THE MADNESS OF ABUNDANCE
LATIN AMERICAN IMPRINTS—POETICS, THEATER AND ART:
THE LEGACY OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

Symposium Overview

Our recent symposia targeted issues of inequality, equity gaps, and development challenges tied to the human condition. This agenda considered more indirectly than directly threads and themes of social justice. This year’s symposium helps to better balance our portfolio with matters magically spun from perceived truth, and from love, death, politics and power by a master and Nobel laureate. In my own case, Gabriel García Márquez’ One Hundred Years of Solitude first appeared in 1969 in Mejía, Arequipa, Perú, where Arequipeño summer beachgoers were mostly reading favorite son Mario Vargas Llosa’s The Green House. Later, I would be struck by the universal optimism ever after ascribed onto the historied body that is Latin America, voiced by Juvenal Urbino in Love in the Time of Cholera as a perceived truth:

“Como será de noble esta ciudad que tenemos 400 años de estar tratando de acabar con ella, y todavía no lo logramos.”

“How noble this city must be for we have spent 400 years trying to finish it off and still we have not succeeded.”

The Center and the Department of Romance and Classical Studies welcome the support and collaboration of the MSU Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, especially for the April 18 theatrical performance culminating our new Hispanic Theater (SPN 491) course. This performance is also the result of a key alliance with the Department of Theater. The 2013 symposium builds upon Don Juan Week, an important campus-wide creative endeavor in fall 2012. This event brought Carlos Morton to MSU to speak on “Don Juan through the Ages”—in The Don Juan Traditions symposium—complemented by a staged reading of a Morton play, Johnny Tenorio, and selections from Don Giovanni by the MSU Opera Theatre (College of Music).

The 2013 symposium also aligns with another initiative funded by the Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives—the College of Music’s Latin is America initiative, a central signifier of the many ways that society writ large has been enriched by Latin Americans. Importantly, the symposium kicks off by putting students first with a poster session on “Latin America and Its Literature”. Then two plenary keynote addresses will discuss the legacy of García Márquez. Artistic expression is pursued in “Magical Realism on Canvas”, and is subsequently discussed with the audience by the invited panel of presenters.

Robert W. Blake
Director for the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies

1 Professor of Dramatic Arts at the University of California Santa Barbara, Carlos Morton is one of the leading figures of Chicano Theater in the U.S. and abroad
When the Nobel literary prize was bestowed to him in 1982, Gabriel García Márquez delivered a lecture, The Solitude of Latin America. One of his most famous excerpts from this speech was:

Faced with this awesome reality that must have seemed a mere utopia through all of human time, we, the inventors of tales, who will believe anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to engage in the creation of the opposite utopia. A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness will be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth.

Thus declaring this utopic dream, García Márquez reverted to the final fatalistic lines of his masterpiece, One Hundred Years of Solitude, which reads:

For it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth.

These proclamations reflect the contradictions in Latin America’s fate. García Márquez’ portrayal as isolated, underdeveloped and detached from the progressive modern world seemed by mid-century an unavoidable fate, just as in the admonition of One Hundred Years of Solitude. Closer to the truth, Gabriel García Márquez’ writings put Latin America onto a map between fatalisms and utopias. For good and bad by the 1970s and 1980s, and thanks to the Literary Boom, Latin American writers and their countries found their
way into scholary works, academics, and the cultural lives of North America and Europe. Thanks are also due to those who invested in studying them and by teaching, circulating and writing about them, and by so doing, helping to free Latin America from its inevitable fate of solitude.

We convene this event with the noble help and key contributions of North American Colombianist scholars who were among those who were especially responsible for promoting the work of Gabriel García Marquez in the US academic community. Jonathan Tittler is one of the founders of the Asociación de Colombianistas, and Michael Palencia-Roth is a scholar whose pen and pulpit have been devoted to Garcia Marquez’ writings. We also welcome the perspectives of Colombian artist David Alvarado, whose visual artistic portrayal, Magical Realism on Canvas, immerses the audience in a semantic transposition of García Márquez’ literary creation. By uniting literature, theater and art, and with a whisp of Latin music, we celebrate the legacy of this Colombian author, and the imprints he put into the cultural fabric of the modern world. These imprints are harmonized especially by students through posters and theatrical presentations building upon their Latin American learning at MSU.

