



## **Gabriel García Márquez: The Last Interview: and Other Conversations**

*Gabriel García Márquez , David Streitfeld (Editor)*

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**An intimate and lively collection of interviews with a giant of twentieth century literature—the only collection of interviews with García Márquez available**

Hailed by the *New York Times* as a "conjurer of literary magic," Nobel Prize-winning author Gabriel García Márquez is known to millions of readers worldwide as the author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Beloved by readers of nearly all ages, he is surely the most popular literary novelist in translation—and he remains so today, a decade after the publication of his final novel.

In addition to the first-ever English translation of García Márquez's last interview, this unprecedented volume includes his first interview, conducted while he was in the throes of writing *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which reveals the young writer years before the extraordinary onslaught of success that would make him a household name around the world. Also featured is a series of unusually wide-ranging conversations with García Márquez's friend Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza—surely the only interview with García Márquez that includes the writer's insights into both the meaning of true love and the validity of superstitions. *Gabriel García Márquez: The Last Interview* also contains two interviews with Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* reporter David Streitfeld.

A wide-ranging and revealing book, *Gabriel García Márquez: The Last Interview* is an essential book for lifelong fans of García Márquez—and readers who are just getting encountering the master's work for the first time.

## **Gabriel García Márquez: The Last Interview: and Other Conversations Details**

Date : Published January 27th 2015 by Melville House

ISBN :

Author : Gabriel García Márquez , David Streitfeld (Editor)

Format : Kindle Edition 128 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography



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## ?????? ?????? says

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## Sharjeel Ahmed says

A very important book for any reader interested in the personality of Gabo. After reading Solitude, I was harassed by this curiosity to understand its author, and YouTube did not help at all. This book presents five rare interviews with Marquez that shed light on his mind, that unique mind that could create a masterful work like Solitude and later come to despise it too.

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## Resh (The Book Satchel) says

A few interviews with the master Gabriel Garcia. I really enjoyed reading through this one. My only complaint - I wish there were more of them.

Reading these I can see Garcia as a man who knew his own greatness as well as acknowledged it. Some might think it was a bit boastful of him to talk that way. I felt like "Here is a man who knows what he is made of."

The interviews are translated as Gracia refused to give them in English. It was delightful reading about his mannerisms and rules from the POV of those who came to interview him as well. The book talks of Garcia's early days, his lack of money, his wife & family life, his superstitions, his fascination towards some women, some books he loves etc. Perfect trivia for any fan.

I was amazed that Garcia considers The Autumn of the Patriarch as his best work. He was let down that the beauty of that novel wasn't recognised as much as One Hundred Years of Solitude that plunged him into fame. He keeps talking about the differences between the two that makes me eager to read The Autumn of the Patriarch which I haven't read yet.

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## Ageng Indra says

Tidak begitu menarik, ketimbang wawancara dengan Bolaño yang saya baca sebelumnya. Bila Bolaño banyak omong soal kesusastraan, Wawancara Gabo sekadar membicarakan proses kreatifnya sendiri dan

beberapa gosip tentangnya. Gabo sering mengejek pewawancaranya dengan bercandaan yang intimidatif, selain karena dia tampaknya benar-benar tidak suka wawancara, juga barangkali untuk mencairkan suasana, atau tepatnya, menenangkan dirinya sendiri dari kecemasan sosial. Seperti diungkapkan di penutup wawancara terakhirnya.

"I have the great advantage now that the people who come here are already intimidated ... and that makes it easier for me."

Hal menarik lainnya adalah detil-detil bernada magis yang banyak bertebaran di tiap wawancara, seperti fotografer yang mati lima belas hari setelah memfotonya sampai Gabo sendiri tak pernah melihat hasil fotonya, sampai kritikus yang mati 40 jam setelah memuji karya terbaiknya.

Sebagian besar yang tersisa dari buku ini diisi keluhan kenapa Autumn of Patriarch tidak mendapat perhatian sebanyak Solitude, dan tentang perempuan.

Soal kesusastraan, sekali lagi, tidak begitu banyak--setidaknya ketimbang Bolaño--meskipun yang sedikit itu juga cukup menarik.

