Intuition and Later Forms of Human Consciousness in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

ENSP 355: Society and Revolution in the Novel

Wm. M. Thornton

Intuition and Later Forms of Human Consciousness in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Part of the reason why Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is such a fiendish critical problem—and indeed the adulation to date has recognized its own inadequacy as being analytically or synthetically incomplete—lies in the difficulty of drawing a large enough circle around an epic fiction, a work which radiates allusions and meanings. To encompass the serially disperse fact of the fiction—one feels uncomfortable with the term 'novel'—and at the same time not to betray the several valences of what is clearly Marquez's unity of intent, must be the goal of a serious study of Marquez. Within the empirical or serial dimension one must include, first, what is an abridged compendium of Western social and material progress over the last five hundred or more years; second, a cluster of literary and human *topoi*, which at some junctures seem almost gratuitously inserted;[1] and, third, the seemingly endless chaos of narrative events. On the other hand, one must reconcile these serial or additive patterns with what one comes to recognize as the fiction's basic success: that is, a rendering of aspects of human behavior and consciousness, not in the novelistic mode of expanded and intricate characterization but in what may loosely be called a poetic mode ('poetic' since it involves linguistic concentration for purposes which are as affective as they are descriptive and since non-realistic motifs such as the reappearance of the dead inhere in ways that place the fiction outside the tradition of novelistic psychological realism).

But I do not wish to use the notion of the poetic mode as a critical saw or gambit so as to expose stylistic aspects of the fiction; rather,

what I am seeking is relational: why it is that the various kinds of serial enumeration—all within a larger narrative frame which pretends to discursive evolution—should find themselves interlaced with the intuitive explosions of poetic language and events. Granting for the moment the evidence of the paper for the sake of this initial summary, it is clear that both the empirical mode, with its correlative serial perception, and the poetic mode, with its intuitive perception, come to have the force of world-views. And the two are in conflict: but not in the way that the liberal partisans struggle against a conservative dictatorship. (This is the political moment of the fiction which, though related, has finally the force of a local skirmish within the historical—which is to say, serial—continuum.) Instead, in a way far deeper and inclusive, the Welt of the people of Macondo—or rather, that original and primitive aspect of their world-view untouched by the progressive and historical—clashes with the encroaching and eroding elements that penetrate the village. The conflict becomes internalized. The primitive mode of perception and behavior—registered poetically—keeps uneasy company with the serial and progressive. What results from this internalized conjunction is a diminishing calculus with its null point in the entropy of solitude, for individual characters beginning with Jose Arcadio Buendia and in the end for the Buendia family and the village.

Viewed within the rubrics of this destructive synthesis of the intuitive and empirical, One Hundred Years is both a fiction about society—or more accurately, about two societies in conflict—and a psychodrama of the shift in the Western mind from intuitive to empirical forms of perception and behavior, from the Classical and Medieval world-view to the early modern, rationalist view. However, such abstractions as these do not do justice to the vitality of the fiction; One Hundred Years reads in no way

like of sociology text, despite its social focus. The energy released by the fiction, I would like to think, devolves from the poetic or intuitive mode (that of the primitive Macondo) and from the conflict of the poetic with the empirical.

To define—briefly for the nonce—the intuitive mode there is no better place to begin than Melquidades' first pronouncement: "Things have a life of their own...It's simply a matter of waking up their souls." (p. 11)[2] This is not really pantheism or, if so, its most rudimentary form since pantheism implies a godhead or unifying force whereas what Melquiades says indicates a dispersion of force in the multiplicity of realia. Not pantheism, it is rather a primitive and mythic naturalism. To the very end of the fiction when the "voracity of nature" (p. 377) engulfs the village, things come to life and do so, contrary to the second part of Melquiades' statement, without human volition. Given the world of the fiction in which a vital nature is quotidian and assumed, the villagers' mental order mirrors the natural order: words and things are integral; causal relationships are conceived associatively rather than deductively or empirically; clairvoyance and ritual are viable modes of perception and response. All of these aspects of what can be called the intuitive mind of Macondo will be discussed at length later and with the help of Cassirer's work on language and the mythic consciousness.[3] Now, instead, some preliminary steps must be taken. The intuitive village mind must be understood in its relation to the narrative posture since, unlike Cassirer, Marquez does not give us a philosophical or sociological study of the intuitive processes. One Hundred Years, despite its radical departure from the norms of realistic fiction, must still be treated as an artifact—to be unearthed, alas, empirically and analytically in this discussion (one searches in vain for the impossible mantra that will make the fiction become magically clear).

The energy released by the intuitive dimension of the fiction, which devolves from the village mentality as noted above, must be traced as it passes through the narrative filter.

