



Absurdity and the Sisyphian Cycle in Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude

Asst. Lect. Ali Kareem Hussein

University of Wasit, College of Education, Department of English Language

alikha@uowasit.edu.iq

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0385-8050>

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Sisyphian absurdity in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970) through Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942/1979). While scholars typically read the novel through magical realism or political allegory, and Camus's framework is seldom applied to Latin American literature, this study employs a qualitative philosophical analysis of the novel's cyclical structure and character archetypes. The study demonstrates that repetition embodies Camus's triad—confrontation, suicide, and rebellion. The study reinterprets the novel's cycles as acts of conscious rebellion rather than doom, distinguishing physical from philosophical suicide among characters, and establishing magical realism as a vehicle for metaphysical inquiry. The study concludes that freedom lies in lucid confrontation with absurdity, and happiness remains possible through this awareness.

Keywords:

One Hundred Years Of Solitude, The Myth of Sisyphus, philosophical suicide, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Camus

العبثية والدورة السيزيفية في رواية مئة عام من العزلة لغابرييل غارسيا ماركيز

م.م. علي كريم حسين

جامعة واسط / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تجليات العبثية السيزيفية في رواية غابرييل غارسيا ماركيز "مئة عام من العزلة" (1970)، مستندة إلى فلسفة ألبير كامو في كتابه "أسطورة سيزيف" (1979/1942). وتبين الدراسة كيف تجسد الرواية مفاهيم كامو الأساسية: المواجهة بين الإنسان والكون، والانتحار الفلسفي والجسدي، والتمرد العبثي. ومن تحليل الشخصيات الرئيسية، توضح الدراسة أن التكرار في الرواية ليس مجرد أداة سردية، بل رؤية فلسفية للوجود؛ إذ تصبح حياة عائلة بوينديا حلقة لا تنتهي من الأسماء والمآسي المتكررة، مجسدة أسطورة سيزيف. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن ماركيز يقدم رؤية عميقة: فالبشر محكوم عليهم بتكرار أفعالهم، لكن الحرية تكمن في كيفية مواجهتهم لهذا المصير؛ فالوعي بالعبثية هو في حد ذاته شكل من أشكال التمرد، والسعادة ممكنة على الرغم من هذا الوعي، بل بفضلها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مئة عام من العزلة، أسطورة سيزيف، الانتحار الفلسفي، غابرييل غارسيا ماركيز، كامو.



1. Theoretical Framework

Zaretsky (2011) indicates that the twentieth century witnessed numerous intellectual and cultural transformations that played a prominent role in shaking many of the assumptions that had dominated human consciousness for centuries. Wars, economic collapses, political crises, the decline of religious authority, and traditional metaphysical interpretations led to a state of doubt regarding the ability of reason or religion to provide adequate answers to the great existential questions. Whistler (2018) argues "The magnitude of suffering experienced and witnessed in the first half of the twentieth century understandably led many people to re-evaluate their moral and spiritual position in the world" (p.48) adding that "for some, faith in God's divine wisdom was sufficient consolation, but many others rejected religion altogether, unable to accept that any theodicy could justify the immense pain and chaos around them" (p.48)

Under these circumstances, the philosophy of the absurd emerged as one of the most important intellectual responses to modern crises. Tranter (2023) asserts "Albert Camus' reflection in *The Myth of Sisyphus* presents the absurd, the intrusion of the meaningless and irrational universe into the order and future focus of modern life" (p.373), as it sought to understand the human condition in a world that seemed indifferent to its aspirations and deep desires for understanding meaning, order, and certainty in their lives. Zaretsky (2011) concludes "He [Camus] appears to us, in a way that few other writers do, as someone who wrote for his life and for our lives as well" (p. 2)

In his famous essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Albert Camus presents a comprehensive philosophical conception of the problem of human absurdity. Camus begins with the idea that humans possess an innate need to understand or search for meaning, unity, and order. However, the world they inhabit is not responsible for providing clear or definitive answers to such aspirations. From this arises what Camus calls absurdity, which represents the state resulting from the confrontation between humanity's desire for understanding the universe they inhabit and the silence and indifference it provides. Camus (1942/1979) admits that absurdity does not lie in human beings or the universe in which they live, rather, "it is born of their confrontation" (p.33)

Moreover, Camus (1942/1979) asserts that the absurd represents "the divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, my nostalgia for unity, this fragmented universe and the contradiction that binds them together" (p.50). Given that this contradiction cannot be definitively resolved, the question that preoccupied Camus was not how to eliminate absurdity, but rather how to live with it and confront it without escaping into metaphysical illusions or surrendering to despair.

In addition, the influence of absurdist philosophy was immense, becoming one of the most prominent influences in modern and contemporary literature. Many literary works produced in the 20th century attempted to portray humanity facing a turbulent world lacking certainty, striving with all its might to find meaning in life amidst chaos, repetition, and proximity. From this perspective, absurdity has become an effective critical tool for understanding and studying literary texts that address issues of existence, isolation, time, history, and human destiny. (Webber, 2018)

One of the fundamental concepts presented by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is suicide. From Camus' perspective, this concept assumes different dimensions. Camus (1942/1979) explained that "there is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide" (p.11) and criticized the traditional interpretation of suicide as a mental illness or disorder. He argues that the concept of suicide is far more complex than previously thought. The causes that lead to suicide, such as emotional or financial failure or illness, are merely superficial and not the core reasons that drive individuals to commit suicide.

