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# **The Politics of “La siesta del martes”: A Phenomenology of Boredom and Suspended Time in Gabriel García Márquez**

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**Abstract:** This article offers a phenomenological reading of boredom as a social and political experience in Gabriel García Márquez’s short story “La siesta del martes” (1962). Previous criticism has examined the story’s narrative economy, its representation of poverty and class antagonism, and the dignity of the grieving mother. This article shifts attention to the atmospheric organization of boredom. The siesta appears as the form through which an exhausted social order suspends response, preserves hierarchy, and turns a mother’s mourning into a public event. Drawing on Josefa Ros Velasco’s conception of boredom as a damaged relation to the present, and in dialogue with phenomenological theories of emotional atmosphere, the article shows how García Márquez distributes boredom through heat, silence, institutional delay, spatial thresholds, and the public gaze. The town’s status as a former banana enclave is central to this reading, since its torpor belongs to the afterlife of an extractive economy whose routines and hierarchies remain after its purpose has faded. Against this atmosphere, the mother’s composure and refusal to delay enact a form of temporal resistance. The article contributes to boredom studies by showing how literary narrative can present boredom as an environmental, moral, and public condition before it appears as a matter of private psychology.

**Keywords:** boredom, affective atmospheres, phenomenology, García Márquez, Hermann Schmitz, Hans Blumenberg.

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## 1. Introduction

“La siesta del martes”<sup>1</sup> holds a singular place in García Márquez’s early fiction, and it earns that place by compression rather than by event. In a handful of pages, it gathers nearly everything that will preoccupy the later work: poverty, the weakness of institutions, the circulation of rumor, the stratification of provincial life, and the figure of a woman who maintains her moral bearing while the surrounding environment slides into cruelty or fatigue. The plot could be told in three sentences. A mother and her young daughter ride a third-class carriage to a small town to lay flowers on the grave of Carlos Centeno, the woman’s son, shot dead a week earlier as he tried to break into a house. They reach the town at the dead hour of the siesta, when the shops are shut, the heat is at its height, and the streets are empty. The mother asks the parish priest for the keys to the cemetery; he hesitates, questions her, recognizes the dead man as a thief, and at last hands them over, by which time the town has woken just enough to gather at its windows and watch the two strangers walk out into the sun.

The narrative constructs an affective world in which the ordinary elements of public life—a train, oppressive heat, a wire-mesh door, a priest’s study, and shuttered windows—are integrated into a unified moral atmosphere. The primary force exerted on the reader does not arise from explicit actions or dialogue, but from the way the town frames the mother’s modest undertaking. García Márquez’s prose generates a tangible feeling of pressure, composed of repose, heat, and delay. The town appears empty, yet its emptiness is vigilant; it seems inert, yet its inertia is already imbued with judgment.

Most readings have approached that pressure through narrative structure, social realism, and the dignity of the poor. Arango’s (1985) structural analysis persists as valuable precisely because it shows how much the story’s minimal action depends on a strict economy of functions, spaces, and oppositions; Mallett (1974) reads it through image and juxtaposition; Padilla Villada (2020) through the theory of reception; and Hoshan (2021) through the lens of critical discourse analysis. These accounts convincingly establish that the story turns on class and the confrontation between rich and poor. What they leave open is a prior and more elusive question, one that belongs squarely to boredom studies: how does the story make social judgment felt before anyone has pronounced it?

Two further bodies of scholarship frame the argument. The first is the historiography of the Colombian banana zone, which supplies the material coordinates of the world the story depicts (Bucheli, 2005; LeGrand, 1998) and which cautions—here Posada-Carbó (1998) is the essential reference—against reading the fiction as a record of that history. The second is the strand of boredom studies that treats boredom as historically and socially constituted rather than as a private mood (Barbalet, 1999; Goodstein, 2005), and for which literature has been a principal archive (Meyer Spacks, 1995). The present article belongs to the third of these fields and draws on the other two: on the criticism for its questions, on the historiography for its coordinates and its cautions.

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis is based on the Spanish version of “La siesta del martes”, as collected in *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (García Márquez, 1962). Quotations are rendered in English in the body of the article, followed by the original Spanish in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, all English renderings are my own translations.

