PLAYBOY: We’ll be talking extensively about your work, but let’s pursue this question of literature and politics a bit further. You are fascinated by the relationship between the two subjects, aren’t you?

GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: . . . I am a Latin American, and considering all that is going on in Latin America, it would be a crime not to be interested in politics. If I came from a part of the world that didn’t have Latin America’s enormous political, economic and social problems, I could ignore politics and live, very happily, on a Greek island. However, I am, indeed, Latin American, and so the only choice I have is to be an emergency politician. (García Márquez, “Playboy Interview” 99)

This part of a conversation between García Márquez and Claudia Dreifus informs to a large extent, Márquez’s concerns about the Latin American political condition and its vital link with his literary productions.

To begin with No One and In Evil Hour, these two early novels relentlessly criticises every bit of the repressive political situation of the country, where the prospect of leading a peaceful and honourable life remains just a mere dream. “‘You should realize that you can’t eat dignity.’” (García Márquez, No One 42). When the old Colonel’s wife reminds him of the harsh reality, it also makes one realize the state of affairs of the nation where one’s right to live with dignity is also at stake. In Evil Hour has a solemn and pious start with Father Angel ringing the church bell for early morning mass. A young girl Trinidad helps him in trapping mice which has infested
the old church. Márquez’s imagery of the dead mice is at once repugnant as well as meaningful: “Trinidad pushed open the street door while the bells were ringing and went to the corner where she had set the traps for the mice. She found something that brought on repugnance and pleasure in her at the same time: a small massacre” (García Márquez, *In Evil Hour* 2). The implied rottenness and seemingly innocuous “small massacre” is just like the tip of an iceberg. The actual rottenness and depravity lies deep within. The lampoons become a cause of concern for the entire society as they are extremely subversive in nature. Threatening to expose the already known depravity within the respectable households, the lampoons bring to surface the otherwise repressed moral depravity at a personal level and political brutalities at a more social level.

Márquez’s dark humour and caustic satire exposes the corrupt system. While the lawyer’s casual reply to the colonel’s enquiries reflect the utter insensitiveness to the old man’s condition: “ ‘Just think about it; there have been seven Presidents, and each President changed his Cabinet at least ten times, and each Minister changed his staff at least a hundred times.’ ” (García Márquez, *No One* 26); in *In Evil Hour*, the Mayor’s false concern for justice and peace is deflected by the doctor’s sarcastic words. For instance, when the corrupt Mayor tells the doctor of the town to conduct an autopsy, the doctor replies:

“ ‘So we’re doing autopsies now,’ he said, and added;
‘That’s great progress, obviously.’ ” (García Márquez, *In Evil Hour* 13).

Márquez is best at obliquities. *No One* and *In Evil Hour* are set in the backdrop of *la violencia* — which is considered to be amongst the most violent
periods in Colombian political history, as Michael Wood explains: “The violence came from guerrillas, gangsters, self-defence groups, the police, the army; and some 200,000 people (the low estimate) died in it. When it was said to be over, or more or less under control, in 1962, there were still 200 civilian deaths a month” (Garcia Marquez 9). Yet, in both the novels, actual violence is hardly shown. Rather the casualness with which the people deal with the curfews, violence and censorships critically reflect on the actual lives of people in such repressive states where horror simply creeps in and where assassinations and ‘disappearances’ become mere normality, a condition when “Tyranny not only enters the tissues of everyday life, it gets to be treated as if it were itself an everyday fact” (Bell 34).

Márquez concentrates on what William Rowe calls “the corrupting penetration of power into everyday life” (263). Repressive and brutal measures become the means to maintain power over the masses. Just beneath the façade of peace and stillness lurks the fear of death, as the barber in In Evil Hour says: “‘You don’t know what it’s like,’ he said, ‘getting up every morning with the certainty that they’re going to kill you and ten years pass without their killing you.’” (García Márquez, In Evil Hour 156).

But as Foucault states: “Where there is power, there is resistance . . .” (95); despite everything, people do resist. In No One, the possibility of receiving the war pension remains vague. The possibility of the rooster either winning or losing the cockfights also remains uncertain. However, despite all impossibilities, the old colonel remains undaunted and continues the battle for honour and justice. We never know whether justice will be delivered but the fight for it continues. The colonel’s
defiance against the oppressive political forces carries forward the defiance and protest of the common Latin American man against political oppression.

