# A JOURNEY TO MACONDO

Will outside readers ever be truly able to crawl under the skin of the author, challenging their cultural preconceptions?

*Jan Vincent Meertens*

**Abstract**

Whereas literature provides the native reader with an entertaining narrative and food for thought, it provides the non-native reader with a unique sociocultural perspective of the community in which the novel has been set. In this paper, I examine how—and to what extent—cultural differences create distance between the original literary creation and the interpretation by the outside reader.

Here I use García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as the material for analysis and explore why readers from North-western Europe and North America might lose sight of what is implied and of what is left unsaid. This article discusses the novel in the light of high- and low-context cultures, intercultural communication, face theory, politeness strategies and translation strategies.

The article shows that an unbiased interpretation by a reader with a different cultural background than the author of the novel is not possible, but that having more knowledge about the context of the novel and an awareness of one's subjectivity may help the outside reader to go beyond a mere surface-level interpretation.

Key Expressions: *One Hundred Years of Solitude, low- and high-context cultures, intercultural communication, face theory, politeness strategies, culturally-based preconceived notions, translation strategies.*

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## Introduction

Ever since its publication in 1967, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez has attracted a large, diverse, worldwide audience. The novel is recognized to be a masterpiece in Spanish literature, at the level of Cervantes' *Don Quijote*.

To comprehend García Márquez's novel, we need to understand the world in which he wrote it: a world in a state of perpetual turmoil. The revolutions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century across Latin America gave rise to dictators and tyrants. Popular rebellions resurfaced after World War II, but the world was different from the times Spanish ruling was shrugged off. The region was caught in the crossfire between capitalist and communist powers which actively supported rebel factions. The result was a continual rise and fall of military leaders, many of whom violated the human rights of their citizens and even undertook ethnic genocides against Amerindian populations. This often happened on behalf of exponents of the capitalist world, such as the United Fruit Company. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can be seen as a ciphered satiric allegory of the birth and development of Western Civilization since its very inception; of its extension to Latin America by Spain; and of its 'evil' manifestations and developments in Colombian history…' (Meckled, 1982). Nobel Prize laureate García Márquez used magical realism as a literary device to expose the areas of reality that many in Colombia have chosen to forget or ignore. He reclaims history and his use of magical realism helps to question the epistemological issues of the history we have been taught. García Márquez has created an image of his land, country, and continent, and given it a name: Macondo. And that image is generally seen to be so coherent, so poetic and persuasive, and above all so successful, that it has become a collective identity. It is an image of Latin America in which the inhabitants of this vast and diverse continent recognize each other, with inhabitants identifying as the descendants of the lineage of the Buendía and the sons of Macondo.

This article provides a discussion of the limitations facing the reader who is not a native or resident of Northern Colombia, the 'outside reader' to grasp the full context of the novel. I have analysed the novel in the tradition of historical and comparative philology and have reviewed and included many articles and studies written about the author and the book. By working along the divides of high- and low-context communication, we will be better able to understand the author's and reader's perspective(s) and subjectivity. I will try to illustrate the broad context within which the novel was written as well as which cultural, epistemological, and linguistic barriers the outside reader will face when interpreting the story of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

We will discuss the specific regional context of the novel: Northern Colombia, with its indigenous, African, and Spanish influences as well as García Márquez's childhood, education, early career, and the influences under which he developed as an author and under which the highly contextual narrative of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was conceived. I will then review how not only the lack of historical and local knowledge but also the lack of cultural and linguistic proximity separates the outside reader from the mind of the creator of Macondo.

The questions at hand are whether an outside reader will ever truly be able to crawl under the skin of the author, let alone the characters in the novel, thereby challenging their culturally-based preconceived notions? Whether native Spanish speakers from other regions and non-native Spanish speakers can read the original version and gain the same contextual information as people from Northern Colombia? And, whether people reading in translation being from a high-context or a low-context culture, will gain the same contextual information as people from Northern Colombia or will they be limited to interpret the novel through the translator's and their cultural lens and enjoy the journey to Macondo if only with a tourist gaze?

## High-context Culture

Communication is a process that involves numerous steps widely researched and described in academic literature. Written communication, including storytelling, is one of many forms of delivering information. The storyteller creates an idea of what he or she wants to share and transforms his or her thoughts into words that will transmit the meaning. The reader converts the information into his or her 'own' meaning. This decoding is subject to subjectivity. We read things as we are[1], driven by core cultural values, our answers to basic social dilemmas. Scholars including Benedict (1959), Mead (1962), Inkeles and Levinson developed the conviction that all societies, modern or traditional, face basic social dilemmas; only the answers to the dilemmas differ. Two of these predicaments have been widely seen as the most influential on the style of communication: the dilemmas of how to deal with authority and how to deal with the relationship between the individual and society. These two dilemmas can be linked to two contrasting communication styles introduced by anthropologist Edward Hall in his book 'Beyond Culture' (1976). He distinguished the 'high-context' style and the 'low-context' style. Hall argued that some cultures prefer communication through inference and implied ideas (high-context), while other cultures entertain more explicit, low-context, communication. Hall differentiates entire cultures along this dimension of communication, from high- to low-context. Hofstede (2010) argues that one driver of high-context communication is collectivism. In other words: high-context communication is preferred in 'societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into, strong cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty' (Hofstede, 2010 p92). Another generally accepted dimension of high-context communication is high power distance, defined by Hofstede (2010) as: 'less powerful members of society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Low-context communication, in contrast, is preferred in more egalitarian societies, with a lower degree of power distance'. (Meertens, 2017). In these societies, people tend to have many connections, but each connection serves a specific purpose and lasts a shorter duration of time. Rules of interaction will vary more in a low-context situation. Expectations of behaviour will be spelled out more explicitly with less inference required on the part of the listener.