This analysis contends that the answer resides in boredom, not as an explicit theme or as a mood experienced by the mother or daughter, but as a social and atmospheric phenomenon. On this reading, the town's boredom constitutes a collective contraction of meaningful possibility, produced by the siesta, institutional lethargy, routines the story presents as inherited rather than chosen, and the appetite for spectacle engendered by such depletion. In this context, boredom is neither trivial nor a mere lack of entertainment, nor is it a private state of an idle individual. Rather, it is a worldly phenomenon, embedded in the hour, the architecture, the rhythm of the parish office, and the gaze that transforms a mother's anguish into a consumable event for the town (Barbalet, 1999; Ros Velasco, 2017, 2023).

Ros Velasco is my principal theoretical guide because she rejects the long moral tradition that treats boredom as a weakness or a vice. For her, boredom names a damaged relation to the present: the world, or the activity, fails to furnish the stimulation, expectation, or meaning we need from it, and that failure registers as a particular discomfort (Ros Velasco, 2017, 2023). Two features of her account matter most here. First, boredom is not the simple absence of stimuli; a world may be full of objects, sounds, and routines and still fail to cohere into anything that holds us. Second, boredom is diagnostic: it tells us that something in the relation between subject and world has stopped working. In "La siesta del martes", that diagnosis falls not on the mother but on the town, whose boredom reveals an obsolete social order—closed institutions, a religion gone tepid, a class hierarchy that survives as a reflex (Ros Velasco, 2017, 2019, 2023).

Ros Velasco's account of boredom becomes clearer when placed in dialogue with phenomenological theories of affective atmosphere. Böhme (1993, 2017) provides the basic conceptual framework by defining atmosphere as a quasi-objective, spatially diffused feeling that hangs between subject and object, emerging from the features of an environment while becoming real only in the body that enters it. Schmitz (2016) makes it possible to advance a stronger and more precise claim. Silence, weather, and the felt body occupy "spaces without area" (Schmitz, 2016), which means that an atmosphere is not a private projection, but something encountered, a presence that lays hold of whoever moves through it. The two approaches are not interchangeable. Böhme allows us to describe the mood of the town, whereas Schmitz supports the more demanding argument that its heat and silence are not figures for inner states but agents in their own right. Anderson's (2009) reformulation is useful at this point because it makes explicit what the phenomenological accounts leave implicit: atmospheres are collective and transpersonal, they emanate from an assembling of bodies and things while exceeding any one of them, and they are therefore the appropriate category for an affect that belongs to a situation rather than to a subject. Ratcliffe (2008) adds the dimension of possibility, since existential feelings are the background orientations through which a world appears to offer or withhold room to act. Fuchs (2002, 2007) links lived space to the gaze of others and, with it, to the phenomenology of shame on which the story's climax turns. Blumenberg (1986) finally provides the temporal frame, since his distinction between the finite time of a life and the vast, indifferent orders of world-time clarifies why the mother's errand acquires its political charge.

One might object that these dynamics could be described more simply as oppression, and that the concept of 'boredom' merely reframes a familiar account of class power. The objection

is well taken, and the answer is not that boredom replaces the other descriptions but that it supplements them at a specific point. While oppression denotes a relation of power, it does not, in itself, account for the town's desire to witness a poor woman's shame. Boredom, by contrast, does. In a social world where shared meanings have diminished—where institutions operate by protocol, faith lacks conviction, and days repeat without renewal—there is an inclination to seek intensity wherever it is available, often in the spectacle of another's exposure. Gossip acquires significance where meaning is scarce; classification substitutes for care when genuine concern has waned. Thus, boredom is not a decorative concept but provides the essential intermediary between an unjust social structure and the particular, almost gratuitous, cruelty of a town that emerges from torpor only to observe the suffering of others. Oppression explains why the mother is judged; boredom explains why the act of judging becomes, for the town, an event worth witnessing.

The method of this article is phenomenological. Phenomenology describes how a situation gives itself to whoever undergoes it, before and beneath the judgments that may afterwards be formed about it, and it does so without dividing what is described into outer facts and inner feelings. Atmosphere requires a description of that kind, belonging as it does neither to the streets alone nor to any single mind. The judgment at issue in this story is felt before it is uttered, and that is the level phenomenology was constituted to reach. Nor does the fictional standing of the town raise an obstacle. The method has always worked by varying a case in imagination until what is essential to it stands clear, and Husserl (1983, §70) held fiction to be the vital element of phenomenology and of every eidetic science. What is described here is therefore a structure the story sustains, and not the inner life of invented people.

