



Re-Visioning Marquez through Marxist Lens

Lilack Biswas

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dinabandhu Mahavidyalaya, Bongaon, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India
Email: lilackbiswas@gmail.com

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Abstract— This article explores the socio-economic and class dynamics present in the works of the renowned Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez. Through a Marxist lens, the study examines how García Márquez's novels critique the capitalist structures, power imbalances, and social hierarchies that pervade Latin American society. The analysis focuses on three of his most significant works: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, and *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Throughout the paper, García Márquez's critique of authoritarianism, corruption, and imperialism is discussed, revealing his nuanced understanding of the socio-political landscape of Latin America. By situating individual narratives within broader historical and economic contexts, the study provides a comprehensive Marxist interpretation of García Márquez's literary oeuvre, demonstrating how his novels serve as both a reflection and a critique of the socio-economic realities of his time.



Keywords— Marquez, Marxism, Latin America, Capitalism, Social hierarchy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gabriel García Márquez, a prominent Colombian novelist and Nobel laureate, is best known for his significant contributions to Latin American literature, particularly through the genre of magical realism. His novels, rich in fantastical elements, also provide a profound critique of social and political structures. Interpreting García Márquez's novels from a Marxist point of view allows readers to uncover the underlying social commentary on class struggle, colonialism, and the impacts of capitalism.

Marxist literary criticism, rooted in the theories of Karl Marx, emphasizes the role of socioeconomic factors in shaping literature. This approach examines how literature reflects, reinforces, or challenges the economic structures and power dynamics within society. In García Márquez's work, these themes are prevalent, making a Marxist analysis both relevant and insightful.

This dissertation aims to explore the novels of Gabriel García Márquez through a Marxist lens, focusing on how his narratives reflect and critique the socio-political conditions of Latin America.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marxist literary criticism has been applied to various literary works to unveil the dynamics of power, economy, and social relations. Key texts in Marxist theory, such as "The Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Das Kapital" by Marx, and later works by thinkers like Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, provide the foundational framework for this analysis.

Previous scholarly works have examined García Márquez's literature through multiple lenses, including postcolonial, feminist, and psychoanalytic perspectives. However, a focused Marxist critique reveals the deep-rooted economic and class issues that permeate his novels. Scholars such as Roberto González Echevarría, Gerald Martin, and Michael Wood have touched upon these themes, but this dissertation seeks to provide a comprehensive Marxist interpretation.

III. METHODOLOGY

This dissertation employs a Marxist theoretical framework to analyse selected novels by Gabriel García Márquez. The methodology includes a close reading of texts to identify themes related to class struggle, economic exploitation, and

power dynamics. This approach is supplemented by historical and contextual analysis to situate the novels within the socio-political landscape of Latin America.

IV. HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Gabriel García Márquez's writing is deeply influenced by the historical and social contexts of Latin America, particularly Colombia. The region's history of colonization, political turmoil, and social inequality forms the backdrop of his narratives. Understanding this context is crucial for a Marxist analysis, as it provides insight into the power structures and economic conditions that shape his characters and plots.

V. ANALYSIS OF KEY NOVELS

One Hundred Years of Solitude

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a seminal work in Latin American literature, renowned for its rich tapestry of magical realism and its profound social and political commentary. From a Marxist perspective, the novel offers a critical exploration of class struggle, economic exploitation, and the impact of capitalism and colonialism on Latin American societies. This analysis delves into how *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reflects and critiques these socio-economic dynamics through its narrative structure, character development, and thematic content.

Historical Context and Setting

The fictional town of Macondo, where the Buendía family saga unfolds, serves as a microcosm for Latin American history. The town's evolution—from its idyllic beginnings to its eventual decline—mirrors the historical trajectory of many Latin American countries, influenced by colonialism, the rise of capitalism, and foreign imperialism. The cyclical nature of the Buendía family's fortunes can be seen as a reflection of the recurrent cycles of hope, exploitation, and despair that characterize the region's history.

Class Struggle and Social Inequality

Throughout the novel, García Márquez highlights the class divisions and social inequalities that permeate Macondo. The Buendía family, as the town's founders and initial rulers, represent the landowning elite, while the town's labourers and indigenous people symbolize the marginalized working class.

