

2.17 – One Hundred Years of Technical Difficulties with Kali (pt. 1)

Angourie (host)

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which this work was developed and is presented. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

[theme music]

Angourie (host)

Hello, and welcome back to The Community Library: a podcast, book club and discussion space. I'm your host, Angourie Rice.

Kali (guest)

And I'm Kali Shanthi.

[theme music]

Angourie (host)

I am so excited to have you back on the podcast, Kali! If you guys remember, Kali and I discussed *Watch Us Rise* way back in season one, I think it was, like, episode 7, so high time that I brought you back!

Kali (guest)

Yay! I'm so excited to be here! And that book was, like, such a banger. And I think we might just outdo ourselves today, though.

Angourie

I know, what are we going to do after this? Every time I bring you back, we're gonna have to choose, like, the best book, like, even better and better.

Kali

Yeah! Keep raising the bar. Oh, my god.

Angourie

This week, we are talking about the discussion pick for this month's theme, which is Fiction in Translation, and we have chosen *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez. Now, this was Kali's choice. I texted her and I said: "Would you please be on another episode, the theme is translation, can you choose a book?" And Kali was like: "Yes, I choose this one!" So, do you want to tell us why you chose it, and what it's about, and what you thought of it?

Kali

Yeah, sure! I was in South Africa last year with my family, and my aunt actually gave me this book before I left and said that it was, like, mandatory reading, and that I need to read it going into my twenties, and it'll change my life. And I was like, woah, okay. No pressure. This better be a good book. Yeah, and I've also been learning Spanish this year, so I was really interested in reading more Latin literature, and just, like, immersing myself in the culture while I'm learning the language. And

so when you asked me about translated literature, I was thinking there's a lot of Paulo Coelho books that I really love, and that's translated from Portuguese, so it could be one of those, and maybe some African literature. But then I realised that I've got this book in my house that I'm supposed to be reading that'll change my life. And I read the first chapter, but, like, it's quite hard to get into, and then I was like, well, this is the perfect excuse to get into it and really, like, analyse it. And yeah, so I chose that, and I'm so happy that I did, because wow. What a book. What a guy. I'm so impressed.

Yeah, the book basically follows members of the Buendía family through one hundred years of solitude! And a whole lot of stuff happens! A whole lot of stuff happens, and it's all wrapped up in a crazy meta message that's quite bleak, actually. I felt quite bleak by the end of it, but it's really, like, hardcore realistic, with these beautiful injections of fantasy that just paints this amazing, epic narrative, and I think, yeah, I think everyone should read this book.

Angourie

So, did it change your life?

Kali

Ah, yeah, I reckon. I reckon! Every time I read a book on this podcast, my life is changed.

Angourie

Yes! That makes me so happy! I was apprehensive going in, because it's quite a – it's a dense book, and I didn't know much about it. I had heard of it before, but I didn't know much. I don't know why I was apprehensive, I think I was just, like, ooh, I know this is so famous and so acclaimed, like, I don't want to not like it. But I was surprised at how invested I got, and how much this book strangely spoke to me, even though I wouldn't say I relate to any of the characters, at least I hope not, they're all a little crazy!

Kali

Yeah, definitely!

Angourie

But I think there are so many elements in there that I love that I am really interested in reading about, like intergenerational trauma, and family histories, and I love books about storytelling. It just kind of incorporated all these things that I love in this new genre of magical realism that I have never read from before. So, it was a first for me, which is always exciting.

Kali

Yeah, totally! It was like, once you can get into the flow of the writing, which, admittedly, is a bit of a challenge if you're not used to it, yeah, it's just phenomenal. And – and, you really, like, learn about the world that he's building through this writing style. You, like – and you learn to understand what things mean.

Angourie

It's such an immersive world, and, you know, that style of magical realism is ... it's where an author paints a realistic view of the world, but injects all of these, like, little bits of magic and fantasy in it. But the thing that makes it really distinctive is that the characters go about their day as if this is normal, and this always happens. The writing style is so poetic and lyrical, and it feels like ... I think

Maija, actually, our friend Maija described reading Virginia Woolf as, like, being submerged underwater, like, that's what it's like, being in that world. And I felt the same way, reading this.

Kali

Definitely, and it's – and it's so dense, and, like, all-consuming, like, there's so much happening in every sentence, even. Like, I – I mean, I tried to ... what is this called? Like, annotate my book, where I added, like, little sticky-notes and stuff. I mean, I've never been that person, but I tried to do it for this book, and I used so many sticky-notes, because every two pages, something significant happens!

Angourie

The way it's written, it came to that point where, like, you know, things that happened at the very start of the book, like, for example, the patriarch of the family is tied to a tree. He's just tied to a tree for, like, a really long time.

Kali

And they kinda just forget about him a little bit!

Angourie

And, like, his daughter has a black bandage on her hand – she burns her hand, and she has a black bandage on her hand. And these two things – when we get halfway into the book and they reference: “Oh, yeah, that guy who's just out tied to a tree, and the bandage on her hand.” It came to a point where I forgot why he was tied to a tree, and I forgot why she had the bandage on her hand, but it had become such a part of my memory, that I felt like, oh, it doesn't matter anymore because I am part of this family and this family legend, and that's how the history and the story-telling in the family works, is that eventually, everyone just forgot why he was tied to a tree, but he was, and that was his character. The things that were talked about in the book became family legend right before our eyes.