The description that follows treats boredom as a social and political experience, and pursues it through the story's rhythms and delays, its treatment of heat and silence, its spatial thresholds, its bodily gestures, and the forms of visibility through which social judgment takes shape. The aim is to show that boredom in "Tuesday Siesta" is not confined to interiority, but emerges as a shared atmosphere in which time, space, institution, and gaze converge. The argument unfolds in four sections: first, a phenomenological account of boredom as atmosphere; second, an interpretation of the siesta as a chronotope of suspended social time, grounded in the history of the banana enclave; third, an analysis of heat, silence, and closure as constituents of a moral atmosphere; and fourth, an interpretation of the mother's dignity as temporal resistance—a refusal to allow the rhythm and gaze of a bored social order to dictate the terms of her grief. The conclusion demonstrates what the story contributes to boredom studies: evidence that boredom can be public, spatial, and political before it becomes a matter of private psychology.

## **2. Boredom, Atmosphere, and the Damaged Present**

A philosophical reading of boredom has to begin by refusing its everyday diminishment. We are used to treating boredom as a small thing: having nothing to do, the irritation of a wait, the dull friction of repetition. The smallness is misleading. Because boredom concerns the relation between time, attention, and meaning, it can lay bare the structure of a world—what that world

fails to give, what it withholds, where expectation persists without fulfillment, where habit grinds on after vitality has withdrawn. This is why the study of boredom has had to range across sociology, phenomenology, psychology, and intellectual history rather than settle in any one of them (Barbalet, 1999; Elpidorou, 2023; Elpidorou & Ros Velasco, 2025; Svendsen, 2005).

Ros Velasco's (2017, 2023) contribution is to hold boredom apart from both moralism and metaphysical glamour. Boredom, on her account, arises when the present does not engage us as we expect or need it to. The trouble is rarely a literal absence of stimuli; there may be no end of objects, sounds, and obligations. The trouble is that they refuse to cohere into meaning. The world is there, but it is not enough; it goes on, but it does not open. In her strongest formulations, boredom becomes a signal of damaged reality—or, more carefully, of a damaged relation to reality.

The town of “La siesta del martes” is not empty in any literal sense. It has a train station, streets, a rectory, a priest, houses, children, and a cemetery. What it lacks is not social form but meaningful hospitality; it keeps its forms and has mislaid their generosity—institutions without warmth, a religion without conviction, an attentiveness without compassion. The siesta gathers this condition into an hour. Public life has not vanished but turned inward and gone inert, and the inertia is not innocent: it is precisely the state in which judgment can take the place of encounter. When the priest at last murmurs that “God’s will is inscrutable” [“la voluntad de Dios es inscrutable”], the narrator notes that he says it “without much conviction” [“sin mucha convicción”] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 141). The sentence is the office speaking, not the man nor the faith. The institution still produces its phrases; what has drained from them is weight.

That small notation is the model for the kind of evidence on which this reading rests, and it allows the criteria of diagnosis to be stated. An atmosphere of boredom is claimed here only where four features appear together in the text. First, time is emptied of purposeful activity while remaining socially organized: the siesta is not rest but a regime. Second, forms persist after their motivating meaning has withdrawn, as in a formula pronounced without conviction or a ledger filled in without interest in the life it records. Third, repetition occurs without renewal, so that what recurs brings nothing with it—the symmetrical and interminable plantations, the twenty-eight years of a widow’s fear. Fourth, intensity is sought in a source external to the community’s own purposes, and found in the exposure of a stranger. Torpor alone satisfies none of these criteria; heat satisfies none; curiosity satisfies only the last. It is their conjunction, and only their conjunction, that the concept of boredom is being asked to name.

It is worth marking the distance between this boredom and the deep boredom that Heidegger (1995) made famous as a disclosure of beings as a whole. Stafford and Gregory’s (2006) reconstruction is useful for its two formal moments—being left empty and being held in limbo—and for the way it binds boredom to the passing of time. But García Márquez does not stage a subject lifted by deep boredom into ontological insight. He stages a town whose habits have lost their ethical vitality while keeping their disciplinary force. The point is not that boredom opens a window onto being; rather, boredom has become socially operative. It arranges bodies in doorways and at windows, slows the tempo of response, and makes poverty visible. The

suspension at work here is not metaphysical but managed: a waiting that has learned to convert delay into exposure.

