



Research Paper

Harmonising the Past: The Role of Music in Shaping Cultural and Political Narratives in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

"I had dreamed about the good life, going from fair to fair and singing with an accordion and a good voice, which always seemed to me to be the oldest and happiest way to tell a story."¹ — Gabriel García Márquez

A pivotal voice in Colombian culture, Gabriel García Márquez is a recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, with his contributions marking him as one of the most influential Latin American writers of the twentieth century. He pioneered the genre of magic realism² and revolutionized how Latin American literature is viewed globally. Before Márquez, Latin American writers were largely overshadowed by their European and North American counterparts. However, his global profile continues to inspire generations of writers across the world to embrace their cultural narratives (Bloom). In an interview, Márquez indicated that his interest lies more in storytelling than in the theoretical basis of writing, focusing more on narrative aspects (Gale). He uses his unique narrative style, rooted in magical realism—a blend of the everyday and the fantastical—to intertwine the era of civil unrest and colonial influences in Latin America during the mid-twentieth century.

Born in 1928, in Aracataca, Colombia, the experiences of his childhood and environment are mirrored consistently in his novels. His literature reflects the struggles of colonialism, social injustice, and cultural transformation, as he compels readers to empathize with the changes in Latin America (Maurya). Márquez's unique narrative style and his engagement with the concept of collective history are best exemplified in his most famous novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. His personal experiences, having lived through significant political unrest and his time in countries like Mexico and Colombia, help this novel to serve as an allegory of the region's culture.

The novel was written amidst the era of imperialist expansion and the 'La Violencia' conflict³ that occurred between 1955 and 1967 in Latin America, particularly in Colombia. At the time, the influence of European post-colonial legacies palpably manifested through the dynamics of extractive capitalism (Sankey). This influence underscored the contested nature of Colombian identity and revealed how colonial discourses, initially imposed by European

¹The Colombian Folk Songs That Influenced Gabriel García Márquez's "Magical Realism". *GBH*, 5 May 2016, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/2016-05-05/the-colombian-folk-songs-that-influenced-gabriel-garcia-marquezs-magical-realism>.

² For more on magical realism and narrative style, read Faris, Wendy B. 'García Márquez and Magical Realism'. *The Oxford Handbook of Gabriel García Márquez*, edited by Gene H. Bell-Villada and Ignacio López-Calvo, 1st ed., Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 31–49. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190067168.013.2>. ; López-Baralt, Mercedes. 'Myth and Poetry in Macondo'. *The Oxford Handbook of Gabriel García Márquez*, edited by Gene H. Bell-Villada and Ignacio López-Calvo, 1st ed., Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 323–40. *DOI.org (Crossref)* <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190067168.013.19>. ; Warnes, Christopher. "Magical Realism and Defamiliarization in Gabriel García ; Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*."

³ La Violencia was a civil war between Liberals and Conservative that took place in Columbia from 1946-66. It consisted of political violence around the presidential election of 1946, the upheavals generated by Gaitan's assassination, and fighting under the Liberal/Conservative coalition from 1958 to 1975. This conflict resulted in the deaths of an estimated 200,000 Colombians and displaced many more. Scholars argue that La Violencia provides the background of the novel, due to the author's depiction of civil wars, violence and elections. 'Critical Analysis of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* - Free Essay Example'. *Edubirdie*,

<https://edubirdie.com/examples/critical-analysis-of-one-hundred-years-of-solitude/>. Accessed 28 June 2024.

powers, perpetuated a complex interplay of unification and differentiation within the nation.⁴ These powers impacted Colombian culture, introducing European languages, religions, and traditions that blended with indigenous traditions to form a hybrid cultural identity. Márquez often even used his earnings and influence to support radical movements and anti-imperialist efforts, such as founding the HABEAS organisation⁵ to correct abuses of power and free political prisoners, thereby participating in the resistance against oppression in Latin America (Lydia 2). He portrays this aspect of Colombian life by integrating themes of imperialism and political corruption within the narrative, and critiquing the inherent imperialism.

