

“Remedios in the Sky with Diamonds: Gabriel García Márquez and the Beatles in Their Own Write.”

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ABSTRACT: This paper highlights the parallels and intersections in the unreal and magical realist worlds created by Gabriel García Márquez and the Beatles by grounding their works in the literary, visual, and musical artifacts of the 1960s cultural revolution. By examining Beatles songs and films and with close reading of several chapters from *Cien años de soledad* and from several short stories and opinion columns written by García Márquez, this essay unravels an exciting implicit collaboration between Colombia’s most famous writer and one of the world’s most celebrated musical bands.

KEY WORDS: insomnia, tobacco, solitude, yellow, ship, unreal, magical

Esta tarde, pensando todo esto frente a una ventana lúgubre donde cae la nieve, con más de cincuenta años encima y todavía sin saber muy bien quién soy, ni qué carajos hago aquí, tengo la impresión de que el mundo fue igual desde mi nacimiento hasta que los Beatles empezaron a cantar. Todo cambió entonces.

Gabriel García Márquez. “Sí: la nostalgia sigue siendo igual que antes,” 1980

Insomnia, Tobacco and Accordions

There are no known reports to date of any of the four Beatles ever reading any text by Gabriel García Márquez, let alone ever commenting on or consciously referencing in their music any part of his work. Therefore, the syndicated opinion column that García Márquez published one week after John Lennon’s death on December 16, 1980, might represent the only concrete occasion in which the two sensations—the Beatles and García Márquez—meet on the page. However, if we are to believe what he writes in this column—that he played only two LP’s while writing *Cien años de soledad*: a selection of Claude Debussy’s preludes and the first album by the Beatles—, a more profound, if implicit, influence of the foursome’s music on the famous Colombian writer is conceivable.

In an attempt to find some reassurance amid the commotion caused by the tragic death of Lennon, García Márquez explains that everything that surrounded the spontaneous and moving expressions of love and respect for the murdered Beatle, a man who had done nothing else but sing for love, turned out to be both a worldwide victory for poetry and the apotheosis of the underdogs. By paying attention to the variety of ways by which people all over the world showed their respect, admiration and love for Lennon, García

Márquez contends that Beatlemania was still alive and that a more definitive incarnation of it was actually booming in real time. The hysterical and noisy displays of adulation for the band in the early years of its success, he implies, was giving way to a common nostalgia shared by different generations. This might actually be the reason behind his column’s ambiguous title.

Few scholars have pondered the ways in which the Beatles and García Márquez seem intertwined, even if both were producing landmark works during the same world cultural revolution and addressing common themes in their texts. The Colombian writer and the English pop sensation-turned-cultural movement embodied the spirit of the time. This essay brings to light some of the parallels and intersections in the works of García Márquez and the Beatles and proves how this shared reflection addresses the unreal and magical-realist worlds created by the cultural revolution of the 1960s. By examining Beatles songs and films and with close reading of several chapters from *Cien años de soledad* and from several short stories and opinion columns by García Márquez, this essay unravels the groundbreaking interrogation of reality that characterizes the sensorial and adventurous aesthetic of the music and visuals of the English band and the famous Colombian’s narratives.

“I’m so Tired,” a 1968 song by the Beatles, and Chapter 3 of *Cien años de soledad*, the 1967 landmark novel by García Márquez provide for a cogent starting point to show their common elements, namely on the topic of insomnia and references to the explorer and colonialist, Sir Walter Raleigh. The novel was written before the song came out as part of the *White Album*, the ninth studio album by the band, a double set that is considered one of the Beatles most famous and critically acclaimed records. There are no concrete links between these two works.

“I’m so Tired” deals with the topic of insomnia and with its associated mental disorders. It is said that the song is about Lennon

longing for Yoko Ono, with whom he just had started a relationship. While meditating in Rishikesh, India, with the other Beatles and celebrities, he began to think of her, which led to insomnia. In order to cope with the impossibility of sleeping, and with the fear of going insane—at one point he states that "my mind is on the blink"—, Lennon first considers getting up to fix himself a drink and later on concedes that, although he is tired, he will have another cigarette. As an apparent digression, probably to reinforce his chaotic mental state, Lennon's stream of consciousness leads him to curse Sir Walter Raleigh ("he was such a stupid git"), who was, among other dubious things, memorialized the person responsible for popularizing tobacco smoking in England.