- **José Arcadio Buendía's Utopian Vision:** The patriarch's initial vision of Macondo as a utopian community is quickly undermined by the realities of social hierarchy and economic exploitation. His efforts to create a society based on equality and

scientific progress are thwarted by his own descent into madness and the inherent inequalities that develop within the town.

- **Foreign Capitalism:** The arrival of foreign capitalists, particularly the American banana company, marks a turning point in Macondo's history. The company's exploitation of the town's resources and labour reflects the real-life economic imperialism that Latin America experienced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The company's presence leads to environmental degradation, labour strikes, and ultimately, the massacre of striking workers—events that highlight the brutal realities of capitalist exploitation.

Economic Exploitation and Imperialism

The banana company's intrusion into Macondo is a direct critique of the exploitative practices of foreign corporations in Latin America. García Márquez uses this storyline to expose the destructive impact of economic imperialism on local communities.

- **Exploitation of Labor:** The workers in the banana plantations are subjected to harsh conditions and meagre wages, illustrating the exploitative nature of capitalist enterprises. Their subsequent strike and the violent suppression by the company's hired forces underscore the conflict between the working class and capitalist interests.
- **Environmental Degradation:** The company's operations lead to significant environmental damage, symbolizing the broader impact of capitalist exploitation on the natural world. The deforestation and pollution caused by the company's activities contribute to the eventual decline of Macondo.
- **The Banana Massacre:** The massacre of striking workers is a pivotal moment in the novel, reflecting real historical events such as the 1928 Banana Massacre in Colombia. This event underscores the lengths to which capitalist interests will go to maintain control and suppress dissent, highlighting the inherent violence of the system.

Power and Corruption

The novel also explores the corrupting influence of power and the cyclical nature of political authority.

- **Rise and Fall of Leaders:** Various members of the Buendía family, as well as other characters, rise to positions of power, only to become corrupt and

ultimately fall from grace. This cycle reflects the broader historical patterns of political leaders in Latin America, who often come to power with revolutionary ideals but become corrupt over time.

- **Authoritarian Rule:** The military dictatorship that emerges in Macondo during the banana company's reign exemplifies the authoritarian regimes that have plagued Latin American countries. The use of violence and repression to maintain control is a critique of the oppressive nature of such regimes.

Cultural Alienation and Social Fragmentation

García Márquez also delves into the themes of cultural alienation and social fragmentation that result from economic and political exploitation.

- **Loss of Cultural Identity:** The intrusion of foreign capital and influence leads to a loss of cultural identity in Macondo. Traditional ways of life are disrupted, and the community becomes increasingly fragmented. This reflects the broader impact of colonialism and imperialism on Latin American cultures.
- **Family Disintegration:** The Buendía family's decline parallels the social disintegration of Macondo. As the family becomes increasingly isolated and fragmented, so too does the community. This disintegration is a metaphor for the alienation and loss of social cohesion caused by exploitative economic and political systems.

Chronicle of a Death Foretold

Gabriel García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a novel that intricately weaves the themes of honour, social complicity, and cultural norms within the setting of a small Latin American town. Through a Marxist lens, the novel can be seen as a critique of the socio-economic structures and class dynamics that underpin the community's collective actions and inactions. This analysis explores how the novel reflects and critiques the power dynamics, social hierarchy, and economic factors that influence the lives and decisions of its characters.

Historical and Social Context

Set in a fictional Colombian town, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* takes place in the mid-20th century, a period marked by significant social and economic changes in Latin America. The region's history of colonialism, class stratification, and patriarchal norms forms the backdrop of the narrative. Understanding this context is crucial for a Marxist analysis, as it provides insight into the economic and social conditions that shape the characters' behaviour and the town's collective mentality.

Class Struggle and Social Hierarchy

The social hierarchy in the town is a central element of the novel, with characters occupying distinct positions within the class structure. The novel portrays a rigid social order where wealth, family lineage, and social status dictate individuals' roles and interactions.