One Hundred Years of Solitude is a multi-generational story about the Buendía family in the fictional Colombian town of Macondo. Founded by patriarch José Arcadio Buendía, the narrative delves into the lives of six generations of his family, tracing their rise and fall alongside the evolution of Macondo. The novel begins with José Arcadio Buendía and his wife, Ursula Iguaran establishing the town of Macondo as it was manifested in his dreams—acuity made of mirrors. It remains isolated for years, with no contact with the outside world, other than gypsies who occasionally visit. Led by Melquíades, another gypsy, they bring technologies, inventions and discoveries, leading Macondo to the path of innovation. José Arcadio Buendía is impulsive, inquisitive and of a solitary nature, alienating himself from his surroundings. These traits are passed on to all descendants in the novel. As the town begins to arise, they give birth to two sons, José Arcadio (I), and Aureliano (Colonel Aureliano Buendía). Soon, as the town begins to establish contact with other regions and adopt forms of governments, a third child is born, Amaranta. Later, Pietro Crespi, the Italian pianola expert arrives. He is hired to teach Rebeca and Amaranta how to dance, causing both of them to fall in love with him, and is also skilled in music. Civil wars take place, including a conflict between the liberals and conservative parties, and they continue to apprise until the signing of a peace treaty. The novel spans over a century, interspersed with detailed descriptions of births, deaths, inventions, marriages and love affairs. The story is also rich with magical realism and recurring themes including remedial insomnia, children with tails of pigs, and characters who defy natural ageing. Incest, especially, becomes the original sin that threatens the six succeeding generations of the Buendías. Rebeca, is the earth eating adopted daughter of José Buendía and Ursula, who later marries José Arcadio (I) against the wishes of her family. This marks the end of the second generation (Popova).

⁴ The construction of Colombian national identity remains a contentious field, where European colonial impacts are both contested and reinterpreted, reflecting a continuous struggle to redefine power relations and cultural narratives in the postcolonial era. For more on imperialism and colonial influence in Colombia, read Cubillos, Jhon Jairo Losada. 'Colonial Implications of the Colombian National Identity: Between Coloniality and Genealogy'. *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, vol. 16, no. 21, Jan. 2018, pp. 123–47. ; Sankey, Kyla. 'Extractive Capital, Imperialism, and the Colombian State'. *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 45, no. 5, Sept. 2018, pp. 52–70. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X18782982>.

⁵ The Habeas Foundation was a human rights organization established by Gabriel García Márquez to advocate for political prisoners, particularly those aligned with Marxist-Leninist ideologies involved in guerrilla or labelled terrorist activities. This foundation aimed to offer legal and financial assistance to individuals who were persecuted politically, and targeted dictatorships in countries like Argentina, Chile, and Panama. The foundation challenged oppressive regimes and supported those which fought for political and social change. Despite its noble aspirations, the Habeas Foundation faced criticisms for its perceived leniency towards certain regimes, notably the Cuban government.

When Gabriel García Márquez Was Investigated over His Links to Communism | U.S. | EL PAÍS English. <https://english.elpais.com/usa/2022-01-27/when-gabriel-garcia-marquez-was-investigated-over-his-links-to-communism.html>. Accessed 4 July 2024.

Colonel Aureliano Buendía is married to Remedios Moscote, a beautiful young girl who dies early. He has a son, Aureliano José, with Pilar Ternera, as well as seventeen other sons from unknown women. Although José Arcadio Buendía is married to Rebeca, he has a son named Arcadio with the Pilar Ternera. The cycles continue onto the third generation, where more children are born, including twins, José Arcadio II and Aureliano II. Aside from growing up to be a fat hedonist, Aureliano II becomes a virtuoso on the accordion, playing songs to become one of the most respected men in Macondo. Marriages and affairs recur in the fifth and sixth generation, until an affair within the family results Aureliano (III) of the final generation to be born with the tail of a pig as a result of incest (*The Ultimate One Hundred Years of Solitude Family Tree EdrawMax Online*). The novel finally concludes with a devastating cyclone that destroys the town, and the manuscripts of Melquíades revealing that the fate of the Buendía family had been predetermined.