It should be noted that other cultural dimensions have an impact on the way a community is developed and how people communicate with each other. Overlapping or contrasting gender roles will impact status, solidarity, and many more aspects of social cohesion and communication. Uncertainty avoidance, the lack of tolerance for ambiguity, will have an impact on, for instance, anxiety, rules, and style of thinking. Low-context communicators tend to, based on the belief that there is always objective truth, emphasize logic and rationality. This allows for an inductive and linear, monochronic, process of discovery. High-context communication will contemplate an issue with circular logic, polychronic and deductive thinking, accepting that there may be more than just one single truth. (Würtz, 2006; Hofstede 2010). In high-context cultures, therefore, the intimate relationships, well-structured social hierarchy, and social norms serve as a broad context in which interpersonal communication takes place. Most communication relies on the physical context or is presented non-verbally, and less information is contained in the verbal part of the message such as in words, sentences, and grammar (Hall, 1976).

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[1] Paraphrased of Anaïs Nin 1961, Seduction of the Minotaur, Page 124, The Swallow Press, Chicago, Illinois.

Putting cultures on the continuum between Hall's high-context and low-context provides a useful framework for our discussion. Anglo-Saxon and North-western European cultures reflect a preference for low-context communication (Gudykunst et al 1987). What you hear is what you get. Latin American, Asian, and African cultures generally favour high-context communication (Hofstede, 2010). Members of these societies are perceived by low-context communicators as more introverted and indirect, and often more difficult to 'read'. Latin and Eastern European and the more modern urban societies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America prefer a communication style that holds the middle between high-context and low-context, depending on the relationships between interlocutors and the background against which the communication takes place. Colombia, in particular rural 20th century Colombia, can be regarded as high-context. Its culture is accepted to fit the high-power distance and collectivistic traits[2]. The mix of indigenous, African, and Spanish heritage reinforces the need for intricate, highly contextualized communication patterns.

It is within this complexity of divergent cultures that García Márquez and the reader of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* interact with each other. Readers from low-context cultures can be expected to have more mental distance to the novel than those from high-context cultures, even if they have knowledge of the official history and awareness of the subhistorical 'history' as described by Howe (2001).

## Subjectivity

Three insights of cultural philosophy are important in order to relate to and understand somebody from a different culture. First: our ways of being, our ideas, and our convictions are not universal nor transhistorical. Second, our thinking is based on several fundamental propositions; core values that influence our worldview and the way we act. Third, the subject, the I, is part of and a product of an environment, a tradition, and a variety of interactions with other beings. Therefore, approaching reality from a completely neutral or objective point of view is impossible (Gadamer, 1960).

Heidegger describes the process of understanding a text hermeneutically. In everyday life, we are not interested in an objective understanding of our situation but interpret it through the larger cultural-historical context of which we are part. It is therefore not a matter of freeing ourselves from this circular structure of interpreting our situation but accepting this circular structure of existence in the right way (Heidegger, 1971). Gadamer says that our core beliefs function as prejudices with which we face the world. Because the hermeneutic experience has a circular structure, our interpretation of a work of art tells us something about ourselves. Understanding something is always a form of understanding oneself. In our explanation of the world, we always take ourselves and our historically determined context with us. An unbiased interpretation is therefore not possible. The quality of an interpretation is determined by the extent to which one knows how to make the guiding prejudices explicit and dares to put them at risk (d'Ansembourg, 2017).

## One Hundred Years of Solitude

Art is one aspect of culture and the creative expression of one's experiences, emotions, and other qualities. Works of art created by a society are a product of the culture that prevails within that community. Art and culture are interlinked.

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[2] Based on Hofstede and World Value System data.

In this article, we focus on the novel in the context of culture, the ensemble of social forms, material traits, customary beliefs, and other human phenomena that cannot be directly attributed to a genetic inheritance of a religious, racial, or social group. Examples of cultural features that can be found in literature are proverbs; idioms; formulaic expressions; social structures; roles and relationships; customs; rituals; traditions; festivals; beliefs; values; superstitions; taboos; metaphorical and connotative meanings and humour.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is full of words, references, behaviors, and situations that cause emotions in the reader and touch upon his value orientations. Emotions will range from 'understanding' to 'bewilderment', from 'acceptance' to 'rejection', and from 'joy' to 'repulsion'. Some sources of these emotions can cause opposite emotional reactions, depending on the larger cultural-historical context of which the reader is part. Readers will feel different emotions when interpreting climatic conditions in the novel. 'Summer' will evoke sentiments of joy and comfort in the many readers living in North America and Europe. Macondo, however, has a tropical climate with summers of smouldering heat and humidity. With 'winter' (*invierno*) locals refer to the sparse but heavy rains that wash away the heat and dust, albeit for just a few hours. These rains, these 'winters', are cherished by the locals.

The novel has political, historic, institutional, and economic references which, in the context of the target culture, may not be as they seem to be to an outside reader. Any reader *of One Hundred Years of Solitude* will benefit from being aware that the official account of the history of the country is not that of those who lived it and that the author provides a glimpse through the eyes of the Buendías. Irving Howe describes this historical context as follows: 'García Márquez wishes to capture all that gradually slips out of memory and can perhaps be regained only through myth: he wishes to preserve the subhistorical "history" of his people as they try to preserve themselves in the midst of an endless civil war…… what gives this novel its quotient of ferocity is the repeated intrusion of the sterile official history, the often ridiculous politics and civil wars….., juxtaposed to the fertile subhistorical myth, as a sort of comic transcendence…' (Howe, 2001).

The novel is permeated with the colonial history of Northern Colombia and Latin America in general. The colonialization of what today is been referred to as Latin America resulted in the blending of three distinct worlds: the native American, the European, and the African. Native American culture became permeated with many different cultures, languages, and spiritualities from the other two worlds, with the African heritage occupying the least prominent place. During the colonization process, often understood to be the encounter between two worlds, African elements were denied and erased. Exoticizing and degrading these representations was rooted in slavery and the forms of racial classification and hierarchy that were created in the 15th and 16th centuries by Spain and Portugal and reworked by Northern Europeans thereafter (Bush, B. et al, 2018). All civilizations have a tendency towards domination, and the stronger the civilization, the more clearly this tendency will appear. 'The cause of the exceptional brutality and cruelty that typified whites was not only the lust for gold and slaves that consumed their minds and blinded the ruling elites of Europe, but also the incredibly low standards of culture and morals among those sent out as the vanguard for contact with Others. …….. is bound to cast a sad shadow over our relationship with the Others, to shape our common views about them, and to fix stereotypes, prejudices, and phobias in our minds that sometimes still appear in one form or another to this day.' (Kapuscinski, 2008). García Márquez, descendent of the Spaniards, was deeply inspired by the Wayuu, an ethnic group of the arid Guajira Peninsula (Saldívar, 1998). The group is known to have never subjugated to the Spanish explorers, leaving the two groups in a permanent state of war. The process of evangelization of these, what the Governor described as 'barbarians, horse thieves,

worthy of death, without God, without law and without a king', took until 1942 when Christmas was celebrated by the Wayuu for the first time. The Wayuu have long protected their traditional community, keeping distance from the mimetic internalization of the colonial state. However, the colonial state is at the same time the symbol and the reality of a foreign culture that is injected into the indigenous tradition.