Márquez’s grandfather Colonel Nicolas waited for years, hoping that someday he would receive the pension, which never happened. Waiting/ hoping — for justice, job, pension, return of ‘disappeared’ kins, was the only thing that common people could do:

Sometimes, especially in Latin America and other parts of the so-called ‘Third World’, where most people are completely powerless, you just have to wait for situations to evolve. (This is why so many of García Márquez’s novels and stories are about waiting and hoping — it is the same verb in Spanish: esperar — for things that may never come and usually don’t). (Martin, Gabriel García Márquez 163)

Yet, people did wait. Maybe therein lied the resilience of the common man. The ‘power’ of the common man lied in hoping against hope.

Solitude, solidarity, power, powerlessness — certain themes which keep recurring in Márquez’s works find their first mature treatment in No One; wherein it is “impossible to separate its central themes of waiting and hoping, weather phenomena and bodily functions (not least excreting or, in the unfortunate Colonel’s case, not excreting), politics and poverty, life and death, solitude and solidarity, fate and destiny” (Martin, Gabriel García Márquez 212).
Just as power and brutality seeped into the very fabric of everyday life, defiance too found its outlet in the courage and will of the common men. It is in the courageous act of men like the dentist in *In Evil Hour* (when he pulls out the Mayor’s rotten tooth without anesthesia) that we find instances of resistance:

The Mayor grabbed him by the wrist.

“Anesthesia”, he said.

Their eyes met for the first time.

“You people kill without anesthesia”, the dentist said softly. (García Márquez, *In Evil Hour* 58)

Márquez started his career as a journalist in *El universal* amidst severe press censorship. Any political view or protest had to be moderated. The dark days of curfews and censorship had already made an impact on his political inclinations, and his experiences of living in such a state of siege brought him to commit himself not to a particular political ideology — socialism — but also, for a few years at least, to a particular way of viewing and interpreting reality and a particular way of expressing and communicating it technically. The result would be his political reportage, and the writing of the novels *No One Writes to the Colonel* and *In Evil Hour* and the stories of *Big Mama’s Funeral*. (Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez* 169)

An excerpt from *Living to Tell the Tale* will show how public demonstrations and other such modes of political protest were suppressed. However, despite severe
censorship and brutal threats; Márquez, Zabala and the newspaper (*El universal*) continued the war:

The police had been militarized as another demonstration of the government’s severity in the political violence that was bleeding the country, though there was a certain degree of moderation on the Atlantic coast. But at the beginning of May, without reasons either good or bad, the police harassed a procession on the streets of Carmen de Bolívar, about twenty leagues from Cartagena. I had a sentimental weakness for the town, where my Aunt Mama had grown up and where my grandfather Nicolás had invented his celebrated little fish of gold. With unusual determination Maestro Zabala, who had been born in the neighbouring town of San Jacinto, gave me editorial management of the news item without regard for censorship and with all its consequences. My first unsigned article on the editorial page demanded that the government hold a thorough investigation of the aggression and punish those responsible. And it ended with a question: “What happened in Carmen de Bolívar?” Faced with official scorn, and now in open warfare with censorship, we continued repeating the question with growing energy in a daily article on the same page, prepared to make the government much more irascible than it already was. (García Márquez, *Living* 324-25)

And ironically, “Zabala’s grim joke, whenever he renewed the campaign, in the face of government denials and inertia, was to end with the words, ‘No doubt about it, in Carmen de Bolívar absolutely nothing happened’” (Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez*)
115). And yes, nothing happened in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* too, when some three thousand workers on strike were gunned down by military authorities and the dead bodies were thrown in the train bogies and eventually dumped into the ocean, and yet nobody remembered the incident. In 1948, when Zabala and Márquez repeatedly and untiringly questioned — “what happened in Carmen de Bolívar?” — there was the same situation in Macondo of *One Hundred*, that is, what happened in Macondo, and of course, as ironical as it could be, the officers replied: “Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing ever will happen” (García Márquez, *One Hundred* 316).