The novel allegorically maps the history of Colombia, blending it with magical realism to explore the cyclic nature of human struggle, societal growth, and decay (Litcharts). As Márquez was deeply influenced by his upbringing in Aracataca and by the stories told by his grandparents, this novel seeks to capture the spirit and anecdotes of his family's past, transforming personal memory into a narrative that becomes a commentary on the unique aspects of Latin American life, especially in a post-colonial context. The structure also mimics the cyclical nature of history and human behaviour, as reflected in the repetition of events, characters and linguistic devices.⁶ Notably, Márquez was a part of the Latin American Boom, a literary movement that sought to bring the continent's vibrant culture to a global audience through innovative narrative techniques. His use of magical realism lends itself to precisely this, additionally earning its name as a classic because of the innovative literary style, storytelling, and cultural impact it went on to have across the world (Faris).

The novel does not follow a linear structure, deploying flashbacks and foreshadowing to intertwine the personal destinies of the characters. Although there is a distinctive beginning, middle and apocalyptic conclusion to the story, there is a sense of circularity to the narrative. The characters cannot break free of their family's behavioural patterns, finding themselves repeating events, sentences, decisions and fates that echo their family history. As a result, there is a diegetic confusion between the past, present, and future. The repetition of family names and character traits, recurring themes, characters and dialogue are examples of this circularity which give rise to the collapse of linear time. This cyclical nature of their existence highlights the themes of history, magical realism, post-colonialism, and solitude that recur in the narrative.

In *One Hundred Years Of Solitude*, Gabriel García Márquez meticulously weaves musical elements into the story, allowing them to reflect the cultural and political upheavals of Latin American history. Music plays an important role in depicting and shaping culture.

⁶ There has been a range of work on generational structure and temporality in Márquez's one hundred years of solitude. Notable among them are Taylor, Anna Marie. 'Cien Anos de Soledad: History and the Novel'. *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1975, pp. 96–112. ; Williams, Raymond Leslie. *A Companion to Gabriel García Márquez*. 1st ed., Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2021. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781800105331>. ; Patterson, Anthony. *Central Importance of Temporality in the Fiction of Gabriel García Márquez*. California State University, Dominguez Hills, 2004. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 1427234. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/c3d14c862374151d8a19fa17fbd864c3/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y> ; 7. Bell-Villada, Gene H. "Names and Narrative Pattern in 'One Hundred Years of Solitude.'" *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 9, no. 18, Spring 1981, pp. 37-46. *Latin American Literary Review*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20119255>.

Like other forms of art in Márquez's work which often serve as a backdrop to significant events and transitions, music and festivities mark moments of both joy and tragedy, reflecting sociopolitical changes within society. However, there is limited scholarship on the use of music in the novel and its relationship with the novel's political and cultural dynamics. Gene

H. Bell-Villada and Marco Katz Montiel argue that Márquez employs music in his writings to enhance the narrative and to act as a cultural marker that depicts the lives of the characters and the political situation of the time (Bell-Villada and Katz Montiel). Yet they fail to draw connections between the structural and stylistic choices of his writing, and the use of song in the text. This article further builds on the work of Ana Maria Ochoa, who has examined Márquez's role in the folkloric perception of vallenato music, a traditional Colombian genre of music (Ochoa). Ochoa, however, does not engage with the novel in a meaningful way, and fails to substantiate her arguments with examples from the novel. This necessitates a more focused study to unravel how Márquez's use of music not only shapes the emotional dynamics and themes of the novel, but also reflects the multigenerational societal and political shifts of Colombian history. This article aims to analyse the role of music in Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, improving our understanding of how literary works depict and shape perceptions of history. It aims to unpack how music in the novel reflects the culture that has shaped Latin America. Additionally, it will highlight the way in which musical elements in the novel influence the cultural identity of characters and the development of society.

This article is organized into two distinct sections, each exploring the relationship between music and narrative in the novel. The first section delves into the cultural significance of vallenato music. It examines the historical and cultural roots of vallenato, and underscores how vallenato, through its lyrical and musical components, serves as a cultural artifact that reflects the collective memories and histories of its people. The second section discusses the broader use of music in the novel, showcasing how Márquez integrates various musical forms to

enhance character development and depict cultural identity.