With the import of African slaves, the region became infused with yet another culture: the West African tradition. A tradition based on the premise that the community is more important than the individual. The status of 'person' is something you acquire, not something that you owe purely to the fact that you are a human being. Central to this tradition is the circularity of time, a prevalent feature in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Society is not just made up of the living, who reside in the visible world and travel there. The living dead and the not yet born are also part of society. They live in an invisible world. It is not behind our backs as a horizon for the deceased or as a frightening prospect, but this life sphere of invisible spirits regularly appears in the visible world. A person from four generations ago does keep his identity as an ancestor, but he is absorbed into the community of collective immortality. Within the network of the family or the relationships in the community, the individual experiences himself and is experienced by the community. This is the cultural basis of the principle of interdependence between individual and community and of the principle of sharing, mutual care, and compassion for the other, which are characteristic of most indigenous communities (Ramose, 2017). Another African and aboriginal cultural trait is animism, which describes the most common, foundational thread of indigenous belief systems. Animism is a particular sensibility and way of relating to various beings in the world. It involves the belief that objects such as stones or trees or rivers embody spirits: the objects are themselves the physical and material manifestations of the gods and spirits. We see the influence of animism in magical realism.

Aside from the indigenes and slaves, settlers from other regions in Colombia have also reached the Northern Lands of the country to work on plantations and in mines. The settlers were often 'mulatto's' and 'mestizos', people of mixed ancestry with white, black, and indigenous backgrounds.

These aboriginal and disparate cultures have become deeply connected and stories like that of Macondo provide an epistemological paradigm of their common past and destiny.

### The author: people, language, and places

García Márquez was influenced by the people and books surrounding him from childhood onwards (Saldívar, 1998). People of diverse ancestry, political worldviews, and artistry; books by authors from Western, classical, and Latin American traditions. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* bears the characteristics of all of these influences. He lived off and on in hot and temperamental coastal Colombia where he had a chance to flourish and become a *mamagallista*, a prankster; as well as in a formal Bogotá. His travels brought him under influence of many literary and political trends. In Cuba, it was the Vanguardia movement known for its surrealism, its embracing of heritage as well as political ideology. He became friends with Fidel Castro. Paris provided him with the benefit of a new perspective of his birth ground. '*The most important thing that Paris gave me was a perspective on Latin America. It taught me the differences between Latin America and Europe and among the Latin American countries themselves through the Latins I met there.*'

In his teens, García Márquez read the entire oeuvre of Sophocles (his closest and constant master) with the same fascination with which he had read 'One Thousand and One Nights' at

the age of nine and, later, the works of Kafka, Woolf, Faulkner, Hemingway, and Melville. García Márquez was fascinated by Faulkner and his experimental style which included meticulous attention to diction and cadence. Faulkner composed his often highly emotional, subtle, cerebral, complex, and sometimes Gothic or grotesque stories of a wide variety of characters including former slaves and their descendants, poor agrarian or working-class, white, Southerners, and Southern aristocrats. Hemingways' *The Old Man and the Sea* caused a sensation with García Márquez. The story counterbalanced Faulkner's enormous influence on him. "*Faulkner is a writer who has had much to do with my soul, but Hemingway is the one who had the most to do with my craft- not simply for his books, but for his astounding knowledge of the aspect of craftsmanship in the science of writing.*"

The film '*Ladri di biciclette*' (Bicycle Thieves) by Vittorio's De Sica made a huge impression on him. That film brought him under the influence of Italian neo-realism, especially in terms of the aspect of the transcendent human, which would form an essential element of his storytelling world.

Writing articles as a young journalist was the laboratory for the contemplation and demarcation of his literary themes of love and death, loneliness and homesickness, the power in the solitude of power, the primordial times, the circularity and inertia of time, the world as an all-encompassing village, with the all-defining drama of everyday life at the center of it all. *'Ultimately literature is nothing but carpentry. With both you are working with reality, a material just as hard as wood.'*

## Macondo: The breeding ground

All these people and places offered García Márquez stories, life experiences, and friendships that contributed to his growth as an author. But the essential breeding ground for his work was the history of Aracataca and his miraculous childhood. In light of the work of Faulkner and Virginia Woolf: his birthplace with the jasmine and haunting spirits and all the characters he lived with. With the lands surrounding the town, colonized by the United Fruit Company to cultivate bananas.

In the first ten years of his life, García Márquez lived with his maternal grandparents of Spanish descent. He eventually moved back with his father and after returning from a physically and metaphorically cold episode in Bogotá he faced the dangerous deception of nostalgia. However, the colonel's[3] grandson managed to escape the trap of homesickness in a way that was poetic by creating a strong, seductive, autonomous world, in which he recalled the happy moments of his childhood alongside his grandfather and was able to preserve them unaffected by time. He reconnected with Caribbean culture and the ghost images of his childhood. He immersed in the warmth of the *vaina*, the day-to-day concerns of life. With the highly lyrical and expressive *vallenatos*, folk songs of Coastal Colombia blending African, European, and indigenous rhythms in the background. But he went further and also recalled the moments when he had been deeply unhappy, moments when he thought he was dying of fear: the nights cast with his grandmother's death. Only in the world he created in the image and likeness of the world he did achieve what he craved as a child: crossing the line to the world of the constantly wandering spirits around the house, reconciling with them. This state of soul, more than a state of mind, was the real place from which he had left and where he tried to return and to appropriate it in a poetic way.