The theme of insomnia in a Beatles song is remarkable for several reasons. First, because it represents the consolidation of a shift to more profound, intimate and painful experiences as the main source of inspiration for Lennon's songwriting. It is important to note that the *White Album* also includes "Julia", a song he wrote to his mother, whom he saw killed in a car accident when he was seventeen years old. Furthermore, Lennon is addressing emotional and dreamlike realities in the song, as he had done in the 1966 song "I'm Only Sleeping." Also, given that insomnia might be caused by other medical and mental health ailments, because it is very likely that it disguises underlying conditions. Thus, even if the first explanation for Lennon's short-term sleep disorder is most likely related to being separated from Yoko Ono, his plea for "a little peace of mind" encapsulates other tensions, most likely derived from past traumatic experiences in his life, such as growing up in public or being a Beatle. Finally, the invocation of Sir Walter Raleigh, albeit unintentionally, opens the door to address not only the historical exchanges of material and cultural goods between Europe and the New World, but also their relationships.

Chapter 3 of *Cien años de soledad* also deals with insomnia. Just like in Lennon's case, this condition is used by García Márquez to represent underlying problems and associated mental disorders, most notably forgetfulness and dementia, in an unrealistic and magical realist setting. However, instead of the individual and temporary crisis of "I'm so Tired," García Márquez portrays the condition as an epidemic: most of the inhabitants of Macondo have been infected by an insomnia plague, which has been brought by Rebeca, an orphan who mysteriously arrives in town, and spread through the consumption of candy animals. The main consequence of this situation is that people begin to suffer memory loss, most of it manifested through the loss of the name and notion of things.¹ But Melquíades, the Gypsy, returns to town and brings the antidote to insomnia. One of the victims of the plague is Francisco el Hombre, a very old troubadour—he is said to be 200 years old—who had disappeared during the worst days of the plague. But upon the collective recovery of sleeping and memory, Francisco el Hombre reappears in Macondo to sing his stories and to deliver the news, as he always used to do, accompanied by an archaic accordion that Sir Walter Raleigh himself had given him in Guyana.

The overlap of themes and characters in "I'm so Tired" and in Chapter 3 of *Cien años de soledad* is not a mere coincidence but rather a reflection of the complex and at times uneven interactions between Europe and Latin America. Raleigh is said to have read books relating the conquest of Spaniards in America, which most likely inspired him to pursue gold and fortune in the New World ("Walter Raleigh" 3). He took part in several expeditions that attempted to locate Eldorado, the mythical city of gold, in the highlands of Guyana, a region on the northern coast of South America that was the supposed location of the city at the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth. In fact, Eldorado appeared in different places in numerous maps of the time, perhaps because it was more a product of fantasy and delirium than of reality. Raleigh's quest for gold was a failure, but he managed to bring other goods to England, like tobacco, before King James ordered him to be beheaded for disobeying orders to avoid conflict with the Spanish. García Márquez celebrates in this chapter the cultural exchanges and contributions of Europe to the region. The archaic accordion Raleigh gave to Francisco el Hombre became the signature instrument of Colombian vallenato, a folklore musical genre for which Francisco el Hombre is a legendary figure.²

Thus, the reference to Francisco el Hombre, as it connects legendary stories to music, seems appropriate to characterize the improbable encounters between the Beatles and García Márquez as well as their common representation of fantastic and magical realist worlds. In fact, the Colombian depiction of chance meetings between inhabitants of poor and forgotten Latin American towns with foreign visitors helps to illustrate both these types of encounters and alternate worlds. Consider for example the short story "El ahogado más hermoso del mundo," also from 1968 (G. García Márquez 47-56). The children, men and, above all, the women of a sad and forgotten village unceremoniously give a good-looking foreign dead man the name Esteban and adopt him as their most favorite local "inhabitant." His arrival to the seaside and his funeral, quite fortuitously, give sense, identity and color to the houses and to the isolated life of the village.