Kali

The narrative keeps moving forward, and so things that happened early on keep fading into the background, and that's – for you, as the reader – that's what's happening to you. You're like – there's so much happening that you can't keep track of everything, but that's exactly what's happening with the characters as well. Like, they can't keep track of everything that's happened, even the smallest details that seem huge at the time, and that's kind of what the book is telling you, is like: you are destined to forget the things that have happened and then repeat the same mistakes, because – because life keeps going on. *explosion sound effect*

Angourie

Yeah!

Kali

Mic drop.

Angourie

Time in this book is kind of ... it's kind of linear, but it's also very much not. As I was reading, I was finding we would circle back to people, so we would read about a certain character up to a certain

point, and then we would circle back and say, like: “Meanwhile, his sister was doing this at the same time.” And then there were also these little sentences that were saying: “The family would never [find] out what happened to that person,” or “That person then, one hundred years later, went off and died in this way.” Even though we kept moving forward, and things that were left in the past were left in the past, everything was referenced and kept coming back. It all culminates to a head at the very ... oh, should we save the ending? We should save the ending.

Kali

Yeah, yeah, let’s save it.

Angourie

But it’s – time kind of moves in a circle in this book.

Kali

Yeah, definitely. Just, the way that he constructs those sentences jumping in between all of these different points in time, it was so effortless. I mean, you would think that it would get really confusing, and sometimes it is a bit confusing, [but] you really go along with the journey. Like, you can place what he’s talking about. Like, I don’t know, I kind of, like, imagined it as, like, the flow of his words, and the way that he was constructing the time. He would say, like: “This thing happened. Aureliano Buendía died.” And then he would be, like, he would just jump back twenty years, and be like: “While this was happening for Aureliano Buendía, blah blah blah.” The time is fucked, is basically what I’m saying! But, it makes sense in the story. [laughing] I got there in the end! It was a journey.

Angourie

The time is fucked!

Kali

Yeah.

Angourie

So, before we started recording, I asked people on Instagram and Twitter to send in some questions, and someone on Instagram, @carlosjijon asks: What did you think of the book’s unconventional narration?

Kali

Ooh. Great question. Yeah, it was, it took a while to get used to because I was expecting kind of the narrator to be able to explain things when things didn’t make sense, but it was very much kind of objective, and in that way like, it was all about interpretation which was one of the huge things of the book, which we’ll get to later. But yeah, it was so much about how you were reading what was happening, and this narrator was very much detached from the events of the book and kind of just laying everything out there in a super objective way, even when things kind of didn’t make sense. But I think what I learned throughout the book was to trust that things would be – would become clearer. Like there were a lot of points where I was like, wait, what’s going on, like, did I miss something, do I have to go back and just check up who this is or what happened to this guy again? And then, it was almost like Márquez was anticipating that and within the next few lines, that became clear. Like that thing was like, explained more, or my question was answered. But in a very

objective, matter-of-fact kind of impersonal way. That this narrator had no stakes in the story whatsoever.

Angourie

Yeah, it's the most fascinating third person perspective I've read from cos it's so completely separate, and almost cold and unfeeling, in the way that you would read a textbook. It kind of, it almost reads like this really lyrical textbook that isn't presenting facts about – it's not presenting facts that are marked by dates in history, but it's marked by emotions and people, and it's a history of people. It reads in such a matter-of-fact way, but I agree, I felt that trust in the narrator, and I think it really allows the audience to form their own perspective on things because there were a lot of questionable things that happen in this book.

Kali

Yeah.

Angourie

Like a fifty year old man marrying a twelve year old girl, and it's like, that's not okay.

Kali

Yeah, and the thing about all of these crazy things that happen, I found myself just having to pull myself out of the story for a bit and be like, wait, that was messed up right? Like, that's not okay. When it comes to the magical realism aspect of it, like things like ghosts just hanging out, you have to think about it for a second and be like, no that's definitely supernatural. He's talking about a ghost.

Angourie

I would forget, like if they were like oh this guy just showed up at their house I'd be like, wait, did he die before though? Is this a ghost or is this a real person?

Kali

Yes.

Angourie

Like, I would forget who had died. And I would have to check to see if that person was a ghost or not.

Kali

Shout out Prudencio Aguilar.

Angourie

Oh my God him, yeah.

Kali

I loved that character. And that whole storyline of José Arcadio Buendía interacting with Prudencio Aguilar, whom he essentially, well he killed him right, he murdered him, right?

Angourie

He did.

Kali

Then they became companions for years and years to come, Prudencio being a ghost, and José Arcadio Buendía being insane, and they were just like buddies. And it was so haunting and fascinating and sad to see the way that this man, this like tortured soul was just, he had nowhere else to go and so he ended up spending his eternal death following around the man who killed him, and then becoming invested in his life, and like the way that that stories like that were told, stories that were so emotional and so sad or tragic were just kind of laid out there, and then you had to decipher them for what they were and be like, oh that's really, that's really tragic.

Angourie

I think the great thing about it is that it assumes the intelligence of the reader. It's almost like Márquez is saying to me like, I trust you to take out all these little meanings, and to understand what's happening on a more emotional level.

