University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange

University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects | University of Tennessee Honors Program

5-2012

No se puede vivir sin pensar: an analysis of The Boom in Latin America

Lauren Lee
UTK, llee17@utk.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj

Recommended Citation
Lee, Lauren, "No se puede vivir sin pensar: an analysis of The Boom in Latin America" (2012). *University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects.*
http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/1559

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Tennessee Honors Program at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

No se puede vivir sin pensar: an analysis of The Boom in Latin America

Lauren Lee
Advisor: Dr. Luis Cano

Honors Thesis Project
UH 498
Spring 2012

Outline

A. Introduction

1. Define the Boom
2. The Boom as a publishing phenomenom
3. Totalization

B. Loneliness

1. La casa tomada - Julio Cortázar
2. Carta a una señorita en París - Cortázar
3. El avión de la bella durmiente - García Márquez
4. Los cachorros - Vargas Llosa
5. Comparison and connections of loneliness

C. Conformity in Society

1. Ómnibus - Cortázar
2. Los cachorros - Vargas Llosa
3. La luz es como el agua - García Márquez
4. El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve - García Márquez
5. Comparison and connections of society

D. Control and Power

1. Sólo vine por usar el teléfono - García Márquez
2. El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve - García Márquez
3. Circe - Cortázar
4. Comparison and connections of control

E. Conclusion

Genius does not happen often nor in great numbers. A literary phenomenon called the Boom, broke both of these odds. During the 1960's, Latin America produced some of the greatest writers and pieces of literature of all time. The most famous writers among this period included Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar and Mario Vargas Llosa. Critic of Latin American fiction, Gerald Martin, lists five of the greatest works of the Boom which have no room for improvement. "Certainly Cortázar never improved upon *Rayuela* (1963), nor Fuentes upon La muerte de Artemio Cruz (1962...), nor Cabrera Infante on *Tres tristes tigres* (1963...), nor Vargas Llosa on *La Casa Verde* (1966), nor García Márquez on the incomparable *Cien años de soledad* (1967), which marked the apotheosis of the movement and, as it transpired, heralded its decline" (Martin, 54). The two most recognized works of the Boom are *Cien años de soledad* by Gabriel García Márquez and *Rayuela* by Julio Cortázar. The Boom did not solely occur just because of these great writers and their works; it was due to a mix of the times, politics, culture, and the publishing industry. "If the Boom exists, it was due to cultural, political, and economic factors that made it such that a group of novelists was recognized as somewhat homogenous, despite the differences in their ages and backgrounds" (Gonzalez Echevarria, 65). The boom is unique in that it is contained to such a short time frame during the 1960's with a limited number of authors. Its restrictions are clear and it is easy to categorize a work as belonging to the Boom or not.

Before the 1960's, Latin America had great works by talented writers, but were not as

popular among the public eye as they should have been. Authors did not even need publishers. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, founder of *El mundo nuevo* magazine and one of the most influential Latin American literary critics said during an interview, "Carlos Fuentes was the first Latin American writer I can think of to have an agent, and an American one at that" (Rodríguez Monegal, 30). The publication industry flourished and was able to publish, market, and sell Latin American works to the public. Martin defines the Boom best as:

> For the first time Latin American authors saw their novels published in large quantities, and were soon able to conceive of living of the proceeds of their writing and its commercial by-products. Latin American middle-class readers, a rapidly expanding group whom the writers in many ways represented, flattered both by the literary reflection of their own image and by world attention focused on the new fiction, began at last to prefer works by writers from their own continent to those from Europe, and waited eagerly for the next book by Cortázar, García Márquez or Vargas Llosa... The astonishing result of all this was that the Boom writers became household names in Latin America, like film or pop stars, sportsmen or politicians (Martin, 53-54).

Not only were the authors famous among the literary world, but famous in pop-culture too. *El mundo Nuevo* magazine published the best literature produced in Latin America. The central office was located in Paris which helped its popularity because it was seen as a trendy magazine in a well known location. "Paris is really the international capital of Latin America even today" (Rodríguez Monegal, 31). Their sole

interest was to publish good Latin American works that needed to be read. A wide variety of material was chosen and anything from poems to essays were featured. *El mundo nuevo* became controversial due to some of the uncensored stories they published and was banned in Brazil, Argentina, Spain and Cuba (Rodríguez Monegal, 32). The public's desire to read the magazine only grew after being prohibited. "The mission of the magazine was to introduce new writers. This would explain why so many Boom novels became best-sellers: You published chapters in Mundo Nuevo and whetted the appetites of readers all over the New World. Even García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* made its first public appearance in *Mundo Nuevo*..." (Rodríguez Monegal, 34). Politics quickly put an end to the Boom. It was officially over by 1984 and lasted only a short period of time. Julio Cortázar's *Bestiario*, Mario Vargas Llosa's *Los cachorros* and Gabriel García Márquez's *Doce cuentos peregrinos* are all major works that were produced during the Boom. Each has their own unique style, but they all play and push the previous boundaries set by earlier Latin American writers. Experimentation with language, narration, plot, and characters can all be found in these novels. Some unique characteristics of the writing style of the Boom are in its omniscient narration, but with the familiarity of being a friend or family member of the characters seen in the story. For example, in *Circe* the narrator is first person omniscient and refers to the characters as if he or she has met and known them. "Yo me acuerdo mal de Delia..." (Cortázar, 76). This gives the audience a more familiar feeling and connection to the characters and lets them relate to them on a closer level. Another recognizable characteristic of the Boom are its comparisons of opposites:

light and dark, wet and dry, innocence and maturity. These juxtapositions make the reader question what his or her role is in society and how he or she views the world. Realismo maravilloso is seen in some of these works where what would be considered extraordinary is viewed as everyday. This is seen in *Carta a una señorita en París* with the vomiting of rabbits and *La luz es como el agua* with the navigation and sailing of light instead of water. This type of writing was widely accepted by grand audiences, but also criticized by some. Novels of the Boom typically have a traditional vision of the world and consist of characters that are white, cultured, and formally educated put in typical social situations. There are not many people of different races, sexes or of poverty. This can be criticized as an elitist view of the world. The social criticism is important, however, what is at the center of focus are the abstract themes and ideas. Overall, the Boom presents the audience with new ways of looking at the world that are interesting and fresh.