Or, consider the courtyard of the house of Pelayo and Elisenda after a heavy storm in "Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes," another short story by García Márquez originally written in 1955 and first published in English in 1972 (G. García Márquez 9-20). Amidst the mud and the many thousands of crabs, emerges a very old man with enormous wings. Instead of fear or discomfort, the couple show aplomb, quickly taking advantage of the situation and fixing their house into a kind of public museum from where they can display this "fallen angel." They charge money to visitors and, with the profits, rebuild their house. But when father Gonzaga proves the old man cannot be an angel (because he does not speak nor understand Latin, the language of angels), and when another attraction hits the town (a girl, who happened to be transformed into a spider for not obeying her mother) and the competition trashes the family business, the winged old man becomes, simply, an an-

noyance and another member of the family. After some time, stiff feathers began to grow on the old man's wings. He eventually, after several noisy and clumsy attempts, managed to fly away. The presence of this old man and the irruption of Esteban's corpse, as well as the corresponding reactions by the local people, might be seen as metaphors of encounters between Europeans and Latin Americans, respectively, and of the complex relationships and dialogues that take place between them as alternate generators and receptors of cultural products.

Just like García Márquez's winged old man and spider girl, the Beatles also invoke images of performances by extraordinary creatures, most commonly associated with circuses and other itinerant spectacles, adding in this way another layer to an already volatile reality and making it more magical and unbounded. That is the case of the 1967 Beatles song "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite," where the band's ethereal and out of time musical proposition is akin to García Márquez's narrative. Originally inspired by an old poster for a Victorian 1843 circus performance, that Lennon had bought in an antique shop, the lyrics of the song are almost verbatim of the flyer's content. The characters and attractions mentioned in the song and in the poster include a Pablo Fanques Fair, horses, garters, hogshead of real fire and Henry the horse. The recording portrays a musical time traveling experience that takes the listener back to the Victorian days by reenacting an atmosphere of the old festivities of the time. This is mainly achieved by the inclusion of a modern version of a calliope, the keyboard instrument used in traveling fairs. What George Martin, the producer of the record, used instead of the calliope in the section of the song where Henry the horse dances the waltz, was a randomly created musical patchwork that invokes a striking timeless, surrealistic and comic atmosphere. In this way, fictional, magical and intertwined layers of reality are reproduced in purely musical fashion. It was like Henry the horse, the winged old man and the spider girl were all dancing the same waltz.

The Crux of Solitude

The Chronicles of the Indies that made such a staggering impression on Sir Walter Raleigh certainly resemble solitary ventures into fantasy in spite of being for the most part accurate accounts of reality. That was the subject of two opinion syndicated columns García Márquez published on June 9 and July 1, 1981—"Fantasía y creación artística" (Notas de prensa 161-4) and "Algo más sobre literatura y realidad" (Notas de prensa 169-72)—, that evolved into "La soledad de América Latina," the text he read on the occasion of his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in Stockholm on December 1982 (*Yo no vengo a decir un discurso* 21-9). García Márquez contends there that those chronicles contain the seeds of the celebrated novels he and other Latin America authors wrote, especially during the second half of the twentieth century, for they are but humble attempts to capture reality and not exotic creations of imagination. What to most Europeans and North American critics and readers were skill-

ful and aesthetically pleasant distortions of reality by Latin American writers, actually were, just like the Chronicles of Indies, limited and not always successful attempts to capture an exuberant reality that obeys logical and poetic rules not compatible with Western yardsticks. He goes on to explain that since Latin American writers and artist have to ask but little of imagination, their main problem is a lack of conventional means to render their lives believable. He resents that the interpretation of Latin American reality as well as of the social, political and economic solutions to their problems have to go through external and foreign patterns that serves only to make their people ever more unknown, ever less free and ever more solitary. And this is, according to him, the crux of the solitude of Latin America.

Solitude is precisely the main subject of the writing of García Márquez and of some of the Beatles songs, like 1966 "Eleanor Rigby" and of the acclaimed 1967 album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. However, just like with insomnia and as it is clear from the considerations he makes in his speech, García Márquez treats solitude not only in its metaphysical or individual dimensions: he also depicts the collective features of solitude and traces its causes to indifference, discord, misunderstandings and oblivion. In a 1971 interview he explained that, to him, solitude is the opposite of solidarity and that this belief constitutes the essence of *Cien años de soledad*:

Se han escrito toneladas y toneladas de papeles, se han dicho cosas tontas, cosas importantes, cosas trascendentales, pero nadie ha tocado el punto que a mí más me interesaba al escribir el libro, que es la idea de que la soledad es lo contrario de la solidaridad y que yo creo que es la esencia del libro.