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[3] García's maternal grandfather

The stories of his grandfather, the stories of the traditions of the Caribbean coast and Aracataca, and later the pages of national history, brought García Márquez, strengthened by the Bible, Sophocles, Defoe, and Camus, to mind that his people and his country had been hounded for centuries by many plagues and disasters, such as wars, *La Violencia*[4]The plundering of national resources, social and economic marginalization, floods, locusts, political scams, cultural rivalries, and schizophrenia. The country was torn apart by violence, the special form of political enterprise in Colombia: not as a way of living together and leading together, but as a permanent medieval epidemic. The reconnection with his roots was a crucial moment in his life because his literary career would have been very different if he had not returned in time and did not sense that creative power comes from the dark imagination of the people and that literature is born out of the fusion of the writer's talent and his home environment and its anonymous tradition (Saldívar, 1998).

It all fell together, in Mexico: *'One day, as we were heading to Acapulco with Mercedes and the kids, I was driving my Opel, thinking obsessively on One Hundred Years of Solitude when suddenly I had a revelation: I should tell the story precisely the way my grandmother used to tell hers, beginning with that afternoon when a kid is taken by his father to discover ice.'* (E. García Márquez 2001). A story influenced by indigenous people, descendants of African slaves and colonists, *vallenatos*, Western philosophers and authors, and, above all, a grandfather and a grandmother who lived their *vaina* in a small, hot, and humid Caribbean town.

### Magical realism

García Márquez attempts to rewrite the recorded history of Colombia by taking into account aspects of life that were ignored such as genocide, superstition, and personal sense of drama. He is known for a magical blend of mystery and reality, *magical realism,* a term coined in 1925 by Franz Roh, a German art critic, to refer to how post-expressionist painting revealed the astonishing and mysterious wonder of the everyday world. By telling the story of the sole survivor of a massacre, Jose Arcadio Segundo, García Márquez shows the reader that people prefer to believe a fabricated version of history rather than face the truth of the gruesome event. He uses magical elements to illustrate emotions and experiences that are too extreme for words. When José Arcadio Buendía dies it rains yellow flowers. Gypsy artist Melquiades arrives in Macondo with two "magnetized ingots" with which he performs "magical" feats.

'Macondo' is known to originate from mystical Eastern Central Africa, from the centuries-old language of the Bantus, spoken by many of the slaves that were put to work in Colombia. "*Likondo*" and "*makondo*" (plural) mean "banana" in many Bantu languages. Makondo can cure illnesses and is also the preferred food of the devil. To García Márquez, the name Macondo, with its deep and enigmatic sound, captures the mythical space he had devised from Aracataca and his youth: *'Macondo is not a place but a state of mind allowing one to see what one wants to see and see it how one likes to see it.'*

Macondo seems to embody the hall of mirrors of its founding vision: it doesn't create anything of its own, and therefore it can't influence the outside world or even sustain itself without the ideas of others. Though history is often depicted as constant forward progress, García Márquez makes the point in this novel that many of the events of history repeat themselves or regress instead of constantly improving. This shows that progress is an illusion and that all civilizations are destined to eventually fall (Jemc, 2018). He emphasizes that *'no single line in my books which has not originated in a real fact'* (García Márquez, 1980). *'I was born and grew up*

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[4] A political feud between Liberals and Conservatives with 200.000 persons dead (1946 – 1964).

*in the Caribbean. I know it country by country and island by island, and maybe this is the origin of my frustration that it has not ever occurred to me or has it been more amazing than reality itself. The problem is that the Caribbean reality resembles the wildest imagination.'*

## Circularity of Time

Characters in the novel seem to be trapped in the circularity of time, leaving the reader gradually unsure about which generation or interval s/he is reading. This is particularly unsettling to readers from low-context cultures who experience time as a given, as an empty space that needs to be filled. In rural, high-context, cultures like that in Macondo, people make time and are not made by time. Therefore, it is both natural and logical to live the time. *Si Dios quiere* or *ojalá*, let's hope so… The living make speech and knowledge of being possible. But they live with the beings who have left the world of the living and with those who have yet to be born. Birth and death are experienced and recognized as rites of passage.

Passages in the novel can awaken ancestral echoes in the subconscious of the reader. Úrsula plans a dance to inaugurate the newly renovated house, ordering a pianola to provide the music. The family is awed by the music of the magical piano and José Arcadio Buendía tries to take a picture of the ghost playing. *'…the stubborn descendants of the twenty-one intrepid people who plowed through the mountains in search of the sea to the west avoided the reefs of the melodic mixup and the dancing went until dawn* (García Márquez, 2006). Slowly, the soul seems to be freed from the shared passion that brought these people together tonight. It is the Duende, the magical connection with the spirit of the ancestors, from the indigenous, the West Africans, and the Spaniards. The movement, the sound, the scream, the tear, it all comes together in the Duende, in centuries of positive energy. Duende comes from the word Duen de Casa, owner of the house, and refers to the spirit of the house. It is the spirit of the group and therefore the deepest core of culture. The Duende doesn't just let herself get caught, let alone change. She only shows herself when aroused. And when she's there, the soul of culture shows itself, in its full glory (Meertens, 2017).

In the novel, there are hundreds of examples of this fresh, light, and precise style projecting a strong and unequivocal image in the mind of the reader, full of metaphors that light up the story.

Not only are the characters haunted by their own decisions but also by those made by their ancestors. Events blur the distinction between past, present, and future, leaving the protagonists of the present in a state of fatalism, of resignation. Their fate, they believe, is predestined. García Márquez ties family names to temperament and ability, suggesting a person's destiny is sealed at birth with no way to escape it. Male family members named Aureliano are solitary and studious and usually gifted with some psychic ability. Those named José Arcadio are strong but marked with a tragic fate. García Márquez confuses the by then predisposed reader by having twin brothers Aureliano Segundo and Jose Arcadio Segundo follow the paths of opposite names. The women try to break this cycle of naming. The men, however, insist on paying tribute to their ancestors by continuing the name cycle, dooming the newborns to the same fate they suffered. The plague that descends on Macondo exacerbates the time disorientation, with its population suffering from insomnia and consequently a collective obliviousness, a permanent state of an eternal present. Any attempt to escape the past is suppressed by a blinding nostalgia for childhood in Macondo. Blinding, as it takes away the sight of a failing city, which Macondo truly is.  Only in the last pages of the novel, the reader discovers that in Macondo, there are two kinds of time: linear and cyclical.