What all the novels of the Boom had in common was its aim to be total. They each wanted to create a greater view of wholeness achieved through the small scale lens of a personal story. The world is shown through a small history. The complexities of life are distilled down into a digestible story that the reader can take in without being overwhelmed, yet upon further investigation, come to realize the broader implications and commentary about the world it contains. Cuban critic of the Boom, Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria, states that, "The novel of the Boom aspired to be total, and even if it failed and made a spectacle of this failure, the fact remains that the possibility of

totalization was an important factor" (Gonzalez Echevarria, 69). It is through this goal of seeing the world as a whole that novels from the Boom can be categorized together. The totality comes from the universal themes that all humans experience. The works studied specifically with the view of totality are: Julio Cortázar's works from *Bestiario: Casa tomada, Carta a una señorita en París, Circe,* and *Ómnibus;* Mario Vargas Llosa's *Los cachorros;* and Gabriel García Márquez's stories from *Doce cuentos peregrinos: El avion de la bella durmiente, <<Solo vine a hablar por teléfono>>, La luz es como el agua,* and *El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve*. The themes found in these stories are the state of loneliness, conformity among society, and the sense of power and control which define the Boom and its take on life.

Loneliness is a common theme seen throughout the novels of the Boom period. It is part of the human condition that everyone feels. Sometimes it is inexplicable and other times it is put upon us by others and society. The theme of loneliness can be seen in Julio Cortázar's *La casa tomada.* A brother and sister live in a big house by themselves without any interaction with the outside world. They are obsessed with taking care of the house and are consumed by their daily repetitive routine. A mysterious noise takes over the house and forces them out slowly, room by room. This pair lives alone and has no desire to interact with the outside world. The brother used to go to the market to buy yarn for the sister to knit with and books, but eventually stops doing that for an unknown reason. The sister never once has a thought of leaving the house and seems perfectly content cooking, cleaning, and knitting all day long. Neither one ever

expresses any feelings of loneliness, but they do not have anyone on whom they can depend. They are stuck in this repetitive routine due to the fact that they have nothing new to think about. All of his books have been read, all the sweaters and socks have been knit and the same food has been cooked. It is easy and comfortable to not have to change and due to their isolation, they have no desire to change. When they hear this noise, instead of checking to see what it is, they simply lock themselves into smaller and smaller quarters of their house. If they had had others to ask about the noise, perhaps they would not have been so scared or unwilling to see what it was. It is as if they do not know what they are missing out on by secluding themselves to each other and a few simple things. They are not happy nor are they sad. They are however boring and simple with little to no thoughts or conversation. Having no references to what it is to interact with anyone else besides each other, the brother and sister are unaware of any other person besides themselves. The loneliness is not felt or acknowledged by the couple, but it is completely avoided and escaped. Even though they are not cognizant of their aloneness, it is apparent through their lack of communication to the outside world. Irene's brother finds a chest full of scares his sister has knitted and preserved with mothballs as if they were to be sold in a market. "Un día encontré el cajón de abajo de la cómoda de alcanfor lleno de pañoletas blancas, verdes, lila. Estaban con naftalina, apliadas como en una mercería; no tuve valor de preguntarle a Irene qué pensaba hacer con ellas. No necesitábamos ganarnos la vida, todos los meses llegaba la plata de los campos y el dinero aumentaba" (Cortázar, 12-13). Irene knows there is an external world outside of her brother and her, but does not feel the need to leave her home

since everything is taken care of. Because of this, she becomes obsessed with knitting. They are not part of society and remain static in their lives through their inability to grow due to the same routine and lack of outside communication.

Suicide is one of the most outward forms of loneliness. In Julio Cortázar's *Carta a una señorita en París,* an apartment tenant cannot stop vomiting bunnies. The only way he knows how to stop throwing up bunnies is to kill himself. This desperate attempt to communicate by killing oneself is one of the greatest signs of loneliness. The letter he is writing explains the account of what is happening, how the rabbits first come about, and his anguish and worry that this will never stop. Loneliness manifests itself here with the tenant being unable to talk to anyone except the woman in Paris, about what is going on. He is at a loss as to what to do for help and does not even think about seeking out advice. The tenant feels as though he must hide the bunnies from the housekeeper, Sara, and so he stacks them in a closet for as long as possible. "Su día principia a esa hora que sigue a la cena, cuando Sara se lleva la bandeja con un menudo tintinear de tenacillas de azúcar, me desea buenas noches -sí, me las desea, Andrée, lo más amargo es que me desea las buenas noches- y se encierra en su cuarto y de pronto estoy yo solo, solo con el armario condenado, solo con mi deber y mi tristeza" (Cortázar, 25). The main character feels alone even though he is surrounded by bunnies. This is just a superficial feeling of having a "community." His writing to the señorita could be viewed as an attempt to try and solve the problem, but he writes in a state of surrender and not one of hope and leaves the letter waiting for her at the apartment as a suicide