Eso explica la frustración de los Buendía, uno por uno; la frustración de su medio, la frustración de Macondo. (...) La frustración de los Buendía proviene de su soledad, o sea de su falta de solidaridad: la frustración de Macondo viene de ahí, y la frustración de todo, de todo, de todo, de todo. (González Bermejo 55)

Cien años de soledad was released in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on June 5, 1967. Only one week before, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the eighth Beatles album, was released in England and the U.S. The novel and the album have been considered unanimously amongst the most influential cultural works of their time. The reason for this assessment has to do not only with the comparable impact these works have had on society and culture, but also with the similar aesthetic and thematic assumptions they display. Coming from unexpected marginal places in the 1960s—working-class youth and Latin America, respectively—the band and the writer managed to set new rules for the cultural industry and became trailblazers of artistic and technical innovation in recording

and writing. Besides, in spite of their celebrated surreal and fantastic elements, both works were grounded on real life and personal experiences: childhood memories, newspaper and everyday local stories, pictures and posters, and even political turmoil.³

Cien años de soledad helped to consolidate the craftsmanship of Latin American novelists and their worldwide recognition by combining sophisticated narrative strategies, first used by European and North American literary modernists, with oral narrative techniques. The result of this approach is commonly known as magical realism. Critic John King explains that magical realism is the "juxtaposition of the avant-garde and the non-modern, Western thought and popular beliefs, Borges and García Márquez's grandmother" (King 74). The novel fictionalized numerous aspects of García Márquez's childhood and youth and of Colombian history. In fact, as the celebrated critic Raymond Williams contends, the novel is one of the most historical books of the Latin American Boom and abounds in social and political implications (Williams 96). Macondo, as a fictional place, is an alter ego of real places such as Aracataca, Colombia and Latin America as a whole. By the same token, most of the characters in the novel are based on real life people. For example, colonel Aureliano Buendía "is modeled after a late-nineteenth-century figure, General Rafael Uribe Uribe, who was a leader of the liberals who suffered numerous defeats in Colombia" (Williams 96). But colonel Buendía is also an alter ego of García Márquez himself, since both the character and the writer were known for their prediction powers, their thirst for social justice, and for being ashamed secret poets.

The Beatles, meanwhile, recorded and released a concept album that is built around the performance of a fictional band, an alter ego of themselves, that consists of solitary souls, a lonely hearts club band. The decision to create such a performance grew from their desire to symbolically separate themselves from the Beatles. Even the legendary cover of the album suggests an intense aloneness. The famous artwork is a collage consisting of two versions of the Beatles—wax sculptures of the bandmembers as in the early sixties, and the incarnation of them as an Edwardian military band—surrounded by life-sized cardboard cut-outs of their own idols and of significant personalities of culture and counterculture. That diverse crowd paradoxically reinforces the feeling of loneliness.

The album changed popular music by exploiting the most sophisticated technical resources offered by recording studios of the time (in fact, those recording tools became part of their composition process) and by exploring a wide range of music genres, including vaudeville, electronic, avant-garde, and classical Western and Indian music. In the 2017 television film *Sgt. Pepper's Musical Revolution* (Hanley) composer and musicologist Howard Goodall states that the Beatles, George Martin (the producer of the album), and their team of engineers turned the studio into an audio laboratory, a creative launch pad, and constructed the album sound by sound, layer by layer, track by track, instrument by instrument.

It was in "Eleanor Rigby," a song recorded and released in 1966, a year before *Sgt. Pepper's* was launched, that the Beatles dealt

more prominently with the topics of solitude and dementia. Paul McCartney contemplates the lonely people and rhetorically asks about their origin and allegiance before focusing on two of them, Eleanor Rigby and Father McKenzie, who seem to be at the declining phase of their failed existences. Eleanor Rigby is almost an invisible character who has removed herself from any interaction with others. She shows up at church after weddings have taken place to pick up the rice. She waits at her window, wearing a face that she keeps in a jar by the door, and lives in a dream. Father McKenzie has lost all of his parishioners, writes sermons that no one will hear and darns his socks in the night. Most likely, Eleanor Rigby and Father McKenzie might be experiencing some form of dementia, disassociation from their own existence, or despair brought on by age, economic disaffection and personal loss. Father McKenzie could be coming to terms with the fact that he is trained to do something, being a priest, that is losing its social status in secularizing communities.⁴ When Eleanor Rigby dies, Father McKenzie is in charge of the funeral, but nobody goes and she is buried along with her name. García Márquez expresses in his column on Lennon his admiration for the obstinate baroque cello bass and the poetic genius of this song, especially in the scene where Eleanor Rigby wears a face that she keeps in a jar just like if it were a pair of shoes or a scarf, an image that evokes an unreal and magical realist world, similar to the ones he created.