The Use of Vallenato Music in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Traditional vallenato folk music can be traced back to the nineteenth century, (*Vallenato: Musical Fusion Genre of the Caribbean Region of Colombia*) when the genre was used as a medium for cultural expression in the Northern Columbian and Caribbean region by the indigenous people of Africa, and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (*UNESCO - Traditional Vallenato Music of the Greater Magdalena Region*). Historically, Valledupar, a city in Northeastern Columbia, has been the home of indigenous tribes and the place where the annual 'Festival de la Leyenda Vallenata', takes place to celebrate vallenato. It crowns the "Rey vallenato", or the best of musicians. These songs had elements of Spanish poetry and European derivation, with lyrics that shared stories and news of Latin American history.

Typically involving the *caja* (a small drum), *guacharaca* (a scraper), and an accordion, the music consists of four main rhythms – *paseo*, *son*, *merengue*, and *puya*.

An accomplished journalist, Gabriel García Márquez showed an interest in the genre's potential while writing about Colombian folklore. He was quoted as describing his novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as "a 350-page vallenato." (Bell-Villada and Katz Montiel). As scholars like Gene H. Bell-Villada, Marco Katz Montiel and Betto Arcos have demonstrated, Márquez was influenced by the genre from an early age, even residing in Valledupar for a period of time. He played a role in popularizing and celebrating vallenato through his active involvement in the vallenato festival in Valledupar, and in his memoir "Living to Tell the Tale," he vividly recounts his dream of living a nomadic life, singing vallenato from town to town.⁷ The emergence of magical realism through Márquez's works influenced the perception and interpretation of vallenato. His portrayal of the music fabricates a symbolic connection to Colombian culture. He includes knowledge of both, the European-classical repertory and the popular folk elements of northern Colombia to create a mix of realism and fantasy to critique the events of local Columbian life (Ochoa).

While previous studies have focused on how García Márquez often integrates elements of vallenato into his literary works, they are limited in their analysis of the use of vallenato in the structural and textual nuances of his work. This section will explore Márquez's use of vallenato, both structurally and stylistically, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

In the novel, Márquez meticulously weaves allusions of vallenato in his writing, structurally, lyrically and stylistically. While the more salient references to this music are being conveyed through the actions and behaviour of the characters, the stylistic and structural choices also are emblematic of his integration of his musical influences.

Francisco el Hombre is one such character and mythical legend who travels across town singing and bringing news. In the novel he is seen as "frequently pass[ing] through Macondo distributing songs that he composed himself," while singing in "great detail the things that had happened in towns along his route" (García Márquez and Rabassa 31).

Historically, there has been a "Franciscan" subculture that stems from Francisco el Hombre, the mythological legend of the Caribbean, whose statues can be seen throughout the region.

Towards the end of the novel Márquez writes, "In the last open salon of the tumbledown red-light district an accordion group was playing the songs of Rafael Escalona," describing him as the "heir to the secrets of Francisco el Hombre" (García Márquez and Rabassa 199). Rafael Escalona (1926–2009) was a renowned lyricist and composer of Columbian folk music, revolutionising vallenato. Gene H. Bell-Villada and Marco Katz Montiel argue that as he was a "sometime friend and an almost exact contemporary of the novelist", and "linked directly to Francisco el Hombre", "the two gures [served] as quasi- bookends within the purported vallenato that is the history of Macondo" (Bell-Villada and Katz Montiel). In accordance with these facts, the direct link to this musical tradition brings the sounds and feelings of vallenato into the story, evoking a cultural resonance. The integration of myth and traditions, within vallenato's origins into the fabric of Macondo, capture the culture in a way where it again aligns with the concept of his "350 paged vallenato" ("The Colombian Folk Songs That Influenced Gabriel García Márquez's "Magical Realism"). This suggests the mimicking of an end to Márquez's three hundred and fifty pagesong, as he sums up the spirit of the region's culture.