Kali

Yeah. You focus more on what resonates with you most. Like I can imagine that other people reading this book wouldn't really care about the Prudencio Aguilar storyline because it is so minute in comparison to the rest of the book, but for me, for whatever reason, that's something that I've thought about since finishing the book. Because everything's presented in this very matter-of-fact way, you kind of hold on to the bits that connect with you, and that you interpret for yourself, and that's really nice, because then I guess it becomes a different story to everyone who reads it.

Angourie

Can you tell us about the founding of the town, and how we come to Macondo?

Kali

Yes. wow, epic. The first characters that we are introduced to are José Arcadio Buendía, the patriarch of the Buendía line, the first Buendía, and his wife Úrsula Iguarán. They travel for years? Weeks? Months? A long time. Over mountains – treacherous mountains, to found a new town. And José Arcadio Buendía is known for his, like, very strong-willed, enterprising, he wants to advance his people and his friends, and he wants to find the ocean, and in this crazy trek they end up settling in this little town in the swamp, and they name it Macondo, the city of mirrors. From that moment on, we're placed in this newly-formed town. I think one of the descriptions that we're given is: things were so new and language was so new that not everything had names. And from there we watch this place evolve over a hundred years, and it's very personal because obviously it's founded by these two heads of this family, and then we follow their family.

Angourie

Yeah. And you kind of have these, like, levels of setting and solitude. How, like, we have these individual characters who create the story, they are the story, and they all feel like they're in their own little solitudes, and then they are all in this big house that is the rock of the family, that is the root of the family, this house, which is also in solitude, because its ties are so close to the family. And then, within that – no, wait, I don't know where I'm going – I'm going outwards!

Kali

The next level! The next –

Angourie

The next level! Next level is Macondo, the town, which is also in solitude, there is nothing connecting Macondo to anywhere else until the railroad comes. But we have all these levels of solitude and I think it's so cool how all of these things, so Macondo and then the house and then the people, they can't exist without each other. The ending of the Buendía family is the ending of Macondo and the ending of their house. Like, it all happens at the same time because these characters can't exist without their habitat, and the habitat can't exist without the characters. Also, you know, the few times that the characters leave, like when we go into the further generations, one of the daughters is sent away to Europe, and we just like don't find out what happens to her when she's in Europe. We only reconnect with her when she comes back. But they always come back, that's the other thing. No one from that family leaves and never returns, they always come back ... to die, basically.

Kali

Yeah, definitely. And that was also something that I noticed really late on into the book actually, that our perspective is so deeply rooted in the place. We're not following a particular person, we're not following even a theme other than solitude, I guess, like you said, all the different layers of that, but it's so firmly rooted in Macondo, and you hear about other things that happen but you never go there. With the story. I mean I don't think I've ever read something that's like that. Where you are more tied to the place than you are to the characters.

Angourie

Macondo and their house is its own character, it's pretty much the protagonist.

Kali

The characters and the storylines of all the characters, cos there's so many, are like vessels to tell the story of the place and of the house, rather than the other way around.

Angourie

Oh, you wanted to talk about the destruction of the house, and how the house goes through these cycles.

Kali

Yeah, I found it really interesting that while we're exploring this like cyclical nature of time, and all these different timelines crossing over and storylines crossing over, that throughout everything from the beginning of the story until the end, literally from the beginning to the end, we're constantly in these cycles with the house – and the town, even – of destruction and restoration. And it kind of moves with the generations as well, like there's something in each generation that destroys everything, and then there's something or someone that restores it all again, and it just keeps going in these waves and these cycles. And it's so interesting that it's kind of showing the pattern of time and the theme that history will repeat itself in this very physical form. It just keeps going and going and going until by the end everything is – there's a finality in that everything is just destroyed.

Angourie

I've just realised – it's so dumb, but it's the life of the town. So many characters are born and whose lives are in this story, but we're just following one life, and that's the birth and then the death of the town.

Kali

Yes queen!

Angourie

Ah!

Kali

Yes, oh my God, but that's it, right there, like, damn.

Angourie

Do we want to talk about the specific characters?

Kali

Yes, let's get into it.

Angourie

Someone asked on Instagram, did you get confused by all the characters?

Kali

Of course. Is it possible not to? I was constantly referring to the little family tree at the front of my novel.

Angourie

I started drawing my own family tree cos I was listening to it on audio, and then I was looking through the chapters on Audible, and then I found that it came with a family tree, with like a pdf, and I was like, oh well now I've just drawn my whole family tree for nothing! But I was constantly referring back to that.

Kali

Yeah it was so helpful. I found it so interesting that it speaks to the themes and everything that Márquez is trying to talk about, that he presents you with this finished family tree at the beginning of the novel, so you can look through and essentially predict everything that's going to happen before it happens, but it only really takes on meaning as you uncover the story. And so I would be like looking at the family tree, trying to figure out which friggin' Aureliano we're following now, and then I'd be like, but this guy who's only a baby now ends up marrying this person.

Angourie

But you're so right, he kind of like gives you this prophetic ability even before you start the book, it's important because a lot of the characters have that gift of foresight. Like Aureliano, all of the Aurelianos have a prophetic ability but the first Aureliano is the strongest, and then Pilar Tenera, who isn't a Buendía but she mothers two of the children?

Kali

Yeah ...

Angourie

She's very connected to the family.