note. As in *Casa tomada,* neither the brother and sister nor the tenant know what to do when something goes wrong. Furthermore they have no knowledge to compare to see if this behavior is at all strange or different. He is speaking to Andrée as if she were there in the room with him. He does not go to seek help, he just suffers and then takes an extreme measure to stop vomiting rabbits. Had he not felt alone, he would have had more reasons to live, mainly other people to live for. Since he is just by himself, he feels no need to continue his life, nor can he even see past the bunnies. This novel takes the strange story of throwing up rabbits and turns it into a larger commentary on solidarity and aloneness that people face when confronted with an issue they do not know how to solve it.

The feeling of solidarity and oneness is common. This emotion is felt by every human being and can be more extreme in some cases than in others. In Gabriel García Márquez's *El avión de la bella durmiente,* a man creates a false illusion of hope and a full life with a girl he has just met and has hardly spoken. The main character gets stranded in the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, France while waiting to go home on a flight to New York City. He sees a young, breathtakingly gorgeous woman in line whom he calls "The Beauty." While trapped inside the airport during the snowstorm, he becomes obsessed with thinking about her and even passively searches to find her. He becomes speechless when he realizes that she is already in the seat assigned next to him on the airplane. During the flight, Beauty gives specific instructions to the stewardess to not wake her up for any reason whatsoever. She takes two pills and sleeps the whole

time. He cannot stop thinking about her and imagines them together later in life by referencing marriage. “Luego extendí la poltrona a la altura de la suya, y quedamos acostados más cerca que en una cama matrimonial” (García Márquez, 55). “Sólo entonces caí en la cuenta de que los vecinos de asiento en los aviones, igual que los matrimonios viejos, no se dan los buenos días al despertar. Tampoco ella” (García Márquez, 56). He is so consumed by the idea of happiness with Beauty that he is in utter disbelief when she wakes up after the flight has landed, gathers her things, and exits without even saying goodbye. He is unhappy by himself and thinks that being with her will make his life more complete and fuller. He “takes care” of her while she is sleeping by reiterating to the stewardesses that she does not want to be awoken and also gives concern for the turbulence during the flight by wondering if she is all right. By himself he feels as if something is missing and can only imagine how much better things would be if he had her. His search for a companion is unrelenting during the whole story, but is only based off her good looks. This superficial sense of wanting another reflects on society’s coveting of what it deems beautiful and acceptable. If only he had her he would be happy, if only he could have one more thing he would be happy. This vicious endless cycle will never bring him happiness. He is alone because he is ungrateful for the things in his life he does have like money since he is able to commute from one metropolitan area to another. She has no desire whatsoever to interact with him and has the goal of travelling and resting from Paris to New York. He, on the other hand, is waiting for the moment to be able to talk to her. Thoughts turn into desperation as he waits, thinks, and even resorts to almost waking her to be able to

hear her voice, even if it is in anger. He cannot understand how she can just leave without even saying goodbye. "Entonces se puso la chaqueta de lince, pasó casi por encima de mí con una disculpa convencional en castellano puro de las Américas, y se fue sin despedirse siquiera, sin agradecerme al menos lo mucho que hice por nuestra noche feliz, y desapareció hasta el sol de hoy en la amazonia de Nueva York" (García Márquez, 57). He will forever be lonely if he continues to live his life like this. It is one thing to be attracted to another, but if you do not take a chance to talk to him or her, then the opportunity will disappear and will never surface again.

Solitude is not always a choice, but is sometimes forced upon a person. Unexpected occurrences happen that cannot be changed or prevented during a lifetime. This is what happens in Mario Vargas Llosa's *Los cachorros*. Cuéllar was once the leader of his private school friend group, but after a serious dog bite, soon becomes a follower to the pack. Cuéllar is caught up in his friend group and what they think of him until he meets and falls in love with Teresita Arrarte. She introduces him to new and deeper thoughts such as religion, politics, and spiritualism. He decides to begin to ignore her when their relationship gets too intimate due to his castration from the dog bite. Even though he wants to be with her, he chooses to be alone for fear of making her unhappy and unpleased. Cuéllar finds true happiness in another, but chooses to let her go. After all the struggles and rebellions with his friends in the previous years he became himself and grew into a man with the help of Teresita. He chooses to hide the secret of his castration from her and ends up being alone for the rest of his life. His actions will

never let him go back to know if he made the right decision and for that he must suffer. If he had told the truth to Teresa, she may have loved him enough to have been understanding. Due to his fear and lack of trust in one another, he never gave their relationship a fair chance. Cuéllar also feels singled out from the group because he feels different from his friends since his masculinity has been tampered with. He also feels alone on a different level of intelligence. Teresita raises the bar to a higher level of critical thinking than what Cuéllar is accustomed to with his friends. He feels an internal struggle here because he wants to take part in both lives of his friends and his girlfriend, but cannot manage both forever. This causes him to feel often times alone because he is not accepted completely by the other or by himself. Cuéllar is very insecure and due to his insecurities he is unable to find himself which causes an internal unhappiness which is then manifested in the inability to get along with others. If he could have been honest with himself and others to figure out what things are truly important in his life, then he would not be alone. Teresita finds someone else and his friends also end up finding partners. Cuéllar should not have self doubt, his personality and what he has to offer. He is lonely because of life's circumstances and his own decisions in regard to those.

