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LOS MÁRQUEZ EN MACONDO - SURNAMES FOR A
FAMILY OF CHARACTERS

Margaret V. Ekstrom
St. John Fisher College

A century is a long time, particularly if it's spent in the special seclusion and loneliness of being lost in the crowd. This is exactly what happens to the inter-related characters in one of the most popular Latin American novels written.¹ The Colombian author, Gabriel García Márquez, published his great novel, Cien años de soledad (One Hundred Years of Solitude),² in 1967, amplifying the creation of his mystical and mystifying world of Macondo. Within the work, we find an abundance of unique characters, some mysterious, others at least surprising: gypsies, phantoms, pilgrims, prophets and wanderers. Among them, there are some with the suggestive name of Márquez, with obvious connotations and references to the name of the author himself and of his family.

We can say that Macondo is a fictitious place, but it represents Colombia and its problems, which are also those of many Latin countries. Introducing in the work

characters who can also be at the same time true or real people brings the readers closer to the characters and to the action of the novel itself. Many authors, among them the greatest and the best, including Shakespeare and Cervantes, make references to themselves or to historical personages within their works of fiction. This technique adds to the literary game, to the mixture of art and life. It is not necessary that the character be an exact representative of the real person; the suggestion is often enough.

In other works (La hojarasca / Leafstorm; La mala hora / The Evil Hour; El coronel no tiene quien le escriba / Nobody Writes to the Colonel; Los funerales de la Mamá Grande / Big Mama's Funeral), García Márquez makes references to Macondo and to characters who also appear in Cien años de soledad. In regard to the history of Colombia and its relations to the history of Macondo, there are descriptions of almost interminable wars, pestilence, and exploitation by foreign companies. Although there are exaggerations within the literary work, the parallels with historical events in Latin America are obvious and clear. It is a light touch for uniting a mythical world with the real

world as we know it, and it establishes a "true and verifiable" literary history for Macondo.

Cien años de soledad is the history of several generations of the Buendía family and of their neighbors in their land of Macondo. Throughout the work, the author makes use of his personal experiences, particularly his childhood memories, to enhance his literary creativity. Gabriel García Márquez was born in Colombia in 1928, and he spent many of his formative years living with his grandparents, whose stories formed the foundation for his themes and style. Growing up in the town of Aracataca, young Gabriel learned of local myths and legends from his grandmother. From his grandfather, he learned of the experiences of soldiers in warfare. Near the town was a banana plantation called Macondo, where Gabriel used to play as a boy. All these elements later came together to form the basis for the creation of a literary world.³

The derivation of names for people and places is important in analyzing the works of García Márquez. However, of possibly even greater importance is his use of the repetition of names to emphasize family links, to create an atmosphere, to illustrate a character's confusion and loss

of identity within the "crowd" of the family, to underscore timelessness and nostalgia. Some of the names he employs are psychological, attributive or connotative. Some of them involve the interplay of polyanthroponymical names, where the personality of a character is given more than one name or where several characters tend to merge and blend. This is especially true in the case of siblings, twins and cousins within the novel, who purposely switch names for diversion.

If we look first at the name of the region where the action of the novel occurs, we are confronted with the mystery of Macondo. There is the reference to the banana plantation of that name known to the author in his youth, with all the memories that evokes of the Colombian past. The etymology of the name is somewhat obscure, but it can perhaps be traced back to the verb macarse, meaning "to begin to rot," used in reference to fruit. A maca is a blemish in a piece of fruit. A maco is a sack, bag or basket, perhaps used to carry fruit.⁴ These variants appear to be combined with the root/stem hondo, meaning "deep, low."⁵ These words seem appropriate to create the idea of Macondo as a flawed and rather elusive world,

tropical, agricultural and ambivalent.

In turning to the characters and their names, we will see the deliberate repetition of family names to create confusion for the reader and virtual havoc among the characters themselves. García Márquez uses this technique to reinforce the powerful humor within his novel, as well as to create sympathy in the reader toward the characters, and indeed toward the foibles of all humanity.