- ii -

The way the intuitive energy reaches the reader is significant in itself as an act of communication, as well as for what it says about the two social configurations. When, for instance, very early in the fiction, Jose Arcadio Buendia takes it into his head to discover a route out of the isolated village to civilization, the scene balances delicately between the narrator's discursive rendering of the exploration and the villagers' conception of what they are doing. The narrator, having already established his tonal distance by means of chronicle or reportage, coordinates Macondo geographically in terms of the villagers' impression of what surrounds them. He boxes the compass of their geographical imagination, as it were, in what is an empirical transferral of factual information to the reader. On the other hand, the information itself is the furthest thing from being factual or empirical: the narrator notes, for example, that the villagers imagined an infinitely extensive swamp to the south and to the west "soft-skinned cetaceans that had the head and torso of a woman" (p. 19). Nor is Buendia's decision to try the northern route grounded in the empirical, but rather based partly on legends received from the gypsies (second-hand and therefore empirically non-substantial information), partly on his subjective conclusion that the eastern route was impossible because it led to the past, and partly on the factually unsubstantiated supposition that the only route left—the northern route—led to civilization. The expedition is undertaken, consequently, amid talk of the cardinal points of

the compass—the toy of primitive geophysical science—without any basis in empirical proof that the northern route will lead to civilization. While the compass lends a patina of scientific authority to the exploration, deliberate action based on empirical knowledge is nowhere made visible. The point is not so much that the scene is inversely reminiscent of early explorations of the uncivilized New World (though this would support the notion that the fiction is an historical psychodrama as suggested earlier), but rather that Buendia and the villagers—at least the men of the village—mask what are essentially subjective acts of mind by means of superficially scientific rubrics. Furthermore, Buendia conforms to the same mental pattern on later occasions when he tries to take a picture of God with a camera—another development of science, the empirical limitations of which he is unable to grasp—and when he imagines that Melquiades' magnet will attract, and his alchemical formulas will multiply, gold.

While a careful distinction can be made between the attempt to photograph God—the use of pseudo-science to accomplish an intuitive act—and the attempt to perform the concrete act of geographical discovery by means of subjective criteria, the two instances come finally to the same thing: the incongruence of means and ends, or more specifically, the inappropriate conjunction of intuitive thinking with empirical ends and vice versa. It is this inappropriateness of means and ends that makes the passages pitifully humorous. Furthermore, the narrator's empirical distance, his chronicling of events, tends to heighten the humorous aspect of the passages since he uses the very means that the villagers lack, empirical objectivity. In this context, the introduction of the mail route motif, following immediately on the villagers' conception of their isolation, puts the capstone on the absurdity of the exploration scene since, obviously, the mail is an emblem of civilization and the fact that it arrives in Macondo indi-

cates that the town has at least a physical contact with civilization. But although the villagers' sense of physical isolation is made to seem comic and false, in a deeper sense Macondo is indeed isolated. Because the town's mentality differs so radically from that of the larger society, the village mental configurations are made to look not just foolish in specific instances but, more important, inadequate in the face of empirical perception and behavior. And, since the narrative posture of empirical reportage mirrors the mental habits of the larger society, the sense of Macondo's exclusion from the mainstream is redoubled as it devolves on the reader. Consequently, what seems at first like a comic rendering of Buendia's conflicting means and ends—the intuitive behind an empirical facade—comes to speak directly of Macondo's isolation within what is made to seem an antiquated mental habitat.

But, and at the same time, one must quickly add that the narrator's voice is deeply divided and compromised: between the empirical posture that recapitulates history's serial fiat and another posture, just the reverse, that trades in the coins of ambiguity, metaphor and feeling. This second narrative posture—analogous to Macondo's primitive intuition and used to communicate that intuitive mentality—is encased within the facticity of the chronicle posture. And the enclosure of the intuitive narrative posture—which will be instanced next—within the other, the empirical, narrative pose mirrors the enclosure of the antique intuitive mentality of Macondo within the empirical mentality of the larger society, all of which is given substanital dramatic form by way of the isolation and penetration of the village from and by the larger society.

When Aureliano Segundo opens the "long lead chest closed by copper bolts" (p. 202) which contains his father-in-law, Don Fernando del Carpio, the corpse is imaged with comic disproportion. Don Fernando's sense of

gravity and decorum accounts for his proud funereal bearing ("dressed in black with a crucifix on his chest"). But the pretentions of the living Don Fernando find themselves eroded by their comic juxtaposition to the grotesque decay of his flesh ("his skin broken out in pestilential sores and cooking slowly in a frothy stew with bubbles like live pearls."). Don Fernando's pretensions do of course have deep roots in the aristocratic and mortuary valences of the Spanish and Latin American mentality, and therefore the scene has an historical realism and relevance. However, as with the inverse conformity of New World explorations to Jose Arcadio Buendia's "by guess and by God" exploration to find civilization, the significance of the passage goes well beyond the historical. Specifically, the comic disproportion between Don Fernando's pretensions and the grotesque fact of his carnal dissolution suggests that Marquez is playing fast and loose with the narrator's objective (empirical) distance.