That boredom can be socially operative is not a metaphor extended from the individual case. A community is not a subject and has no impulses to act on, but boredom was never only a state of subjects. Goodstein (2005) has shown that it is a modern way of articulating a crisis of meaning, formed in and by the vocabularies of a period, and social from the outset rather than merely mental. Barbalet (1999), from the sociology of emotion, treats it as the registration of an absent meaning in a situation, continuous with the social organization of significance, so that the conditions which deplete a shared world produce the affect in those who inhabit it. The theory of atmosphere was devised for the same reason, to name affective qualities that belong to situations rather than to persons and that are met as already there by whoever enters them (Anderson, 2009; Böhme, 1993). The story shows a situation of just this kind, whose loss of meaning conditions the responses its inhabitants severally give, and literature has long been where such conditions become describable, which is why the literary history of boredom belongs to its evidence rather than to its margins (Meyer Spacks, 1995).

At this point, the phenomenology of atmosphere<sup>2</sup> is necessary because the story withholds exactly what a psychological reading would want. There is no interior monologue of boredom, no character who reports the feeling. There is an hour, a climate, a spatial arrangement, a public rhythm. Böhme's (1993, 2017) concept of atmosphere names the in-between standing of those phenomena: an atmosphere is neither purely subjective nor purely objective but the felt quality of a situation, arising from the environment and yet realized only in the body that undergoes it.

Schmitz (2016) lets the claim be put even more sharply. In rejecting the inherited partition of an external, objective world from a sealed inner one, he argues that emotions are atmospheres occupying a space without area, a space of experienced presence. This is what allows me to insist that the atmosphere of García Márquez's town is not the sum of private projections by isolated minds. It is met as a space of heat, hush, withdrawal, and expectancy—that takes hold of the bodies crossing it. Heat, silence, and a closed door are therefore not decorative realism. They are atmospheric agents: they tune the space, they slow the body, they alter what a movement through the street can mean.

Ratcliffe (2008) clarifies the same point from the side of possibility. Existential feelings are not emotions aimed at particular objects but background ways of finding oneself in a world, and they govern what shows up as possible there. The world the mother enters is not simply hot; it is closed, its possibilities narrowed to delay, scrutiny, and the threat of shame. Fuchs (2002, 2007) takes the last step. Shame, in his phenomenology, is not first of all an inward feeling but a structure of exposure: the shamed subject is made a body-for-others, thrown into an alienating visibility. The story builds steadily toward such a scene—the priest searching the two faces for tears, the children with “their noses flattened against the wire mesh” [“sus narices aplastadas

<sup>2</sup> In previous work, I have developed the notion of an *atmosphere of trust* as an emotional space of binding proximity that organizes relations of dependence, care, and power. From this perspective, the home is understood not merely as a private or domestic setting, but as an originary sphere of relational and existential constitution, where self-confidence, openness to the world, and the primary experience of love first take shape (Santos-de-Torregroza, 2026).



contra la red metálica”], the neighbors massing at the windows (García Márquez, 1962, p. 141). And yet the mother does not become what the town has assembled to see. Her composure, made visible in her bodily gestures, is not a lack of feeling but a refusal to let herself be defined or absorbed by the collective emotional atmosphere that surrounds her.

The guiding thesis can now be stated more exactly. Boredom is what an atmosphere becomes when a world goes on imposing its forms while withdrawing its meaning. In this story, the forms are the siesta, parish protocol, the respectability of class, and the license of public spectatorship; their meaning has worn threadbare, but their power has not. García Márquez’s achievement is to make that impoverishment perceptible without ever naming it. The reader is not handed a theory of boredom. The reader is placed inside a social atmosphere in which boredom has turned punitive (García Márquez, 1962; Ros Velasco, 2017, 2023).

### **3. The Siesta as Suspended Social Time**

The title is already a small theory of time. “La siesta del martes” names neither a person, an action, nor a moral problem; it names an interval. The siesta is a culturally legible suspension of the ordinary public rhythm: work stops, doors close, the streets empty, bodies retreat from the heat. It is a pause—but not all pauses are peaceful. In García Márquez (1962), the pause becomes a scene of social truth, the moment in which the town shows what it is when it is no longer busy performing itself as public life.