Macondo is founded by a group of people fleeing from the problems of their lives in another time and place, including a family curse of incest. Their leaders are José Arcadio Buendía and his cousin/wife Úrsula Iguarán, the patriarch and matriarch of the clan, establishing the archetype of the family in the novel.⁶ The family name of Buendía rather ironically implies the greeting of "Good day."⁷ José derives from the biblical Hebrew, Joseph = the Lord addeth.⁸ Arcadio suggests an arcade or vaulted passageway, the land of Arcadia, noted for its pastoral, rustic simplicity.⁹ Úrsula is from the Latin for little she-bear, a strong woman of distinguished quality.¹⁰ Iguarán is derived from a combination of igual = equal, balanced; iguarias = viands, food, meal; and iguarandi = herbs.¹¹

The two founders seem to illustrate the characteristics of their names; the patriarch is rustic, strong and clever, willing to add to the population and well-being of his people. The matriarch is also unique, strong, sturdy and sustaining.

Their first-born son is named José Arcadio, for his father. The second son is called Aureliano, a name implying golden, golden-haired, a name for emperors.¹² Aureliano goes on to become a colonel and a silver-and-gold-smith. These three names of José, Arcadio and Aureliano, in a variety of combinations, are the only ones used for male descendants of the Buendía clan.

The names for female descendants are also repeated, as are variations of the family characteristics implied. Amaranta (Amaranth) is the first-born daughter; the name is derived from the Greek for unfading flower,¹³ and here is applied to the maiden aunt obsessed with thoughts of incest and the family curse. Other female names repeated in the novel are:

Rebeca Montiel = (Hebrew) beautiful peacemaker from the mountain¹⁴ (used for an orphan child, an outsider adopted into the family)

Remedios Moscote = remedies, help + fly, mosquito¹⁵ (an
 ironic name; she died very young)

Pilar Ternera = tall and straight but gentle, "calf-like"¹⁶
 (a woman shared by two Buendía brothers)

Santa Sofía de la Piedad = holy wisdom of pity, piety,
 mercy¹⁷ (a gentle mother)

Remedios la Bella = beautiful remedies¹⁸ (an innocent
 beauty)

Petra Cotes = rock, hard + part, quota¹⁹ (another woman
 shared by Buendía twin brothers)

Fernanda del Carpio = (Teutonic) "she grows bold through
 peace" + tree²⁰ (an outsider wife)

Renata Remedios = remedies reborn²¹ (by nickname, called
 Meme = same).

Some of the outsider men who become romantically in-
 volved with the Buendía women have exotic names and en-
 counter considerable sadness, such as:

the Italian music teacher Pietro Crespi ("Curly Pete");

the aging Flemish husband Gastón who loses his young wife
 to her own nephew;

the mechanic surrounded by butterflies, Mauricio Babilonia
 (Moorish Babylon), a strangely exotic figure.²²

One of the rejected suitors is of particular interest, since he firmly establishes the Márquez family in Macondo. We encounter Gerineldo Márquez for the first time in the fourth chapter of the novel, and this character appears throughout almost the entire book. He was companion and close friend of Aureliano Buendía, the second son of the founder of Macondo. The two had known one another since childhood, and the Márquez family had participated in the founding of Macondo, under the direction of the chief-patriarch, José Arcadio Buendía.

Gerineldo is a transposed version of Reginald, coming from the Teutonic for "wise power;" it is also related to Gerald (Teutonic) for mighty warrior, strong with the spear.²³ García is also related to the name Gerald; García is the most popular and widespread Hispanic surname; it has been used as a patronymic and as a given or first name. García may be derived from the Basque "Artza;" it may refer to "crown prince" or to a fox, to a village or a place in Spain or to a steep, rocky hill.²⁴ The surname Márquez is derived from the Latin Marcus, Marcos for the war god, Mars; the spelling variation marqués means marquis, a nobleman.²⁵

While the etymology and derivations of the names are interesting, since the Márquez men do illustrate qualities of wise, powerful warriors, I believe the author is particularly interested in establishing historical validity for the Márquez family within his novel.