Chang (2025) demonstrates that, according to Camus, the true motives for suicide are often unattainable desires, such as a person's yearning for existence, a search for meaning, or a desire to understand the universe in which they live. He believes that the primary or essential reasons for suicide are fundamentally existential and philosophical. Camus (1942/1979) contends, "There are many causes for a suicide and generally the most obvious ones were not the most powerful ... What sets off the crisis is almost always unverifiable" (p.12). He believed that human suicidal ideation stemmed from the contradiction between the desire to find meaning and the silent world that offers nothing of the sort. When this fateful confrontation arises between the absurdity of existence and the human drive toward meaning, suicide becomes a logical solution to escape this contradiction. However, Camus categorically rejects this conclusion, considering it an escape rather than a confrontation with the absurd. In Camus' philosophy, confrontation occurs in the way a person embraces this absurdity and attempts to create meaning for themselves through this confrontation.

However, the second concept of suicide presented by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is philosophical suicide. By philosophical suicide, he means when a person resorts to religion, metaphysics, or any esoteric interpretation, such as the existence of a hidden force or a higher entity controlling humanity. In this case, the person attempts to connect their existence to this transcendent entity to give meaning to their absurd condition. In this context, Camus criticized many philosophers, including Søren Kierkegaard, Lev Chestov, and Karl Jaspers, because, from his perspective, these philosophers confronted absurdity but then leaped into religious faith as a final solution. Camus (1942/1979) contends that "all of them [Existentialist philosophers] without exception suggest

escape through a forced hope that is religious in nature" (p.35). Furthermore, Flynn (2006) argues, "Life does not follow the continuous flow of logical argument and that one often has to risk moving beyond the limits of the rational in order to live life to the fullest" (p.3). Camus considers this philosophical suicide similar to physical suicide, as it does not eliminate the tension arising from the confrontation between humanity and absurdity; instead, it does not lead to coexistence with absurdity. Berthold (2013) contends that what drives Albert Camus to reject the idea of faith is that Camus comes to believe that " [Faith] is a form of intellectual suicide and cowardice". (p.138).

Albert Camus proposes revolt as the one and only coherent response to the absurd which represents the confrontation between humanity's longing for meaning and the universe's silent indifference. Revolt entails enjoying life with full awareness of the meaninglessness of our existence without resorting to evasion strategies such as religious faith, metaphysical hope, or any form of philosophical suicide that artificially imposes meaning upon an indifferent world. For Camus, the mythical figure of Sisyphus exemplifies this ideal. Condemned to an endless labor represented by pushing a boulder up a mountain only to watch it roll back down, Sisyphus possesses no illusion of ultimate success or transcendent purpose. Yet he continues his task relentlessly. This perseverance, undertaken with lucid consciousness of its futility, constitutes the essence of absurd revolt which is the defiant acceptance of one's fate without surrender, transforming the very act of repetition into a source of meaning and, paradoxically, happiness.

This study attempts to show how these absurd concepts have been manifested in Gabriel García Márquez's novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

2. Literature Review

Birutė Ciplijauskaitė (1973) in his article *Foreshadowing as Technique and Theme in "One Hundred Years of Solitude"* argues that foreshadowing plays a pivotal role in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It is not merely a narrative device but one of the novel's central themes. The primary function of this technique is to create a sense of cyclicalality and repetition, as events and prophecies recur in Macondo across generations. This reinforces the idea that history repeats itself in an inescapable cycle. This is clearly manifested in the character of Colonel Aureliano, who, at the beginning of the novel, faces a firing squad that represents the fate of many members of José Arcadio Buendía's family, foretelling the death and annihilation that haunts them. Other characters also embody foreshadowing, such as Melquiades the Gypsy, whose prophecies foreshadow the fate of the entire Arcadio Buendía family, the true nature of which is only revealed at the end of the novel.

In *The Dark Side of Magical Realism: Science, Oppression, and Apocalypse in One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Conniff (1990) challenges the prevailing optimistic reading of magical realism, which is often seen as a hopeful literary response to the chaotic reality of Latin America. Instead, the article presents the darker aspects associated with this literary genre, arguing that magical realism is not merely an expression of hope but also a powerful tool for depicting a reality in which total destruction, or the apocalypse, has become a plausible and inevitable scientific possibility. The study focuses on three main aspects. The first is a critique of scientific progress, analyzing how gypsies first appeared in Macondo carrying inventions like magnets, the beginning of a seemingly magical but fundamentally oppressive process. Conniff (1990) argues that this advanced mode of thinking, while promising prosperity, ultimately paves the way for tragic and catastrophic outcomes. The second aspect focuses on the failure of democratic science, examining how both Malquidás and José Buendía suffer from a fatal blindness, each assuming that scientific progress is a process of liberal democracy, but their hopes vanish when they discover that it does not lead to liberation but rather to a vision of progress that remains vague and simultaneously oppressive, but is never truly democratic. In the third aspect, the article focuses on the annihilation of the world as an inevitable outcome. Conniff's (1990) article is based on Gabriel García Márquez's speech after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, where the author explains that, unlike William Faulkner, he could not refuse to acknowledge the end of humanity because the end of the world had become a scientific possibility. Conniff (1990) extends this concept to include the novel, arguing that the catastrophic ending of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is not a tragic surprise, but a logical and inevitable consequence of the progress brought about by the very same progressive ideas that García Márquez criticizes. The final destruction is described as an eternal repetition and a realistic result of the oppressive forces unleashed by science and progress.