The story opens in motion, and the motion is already laden with tedium. The train “leaves the trembling corridor of red rock and enters the banana plantations, symmetrical and interminable” [“las plantaciones de banano, simétricas e interminables”] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 135), and the sea breeze is lost for good. The landscape into which the mother and daughter travel is not expansive but repetitive, ordered by symmetry and exhaustion rather than by promise. Their journey carries grief through a geography already shaped by monotony. The opening paragraph thus does more than establish atmosphere. It situates the story within the banana enclave, a world of foreign offices, electric fans, brick company camps, and dusty rose gardens laid out along the railway line.

That geography is the story’s buried politics, and it surfaces in a single expression when the narrator describes “the town’s houses as built on the banana company’s model” [“construidas sobre el modelo de la compañía bananera”] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 136). The town is a former enclave of the fruit trade, its very architecture a bequest of the corporation that once organized the region’s labor and its life. García Márquez ties the place still more firmly to his mythic-historical world a few lines later, when the lonely widow who fires the fatal shot is said to have nursed her fear, “since the days of Colonel Aureliano Buendía, across 28 twenty-eight years of aloneness” [“desde los tiempos del coronel Aureliano Buendía, cerca de 28 años de soledad”] (1962, p. 140)—the very phrase that would name the novel of the banana massacre still to come. The siesta, then, is no innocent Mediterranean habit transplanted to the tropics. It is the daily rhythm of a depleted company town: a social order that has outlived the boom which built it and kept only its hierarchies, its torpor, and its suspicion of the poor. When I call the town’s boredom

political, this is what I mean. Its lethargy is the afterlife of an extractive economy, and the judgment it visits on Carlos Centeno's mother is the reflex of a community left with structure but no longer with purpose (García Márquez, 1962).

What the story gives is a built environment shaped by the company, a landscape of interminable plantations, and a public life contracted to routine. It does not report the company's departure, and it fixes no date for a decline. The enclave survives in the text as a resonance rather than as a chronicle, and that is enough for a reading which is interpretive rather than historical. The town's torpor is legible as the routine of a social order whose organizing purpose is no longer present to it, and whose hierarchies persist as reflex. This is what makes its boredom political.

Against that suspended time, the mother arrives with her own time. She is not drifting; she has a destination, a bunch of flowers, and a task, and her hours are directed toward the grave. When she reaches the town, the public order has receded into the siesta—shops shut, offices closed, houses bolted from within, the air growing dense under the heat—and the contrast between her directed movement and the town's dormancy supplies the story's first philosophical tension. She bears a meaningful deed into a place whose public meaning has gone to sleep. The narrator's image for that place is exact: "the town floated in the heat, oppressed by its own torpor" ["el pueblo flotaba en el calor [...] agobiado por el sopor"] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 137).

Blumenberg's distinction between lifetime and world-time sharpens what is at stake. In *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit* (1986), he describes the human disproportion between the finite span of a life and the far larger temporal orders within which any life is set. The mother's errand belongs wholly to lifetime: it is finite, urgent, bound to a dead son and to the few hours before the return train. The town's siesta behaves like a local edition of world-time—indifferent, recurrent, larger than the need that has walked into it. The political force of her movement consists in its refusal to let an impersonal social time absorb the finite time of mourning. She has come; therefore, she will go to the grave now.

Ros Velasco's account of boredom as a mismatch between expectation and purposeful participation explains why the siesta is more than a backdrop. A siesta can be rest, but the rest in this story does not liberate; it is a social mechanism for deferring response. The mother's need is concrete and immediate. The town answers with suspension, and the priest gives that suspension a voice when he suggests that, "in such heat", the women "could have waited for the sun to go down" ["con este calor [...] han podido esperar a que bajara el sol"] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 139). On its surface, this is practical kindness. Underneath, it is a demand that grief accommodate itself to the comfort of the institution and the convenience of public opinion, that mourning present itself at the hour least likely to disturb the town. Her reply refuses the bargain without raising her voice: "the train leaves at half past three" ["el tren se va a las tres y media"] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 138). Her time is not the town's to administer (Ros Velasco, 2017, 2019, 2023).

This is where the politics of boredom becomes precise. Boredom looks like empty time, but empty time is never distributed equally. Some have the power to suspend the world; others must cross that suspension on adverse terms. The town can close itself; the priest can defer; the



neighbors can wait behind their shutters for something to look at. The mother cannot wait in the same way, because to wait would be to grant the town authority over the timing of her grief. Her refusal to delay is a refusal to let a bored social order fix the hour of remembrance.