During the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla, in 1955 he interviewed Luis Alejandro Velasco — crowned Colombian hero, who was the only survivor among/of the eight crewmen who perished when the destroyer (naval ship) Caldas ‘supposedly’ became uncontrollable in the turbulent waves. However, Márquez’s interviews and questions and the resultant answers pointed to something which had been overlooked — an issue which was officially tried to cover up. And thus, the story of the national hero and the heroic incident was re-written (published as *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*), albeit with a twist — because the numerous enquiries and interviews with Velasco actually “revealed that the boat had not pitched and rolled in a violent storm but had sunk because it was carrying illegal merchandise which was improperly secured; and that regulation safety procedures were grossly inadequate” (Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez* 174). People who have questioned his commitment and courage need to remember that this story

put *El Espectador* in direct confrontation with the military government and undoubtedly made García Márquez still more of a *persona non
grata, a troublemaker considered an enemy of the regime. Those who routinely question his courage and commitment should certainly reflect on this period in his life. (Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez* 174)

Many years later he would produce *News of a Kidnapping*, which almost like *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*, is an example of Márquez’s dexterous matching up of political journalism and creative writing, and as Susana Cato writes, the book is also “an example of news reporting that is humanized, with flesh-and-blood protagonists, whereby García Márquez opens up — as he did in *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* — that fascinating space often denied victims by journalistic cool-headedness: that of memories” (García Márquez, “Gabo Changes Jobs” 184-5). He voiced his protest through his pen — his pen unearthed buried truths, dug out corrupt practices, questioned and challenged politically motivated massacres, and although he never directly challenged the reactionary government in 1954-5 but in report after report he took up a point of view which was implicitly subversive of official stories and thus challenged the ruling system more effectively than any of his more vocal leftist colleagues, guided always by rigorous investigation, reflection and communication of the realities of the country. All in all, it was a sustained and brilliant demonstration of the power of the story-teller’s art and of the power and central importance of the imagination even in the representation of factual material. (Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez* 174)

If we study the trajectory of his literary creations, we would notice a sharp difference (in his dealing with themes and his stories) between the works produced in
Europe (he wrote *No One* as well as *In Evil Hour* when he was in Paris and London respectively), and those which he wrote after coming back to Colombia to work for Prensa Latina in Bogotá.

The story which first shows this difference of treatment and attitude is ‘Big Mama’s Funeral’. This story marks the transition from his usually ‘realist’ mode of writing to a witty amalgamation of ‘magical’ and the ‘realist’ mode. ‘Big Mama’s Funeral’ differs very much in content and technique from his early works, for example, *No One* or the short stories written during his stay in Europe. His return to Colombia after a hiatus of more than three years was only a rude awakening for him as he realized that; while all around the world, changes were taking place — his country was still fighting the bitter battle for power. While he was in Europe and even in Venezuela; he could at least be nostalgic and even express affection for his Colombian characters, but as Martin says:

‘Big Mama’s Funeral’, however, was the product of his return to Colombia itself, not only after more than three years away but also, unmistakably, after Europe, after Venezuela, after Cuba. To read it for the first time is to feel the weight of all those different experiences bearing down one after another on his perception of the country; it is to feel all the writer’s accumulated frustration, and scorn, and anger at the country which endlessly consumed its own children and seemed as though it would never, ever change. (*Gabriel García Márquez* 254)
The following discussion by Gerald Martin about ‘Big Mama’s Funeral’ attests Márquez’s perception of the Colombian condition and this story marks the beginning of his ironical treatment of the sorry state of affairs of his country:

So the first thing to say about ‘Big Mama’s Funeral’ is that almost nothing happens in it, it is a great song and dance about nothing. It tells the story — indeed, a narrator very like Gabriel García Márquez himself tells the story — of the life and death (much more of the death than the life) of an old Colombian matriarch known as ‘Big Mama’ whose funeral is attended by all the politicians and dignitaries of Colombia and even by distinguished visitors from abroad, such as His Holiness the Pope. The story shows but does not say that Big Mama’s entire life has been spent in the middle of absolutely nowhere, that her wealth is based on a shameless relationship of ruthless exploitation with the laboring peasant masses, and that she herself is ugly, vulgar and in every way ludicrous. Yet no one in her unnamed but unmistakable nation seems to notice these obvious facts. In other words, García Márquez is creating an allegory which shows the real moral status of the still feudal semi-‘oligarchy’ first identified by Gaitán and the hypocrisy of a cachaco-dominated ruling class that pretends that Colombia’s is the best of all possible worlds and that the only ones letting the side down are the poor misbegotten people that these superior beings themselves oppress. What we have, in García Márquez’s view, is a colonial land-tenure system overseen by a nineteenth-century political system. (Gabriel García Márquez 255)
And obviously, the story is his “furious reaction to the national situation and his own sense of let-down on his return, after four long years away from the country. The big difference now is that his voice is that of a writer of authority, a writer whose scorn and contempt has been well earned, based as it is on experience of the wider world” (Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez* 256).

With *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Márquez enlarges his vision and scope to encapsulate the continent’s prejudices and predicament. The one hundred years of the history of Macondo can be said to be a compact history of Latin America — albeit, politically satirical and demystified. The entire narrative of *One Hundred* recreates the history of the American subcontinent subtly — sometimes seriously and at other times parodically. The founding of the remote, isolated village of Macondo; the course of its development from an idyllic, peaceful place to a region of conflict (during the civil wars) to its final ruined state (after the Banana massacre)— comprises the hundred years of Macondo. Columbus’s ‘encounter’ with America initiated the process of conquest, domination, annihilation of the native population and finally the imposition of imperial rule. Latin America and its populations had always occupied fringe positions in every matter— be it political participation, economic benefits or technological advancements.

Macondo is founded by the patriarch José Arcadio Buendía with the ‘dream’ of building an illuminated city made of glass, which only turns out to be a mirage by the end of the novel. The last member of the Buendía family realizes that the entire life and history of Macondo and the Buendías’, as well as their annihilation has been predetermined. Conceived as a utopia, Macondo turns more into a forlorn, dystopic
place. It goes through the phases of settlement, political unrest, industrialization, economic downturns etc., which are resonant of the various phases of colonial and post-colonial Latin America.

Macondo’s isolation and solitude projects the suffering of its people. They are never the controllers of their own destiny. Márquez shows that since the beginning ‘outer’ forces make a big impact in the life of Macondo. The modern inventions brought into Macondo by the gypsies fill them with awe and surprise which reflect their ignorance and backwardness while also exposing their vulnerability. Political unrest is also brought about by ‘outer’ influences. For years, Macondo remains outside the political sphere of the central government but as it enters the peripheries of matters of politics, it plunges into years of unrest and violence. Even the so-called and short-lived economic development is brought about by the Banana Company. The banana workers’ massacre can be said to be the final showdown of the narrative, after which Macondo’s decline begins. The Macondans act as mere puppets in the hands of outer forces.

In One Hundred, he creates a world of magic and disbelief which merges normally with the actual world of Macondo. Ghosts, flying objects and bizarre incidents that happen are narrated as normal occurrences. This characteristic presence of ‘magic’ should not be however reduced to the only assumption that Márquez privileges the Caribbean folk beliefs and world view; rather the simultaneous presence of ‘magic’ with the ‘real’ works as a destabilizing agent because once the category of truth has been brought into question and the category of the real broken down or overturned, the boundaries of
other categories become vulnerable. The reader becomes aware that if the category of the real is not definite then all assumptions of truth are also at stake. (Bowers 64)