In *"One Hundred Years of Solitude", Indigenous Myth, and Meaning*, Jay Corwin (2011) challenges prevailing critical readings that place the novel within the biblical (Exodus/Genesis) model, arguing that these are colonial interpretations that reject the novel's mixed origins. He calls for a re-examination of the indigenous myths of Colombia as a primary source for understanding indigenous Colombian symbols and themes, specifically those of the Chibcha people. The article presents clear parallels between the novel's characters and these myths. For example, the author highlights the similarities between Melquíades and the Chibcha sun god Bochica, and between the Buendía migration and the Hunzahu myth. He also focuses on interpreting the events of the flood and apocalypse through the Popol Vuh rather than the Old Testament. The article concludes that ignoring these mythological sources is not merely a passing error or oversight, but rather a repetition of a

colonial process. Deconstructing the original symbols reveals a clear understanding of the meanings and the implicit critique of the identity of Colombia's indigenous peoples within the novel.

Alvaro Santana-Acuña (2014) in *How a literary work becomes a classic: The case of One Hundred Years of Solitude*, focuses on the process by which a literary work becomes a classic, using *García Márquez's novel* as a model. He argues that what makes a work a classic is its transcendence of its original context and its adoption by actors and organizations not involved in its creation, a process that goes beyond mere critical appreciation of the work. The article focuses on four main patterns that contribute to the collective construction of a literary work's value as a classic: Lived Experience, Universalization, Artistic Commensuration, and Entrenched Criticism. The author explains that his choice of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* stems from two main reasons: first, Latin American literature did not constitute a unified tradition at the time of the novel's publication, which facilitated the study of its rise without being influenced by this complex variable. Second, because this novel was produced in a decentralized literary milieu, it helps us understand how the work achieves its classic value outside dominant cultural centers like Paris or London.

In *Embracing Chaos: An Absurdist Interpretation of Cormac McCarthy's No Country for Old Men* (2025), A. Hamad and A. Merwah offer an absurdist reading of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* within the framework of Albert Camus's philosophy of The Myth of Sisyphus. The article argues that the novel transcends the crime-thriller genre, becoming instead a profound philosophical inquiry into humanity's struggle against an indifferent universe. The authors analyze the three main characters: Anton Chigurh embodies absurdity itself as a metaphysical force of chaos; Sheriff Ed Tom Bell represents a yearning for moral unity, failing to confront modern violence; and Llewelyn Moss acts as an absurdist hero who persists in resistance despite inevitable defeat, echoing the Sisyphean struggle. The article concludes that the novel embodies the principles of absurdism through its portrayal of random violence and the collapse of traditional morality, offering a contemporary interpretation of Camus's philosophy on the lucid confrontation with meaninglessness.

This study differs from previous studies in that it offers an absurdist reading of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* based on Albert Camus's philosophy in the Myth of Sisyphus. While studies such as Conniff's (1990) article addresses the dark side of magical realism, Santana-Acuña's (2014) study on the mechanisms of a literary work becoming a classic, and Corwin's (2011) study explores the novel's original mythological origins, this article analyzes the novel from a completely different angle. It does not examine the novel's origins, classification, or social critique, but rather focuses on analyzing the characters and events in light of Camus's concept of the absurd to trace the manifestations of the confrontation between humanity and the silent universe, and the characters'

struggle with meaninglessness. This opens a new interpretive horizon that differs fundamentally from previous critical articles.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical research design. As McCombes (2019) asserts, descriptive research is not merely about cataloging data but about systematically and accurately delineating the intricacies of a specific population, circumstance, or phenomenon. In the domain of literary analysis, this can be translated to a rigorous textual examination aiming at deconstructing the narrative architecture, character trajectories, and symbolic systems pervading the novel.

Beyond simply answering what, where, when, and how, this approach will enable the scholar for a nuanced exploration of why—specifically, why the cyclical nature of the Buendía family's history evokes a profound sense of existential absurdity. By systematically mapping the repetitive patterns of behavior, names, and historical recurrence, this research moves beyond surface-level summary to interpret how Márquez's narrative structure functions as a literary embodiment of the Sisyphean condition, ultimately revealing the text's philosophical commentary on human effort, futility, and the pursuit of meaning in a clearly indifferent universe.

4. Absurdity and the Sisyphean Cycle in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

4.1. Absurd Nostalgia for Unity: José Arcadio Buendía

Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* represents a prime example of the absurdist literature in Latin America. A deep reading of this novel reveals how myth, history, and irony intertwine to create a world dominated by repetition and meaninglessness. In this novel, Camus's concept of the absurd is manifested as the product of the confrontation between humanity's innate desire for meaning and the silence offered by the universe.