Just as vallenato captures the oral histories and collective memories of the Colombian people through magical realism and rhythm, the novel similarly preserves a magical realist history of the fictional Buendía family. Aureliano Segundo (II), the twin of José Arcadio Segundo, would also "accompany [himself] with the same archaic accordion," (García Márquez and Rabassa 31). imitating a classic vallenato ensemble which consists of

an accordion for melody and harmonies, and a vocalist who is usually the accordionist themselves. This exemplifies his allusions to vallenato, in having one of the main characters in the novel play the accordion, suggesting that he himself is leading the song while telling

⁷ García Márquez, Gabriel, and Edith Grossman. *Living to Tell the Tale*. 1st Vintage International ed, Vintage International, 2004.

the story. Aureliano “would spend his afternoons in the courtyard, learning to play the accordion by ear” and “became a virtuoso on the accordion” (García Márquez and Rabassa 96), “singing at the top of his lungs the old songs of Francisco the Man” (García Márquez and Rabassa 98). This could be read as Márquez’s attempt to depict the ways in which Columbian society did not learn from their history. They repeated self-composed songs, foreshadowing that history could repeat itself, with people immersed in the notions of money, love and power which surrounds them. This illustrates how personal and societal progress can be ensnared by recurring flaws and values, as the same themes recur repeatedly with each new generation.

These themes are not just confined to the story but are intended to mirror the larger Latin American experience, where history often repeats itself, and the people are caught in a cycle driven by these very notions of money, love, and power. Márquez uses the magical realism genre to amplify these cycles, making them vivid and inevitable, suggesting that they are woven into the very fabric of human nature and societal structure. This is further exemplified by the instances where Aureliano is shown to always play the accordion after an event or significant moment. It is also used as an escape no matter the adversity. “The bodies of the Aurelianos were no sooner cold in their graves than Aureliano Segundo had the house lighted up again, filled with drunkards playing the accordion” (García Márquez and Rabassa 124). This suggests how Márquez views the events, almost as if they are a historical record unfolding in the style of vallenato.

Furthermore, the incorporation of “distant pipes, drums, and jingles of the gypsies” to “announc[e] the latest and most startling discover[ies]” (García Márquez and Rabassa 14). all weave themselves into this musical genre with mention of the instruments. They perform the roles that they are associated with, of information and story dissemination, and imply the beginning of Márquez’s song, the novel, just like vallenato music. Another instance of this connection is when after completing his idle routines, “[Colonel Aureliano Buendía] heard the distant brass instruments, the beating of the bass drum” and “knowingly fell into a trap of nostalgia” (García Márquez and Rabassa 132). The sounds of the drums not only imitate a classic vallenato song but become threads woven into the fabric of cultural memory to reflect the essence of vallenato music. They are not merely instruments but serve as a portal to the past, drawing people into a nostalgic trip where each beat resonates with the collective memory of his homeland, just like each song does with its unique percussion.

Ana Maria Ochoa argues that “the rise of genres in folk and popular music is a process that entails the cultural construction of an identifiable, bounded sonorous item through the creation of a poetics of entextualization” (Ochoa 208). Further, Wendy B. Faris discusses how the repetition of events and character types along with a number of images regarding time creates a sense of circular rather than chronological time (Faris). While these are compelling arguments, their analyses do not take into account how this concept in the novel is made ‘sonorous’ through constant mentions and recaps of the events sporadically in the novel to intentionally reiterate the ongoing pattern of similar habits spanning all generations. The structure mirrors something like the chorus of the song, time constantly circling back to the same beliefs, values and decisions that have already occurred. Therefore, structurally, in its repetitive nature, “the author constantly gives us ostensibly reassuring times of the day, days of the week and months” (Martin 51) to not only make sense of them but also create a pattern of recurring events and days where it becomes a chorus or hook of the song, to resonate with us more deeply.

The language and devices chosen emulate the vallenato genre as well. One example of this is during the introduction of Rebeca, when Márquez vividly describes “her greenish skin, her stomach, round and tense as a drum” (García Márquez and Rabassa 26). Many of the similes used are musical and connect to instruments like the drums. The onomatopoeia — “cloc cloc sound” (García Márquez and Rabassa 26)—creates a similar effect by bringing the song to life in the novel as it is being played. Additionally, the symbols and motifs, like the birds, are also alluded to. Birds are a recurring motif in the novel, often to symbolize freedom and the possibility of escape from the cyclical repetition of history, or to hint at moments of forewarning. For instance, yellow birds appear around Mauricio Babilonia, signifying his presence and the inevitability of his tragic fate with Meme, wherein he is left paralysed as a result of his shooting due to his affair with her. Further, birds are sometimes seen as omens or conveyors of messages, mirroring the fate of the town itself (Litcharts). In accordance with this, an instrument used in vallenato music is the *guacharaca*, which is designed to mimic the

call of the *guacharaca* bird (*Colombia Country Brand*). This suggests Márquez intentionally deployed symbols that fit in musically from different aspects of the genre.