Other instances of corporal reality conjoined with intangibles speak of the same humor of disproportion. The spiritual finds itself linked with the excremental when Fernanda uses Melquiades' room ("about which the spiritual life of the house revolved in former times") to store the seventy-two chamberpots (p. 244); and the heart is yoked imagistically to the viscera and the phallus when Aureliano (the third) confesses his passion to Amaranta Ursula: "...he opened up the most hidden passageways of his heart and drew out an interminable and lacerated intestine, the terrible parasitic animal that had incubated in his martyrdom." (p. 362). Although this last example has a lot to do with Marquez's attempt to give imagistic form to the psychological life of both Auriliano and the Buendia family—something which will figure at later points in its own right and in terms of the metaphors of intuition—it demonstrates here, on the primary verbal level, this same oxymoronic or disproportionate sort of humor as do

the chamberpot episode and Don Fernando's arrival in Macondo. All three examples indicate that the narrator's empirical distance is translucent or penetrable in spite of the superficial impression it gives of being realistically factual and therefore static or one-dimensional.

Yet another major formula within which one finds the comic conjunction of the corporeal and the intangible is that of the obscenity of some of the dialogue, circumscribed by the sometimes prissy avoidance of obscenities in the narrative voice. (Charged words do not conform to the narrator's pose of empirical distance, though we will find that, via juxtaposition, the intent of charged language penetrates the narrative gauze.) Thus, in one case of narrative decorum, Renata Remedio's thoughts of rebellion from her mother, Fernanda, take a much more explicitly vulgar form than the way they come to the reader as filtered through the narrative consciousness: "that she could use the clavichord as an enema" (p. 253). Her actual thoughts, one assumes, are couched even more frankly than this clause suggests. And within the fiction there is a similar disproportion between the vitality of the obscene spoken epithets and their meaning after being laundered in one way or another. Colonel Aureliano's exclamation on being brought to the execution wall ("'A person fucks himself up so much... just so six weak fairies can kill him and he can't do anything about it.'" [p. 126]) is reinterpreted as prayer by Roque Carnicero. Amaranta's habit of speaking to Fernanda in obscene gibberish is another example; when she does speak plainly—<u>en clair</u>, as it were—the obscenity is missing though the meaning is retained: "'I was saying...that you're one of those people who mix up their ass and their ashes.'" (p.200). "Ashes" stands in for "shifisifit" (p. 199).

There are two instances when the narrator's decorus pose seems to collapse, when he uses obscenities within his own voice. But it is signifi-

cant that both are moments of acute social relevance and that the use of obscenities is a way of registering the mental frustrations of the characters involved, and therefore emblematic rather than expletive. Thus, in the context of the government's interminable postponement of pensions for the liberal soldiers, Colonel Aureliano's feelings are reflected by the narrator: that most of the veterans "were still waiting for a litter in the shadow of public charity, dying of hunger, living through rage, rotting of old age amid the exquisite shit of glory." (p. 229). The other case finds Ursula, in her blind decrepitude, registered by the narrative voice.

> ...she felt unrepressible desires to let herself go and scamper about like a foreigner and allow herself at last an instant of rebellion, that instant yearned for so many times and so many times postponed, putting her resignation aside and shitting on everything once and for all and drawing out of her heart the infinite stacks of bad words that she had been forced to swallow over a century of conformity. (pp. 235-36)

Ursula's personal frustrations and Colonel Aureliano's partisan frustrations communicate themselves to the reader by way of the narrator's discursive or non-expletive use of obscenities. And, as in the case of the comic disjunctions—both the verbal obscenities and the dramatic disjunctions—an emotional lode rooted in the intuitive village mind is transferred across the narrative interface.