The Boom novels define loneliness in a very personal way. The fact that an individual is just that - an individual. One cannot survive on their own happily and this is demonstrated in *La casa tomada, Carta a una señorita en París, El avión de la bella durmiente, y Los cachorros.* Loneliness is assisted by life's circumstances and sometimes

chosen by the individual. The Boom presents this theme in a covert way of never directly addressing the issue, but showing it in different aspects of the characters' life. This reiterates how life really is and shows that though one may not realize he or she is lonely, it is apparent in his or her actions. Each story reflects the knowledge of a group and the separation that they feel from that group. The wanting to belong or to be accompanied by another is witnessed by the audience. Everyone feels lonely. This is universalized by the Boom authors and told in a relatable manner.

The group as a whole is further studied in the Boom by separating it in society into divisions of the "in-crowd" and the "outsiders." The sense of belonging still exists, but is even further distinguished by social class labels. Society in the Boom is constantly being critiqued and written about in the works of this time. Most of the characters live in the middle to upper class societies and enjoy privileges that not all receive. Sometimes this social status can be a cause for distress and worry in the lives of these individuals. Being in the "in" group is very apparent and one knows when he or she is accepted within society.

To evade the feeling of being alone, one must usually conform to the standards of a group. This ever presence of conformity in society is another common theme found in the Boom novels. Most of the characters belong to the middle and upper class and have more privileges and opportunities than In Cortazar's *Ómnibus,* society pressures and isolates a rider. Clara sits alone on the bus ride to Retiro Train Station in Buenos Aires,

Argentina and soon feels different and ousted by the rest of the bus riders. The chauffeur is irritated to drive her and shows it by constantly looking back at her, checking on her in his mirror and even going so far as to tell her that the bus line does not go to her destination. She notices that all the other riders are staring at and whispering about her. One thing that everyone except for her has in common is that they are all holding bouquets of flowers. She cannot wait to get off the bus to buy flowers for herself so she can fit in. Her only options are to get off the bus or to buy flowers. She is able to make it all the way to Retiro after she is befriended by another passenger also without flowers. She is made to feel not as worthy as the other passengers through her purchasing of a ticket. Her 15 cents seems to be not as worth as much as the other passenger's same exact amount. She is made to feel like a lesser of a person even though she has paid exactly the right amount of change for her destination. Somehow it is not good enough for the driver or the other passengers. Clara and her friend are so eager to get off bus 168 at Retiro and buy flower to be able to fit in. This is the one thing that they think will bring happiness to their lives. After purchasing the bouquets, they go their separate ways and are said to be content. The bus not only represents public transportation in Buenos Aires, but is a metaphor of the opposition of the individual from the group. The influences of the the majority influence how they feel and their actions. They are treated as lesser human beings just because they are not carrying bouquets of flowers. The Boom influences this story to take the larger issue of discrimination and fits it into the story of people feeling excluded while riding a bus.

Changes happen no matter what. Sometimes those changes can take affect your position in society. Cuéllar in *Los cachorros* by Mario Vargas Llosa goes through a drastic change after he is bitten by Judas the dog and castrated. Before the accident, he was the leader of his friend group; everyone looked up to him and followed his example. After the incident, Cuéllar isolated himself. He was no longer sociable among his friends nor did he take interest in girls and mature until a later age. These boys from a young age have always taught to be "men." Masculinity is very important in Latin American culture and to become castrated is directly taking away one of your primary sources of what it means to be a man. This affects his socialization with the other males in his group and his interactions with females too. To identify with masculinity is an essential part of belonging to a society. It allows one to meet certain expectations and to set certain standards of himself or herself. Cuéllar is at a loss of what to do after he physically recovers from the dog bite. He is unable to have intimate relations with Teresita and thus cannot have a partnership with her. He feels like he does not fit in because of this secret that makes him so different from his friends. Cuéllar's girlfriend also excludes him from the group further by being so different from the rest of them. She is intelligent, presents new ideas and thought to him, and is mature. His friends, on the other hand, do not talk about topics in depth and are concerned with superficial things. Because of these differences, his friends and Teresa do not get along and Cuéllar is put in the middle. He is forced to choose one or the other and ultimately decides to be with his friends. This decision is a combination of societal pressures and

his thought of failing to measure up to masculinity standards. Cuéllar believes that because he no longer has his member that he is not masculine, according to society. He also is uncomfortable with the fact that his girlfriend is so different from his friends. They are unaccepting of her which help him to choose to stop hanging out with her. Society's expectations and goals are in place due to tradition. To break from the system and to go against what the majority is doing takes a ton of courage and is an extremely difficult thing to do. Cuéllar who was once a strong, confident teenager, changed drastically to an insecure, self-doubting individual after the dog bite accident. When your sex is put into question, opposition with society is always nearby. The concept of masculinity expects males to be strong and unemotional. When Cuéllar is suddenly taken from this male role by having his genitals removed, he is completely confused as to where he now belongs in society. He feels as though he cannot have a girlfriend because he would not be able to live up to her standards sexually or produce a child. Reproduction is usually a requirement of men and women in society and when that is taken away, the societal role does not fit the same way. Cuéllar questions everything he has ever known and therefore develops differently and distanced from his once very close-knit friend group. Society controls the way a person thinks, behaves, and acts.

