

Gabriel García Marquez: a name synonymous with comedy. A renowned humorist, this Latin American novelist is best known for his Nobel-prize-winning epic, One Hundred Years of Solitude, but is undervalued for his shorter, less confusing works. Novellas like “Leaf Storm”, “No One Writes to the Colonel”, and “Chronicle of a Death Foretold” are a few examples reminiscent of that crazy *muchacho* we all love. Marquez utilizes his Columbian heritage in all of his stories to provide an unfamiliar setting, rich with culture and potentially humorous situations, like endless parades of death. Not only are his settings captivating, but his witty style as well. There are some however, that don’t see the humor in Marquez, for reasons difficult to decipher. It is the combination of these elements that makes Gabriel García Marquez the funniest Colombian Nobel-prize-winning writer ever.

Appealing settings are very important to Marquez. The fictitious Colombian town of Macondo is introduced in “Leaf Storm” on a Wednesday, which is made apparent after Marquez clarifies the day of the week five times in the first three pages. Marquez notes that the month is October five times in the first two pages of “No One Writes to the Colonel” and leaves all of his characters unnamed, indicating his sole interest of establishing a setting. One Hundred Years of Solitude features several characters that share the same name, but doesn’t confuse the reader since they tend to look and think alike – an interesting fact, considering that One Hundred Years of Solitude also takes place in Macondo, which progresses since the period of “No One Writes to the Colonel”; Marquez’s settings grow, not his characters. Marquez’s view of an ideal setting is very

formulaic. Every town is rich with Columbian culture, like political violence, siestas, town gossip, and funerals, and filled with colonels, religious figures, and unappreciated housewives. It resembles modern “sitcoms” (situational comedies) in the sense that the environment is strictly repetitive and that the plot is driven by disputes regarding common social events and events. Referring to frequent deaths, one of Marquez’s colonels comments, “It’s the first death from natural causes we’ve had in many years,” Another of his colonels in a different story describes a common Christian view, “I get just as upset thinking that God exists as thinking that he doesn’t. I’d rather not think about it,” Marquez presents an ideally conflictive, eventful, and unfamiliar setting for comedy.

Marquez has a very distinctive style. He allegedly founded the genre of magical realism, but in truth only popularized a Latin American writing-style with One Hundred Years of Solitude. The three cited novellas don’t particularly exemplify the style, but do follow a few trends. Illogical and unexplained events, multiple perspectives, and the distortion of time categorize magical realism. “Chronicle of a Death Foretold” isn’t really a chronicle; the journalistic narrator interviews characters out of order. The style of “Leaf Storm” is highly confusing, switching between first-person perspectives constantly. The colonel of “No One Writes to the Colonel” illogically tolerates the lack of his pension for fifteen years. The style, which is evident in all of Marquez’s work, practically defines humor: the juxtaposition of the real and absurd.

Many readers miss the intended humor of Marquez since it’s difficult to find comedy in such dark environments. Perhaps it’s because the context of magical realism makes readers feel that some absurdities aren’t supposed to be funny – only accepted. A man who enjoys eating grass, a stubborn colonel who values his cock more than his wife,

or man falling flat on his face when he dies are typical examples of overlooked humor by readers. Although it is understandable that readers can't distinguish serious events from humorous ones, it is difficult to not see comedy in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Ridiculous memory-recovering solutions to mass insomnia, people flying around, and commonly reincarnated citizens are not easily overlooked. The humor is there – readers just need to loosen up!

Is Marquez really that funny? Not really. Humor is perspective. I'm sure Marquez didn't *intend* for me to find his stories so funny. In fact, it's rather cruel of me to find the constant death and sorrow of Marquez's stories something to laugh at, but regardless of what I think, Marquez's settings and writing-style are deliberately funny at times. Although it really is difficult to tell what is and what isn't supposed to be comedy when reading Marquez, it certainly is possible if you give him a chance. Jonathan Leonard of the *New York Times* commented, "It is the genius of García Marquez that... there is laughter even in death."