Exploring Notions of Cultural Identity through Music

Moving away from Gabriel Garcia Márquez's use of vallenato in the text, there are other utilisations of music in the novel which enhance the way that the cultural atmosphere is depicted in the novel. While Anna Marie Taylor and others have analysed how cultural identity is presented through his writing (Taylor), these studies have not considered the role of music and its impact on the development of Latin American cultural identity in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Music helps to preserve these cultural influences and impact the way that the characters and people of the town understand their own heritage. It reflects the rhythms of life and the emotional landscapes that define it. Further, it is used as another way of tying the emotional states of the characters to their cultural heritage. Márquez's exploration of cultural identity offers insights into the broader Latin American experience. Hedelves into the nuances of Colombian culture, including its traditions, customs, and the daily lives of its people through his employment of a range of different characters and a style that merges the realistic with the magical.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Márquez portrays the mythical village of Macondo, which serves as a microcosm of Latin American society. The use of the setting, characters, and events reflect the complexities of Colombian society within their colonial legacies, civil wars, and the continuous search for modernity. It is also central to the characters' development, as they are embedded in a cultural context that influences their destinies, and beliefs. Magical realism helps effectively explore the dominant Latin American conception of identity, which Wendy B Faris presents as one that is intrinsically tied to a blend of ancient indigenous elements and contemporary cultural aspects (Faris 33). Portrayed as fluid and dynamic, she implies it reflects both historical depth and an ongoing process of cultural hybridization and decolonization. Building on Faris' point, one can argue that Márquez's exploration of identity in the novel embraces a rich heritage of Colombian myths and history.

Dance, revelry, music and passion all come together to illustrate the greatest traditions of culture in Colombian society. "Dances and music sowed a panic of uproarious joy through the streets, with parrots painted all colours reciting Italian arias, and a hen who laid a hundred golden eggs to the sound of a tambourine" (García Márquez and Rabassa 14). Vivid descriptions like the weaving of Italian and European arias and instruments, leading to "uproarious joy" (García Márquez and Rabassa 14) and the colourful image of parrots reciting them enhance the sense of magical realism. Furthermore, it illustrates the destabilizing yet vibrant effects of cultural change on Macondo's traditional ways of life with the proliferation of globalisation, which shaped their culture identity.

In the novel, music is synonymous with celebration, and events are often inaugurated with a dance. Music is always present in the atmosphere and is woven into the fabric of Macondo itself, which is filled with music and street performers. Music also frames important events: "From then on the gentleman had a band of musicians play beside the window of Remedios the Beauty, sometimes until dawn" (García Márquez and Rabassa 99). In Macondo, music played as the food of love, intrinsically capturing the power of emotions and strength of passion in the social fabric. They "place[d] musical clocks in every house" (García Márquez and Rabassa 25) and were "synchronized with such precision that every half hour the town grew merry with the progressive chords of the same song until it reached the climax of a noontime that was as exact and unanimous as a complete waltz" (García Márquez and Rabassa 25). Not only was music very prominent as an equivalent to harmony in society, but also as a symbol for order. It stresses on the passage of time, in which music remains a constant, and history repeats itself, with each generation of the Buendía family facing similar struggles similar to their predecessors. New regimes often rise to power promising change but end up perpetuating the same patterns of violence and oppression. Through this, the futility of war and destructiveness of civil conflict and political polarization is illustrated. "José Arcadio Buendía finally got what he was looking for: he connected the mechanism of the clock to a mechanical ballerina, and the toy danced uninterruptedly to the rhythm of her own music for three days" (García Márquez and Rabassa 43). Here, Márquez portrays how the characters desperately needed to exert control over their repetitive nature of life. "There was the sound of a piano lesson just like the one that Fernanda heard during the siestas of her adolescence" (García Márquez and Rabassa 145). Even the female characters were drawn into the circular spiral of events in society, where the music was the catalyst to create the effect of repetition and a chorus-like structure.