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### **Rayce Arrington says**

The novel "Gabriel Garcia Marquez: The Last Interview" is a very interesting read. In all honesty this book caught me off guard in the very beginning when it starts off by the author actually talking to Gabriel Garcia, in my head I was thinking that this story would be a narrator talking about his life not a conversation between the two men. This twist was in my opinion an excellent format to create this novel; it was actually really cool and made it more entertaining. The novel consisted most of the time of just the author and Gabriel Garcia but in one part his friend was also there and said some things and added onto some stories. Though the interviews were pretty short, the reader gets to know Gabriel Garcia on a more personal level and learn what he was thinking when it came to creating some of his books. Some interesting facts that I learned while reading the novel was the fact that, the main book that got him famous (100 years of solitude) was not his best book in his opinion. Also surprisingly it didn't take 100 years to make, but it felt like it though... (100 years of solitude is pretty good in my opinion but so freaking long and can get boring at times.)

The novel is split up in parts instead of chapters, each of these parts consist of interviews discussing different topics. One of the topics that really stood out to me would have to be his effects on politics. He just simply wanted happiness for all; he believed that happiness is the answer for everything. I just thought that it was awesome that this man (Gabriel Garcia) could make a big change like that to the world and leave such an impact. Another part/ section of the novel are what he thought about women and how he implemented them in his writing. Now at first I was like "oh ok, I don't know why a whole part of this book is about the opposite sex but alright". After reading it though, I understood why it had a whole section. All of his life he had women him, supporting him and made him the man who he was. The women in his novel are very noble or wise (at least most of them are) due to the fact that he respects them to the highest degree.

Overall this novel was a good read, took me around 4 hours total to read over a period of a week. As a 15 year old going on 16 in a week, I would give it a 8/10.

-Rayce Ventura

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## **Stephen says**

"If it's true that every writer spends his life writing one book, which would yours be?"

"The book of solitude."

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## **Mutasim Billah says**

*"Nothing awful can happen to me if there are yellow flowers around. To be absolutely safe, I need yellow flowers (preferably yellow roses) and to be surrounded by women."*

*Gabriel García Márquez: The Last Interview: and Other Conversations (The Last Interview Series)* is a compilation of interviews and conversations of arguably the most celebrated Latin American writer and journalist of the 20th century.

The interviews find Gabo at different stages of his career. From a young aspiring novelist, to the mammoth that he had become. Charming yet elusive, sometimes outspoken and at others diplomatic, these interviews give us an intimate view of one of the greatest writers of our times.

## **INTERVIEWS**

### **A Novelist Who Will Keep Writing Novels (1956)**

A young García Márquez has just found some acclaim after releasing his first book *Leaf Storm*. The interview explores his views on writing and the state of Colombian literature, his interests in film and his future plans on writing fiction.

### **Power to the Imagination in Macondo (1975)**

Here we find Gabo at his peak. On the brink of unleashing *The Autumn of the Patriarch* into the world, García Márquez talks extensively about his views on Latin American politics and revolution and how much his writing has been influenced by these themes. His views on the 1973 Chilean coup d'état are also explored here

### **“Women,” “Superstitions, Manias, and Taste,” and “Work” (1983)**

A more personal interview, Gabo sits with fellow writer/journalist Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza and answers his questions on the role of women in his life and in Latin American culture, his superstitions and manias, and his writing. This interview finds a particularly cheerful Márquez just before he would be receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature.

### **A Stamp Used Only for Love Letters (1994 & 1997)**

Two series of interviews by David Streifeld explore Gabo's views on his friendship with Castro, his new

perception of mortality (he had just beat cancer) and his career in journalism and his life as a major public figure in Latin America. If the other interviews find García Márquez at his most amicable and charming, these interviews are a lot more difficult as Streitfeld pokes and prods with his questions into formidable aspects of his life and questioning him about politicians and drug-lords.

*With Fidel Castro*

### **'I've Stopped Writing': The Last Interview (2006)**

García Márquez's final interview, where he admits that he has taken a "sabbatical" from writing and that it is undecided whether he will ever write again. This piece finds Gabo and his family reminiscing of the past, of the places where they lived and the people they met. He also talks about his memoirs and is found to be a lot more confident.

I really enjoyed reading these interviews. There was sharp contrast in the García Márquez of each era, proving that the man's views and character have remained elusive 'til the end. Yet, we do get an intimate portrait of the man, his eccentricities, his aspirations and his hopes for the future. I particularly enjoyed Mendoza and Streitfeld's interviews because of their differing journalistic approach to the interview and Gabo's reaction to both.

