

1974

Onomatology of Male Characters in the One Hundred Years of Solitude of Gabriel Garcia Marquez

John C. Miller

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/los>

Repository Citation

Miller, John C. (1974) "Onomatology of Male Characters in the One Hundred Years of Solitude of Gabriel Garcia Marquez," *Literary Onomastics Studies*: Vol. 1 , Article 10.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/los/vol1/iss1/10>

This Conference Paper is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Literary Onomastics Studies* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

ONOMATOLOGY OF MALE CHARACTERS IN THE ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE
OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

The novel One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) by the contemporary Colombian writer, Gabriel García Márquez, especially lends itself to an onomatological analysis.¹ The novel traces five generations of a family in a cosmos whose contours are hazy, whose statistics are doubtful, and whose geography is fantastic. Macondo, the location of the work, is a place in which "... the world was so recent that many things lacked names and in order to indicate them, it was necessary to point." (G.G.M., p.11). The fact that the setting in which the family saga occurs is lacking in identifiable object names and the additional revelation that later in the novel the town suffers a plague of insomnia so severe that common objects must bear a tag: "This is a cow. She must be milked every morning so that she will produce milk and the milk must be boiled in order to be mixed with the coffee to make coffee and milk," (G.G.M., p. 53) indicate the significance which the author lends to the onomatology of the personages within One Hundred Years of Solitude.

The names of the male characters are particularly important in accordance with the recurring phenomenon of human experience within the novel. There are five José Arcadios, one called only Arcadio, as well as twenty-one Aurelianos, within the five generations of the family. "Throughout the long history of the family, the insistent repetition of the names had made her (Fernanda, outsider wife) draw some conclusions that seemed to be certain. While the Aurelianos were withdrawn,

but with lucid minds, the José Arcadios were impulsive and enterprising, but they were marked with a tragic sign." (G.G.M., p. 174). The only exceptions to the personality features just cited are Aureliano Segundo (II) and José Arcadio Segundo (II), twins so much alike that they are constantly confused and confusing each other—two synchronized machines until their adolescence, then later confused in their funeral rites.

The patriarch of the Buendía family, an apocoped surname indicating a good day or a good morning, is named José Arcadio, "José" as the patriarch Joseph of Genesis, one of the twelve sons of Jacob; "Arcadio," the male Spanish form of the name of the ancient Greek region of Peloponnesus, isolated and intersected by mountains and proverbial for its rural simplicity, a favorite haunt of the pastoral god, Pan, indicates the hoped-for nature of Macondo, similar in its geographical and psychological solitude. José Arcadio has gone in search of his Arcadia after a tragic fight in which he has killed Prudencio Aguilar, who has questioned his machismo after a cockfight. Prudencio Aguilar, (ironic use of the name "prudent one," and even more sardonic use of the surname "eagle-like"), murdered after a cockfight, dies when José Arcadio Buendía's spear pierces his throat, but his spirit will continue to visit the assassin in Macondo (Arcadia) "... for after many years of death, the yearning for the living was so intense that ... he had ended up loving his worst enemy." (G.G.M., p. 80).

The first male child bears the name of his father, whereas the second bears the name Aureliano; as a child, Aurelito (diminutive, affectionate

use) and is later constantly cited by military rank as Colonel Aureliano. García Márquez's classical training and his sense of irony constantly are interwoven in the names of his characters. The Aureliano who has served as his model for the colonel is Lucius Domitius Aurelianus (c. A.D. 275). The historical Aurelianus' "... tireless energy and brilliant military talents restored the unity of the Empire after four years of disaster. He was rightly hailed as restitutor orbis ... He attempted a reform of the now worthless coinage, issuing new money for the old." (O.C.D., p. 154).² The ironic onomastic skill of García Márquez is shown in two aspects of the fictional Colonel Aureliano. Contrary to the etymological golden orientation of his name, he becomes an expert silver-smith early in his life and then spends money on muriatic acid in order to prepare aqua regia so that he might beautify certain objects by plating them with gold. His golden fish, created in his youth, becomes the new coinage of the Buendía family.

Unlike the Roman, Lucius Domitius Aurelianus, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was never a military hero. He organized thirty-two armed uprisings and lost them all, and the only wound which he received was accidentally self-inflicted—additional touches of the author's ironic use of names. With a single exception, his seventeen male children, each born to a different woman in the wartime battle zone, are eliminated in political vengeance.

Only five of the Aurelianos are identified throughout the work, i.e. given a name other than Aureliano. All are skilled craftsmen who bear an indelible cross left by the village priest on a fated Ash Wednesday.

Aureliano Triste (the sad one) is noted for his cordiality and his drive; he succeeds in bringing the railroad into Macondo. Aureliano Centeno (the hundredth one) develops a recipe for sherbet. Aureliano Serrador is a sawyer by profession; Aureliano Arcaya is killed in Macondo—perhaps "Arcaya" serves as a variant form of "Arcadia." The sole survivor, Aureliano Amador (lover), perhaps the key word to survival, is later shot down in the street by policemen when he is not recognized and is refused entrance to his father's house. (G.G.M., p. 345)

The closest military companions of Colonel Aureliano provide another example of the complex use of names within One Hundred Years of Solitude. The author's great-great-grandfather, Gerineldo Márquez, is the first historical figure to appear in the work. Other officers possess significant names. Colonel Magnífico Vísbal (the magnificent force or power / Latin derivative) is stabbed to death as he sleeps out a fever in the cot of Colonel Aureliano. Captain Roque Carnicero, whose surname means "butcher," is well portrayed as the assigned executioner of Colonel Aureliano; but in a typical García Márquez ironic twist he suspends the "butchering" execution and becomes chief of staff for the colonel.

