



Memories of My Melancholy Whores

By Gabriel García Márquez

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A *New York Times* Notable Book

On the eve of his ninetieth birthday a bachelor decides to give himself a wild night of love with a virgin. As is his habit—he has purchased hundreds of women—he asks a madam for her assistance. The fourteen-year-old girl who is procured for him is enchanting, but exhausted as she is from caring for siblings and her job sewing buttons, she can do little but sleep. Yet with this sleeping beauty at his side, it is he who awakens to a romance he has never known.

Tender, knowing, and slyly comic, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* is an exquisite addition to the master's work.

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Memories of My Melancholy Whores By Gabriel García Márquez Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"The year I turned ninety, I wanted to give myself the gift of a night of wild love with an adolescent virgin." So begins *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, and it becomes even more unlikely as the novel unfolds. This slim volume contains the story of the sad life of an unnamed, only slightly talented Colombian journalist and teacher, never married, never in love, living in the crumbling family manse. He calls Rosa Cabarcas, madame of the city's most successful brothel, to seek her assistance. Rosa tells him his wish is impossible--and then calls right back to say that she has found the perfect girl.

The protagonist says of himself: "I have never gone to bed with a woman I didn't pay ... by the time I was fifty there were 514 women with whom I had been at least once ... My public life, on the other hand, was lacking in interest: both parents dead, a bachelor without a future, a mediocre journalist ... and a favorite of caricaturists because of my exemplary ugliness."

The girl is 14 and works all day in a factory attaching buttons in order to provide for her family. Rosa gives her a combination of bromide and valerian to drink to calm her nerves, and when the prospective lover arrives, she is sound asleep. Now the story really begins. The nonagenarian is not a sex-starved adventurer; he is a tender voyeur. Throughout his 90th year, he continues to meet the girl and watch her sleep. He says, "This was something new for me. I was ignorant of the arts of seduction and had always chosen my brides for a night at random, more for their price than their charms, and we had made love without love, half-dressed most of the time and always in the dark, so we could imagine ourselves as better than we were ... That night I discovered the improbably pleasure of contemplating the body of a sleeping woman without the urgencies of desire or the obstacles of modesty."

Márquez's style never falters throughout this recounting of his life and his exploration of love, found at an unexpected time and place. The erstwhile lover is still capable of being surprised--and fulfilled. After an absence of ten years, it is a treat to have another parable from the master. --Valerie Ryan

From Publishers Weekly

García Márquez's slim, reflective contribution to the romance of the brothel, his first book-length fiction in a decade, is narrated by perhaps the greatest connoisseur ever of girls for hire. After a lifetime spent in the arms of prostitutes (514 when he loses count at age 50), the unnamed journalist protagonist decides that his gift to himself on his 90th birthday will be a night with an adolescent virgin. But age, followed by the unexpected blossoming of love, disrupts his plans, and he finds himself wooing the allotted 14-year-old in silence for a year, sitting beside her as she sleeps and contemplating a life idly spent. Flashes of García Márquez's brilliant imagery—the sleeping girl is "drenched in phosphorescent perspiration"—illuminate the novella, and there are striking insights into the euphoria that is the flip side of the fear of death. The narrator's wit and charm, however, are not enough to counterbalance the monotony of his aimlessness. Though enough grace notes are struck to produce echoes of eloquence, this flatness keeps the memories as melancholy as the women themselves. 250,000 first printing.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

García Márquez (*Living to Tell the Tale*, ***1/2 Jan/Feb 2004; he was profiled in our Jan/Feb 2003 issue), who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982 for his classic *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, can, at this point, "publish anything he wants" (*Houston Chronicle*). That about sums up the critical reception of

Memories, a tale of love, aging, and revelation. Most reviewers described the short novel as sparkling and exquisitely bare, "requiring near biblical contemplation" (*Washington Post*). But as the narrator—loathsome, obsessive—recalls his journalism career, his prostitutes, and his near marriage, a few critics found scant purpose in this nonagenarian's musings and claimed the novel fell far short of the author's abilities. Ultimately, *Memories* celebrates the power of love in the looming face of death. In that respect, it's a far cry from *Lolita*.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nannie Hand:

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Sharon Stennis:

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Mavis Strain:

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Jennifer Day:

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