Although Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970) is usually read as an example of magical realism, it also offers broad possibilities for reading from the perspective of absurdist philosophy. The novel does not merely present extraordinary events or imagined worlds, but rather engages deeply with issues of historical repetition, existential isolation, and humanity's failure to transcend its destiny or find meaning. By tracing the history of the Buendía family through successive generations, Márquez creates a world where names, events, desires, and mistakes are repeated in a way that almost makes history revolve in a closed loop, devoid of true progress or ultimate salvation.

The concept of absurdity is particularly important in reading this novel because of the striking similarity between the cyclical structure of events in Macondo and the symbolic structure of *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Just as Sisyphus is condemned to push the boulder to the top of the mountain in an absurd manner only to have it roll down again, the novel's characters seem destined to reproduce this cycle. Their destinies and mistakes are repeated throughout time, as the attempts at love, knowledge, political revolution, and social advancement of the Buendía family members do not ultimately lead them to a lasting meaning. Instead, they often end up in isolation, failure, or oblivion. The family's history can be seen as a form of Sisyphean existence, characterized by continuous repetition and an endless pursuit of unattainable goals.

Furthermore, the novel raises fundamental questions that intersect with the issues Camus addressed in his philosophy. The characters constantly strive to transcend the limits of their existence through love, power, or knowledge, but they collide with a world that does not respond to their desires or fulfill their aspirations. Time does not proceed according to a linear sequence but rather takes on a cyclical shape, continuously reproducing the past. This reinforces the sense of the absurdity of human experience and makes the individual a prisoner of a history they cannot change or escape. From this point, this article seeks to explore the manifestations of absurdity in this novel.

The novel begins when José Arcadio Buendía flees his past after murdering Prudencio Aguilar and finds Macondo in a secluded spot on a riverbank. What José Arcadio Buendía did was not merely a geographical move from one place to another, but an existential attempt to have a new beginning. Gabriel García Márquez (1967/1970) illustrates:

"MANY .YEARS LATER, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. At that time, Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point." (p.1)

Buendía's creation of a new city represents a firm belief that humanity can create a more orderly and harmonious world and that humanity has the ability to overcome the mistakes of the past. He does not simply escape but establishes a new society that he believes will be different from the old world he lived in. From Camus's perspective, this act can be seen as an expression of humanity's need to search for meaning. Before discovering the absurdity of the world and the universe that surrounds him, man often seeks to build a system that gives his life purpose.

What Albert Camus describes as "nostalgia for unity" in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is embodied in the character of José Arcadio Buendía, where Buendía represents the absurd man (not the absurd hero so far) par excellence, as Buendía's mind yearns to discover the absolute truth. He is always making deals with the gypsy Melquiades to obtain things with a magical effect, such as illusion. Márquez (1970) indicates:

"Jose Arcadio Buendía, whose unbridled imagination always went beyond the genius of nature and even beyond miracles and magic, thought that it would be possible to make use of that useless invention [the magnet] to extract gold from the bowels of the earth. Melquiades, who was an honest man, warned him: "It won't work for that." But Jose Arcadio Buendía at that time did not believe in the honesty of gypsies, so he traded his mule and a pair of goats for the two magnetized ingots" (p.2)

As mentioned previously, the absurdity lies in the "divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints" (Camus, 1942/1979, p.50), and this is precisely what happened with José Arcadio Buendía, the closer he got to the truth, the further he moved away from it. Camus asserts that absurdity arises not from the world nor from humanity, but from the tension between humanity's desire to discover meaning and a silent world that offers no response. Buendía embarks on a journey with a group of men toward the sea in search of gold making use of the magnet he traded with Melquiades. He leads this expedition with unwavering confidence despite the harshness of nature, emphasizing that his primary goal is not ease of access, but rather staying on course:

"It's all right," Jose Arcadio Buendía would say. "The main thing is not to lose our bearings." Always following his compass, he kept guiding his men toward the invisible north so that they would be able to get out of that enchanted region." (Márquez, 1967/1970, p.12)

From Camus' perspective, this moment represents the first expression of man's need for meaning, as Buendía and his men are not only looking for the sea as a geographical location but also as a promise of salvation, knowledge, and a new beginning. However, these illusions are quickly dispelled when Márquez begins to unravel this illusion, as the further the expedition progresses into the middle of the forest, the more difficult it becomes for them. Márquez describes the forest as "a universe of grief," and these men were walking through it as if they were "sleepwalkers" when the earth began to sink under their feet and the trees blocked the light until the world seemed to be drowning in eternal sadness. This image does not present nature as a direct enemy of man. On the contrary, nature is presented as an indifferent entity that does not care about man and does not pay any attention to his efforts.

Here, Camus's idea of the unreasonable silence of the world is embodied, where man does not get the answer he is yearning for, no matter how strong his will is.

This clash reaches its climax when the expedition discovers a huge Spanish ship in the heart of the jungle: " Before them ... was an enormous Spanish galleon. Tilted slightly to the starboard, it had hanging from its intact masts the dirty rags of its sails in the midst of its rigging, which was adorned with orchids" (p.12), where they stand speechless before a scene that defies logical explanation. The ship, which was supposed to be a symbol of the sea, appears in a place where it could not possibly exist, surrounded by ferns and palm trees, and covered in moss until it has become part of nature itself. Márquez portrays this confrontation in a magically satirical style; while man searches for meaning, the universe offers him/her mockery, that " The discovery of the galleon, an indication of the proximity of the sea, broke Jose Arcadio Buendía's drive. He considered it a trick of his whimsical fate to have searched for the

sea without finding" (p.12) For example, instead of discovering the truth and obtaining gold, Buendía and his men find a rusty shield.