Both have always existed simultaneously, and, even as the Buendías move forward along the straight line of time, they are also returning to the beginning of time in an ever-shrinking spiral. The circularity of time is a fact of life to many high-context readers and a source of chaos for the low-context reader. García Márquez had chosen not to include a family tree in the book, probably to set up the mental trap of circularity of time. English translator Gregory Rabassa (1970) felt compelled to compensate for this loss of control by including the tree: '*something to help readers keep all the characters straight*'. This was somewhat patronizing towards the English language readership, taking away the chance of getting confused and taking away the benefit of experiencing the emotional impact of puzzlement and loss of linear chronology.

## Social Proprietary

Social propriety which ends in solitude and even death is the central theme of the novel. Personal happiness will flourish outside rigid social norms. Rather than being allowed to follow one's passions, the characters of the Buendía family do what is expected of them, resulting in loneliness or unfulfilling relationships. These personal aspirations clash with societal expectations, in particular for women in small-minded high society. The happiness and freedom which are enjoyed in an interracial affair and old-aged, rekindled love are rejected because of racist believes and prejudices about elderly sex ('obscene'). Ambition, curiosity, and eccentricity, for instance, make José Arcadio, the patriarch of the family, an outcast suffering from community-imposed solitude. He is tied to a tree and starts speaking nonsense, which is later uncovered by a priest to be Latin. In spite of being invited back in José Arcadio prefers, having mentally escaped from the grip of expectations, the now comfort of his solitude. Another example is Meme's passionate affair with Mauricio. They have an illegitimate child which the grandmother insists should be kept a secret. The social shame leads to Mauricio's death and destroys Meme's life. The secrecy of that bloodline finally results in a child with the tail of a pig.

Social expectations affect personal space. The interaction between the Buendías is ongoing and intense. People perceive social and personal space in different ways. Hall postulates that the distance between individuals is related to the preference each culture has for sensory inputs used (Hall, 1976). For a high-context reader, limited personal space may be natural but for a low-context reader, this might cause irritation, fatigue, and a sense of rejection. Social norms tend to be more rigid in high-context cultures than in low-context cultures. High context readers will likely feel more compassion for the family members. They will be better able to feel the dilemma of staying loyal to the family or following personal aspirations at the, perhaps imaginary, risk of expulsion. Low context readers may feel suffocation and will be inclined to encourage the individual to 'just' follow his or her dream and leave, unaware of the prize the rebel probably pays: not only exclusion but also loss of belonging.

Characters in the novel are in a constant balancing act between belonging and independence and this involves using politeness strategies to avoid loss of face. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes (Goffman 1955). While it is not a necessity for one to strive to gain face, losing face is a serious matter which will, in varying degrees, affect one's ability to function effectively in society, in particular in collectivist cultures. 'Facework' strategies are required during social interaction to maintain each other's face and avoid or mitigate affront, or face-threatening acts (FTA). The FTA can be verbal, paraverbal or non-verbal. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is the effort to redress these affronts. The relative nature of politeness is often related to differences in class, age group, distance, power, and ranking (Trudgill, 1983).

García Márquez applies numerous facework strategies in the book. Low-context readers' awareness of these politeness strategies will deepen their understanding of the interpersonal relationships in the novel. There are no common criteria of politeness across cultures. Gumperz (1970) illustrates how speech functions like complimenting differ from society to society. In low-context cultures, compliments and acceptance are brief and concise whereas in high-context cultures complimenting is often a prolonged activity involving several exchanges of praise and ritual denials. In cases of conflict, members from individualist cultures often prefer to use negative politeness strategies by showing deference, while members from collectivist cultures would rather use positive politeness strategies, highlighting friendliness (Morisaki and Gudykunst, 1994).

Understanding face-threatening acts and ensuing politeness strategies is perhaps the most complex and sensitive aspect of intercultural communication. However well the author describes the circumstances, however precise the translator translates the work, there will always be a moment of the reader's preconceived notions, touching and sometimes misdirecting the reader's emotions. It is in the language and the translation that we find new linguistic layers of bias, potentially pushing the outside reader further away from the mind of the author.


## Language and translation - Spanish

One Hundred Years of Solitude was originally written in the Spanish of García Márquez. He was keenly aware of the diversity within the Spanish Language, being quoted as saying that *'we will understand each other, even in Spanish'.*

There are important phonological, grammatical, and lexical variations in the spoken Spanish of the various Spanish-speaking regions. When Latin America was colonialized, the Spanish brought their Peninsular Spanish (*Castellano*) along. Once there the imported *Castellano* evolutionized into a local Spanish. *Castellano* can be considered to be a semi-high-context language that avoids repetitions of the same word for the sake of elegance and therefore uses synonyms or pronouns at the direct expense of preciseness and clarity (Usunier, 1995). Latin American Spanish has been injected with indigenous and African influences and can be regarded as a higher context language. This distinction becomes evident in grammatical, phonetical, and lexical differences between Castellano and Latin American Spanish and across Latin American dialects. There is a wide variety of Spanish dialects, taking into account characteristic factors of the different areas such as their political and cultural ties, their geographical proximity, or their possible contact with any indigenous language. Ureña combines the Antilles, coast, and plains of Venezuela and northern Colombia, with the indigenous language Lucayo (Ureña; Ghiano, 1977).

Differences in the Spanish lexicon are abundant. A typical aspect of Latin American Spanish is the socio-cultural connotations of *voseo*. A Latin American variation of addressing people from the inner circle is the use of '*ustedes*' instead of '*vosotros*'. In Spain, '*ustedes*' is used in a more formal and *vosotros* in a more informal context. In Colombia, however, *ustedes* is used very often, irrespective of the context. '*Usted*' is also used in the case of social distance and seniority. When close friends and couples use the more intimate '*tú*' for each other, they may fall back to '*usted*' when in disagreement or in directive. This wide range of words to address a group or an individual is typical of a high-context culture. Low context speakers have much less to work with. The English word 'you' covers many variations of 'usted and tú' as do the words 'jij' and 'u' in the Dutch language. High context users of the English language such as

Nigerians and Indians, have found their own ways of addressing people with more deference than is possible with solely the word 'you'. (Meertens, 2017).