Kali

Yeah, let's just say that.

Angourie

In multiple ways. She makes predictions with cards, and I remember there's a certain point in the book someone comes to her and says, can you give me the answers, like can you predict what's going to happen, and she's like: "I almost don't need the cards to predict what's going to happen to a Buendía, because I know you so well." And so Márquez gives you the family tree and he also gives you that ability to see what's going to happen. It makes me more connected to the story I think.

Kali

Yeah definitely, and it's like retraining your idea of like a linear narrative, because you're traditionally going to be like I don't want to see what happens because then I'll know it and I'll spoil it, like you said, but Márquez is trying to get totally away from that, it's like the inevitability of what's going to happen.

Angourie

Yeah, it's like not about the twists and turns and keeping things a surprise, like it's about the emotion of it and the pattern that it follows. So if we're talking about the first generation, cos I wrote them all down, we have six generations of Buendías. The first generation we start off with one couple, José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula Iguarán ... your pronunciation is so much better than mine.

Kali

No, you're doing great, sweetie!

Angourie

[laughing] Thank you! And they are the ones who found ... founded the town. Find the town?

Kali

Found. Founded? Find.

Angourie

Cos they don't find it. But they are the ones who founded it, but how do you found something in the present tense? Found?

Kali

They ...

Angourie

They find the town?

Kali

No, they found the town. Wait, but that sounds like they found the town!

Angourie

They found it. They, okay, they are the founding members –

Kali

They established the town!

Angourie

They establish the town! They establish the town. Yes. We've kind of mentioned José Arcadio Buendía a little bit. He goes a bit crazy.

Kali

Just a little bit.

Angourie

He gets tied to a tree, after he goes batshit crazy.

Kali

And destroys everything in the house.

Angourie

Oh, true, he does! And then he gets kicked out and tied to a tree for fifty years. And the person that I love, that we both love, is Úrsula.

Kali

What a queen.

Angourie

She's incredible. The rock of the family, survives war, death, illness, she survives the death of her husband, all her children, and all of her grandchildren. She lives for a really long time. She gets to like 114 and she stops counting.

Kali

She's just a bad bitch, like, you know, like she puts up with so much crap, she's the closest that we get to someone who's watched it all happen. Like she saw 90% of this narrative unfold, until her last days she was relied on as the matriarch of the family, like she was the actual backbone, holding everything together, she was one of the people who did the most restoration, not only of the house but of people throughout the whole novel she's, like, fixing people and helping people, and in this really like bad bitch way. I don't know how to describe it, like she just she just doesn't give a fuck, she's so dope and hard core. Cos I didn't know what to expect coming into this book about, you know, the depiction of female characters. It's old, it's from the 60s, and there's a lot of classic literature that's amazing but the women don't feature as much, or aren't very nuanced characters. So I was – didn't know what to expect, honestly. But Úrsula is the hero of the story for me at least. Not only her, but all of the women characters are so incredibly detailed, and flawed, and heroic, and just as much, if not more so, than their male counterparts, and I just found that a joy to read

because you've got, like these heroic and villain tendencies in like everyone, and sorry I'm totally going off point or topic of Úrsula now. But –

Angourie

No, I agree that. I went into it expecting José Arcadio Buendía to be the rock and the constant in the family. I was like, he's obviously the patriarch, and he's set up as the patriarch of the family and, like, I was expecting to follow him. Then when Ursula just outlived everyone I was like yes, what a bad bitch. My queen. She is the one constant and I felt security with her, and I felt that as she was nearing the end of her days, I was like, I'm gonna feel a lost sense of security when she dies. As you said, she's the one who builds up the house, she builds up the people, and once she's gone who's going to take over, who's going to fill that role? Because she's that constant, she's the one who keeps the stories going and she keeps the memories going. And she's the one who reminds the children and the generations, like, your great-grandfather did this, your aunt did this, like, she holds all of those memories and all of those stories, and is able to pass them down because she has seen so much.

Kali

Exactly. And she is the one that can see the patterns of time and how history is repeating itself.

Angourie

And she warns them!

Kali

Exactly, she warns them of everything that happens. Like, literally, if they listened to Úrsula, we would be in a different place right now. The biggest themes of the book are like nostalgia and amnesia and destiny and fate and all of those things are facilitated by Ursula's presence. I mean, she's like just the best bitch. I think we can conclude.

Angourie

In conclusion, Úrsula is the baddest bitch, and we love her, and we stan forever.

Kali

Forever stan.

Angourie

She has three children and one adopted daughter. José Arcadio is the first born. He's the oldest, he runs away with the gypsies very early on, and comes back covered in tattoos.

Kali

Yes. Shooketh.

Angourie

Family drama. And we never find out what happened to him when he was, like, off gallivanting with the gypsies.

Kali

And he comes back all hardened and like ... rar.

Angourie

Rar.

Kali

[laughing] Rawr XD, oh my god!

Angourie

[laughing] José Arcadio really just said rawr XD.

Kali

It's not a phase, mom. [laughing]

Angourie

[laughing] He's all brawn, and his younger brother is all brains. But strangely, his younger brother, Colonel Aureliano Buendia, who is the first Aureliano of many –

Kali

Many!

