

Aureliano: A Name with no Fortune in the Novel ‘One Hundred Years of Solitude’

Hilal Ahmad Dar

Research Scholar, Department of English, Jiwaji University Gwalior, India

Yasir Ahmad Dar

Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Lukhnow, India

Abstract

Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is “filled with haunting creatures” and represents the solitude and misery of the inhabitants of Macondo. As, the establishment of Macondo is based on guilt of incest, it is this incest which is the cause of solitude of its inhabitants. Throughout we see generations of Buendia’s suffering a similar fate. The present paper proposes to highlight that how a name decided the fate of a family and will highlight the prickly solitude which became a legacy for all the Aureliano’s and ultimately the cause of their doom. It will focus on a particular generation of the Buendia family namely Aureliano’s who succumb to a hundred years of solitude. As the town of Macondo is isolated and alienated from the outside world similar is the case with all the persons who possess the name of Aureliano in the town of Macondo. The persons with the name of Aureliano are said to have a solitary air and we see Aureliano after Aureliano succumbing to a similar fate.

Keywords: haunting creatures, solitude, Macondo, incest, fate, legacy, Aureliano, succumb.

“What’s in a name?” says Shakespeare, “that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” (Shakespeare p. 47). But four hundred years later, Gabriel Garcia Marquez through a character commented on the effect of name on one’s personality and he seems to suggest that ‘there is something in a name’ as a name had a certain effect on its possessor. This effect comes in our notice very early in the novel when a child is born in the Buendia family and they are reluctant to name the child Ursula, “because a person suffers too much with that name” (Marquez p. 134). This line seems to suggest that a name has a certain effect upon its possessor. The present paper proposes to highlight the effect of name “Aureliano” upon its possessors in the Buendia family as we see in the novel that each Aureliano of the Buendia family suffers a similar fate and anxiety. One hundred years of solitude is the epic saga of a family in a fictional town of Macondo in Caribbean. It was a world created with such subtlety and meticulous effort that its characters came alive from the book and pricked the reader at many places. It was a novel where mundane and marvelous fused together with such precision that trivial things became supernatural symbols- where ants became the symbols of causing destruction of Macondo. A name on the other hand decided the fate of a family which succumbed to a hundred years of solitude only to be delivered by the last of their line. In this paper I would highlight the prickly solitude which became a constant companion for all the Aureliano’s in the family of Buendia to carry forward until the line, that started with colonels would end up a colony of carnivorous ants, who finally prevail over humans in Macondo, only to be wiped out in future by some other species, as per unsaid prophecy.

We are introduced to the first Aureliano of the Buendia family in the very first sentence of the novel and he looks to be a peculiar child with some strange qualities as we are told “...the first human being to be born in Macondo, would be six years old in March. He was silent and withdrawn. He had wept in his mother’s womb and had been born with eyes open. As they were cutting the umbilical cord, he moved his head from side to side, taking in the things in the room and examining the faces of the people with a fearless curiosity” (Marquez p. 15). The final sentences of the novel cause panic in us as another Aureliano, generations down having deciphered the parchments would be prophesying as well as living his end. And in between we see generations carrying name of Aureliano suffering from the same anxiety and desperation which first Aureliano suffered since the day when he came back from war, heroic but broken and reduced to a historic relic. As we are told that, “Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty two armed uprisings and lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty five” (Marquez p. 106). Colonel Aureliano Buendia is the youngest son of Jose Arcadio Buendia and Ursula Iguaran, whom he startled even before being born. Ursula had heard him weep in her womb and many then interpreted that he would be a prophet, but years later when the gusts of lucidity cleared mist from Ursula’s eyes does she declare that the children who wept in mother’s womb were actually incapable of loving. “Throughout the long history of family the insistent repetition of names had made her (Ursula Iguaran) draw some conclusions that seemed to be certain. While the Aureliano’s were withdrawn, but with lucid minds, the Jose Arcadio’s were impulsive and enterprising, but they were marked with a tragic sign” (Marquez p. 186). As a child Aureliano shows a prophetic vision when he had premonitions which lasted till his end, and a trait

