

A SHORT ANALYSIS OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ IMAGERY AND METAPHOR

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* once Marquez lays down the predicate for an idea, perhaps in an accompanying metaphor, he stays with it until the vignette plays out. Marquez's operation takes a long stretch to play out and therefore one must be patient when looking for the associative connections. For example, in one passage a leading character marries his cousin. The couple and their relatives are concerned that the offspring will suffer from disabilities commonly believed to result from a consanguine marriage.

"...Although their marriage was predicted from the time they had come into the world, when they expressed their desire to be married their own relatives tried to stop it. They were afraid that those two healthy products of two races that had interbred over the centuries would suffer the shame of breeding iguanas. There had already been a horrible precedent. An aunt of Ursula's married to an uncle of Jose Arcadio Buendia, had a son who went through life wearing loose, baggy trousers and who bled to death after having lived forty-two years in the purest state of virginity, for he had been born and had grown up with a cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew with a small tuft of hair on the tip. A pig's tail that was never allowed to be seen by any woman and that cost him his life when a butcher friend did him the favor of chopping it off with his cleaver...They would have been happy from then on if Ursula's mother had not terrified her with all manner of sinister predictions about their offspring, even to the extreme of advising her to refuse to consummate the marriage. Fearing that her stout and willful husband would rape her while she slept, Ursula, before going to bed, would put on a rudimentary kind of drawers that her mother had made out of sailcloth...That was how they lived for several months. During the day he would take care of his fighting cocks and she would do frame embroidery with her mother...[u]ntil...the rumor spread that Ursula was still a virgin a year after her marriage because her husband was impotent...So the situation went on the same way for another six months until that tragic Sunday when Jose...won a cock fight from Prudencio...aroused by the blood of his bird, the loser backed away...so that everyone in the cockpit could hear what he was going to tell him. Congratulations!"..."Maybe that rooster can do your wife a favor..."Ten minutes later he returned with the notched spear...Jose...pierced his throat...That night ...Jose...Pointing the spear at her ordered: "Take them off..."If you bear iguanas, we'll raise iguanas," ...but there'll be no more killings in this town because of you (pgs. 22-24)."

Marquez raises the matter of a married man's inability to consummate his marriage ostensibly for reasons related to the specter of bearing children having the qualities of an iguana. Iguanas have long tails. He then connects the idea of a long tail to a cousin with a pig's tail, born to an aunt that married an uncle. The cousin died after having the tail amputated. The author links two animals, iguanas and pigs to forbidden marriages, both his and his distant relatives. He then introduces the subject of roosters, the third reference to

animals in this vignette. Here there is copious reference to cocks, and cockpit, the consequence of which leads not only to a man's death, but also conquering of his wife's virginity.

Another thread deals with breeding as well, but the track is slightly different. If we simply cull the words and phrases dealing with the issues of procreation we find:

interbred over the centuries would suffer the shame of breeding iguanas.
sinister predictions about their *offspring*,
her husband was *impotent*
aroused by the blood of his bird
Maybe that rooster can *do your wife a favor*
If you *bear* iguanas

It appears that the entire tale about Jose Arcadia Buendia and his wife plays out over these connections, which follow *a seriatim*, carrying the story and its moral forward.

What follows is a second example of the manner in which Marquez links one idea, as depicted metaphorically, in this instance as a daguerreotype, to two distinct ideas, the death and the future. These subjects seem to raise the hope that we might in some way be eternal beings, even if 'fastened onto a sheet of iridescent metal,' Malquiades is a character that appears early in the story as both a gypsy leader with extraordinary powers of invention. Between the beginning of the story and the passage below he is reported dead. However, he seems to reappear much to the delight and surprise of Jose Arcadio Buendia.

"While Macondo was celebrating the recovery of its memory, Jose...and Melquiades dusted off their old friendship. The gypsy was inclined to stay in the town, He really had been through death, but he had returned because he could not bear the solitude. Repudiated by his tribe, having lost all of his supernatural faculties because his faithfulness to life, he decided to take refuge in that corner of the world which had still not been discovered by death, dedicated to the operation of a daguerreotype laboratory. Jose...had never heard of that invention. But when he saw himself and his whole family fastened onto a sheet of iridescent metal for eternity, he was mute with stupefaction. That was the date of the oxidized daguerreotype in which Jose...appeared with his bristly and graying hair, his cardboard collar attached to this shirt by a copper button, and an expression of startled solemnity, whom Ursula described, dying with laughter, as a "frightened general." Jose...was, in fact, frightened on that clear December morning when the daguerreotype was made, for he was thinking that people were slowly wearing away while his image would endure on a metallic plaque. Though a curious reversal of custom, it was Ursula who got that idea out of his head, as it was also she who forgot her ancient bitterness and decided that Melquiades would stay on in the house, although she never permitted them to make a daguerreotype of her because (according to her very words) she did not want to survive as a laughingstock for her grandchildren. That morning the children in their best clothes, powdered their faces, and gave a spoonful of marrow syrup to each one so that they would all remain absolutely motionless during the nearly two minutes in front of the Melquiades' fantastic camera....Aureliano appeared dressed in black velvet...He had the same clairvoyant

look that he would have years later as he faced a firing squad...But he still had not sensed the premonition of his fate...he seemed to be taking refuge in some other time, while his father and the gypsy with shouts interpreted the predictions of Nostradamus amidst a noise of flasks and trays...(pgs. 54-55).”

In this passage Marquez recovers Melquiades from the dead. The linkage is a resurrection that occurs in viewing the immortal image of someone cast in a photograph, and in this case even more lasting a sheet of metal, “... he had returned (from death) because he could not bear the solitude. And, “he decided to take refuge in that corner of the world which had still not been discovered by death, dedicated to the operation of a daguerreotype laboratory.”

Jose is then drawn in by its permanency when, “...he saw himself and his whole family fastened onto a sheet of iridescent metal for eternity.”

Ursula however, is prescient when she sees his image and describes her reaction, “... dying with laughter, as a “frightened general.” Their son Aureliano later in life following war becomes the victim of a firing squad. It seems that this idea of relating the “living image”, cast in as a daguerreotype to the dead, plays back and forth, as well as the daguerreotype as a kind of crystal ball. “...He had the same clairvoyant look that he would have years later as he faced a firing squad...he seemed to be taking refuge in some other time, while his father and the gypsy with shouts interpreted the predictions of Nostradamus amidst a noise of flasks and trays....”

One Hundred Years of Solitude is arguably Marquez’s best work. Although it was not Marquez’s first novel, it was written while he was in his early thirties. I recently read *Living to Tell the Tale*, an autobiography, written in his eighties (published 2002) and was able to contrast it to his writing style in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* written in 1961. Without reference or justification, my rather uncritical assessment is that the later autobiography work is beautifully written, but lacks the vibrancy of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.