Angourie

For a while there it's really his story, and even though he's the youngest son, he almost feels like the Úrsula of this generation, cos he lives a long time, he sees a lot of shit. He's the one who has the gift of foresight. He goes to war against the conservatives, and is a Colonel, obviously, in this long civil war.

Kali

And he, yeah, is definitely our protagonist, we care a lot about what's happened to him. Also, good to note that in the very first sentence of the book, Márquez, I mean, should I read it? I'll read it.

Angourie

Read it, yeah!

Kali

Goes like this.

"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."

So immediately in the first sentence of the book we know that Aureliano Buendía becomes a Colonel in the army, and he's facing a firing squad, which is kind of imminent death. Also within the sentence there's a whole lot of time zones – no. Time zones?

Angourie

Time jumps?

Kali

Jumps?

Angourie

Time periods? We're jumping from ... yeah.

Kali

Tenses, if you will?

Angourie

Yes, I will. I will actually.

Kali

We know that this thing happened in the past, discovering ice, happened in the past, Colonel Aureliano Buendía is facing the firing squad in the future, and something else is happening in the present. We're dropped into this narrative from the perspective of Aureliano Buendía, for the first like third of the book, we are expecting death, we are expecting Colonel Aureliano Buendía to be faced with the firing squad and die, and spoiler alert, he doesn't! So, our whole perception of the book is like, oh shit, okay, well, in the first sentence of the book – since the first sentence of the book we've been expecting this climactic event that never happened, so now anything could happen, we actually don't know what's going on.

Angourie

Colonel Aureliano Buendía has such a complicated relationship with death, because he is in this war – he's fighting in this war, and word gets back to him that he escapes something like three assassination attempts, he survives wounds that should have killed him, and he also escapes multiple death sentences. Like, he's sentenced to the firing squad, at some point he's sentenced to a hanging possibly, and he escapes death, but he's left with so much trauma from the war. And, oh my gosh, I remember, his friend telling him: "You are so much older than you look." Because, through the war, Colonel Aureliano has lived all of these lives, and he's tried – he's escaped death time and time again, but he's left with so much trauma that he doesn't know how to deal with it, and he banishes all of these memories. Like, he doesn't want to feel anymore, he doesn't want to love, he doesn't want to feel cos he's been through so much pain and hurt.

Kali

It's really interesting, specifically with Colonel Aureliano Buendía, because his life feels like so many lives, and he lives all these almost different realities. Like, the Aureliano as a child is very different in a lot of ways to the Aureliano as an adolescent, and how he goes off and he has all these adventures, and this difficulty with love, and finding out who he is, and how to love someone, and he has this obsession with this child, then, later, as an older, kind of, middle-aged man. And, you can see that he's – I mean, that whole thing was really fucked up – but you can see that he's, like, a really complex, damaged, cut off, compartmentalised person whose life has severed his ability to feel things like a normal human. And I think Úrsula, even, at one point says: "You are incapable of love, you are a person who's incapable of love." Which, in retrospect, makes so much sense, because he's constantly searching for this thing that he can't achieve, and then, in his later years, he becomes totally unfeeling. Simultaneously, he's also this symbol for so much emotion, and passion, and liberation, and he's a figurehead of the war. So, it's really a juxtaposition between – [laughing]

Angourie

Love that! Bringing out those VCE terms!

Kali

Between ... oh, yeah! Do I get extra points because I used it?

Angourie

Yes. Definitely.

Kali

Yeah, between his, like, personal ability to be human and feel emotion, and then, kind of, the traits that he's imbued with by the public as this figure of something that's so much bigger than him.

Angourie

Can we talk about in the third generation, Arcadio, who is the son of José Arcadio and Pilar Ternera, and he was born before José Arcadio ran away with the gypsies –

Kali

And raised as Amaranta's brother, almost. They were kind of born at the same time.

Angourie

Yes. I just remember thinking he was very interesting because, he's really – I mean, they all turn out pretty crazy, um, but he is one who kind of turns into a villain. Because during the war, Colonel Aureliano Buendía leaves the town, and he leaves Arcadio in charge, and he becomes drunk with power, and it's kind of him and all his teenage friends, who [are] just, like, this – they're this gang who run around and terrorise the neighbourhood, basically. Before you know it, he's become this monster, and when I was reading it, I was like, how – how did – how did this happen, though? Like, José Arcadio was all brawn, but he wasn't awful. But then, there's a little section where Márquez talks about him – talks about Arcadio and how he grew up, and how he was ignored all his childhood because he was raised as one of their own, but not really. And so, from childhood, he was put into this solitude – he didn't know who his mother was, he didn't know who his father was. He was ignored, and that isolation and that solitude just, like, burned into him and created this monster that came out when he became an adult.

Kali

Yeah, and also, only appeared in the absence of all the other male figures of his life, like Colonel Aureliano Buendía was off fighting the war, and that kind of left this gap for Arcadio to unleash his rage at the world. There was a quote that I highlighted that I thought was amazing, that while all of this stuff was happening in the town, everyone was running rampant, these kids – these teenagers, or young adults, were just being absolutely horrific, and Úrsula didn't know what to do, and was so angry that she basically just went in and fucked shit up with Arcadio. They had, like, a court hearing where Úrsula got up with all the other mothers in the town and said:

“Don't forget, we will still be mothers, and no matter how revolutionary you may be, we have the right to pull down your pants and give you a whipping at the first sign of disrespect.”