- **The Vicario Family:** The Vicario family represents the lower-middle class, with modest means and a strong adherence to traditional values. The family's decision to avenge Angela Vicario's honour by killing Santiago Nasar is deeply influenced by their social standing and the pressure to uphold familial honour within their class constraints.
- **Santiago Nasar:** Santiago, belonging to the upper class, is portrayed as wealthy and influential. His social status provides him with certain privileges, but it also makes him a target for the Vicario brothers' vengeance. His murder can be seen as an act of class struggle, where the lower-middle-class Vicarios challenge the upper-class Nasar.
- **Bayardo San Román:** Bayardo, an outsider with immense wealth, disrupts the town's social order. His affluence and charm win him Angela Vicario's hand in marriage, but his eventual rejection of her after discovering she is not a virgin highlights the economic power dynamics at play. His ability to annul the marriage and leave town unscathed underscores the impunity often enjoyed by the wealthy.

Economic Exploitation and Capitalism

Economic factors play a significant role in shaping the characters' lives and actions. The town's economic structure, based on traditional and agrarian lifestyles, reflects broader capitalist dynamics and the exploitation inherent in these systems.

- **Working-Class Struggles:** Characters such as the Vicario brothers, who work as butchers, and other labourers in the town, represent the working class. Their economic struggles and limited opportunities highlight the harsh realities of life for those at the lower end of the social spectrum. The economic pressures they face exacerbate their adherence to traditional norms, as maintaining honour becomes a way to preserve social capital.
- **Santiago's Wealth:** Santiago's wealth and the influence it affords him are indicative of the capitalist structures that privilege the affluent. His ability to command respect and exercise control over others, despite his questionable behaviour,

illustrates the power imbalance perpetuated by economic disparities.

Power and Corruption

The novel also explores themes of power and corruption, particularly how social and economic power is wielded and abused.

- **Social Complicity:** The townspeople's collective inaction in preventing Santiago's murder reflects a broader critique of societal complicity in maintaining unjust power structures. Despite knowing about the Vicario brothers' intentions, the community fails to intervene, revealing a deep-seated acceptance of social norms and fear of challenging the status quo.
- **Authority Figures:** Characters such as Colonel Aponte, the mayor, and Father Amador, the priest, embody the corrupt and ineffective authority figures who fail to uphold justice. Their negligence and moral ambivalence underscore the dysfunction within the town's power structures.

Cultural Alienation and Social Fragmentation

Marxist theory often addresses the theme of alienation, where individuals become estranged from their labour, society, and even themselves due to capitalist structures. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, cultural alienation and social fragmentation are evident in the characters' interactions and the town's overall dynamics.

- **Angela Vicario's Alienation:** Angela's rejection by Bayardo and subsequent ostracism by her family and society highlight her alienation. Her forced adherence to traditional gender roles and the economic and social pressures placed upon her underscore the dehumanizing aspects of the town's cultural norms.
- **The Town's Fragmentation:** The town's collective failure to prevent Santiago's murder, despite widespread knowledge of the Vicario brothers' plan, reveals a fractured community. The residents' unwillingness to act reflects a breakdown in social cohesion and mutual responsibility, driven by fear, apathy, and adherence to oppressive norms.

Gender and Patriarchy

While primarily a Marxist analysis focuses on class and economic factors, it is also essential to consider the intersection of gender and patriarchy in the novel. The patriarchal structures that govern the town's social interactions are deeply intertwined with economic and class dynamics.

- **Honor and Patriarchy:** The concept of honour, particularly female chastity, is central to the novel's conflict. Angela's perceived dishonour leads to Santiago's death, illustrating how patriarchal values control and exploit women's bodies. The economic implications of marriage and virginity further complicate this dynamic, as women's worth is often tied to their ability to secure advantageous marriages.
- **Male Dominance:** The actions of male characters, from the Vicario brothers' violent retribution to Bayardo's rejection of Angela, reflect the patriarchal dominance that permeates the town. This dominance is maintained through both social norms and economic power, perpetuating cycles of oppression and violence.

Love in the Time of Cholera

Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* is a rich and intricate novel that explores themes of love, aging, and societal change in a Caribbean setting during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From a Marxist perspective, the novel can be analysed in terms of its critique of socio-economic structures, class dynamics, and the impact of capitalism on personal relationships and social development. This analysis delves into how the novel reflects and critiques the socio-economic conditions of its setting, using the relationships and lives of its characters to explore broader themes of class struggle and economic exploitation.