So many instances of the oxymoronic humor of disproportion present themselves that one could go on nominating them endlessly, which is to say, serially. However, it is important to note that not all link the intangible with the corporal. Some have to do with manners such as Aureliano Segundo's eating contest with Camila Sagastume; Fernanda's habit of eating formal meals alone; or the love Gaston and Amaranta Ursula share at fifteen hundred feet in the air and in a pool of muriatic acid. Other cases of the humor of

disproportion reflect the political and economic dimension: the telephone in the banana company's compound, ringing after years of rain and drought; or Colonel Aureliano's habit of exchanging golden fish for gold coins to endlessly make more fish; or the later variation on the same scheme, making the golden fish and then melting them down. Each of these examples has something to say about the Buendia or Macondo mentality and its clash with the larger society. As such they are emblems of a stylized and non-characterological psychological realism. Furthermore, some or all have the gratuitous quality of absurd humor when disengaged from their deeper social context; thus, the case of high altitude love shares the absurd ambience of Satie's remark about the nurse who took his temperature and gave him one and of Apollinaire's Christ in "Zone" who is both aviator and thief. However, if one comes at all these instances of comic disproportion in a generic fashion—avoiding the temptation to see them as specifically absurd or socially significant—it becomes clear that there is an intentional organization to the fiction which belies the narrator's empirical objectivity. The narrative objectivity would, on the face of the matter, indicate only an unfolding of events serially; but because of the comic juxtaposition the scenes take on meanings beyond the simple quiddity of their elements. They come to have meanings—now absurd, now socially relevant—which are not solely phenomenal but emblematic of the intuitive processes of mind of the village and the Buendia family.

The transmission of the intuitive across the fault plane of empirical narration could be demonstrated in other ways: by means of character's names that are somehow appropriate to their behavior; by means of verbal pyrotechnics associated with sex, death and solitude; or by means of discrete linguistic nodes—usually metaphoric such as the steel claws of the crab used to image Aureliano Segundo's throat cancer. But, for the sake of

economy, these patterns will be introduced as evidence in discussing—now directly—the intuitive mode of perception and behavior.

- iii -

Not by chance is there a linguistic and thematic parallel between One Hundred Years and the following passages from The Georgics.

> [Proteus] we reverence
> And aged Nereus too; because the seer
> Knows all that is, and has been, and will be.
>
> Swirling across the plains with furious flood,
> The river Po, the monarch of the streams,
> Washed woods away and cattle, byres and all...
> The farmer toiling with his curving plough,
> Will turn up spears devoured by flaking rust
> Or strike an empty helmet with his hoe,
> And pause to wonder at heroic bones.
>
> Even the jaws of Taenarum, hell's gate,
> He entered and the murky groves of fear,
> And saw the dead and their tremendous king
> And gods that yield not to the prayers of men.
> Stirred by his singing, from the depth they came,
> The unsubstantial shadows of the dead,...[4]

Proteus, like Melquiades, is all-knowing; the annual fluvial overflow becomes grotesquely extended to four years of rain; the unearthing of buried weapons corresponds to the armor that the magnet discovers; and, in the third passage, the Orphic motifs are parallel to Jose Arcadio Buendia's exequies and to the consistent rediscovery or reappearance of the dead. No direct reworking of Virgil is intended, one feels sure, but there is a common ambience which begins to suggest the cultural moment of the intuitive village mentality.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this mentality is its characteristic linking of elements that, viewed empirically, would be discrete. This is true of material relationships in One Hundred Years: butterflies

become the emblem of Maurico Babilonia; gun smoke the emblem of Jose Arcadio's corpse. But, whereas I use the word "emblem" to indicate the incidential or occasional relationship of each pair of elements, the intuitive mentality sees something closer to an equation of conjunction. Cassirer puts the case perfectly.

> Here the nuances of significance and value which knowledge creates in its concept of the object, which enable it to distinguish different spheres of objects and to draw a line between the world of truth and the world of appearance, are utterly lacking...Instead of the dialectical movement of thought, in which every given particular is linked with other particulars in a series and thus subordinated to a general law and process, we have here a mere subjection to the impression itself and its momentary "presence."
>
> Consequently the term "analogy magic," commonly used for a certain kind of magic undertaking, does not express the true meaning of this magic; for when we see mere sign and similarity, magical consciousness and perception see the object itself.[5]

Intuitive, or what Cassirer calls mythical or magical consciousness, is associative; but, unlike the empirical associative principle, there is no recourse to a "general law and process." Instead, intuitive association is arbitrary and displaces the quiddity of the object or occurance into a proximate reality: butterflies, gun smoke and one could also include the yellow flowers linked to Jose Arcadio Buendia's death.