Other examples of lexical differences are the Latin American words *concreto, liviano, or canguil*, which are unknown or little known on the European continent *(hormigón, ligero, palomitas de maíz)*. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* provides many examples of Americanisms, Spanish words and expressions with their origins in America, often from indigenous languages, and their use is usually unique to the continent. An outside Spanish-speaking reader unfamiliar with these words needs to make a translation, find a more generic word used in both continents or find a description of its meaning when using the original. *Chicharron* (Pork with portions of bacon attached, chopped into pieces small and fried on its own grease) in *'[...] la preciosa herencia de Úrsula quedó reducida a un chicharron carbonizado que no pudo ser desprendido del fondo del caldero[...]'* can be translated in *morros fritos*. Parranda (Party of a group, in particular at night, with drinks) in *'Aureliano Segundo no desperdició la ocasión de festejar a los primos con una estruendosa parranda de champaña y acordeón.'* can be adapted in the more generic *'fiesta'*. Other words, exotisms, and indigenisms such as *hamaca* (seat) or *yuca* are those words that refer to realities unique to indigenous areas or Latin America and are unknown or little known in Spain as they do not have a lexical equivalent in *Castellano*. These cannot be translated and need a footnote or to be looked up, putting the outside Spanish reader slightly at a distance from the original work.

Perhaps most importantly, there are words that exist on both continents but take on a different meaning, sometimes contrasting or with varying connotations, even between regions on the continent. An example is the word *'regalar'* which in Spain means to give in the sense of a gift. In Colombia, however, it is a friendly, educated, way of asking somebody to pass on something, also if it is clear that it needs to be paid for. *'Me regala un tinto?'* Can I have a coffee? Adding to the confusion, as this word means red wine in Spain and coffee in Latin America. *'Coger'* means 'take' in Spain as in 'take the bus'. However, in Latin America, the word refers to sexual intercourse.

There are also phonetic differences. In the Caribbean 's' is generally pronounced muffled, it is a 'deaf s'. When reading the dialogues between the *costeños*, the coastal folks in Spanish, the mental sound of the 'deaf s' provides additional context and flavour to the conversation.

García Márquez describes his characters in their own language. Melguíades for instance, is characterized by poetic and scientific language '[wearing] a velvet waistcoat patinated with verdigris of the centuries' and Melguíades speaks in similar terms: 'Things have their own life, it is a matter of awakening their spirit'. Ursula, on the other hand, uses down-to-earth, colloquial language and is described in the same words. José Arcadio Buendía, the pater familias, is characterized by plain, occasionally vulgar, language, which he uses in speech as well. 'Damn! Macondo is surrounded by water everywhere.'In this way, García Márquez does not maintain an established narrative style, hopping from poetic, to imaginary, to colloquial, to humoristic, to solemn, and back to poetic.

In an interview in Libre in 1972, García Márquez says that spoken Spanish *'walks down the street, while written Spanish is held prison for several centuries by the language police of the Academia de Lengua'*. To try to set the written language free is what writers in Spanish need to strive for, and what García Márquez has been doing, decolonizing the language. Employing a Creolized language, highlighting overlapping language usages and code-switching. The meaning of old words is changed, and new words are brought into being. 'Neither the colonial nor the colonized cultures and languages can be presented in a "pure" form, nor can they be separated from each other.' (Bhabha, 1994)

## Language and translation – English and other languages

For the outside native Spanish reader, there are multiple linguistic barriers as we saw in the previous chapter. Outside, non-native Spanish readers, in particular those from low-context cultures, face linguistic and cultural hurdles. Readers in languages other than Spanish will have yet another barrier: the linguistic and cultural interpretation of the translator. These translators had to make a difficult choice between faithfulness to the original source text (ST) (foreignizing strategy with the possible inclusion of footnotes) or adaptation to the target language (TL) (domesticating strategy with a possible weakening of credibility of the original narrative). This dilemma has been widely discussed by anthropologists and linguists, with few denying that language and its entire structures are dependent on the cultural and historical context in which they exist. Each of us creates one's own image of the world, unlike any other. These images are not compatible and not replaceable. Sociolinguistic scholars such as Malinowski (1964) have concluded that linguistic behaviour could best be delineated and interpreted in its appropriate socio-cultural contexts. Language is a part, product, and vehicle of culture. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the relevant socio-cultural contexts of communication.

Is there a role for the author to play in facilitating the translation and perhaps participate in the process of domestication? Translator Thomas di Giovanni and the Latin American writer Jorge Luis Borges are known to have collaborated 'intimately' to make Borges's writing clearer and less ambiguous for North American readers. Di Giovanni saw one of his main tasks as explaining obscure regional references and providing historical details that Borges had omitted in writing for Argentines. This approach is criticised. When Latin American narratives are transposed to another polysystem[5], their instrumental nature loses its immediacy, and the works are decontextualized (Larsen,1995).

Aside from one instance, Bolaños (2010) could not confirm any exchange between García Márquez and his translators, not even with Gregory Rabassa (English, 1970). García Márquez craved the comfort of Spanish as he tells in an interview with The Paris Review (1981): '*Excluding great masterpieces, I'd rather read a mediocre translation than try to read something in the original language. I never feel comfortable reading in another language, because I only feel truly involved with Spanish.*'

The exception is Eliane Zagury for her Portuguese translation. Several footnotes in her translation (foreignization) correspond to terms the translator seems not to have understood at first and she has explicitly marked that she got in touch with García Márquez and he clarified the meaning to her: "*Explicação do autor à tradutora*" ("Author's explanation to the translator").