Like, damn, girl! I guess it's – Márquez is trying to show what the conditions of someone's upbringing can do to their personality later in their life, and then Úrsula, kind of, not taking responsibility for who Arcadio has become, and still saying that she has the authority over him.

And, it's a bit sad, but also he was awful and deserved to die.

Angourie

So, now we've talked about the first three Arcadios. That Arcadio that we were just talking about, then José Arcadio, and then José Arcadio Buendía, and they die in reverse order of their birth. The – the three men who were supposed to continue the line. The line does go through the Arcadios, kind of, until it gets to Aureliano Segundo, who continues the line, but that's supposed to be the male line that's kept strong, that name of Arcadio, but it just fails. This attempt to keep the bloodline pure, and to keep having babies with the name Arcadio, and keep that patriarchal line, it fails.

Kali

It's kind of, like, subverting the, like, traditional masculinity, I guess, because the José Arcadios of the family are these impulsive, enterprising, wild, strong, brawny men who are, like, who work with their hands, and who are constantly trying to decipher mysteries, and are very, like, passionate. And then the Aurelianos are quite introverted, and withdrawn with, like, these lucid minds, and very problem-solving, and more gentle, I guess, in nature. And the Aurelianos are the ones who dominate the narrative and have the most air-time, I guess, and continue the line all the way to the end, whereas, yeah, like, the Arcadios kind of fail. All of them, actually.

Angourie

Cos their hot-headedness, it gets them killed. I mean, the Aurelianos are able to survive and continue because they don't get themselves into that much trouble. Shall we move onto the fourth generation, which I would like to argue is the most interesting generation.

Kali

Mm, yeah, I'm with you there.

Angourie

The first born in this generation is Remedios the Beauty, who is the daughter of Arcadio, the wild one, and his wife, Santa Sofia de la Piedad ... Piedad? Please say it for me!

Kali

Santa Sofia de la Piedad.

Angourie

I'm gonna – I'm gonna work on it.

Kali

Nah, you got it! You had it.

Angourie

If it was French I'd be okay! Remedios the Beauty, I was fascinated with, because she ... a lot of the women's storylines in this story, um, surround who they marry, and their labours in love, and all of that. And then you're presented with Remedios the Beauty, who is nicknamed that because she is the most beautiful girl in Macondo. But she's this strange, other-worldly, virginal, fairy-like goddess, who rejects all advances of all men. But she's not prudish, she's completely comfortable in her

body. She walks around naked cos she believes that she – that’s her most freest form. And she’s like, this other being, like an angel, and then suddenly she ascends to heaven one day. She just –

Kali

Yeah, like, just casually!

Angourie

This light shines on her, and she’s like, psey! Peace out, guys!

Kali

And she takes Fernanda’s sheets! [laughing] It’s so great! And that’s the only thing Fernanda cares about, is like, where’s my sheets? Oh, great. Just, great.

Angourie

So, she – to me, is like, such an – such a different representation of femininity, different to all the other representations that we see in the family.

Kali

Definitely. And she rattles the world of Macondo, like, people do not know how to handle her, because she is so other-worldly in everything about her. The fact that she, like, shaves her head and becomes more beautiful, and people are, like, almost disgusted with how drawn to her they are, because she should not possess the kind of allure or attraction that she does. Like, I mean how many men died because they fell in love with her? A lot.

Angourie

Too many.

Kali

People just could not control themselves around her, and she – and died of broken hearts because of how embedded she was in their brains, they couldn’t stop thinking of her. I think there was a description that I just – was so beautiful, of like, the perfume of her body leaked from the man’s brain when he died. He’s a total break in the monotony and the repetitiveness of the characters that we’ve seen thus far, because she just comes out of nowhere and rejects everything that everyone is trying to put on her. All the kinds of, like, tradition, and family values, and “marry this man.” I guess, in a way, she’s kind of a culmination of Remedios the child bride and Amaranta. She kind of embodies Amaranta’s, like, refusal to get married and have a husband, but in this totally angelic, heavenly form. I’m not quite sure what to think of her ascending to heaven, to be honest.

Angourie

I feel like there was no other way it could go. The way that she was described and the way that they talked about her is that she – to me, made it very clear that she is not human, like, she was just not human. And it’s strange that she has been born from this Arcadio, who, like, was an awful person, or became an awful person. Maybe you could read it as this – she’s like, the personification of the magic in the novel. Like, we have all these magical elements and she is the most magical person of them all, and so she is too magical to belong there. What I loved about her, two things: I loved that she didn’t die a mortal death – that she didn’t die in some tragic way in the way that so many beautiful women do in literature, and I also liked that she didn’t take the blame – at least the way I

read it, she didn't take the blame for these men dying and falling love with her. Because I think that's a narrative we see a lot of the time, is that, oh, this woman is so beautiful, she must cover up, the men can't help themselves, they can't control themselves around beautiful women and therefore it's the woman's responsibility to adapt to that. And she's just like, "No, fuck you, I'm gonna do whatever I want, and you died of a broken heart, ha ha, sucks to be you then."