Marquez draws somewhat more sparingly on another aspect of the intuitive mind: that of the conjunction or copula between words and things which both Cassirer and Foucault make a good deal of.[6] It is true that Francisco the Man's songs function as a kind of verbal reflector of events in the Homeric tradition, but Marquez does not force any direct equation between the words of his songs and the phenomena they register, nor does he intimate that the people of Macondo make such an equation. The naming of

characters for the intuitive mind also derives from the topos of equivalency between words and things, but again, with one exception, Marquez's empirical narrator lets the names speak for themselves and, more important, does not dramatize the intuitive equation in the village mentality between someone's name and his behavior. The exception is Roque Carricero, a name which the narrator says is not a matter of chance while the translator makes the necessary interlinear addition that the name means butcher. However, the majority of names have some suggestive meaning which is neither alluded to in the narrative voice nor registered as part of the mental fabric of the characters.[7] In a deeper though more ambiguous way, Melquiades' manuscript functions as a copula between word and event, all the events within the arch of the narrative. And it may be that the century of sporadic attempts at decipherment represent the town's desire to posit the verbal equivalent of their history. To the extent that the manuscript, as word, equates to event, the processes of intuitive association are fulfilled. And to this extent the manuscript has the same meaning for the villagers as do the incidental associations of proximate phenomena cited in the preceding paragraph. Melquiades' manuscript is a complex motif, however, since it can also represent the desire for an empirical order and justification, something unavailable within the scientific and political arenas. (Given this meaning, the Buendia's attempts to unravel the manuscript parallel those of the community of Borges' "The Library of Babel" as it searches in vain for the ultimate book of all knowledge.) If both possibilities are tenable, then the meaning of the manuscript for the town balances precariously between the latter-day desire for empirical order and the earlier, more primitive intuitive equation of word and phenomena. But one additional notion brings one to the conclusion that the manuscript represents the former, and we will return to the subject of the manuscript after this one clarification.

While we see the associative processes governing thing and thing, and in a more ambiguous way word and thing, there is no discrimen rerum between specific associative pairs. All operate in the same way and with the same force: consequently, there is not a rudimentary metaphysics based on metaphoric association but rather a planar or one-dimensional reality, each element of which has, as Melquiades says, its own vitality. As a result, the narrator's attempts to register the associative mind are somewhat misleading since they read like metaphors: "Aureliano Segundo...saw Petra Cotes spinal column like a row of spools strung together along a cluster of withered nerves" (p. 297); "Amaranta Ursula returned with the angels of December, driven on a sailor's breeze" (p. 347). But these examples are metaphoric because they are filtered through the intermediate narrator which uses metaphoric language as part of a "general law and process" (Cassirer's expression) as a tool of objective realism. For the village itself the associative hierarchy of a true metaphysics is inconceivable since it would require a higher law to order phenomena. Or is it conceivable?

Could the manuscript be that higher law? I think not since, if it is, the evidence of the book, not to mention Cassirer's, would be radically contradicted. If nowhere else in the fiction is there anything demonstrated except a planar vitality of multiple phenomena, albeit associatively linked in an occasional way, then the terminal example—the word-event linkage of the manuscript—cannot be expected to function in a different way. Short of the equation of Melquiades with an all-knowing God, one must conclude that he is simply pulling one more trick out of his magic bag. Like the pseudo-scientific devices which fool Jose Arcadio Buendia, the manuscript is the ultimate empirical trick played on the intuitive mind of the village. Like the narrator's empirical posture, the manuscript is discursive;

furthermore, it is reflexive and tells Aureliano (the third) nothing except what was and is. As opposed to the intuitive association of equally vital phenomena, the manuscript is an empirical catalogue, which is oriented toward the necessity of history, not the associative freedom of the intuitive mind.

One must immediately add, however (and by way of returning to the characteristics of the intuitive mind), that there are limitations on the intuition's associative freedom. Naturally, intuitive association rarely takes place in a vacuum. There is no dispassionate or pure research into phenomena in the intuitive world-view; nothing, as Cassirer says, is accidental.[8] Cause is conceived under the guise of feeling and operates associatively, subscribing to the nearest appropriate object or event the faculty of cause. Thus, it is Mr. Brown who is believed to have brought the rain to Macondo (p. 291) because of the complex association of Mr. Brown with the banana company which is in turn linked to other disasters suffered by t e town. (This is my own intercalation; the narrator's objective realism cannot compromise itself in this way.) As Cassirer explains, "Anything can come from anything, because anything can stand in temporal or spatial contact with anything."[9] There is therefore a triangular pattern in the intuitive mind which finds phenomena linked associatively by proximate and arbitrary causality and causality determined associatively by feeling, a point that Cassirer does not make. Instead, Cassirer defines the mythic or intuitive consciousness as somewhat more amorphous.