Maturity and innocence are two things that society instills and takes away from its citizens. *La luz es como el agua* by Gabriel García Márquez elaborates on society's expectations of its youth in maturation and how the young can rebel. Two sons, Totó

and Joel are promised a reward of a sailboat if they win an award at school. They keep asking their parents for a sailboat and finally they give it to them around Christmas time. The parents do not understand why the boys would want it right now as they are living currently in landlocked Madrid and even say, "-Para empezar -dijo la madre-, aquí no hay más aguas navegables que las que salen de la ducha" (García Márquez, 146). The boys are constantly overcoming obstacles that their parents think are obvious reasons not to get a boat or to bring it upstairs, but the boys are persistent in wanting to sail. They bring the boat from the garage up to the maid's room even though their father cannot imagine why the boat would be of any better use in the house than in the garage since there is still no water. Totó and Joel prove their parents wrong by first winning the award and then getting their classmates to help them bring the boat upstairs. They manage to find a way to sail it in the house by closing all the windows and doors and smashing a light bulb in a lamp that floods three feet of light into the living room. They continue to do this every Wednesday night when their parents are gone to the movies. This secret sailing that they continue shows that their parents would not approve of their behavior. The boys get more and more involved with sailing and ask for scuba equipment if they win the Gold Gardenia prize awarded from the headmaster. After winning and getting the scuba gear they go from filling the apartment from three feet of light to two fathoms or twelve feet. They become more consumed by the light and want to push it further and further all the while keeping it to Wednesdays as to hide it from Mom and Dad. When the boys win the end-of-the-year awards for excellence and setting a good example for the rest of the students, they do

not ask for any toys, to the parents' surprise, but instead a party to celebrate with friends. They are pleased and think it is a sign of their children maturing. "El papá, a solas con su mujer, estaba radiante. 'Es una prueba de madurez' dijo. 'Dios te oiga' dijo la madre" (García Márquez, 148-149). The parents leave one final time for a movie and upon returning home are met by firemen and emergency responders to a flood of light outpouring from their building. The boys had turned on too many lights, flooded the apartment, drowned themselves and all of their classmates. A description of how the boys were positioned doing immature things in contrast with the adult items found floating in the light show the contrast between youth and adulthood.

> Al final del corredor, flotando entre dos aguas, Totó estaba sentando en la popa del bote, aferrado a los remos y con la mascara puesta, buscando el faro del puerto hasta donde le alcanzo el aire de los tanques, y Joel flotaba en la proa buscando todavia la altura de la estrella polar con el sextante, y flotaban por toda la casa sus treinta y siete companeros de clase, eternizados en el instante de hacer pipi en la maceta de geranios, de cantar el himno de la escuela con la letra cambiada por versos de burla contra el rector, de beberse a escondidas un vaso de brandy de la botella de papa" (García Márquez 149-15).

Both Totó and Joel are searching for something after their expiration. Totó is looking for the lighthouse while Joel is trying to locate the North Star. This search for something shows that these boys are not happy in their lives and want something more. The difference between these children and the adults is that they do not want to grow up or be put in the roles that are expected of them. Society, represented as Mom and Dad, is

trying to motivate their children to be successful by rewarding them with gifts if they win these school honors. Joel and Totó know it would not be accepted to sail when their parents are home so they must do it when they are gone out to the movies. This is not enough for them as they begin to thirst for more and more as evidenced by filling the apartment with more light to the point of overdoing it. The boys refuse to conform to society and escape its rules and requirements through their sailing and eventual deaths. Totó and Joel were had to conform to society by winning the awards, being popular among their schoolmates and teachers, and obedient to their parents. They are able to keep their innocence by proving their parents wrong about how getting a boat would be of no use in the landlocked city and that it would not fit in the apartment. Although the death seems very tragic in the fact that so many lives were lost, but the audience cannot help but feel a freeing from the norm. They were able to follow their desire and passion instead of getting beaten down by society. It is hard to keep an optimistic view and innocence throughout life, seen by the parents skepticism and doubt about sailing, but the boys are able to keep those forever having died at a young age. Society still wins in a sense that although they did not have to grow and mature into full adulthood, they were forced out of that opportunity in order to preserve their childhood innocence.

Social class is one of the first things noticed in *El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve* by Gabriel García Márquez. Nena Daconte and her new husband, Billy Sánchez, both come from well to do families, especially his. They are married in Colombia and then fly first

class to Europe for their honeymoon. Nena Daconte gets a fur coat, has an expensive wedding ring of good, antique quality, and they have a new Bentley convertible waiting for them at the airport when they arrive. They are greeted by ambassadors of the country and live nothing less than a very comfortable life. Billy Sánchez is "intoxicated" by the car. When he first sees it, he makes his wife and all the other hosts wait outside for longer than necessary while he inspects and relishes in it. His concern for the car is greater than the comfort of the others and is evidenced further with his wife. He cannot stop driving it and is more concerned with his obsession with the vehicle than he is about his wife, unborn child, or her finger that will not stop bleeding. They barely even stop to use the bathroom on their trip. These material possessions prove to be useless when Nena Daconte is admitted to the hospital. He has to park his car on the road while he waits to be able to visit his wife and gets a ticket for not knowing the odd and even numbered parking days and laws. He does not drive the car while in Paris and does not even think twice about it when he is overcome with thoughts about Nena Daconte and when he will get to see her again. Nena Daconte gets blood on her mink coat which Billy Sánchez washes out when he is waiting to visit her, but even this is fruitless because she will never be able to wear it again. All of these worldly good have no value to them when they are in desperate times. Billy Sánchez is able to live on bare minimum and wonders how he ever lived his life without her before. He worries what life will be like if he must go on without. Class and rank are very important to him and he is even referred to as pure (in race and blood).