The third generation Jose Arcadio, called Arcadio "to avoid confusion," becomes the village school teacher and within this role, attempts to establish a liberal Arcadia. "There was talk of shooting Father Nicanor (the village priest), of turning the church into a school, of instituting free love." (G.G.M., p. 101) Together with his brother, Aureliano José, the variants on the José Arcadio-Aureliano, family naming tradition, Arcadio suffers the violence of war. He is executed in Macondo

while Aureliano José is shot in the back after he refuses to submit to a weapons search in the movie theater of the town.

The outsiders play an important role in the world of Macondo. Melquiades, leader of the first gypsies, whose arrival marks spring every year, brings the miracle of ice, magnets, the compass and other wonders. He is a fugitive from death and from multiple plagues or diseases contracted around the world. The name "Melquiades" perhaps has its origin in the Second Century religious heresy of Theodotius, who affirmed that Melchisedech was not a man, but a heavenly power, unbegotten, located in an unnamed place. (Blunt, D.S.H., p. 304).³ The origin of Melquiades is considered to be Babylonia (G.G.M., p. 318), a stopping point on the travels of the gypsies after the exodus from India.

Likewise, the lover of Meme, fourth generation, bears the names of Mauricio Babilonia. He not only possesses the dark melancholy eyes and dreamy air of the gypsies (G.G.M., p. 265), but the miraculous appearance of yellow butterflies, suffocating and fluttering, always precedes his presence. The obvious use of the surname "Babilonia," geographic source of Melquiades and the gypsies, and the first name, "Mauricio," which in its etymology denotes the Moors, Africans, or Carthaginians, again illustrates the preoccupation of García Márquez with the choice of names.

Gaston, the husband of Amaranta, "a thin, older Fleming with the look of a sailor," has no surname. A prototype Frenchman, according to G.G.M. (small moustache, good lover, riding a circus bicycle in tights and a straw boater), Gaston is an example of the sound-symbolism onomastic phenomenon, i.e., auditory-verbal association with sound intensive

vowels, a, o, heavy and ponderous as suggested by Grammont and Wellek and cited by Professor Gerus-Tarnawecy.

García Márquez depicts authority through the literary figure of paranomasia in the personage of Don Apolinar Moscote. In addition to being the only character to bear the respectful Don, herein used ironically, we have an Apollo-like figure who little resembles the Greek god and whose surname indicates "large gnat" or "mosquito" in Spanish, another attempt by the author to give poli-philosophical humoristic meaning in the naming of a character.

Pietro Crespi, handsome, romantic figure, initially sent to Macondo to assemble the pianola and to give music lessons, bears a name used by García Márquez in an onomatopoeic, sound-symbolistic manner. "Crespi" and "Pietro," with short intensified vowels, depict the fawning and prim foppishness presented in this character, also designated in Italian for his curly hair.

The choice of two American names, Mr. Jack Brown (of English/Scottish origin) and Mr. Herbert (of Welsh/English origin), gives a definitive Anglo-Saxon crispness and distant sound-symbolism to the administrators of the banana plantation who live behind electrified chicken yards, within and yet isolated from Macondo. The village bartender and bordello owner, Catarino, receives his name from a verb "catare" which had a particular meaning when used by the chroniclers of the Indies in precolonial and colonial South American history: to obtain merchandise, particularly metal, through trickery.

Other minor figures may still be cited but perhaps the onomastic

gems of the novel, clothed in magic realism, are found in the pages wherein the literary and the real world intertwine. Gabriel García Márquez cites within One Hundred Years of Solitude the fictional characters of three contemporary Latin American novelists: Alejo Carpentier, Victor Hughes; Carlos Fuentes, Colonel Lorenzo Gavilán; and Julio Cortazar, Rocadamour. In addition, Gabriel García Márquez gives a self-portrait as well as sketches of four of the members of his tertulia in Baranquilla: Ramón Vinyes, Catalan bookseller, only identified as "the Catalan;" Alfonso (Alfonso Fuenmayor); Germán (Germán Vargas) and Alvaro (Alvaro Cepeda, Colombian novelist). The tertulia members teach Aureliano the Third (III) the fine art of bottles and brothels. Through them, Aureliano discovers that "literature is the best toy that has been invented to make fun of people." (G.G.M., p. 357) Aureliano so identifies with Gabriel (G.G.M.) that the two become inseparable, author and literary creation. "...Aureliano and Gabriel were linked by a kind of complicity based on real facts that no one believed in, and which had affected their lives to the point that both of them found themselves offcourse in the tide of the world that had ended and of which only the nostalgia would remain." (G.G.M., p. 359).

In the world of Macondo where everything is so recent that many things lack names, Gabriel García Márquez has used names in their traditional symbolic or allegorical as well as semantic interpretation, searching in classical history and mythology, Spanish chroniclers and modern Colombian history to name appropriately the personages of his

novel, One Hundred Years of Solitude. He has used the world of history and fiction, including other authors' literary creations, and has adopted sound-symbolism and paranomasia to present to the reader a universe wrapped in Biblical lineage and Rabelaisian humor--a new Arcadia, a five-generation saga marked by a prophesy and a history. "The first of a line is tied to a tree and the last is being eaten by the ants."

(G.G.M., p. 381)

Gettysburg College

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

F O O T N O T E S

1. Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude, trans. Gregorio Rabassa (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).
2. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, eds., Oxford Classical Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 154.
3. John Henry Blunt, A Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties and Schools of Religious Thought (Ann Arbor: Gryphon Books, 1971), p. 304.

The Buendía Family