> The linguistic term "polysynthetic" has indeed been applied to the mythic imagination, and the term has been explained as meaning that for the mythical imagination there is no separation of a total complex into its elements, but that only a single undivided totality is represented—a totality in which there is no "dissociation" of separate factors, particularly of the factors of objective perception and subjective feeling.[10]

And since the intuitive mind operates on a planar reality in which everything is equally alive, Cassirer is right to conceive of an "undivided totality." But he does not fully account for the bumps and mounds on the planar surface of the intuitive mind caused by feelings, which introduce direction, though not of the metaphysical sort. This direction, being a function of feeling, is inevitably tied to the instincts, not a bogus category when applied to the pre-empirical mind. Instinct accounts for the rivulet of blood from Jose Arcadio to Ursula—literally the blood tie, with its concomitant feelings intended, between mother and son. Likewise, the amber-colored oil coming from the skull of Remedios the Beauty's admirer is a register of his passions. (What the love-poets of the Middle Ages and Renaissance conceived of as eye-beams parallels the odor of Remedios the Beauty's skin transferred to her admirer's blood; however, the sense of the conceit in the transferred odor is missing: for the village mentality the smell and the amber-colored oil equal Remedio's effect on men and their passion for her.)

One final aspect of the intuitive mind ought to be noted: its expression in ritual. Here especially instinct plays a significant role since both it and ritual are habitual responses to the natural order. Amaranta is said to have spent her life weaving her shroud (p. 242) and to the extent that outward and inward—ritual and instinct—are inseparable this is literally true. ("The purely inward must be objectified, must transform itself into something outward; but on the other hand, all intuition of the outward remains enmeshed in inward determinations."[11]) Amaranta, "a virtuoso in the rites of death" (p. 259), responds to the fact of death—something the narrator can get at only by personification as in the passage quoted next—ritualistically as the legitimate demand of a natural sequence: "Death did not tell her when she was going to die...but ordered her to begin sewing her own shroud on the next sixth of April." (p. 260).

Whereas Amaranta is oriented toward mortuary rituals, other characters respond to different dimensions of human reality. ("Even at the lowest levels these transitions [from one age or status to another]...are somehow lifted out of the uniform course of events...Birth and death, pregnancy and motherhood, puberty and marriage—all are marked by specific rites of passage and initiation."[12]) All these human watersheds can be instanced in terms of their ritual equivalents in One Hundred Years. Other more everyday actions are also registered ritualistically such as the rites of the bath, the ablutions performed by Remedios the Beauty (pp. 218-19) and perverted by Jose Arcadio (the seminarian) (p. 340); and the eating rituals, perverted by Fernanda (p. 200) and, comically, by Camila Sagastume (pp. 239-40). In terms of frequency, however, the rituals associated with sex and death predominate and it is in these contexts that the narrator brings off his most intense verbal flourishes.

Another overarching ritual pattern—that of unearthing and burial—alligns the family's chronicle in terms of a birth-death configuration. In the beginning things are uncovered the skeleton with the locket containing hair and the rusted armor. While these can be construed as emblems of the past, the village mentality performs no such abstraction; it is not until later that time becomes more than a serial progression of moments and that memory can dig down, as it were, and uncover the past. Thus, only in his solitude can Jose Arcadio Buendia know that "time [can] splinter and leave an eternalized fragment in a room" (p. 322). Melquiades is the first to die and the various rites of covering over the dead proceed under various guises. Some burials come off as comically grotesque, such as Pilar Ternera's, beneath the dance floor sitting in her rocking chair.

> The mulatto girls, dressed in black, pale from weeping invented shadowy rites as they took off their earrings, broaches, and rings and threw them into the pit before it was closed over with a slab that bore neither name nor dates, and that was covered with a pile of Amazonian camellias. (p. 367)

Others are rudely grotesque such as the mass burial after the massacre which finds the anonymous corpses thrown into the sea and imaged as imperfect bananas.[13] The gold horde, the location of which is known only by Ursula, may be the only thing unearthed in the second half of the book. Since it is—for us as abstracting readers—an emblem of the empirical, progressive world, Aureliano Segundo's excavations can hardly be considered as ritualistic. Oriented toward the empirical world, the gold cannot be equated to what is turned up by the mental excavations of nostalgia and memory. And this second kind of uncovering, the mental, can easily be considered as mortuary rituals in that instances tend to preceed death: Colonel Aureliano and even Fernanda fall into the trap of nostalgia just before they die.

It is important to note that women have the focal role in terms of performance of rituals, though men are occasionally included in tandem: such is the case with Aureliano Segundo's ancillary role as part of the fertility rite directed at the livestock. Part of the reason for this pattern of female predominance seems to be that the men are often engaged in the tribulations of confronting the empirical world, leaving the women to perform the rites in a solitude much like that of Lorca's women.[14] By following Ursula's ritual life through the fiction one can recapitualte most of Cassirer's list of significant junctures at which rituals inhere: the chastity belt episode as a rite of passage from virginity; her forty days rest on being delivered of Amaranta;[15] her recurrent rejuvenations of the

house, noted at one point in conjunction with her putting "an end to the numerous superimposed periods of mourning" (p. 173); the promise she makes to die when the rain has stopped; her "endless, stumbling, deep prayer that lasted more than two days" which together with "a certain confusion in nature" preceed her death.