As one who shoulders two nationalities, two cultures, two languages and thereby two worlds, I celebrate that among Americans all, we Latin Americans are no longer compelled to a fatalism like that depicted in One Hundred Years of Solitude.
SYMPOSIUM

THUR., APR 18, 7:00 PM  ARENA THEATER, MSU AUDITORIUM
Hispanic Theatrical Performance

Magia y Realismo: Escenas Latinoamericanas
(Magic and Realism: Scenes from Latin America)
Students in Hispanic Theater, SPN 491
Directors: Elvira Sánchez-Blake and Joni Starr

Act one
Historia del mono que se convirtió en hombre
Story of a Monkey Who Turned Himself into a Man from
Stories to be Told (Historias para ser contadas) by Argentinian Osvaldo Dragún

Act two
Historia del hombre que se convirtió en perro
Story of a Man who Turned Himself into a Dog from Stories to be Told (Historias para ser contadas) by Argentinian Osvaldo Dragún

Act three
El descubrimiento
The Discovery by Colombian Elvira Sánchez-Blake

FRIDAY, APRIL 19  3RD FLOOR, INTERNATIONAL CENTER

9:00  POSTER SESSION  3RD FLOOR HALL
Latin America and Its Literature

El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve/ The trail of your blood on
the snow
Sarah Miller, Education

El ahogado más hermoso del mundo/ The most beautiful
drowned person in the world
Eileen Stefansky, Animal Science

Un día de éstos/ One of these days
Maxwell Winkler, Physiology

El incesto en ‘Cien años de soledad’
Kendra Peterson, Spanish and Supply Management

Los espejos y espejismos en ‘Cien años de soledad’
Hillary Nienhouse, Spanish

Los elementos de la memoria, el olvido y el trauma en ‘Cien
Años de Soledad’
María Elena Navedo, Spanish and Music

The Train
Morgan Murphy, International Relations, Comparative Culture and Politics

La verdadera cola de cerdo?/ The Real Pig’s tail?
Megan Aprile, English and Spanish for Secondary Education

Los ejes: Las mujeres en ‘Cien años de soledad’
Megan Frayer, Spanish and Zoology

Facilitator: Elvira Sánchez-Blake, Michigan State University
10:00  KEYNOTE ADDRESSES  ROOM 303
The Legacy of Gabriel García Márquez

Introductions
Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, Michigan State University

Toward ‘One Hundred Years of Solitude’ and Beyond: García Márquez and his Precursors
Michael Palencia-Roth, Trowbridge Scholar in Literary Studies and Professor Emeritus of Comparative and World Literature, University of Illinois

The Legacy of García Márquez, Ethical Poet
Jonathan Tittler, Professor Emeritus of Hispanic Studies, Rutgers University

12:00  LUNCH AND VIEW POSTERS

1:00 pm  MAGICAL REALISM ON CANVAS  ROOM 302
Presentation (in Spanish) and discussion of electronic images of an exhibition of oil paintings colorfully depicting themes of love, death and politics in García Márquez’ seminal novel, Cien Años de Soledad. David Alvarado, Colombian artist based in Granada, Spain

Interpreter: Mark Davis, Michigan State University
Facilitator: Elvira Sánchez-Blake

2:00  BREAK

2:30  PANEL DISCUSSION: LEGACIES  ROOM 303
Panelists Palencia-Roth, Tittler, Alvarado and Sánchez-Blake will engage the audience in discussion of the legacies of Gabriel García Márquez.
Convenor: Danny Méndez, Michigan State University

3:30  CLOSING COMMENTS
Robert Blake and Marshall Olds

4:00-5:30  RECEPTION AND ENTERTAINMENT  3RD FLOOR
Staged reading of The Solitude of Latin America, García Márquez’ 1982 Nobel Lecture, by Diómedes Solano accompanied musically by Discurso (Discourse), Ty Forquer, percussionist; Víctor Márquez, composer.

MUSIC BY GRUPO EL AMPARO playing an arrangement by María Elena Navedo of Alfonso Storni and other Latin jazz compositions.

GROUP MEMBERS are Walter Cano (trumpet), Jerrick Matthews (trombone), Caroline Glaeser (piano), Louis Rudner (bass), Jordan Otto (drums), and María Elena Navedo (saxophone).

PRE-SYMPOSIUM ACTIVITIES
College of Music Latin Is America Musical, Artistic, and Scholarly Event Series

Monday, April 15
Andy Narell, steel pan star with “University of Calypso” Ensemble
7:30 p.m., MSU Community Music School

Wednesday, April 17
Dream Havana
Screening of this award-winning film followed by discussion with producer/director Gary Marks
7:30 p.m., MSU Community Music School
IMPOSSIBLE AND FORBIDDEN LOVES

David Guilo/09
INSOMNIA
In 1967, in The Atlantic Monthly, John Barth published an essay that became famous, “The Literature of Exhaustion.” In it, Barth writes that he is not referring to a moral exhaustion or even an intellectual one. Rather, he is pointing to a literary exhaustion: the novel form, he believes, is exhausted and about dead. Proust, Joyce and Kafka were path breakers. Following them, Hemingway and Faulkner were also path breakers in their generation in American literature. Now, in the 1960s, there is no one like them, for everyone is paralyzed beneath the apocalyptic weight of the grand masters. Outside the USA, there are, he says, two writers of note: Beckett and Borges. Beyond that, there is no one. There is no truly original talent, no new Cervantes, no new creator of anything that might recall the magic of The Thousand and One Nights.