The pacing makes this conflict feel rather than be asserted. Nothing dramatic happens quickly. The two travelers arrive, find the rectory, speak through the mesh, wait for the priest, answer his questions, and receive the keys. The slowness is not incidental; it is the argument's form. García Márquez obliges the reader to undergo the burden of delay, and so to feel how little action is required for social violence to occur once the atmosphere has already been arranged against the poor. Even the waiting is unequal. The mother waits only where the institution imposes waiting; within, her time stays pointed at the cemetery. The town waits in another register altogether—it waits for an occasion to look, to classify, to convert a dead son and his mother into social meaning. Its siesta is not simply inactive. It is a waiting, grown-hungry for spectacle (Barbalet, 1999; García Márquez, 1962).

The siesta thus becomes what one might call a chronotope of suspended social time: not simply a temporal setting but a fusion of time, space, and social relation. The hour organizes the architecture, the architecture organizes visibility, and visibility organizes judgment. Shuttered doors and lowered blinds do not abolish public life so much as deform it, producing a community hidden enough to judge and present enough to be felt. The mother's walk toward the cemetery is political because it traverses this suspended field without asking its leave (García Márquez, 1962).

#### **4. Heat, Silence, and Moral Atmosphere**

No element of the story carries more atmospheric force than heat. The image of a town that “floated in the heat” [“flotaba en el calor”] is more than a sensory description; it gives heat the standing of a medium (García Márquez, 1962, p. 137). The town does not simply contain the heat. It is held by it, suspended in it, just as its institutions, bodies, and judgments are suspended. Heat slows movement, thins speech, and turns the place into a field of heavy perception in which even an act of mercy would cost an effort no one seems willing to make.

Böhme's (1993, 2017) language of tuned space is apt here. An atmosphere is not a property one could isolate like a material object; it is the way a space comes to be experienced as already bearing an affective tone. The heat tunes the town toward lethargy, and the lethargy is not neutral. It produces a world in which compassion, too, is slowed, in which response demands exertion, and in which institutional care arrives already tired. The priest's religious language fails for lack of conviction, not simply because he is a weak man, but because the atmosphere has drained the weight from his office before he opens his mouth.

Schmitz (2026) is decisive at this point, for he keeps the analysis from collapsing heat and silence back into metaphors for inner states. There are, he argues, spaces without area, including the spaces of sound, silence, weather, the felt body, and emotion as atmosphere. His treatment of silence is the most pertinent. Silence is not the mere lack of sound but a spatial mode of presence, and it comes in different forms: ceremonial, oppressive, broad, dense. The calm of

this siesta is of the constricting sort. It presses, narrows, and exposes. In a town fully awake, the two travelers might be absorbed into the ordinary traffic of the street; inside the silence of the dead hour, their every movement becomes audible, visible, available to be read. The withdrawal of activity does not protect them. It produces them as a spectacle.

The rectory concentrates this pressure into institutional form. The women do not step into a scene of pastoral consolation but into a small apparatus of mediation: a wire-mesh door, the priest's sister who calls him, a wooden railing dividing the room, a desk, a ledger, the request for names, and the identification of the dead. The space is cramped, orderly, and bureaucratic. The priest does not so much receive the mother as process her, and the processing, while never overtly violent, is anything but neutral. It translates anguish into social information, a life into an entry in a parish book. He is not, for all that, a man enjoying a spectacle. He blushes and sweats, and he will end by proposing a discreet exit through the courtyard while his sister offers an umbrella against the sun. Those gestures administer the mother's visibility and are at the same time a limited, embarrassed form of care, and the story refuses to separate them. The same offer that would spare her exposure concedes that exposure is what she deserves, and asks her to accept a discretion indistinguishable from shame.

The heart of that translation is the question of what Carlos Centeno was. The town knows him under a single category, 'the thief', the man shot in the night (García Márquez, 1962). The mother knows him as a son formed by hunger and by the beatings of the boxing ring, a man whose every mouthful, she says, once tasted to her of the blows he took on Saturday nights. When she answers the priest's probing by saying that "he was a very good man" ["era un hombre muy bueno"], she is not denying the theft (García Márquez, 1962, p. 141). She is rejecting the town's compression of a whole life into one public label. The bored moral order wants a classification it can file: thief, mother of a thief, poor woman, shame. The mother answers with duration, restoring to the dead man the thickness of a history that the town's judgment has flattened.