Historical and Social Context

The novel is set in a Caribbean port city, influenced by the historical and socio-economic realities of Latin America during the time period it covers. The setting encompasses a society in transition, grappling with the impacts of colonialism, burgeoning capitalism, and social stratification. Understanding this context is essential for a Marxist analysis, as it illuminates the economic and social forces that shape the characters' lives and the community's dynamics.

Class Struggle and Social Hierarchy

The social hierarchy and class divisions in the novel are central to the characters' interactions and the unfolding of the narrative. The novel portrays a society where wealth, social status, and class influence every aspect of life, from romantic relationships to professional opportunities.

- **Florentino Ariza:** Florentino represents the aspiring lower-middle class. His lack of wealth and status becomes a significant barrier in his pursuit of Fermina Daza. Florentino's life is marked by his struggle to elevate his social standing and prove his

worth in a society that values material success. His relentless pursuit of economic stability and social acceptance highlights the class struggle inherent in his character arc.

- **Fermina Daza:** Fermina's marriage to Dr. Juvenal Urbino illustrates the societal expectation for women to marry into wealth and social standing. Fermina's eventual acceptance of Urbino's proposal is heavily influenced by the economic security and social prestige it offers. Her journey from humble beginnings to a life of affluence reflects the transformative power of marriage as a tool for social mobility.
- **Dr. Juvenal Urbino:** Urbino embodies the upper class, with his education, wealth, and social influence. His character represents the consolidation of power and privilege that comes with high social standing. Urbino's role as a doctor also signifies the professional elite, whose status is often reinforced by their economic and social capital.

Economic Exploitation and Capitalism

The novel critiques the capitalist structures that define the lives of its characters and the community. Economic exploitation and the pursuit of wealth are recurring themes, illustrating the pervasive influence of capitalism.

- **Florentino's Career:** Florentino's rise within the River Company of the Caribbean is a testament to his dedication to achieving economic stability. His role in the company, which benefits from the exploitation of labour and resources, reflects the broader dynamics of capitalist enterprise. Florentino's success, built on the back of an exploitative economic system, underscores the moral compromises and social costs of capitalist ambition.
- **Urbanization and Modernization:** The city's transformation through modernization projects and urban development represents the encroachment of capitalist progress. These changes often come at the expense of traditional ways of life and the displacement of poorer communities. The novel highlights the tension between progress and preservation, illustrating the social upheaval caused by economic development.

Power and Corruption

The novel explores the themes of power and corruption, particularly in the context of socio-economic status and personal relationships. Power dynamics are evident in the

characters' interactions and the societal structures they navigate.

- **Political Corruption:** The novel hints at the corrupt practices within the political and business spheres, reflecting the broader context of Latin American politics. The River Company's operations, supported by political influence and corruption, reveal the complicity of economic and political elites in maintaining their power and wealth.
- **Patriarchal Control:** The control exerted by male characters over female characters reflects the patriarchal power structures that govern society. Urbino's authority over Fermina, and Florentino's obsessive pursuit of her, highlight the gendered dimensions of power and control. The novel critiques these dynamics, illustrating the ways in which economic and social power are intertwined with gender oppression.

Cultural Alienation and Social Fragmentation

Marxist theory often addresses the theme of alienation, where individuals become estranged from their labour, society, and even themselves due to capitalist structures. In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, cultural alienation and social fragmentation are evident in the characters' experiences and the community's transformation.

- **Florentino's Alienation:** Florentino's relentless pursuit of Fermina and his rise in the corporate world leave him emotionally and socially alienated. His numerous affairs and unfulfilled romantic life reflect his deeper sense of isolation and disconnection from genuine human relationships. This alienation is a result of the capitalist emphasis on success and material gain over personal fulfilment.
- **Community Transformation:** The city's modernization leads to a fragmentation of traditional social bonds and community structures. As the town becomes more urbanized and economically developed, the sense of communal identity and mutual support erodes. The novel critiques this fragmentation, highlighting the social costs of capitalist progress.