Let's look at a few examples of translation strategies for the novel. Take the last name of captain Roque Carnicero ('butcher'): '*El jefe del pelotón, …, tenía un nombre que era mucho más que una casualidad: Roque Carnicero*'. A foreignization strategy is used in French and English, keeping the original term in the translation, (e.g. 'Carnicero' in French) but its meaning explained in a footnote, or with an explanation added directly in the translated text (e.g. 'Carnicero, which meant butcher' in English). It is also possible to use a domesticating strategy where the foreign item is directly translated into the target language (e.g. 'Roque Fleischer' in German).

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[5]The theory of poly systems (Even-Zohar 1990) in which translated literature is seen as a sub-system of the receiving or target literary system.

Another illustration is Father Coronel's nickname: ".... *fue reemplazado por el padre Coronel, a quien llamaban El Cachorro,* ...". The nickname was left untranslated in the French text (foreignization): "qu'on appelé el cachorro," The footnote reads: "Petit d'une bête fauve". Rabassa translated the nickname into English: ".... was replaced by Father Coronel, whom they called "The Pup", (domestication). Meyer-Clason left the nickname in Spanish but added a hyphenated explanation: "..... wurde durch Pater Coronel mit dem Beinamen El Cachorro – junger Hund- ...... abgelöst" (foreignization).

More challenging to translator and reader is an allusion to a work by Spanish writer Zorrilla: '*El puñal del godo*' without mentioning it explicitly. If the reader does not know the actual name of Zorrilla's work, there is confusion in understanding the passage. In the German and French translations, a footnote clarifies the pejorative connotation of the word *godos,* which, in the main text, was kept in the original Spanish form to facilitate the direct link to Zorrilla's work. In the English, domesticated, translation Rabassa keeps the diffuse allusion in English in the same way as it appears in the original: "He went to the theater, where a Spanish company was putting on The Dagger of the Fox, which was really Zorrilla's play with the title changed by order of Captain Aquiles Ricardo, because the liberals called the conservatives Goths". (Bolaños, 2010)

Perhaps the most poignant example of domesticating is the translation by Rabassa of the word '*puto*'. During the events of the Banana Massacre the narrator comments that it took place in 'el puto mundo.' Puto in Spanish can be translated as 'whorish' or as 'fucking'. However, in the context of the massacre 'this fucking world' would have adequately transferred the emotional impact García Márquez meant to provoke. Rabassa chose a less harsh 'whorish' and that became his and his English readers' interpretation of that sentence within the novel, changing the meaning and impact of the word 'puto'. In a way, Rabassa became a part of the readers' understanding of the novel because he chose that interpretation of the language.

Earlier we discussed the impact of social propriety and face-threatening acts (FTA). García Márquez's characters employ positive and negative politeness with direct and indirect strategies, with redressive action. For instance, if the speaker's intention is unambiguous and direct, redressive action means that the speaker recognizes the imposition on the hearer's face and minimizes it by using negative politeness sub-strategies to counter-balance the disruptive effect of the FTA, such as apology, reluctance to impose, deference to hearer, self-abasement, etc. (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For this strategy, lexical downgraders and syntactic downgraders can be used. Lexical downgraders are politeness markers —such as the word *please*; downtoners —such as *just, simply, perhaps*, and *rather*; hedges —such as *sort of* and *kind of*; and hesitators —such as *well* and *you see*. Syntactic downgraders, have 'the ability to distance the request from reality'. Trosborg (1995) lists several syntactic downgrading strategies, including question forms, tag questions, conditional clauses, embedded clauses, modals, -ing forms, the subjunctive, and past tense forms. Especially, the subjunctive and past tense forms are widely used as downgraders in Latin American Spanish (Meertens, 2017).

The more the reader can relate to these strategies the closer s/he will be able to sense the emotional impact of the FTA on speaker and hearer.

A comparative analysis conducted by German Mira Álvarez (2014) shows how these acts in the source text (ST) are rendered in the English translation by Gregory Trabassa, the target text (TT).
This FTA in the ST is direct without redress:

> *Bueno —dijo—. Diles que vengan a ayudarme a sacar las cosas de los*
> *cajones.*
> "All right," he said. "Tell them to come help me take the things out of the
> boxes".

Nothing is done to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. The speakers normally choose to do the FTA in this way, with the direct imperative as the most common bald-on-record syntactic form both in Spanish and English, due to low horizontal and power distance or risk of loss of face, as in the following request from husband to wife, which does not entail a great sacrifice for the hearer. Both high and low-context communicators will easily relate to this style given the context and speech strategy. Trabassa did not feel compelled to adapt the translation.

There are several cases (11; Mira Álvarez, 2014) in which Trabassa did render a higher or lower degree of negative politeness.

> *Coronel —dijo entonces otro de sus oficiales—, todavía tiene tiempo de*
> *quedar bien.*
> "Colonel," another of his officers said, "there's still time for everything to
> come out right."

With this strategy, speakers make their intentions ambiguous by using indirect speech acts so as not to be held accountable for the FTA, i.e., by being too vague, by saying too little, or by saying something not clearly relevant.
This is a case where the TT is domesticated with additional downgraders by using *there* and *everything.* The ST says: "*you* still have time to come out right."

> *Uno de sus oficiales rompió entonces el silencio soporífero de la carpa. —*
> *Coronel —dijo—, háganos el favor de no ser el primero en firmar.*
> One of his officers then broke the soporific silence of the tent. "Colonel,"
> he said, "please do us the favour of not being the first to sign."

In this example TT includes one more instance of redress —the lexical downgrader *please*, making the TT exchange "more polite" than the one in the ST:
Anglosaxon readers are considered to be low-context communicators and therefore can be expected to be less inclined to redressive action than the characters of the novel. The weight of the word 'favor' in both languages might play a role, reducing the need for 'please, por favor' in Spanish. Favour in English is more task-oriented, and in Colombian Spanish more relationship-oriented.

> *Quería suplicarte el favor de mandarle estas cosas a mi mujer.*
> "I wanted to ask you the favour of sending these things to my wife."

In the ST, the speaker uses *suplicar* in his request, which means to beg, ask for with humility and submission. This humbling lexical strategy is not conveyed with the English verb *ask for*, thus making the request less polite than the original.
And:
> *Queda usted a disposición de los tribunales revolucionarios.*
> "Put yourself at the disposition of the revolutionary court."

