

One Hundred Years of Solitude: Linear and Circular Time

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Cien Anos de Soledad Style in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude is closely linked to myth. Marquez chooses magic realism over the literal, thereby placing the novel's emphasis on the surreal. To complement this style, time in One Hundred Years of Solitude is also mythical, simultaneously incorporating circular and linear structure (McMurray 76).

Most novels are structured linearly. Events occur chronologically, and one can map the novel's exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. One Hundred Years of Solitude is also linear in its broad outlines (Bell-Villida 98). The plot of the novel is simple: [Jose](#) Arcadio Buendia marries his cousin Ursula, they found Macondo, the family grows, declines, and is eventually blown off the face of the earth by a hurricane. There is a beginning, and time moves the story to a total, apocalyptic conclusion (117).

Within this linear background, the structure of One Hundred Years of Solitude is circular

(McMurray 77). Events throughout the entire novel repeat themselves in cycles. The names Aureliano and Jose Arcadio are repeated in each generation, resulting in a total of five Jose Arcadios and 22 Aurelianos. The men's personalities also seem to be repeated; the Jose Arcadios are "impulsive and enterprising," and the Aurelianos are "lucid and withdrawn" (77). The cyclical rhythm is reinforced by six instances of incest that occur over five of the family's six generations.

One of the most striking instances of cyclical structure is found in the novel's opening line: "Many years later, as he faced the [firing](#) squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant [afternoon](#) when his father took him to discover ice" (Garcia Marquez 1). Two generations later, chapter eleven opens the same way: "Years later on his death bed, Aureliano Segundo would remember the rainy afternoon in June when he went into the bedroom to meet his first son" (186). These two sentences are grammatically parallel. They open with an adverbial phrase ("Years later"), followed by the subject and then the predicate in exactly the same verb tense. The sentences begin with an event in the distant future and conclude with an allusion to a future event that, in both cases, occurs within the same chapter. As critic Barroa notes, "the words 'many years later' appear so often they become the heartbeat of the novel" (104).

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