> Tantas artimañas racionalistas resultaban incomprensibles para un Sánchez de Ávila de los más acendrados, que apenas dos años antes se había metido en un cine de barrio con el automóvil oficial del alcalde mayor, y había causado estragos de muerte ante los policiías impávidos (García Márquez, 168).

He is used to a certain privileged lifestyle and thinks lower of people who are not of his social class. He gets upset when he is treated as lesser than what he thinks he deserves, and is at a loss as to what to do without his wife. He keeps comparing this place to his homeland, but that will not bring him happiness nor will he gain anything from complaining.

Another social pressure very evident throughout this work are the masculine and feminine identities. Nena Daconte used to be a tenor saxaphone player before she met Sánchez and she gave it up for him. "Ahí estaba, además, el saxofón tenor que había sido la pasión dominante en la vida de Nena Daconte antes de que sucumbiera al amor contrariado de su tierno pandillero de balneario" (García Márquez, 152). Even when Billy Sanchez first met, Nena Daconte, he tried to assert his masculine authority over her by coming into the locker room while she is changing and showing her his erection. She gives him a challenge of comparing him to another type of lover and he gets too competitive that he must "succeed" in winning her over. In this situation he has complete power over her since he walks in on her when she is completely naked and vulnerable. Instead of backing down she meets his masculinity with some resistance. From that point on they are inseparable and have an intense love

life. During the ride, Nena Daconte gets concerned that her husband has not eaten anything so she offers him some dried fruit. "Con todo, Nena Daconte temía que él se durmiera conduciendo. Abrió una caja de entre tantos regalos que les habían hecho en Madrid y trató de meterle en la boca un pedazo de naranja azucarada. Pero él la esquivó. -Los machos no comen dulces - dijo" (García Márquez, 160-161). She tries to take care of him, but he will not even eat a sweet in the privacy of just the two of them because it is not the "manly" thing to do. Nena Daconte is very worried that he has driven so many hours, but does not even offer to drive because he told her during one of their first dates he made it clear how a woman was to never drive a man as a passenger in a car. "Nena Daconte hubiera querido ayudar a su marido en el volante, pero ni siquiera se atrevió a insinuarlo, porque él le había advertido desde la primera vez en que salieron juntos que no hay humillación más grande para un hombre que dejarse conducir por su mujer" (García Márquez, 161). Billy Sánchez is not insecure in his masculinity, but he makes sure to emphasize it so that no one can confuse him for a sensitive man. This is part of the machismo culture of Latin America and characteristic of the novels in the Boom. Billy Sánchez could perhaps be covering up for gaps his father left in his life as hinted with the gifts given to him out of guilt. "Tenía una pasión insaciable por los automóviles raros y un papá con demasiados sentimientos de culpa y recursos de sobra para complacerlo, y nunca había conducido nada igual a aquel Bentley convertible de regalo de bodas" (García Márquez, 153). Issues with parents, especially father figures is something that Billy Sánchez could be making up for. He had to grow up more independently since his mother was not there to take care of him. His

relationship was changed forever when he accidentally walked in on her and one of her boyfriends in the bedroom. Nena Daconte would like to help look after him, but he does not let her in the obvious ways. When she is gone, however, he does not understand how he managed to survive without her. His masculinity and machismo is useless when he is by himself. He tries to muscle his way through the emergency room to find his wife, but is quickly stopped by the employees. Acting and behaving as a man should is in Billy Sánchez's culture and something he cannot change.

Society is the biggest influencing factor in life. Clara, Cuéllar, Totó, Joel, Nena Daconte, and Billy Sánchez all subcumb to the pressures of life. Using these characters as examples, the Boom says that social class cannot be avoided except through death. One's place in society matters, but only on a superficial level. That, however, is taken very seriously by the citizens and is hard to break free from.

Along with society comes certain rankings and with those rankings comes power. Even a sense of individual power can be something of great loss if no longer available. The Boom realizes that control is an issue all humans deal with and helps one get through life. If one is not in control, then he or she does not take an active role in his or her own life. Worry and anxiousness often result because of this, but a recurring event of being ignored is present throughout these stories. It is through control and decisions that one has understanding of his or her own world. Without this, then he or she will not be a useful citizen.

Losing control can be one of the scariest things that can happen. In *Sólo vine por usar el teléfono* by García Márquez, María ends up in a hospital for female mental patients and does not know why she is there or when she will get out. During a storm she wanted to phone her husband to tell him she would be home late. She hitchhiked with an a couple who were carrying several other women wrapped up in blankets and sleeping. María too fell asleep for an unknown period of time and ended up at the hospital. While there she asks everyone she sees if she can use the phone and they give her the same answer of not now, maybe later. While she is there she is worrying about her husband, Saturno the Magician, and how he is going through his day. He is so worried about her and her whereabouts that he cannot perform even his easiest tricks correctly. María has no control over the situation and how this is affecting her life and her husband's. She cannot escape the hospital and no one will let her use the phone. Loss of control is seen on several different levels in this story. First, María has no control over feeling safe in neither the health nor physical sense. The first day she arrives, she is sedated so that "she can sleep." The next morning she has no control over movement as she awakens to find her wrists and ankles are tied to the bed. She lives in constant fear that Herculina, the security guard, will kill her due to her reputation of "accidentally" choking two patients previously. After she finally is able to find a phone to call her husband, she is sprayed with a water hose and then her legs are injected with turpentine after smashing the lithograph through a window. The doctors categorize her with the violent patients. A second level of control lost is María's will. At first she is very strong and