4.2. Philosophical Suicide: Father Nicanor

Gabriel García Márquez presents two distinct levels of suicide in his novel, echoing Albert Camus's exploration of the myth of Sisyphus. The first level is philosophical suicide, where many characters resort to escaping the absurdity of life through religious or emotional illusions. Other characters commit physical suicide, underscoring the unbearability of life and acknowledging the profound difficulty of confronting absurdity, as Camus suggests.

Father Nicanor, an elderly priest, arrived in Macondo to officiate the wedding ceremony between Aureliano Buendía and Remedios Moscote. He was described as " an old man hardened by the ingratitude of his ministry. His skin was sad, with the bones almost exposed, and he had a pronounced round stomach and the expression of an old angel" (p.84). He was appalled by the inhabitants of Macondo, who were " prospering in the midst of scandal, subject to the natural law, without baptizing their children or sanctifying their festivals" that he thought " no land needed the seed of God so much, he decided to stay on for another week to Christianize both circumcised and gentile, legalize concubinage, and give the sacraments to the dying." (p.84)

By introducing this secondary character, who is characterized by philosophical depth, Márquez attempts to offer his critique of religion as a desperate institution trying to impose meaning on an absurd world. Through the contrast between Father Nicanor's outward and inward appearance,

between spiritual hunger and physical obesity, between outward piety and inner weakness, Albert Camus suggests that a weary body and a tired mind represent fertile ground for philosophical suicide. As Camus sees it, when confronted with absurdity, man tries to escape through forced hope. Nicanor resorts to religion as a last refuge, but this attempt is quickly exposed by his worn body. The weariness evident in his face and body is not merely physical fatigue from travel, but existential weariness from his attempt to impose meaning on a world that rejects it. The description Márquez uses for Father Nicanor reveals a priest who has lost his shine and become merely a tool of an institution that has lost its credibility in the face of Macondo's absurd reality. Using the term "old angel" to describe Father Nicanor is a distinctly absurd and ironic expression. An angel, as portrayed by religion, is a messenger from heaven, an eternal and beautiful concept, yet Father Nicanor is described as a tired old angel. This contradiction reflects the essence of philosophical suicide, which is precisely what Camus rejects when he describes "the leap of faith" as a sacrifice of reason.

Father Nicanor's philosophical suicide reaches its climax in the miraculous scene when:

" The boy ... helped him with the mass brought him a cup of thick and steaming chocolate, which he drank without pausing to breathe. Then, he wiped his lips with a handkerchief that he drew from his sleeve, extended his arms, and closed his eyes. Thereupon Father Nicanor rose six inches above the level of the ground" (p.85)

This satirical scene is a direct embodiment of the leap of faith that Albert Camus rejects. Instead of offering rational arguments to prove God's existence, the priest resorts to an optical illusion or a false miracle to transform doubt into certainty and meaninglessness into meaning. Camus describes this leap of faith as an attempt to escape absurdity through what he calls forced hope. In this context, Father Nicanor performs the leap of faith through chocolate; it is a fleeting, material miracle that relies more on a magical spectacle than on genuine faith. What the priest is doing reminds us of Camus's (1942/1979) earlier assertion that the leap of faith demands " an intolerable sacrifice of the intellect. (p.42)

4.3. Physical Suicide: Pietro Crespi

The examples of physical suicide presented by Gabriel García Márquez are no less important than those representing philosophical suicide. Perhaps the most prominent of these examples is Pietro Crespi, who sees in Amaranta a reason that gives him meaning to continue. He arrived at the Buendía family's house to assemble the pianola:

" The import house sent along at its own expense an Italian expert, Pietro Crespi, to assemble and tune the pianola, to instruct the purchasers in its functioning, and to teach them how to dance to the latest music printed on its six paper rolls" (p.62)

Despite his good looks and positive qualities, they were not enough to get what he wanted, or at least to enable him to face the absurdity of Macondo, he " was young and blond, the most handsome and well-mannered man who had ever been seen in Macondo" (p.62). In Camus's philosophy, beauty and order represent a human attempt to impose meaning on cosmic chaos. Through his elegant clothes and handsomeness, he tries to create order and beauty in Macondo, but this order is superficial, like the pianola he brings—an instrument that plays music automatically but does not create it. From Camus's perspective and his philosophy of the absurd, Pietro Crespi embodies impossible romantic love, represented by someone who builds his life on the illusion of eternal love. When the illusion collapses, all reasons for living collapse with it.