*Gabriel García Márquez, 1927-2014*

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### **Jessica says**

Super quick, really enjoyable read. You can read in one sitting, or an essay at a time. I love getting a sense of GGM's personality. I have only read one novel and two stories of his, but I still got a lot from it, and am wanting to read more and more of his work! Marquez newbies and aficionados alike will appreciate this in their different ways.

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### **Hrishikesh says**

I partly understand the great man's reluctance to be interviewed - if he has something to say, he will say it, in his own words, a thousands times better. There is no overwhelming revelation in this collection of interviews, but the insight it gives into his life is engaging enough.

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### **Shadin Pranto says**

" I want revolution for life, not for death; so that the whole world can live better lives, drink better wine,

drive better cars... Material goods aren't inherent to the bourgeoisie, they're a human heritage that bourgeoisie has stolen ; we're going to take them back and distribute them among everyone. "

" I had thought that I needed to cut more, really there'd been something missing. And so you really have to write a lot, then cut, correct, tear many notebooks to pieces, before you can finally bring a few pages to publisher..! "

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" By not giving them any encouragement.. By not publishing anything of theirs that isn't truly great. Really we don't have to worry about opening the doors of the newspapers to young writers. When they write something great, the doors will open on their own. "

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" I think writers' political roles must be determined by the circumstances of each moment. When it comes to political work, writers like to be given concrete tasks. "

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" Interviewer: There was a story that Escobar gave you money to write your book.  
GARCIA MARQUEZ: That's a stupid thing to say, because I have more money than he did."

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## Faiza Sattar says

*On trying to secure an interview with Marquez - Everyone said it was like getting an audience with the pope. As in: Don't even bother trying.*

I read Gabo's interviews in the early hours of the day, just when the consciousness is evading sleep and yet drifting towards it with an elusive restraint. Marquez's words rise up from the text and begin to spontaneously connect the dots for the fiction I've read from him so far. It's a remarkable experience in itself, knowing the master personally, the man behind the magical One Hundred Years of Solitude and the poetical Autumn of the Patriarch, the reverential No One Writes to the Colonel and the meditative Memories of my Melancholy Whores.

*Solitude was the most famous novel in the world, and perhaps the last to have a demonstrable effect on it.*

The interviews, though brief, lend a vision into his meditations on politics and revolutions, the nature of power and violence, his attitude towards womenfolk, creativity and writing, personal superstitions, Latin American culture, the mystery of love and his aversion to fame. A recluse figure, a legend of mythical proportions in the literary world, Gabo still comes off as a giant in the most mundane of conversations. I'm most intrigued to read his biography by Gerald Martin.

## ON POLITICS AND THE NEED FOR A UNIFIED REVOLUTION

Marquez was an active figure in Latin American politics, using his influence as a literary giant to change the course of corrupt governments and dictators who had long ruled the area, thrashing its culture, literature, economy all into a forgetful stupor. He stressed on the importance of using literature as a weapon to counter dogmatic beliefs and practices that had wreaked havoc on the Latin American society.

*We need to use our imaginations in Latin America, after so many years of ideological petrification, of swallowing things whole; the right already knows all our tactics.*

For Gabo, the idea of revolution was the "search for individual happiness through collective happiness, which is the only just form of happiness." He opposed the practice of active martyrdom for the sake of country.

*I want revolution for life, not for death; so that the whole world can live better lives, drink better wine, drive better cars ... Material goods aren't inherent to the bourgeoisie, they're a human heritage that the bourgeoisie has stolen; we're going to take them back and distribute them among everyone.*

With deep socialist inclinations and a dedicated friendship with Castro, Marquez's fervent ideas on true

governance, opposition to despotic advances are often reflected in his views on power and violence as the two are inextricably linked. His views and personal friendships barred him from entering United States for many years till the sanction was lifted. Once during his visit to the States, the interviewer asked him about the state of affairs back home, to which he candidly replied “I never talk about Colombian politics when I’m outside of Colombia.” And when the interviewer proceeded to his views on American politics, Gabo in all amusing seriousness replied “I never talk about American politics when I’m in America.”