which the last adult Aureliano too revealed when he came to know everything about anything, and when he would declare like a Fakir, “everything is known”. When Colonel Aureliano having fatigued himself in Melquiades’s room- “a sanctuary of sanity” leaves the room and after a brief domestic pleasure, is forced by fate to satisfy his sinful pride and anxiety for unknown in thirty two wars, which he wages only to discover the privileges of simplicity almost forty years later. It took him twenty years of dreadful war and subsequent wars with himself, trying to liberate himself from the vicious fate of the parchments. As his mother says in the days when her judgment was based on understanding of people rather than on emotional ties and solidarity, that Colonel was incapable of love, that “he had never loved anyone, not even his wife Remedios or the countless one night women who had passed through his life, and much less his sense...that he had won and lost for the same reason, pure and sinful pride”. He was hardened not by war but probably by the premonitions in which he might have sensed the end of their line. He was hardened so much that he doesn’t weep when his wife dies, or when his seventeen sons from seventeen different women are hunted down, not even when Jose Arcadio Buendia, his father, dies. Even he couldn’t share any complicity with his friend Gerinaldo Marquez or his brother whom he had loved in childhood. Deep down perhaps he knew that he was escaping from a fate which was already decided from womb. Escaping from the parchments of Melquiades which were written in Sanskrit and whose alphabetic values he couldn’t materialize but sensed through premonitions; in childhood, during wars, in the midst of a vicious circle of little golden fishes. He lives a long and miserable life, enough to convince one that he should have been born with tail of a pig- which actually was the prophecy because he was born out of an incestuous relationship, to save him from so much misery.

The last adult Aureliano too shares similar traits with colonel. One went out to see the world and face the disappointments and the other one became a part of Melquiades’s sanctuary of sanity and knew everything in the end from moth eaten books and hundred years old parchment. His frustration comes however when his aunt Amaranta Ursula embraces him and arouses in him the seeds of sinful legacy of incest. However, he lives most of his life like a cannibal, as Amaranta calls him lovingly, and he seems to be more in complicity with solitude than any other member of the family except Jose Arcadio Segundo who after witnessing a brutal massacre loses all sense and shuts himself up in Melquiades’s room. On the other hand Aureliano grows more and more passionate for his aunt and to satisfy his lusty love he enjoys the bed of a Negro woman whom he makes to whisper Gaston, Gaston in his ears, so as to deceive himself in believing that he made love with Amaranta Ursula. It was he, born of love, on whom falls the axe of deciphering the parchments and hence bringing an end to hundred years of solitude of Buendia family, “...for he knew then that his fate was written in Melquiades’s parchments... it was the history of the family, written by Melquiades, down to the most trivial details, one hundred years ahead of time” (Marquez p. 420).

Another Aureliano in the novel is son of Colonel and Pilar Ternera, that unfortunate woman who waited for her man until her body withered. Aureliano Jose was raised by Amaranta for herself, to share her solitude and relieve her from the involuntary laudanum that her mad beseeching lad throws into Remedios’s coffee. Jose Aureliano too was yoked in an inviolable complicity, with his aunt Amaranta, in whose embrace he felt a sense of security and an impure smell of her bosom. He was seeking consolation for his abrupt solitude, for his premature adolescence with women who smelled dead flowers, whom he idealized in the darkness and changed into Amaranta by means of the anxious efforts of his imagination. Even when he wallowed her image in the dunghill of war, the war would resemble Amaranta more and more, to leave him desperate and sick. And he finds his accomplice in solitude in his mother Pilar Ternera, who had lost the trail of all hope. And in a certain way she thought that Aureliano Jose was the tall dark man, who had been promised her for half a century by the king of hearts and who like all the men sent by the cards reached her heart when he was already stamped with the mark of death, carrying legacy of Aureliano’s forward.

The other important character with the name of Aureliano was one of the twin brothers, seeds of Arcadio and Soffa De La Piedad, who however were so much alike that it was difficult to tell them apart. We agree with Ursula’s fear that may be during their gees of confusion they might have become changed forever, because between Jose Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo, it was not Aureliano but Jose Arcadio who carried on the tradition of being the anarchist Aureliano. He led workers into the great strike because of his insistent provocation. So that “cultivation stopped halfway, the fruit rotted on the trees and the hundred-twenty-car trains remained on the sidings” (Marquez p. 307) and eventually they burnt plantations, tore up railway track, cut telegraph and telephone wires. With the result workers gathered in Macondo and more than three thousand workers were machine gunned and then thrown into the sea. He is the one who behaved like Aureliano, but was named Jose Arcadio, witnessed the bloodshed and grew insane when no one validated his version that workers were killed, because official version of history prevailed and the traces of Buendia’s wiped, long before the biblical storm, from the memory of men. He dedicates the rest of his life trying to decipher the parchments and he actually initiates Aureliano, the last adult of Buendia into the study of parchment. He lived like other Aureliano’s far from crowds in a world of shadow which was impenetrable like a jungle, prone to solitude and madness.

The tale of hundred years of solitude of Aureliano's of the Buendia family reaches its conclusion when the last of Aureliano bred by solitary lovers, in a house haunted by ghosts of ancestors could not survive the legacy of that name and he shouldn't have in fact, because races that are condemned to hundred years of solitude didn't have a second opportunity on earth.

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