Gene H. Bell-Villada and Marco Katz Montiel argue that the arrival of Pietro Crespi, an Italian musician, with the pianola and piano rolls, and his subsequent opening of a musical instruments store, symbolize the infusion of European culture into Macondo (Bell-Villada and Katz Montiel 416). While this argument

clearly aligns with the integration of European influence in Columbia and also the broader shift towards modernization and globalization, music is also used to show its significance in increasing wealth and social prestige and how they are crucial markers of success and respectability. Additionally, they present that this is also apparent in “cultural contact zones” (Faris 41), referring to situations where cultures meet with each other, leading to the hybridization of cultural elements and the creation of new identities. In the context of colonization, Rebeca, an orphan from the town of Manaure and adopted daughter of the second generation, introduces new cultural elements to the community, such as her habit of eating earth (geophagy), and local culture. This integration defies the homogeneity of the community and illustrates how cultural diversity can challenge the dominant colonial narratives. and contribute to the formation of a more pluralistic and inclusive identity. This is notable because vallenato as a genre has “remain[ed] and [now is] progress[ing]” (Faris 35) as it has been influenced by European and African cultures. Even Columbia, in a postcolonial world, aligns with the idea that there are different cultural zones in the novel. Vallenato for instance has indigenous percussion rhythms, but include elements of Spanish lyrics, European influences and German technology (Bell-Villada and Katz Montiel 415).

Drawing from Ana Maria Ochoa argument that the genre's rise and folklorization of vallenato helped to preserve traditional elements (Ochoa), the novel lends itself to an exploration of post-colonial themes, especially in the context of Colombia. Márquez's use of musical motifs, such as vallenato serves as a symbol of cultural identity and resistance against colonial influences. For instance, the fiestas and gatherings highlight how cultural practices are passed down through generations, and during periods of political upheaval, the characters often turn to music for solace, highlighting its role in sustaining morale and a sense of identity. The music and cultural festivities are juxtaposed with the political and social upheavals experienced by the characters like the recurring dances in the midst of the town's turbulent history marked by civil wars and foreign exploitation. This contrast highlights the resilience of local culture and its role in fostering a communal identity amidst external domination and internal strife.

Márquez conveys a spirit of decolonization by providing a space for the expression of hybrid identities and a rejection of Eurocentric narratives. By celebrating local sounds and stories, Márquez challenges the colonial imposition and affirms a uniquely Latin American identity. This is evident in how his characters surround themselves with music as vital expressions of life and historical continuity. Wendy B. Faris argues that “bringing paradigms of Latin American and world history there and playing with them in a nonempirical way, can be seen to decentre the Eurocentric colonial world” (Faris 43). While Márquez portrayed the military conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties, the expansion of the railways to connect colonial settlements, and the hegemony of the American Fruit Company over Colombian produce to echo the most critical developments of the Colombian nation, the music which interspersed the novel reiterated the repetitive destruction of civil wars.

To conclude, this article has attempted to ‘harmonize the past’ by unpacking the multiple layers of music present in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It highlights how Márquez integrates vallenato music not merely as a cultural framework, but also as an agent in the storytelling process to reflect the lives of his characters. It reveals how the novel is like a song itself, incorporating the characteristics and tropes of the musical genre.

The analysis builds on the work of scholars like Gene H. Bell-Villada, Marco Katz Montiel, and Ana Maria Ochoa, who recognize Márquez's strategic use of music as a cultural and political symbol. However, this article extends these discussions by illustrating how Márquez's musical references do more than depict cultural identity: they actively participate in the narrative structure and thematic development of the novel. It suggests that the universal theme of music as a tool for preserving history, extends the influence of the novel beyond Colombian borders to a more global context. This underscores the universal relevance of Márquez's work, suggesting that the novel's themes are not confined to Latin America but resonate with broader struggles for cultural identity. To return to the quote that opened the article, Márquez's narrative itself mirrors the accordion's folds—expanding and contracting through generations, enveloping the echoes of Colombia's past within each note played. This study demonstrates that he told his story like a song—the “happiest way”⁸ to tell a story.

⁸ “The Colombian Folk Songs That Influenced Gabriel García Márquez's “Magical Realism””. *GBH*, 5 May 2016, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/2016-05-05/the-colombian-folk-songs-that-influenced-gabriel-garcia-marquezs-magical-realism>.

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