At the time, Barth had not heard of Gabriel García Márquez. Few people had. He could not have known that, at the moment of his essay’s publication, a novel of stunning originality was also being published, Cien años de soledad or One Hundred Years of Solitude, and that its author was being discovered, first by Latin American readers from Mexico to Argentina, and then by the entire world. The questions driving this lecture at MSU today are: how did this novel come to be? And how did this author become THE Gabriel García Márquez who approximately 15 years later would win the Nobel Prize for Literature?

Great writers become great readers of literature, even to the point of experiencing a feeling of intimacy with their precursors. Great writers also learn how to read their own lives and the lives of others around them. This apprenticeship in the art of reading and writing is not an easy one. Slowly but not inevitably, García Márquez becomes ever more skilled at the kind of “reading” – at the kind of “knowing” and “understanding” – that will lead him toward One Hundred Years of Solitude and beyond.
The Legacy of García Márquez, Ethical Poet  
Jonathan Tittler, Rutgers University

This lecture explores the legacy, both concrete and virtual, of the Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, the winner of the 1982 Nobel Prize for Literature and the author of the novels One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) and Love in the Times of Cholera (1985). After defining the various senses of the term “legacy,” it considers the author’s and his writing’s most original, paradigm-shifting or otherwise noteworthy traits, including his seeming indifference toward nurturing a coterie of disciples; his living outside Colombia; his most memorable images and characters; important thematic omissions; his anti-colonialist and pro-social justice agenda; the editorial, translational and critical industries he spawned; and the unexplainability of his accomplishment in historical terms. Contrary to conventional wisdom, García Márquez is summarized here as an ethical poet because of the unfailingly lyrical nature of his writing; and for his work ethic and ultimate perfectionism regarding perceived truth and aesthetic integrity.

Magical Realism on Canvas  
David Alvarado, Granada, Spain

David Alvarado’s oil-on-canvas exhibition is inspired by the most celebrated literary work in Latin American literature, One Hundred Years of Solitude. Each painting conjures a particular moment in the novel. These include the creation of Macondo and its insomnia epidemic; the bloody war between conservatives and liberals and, amidst glory, the solitude of Coronel Aureliano Buendía; the bloody carnival of two queens and heavenly ascension by Remedios, The Beauty; festive arrival of the yellow train and the banana plantation’s subsequent demise, massacre and the corpse-laden death train. Other illustrations are the love lust of Mauricio Babilonia and Meme engulfed in yellow butterflies, Aureliano II’s extravagances in wealth and misfortune, and the epic instant when Melquiades’ manuscripts are deciphered by Aureliano Babilonia. These paintings, subtly and lyrically crafted in nuanced detail, highlight the genius, aesthetic integrity and literary depth of Gabriel García Márquez. Thus, the essence of Latin America’s foremost epic narrative is captured and wonderfully cast through visual art.
David Alvarado, a Colombian artist based in Granada, Spain, works primarily as a sculptor. He studied Fine Arts as an undergraduate student at Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogotá. His doctoral degree in Fine Arts is from the University of Granada, where working with Manuel Cano Granados he was awarded “superior cum laude” for his research thesis, “Antonio Oteiza Embil, Sculptor, Writer and Adventurer.” He was also awarded second prize for “Yerma’s Dream” at the Second International Sculpture Symposium in 1998; was commissioned to sculpt (in Cabra stone) a monument in homage to D. Carmona Francisco Rivero in Cañada de Barradán, Córdoba, “Dressing the Moon” (ISBN: 84-8154-031-5); and was invited to assist Maestro Eduardo Capa Sacristán in the II Summer University of Sculpture in Alicante.

Alvarado’s artistic approach combines perseverance with sculptural techniques, arming him with an artistic language aimed directly, and with positive musings, at the spectator. His original work comprises unique pieces created classically as well as with methods of the latest generation. His worth as an artist builds upon nearly 30 years as a sculptor, thus acquiring maturity as an artist. Ever-present creative challenges recently lured him into painting. Although it is not his forte, painting provides him yet another outlet of artistic expression, as demonstrated by this elucidating visual portrayal of magical realism.
Exalted Beauty