Kali

Yeah, she just – she's so unemotional in her approach, and she's just like, "I, like, have no control over these people and they're choosing to do what they're doing." And even when she's just having this, like, lovely conversation with this man who's totally pervy on her from the ceiling of her bathroom, she's just kind of like, "Oh, well, I'll let him do what he will but it's not my responsibility at all." It was so awesome, especially when there's so much guilt and, like, gritty, tragic emotion surrounding her in all of the people in her family, so many broken hearts and terrible emotional stuff, and she just maintains this pure, heavenly quality, and is unscathed and untainted by any of that drama unfolding around her.

Angourie

Next in the fourth generation we have the twins, Aureliano Segundo and José Arcadio Segundo.

Kali

Oh, love these boys.

Angourie

Really? Why do you love them so much?

Kali

I mean, I don't love – I don't love them, but I just think, as characters, like, wow. I was enthralled with their storylines from beginning to end. The thing about this book is that it just keeps pulling out all stops, like, from beginning to end. I feel like, there's just like added levels of, like, oh, you think you're just gonna see another Buendía, well, now they're twins! I think these twins were, like, just incredible. The whole thing about them as children confusing everyone and changing their names to the point where everyone had the suspicion that they got confused themselves and actually switched names was so interesting. Because, as their lives went on, you – you started to see, without the narrator ever telling you, you know, that José Arcadio Segundo was displaying much more Aureliano traits than Aureliano Segundo, who was much more bold and enterprising like a José Arcadio, so it was just, like, ah ... And then – and then when they get switched in their graves! Oh. My. God.

Angourie

Oh my god, it was just perfect!

Kali

It was incredible. And the book – the narrator's just like, oh, yep, and then some people got drunk and they switched their graves. I was like, yes! Yes they did! It was amazing.

Angourie

And it's so cool that, you know, you've got this duality of the – the Aureliano type and the – and the Arcadio type. Up until this point, in the family, we think, okay, well, their personalities are dictated by their name. Whoever is called Arcadio turns out to be kind of wild and violent and a bit all over the place, and whoever is called Aureliano turns out to be quiet and bookish and introspective. But then when we get the twins, and Aureliano is the loud, partying one, and Arcadio is, like, the quiet one, are they dictated by the names that they were given? Are those identities in rooted in them, and then the name doesn't mean anything? Or does it mean something at the very beginning, and no matter what they're called after that, they will still have these personalities? I don't know, it's fascinating.

Kali

Yeah, it is crazy. And it – though – I feel like, with this generation in particular is when we start to see the repeating of history in full force. Because now, kind of the first generation, or what happened with the first generation has been forgotten other than Úrsula, who everyone's kind of discrediting as crazy at this point cos she's so old. And so, with Aureliano and José Arcadio, it's like, when the cycle starts to repeat again.

Aureliano Segundo and his affairs – personal matters – were fascinating. So, he had a relationship with this woman called Petra Cotes, who he shared with his twin brother, because she couldn't tell them apart. Then later on, José Arcadio Segundo, his twin brother, kind of dropped off and was doing his own thing, and Aureliano Segundo and Petra Cotes carried on their relationship until Aureliano Segundo met Fernanda del Carpio and they got married. And then it was like this juggling of relationships and worlds, and everyone acknowledged everything that was happening, but no one really spoke about it, and Fernanda! I mean, what a character.

Angourie

Can we talk about Fernanda, cos I am – I'm fascinated by her. She is not a Buendía, she married into the family, but it's almost like she is more Buendía than everyone put together, like – and maybe that's why they don't like her, maybe that's why they look at her as an outcast. Her origin story, if you will, is that she comes to Macondo when Aureliano Segundo holds this big fete, and she comes, and she's, like, nominated the most beautiful girl outside of Macondo, and so she comes and participates. And then she goes home, and Aureliano goes on this big journey to find her, because he was so enamoured with her beauty. And he finds her in this awful, tiny town. She makes funeral wreaths, they're living in squalor. Her parents fed her this idea that she was gonna become a queen one day, and so she has this – this idea of, like, superiority, and then when Aureliano Segundo comes, she's like, this is it, he's the king, he's gonna take me away and I'm gonna become a queen. Macondo is – is her disillusionment, because they're not living in poverty in Macondo, but life is hard and she realises, oh my gosh, this is the rest of my life, I'm never become – I'm never gonna become a queen, a rich, beautiful lady, and everyone makes fun of her for it. She becomes an outcast, and she is painted as this, like, bitter old woman, but she really fits in because Macondo is full of bitter old women. Úrsula is a bitter old woman, and she runs the place, and maybe that's why they don't like her, cos she is too similar to them.

Kali

Yeah, and it's really interesting with how – how much they hate her, and how much they, like, take the piss out of her all the time, but she still makes all the rules in the house. She sets all the precedents of, okay, you – we're not allowed to eat in the pantry anymore, everyone has to sit at the dining table and use silver, and we're gonna use these gold chamber pots and we're gonna do

things my way, and no one fights her on that. Because somehow, even though she is the butt of every joke, and everyone hates her, she still has the most authority, arguably more so than Úrsula, which is really weird. Hearing about her tragic backstory, which is quite sad, I was like, oh, shame, you know, she's not that bad, like every – she's got a bad rap, everyone hates her for no reason, like, she's had a hard life, like, cut her some slack. And then she just got – I mean, she turned into quite a bitch, and like, was just doing some crazy shit, so by the end of it I was like, ah, you know, I don't like her at all. But I'm still so intrigued by her, because somehow she has this power over everyone, to the point where her husband, who is still with his concubine – as they refer to her as – Petra Cotes, they begin – I think there's a sentence in there that says they start to view her as the daughter they never had, and are sending her food parcels and money from the business that they have, and like, they hate her, she's driven a wedge between them, essentially ruining their relationship that they wanted to have just between the two of them, but they still have this obligation to support her.