Although she shows him some love, Amaranta refuses to marry him when he asks for her hand, saying, " Don't be simple, Crespi." She smiled. "I wouldn't marry you even if I were dead." (p.112). This harsh refusal represents an absurd stance. While Amaranta realizes that love cannot be salvation in an absurd world, as she prefers isolation to illusion, Pietro Crespi does not realize this fact. In this context, Camus sees that love, like any other human relationship, can be a form of rebellion against absurdity, but at the same time, it can be a form of escape. Pietro Crespi practices escape through love, as he escapes from the absurdity of Macondo to a world of romance and music. But his world soon collapses when he finds himself face to face with the emptiness left by Amaranta's refusal to marry him. As mentioned earlier, Camus shows that "There are many causes for a suicide and generally the most obvious ones were not the most powerful" (1942/1979, P.12), Pietro Crespi's suicide was not only due to Amaranta's rejection of him, but also because he realized that the love that represented his only refuge in the face of his absurd existence could not give him the meaning he was searching for.

Márquez presents a tragic scene depicting the end of Pietro Crespi. On one November day, Pietro Crespi turns on all the musical instruments, making them play simultaneously. Adding to the scene's beauty is the fact that all the clocks tick as if indefinitely, as if time itself has stopped. This scene represents an admission of the unbearable nature of life. In his final moments, Pietro Crespi confesses his inability to endure the absurdity of existence. What distinguishes his suicide, however, is the musical method he chooses. He ends his life amidst the musical instruments that were once his only refuge, wanting his death to mirror the way he lived, surrounded by beauty:

"On November second. All Souls' Day, his brother opened the store and found all the lamps lighted, all the music boxes opened, and all the clocks striking an interminable hour, and in the midst of that mad concert he found Pietro Crespi at the desk in the rear with his wrists cut by a razor and his hands thrust into a basin of benzoin" (Márquez, 1967/1970 P.113)

This scene represents art's failure to offer salvation; this moment is one of pure absurdity, where beauty does not prevent death but rather becomes part of it. This aligns with what Camus (1942/1979) sees when he describes art as "absurd joy par excellence ... a form of living doubly" (p.86), meaning that art is not a cure for absurdity but rather one of its symptoms. Hipkiss (1984) argues, absurdist artist "finds life's experiences so contradictory and unresolvable that he can only admit to confusion and express the need for a nonrational means of knowing" (p.3)

The essence of the absurd vision that Gabriel García Márquez presents in his novel lies in repetition, where the life cycle of the Buendía family becomes an endless cycle of recurring events, recurring names, and destinies doomed by fate. This absurd repetition takes two different levels: the first is the life of the Buendía family, and the second is the Sisyphean rebellion practiced by Colonel Aureliano Buendía through his repetitive act of creating golden fish and the thirty-two absurd wars he wages and loses in all of them.

4.4. The Sisyphean Wars of Colonel Aureliano

If there is a single act in the novel that can embody the essence of Sisyphean absurdity in its deepest sense, it is the 32 wars fought by Colonel Aureliano Buendía, all of which he loses. This astonishing repetition of lost wars—and sometimes temporary victories—represents a dramatic model of the myth of Sisyphus as formulated by Albert Camus. Just as Sisyphus pushes the boulder to the top of the mountain only to have it roll back down, Aureliano wages war after war despite knowing that these wars are absurd and lead to no victory. In each war he fights, he finds himself where he began: alone, defeated, and more aware of the absurdity of everything. Aureliano Buendía begins his military journey with a noble motive, defending the liberals against the conservatives, as Márquez shows:

"Tuesday at midnight in a mad operation, twenty-one men under the age of thirty commanded by Aureliano Buendía, armed with table knives and sharpened tools, took the garrison by surprise, seized the weapons, and in the courtyard executed the captain and the four soldiers who had killed the woman" (p.104)

This heroic beginning represents Aureliano fighting for a just cause, believing that the wars he wages constitute meaning. However, as Camus argues in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942/1979), the absurd individual is the one who understands that actions, no matter how noble they are, cannot give life

absolute meaning. From Camus' perspective, wars are one of the greatest collective illusions because they offer humanity the promise of salvation in the form of victory, freedom, or justice, but ultimately deliver nothing but death and destruction. Aureliano Buendía initially falls into this illusion, believing that war is a just cause, that victory is attainable, and that sacrifice has meaning. But as time passes, this illusion gradually fades as he discovers that the politicians he fought for are not different from their enemies, as Márquez illustrates:

"when Colonel Aureliano Buendía returned to Macondo, his upset was changed to stupefaction. Even Ursula was surprised at how much he had changed... It was perhaps the most critical moment of the war. The Liberal landowners, who had supported the revolution in the beginning, had made secret alliances with the Conservative landowners in order to stop the revision of property titles" (p.168)

At this critical moment, Aureliano discovers that the war was never about principles, but about power and money. This moment reveals what Camus said about the absurd man, where, according to Camus (1942/1979), the absurd man is the one who realizes " Everything is permitted does not mean that nothing is forbidden" (p.65), moreover, the absolute moral standards do not exist and that man must create his own meanings.

