

The mirrors of macondo



The Mirrors of Macondo In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years Of Solitude the fictional town of Macondo provides a stage, on which the speaker uses the regression of a society to show the disastrous consequences of capitalism on an unindustrialized society. The predominant matriarch character of Ursula Buenda is as a catalyst who introduces and accelerates the spread of capitalism through her entrepreneurial enterprises. While Ursula Buendia is responsible for the founding of Macondo, she is also symbolic for it's the well being and monetary strength. At the beginning of the novel rsula is characterized as being parsimonious, frugal and as "having a great capacity for work" (9), and during this time Macondo is introduced as "a village that [is] more orderly and hardworking" (10) than any. Due to the hard work and brilliant planning by her husband, Jose Arcadio Buenda, all people of the town "could reach the river and draw water with the same effort" (9) and the streets are lined in such a way "that no house got more sun than another during the hot time of day" (9). The tone created by this picturesque setting creates the feeling of an unique society where all people strive not for personal advancement, but for equality of condition. A new chapter opens for Macondo as the industrialization of the village begins to take place. rsula, the once ideal mother, becomes "busy with [her] promising business in candy animals" (41) and begins to slowly drift out of her children's lives, leaving them to be raised by the native hired help. It is her "delicious little ... roosters, ... pink fish ... and yellow ponies" (49) that spread the dangerous illness of insomnia, which is symbolic for the way that money and other capitalistic gains can make one forget what is important in life. A capitalistic society is theoretically driven by want, rather than necessity, just as Ursula came to

be. The theory of Social Darwinism holds that society evolves in stages, with the lower of these stages being a capitalism that eventually evolves into the utopian communist society, but Ursula's wants and capitalistic desires for fulfillment cause Macondo to regress instead of evolve. Macondo goes from the perfect pure communist society to a capitalist one where equality no longer exists. Ursula demonstrates this idea further when she "[takes] out the money she had accumulated" (59) and goes about the task of enlarging the Buenda family home. The Buenda house becomes "not only the largest house in town, ... but the ... [coolest]" (60). This creates a contrast with the original utopian Macondo where "no house got more [or less] sun than another" (9). The Macondo of the past was such a pure communist society in that it didn't have a government and the inhabitants lived in a harmonious state of nature. There was no crime in Macondo, but along with the modernization and economic explosion the need for government arose. As Ursula begins to buy expensive and unnecessary "Viennese furniture [and] Bohemian crystal" (650) a new magistrate arrives in town. Even throughout Jose Arcadio Buenda's opposition to "judges, ... because ... nothing needs judging" (61) Don Apolinar Moscote sets up what will become a conservative regime. The newly installed conservative magistrate begins to operate the government in a corrupt manner with false elections. The government operates in such a corrupt manner that the prospect of "war" (105) is threatened. The arising conflict of liberals and conservatives symbolizes more than altercations between political rivals. The recurring motif of liberalism v. conservatism symbolizes a struggle between the old and new. The old, liberal and communist way of life is quickly being challenged by the new, conservative and capitalist one where frivolous excesses such as "

table clothes from Holland” (65) run rampant. The final phase of industrialization begins to take root and the “ adobe houses of the founders [are] replaced by brick buildings with wooden blinds” (209). Macondo is then suddenly “[shaken] by a whistle” (239) . The “ frightful” (239) train “ was to bring so many ambiguities ... and unpleasant moments ... to Macondo” (239). Along with the train came the infamous Banana Company. The capitalist greed and corruption of the “ shitty gringos” (257) is reminiscent of the greed and corruption of the conservative government. Yet unlike the government it takes an act of God, and not war, to do away with the problem plaguing the village.” Mr. Brown unleash[es] the storm” (338) and causes “[i]t [to rain] for four years, eleven months and two days” (338) in Macondo. The speaker’s use of a flood is symbolic in numerous ways. The use of water destroying all sources of economic and monetary prosperity is similar to a baptism, cleaning the sins of corruption and greed and purging the town of it’s sources. The damage caused by the progression of capitalism into Macondo was on a societal level and the damage caused by the flood was just as damaging on the economic level. The flood did away with all the excesses of Macondo’s society, and also did away with all the economic waist, allowing the possibility for it to return to it’s roots. The days of “ paper[ing] the house...with banknotes” (208) are over, and Macondo is given the opportunity to start over again. After the rains ended Ursula declares that “[a] person can’t live in neglect like this” (360) and Macondo starts to slowly climb out of it’s despair, Petra restarts her lottery, the Buenda house is repaired, and the morale of the town is lifting. However, upon the death of Ursula the few remaining businesses were a “ nearby drugstore” (401), the “ Catalanian’s bookstore” (413) and the town “ brothel” (417). The character

of Amaranta Ursula returns to Macondo and mirrors the role of the deceased Ursula. She decides “ that it [is] possible to rescue the community” (408). Amaranta Ursula set about the restoration of the Macondo that she knew, through “ the restoration of the house” (406). The problem with this restoration is that Amaranta Ursula is part of the fifth generation of Buenda lineage. Instead returning Macondo to the first and second generation communist version, she went about restoring the Banana Company Macondo in which she grew up. Instead of rescuing the village, and Buenda household, the town further moves towards social and economic collapse, as illustrated when the last Aureliano Buendia was reduced to accepting a “ weekly sum” (411) from Amaranta Ursula. Even as Aureliano “[wanders] aimlessly through the town, searching for an entrance back to the past” (444) none is to be found, the society progresses too far into a state of no-return and “ Macondo [is] wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men” (448). The final sentence has a profound effect on the reader. One might say being “ exiled” (448) into a life of solitude is bad enough, but the reader wonders what heinous act Ursula and other residents of Macondo must have committed in order to be “ exiled from the memory of men” (448). The overall tone of the book, especially upon examining the specific downfall of the entire infrastructure of Macondo, causes the reader to empathize with the village and as questions about it’s demise. Was there divine interference in the regression of the society? The allusions used through out the book seem to indicate so. The rain and subsequently flooding of Macondo was reminiscent of Noah’s flood in the Bible where all sin and corruption was wiped away, and the world got to start over again, as Macondo was offered the opportunity to. The reader then is lead to draw the conclusion that

Macondo did not accept this offer and was wiped of the face of the earth, just as the as the mythical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, because the flood offered the village a change to change it's ways and it did not. Since " races condemned to ... solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth" (448), it was wiped of the planet. Word Count 1, 360 Works Cited Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. One Hundred Years of Solitude. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1970.