When Aureliano Buendía was falling in love with the young Remedios Moscote, he went to a tavern with his friends Magnífico Visbal and Gerineldo Márquez to try to forget her. There was a delightful description of Gerineldo as a man skilled in the ways of the world, drinking methodically with a woman seated on his knee (p. 64).

Afterwards, there was mentioned the possibility of a war in Macondo between the liberals and the conservatives. From here on, the colonels Aureliano Buendía and Gerineldo Márquez, who almost always used their military titles as parts of their names, lived constantly within the context of the warrior (p. 89). When Colonel Aureliano Buendía began to plan his campaigns, Colonel Gerineldo Márquez became his lieutenant (pp. 92-93). Although he didn't have much success in war, losing one battle after another, Colonel Aureliano Buendía did engender some seventeen sons, each named Aureliano but with different

middle names, and each born to a different woman.

When he was a captive, Colonel Aureliano Buendía had at his side his faithful friend, Colonel Gerineldo Márquez. They maintained themselves strongly in the face of the enemy and in the face of death, even when Aureliano was condemned to the firing squad (pp. 109-110).

But the illustrious Aureliano escaped from this danger and returned to the war in full glory, creating the legend of his ubiquity (p. 116). He received word from the government of the threat to execute Colonel Gerineldo Márquez. Aureliano accepted the challenge, telling the government to release his friend (pp. 116-117). Finally, the friendship between the two men remained stronger than ever, in spite of their differences.

In a conversation, they revealed their distinct attitudes toward war. Aureliano fought for pride and glory while Gerineldo fought for the great liberal party which, according to Aureliano, didn't mean anything to anyone (p. 121).

Gerineldo Márquez entered frequently into the house of the Buendía family, well received, known and accepted by Úrsula, the mother of Aureliano, and by the children

of the family but rejected in his love for Amaranta, the younger sister of Aureliano. The patience and sadness of Gerineldo in the face of his unrequited love was one of the secondary themes or motifs of the novel. He was a fragile, gentle man, of a good basic education, more suited to war than to government, capable of establishing rural peace (pp. 121-122). Amaranta, preoccupied with the theme of incest, finally decided to reject Gerineldo because of his almost brotherly relationship with Aureliano (p. 123).

In spite of his problems, Colonel Gerineldo Márquez obeyed with strict decorum the orders of his chief, Colonel Aureliano Buendía, in regard to the conduct of the war (pp. 127-128).

Colonel Gerineldo Márquez presided over the military tribunals of the prisoners of war and began to understand the madness of the battles (p. 139, p. 142). According to the characteristics of his personality, he still wanted to marry Amaranta Buendía; he was a man of perseverance, loyalty and devotion (p. 143). Amaranta herself sometimes thought nostalgically of Gerineldo, but she never married (pp. 133, 143, 214).

Like all the inhabitants of Macondo, Gerineldo found himself lost in solitude and loneliness (p. 144). His friend Aureliano did not offer him any consolation; during the most critical months of the war, people noticed very idiosyncratic changes in the personality of Colonel Buendía. He did not pay attention to the evacuations nor to military instructions. His good friend Gerineldo advised him: "Be careful of your heart, Aureliano You are rotting alive." (p. 145)

Finally, Gerineldo had to oppose the orders given by Aureliano, who was only fighting for power, and he was condemned to death for treason. Nevertheless, Aureliano realized his error and decided not to execute him. The two men, still friends, returned to put an end to war, although it was difficult to convince their enemies to propose conditions for peace. "Colonel Gerineldo Márquez fought for defeat with as much conviction and as much loyalty as before he had fought for victory . . ." (p. 149)

In spite of everything, Aureliano was sad at the end of the war, and Gerineldo thought that he wanted to declare another one (pp. 153, 157). During his old age, Aureliano proposed a senile war, without a future, and remained em-

bittered when Gerineldo rejected it (pp. 210, 221, 226).