- iv -

Intuition, a pre-abstract form of consciousness which expresses itself in ritual, is distinguished from metaphysical consciousness by its non-emblematic and non-hierarchical quality (though not its associative property: metaphysical association is abstract in its most advanced stages while intuitive association is concrete). Because of the presence of the intuitive mind at the core of the fiction, it is misleading to reduce the book to a coherent metaphysical formula as one critique does.[16] If the metaphysical interpretation is pushed to its extreme point, Melquiades' manuscript becomes the fiction and the fiction is the "best plaything that [has] ever been invented to make fun of" the reader, as Aureliano (the third) finds out (p. 357). The metaphysical interpretation leads nowhere as does the empirical: the Catalonian bookseller takes literature as a series of informations, a catalogue of how-to-do-its, reduced oxymoronically to the preparation of chick peas (p. 357).[17] One must look elsewhere for Marquez's meaning: it is not to be found in obscurantist metaphor, the "quasi-private jargon" that Poggoli observes in the early heretical avant-garde,[18] and certainly not in the neoclassical serial view so closely linked to the empirical narrator and the larger society. Both empiricism and metaphysics have, in the end, the significance of game or pantalla, the Spanish colloquialism expressing a screen or facade thrown up to cover and divert attention from the authentic.

At this authentic core of the fiction are the simple forms of intuitive consciousness and ritual expression: aspects of the natural, almost tribal, community of the edenic experience. How one gets back to the Garden is, however, a misconstruction of the fiction's meaning, since the answer would either descend to empirical nomination of sententious advice or would be couched in a metaphysical overlaw undemonstrable in the real world. The fiction is realistic to the extent that it pictures what is and was historically: it does not try to invade the future by way of utopia or distopia. There is a delicate balance struck between the wistful nostalgia for the intuitive world felt by Aureliano (the third)

> ...he admired the persistence of the spider-webs on the dead rose bushes, the perserverance of the rye grass, the patience of the air in the radiant February dawn. (p. 381)

and the progressions of human consciousness beyond intuition. The admiration that Aureliano (the third) feels might just as well be applied to the lilies of the field [Matthew 6:28], the Christian emblem of passivity and organic self-containment. And this natural wholeness stands in contrast to metaphysical abstractions and empirical overlaws, which tend to idealize and disect realia. The two elaborations on the original human consciousness like Jose Arcadio Buendia's "unbridled imagination," always go "beyond the genius of nature and even beyond the miracles and magic..." (p. 11). Marquez's vision of annihilation results from this conflict between intuitive naturalism and later forms of consciousness.

> It was the last that remained of a past whose annihilation had not taken place because it was still in a process of annihilation, consuming itself from within, ending at every moment but never ending its ending.

This passage denotes almost literally a mathematical calculus, one which approaches the null by way of ever smaller increments. It is this calculus of ending, never truncated, which images the entropic struggle between intuition and later forms of consciousness.

$A = \overline{DI}$

- footnotes -

[1] In this second case Marquez may be toying with the habit of Spanish and Latin American literature of explicating itself by way of thematic notions: life, death, love, humor, sadness, politics, money, hope, nostalgia, etc. This list of topoi comes from the entries Marquez made in an enlarged tic-tac-toe diagram of fiction's concerns that he gave one recent interviewer. [William Kennedy, "The Yellow Trolley Car in Barcelona, and Other Visions," The Atlantic 231, no. 1 (Jan. 1973), 58.] They correspond roughly to the lists one finds in anthologies of Spanish and Latin American literature which preface each author's contribution. Possibly in the diagram and certainly in One Hundred Years, Marquez seems to be reacting to this reductive tendency in the older literature by gratuitously isolating these "central themes of human experience" (my own irony of quotation). On a deeper level, however, an innovative mixing of these pristine and isolated "concerns" bears real fruit in much the same way that Rilke has far more to say about the interface of life and death in The Duino Elegies than about either separately.

[2] Page numbers included in the text refer to the Rabassa translation of One Hundred Years.

[3] Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955).

[4] Virgil, The Georgics (London: The Folio Society, 1969), pp. 81, 28, 84.

[5] Cassirer, vol. II, pp. 35, 40.

[6] Such comments as these by Cassi er and Foucault are relevant.