Marquez’s sense of reality was deep rooted. He recognized the evils of power with an acute sense of profound understanding. “Violence has existed forever, and it’s an ancient resident of Colombia,” he recalls. On bitter criticism of his association with Fidel Castro, the writer says:

*I believe when people sign a petition, they make a great noise. They don’t really care about the cause. They’re just thinking about themselves—what the public is going to think of their petition.*

This also rings true of modern era petitions, either of a political or social nature – these entreaties are more true to the egotistical demands of those creating it or promoting it than to fostering real change in society.

## ON WOMEN

*It was a Frenchman who said, “There are no impotent men, only unfeeling women.”*

I was most fascinated by Gabo’s personal opinion on womenfolk whom he holds in high regards, and how he dealt with them in his fiction – always giving them a focal role to play. The matriarchal dependency of many of his male characters pushes the boundaries of Latin American culture and give us a keen insight on how Gabo revered the female sex in terms of their wisdom, resilience and mystique.

*All through my life there has always been a woman to take me by the hand and lead me through the confusion of existence, which women understand better than men.*

Women have played a pivotal role in Marquez’s life. He grew up surrounded by oral stories from his grandmother, and a horde of aunts to tend to him. His wife Mercedes provided him with unconditional support. His literary agent Carmen Balcells had been working with him since 1961, his earliest years as a writer. All these matrons have been in one way or another immortalized as fictitious characters in his stories – altering the course of states, families as a whole or lone men in indubitable power.

*Women uphold the social order with an iron hand while men travel the world bent on boundless folly, which pushes history forward. I’ve come to the conclusion that women lack any sense of history. Otherwise, they could not fulfill their primordial function of perpetuating the species.*

At another instance, the writer details on the mystifying aspect of women, the allure of their beauty and femininity without any causal link to sexual advances.

*When I walk into a place full of people, I feel a kind of mysterious signal drawing my gaze irresistibly toward the most intriguing woman in the crowd. Not necessarily the most beautiful, but the one with whom I obviously have a deep affinity. I never do anything, I just have to know she’s there and I’m quite happy. It’s something so pure and beautiful that even Mercedes sometimes helps me to locate her and choose the best vantage point from which to see her.*

On women with corrupted morality, vengeful tastes and unstable lifestyle, Marquez has nothing but kindness

for them. "All they need is some good company, a little understanding, and a little love, and they are usually grateful for it. I say "a little" because of course their solitude is incurable."

## ON LOVE AND FAME

*STREITFELD: There is a stamp in Colombia with your face on it.*

*GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: I hope it's only used for love letters*

Like Marquez reveres the female sex, he venerates not just "love", a singular emotion but also the ability to love which for Marquez is granted to only the extremely fortunate ones. Power and love stand as polar opposites. "Power is a substitute for love," he says. This indeed is true for all his characters who practice supreme authority, are masters of their own fate and that of the country's, and stand alone as bastions of terrible sovereignty – they all lack the fervent ability to love another, or to be an object of love themselves. Their lawlessness and arrogance equates to a crippling incapacity to function as normal human beings, and scarcity of experiencing love either ends in their downfall, death or both.

*MENDOZA: Do you really think the inability to love is very serious?*

*GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: I don't think there's any human misery greater than that. Not only for the person afflicted but for all those whose misfortune it is to come within his orbit.*

For Marquez, the evident problem with love is making it last.

*I don't see love as a quick lunge with no consequences.*

And just as he admires love, he derides fame as a catastrophe for private life.

*Fame unsettles your sense of reality, almost as much as power perhaps, and it continually threatens your private life.*

The thematic use of Solitude in many of his books is undoubtedly linked to the author's persona. It is his elusiveness that cemented his legend and he intended to keep it that way till his last years.

*It's as if you could even measure solitude by the number of people around you. You're surrounded by more and more people, you feel smaller and smaller and smaller.*

It isn't a small wonder that journalists across the world had a hard time getting to him. This perhaps multiplied in the years after he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature. His aversion to fame was not just to protect his family but also to prevent any disturbances hindering his own sense of reality. This, for me, is a true mark of humility in a man.

*More than most authors, he tried not to repeat himself, even as he got older and the temptation to revisit triumphs must have been acute*

## ON SUPERSTITIONS

One of the most amusing and surprising instances of the book covers Gabo's attitude towards superstitions, including his own personal, somewhat peculiar superstitions.