Gerineldo still maintained his contacts with the Buendía family and had his influence over the children of the family. When young José Arcadio Segundo Buendía asked him, Gerineldo took the boy to see some of the executions of the war (pp. 160, 162). His purpose was to show the child the sad and mocking smile of the condemned (p. 225). This experience so impressed the boy that he had the memory all his life (pp. 228, 256). Gerineldo Márquez was scandalized when young José Arcadio Segundo declared himself a conservative and also rejected all military practices (p. 162).

Gerineldo still used to visit the Buendía household from time to time, in spite of the occasional differences of opinion, although he was ill with paralysis; he seemed to be tired, a sad and balding man. He also spoke of the problem of the pensions of the veterans that we see again in El coronel no tiene quien le escriba (p. 174). Gerineldo tried to persuade Aureliano to take part in the celebration on the anniversary of the peace treaty; this seemed like a mockery to Aureliano (pp. 168-187).

In her old age, Amaranta Buendía thought about the

serene and manly protection of Colonel Gerineldo Márquez, which she had rejected (p. 236). When Gerineldo died, during the epoch of the rain which lasted almost five years in Macondo, there was a description of his desolate burial, like an unreal vision, with the sad farewell of the ancient matriarch, Úrsula (pp. 270-271).

But we have not reached the end of the influence of the Márquez family in Macondo. Aureliano Buendía, the grandson of the great-grandson of Úrsula Iguarán and José Arcadio Buendía, lived secluded and almost forgotten in Macondo. He had four friends who shared his interest in the study of books, and they would sometimes gather in the afternoons for discussions. Their names were Álvaro, Germán, Alfonso and Gabriel (p. 327); these are also the names of the author and some of his friends. A particularly strong friendship was established between Aureliano and Gabriel, because of the relationship between their ancestors, the colonels Aureliano Buendía and Gerineldo Márquez, who were considered more mythical than real by the townspeople (p. 329). Clearly, the mention of this young Gabriel, descendant of the Márquez family, brings to the reader's mind some connection with the author

of the novel.

The name Gabriel is from the Hebrew for "in God is my strength, man of God, hero of God;" it also suggests the herald angel, the messenger of God.²⁶ This may be an appropriate name for an author who creates a mythical world. More importantly, it brings the author, his characters and the readers closer together, adding a new dimension to the literary work.

The similarity does not end with and is not limited to the name alone; there are other elements. The sweetheart of the young Gabriel in the novel was named Mercedes --- and that is the name of the wife of the author (p. 339). Gabriel won a contest and went to Paris, like the author (p. 340). Aureliano learned about his friend's activities through the letters that Mercedes received (p. 342). But finally the two friends lost touch with each other: the news from Gabriel became vague and seemed to float in an empty universe. Aureliano lost himself in his passionate love for his aunt, Amaranta Úrsula. The son of these two would be the last of the Buendías, fulfilling the family curse of incest and inbreeding. Aureliano learned the whole truth when he deciphered the ancient parchments containing

the history of the Buendía family (p.349).

Without insisting on the technique, García Márquez left us touches of the real world and of the literary world within his work of fiction. The novel can be understood and enjoyed without recognizing at first the interplay of the names; seeing the connection simply adds to the pleasure. The author also mentioned as characters in his work some characters borrowed from other Latin American writers, thus mixing one fiction with others. These characters are:

Artemio Cruz and Lorenzo Gavilán - from Carlos Fuentes, a Mexican author;

Víctor Hugues - from the Cuban author Alejo Carpentier;

Rocamadour - from the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar.²⁷

In conversations with some critics, García Márquez admits his interest in occasional tricks and jokes of this type, to add to the literary game without detracting from the validity of his work.²⁸ His latest novel continues to employ his themes of family, time, violence and the life of the tropics.²⁹