Here, the link between boredom and judgment shows its mechanism. A social order starved of common meaning manufactures intensity by reducing others to spectacle. Where shared significance is thin, gossip does duty for it; where the institutions are tired, classification stands in for care; where the day is empty, the exposed body of a stranger becomes the event the day was lacking. The town's sudden interest in the mother is not the waking of compassion but the animation of boredom, a community stirred out of its torpor by the chance to watch a shame unfold (Barbalet, 1999; Fuchs, 2002; García Márquez, 1962).

Fuchs's (2002, 2007) phenomenology of shame specifies the danger she faces. Shame makes the subject an object for others; it captures the body in a gaze that defines it from outside. The story arranges precisely such a capture. The priest scans the two faces for tears. The children crowd the mesh. The sister reports from the back of the room that "everyone is at the windows" ["todo el mundo está en las ventanas"] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 141). The mother and daughter are on the point of becoming public bodies, visible bearers of poverty and disgrace, and in most social worlds that visibility would be enough to produce surrender.

What García Márquez stages instead is a quiet reversal. The mother's composure does not dissolve the atmosphere, but it redistributes its ethical weight. She does not become the spectacle the windows have gathered to see. Her composure, made visible in her measured gestures and refusal to hurry, is not a lack of feeling but a refusal to be defined or absorbed by the town's collective emotional atmosphere. The atmosphere assembled to shame the mother begins instead to expose the poverty of the town's moral world. Her dignity serves as an atmospheric counterforce. It neither argues nor pleads, and by refusing to perform the role expected of her, it makes the town's judgment visible as judgment.

### **5. The Mother's Dignity as Temporal Resistance**

The mother's dignity is best understood through the temporal order she sustains against the town. The town inhabits the suspended time of the siesta; the priest moves within the slow time of parish procedure; the spectators wait for an incident that will animate the dead hour. The mother's time is different. It is a ritual time oriented toward mourning the death of her son, bound to the grave she has come to visit and to the limited hours before the return train.

Her composure begins on the train, in the instructions she gives the girl about posture, thirst, heat, and tears. These instructions prepare the child for the social exposure that awaits them. The mother knows that poverty will be read through the body and that grief will be judged through gesture. The serenity attributed to her by the narrator, "the scrupulous serenity of people accustomed to poverty" ["la serenidad escrupulosa de la gente acostumbrada a la pobreza"], belongs to this discipline of exposure (García Márquez, 1962, p. 136). It is a bodily knowledge of the atmosphere they are about to enter, where the poor must regulate even their mourning under the gaze of others (Fuchs, 2002, 2007).

Ros Velasco's (2017, 2019, 2023) theory clarifies the distance between the mother's temporality and the town's boredom. The mother's relation to the present is painful and purposeful. Her grief concentrates meaning around the dead son, the journey, the flowers, and the grave. The town, by contrast, moves through a deficit of meaning in which routine has become automatic and moral language has lost conviction. Elpidorou's (2018) regulatory account of boredom helps explain this contrast, since boredom can signal that a situation has become unsatisfying and push a subject toward a more meaningful form of engagement. In the town, that impulse is diverted toward inspection and spectacle rather than ethical renewal. The mother's grief has depth; the town's judgment remains on the surface (García Márquez, 1962).

Her refusal to wait until evening asserts the time of mourning against the time of the siesta. When the priest suggests that the women, given the heat, "could have waited for the sun to go down" ["han podido esperar a que bajara el sol"], he presents institutional delay as practical advice (García Márquez, 1962, p. 139). The mother answers from another temporal order. "The train leaves at half past three" ["el tren se va a las tres y media"] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 138). The sentence fixes the urgency of her task. Her grief will not be rescheduled to suit the priest's comfort, the heat, or the town's curiosity.

Blumenberg (1986) helps name the political force of this gesture. The mother possesses only the finite time of her journey, her mourning, and her body under the sun. The town behaves as if its temporal order were natural, as if the siesta could determine when grief may appear in public. Her dignity consists in refusing that naturalization. She recognizes the heat, the priest, and the watching windows, yet she does not allow their tempo to become the measure of what she owes the dead (García Márquez, 1962).