*I believe that superstitions, or what are commonly called such, correspond to natural forces which rational*

*thinking, like that of the West, has rejected*

Here, Latin American culture holds a keen similarity to South Asian culture where superstitious beliefs are a crucial building block of societal norms. In context of their geography and value, they are not “irrational beliefs” per se but hold a key to morals most valued. Gabo, earnestly discloses some of his personal superstitions such as “smoking in the nude did not mean bad luck, but smoking in the nude while walking about did”. He even details an instance from private life where getting out of a city and never going back again stands between life and death. These curious little fallacies can be spotted in almost all his stories, and which most definitely influenced his life as a story teller.

## **ON THE ART OF WRITING**

*My father would say I was born in 1927. My mother said, “Let him be born whenever he wants to be born.” Clearly, she’s a practitioner of the new journalism.*

When asked about his first publication Leaf Storm, Marquez candidly recalls how many years he had spent writing, re-writing, editing, cutting, correcting, tearing the many notebooks of the story just to bring a few final pages to the publisher. He adds as to how the ideas that he had initially trashed later formulated the plot to his second book.

For Marquez, “a writer writes only one book, although that same book may appear in several volumes under different titles.” And when asked what his collective book would be about, he calls it “The book of solitude.”

Marquez started his career as a reporter for the local newspaper. He’d often live in one of the shabby rooms in a hotel which also functioned as a brothel. Many a times, due to dire financial circumstances, he’d leave his manuscript as deposit with the hotel porter.

*Journalism is my true vocation. It keeps my feet on the ground. Otherwise I’m like a balloon, I float off. Journalism keeps me nailed to reality. Curiously, as time goes on, I find the professions of fiction and journalism merging. The essence of literature and of journalism is the credibility they create. People are convinced by details.*

His journalistic integrity is best shown in an instance where one interviewer proceeded to use a tape to record the interview session to which Marquez politely declined as he considered himself “an enemy of the tape-recorder. It has an ear but no heart.”

Marquez was dismayed at the immense success of Solitude as it seemed to eclipse the importance of Patriarch which he himself had declared as his masterpiece. Though he had no favourites, it became increasingly challenging for him to write the next book after each published work’s achievement.

*I don’t think of one book as being better or worse than the last; I just want to take that step.*

During the late 90’s and early 2000’s, Marquez had taken to writing on a computer, abandoning the old practice of using a typewriter.

*On a computer, a novel is infinitely correctible. It’s so easy. You go on endlessly. But in the end it’s faster. The proof is I used to put out a novel every seven years, now it’s every two years.*

When asked on the usage of run-on sentences and “breathing commas”, Gabo’s reply echoed the style of

each of his work

*My idea of a literary text is actual hypnotism. It's very important that the rhythm does not have any stops and starts, because when you have a stop or a start, the reader can escape*

This is indeed true whilst reading any of his stories where the reader is given a momentary relief with the aid of a comma or a semicolon amidst reading sentences that last the entire length of a chapter. The style mesmerises and bounds the reader till the very end in a trance like state, where a single breath could break the spell of the magical realist story.

In his old age, Marquez had stopped writing entirely and devoted his time to being an avid reader. Inspired by works of Faulkner, Kafka, Dostoyevsky, he noted that “when novelists read another novelist’s work, they take it apart as if it were a machine. Nothing teaches you how to write a novel except another novel.”

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### **Dustin says**

Quick read, nice insight into his novels.

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### **Fred Kohn says**

When I reserved this book from the library, I didn't realize that there is a whole series of *The Last Interview* books, and I think I will be reading more of them. This particular one came up on a catalog search of Gabriel García Márquez. As best as I recall, his name came up in a book about Ronald Reagan that I was reading, and I wanted to learn more about his political views. I haven't read any of his novels yet and I thought knowing his political views may guide me as to which of his books are likely to interest me the most. After reading this book, I have decided to read *Leaf Storm and Other Stories* before reading his most famous book: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. I don't know if this is the right plan for me but: we'll see!

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### **May Wescott says**

Interesting interviews with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Had to read it for a paper I was doing.

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### **Daniella says**

Did not know he was such a misogynist before, now I do.

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