Aureliano Buendía continues his futile battles, and each time he loses, he returns again. This repetition clearly represents the essence of Sisyphean absurdity, as Márquez explains, " he attempted seven other revolts ... For more than two weeks he held a customs post on the border and from there sent the nation a call to general war" moreover " Another of his expeditions was lost for three months in the jungle in a mad attempt to cross more than a thousand miles of virgin territory in order to proclaim war on the outskirts of the capital" (p.148) Although all these attempts end in failure, Aureliano Buendía continues to fight, driven by an unseen force he cannot resist. Camus sees the absurd hero represented by Sisyphus, as he understands the futility of his action yet persists. Over time, Aureliano reaches this realization, recognizing the absurdity of the wars he wages, " He was weary of the uncertainty, of the vicious circle of that eternal war that always found him in the same place, but always older, wearier, even more in the position of not knowing why, or how, or even when" (p.171) This existential weariness that Aureliano experiences represents the beginning of an absurd awareness. He no longer fights for a cause or noble reasons; on the contrary, he continues these wars because he doesn't know how to stop, and because war itself has become a habit, his defining characteristic. This repetition is reminiscent of Sisyphus, who pushes the boulder again and again. However, the difference is that Sisyphus knows he will never reach his goal, while Aureliano

remains hopeful of a final victory. This represents one of the key differences between Sisyphus and Aureliano; Aureliano is less absurd than Sisyphus because he remains suspended between illusion and reality. This illusion gradually weakens after each defeat, and consequently, his awareness of absurdity increases.

Then Colonel Aureliano reaches a crucial moment of awareness when he asks his close friend Colonel Gerineldo Márquez, " "Tell me something, old friend: why are you fighting?" (p.139), This question perfectly embodies absurdity, representing the question a person asks when they realize that everything they do may be meaningless. His friend's response is decidedly conventional: " Colonel Gerineldo Márquez answered. "For the great Liberal party." (p.139) It is at this precise moment that Aureliano realizes he wasn't fighting for noble motives or a just cause; on the contrary, he was fighting for pride. Human pride, according to Albert Camus, is one of the fundamental human drives, but it cannot give life meaning. Aureliano understands that all these years he had been fighting simply to prove to himself and others that he was capable of fighting. This realization brings him closer to a state of pure absurdity, leading him to seek an alternative to war. He decides to abandon war and retreat into his workshop, where he finds solace in confronting the absurdity he perceives by crafting gold fishes.

After bringing his thirty-two wars to an end, Aureliano decides to return to his workshop, where he begins crafting gold fishes. This shift in Aureliano's attitude is not an escape from absurdity, but rather another form of confrontation, as Márquez explains:

"The anxiety was baseless. If anyone had become harmless at that time it was the aging and disillusioned Colonel Aureliano Buendía, who was slowly losing all contact with the reality of the nation. Enclosed in his workshop, his only relationship with the rest of the world was his business in little gold fishes ... He needed so much concentration to link scales, fit minute rubies into the eyes, laminate gills, and put on fins that there was not the smallest empty moment left for him to fill with his disillusionment of the war. " (pp. 203-204)

Aureliano replaces the cycle of war with the cycle of creating gold fishes, but this cycle differs from his previous one in that it is conscious and peaceful. He no longer fights others, but rather the emptiness within himself. Creating gold fishes represents Aureliano's struggle with absurdity, a struggle that fills his heart and offers him solace in his old age. This new cycle carries a deeper absurdity; he does not create the gold fishes to earn money or leave a legacy for those who come after him, "Since he had decided not to sell any, he kept on making two fishes a day and when he finished twenty-five he would melt them down and start all over again" (p.270), but finds a kind of

inner peace in this absurd act. This cycle is a duplicate of Sisyphus's meaningless pushing of the boulder. Each time Aureliano creates the fishes, he melts them down and creates them anew, as if affirming an absolute, inescapable truth of absurdity: his work has no purpose, which represents human existence—utter absurdity. One of the similarities between Sisyphus and Aureliano is that both perform a meaningless act: Sisyphus pushes the boulder, and Aureliano creates gold fishes and then melts them down. However, the core difference between them is that Sisyphus recognizes the absurdity of his actions from the outset, while Aureliano only comes to this realization gradually after 32 wars. Furthermore, Sisyphus rebels against the gods by despising the punishment of pushing the boulder to the mountaintop and transforming it into a source of joy. Camus (1942/1979) asserts "the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart ... One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (p.111), just as Aureliano rebels against fate by refusing suicide in both its physical and philosophical senses. He does not put an end to his absurd life, nor does he believe in religious or political illusions. Instead, he decides to remain in his workshop and face the absurdity with open eyes. Just as we imagine Sisyphus's happiness, we should likewise imagine Aureliano Buendía happy as he creates his gold fishes, which represent his silent rebellion. He no longer seeks external meaning. Meaning is found in the act itself and in the repetition and awareness.

4.5. The Absurd Hero: Aureliano Babilonia

If the novel represents a text of absurdity par excellence, then the character of Aureliano Babilonia represents the pinnacle of this absurdity, and perhaps to a large extent, Aureliano Babilonia is the only truly absurd hero in this work. While the novel's characters range from those who search for meaning, like José Arcadio Buendía, to those who commit philosophical or physical suicide, like Pietro Crespi and Father Nicanor, and those who repeat the Sisyphean cycle with a diminished awareness, like Colonel Aureliano Buendía, Aureliano Babilonia stands out as a character who combines a complete awareness of absurdity with fatalistic acceptance, silent rebellion, and liberation from the shackles of the past and the future. Márquez writes, "Aureliano [Babilonia] had never been more lucid in any act of his life as when he forgot about his dead ones and the pain of his dead ones ... for he knew then that his fate was written in Melquiades' parchments" (Márquez, 1967/1970 p.420) The moment when Aureliano Babilonia begins reading the parchments at the end of the novel represents the culmination of the absurdist awareness of the entire work. In the final scene, Aureliano realizes that his destiny is predetermined and that his family's history is not a series of random events but a complete text. He reaches a state of awareness that no other character in the novel has. This moment reveals the essence of the absurdist experience in Camus's work. At this

moment, Aureliano is freed from the shackles of the past and the agony of loss to reach absolute certainty that his destiny has been predetermined and that everything that happened was written:

"He began to decipher them aloud. It was the history of the family, written by Melquiades, down to the most trivial details, one hundred years ahead of time ... and he found the origin of the posthumous twins who gave up deciphering the parchments, not simply through incapacity and lack of drive, but also because their attempts were premature " (p.423)

The scene begins by confirming that Aureliano discovers all this at the moment of annihilation when the city of Macondo is about to collapse. This clarity and awareness that Aureliano reaches does not represent a state of rationality in the traditional sense, according to Camus, but rather represents an awareness of the absurd. Camus (1942/1979) explains that whoever " becomes conscious the absurd is for ever bound to it" and as a result "has ceased to belong to the future." (p.35)." Awareness of the absurd is not merely an intellectual awareness but an existential commitment. A state of fusion with the reality of meaninglessness, where Aureliano reaches full consciousness.

Aureliano's awareness is distinguished from that of the other characters because it is free from illusions. Characters such as José Arcadio Buendía and many other characters in the novel have reached partial awareness or brief moments of consciousness followed by madness or escape. However, Aureliano's awareness is final because he has realized that everything is over and that no future awaits him. This moment represents a point of convergence between madness and wisdom, where madness, or what is known as the awareness of an inevitable fate, becomes the only possible rationality in an absurd world. At the same time, this awareness contradicts the attempts of the other characters to impose meaning on their existence. For example, Father Nicanor sought meaning through miracles, José Arcadio Buendía sought meaning through science, and Aureliano the Colonel sought this kind of meaning through war. All these attempts failed because they presupposed the existence of an external meaning that could be discovered. However, Aureliano's attempt did not fail because he was not searching for a new meaning, but rather trying to interpret the existing meaning embodied in the written text of the parchments. This acceptance represents a form of rebellion because it means confronting the truth without illusions.

Forgetting death represents yet another form of rebellion against absurdity. When Aureliano tries to forget the dead in the Buendía family, this does not represent merely an escape from grief but rather a fundamental condition of absurd consciousness. Camus explains that the dead represent the burden of the past and that painful memory constitutes an obstacle to confronting absurdity. Living the

future consists of freeing oneself from the past to live in the present, that is, " Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present" (Camus, 1942/1979, p.304).

While most of the novel's characters were prisoners of their dead, for example, José Arcadio Buendía was haunted by the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar, whom he murdered; Úrsula wept for more than 100 years in her solitude; and Amaranta remained faithful to the memory of Pietro Crespi after his suicide, even while refusing to marry him. This clinging to the dead is a form of philosophical suicide because it prevents the characters from living in the present. In contrast, Aureliano liberates himself from this burden. He does not forget them out of cruelty, but because his awareness of predetermined fate makes him realize that the dead are part of the complete parchments, and that weeping or grieving for them will change nothing.

For Albert Camus, rebellion is the act of confronting absurdity without surrendering; it represents liberation from everything that weighs down the soul. Aureliano's rebellion is a silent one, as he refuses to be a prisoner of the past and chooses to face his destiny with open eyes instead of closing them and clinging to things that will not enrich him. As Camus shows at the end of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Sisyphus is not superior to his fate because he can change it, but because he can despise it and coexist with it, that "he is superior to his fate ... and he is stronger than his rock" (Camus, 1942/1979, p.109) by being happy to serve his punishment and enjoying it fervently. This is precisely what Aureliano does; he transcends his dead not by forgetting them but by overcoming their significance and making his awareness of destiny greater than his grief for them, that he accepted his destined fate just like the way Sisyphus did.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* transcends magical realism to become a philosophical meditation on existential absurdity, engaging deeply with Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* while reconfiguring his thought within the mythic, historical, and ironic context of Latin America. The analysis uncovers four progressive levels of absurdity: first, the human longing for meaning in a silent universe, embodied in José Arcadio Buendía's futile quest for cosmic unity; second, the twin evasions of absurdity—philosophical suicide through Father Nicanor's performative leap of faith, and physical suicide through Pietro Crespi's collapse when romantic illusion fails; third, Sisyphian repetition as the structuring logic of the Buendía lineage, exemplified by Colonel Aureliano Buendía's endless wars and ritualistic gold-fish making, though his awareness comes belatedly compared to Sisyphus's initial consciousness; and fourth, the complete absurdist hero, Aureliano Babilonia, who uniquely combines full awareness, fatalistic acceptance, and silent

rebellion, confronting his prophesied end with lucid defiance rather than resignation. Ultimately, the study concludes that García Márquez's novel does not merely illustrate Camusian philosophy but enriches it by grounding abstract despair in the cyclical rhythms of familial and collective memory, insisting that the most profound rebellion lies in reading one's own story to the very last line.

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