In the ST, the directive is done through a declarative (*queda = put*), while the translation turns the act into a direct command using the imperative (*put = quede*).

Translators are instrumental in transferring the socio-cultural context of the original work. Reading the story in another language than that originally spoken by the protagonists creates estrangement from the original work. Domestication of the translation disengages the reader even further, especially if the socio-cultural context of a scene requires a particular sensitivity to cultural differences, such as politeness strategies.

## Conclusion

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* can be seen as the synthesis of the many influences under which Gabriel García Márquez developed as an author, foremost among them, the region he grew up in and returned to in different stages of his life. A region with a culture injected with indigenous, African, and colonial influences, with inhabitants of mixed descendance and with an intricate, highly contextualised, social life. Influences that came to García Márquez through the stories of his grandparents and the day-to-day life, the *vaina*, in Aracataca. The young man and aspiring author spelled out books of faraway worlds and was fascinated by the stories and narration techniques in particular. Later, as a journalist, he travelled and was exposed to life in Paris, Venezuela, Cuba, and Mexico. It was his memory of how his grandmother told her stories, however, that gave him his inspiration to share the story of Macondo and the family Buendía the way she did. In his own language, a creolized, decolonized, Spanish.

One Hundred Years of Solitude can be read at different levels of comprehension. In its most accessible form, the novel tells the history and adventures of the Buendía family, from before the establishment of the Macondo up to its destruction. It captures its history, its culture, its spirit- the essence of a Latin-American village. The novel also portrays universal themes of contemporary life: the dimensions of time, estrangement, and solitude. García Márquez generally shows that honesty and desire should take precedence over social propriety. Following social norms leads to unfulfilling relationships, shame, loneliness, and life-destroying secrecy. García Márquez uses fantasy, episodic adventures, and omniscient narration rather than more straightforward techniques to cover these themes.

In this article, we discussed potential cultural and linguistic barriers that set outside readers, not native to Northern Colombia, apart from the original work, in its purest form. They will likely need to overcome cultural and epistemological hurdles before being able to grasp the full essence of the story. Language and culture are inextricably interconnected. Language is meaningful in a context, and culture is part of the context. For a better understanding of culture, we can study literature and the opposite is also true: culture can be studied for a better understanding of literature.

We discussed culture along the divides between high-context and low-context cultures. We saw that the novel has been conceived in a high-context culture. The use of magical realism and circularity of time, partially rooted in animism, adds to the cultural intricacy of the novel, making it highly contextual. Magical reality, by nature highly contextual, is not easily understood in a low-context culture as it is not part of its belief system. Magical realism may be entertaining, but it is hardly realistic. Outside readers from a high-context culture can expect to be able to relate to the magical, social reality of the Buendía family and the people of Macondo. These readers will recognize and identify with, for instance, politeness strategies to avoid loss of face, relate to the warmth of social harmony, and to the pain of social propriety. Yet, historical aspects, linguistic differences, and cultural aspects may still keep this reader out of the context of the book. Studying and understanding decisive historical occurrences such as the Spanish

colonization, La Violencia and the labour oppression at banana plantations as well as aspects of indigenous, mulatto, and mestizo cultures will help the reader reach new levels of comprehension.

An important feature of speech, being friendly or hostile, is its cultural relativity. Languages and dialects of the same language differ in their interaction-structuring strategies. All aspects of the content and form or matter and manner of human communication are culture-specific. To draw conclusions and make generalizations based on observations of a particular language is a consequence of an ethnocentric bias that ignores the anthropological and linguistic reality that norms differ from culture to culture, language to language, and even from dialect to dialect. We discussed the cultural and linguistic filters that exist for outside readers reading the original Spanish version of the novel. Spanish has local differences in grammar, phonetics, and lexicon. Each and every one of the Spanish dialects does not do more than enrich the Spanish language and therefore it should be questioned if it is necessary to translate or adapt those Latin American texts in order for an outside Spanish reader to be able to read the text without interruption to look-up words or expressions and lose part of the information of the narrative. The work of García Márquez can in a way be regarded as an effort to decolonize the Spanish language and make Latin American Spanish more mainstream.

Outside readers who read a translation of the novel have even more cultural and linguistic filters between the author and themselves. We discussed various translation strategies, broadly ranging from foreignization to domestication. Foreignization might slow the reader down, keeping him or her out of the comfort zone but allowing more proximity to the original work. A domestication strategy may help TL readers to immediately 'grasp' the literal meaning of the original but at the expense of possibly missing the intended impact of the original words.

As we are always part of a historical context, it is not possible to ignore our prejudices (Gadamer, 2017). In understanding foreign literature (and any work of art, d' Ansembourg, 2017), one should not blindly cling to one's own prejudices and remain receptive to what is different and strange. This requires an awareness of one's own preconceived opinions and prejudices and a willingness to read the novel from a different perspective and possibly adjust one's preconceived opinion. Thus, outside readers from low-context cultures may need to adjust their expectations when reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as they will be entering a different rhythm and literary space, a world of suggestive indirection rather than dramatic action. The work is likely to remain of distant traditions in terms of theme, imagery, character, plot, or broader social and cultural concerns. A deeper, participative examination of the novel will reveal new levels of difference and similarity, and further reading can deepen one's understanding of these varied levels. New juxtapositions will open up over time as we read further and again.

It is unlikely that an outside reader, impeded by linguistic and cultural filters, will ever truly be able to crawl under the skin of the author and grasp the full context of the original novel in its purest form. The proximity to the highly contextualized story varies, with outside readers from low-context cultures, reading in translation likely to stay the most remote from the original. Awareness and management of cultural bias, translation strategies, and

historical context may draw the reader closer to Macondo's *vaina*. But the true soul of Macondo will likely stay in hiding, revealing herself only to the Duen de Casa.

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**Author:**
Jan Vincent Meertens (1959). Meertens was born in the Netherlands and went to school and university in The Netherlands, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. He lived in Colombia, Guatemala, and the United States and is currently based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Meertens has managed worldwide public-private partnerships. He is currently an author, speaker, and trainer in intercultural communication and Chairman of the Connect2Us Foundation.