

Religion in gabriel garcis marquez's "one hundred years of solitude" essay sample...

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Religion in Gabriel Garcis Marquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude" Essay Sample

In "One Hundred Years of Solitude", one largely recognizable theme that Gabriel García Márquez presents is the role of religion. García Márquez repeatedly ridicules the extreme value Latin American culture has placed in organized religion. He also depicts the negative effects the outside religion, and technology, had on Latin American traditional culture.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the character Fernanda del Carpio embodies the rigidity of Catholicism, the major religion of Latin America. It is this outsider, a zealous Catholic, who brings the Buendía homestead under an iron-fist rule with strict religious practices. However, García Márquez expresses his animosity with organized religion when he first introduces Fernanda, illustrating her arrival, "The carnival had reached its highest level of madness ... when on the swamp road a parade of several people appeared carrying in a gilded litter the most fascinating woman that imagination could conceive" (217). The manner in which Fernanda is brought in, and idolized, elevated on a golden couch amongst the heathenish carnival reflects García Márquez's views on the invasion of Christianity into Latin America.

Fernanda's rigid rule and forced participation echoes the destruction of the traditional cultural beliefs. The hypocrisy in the event of the most strictly religious character being named the queen of a barbaric, out-of-control carnival ridicules organized religion.

García Márquez frequently uses miracles in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to further express the hypocrisy he finds with religion and social constructs of

Latin America. Throughout the text, seemingly miraculous happenings occur that to the people of Macondo are normal and accepted, and yet the Buendías find modern technological discoveries confusing. García Márquez uses the arrival of the telephone as a humorous miracle, depicting:

It was as if God had decided to put to the test every capacity for surprise ... to such an extreme that no one knew for certain where the limits of reality lay. It was an intricate stew of truths and mirages that convulsed the ghost of José Arcadio Buendía under the chestnut tree with impatience and made him wander all through the house even in broad daylight. (242)

The comedy in a ghost being one of the Buendías to be disturbed by a modern technology is absurd and strange to the modern reader. However, García Márquez is using the apparition to further display the event of modern technology, and Christianity, driving out the native theology of Latin American culture. The magical quality of the ghost appearing is reflective of the ancient mysticism, and yet the perplexity the telephone brings is comparable to the confusion experienced by Latin American cultures with the influx of European and American influences.

It is important to note that García Márquez is not attacking all religion in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The matriarch of the Buendía family, Úrsula Iguarán, exhibits many religious morals and values. However, she is not representative of organized religion as she does not attempt to force any one form of worship, and is thus one of the most respected characters in the book. Also, a source of religious-like behavior, for some of the Buendías, is the manuscripts Melquíades left behind. First the patriarch, José Arcadio

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Buendía, is enthralled with the scientific mysteries of the gypsy. Later in time, José Arcadio Segundo recedes to the workroom and makes the manuscripts his study. García Márquez portrays how José Arcadio Segundo finds a bit of salvation in his solitude, when he describes, “ Free from all fear, José Arcadio Segundo dedicated himself then to peruse the manuscripts of Melquíades many times, and with so much more pleasure when he could not understand them” (336). The passing down of the manuscripts, the devotion to their study, and the impact of the knowledge on the members of the family give the study of the manuscripts a religious role in the Buendía household.

The extensiveness to which religion impacts Latin American culture cannot be fully described in a single text. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in all of its greatness, can only exhibit a small part in the entire complex history of Latin America. Gabriel García Márquez makes use of this book to communicate the negative effects he sees of organized religion in his culture.