And once the categories of ‘truth’ or ‘facts’ are challenged, Márquez then goes on to subvert the notions of official history and facts. As Eva Aldea says, “. . . the anti-realist elements of One Hundred Years of Solitude are also its anti-colonial elements, and therefore offer, by their very presence in the magical realist text, an alternative hybrid postcolonial vision”. Although bizarre incidents like the insomnia plague happens, such episodes serve to expose the ruthless brutalities of those in power who try to ‘erase’ memory and as Linda Hutcheon says, the insomnia plague “is a lesson in the dangers of forgetting the personal and public past, as is the more obvious revisionary history that wipes out Macondo’s experience of economic exploitation ending in massacre” (197). While the insomnia plague threatens to erase every memory of the inhabitants of Macondo (even their own names); in the later part of the novel a more political (and less magical) incident (that is, the banana massacre) threatens to suppress the excesses of economic exploitation as well as blot out the very incident from official records. As the authorities in power try every means to erase the memory of the brutal killing of three thousand workers — the narrative ironically shows that such reality is even more absurd than any ‘magical’ reality. This explains Efraín Kristal’s belief that Márquez’s “brand of magical realism is informed by his political commitment” (93). The sole witness of the banana massacre, José Arcadio Segundo, fails to resist the authorities and gradually goes into oblivion by confining himself in a room. He almost becomes a phantom figure when the officers who come searching for him do not actually see him although he is physically present
there. As Stephen M. Hart believes, rather than considering it to be some magical occurrence, the phantom becomes the “projection within an ideologically riven nation of a subaltern forced to ‘disappear’ as a result of lying (in both senses of the term) on the wrong side of the political, gender, or race line” (84).

Political amnesia becomes the most common outcome in such repressive states when the totalitarian regimes suppress brutal events and incidents, effacing every record and memory from official history and in its place transpose alternate records and establish them as ‘the truth’.

In In Evil Hour, Pepe Amador is tortured to death in jail but the Mayor and the policemen refuse to admit their crime and even deny the dead boy’s existence, as the Mayor declares: “‘There’ll be no autopsy,’ he said, ‘since there’s no dead body.’” (García Márquez, In Evil Hour 179). In One Hundred Years of Solitude, the government tries every means to suppress the facts of the massacre of the three thousand workers of the Banana Company. When the only surviving witness of the massacre tries to revive the incident, surprisingly nobody in the town remembers the incident at all. Although seemingly absurd, this sudden amnesia of the people of Macondo has more of political reasons than magical. The authorities brutally suppress the truth by resorting to violence and by eliminating any possible witness; till at one point the authorities declare that: “‘Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing ever will happen. This is a happy town.’” (García Márquez, One Hundred 316).
In *The Autumn*, the incidents are further exaggerated to expose the gross manipulation of power and information that dictators or any repressive states resort to. The dictator or caudillo is one of the most dominant figures in Latin American political scenario. The Patriarch in *The Autumn* is a repulsive, fearsome character whose sole aim is to retain political power by any means and who can go to any length of inhumanity for power’s sake. A composite figure of the many tyrants who had ruled most of the Latin American nations, Márquez presents an absolutely loathsome picture of despotism as Kenneth Minogue states:

> The essence of despotism is that there is no appeal, either in practice or in law, against the unchecked power of the master. The sole object of the subjects must be to please. There is no parliament, no opposition, no free press, no independent judiciary, no private property protected by law from the rapacity of power, in a word, no public voice except that of the despot. (3)

The Patriarch’s continuous assault on human values, freedom and the very right to live renders life meaningless and dreadful, and Márquez’s narrative is “relentless in exposing the hideous cruelties and deceptions that are practiced in the name of nothing but power itself” (Boyers 75). Most dictatorial regimes have been responsible for gross violation of human rights. Among the numerous episodes within the novel, one such is that of two thousand children who are brutally murdered (dynamited, in fact) to stop them from exposing the Patriarch’s embezzlement in the national lottery through which he amasses enormous wealth for himself. In Steven Boldy’s words, Márquez creates “an atmosphere of fascinated horror” (85), as the two thousand children are mercilessly murdered: “. . . before dawn he ordered them to put
the children in a barge loaded with cement, take them singing to the limits of the territorial waters, blow them up with a dynamite charge without giving them time to suffer as they kept on singing, . . .” (García Márquez, *The Autumn* 95).

Tzvetan Todorov dwells on the necessity to keep alive memories as well as the attendant task of writers to protest/resist:

Totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century have revealed the existence of a danger never before imagined: the blotting out of memory. These twentieth-century tyrannies have understood that the conquest of men and territories could be accomplished through information and communication and have created a systematic and complete takeover of memory, hoping to control it even in its most hidden recesses. These attempts have sometimes been blocked, but it is certain that, in other cases (which, by definition, we are unable to verify), traces of the past have been successfully eliminated.