This novel of Cien años de soledad, as its name implies, is a long one, and I have only touched upon some

of the themes here, but it is important to note the use of names in the work. There is a mixture of characters of various types, living and dead, fictional and real. The themes of the search for identity and the escape from loneliness are applied on different levels: the cultural, the individual and the literary. In spite of the abundance of characters and relatives of the extended Buendía family, all suffer from a solitude common to and recognized by, at least from time to time, any human being. The frequent references to the Márquez family in Macondo show the kinship of the author, and in turn of the reader, to the characters and their problems. This adds to the literary creation, through the mixture of art with life.

Margaret V. Ekstrom

St. John Fisher College

NOTES

¹For an analysis of Gabriel García Márquez's role in modern Hispanic literature, see: Román López Tamés, La narrativa actual de Colombia y su contexto social (Universidad de Valladolid: Colección Castilla, 1975).

²Gabriel García Márquez, Cien años de soledad (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1967). All further citations from the novel will be incorporated into the text of this paper and will refer to this edition; translations mine. The novel is available in English translation by Gregory Rabassa as One Hundred Years of Solitude (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

³For an analysis of Gabriel García Márquez's technique, see: Suzanne Jill Levine, "Pedro Páramo, Cien años de soledad: un paralelo" in Homenaje a Juan Rulfo, edited by Helmy Giacomani (Madrid and New York: Anaya/Las Américas, 1977), pp. 173-187; Mario Vargas Llosa, García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio (Barcelona: Barral Editores, 1971); Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann, "Gabriel García Márquez, or the Lost Chord" in Into the Mainstream: Con-

versations with Latin-American Writers (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 310-341. (The last text has also been published as: Los nuestros, Buenos Aires: Editorial Sud-americana, 1966).

⁴Joan Corominas, Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana (Madrid: Gredos, 1954), Vol. III, pp. 168-169, 179.

⁵Mariano Velázquez de la Cadena et al., New Revised Velázquez Spanish and English Dictionary (New York and Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1961), p. 384.

⁶Sven Armens, Archetypes of the Family in Literature (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966).

⁷Velázquez, op. cit., pp. 118, 261.

⁸Flora Haines Loughead, Dictionary of Given Names (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1966), p. 67.

⁹Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1959), p. 145.

¹⁰Loughead, op. cit., p. 226.

¹¹Velázquez, op. cit., p. 390.

¹²Loughead, op. cit., p. 25.

¹³Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁴Loughead, op. cit., p. 213.

¹⁵Velázquez, op. cit., pp. 567, 467.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 517, 633.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 593, 610, 516.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 567, 102-103.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 514, 203; cotes could also be related to the word for "knot."

²⁰Loughead, op. cit., p. 161 and Velázquez, op. cit., p. 146; carpio could also be related to a word for "fish."

²¹Velázquez, op. cit., pp. 568, 567, 453.

²²Loughead, op. cit., p. 76.

²³Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴Richard D. Woods and Grace Álvarez-Altman, Spanish Surnames in the United States: A Dictionary (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Co., 1978), p. 64.

²⁵Ibid., p. 85.

²⁶Loughead, op. cit., p. 53.

²⁷Mario Vargas Llosa, "García Márquez: De Aracataca a Macondo" in Nueve asedios a Gabriel García Márquez (Santiago de Chile: Editorial universitaria, 1969), pp. 126-146; John C. Miller, "Onomatology of Male Characters in the One Hundred Years of Solitude of Gabriel García Már-

quez" in Literary Onomastics Studies (Vol. I, 1974), pp. 66-73.

²⁸Carmen Arnau, El mundo mítico de Gabriel García Márquez (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1971), pp. 102-109.

²⁹Gabriel García Márquez, El otoño del patriarca (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1975). This novel is also available in English translation by Gregory Rabassa as The Autumn of the Patriarch, New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