Angourie

They frequently go hungry just to give her food!

Kali

Yeah, and to give her money to spend on lavish things to support her idea that she is superior, or that she's a queen, or whatever. I mean, she's buying, like, velvet curtains and they have nothing to eat.

Angourie

My favourite Fernanda moment was when she went on that long-ass rant to her husband!

Kali

Yes!

Angourie

About all the shit she puts up with!

Kali

For, like, three pages!

Angourie

Shall we move on to the penultimate generation, the fifth generation?

Kali

Yas! Yas, let's.

Angourie

This is when they start leaving Macondo. Everyone in this generation leaves Macondo. They're all children of Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda, they have three children together. The oldest daughter, Meme, is sent away to become a nun, and then José Arcadio is sent away to become a pope, but he comes back and he's not a pope, he fails. And then finally, the youngest is Amaranta Úrsula, and she is sent away to Europe. She's the last one to come back with a Belgian husband, whose name is Gaston.

Kali

Gaston! Good to know that she is, like, raised alongside Aureliano who is the daughter [son] of Meme, her sister. They're kind of raised as brother and sister because they're so similar in age, and Amaranta Úrsula [was] had quite a long while after the other two siblings. That's just important to know.

Angourie

Important to know, cos she comes back and she's rich, and she's quite Westernised at that point, like, they're describing her and she has all of these, like, lavish jewels, and she's ordering the latest fashions from London, and yet she sits around all day and does nothing. And she, like – she had this dream to come back to Macondo, but she gets there and she has nothing to do, and so she starts a romance with her nephew, but they believe that they are brother and sister, Aureliano, who is part of the sixth generation, and it's really weird. It's really weird.

Kali

Although ... I'm not gonna say – I'm not gonna say it's not weird, but the way in which their affair was described, I found quite incredible because as I was reading it, I was like, oh my god, incest, eugh, but I was also like, wow. You know, like the house was in decay around them, everything was falling apart, but they had this love. It reminded me a lot of the way that the narrator described Aureliano Segundo and Petra Cotes' love. So, it was a really, like – in some ways, beautiful description of, like, this weird thing that I was having trouble understanding – or, not understanding, but, like, sympathising with, but at the same time described in such a, like, incredible way. So it was very conflicting situation, I'm just gonna say that.

Angourie

Yeah, and also cos as the end he says that their child, which is the last Buendía, whose name is Aureliano, which I think is an interesting choice considering that Arcadio is the patriarchal name in the line, but the last Buendía is an Aureliano cos they kept it going. The last Buendía, he says, is the only Buendía that has been created out of love, like, true love. And it's kind of weird, but it's also, like –

Kali

It's really sad. It's quite – I found that really heart-breaking, that these two people ... oh, my god, I'm not condoning incest, but like – these two people who clearly had such a deep connection and also were apart for a lot of their lives, it wasn't like they were raised as family members necessarily, but found love in each other, and had this insatiable romance where they genuinely cared for each other and loved each other, and that ... it was just doomed from the start, like it could never have worked. And that line, that he was the only Aureliano born out of – or only Buendía born out of love, was like, shit, all of these other partnerships and pairings and whatever were accepted, but created unhappy and inherently flawed people.

Angourie

Also cos, as a result of them being so in love, they let the house go to complete ruins. It's like that idea of, okay, nobody in this family had a happy marriage, had true love, or children created from true love, but the house and the family survived. And then suddenly when you bring true love into

it, nobody is there to take care of the house anymore, it goes into disarray, and it's the end of the line.

[theme music]

Angourie

Hello, editing Angourie here. Now, Kali and I spoke for a long, long time about this book! So long, in fact, that I have decided to split this episode into two parts. This is the end of part one, I think it's fitting, since we've just spoken about the whole family tree and the end of the Buendía line. Part two is going to come out tomorrow, so you don't have to wait long at all. I hope you tune in, because we talk about some really interesting and cool things in part two. So, thank you so much for listening to part one, and I will talk to you tomorrow. Bye!

[theme music]

Angourie

Oh, you've frozen. Hello?

Kali

Hello? I'm still here. Can you hear me?

Angourie

Yes.

Kali

Uh oh, we are very delayed now. Shit!

Angourie

Oh no!

Kali

Wait, tell me when you hear this [clicks fingers]

Angourie

[long pause] Now.

Kali

Oh no! [laughing]

Kali

Oh no, you've frozen.

Angourie

Oh no, you're connecting to video! Wait, are you back?

Kali

Sorry, you froze there for a second. Yes, I'm back, I'm back.

Angourie

Oh, wait, hello?

Kali

Hello. This connection suddenly got really bad, I don't know what's going on.

Kali

Hold on, don't say anything for one second, my AirPods just died.

Kali

Hello? Can you hear me?

Angourie

Yes, I can hear you. Can you hear me?

Kali

What happened?

Kali

Hello?

Angourie

Hello?

Angourie

Technology.

Kali

TeChNoLoGy.