The traces of what once existed have been either erased or doctored and transformed, lies and inventions replace reality, searching out and spreading the truth is forbidden, and any means is acceptable to accomplish this. In concentration camps bodies are dug up in order to burn them and later scatter the ashes. Photographs, claimed to be authentic, are cleverly altered to prevent worrisome memories. History is rewritten with every change of those in power, and encyclopedia readers are invited to cut out any pages which have become undesirable. It is said that the gulls from the Slovoki Islands are shot down so they cannot carry back messages from the prisoners.
It is easy to understand from this why memory has such importance in the eyes of the enemies of totalitarianism, why every act of remembering, however small, could be useful in resisting it. Perhaps it is because of the influence of a few talented writers living in totalitarian countries that the original context of the importance given to memory and the condemnation of forgetting have widened in the last few years. (11)

Márquez’s works then, pose a challenge to the overarching authorities who try to blot out memories, facts and records.

Since the time he first began writing as a journalist till his latest works, Márquez has always spoken for the common man and has been the voice of millions who had suffered in some way or the other. For instance, the image of the seventy-five year old Colonel who keeps waiting for his pension reminds us of many such hapless old men and women who have been victims of corrupt systems.

His engagement with Latin American life and politics and its representation in his works has for the major part been praised and respected throughout a worldwide audience. But there have also been instances of criticism, especially, when he wrote *The General in His Labyrinth*. His portrayal of the most iconic figure of Latin America received as much praise as criticism. Simón Bolívar is one of the highly revered, well-documented and idolized Latin American figures till date. Márquez’s portrayal of Bolívar in his last days as an ailing hero whose deteriorating health and diminishing political power becomes the focus of the story, angered many historians.
and critics alike. For centuries, Bolívar has been the undisputed Latin American hero whose statues, paintings and life history form part of the cultural history of almost every Latin American nation. Hence, a de glamourised and rather more humanized presentation of Bolívar came as a shock to many people, especially since Bolívar has been turned into a superhero and the ultimate cultural icon over centuries. There always has been a tendency to install certain historical figures as heroes and over time re-present them as cultural icons invested with high ideals and values:

For centuries, a primary purpose of public historical reconstruction and commemoration has been emotive: to elicit a sense of sympathy with high ideals, former heroes, the glorious past, in order to engender a sense of common collective community and purpose, a common set of goals and willingness to fight the good fight in the future. Thus representations of (very various) creation stories, statues of heroes and cultural icons, paintings of great battles, war memorials, commemorative services and occasions, all form part of the construction of public collective memories, of emplotment of the past in particular ways. (Fulbrook 146)

In The General, this iconic figure has already lost his presidentship and embarks on his final journey to leave the country. As the title suggests, till the end Bolívar is not able to bring himself out of the labyrinth of power. Just as Colonel Aureliano Buendía in One Hundred who gets so enmeshed into war and politics that he gradually finds himself lost in the labyrinth of waging wars, winning or losing them, being in power and again deposed; or the ageless, loathsome tyrant in The Autumn whose entire life’s mission is to remain in power — so also in The General,
Simón Bolívar’s life revolves round the wars for independence, plotting battles, winning them as well as losing many, becoming the most powerful man of the newly-independent nations and yet later forced to relinquish all powers. This vicious circle continues and which is why Gerald Martin believes that “the labyrinth became a key symbol within Latin American literature” (“The Novel of a Continent” 635). *The General* has been Márquez’s attempt to revisit history and re-create Simón Bolívar and in Helene Carol Weldt-Basson’s words: “Most readers will learn something about Simón Bolívar, a hero both sung and demystified by this novelistic portrayal, just as history itself is both exalted and deconstructed within its pages” (272).

In *The Autumn*, Márquez delves into the recesses of power to criticize the very institution of dictatorship which is nothing but absolute control of power. He invests the dictator with ‘godly’ powers only to later subvert them, and tries to “deconstruct the magic with which the dictator was traditionally thought to be invested” (Sommer and Yudice 872). The novel abounds in the description of the Patriarch’s inhuman tortures, manipulations and silent assassinations of political opponents. Each unnumbered chapter seems only to be a repetition of maniacal murder and brutality which goes on to critically reflect on the immeasurable violence and repression suffered by millions over the centuries.