> In the development of linguistic forms we differentiated three stages which we designated as those of mimetic, analogical, and symbolic expression. In the first stage we found that there is still no true tension between the linguistic "sign" and the intuitive content to which it refers, that the two tend to dissolve in one another and achieve a mutual coincidence. The sign, as mimetic sign, strives in its form toward an immediate rendering of the content; it strives, one might say, to absorb it.
>
> (Cassirer, vol. II, p. 237)

> In its original form, when it was given to men by God himself, language was an absolutely certain and transparent sign for things, because it resembled them. The names of things were lodged in the things they designated, just as strength is written in the body of a lion, regality in the eye of the eagle....
>
> [Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 36.]

[7] The long list must include the military leaders with their appropriately heroic names: Magnifico Visbal, Gen. Victorio Medina, and Col. Aureliano (here there is a vague suggestion of the actual Panamanian general and president Marco Aurelio Robles). Others: the Spanish verb carpir, to quarrel, suggests Fernanda del Carpio's personality; and the adjective amargo-a (bitter) together with the verb amar (to love) indicate dimensions of Amaranta's character. Buendia (a conjunction of good and day), not a frequent name relatively speaking, has an ironic dimension in light of the family's general disaster. The name Ursula has the same ambience of epic fecundity and matriarchal authority that it has in English. Other names have meanings which are not clearly related to character: Pilar Ternera conjoins the words for pillar and bedpost ~~and~~ calf; nigromancia (cf. Nigromanta) means necromancy.

[8] Cassirer, vol. II, p. 47.

[9] Ibid., p. 46.

[10] Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[11] Ibid., p. 104.

[12] Ibid., p. 109.

[13] The massacre of the three thousand odd persons in the fictive Macondo has deep topical significance. It speaks indirectly of the civil war, called la Violencia, which caused the death of about one million Colombians. The turmoil lasted about fifteen years (1948-1963) and began, according to the unofficial version told by the people, on April 6, 1948, when the communist leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan was shot to death while giving a speech. Gaitan's death may, however, have only catalyzed a potentially violent situation. Villages became completely polarized: some were liberal, others conservative, and a few were communist. In fact, the Violencia tended to avoid large cities and instead took the form of night raids on neighboring villages, plundering and arson. Groups of banditos, representing one or another of the political factions, time and again stopped intervillage buses, always asking the passengers the same question—what political party are you? And if the riders did not guess the right faction, all were shot. Hundred of mass graves mark the locations of such massacres. One, account, perhaps less authoritative, tells of the decimation of the town of Macedonea in the Department of Caldas carried out in 1954 by U.S. military aircraft testing napalm. As a result of the Violencia, the large cities have grown tremendously in population, though mostly by the addition of barrios on the outskirts.

[14] Compare the female sexual frustrations in, for instance, The House of Bernarda Alba to the following, spoken by Ursula: "We'll rot in here... We'll turn to ashes in this house without men, but we won't give this miserable town the pleasure of seeing us weep." (p. 169).

[15] Cf. Lothario dei Segni, On the Misery of the Human Condition. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1969), p. 9.

[16] Emir Rodriguez Monegal, "Novedad y anacronismo de 'Cien anos de soledad'," Revisita nacional de cultura (Caracas), 185 (July-Sept. 1968), 19. Monegal reduces the fiction to the following formula: the world = the book = the word = creation.

Accurate as far as it goes in linking art and life, the formula is nevertheless of little help in understanding the synthetic development of the human mind which Marquez dramatizes.

17 There may be an allusion to the peas of Bersonian memory in Faulkner's Light in August, though Marquez would no doubt brush off such a suggestion as frivilous based on his responses about the debt to Faulkner in the Monegal interview (see preceeding footnote).

18 Renato Poggioli, The Theory of the Avant-Garde (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 37.

- bibliography -

Borges, Jorge Luis, Ficciones, ed. Anthony Kerrigan. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962. 174 pp. intro.

Cassirer, Ernst, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, 2 vols., trans. Ralph Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955. intro., indices.

dei Segni, Lothario, On the Misery of the Human Condition, trans. M.M. Dietz. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1969. xliii, 92 pp. intro., biblio.

Foucault, Michel, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, no translator named. New York: Pantheon Books, 1970. 387 pp.

Kennedy, William, "The Yellow Trolley Car in Barcelona, and Other Visions," The Atlantic, vol. 231, no. 1 (Jan. 1973), 50-59.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia, Cien anos de soledad. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1969, 351 pp.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia, One Hundred Years of Solitude, trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1970. 383 pp.

Poggioli, Renato, The Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald. New York: Harper and Row, Inc. 1968. xvii, 250 pp. pref., biblio., index.

Rodriguez Monegal, Emir, "Novedad y anacronismo de 'Cien anos de soledad'," Revista nacional de cultura (Caracas), 185 (July-Sept. 1968), 2-34.

Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), The Georgics, trans. K.R. Mackenzie. London: The Folio Society, 1969. 96 pp. intro., notes, illus.