stubborn in her ways of repeating that she only came to use the phone. She refuses to participate in the flower making and activities that other patients seem to enjoy. The most violating thing that she refuses are Herculina's sexual passes and harassments towards her. She continues to ask all the doctors and matrons if she may use the phone and is constantly worried about her husband. Towards the end of her stay, she is forced to relinquish control to the institution. She starts to engage, little by little, in the activities and games and comes to the realization that she will never leave this hell. María lays awake in bed one night and asks to anyone listening, "'Dónde estamos?' La voz grave y lúcida de la vecina le contestó: 'En los profundos infiernos'" (García Márquez, 79). Worst of all, she has to give up sexual control to Herculina. María does this, however, to make a bargain with the guard to tell her husband where she is. The one thing she does not lose control of is her persistence to inform her husband. During her absence, Marías husband is suffering imagining life without her and then growing jealous that she left him for someone else. Saturno loses control of his temper when he imagines that his wife is cheating on him with another man. "Saturno colgó. La negativa de la mujer le pareció una confirmación más de lo que ya no era para él una sospecha sino una certidumbre ardiente. Perdió el control" (García Márquez, 77). María has lost all control in her life except for one thing: refusing to see her husband after he too believes she should stay in the sanatorium. After the first visit when he does not take her to leave with him, she does not see any of his magician shows when he returns a number of times nor does she read the letter he writes. The one thing that she can control is rejecting her husband. This is the only thing that she

can directly change.

Uncertainty and lack of control can give one the sense of missing out, especially on things that are of great importance. *El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve* by Gabriel García Márquez tells the tale of newlyweds who have to stop at the hospital when the wife's finger will not stop bleeding. Nena Deconte and her husband Billy Sánchez are driving to their honeymoon in a new Bentley convertible, gifted to them as a wedding parents, from the south of France towards Paris. Her finger is bleeding uncontrollably and so they must admit her into a hospital. This is where Billy Sánchez's lack of control begins to take place. Once known as a somewhat former rebel before meeting Nena Daconte, Sánchez is put off by the lack of comfort and familiarity he has in the hotel room he must check in and stay. It is a grungy place that only received one star and whose room smells like boiled cauliflower. His general routine of getting ready and personal grooming is controlled by the hotel. He must pay to use the shower and even extra for hot water that does not last more than just a few minutes. Most of his belongings are in Nena Daconte's bag and he has to become accustomed to doing things without his partner. He also has no control of his wife's health. The doctors and medical staff keep telling him that visiting hours are only on Tuesdays. After Nena Daconte is taken away, he does not know how long he has been sitting in the hospital.

> Billy Sánchez se quedó parado en la sala lúgubre olorosa a sudores de enfermos, se quedó sin saber qué hacer mirando el corredor vacío por donde se habían llevado a Nena Daconte, y luego se sentó en el escaño de madera donde había

> otras personas esperando. No supo cuánto tiempo estuvo ahí, pero cuando decidió salir del hospital era otra vez de noche y continuaba la llovizna, y él seguía sin saber ni siquiera qué hacer consigo mismo, abrumado por el peso del mundo" (García Márquez, 165).

Being unaware of time makes Billy Sánchez unable to plan for future events and it also affects his memory of dates and how much time has passed. He cannot control what he can look forward to because he cannot schedule anything into his timeframe. Another instance of the lack of time consciousness is seen when Billy Sánchez hardly even knows what day it is because he keeps sleeping for unknown periods of time.

> Tan pronto como subió al cuarto, la mañana del miércoles, se tiró boca abajo en la cama con el abrigo puesto, pensando en la criatura de prodigio que continuaba desangrándose en la acera de enfrente, y muy pronto sucumbía en un sueño tan natural que cuando despertó eran las cinco en el reloj, pero no pudo deducir si eran las cinco de la tarde o del amanecer, ni de qué día de la semana ni en qué ciudad de vidrios azotados por el viento y la lluvia (García Márquez, 167).

Billy is disoriented and does not even know what day of the week it, how long he slept, or if the sun is rising or setting. This lack of knowledge for what day it is makes him ignorant to what is going on around him. Not only that, but the world is passing him by. The only time reference he has is Tuesday, when he is able to visit Nena Daconte. Scheduling your own events puts you in control of when you are busy and

when you are free. Others must go by your time instead of being at the mercy of what others tell you to do and where to be at what time and when. Billy Sánchez learns to find out that the hospital, doctors, Nena Daconte, and her family were all looking for him this whole time. Even though he had just been across the street and had barely gone out in Paris, he had no idea that a search was put out in his name. "Un llamado urgente con sus datos personales fue transmitido desde la noche del viernes hasta la tarde del domingo a través de la radio y la televisión, y durante esas cuarenta horas fue el hombre más buscado en Francia," (García Márquez, 174). If he had been up to date on the news or how much time had passed, he would have found out sooner that his wife had passed away shortly after being admitted to the hospital. Since he did not watch the news, read the newspaper, or talk to others, he isolated himself, closing him off to the outside world. All he was aware of was the hotel, what the doctor looked like, and the worry and concern for his wife and her health. His lack of knowledge and control of what was happening around him made Billy Sánchez miss his wife's funeral and burial. Not only that, but he was not the first person to find out she had passed, as he should of been as her husband. Billy Sánchez lost all illusion of control he ever thought he had when his wife left his side. She really helped him keep his life in order and without her, he had no idea how to function properly as a human being. He had no control over anything in his life and was only left with the immense loneliness without her. Without proper knowledge of his life occurrences, Billy Sánchez missed out entirely on one of the most important things in his life, his wife's death. The whole time he is trying to figure out the status of his wife, but he just cannot quite get a grip on what is

going on and what all he has in his power.