Being a committed socialist, he had always voiced his protest against any kind of imperialism (esp. US imperialism) with respect to Latin America. The best example is his depiction of the massacre of three thousand workers of the Banana Company in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The entire incident is a direct reference to an actual incident that happened in Ciénaga (in Colombia) in 1928; the details of
which could never be known and there was no proper record of it in official history. An advocate for social revolution, a political activist and sometimes even a militant journalist — his friendship with Fidel Castro, Omar Torrijos, and his leftist views made him a controversial figure, especially in the US. To Claudia Dreifuss’s query as to whether he is a communist, he makes his point clear:

Of course not. I am not and have never been. Nor have I belonged to any political party. Sometimes I have the impression that in the United States, there is a tendency to separate my writing from my political activities — as if they were opposites. I don’t think they are. What happens is that, as an anticolonial Latin American, I take a position that annoys many interests in the United States. And so, simplistically, some people say I am an enemy of the United States. What I’d like to correct is the problems and errors in the Americas as a whole.

(“Playboy Interview” 97)

These selected works which have been studied in detail establishes Márquez’s commitment towards literature as well as his society. These works are deeply entrenched in the socio-political milieu of the Latin American continent. His works are as political as they are personal and as Susan Muaddi Darraj asserts “it is impossible to understand his life and work without recognizing the importance of his social, political, and ethnic background, rooted in his native country of Colombia” (9).

Márquez’s particularity lies in the fact that although he is not overtly political, his oblique censure is more critical than the usual loudmouthed criticism. His political standpoint has always been clear: “. . . García Márquez has always been
an independent leftist, a Marxist of his own kind, one who maintains a typically Latin American respect for Soviet achievements, while rejecting the defects and privately spurning the Muscovite model itself” (Bell-Villada, García Márquez 66). His works reflect a balanced criticism of the vices that affect Latin America, instead of resorting to narrow ideological agenda. As Bell-Villada says:

When all is said it should be clear that García Márquez at heart is not an ideologue, in the sense that ideas for their own sake have little attraction for him. Rather he is a writer and an unorthodox radical for whom ideas are simply part of his everyday life, practice, and activity as an artisan of prose. He would be the first to recognize that slavish adherence to any purist “line” leads neither to good art nor to a good society. After all, in his own best fiction he deliberately set out to transcend and do away with the narrow limits and tired schemes of social-protest literature. To García Márquez, imagination and intuition matter more than do set formulas or complex thought, and reality itself is of greater import, is far more miraculous than any human mind’s conceptualizations thereof. And while his leftism is principled, consistent, and evident enough, it has none of the notorious rigidity or inflexibility of old Stalinist theory and praxis. (García Márquez 69)

The pain and suffering, the atrocities and violence, the chaos and mayhem, the misunderstandings and mis-representations — all cry out for justice and deliverance through his works. Despite the vital connection between his art and his ideologies; he never compromises with the finer nuances of art and herein lies the credit of the writer. His conversation with Marlise Simons gives ample proof:
MS: Politics is important to you. But you don’t use your books to promote your political ideas.

GGM: I don’t think literature should be used as a firearm. But, even against your own will, your ideological positions are inevitably reflected in your writing and they influence readers. I think my books have had political impact in Latin America because they help create a Latin American identity; they help Latin Americans become more aware of their own culture.

An American asked me the other day what was the real political intention behind the cinema foundation. I said the issue is not what lies behind it but what lies ahead of it. The idea is to stimulate awareness of the Latin American cinema, and that is fundamentally a political objective. Of course, the project is strictly about film-making but the results will be political. People often think that politics are elections, that politics are what governments do. But literature, cinema, painting and music are all essential to forging Latin America’s identity. And that’s what I mean by politics. (“García Márquez on Love, Plagues, and Politics”160)

Through literature indeed, he envisions a better world (especially for Latin Americans) and where races can finally have a second opportunity on earth.