Gender and Patriarchy

While a Marxist analysis primarily focuses on class and economic factors, the intersection of gender and patriarchy is also crucial in the novel. The patriarchal structures that govern the characters' lives are deeply intertwined with economic and class dynamics.

- **Marriage and Social Mobility:** Fermina's marriage to Urbino is not just a romantic union but also a strategic alliance that elevates her social status. The economic and social implications of marriage for women are central to the novel's critique of patriarchal norms. Fermina's experiences reflect the limited avenues for social mobility available to women, which are often mediated through marriage.
- **Florentino's Obsession:** Florentino's pursuit of Fermina over decades reflects a patriarchal sense of entitlement and control. His objectification of her as the ultimate prize underscores the gendered dimensions of power and desire. The novel critiques this dynamic, illustrating the ways in which patriarchal and capitalist structures oppress and exploit women.

VI. THEMES AND MOTIFS IN GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S WORK

Class Struggle and Social Inequality

García Márquez's novels frequently highlight the disparities between different social classes. The exploitation of the working class and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few are recurrent themes. The struggle for justice and equality is depicted through the lives of his characters, who often face systemic oppression.

Colonialism and Imperialism

The legacy of colonialism and the continued influence of imperialist powers are central to García Márquez's critique. His depiction of foreign companies exploiting Latin American resources and people reflects the historical realities of economic imperialism.

Capitalism and its Discontents

The destructive impact of capitalism is a prominent theme, illustrated through environmental degradation, social alienation, and economic exploitation. García Márquez's narratives often critique the capitalist ethos and its repercussions on society and individuals.

Power and Corruption

The corrupting influence of power is a recurring motif. García Márquez explores how power is wielded and abused, leading to social injustice and moral decay. His portrayal of dictators and authoritarian figures serves as a critique of oppressive regimes.

VII. CHARACTER ANALYSIS THROUGH A MARXIST LENS

Proletariat and Bourgeoisie

Characters in García Márquez's novels often represent different social classes. The proletariat, or working class, is depicted through characters who face exploitation and marginalization. The bourgeoisie, or ruling class, is portrayed through wealthy landowners, capitalists, and politicians who perpetuate social inequality.

Revolutionary Figures and Rebels

Some characters embody revolutionary ideals, challenging the status quo and striving for social justice. These figures often face significant obstacles and resistance from the entrenched power structures.

Victims of Exploitation

Many characters in García Márquez's novels are victims of economic and social exploitation. Their struggles and suffering highlight the human cost of systemic inequality and oppression.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From a Marxist perspective, "Love in the Time of Cholera" is a rich critique of the socio-economic structures and power dynamics that shape the characters' lives. The novel exposes the class divisions, economic exploitation, and cultural alienation that define the community. Through its exploration of power, corruption, and the impact of capitalism on personal relationships and social development, García Márquez offers a powerful commentary on the need for social and economic justice.

"Chronicle of a Death Foretold" offers a thorough analysis of the power relationships and socioeconomic systems in Latin American culture. The tight social structures, financial exploitation, and cultural alienation that characterize town life are all revealed in the story. By portraying class conflict, social collaboration, and the distorting effect of authority, García Márquez provides a potent analysis on the necessity of social and financial equity.

"One Hundred Years of Solitude" is a critical analysis of the socioeconomic circumstances in Latin America from a Marxist standpoint. García Márquez reveals the devastating effects of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism on the area through the metaphorical tale of the Buendía family and the village of Macondo. A potent commentary on the necessity of social and economic fairness, the novel emphasizes the class conflict, economic exploitation, and social fragmentation that arise from these institutions.

The story by García Márquez finally emphasizes how history is cyclical and how the human condition is characterized by recurrent patterns of optimism and sorrow. Putting the family and personal in the larger framework of socioeconomic factors, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* asks readers to consider how interrelated all of our lives are.

Interpreting the novels of Gabriel García Márquez from a Marxist point of view reveals the profound social and political commentary embedded in his work. His narratives critique the economic and power structures that perpetuate social inequality, reflecting the historical and social realities of Latin America. Through the lens of Marxist theory, García Márquez's novels emerge as powerful critiques of capitalism, colonialism, and authoritarianism, offering a voice to the marginalized and oppressed.

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