Another form of control is the power of seduction. In Julio Cortázar's, *Circe*, Delia Mañara manipulates men to her advantage. Mario is in love with Delia Mañara and finally wins her affection after years of trying. It has been rumored that she killed her previous two boyfriends and her family was forced to move apartments because of the neighbors gossiping. Mario has always been infatuated with Delia Mañara since he was little. She is three years older than he and has a strange relationship with her family. They are very evasive and only let Mario come to visit. After finally gaining the attention of Delia, Mario proves to be a very gentlemanly and courteous boyfriend. He buys her all the cooking supplies she needs for baking the chocolates and takes care of her. "Cuando la tomaba del brazo para cruzar la calle, o al subir la escalera de la estación Medrano, miraba a veces su mano apretada contra la seda negra del vestido de Delia" (Cortázar, 78). Mario and Delia have a complex relationship with control. Overall, Delia has control over him through her power of seduction, persuasion, and guilt. Delia is a beautiful, nicely dressed woman that often gets chastised by the public out of jealousy. "Yo me acuerdo mal de Delia, pero era fina y rubia, demasiado lenta en sus gestos (yo tenía doce años, el tiempo y las cosas son lentas entonces) y usaba vestidos claros con faldas de vuelo libre. Mario creyó un tiempo que la gracia de Delia y sus vestidos apoyaban el odio de la gente" (Cortázar, 76). She is a striking woman and is well aware of the fact when she is told by her mother and others that they are just jealous because she is not a "chusma" like they. After her two boyfriends,

Mario gets his turn to be hers. He wants to please her in every way possible and is already at a disadvantage at not thinking of himself as her equal. In order to please her, he does everything she asks of him when it comes to trying her chocolates. She always demands that he try them with his eyes shut. He does so without question. "Había que cerrar los ojos para adivinar el sabor, y Mario obediente cerró los ojos y adivinó un sabor a mandarina, levísimo, viniendo desde lo más hondo del chocolate" (Cortázar, 84). Even if Mario did not like the flavor of the chocolates, he would feel compelled to act as if he did to not her her feelings. Delia Mañara seems to build up each bite he takes with such anxiousness that he cannot disappoint her. She controls him through the amount of effort she put into making the chocolates and the pressure she puts on him through her presence next to him while eating and her expectations of what he will eat. It is through Mario's guilt that he would never tell the truth about the chocolates, until the end that is. He must eat the chocolates because that is all Delia spends her time on. She does not have a job and has even given up practicing piano as much for baking these elaborate chocolates. The final issue of control comes from Delia Mañara's reputation. Often times Mario is compared with her previous boyfriends, Hector y Rolo, and he often thinks that he is still alive. "Delia se sonreía como burlándose. Él se imaginaba cosas, y fue temerosamente feliz. <<El tercer novio>>, pensó raramente. <<Decirle así: su tercer novio, pero vivo>>" (Cortázar, 81-82). It as though he is the winner and must keep up his status as the current, alive boyfriend. Mario tries to kill Delia, but cannot do it and decides to leave when he finds out she put a cockroach in the chocolate he just ate. This is the last straw for Mario and he is able to free himself from

her. She was unsuccessful in her attempts to poison Mario and is found out and seen for who she truly is. He is blinded to her control by his attempt to win her over, her beauty, keep her pleased, and meet her expectations.

Control and being control are all levels of power that can be taken advantage of and manipulated. Without these, there is no belonging to the world and an overwhelming sense of loss and uncertainty take over. Power can be divided among large and small scale, but is equally important and useful to all. Being powerless and out of control are all things that want to generally be avoided or at least under the illusion that they are being handled correctly.

The Boom creates a total view on life's hardships. Feeling lonely, being excluded, and being out of control are things that most people fear and try to avoid at all costs. The Boom is able to magnify everyday issues and present them in a way that seem just like a story to those just reading it. The Boom will never be able to happen again since sharing and online books are not as rare or as marketed as the books during that period were. The circumstances of the times, the authors, the location, and the publishing allowed the Boom to be a one time deal. Although only certain types of people are presented as characters in these novels, their emotions, thoughts, and feelings are shared by all, no matter what class of society one may belong.

Bibliography

Cortázar, Julio. *Bestiario*. Madrid, España: Punto De Lectura, 2006. Print.

García, Márquez Gabriel. *Doce Cuentos Peregrinos*. Nueva York: Vintage Español, 2006. Print.

Gonzalez Echevarria, Roberto. "Sarduy, The Boom, and the Post-Boom." Trans. Caroline A. Mansfield and Antonia Vera León. *Latin American Literary Review*: 57-72. Print.

Martin, Gerald. "Boom, Yes; 'New' Novel, No: Further Reflections on the Optical Illusions of Hte 1960s in Latin America." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 3.2 (1984): 53-63. *JSTOR*. Blackwell Publishing on Behalf of Society for Latin American Studies. Web. 15 July 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3338252>.

Rodríguez Monegal, Emir. "The Boom: A Retrospective." Interview by Alfred J. Mac Adam. *Review* Jan. 1984: 30-36. Print.

Vargas, Llosa Mario, and Ariza Guadalupe. Fernández. *Los Cachorros*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2010. Print.