This temporal independence protects her from shame. Shame depends on the power of the other's gaze to define the subject from outside, and the story places the mother and daughter at the threshold of precisely that exposure (Fuchs, 2002, 2007). The mother feels the pressure of the gaze without granting it authority over the meaning of her son's life. Her insistence that Carlos was a good man, discussed above, belongs to the same refusal: it keeps open a history that the town has reduced to a category, giving duration back to a life that judgment had flattened into a label. Her words to the priest do not ask for absolution. When she says that Carlos "was a very good man" ["era un hombre muy bueno"], she keeps open a history that the town has reduced to the category of theft (García Márquez, 1962, p. 141).

That history is maternal, bodily, and social. Carlos Centeno is the dead man whom the town remembers as a thief, but for his mother, he is also the child raised in scarcity and the young boxer marked by violence and hunger. Her memory gives duration back to a life the town has flattened into a label. The story's political conflict lies in this struggle over time. Bored power reduces a life to a public category; maternal dignity restores the thickness of a history. Bored power asks grief to wait; dignity insists that remembrance has its own hour (García Márquez, 1962; Ros Velasco, 2017, 2023).

García Márquez gives this conflict a quiet form. The mother does not dramatize her resistance or turn it into an open confrontation. She maintains the tempo of her task. Within a world that wants to make her a spectacle, she remains oriented toward the grave. Her dignity lies in this sustained orientation, in the refusal to let the town's bored gaze become the center of the scene. The mother answers boredom with fidelity rather than novelty. The usual response to a bored present is distraction, stimulation, or movement toward something new; Elpidorou's (2023) phenomenological account stresses the disturbance of attention, agency, and meaningful engagement that boredom entails. García Márquez offers a different literary answer. Against a depleted social atmosphere, the mother maintains a relation to the past and to the dead that resists the impoverishment of the present. When the priest offers a discreet exit through the courtyard, and his sister offers an umbrella against the sun, the mother declines both. "Thank you, we are fine as we are" ["gracias, así vamos bien"] (García Márquez, 1962, p. 142). She takes the child by the hand and walks into the street. She does not entertain the town. She exposes it.

## **6. Conclusion**

"La siesta del martes" becomes newly legible when boredom is understood as a politically distributed atmosphere rather than a private mood. The siesta suspends ordinary activity, narrows the field of meaningful possibility, and lays bare the lethargy of institutions that operate through

delay and hesitation. Heat and silence appear as environmental forces that attune the town's social space. The public gaze also emerges as the means by which an impoverished world manufactures intensity from another person's shame. The mother's dignity reveals a bodily and temporal refusal to allow that atmosphere to have the final word on the reality of mourning time.

Ros Velasco's (2017, 2019, 2023) philosophy of boredom is decisive for this reading because it links boredom to a damaged present rather than to mere idleness. It allows us to see that the truly bored formation is the social order that receives the story's protagonist: a former company town whose routines have outlived their meaning and whose principal form of animation is spectacle. Boredom does not displace class prejudice, provincial surveillance, or religious moralism as explanations of the mother's treatment; it explains why that treatment becomes an occasion. Understood in this way, boredom must be politically, as something a social world distributes, and distributes unequally.

From this perspective, the siesta ceases to function as a simple temporal frame or local color. It appears as a form of world in which climate, architecture, institution, and public gaze act together. The story shows that an atmosphere is not only felt; it also organizes positions, slows responses, distributes visibility, and determines who is exposed to others' judgment. This is the literary force of the story: it makes perceptible a violence that need not declare itself to operate, because it is already incorporated into the rhythm of the day, the heat, the silence, and the ordinary forms of social interaction.

This reading repositions the story within García Márquez's studies by locating its social violence at the level of sensible experience. The story offers particularly fertile material for a phenomenological analysis of ordinary violence, because it shows how the judgment of Carlos Centeno and his mother is organized through time and space: the hour of the siesta, the heat, the silence, the rectory, the windows, and the waiting. The article's contribution is to show that the banana enclave does not function merely as historical background, but as an exhausted form of life that survives in routines, hierarchies, and ways of looking. From there, boredom explains why the town turns the mother's mourning into a public event.

The story's contribution to the study of boredom lies in showing its capacity to organize experience socially. In "La siesta del martes", boredom sediments in timetables, climates, buildings, protocols, and collective gazes, until it becomes environmental, moral, and public. The mother confronts that atmosphere through a fidelity to meaning that seeks neither to entertain, persuade, nor justify itself. Her final gesture keeps open the bond with the dead son and, in doing so, exposes the affective poverty of a world that no longer knows how to receive mourning.

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