It is possible to establish some correspondences between the personalities, circumstances and stories of Eleanor Rigby and Father McKenzie and the final years in the lives of Rebeca Buendía and Fathers Nicanor Reyna and Antonio Isabel in *Cien años de soledad*. Rebeca Buendía is an orphan who, after being adopted, became the fourth child of the second generation of the Buendía family. She was the one who infected Macondo with insomnia. When she was young, she ferociously disputed Pietro Crespi's love with her sister Amaranta. Rebeca and Crespi were finally engaged but when the wedding was about to take place, José Arcadio, her eldest brother, returned home after having spent some years with the gypsies. They instantly fell in love and decided to live together. However, José Arcadio was later mysteriously shot to death inside their house and Rebeca, the main suspect, chose to live out her life in seclusion. By the time she was about to marry Crespi, Father Nicanor Reyna was brought into Macondo just for that wedding. Instead, he officiates the one between Rebeca and José Arcadio.

Just like what happens to Father McKenzie, many other catholic priests in García Márquez's stories are very disturbed by the absence of religious faith, despite their best efforts. Father Nicanor began to collect money to build not a church but a cathedral in Macondo. When his attempts to collect money failed, he decided to demonstrate the powers of God to persuade his parishioners to help. In the middle of one of his sermons he even performed a levitation trick: he drank a cup of hot chocolate and rose twelve centimeters off the ground. In spite of this and other tricks he played he was not able to build the cathedral. As years and wars went by, he

died of liver fever and was eventually replaced by Father Antonio Isabel. Given that practically nobody listened to his sermons, and with no levitation tricks in his repertoire, Father Antonio Isabel contended that he had personally met the devil three times. But besides their apathy for religion, people in Macondo ignored Father Antonio Isabel for another important reason: he was old, almost one hundred years old, and he was senile.

Themes of decay, decline, and obsolescence characterize not only its inhabitants but also the town of Macondo, which was itself slipping into oblivion. At one point (Chapter 17), the extreme heat of the Caribbean disoriented birds, causing them to destroy wire fences and crash into walls and windows in the town, before falling dead to the ground. Instead of rice, Rebeca picks up dead birds from the floor. Father Antonio Isabel, in one of his last public appearances, attributed the bird invasion to the presence of a Wandering Jew in Macondo. That was the last straw for him, and he was sent to a mental asylum. Shortly after, Rebeca was found dead and was buried, like Eleanor Rigby, along with her name. Again, just like Macondo, her life and her house were in a downward spiral, heading slowly but surely to a complete solitude.⁵

Remedios, la bella, in *Cien años de soledad* parallels two characters in *Sgt. Pepper's*: the runaway teenager in "She's Leaving Home" and, of course, Lucy, in "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." Remedios, la bella, is the most beautiful woman ever seen in Macondo. However, she is not aware of the fatal effect she has on men. She has some kind of death powers and men have already died of love for her. She stands apart from the outside world, especially when modern technology arrives to town, and basically wanders through a desert of loneliness. Until one day, while folding sheets outside, she is covered all over by an intense paleness and rises up to heaven, disappearing forever in a place where not even the highest-flying birds of memory could reach her (Chapter 12). Some people, especially newcomers, upon hearing her story, contend that everything must be a lie, that in reality she must have run away with a man, and that her family is simply trying to protect her honor in front of the town and Church. In fact, according to García Márquez, the story is drawn from a real incident: that of a woman in Aracataca. The woman had a granddaughter who ran away with a traveling salesman. Everyone knew it, but the woman couldn't accept that the girl had run off and described the event, apparently without guile, by saying simply that she was in the garden with the girl and witnessed her rise up, body and soul. The woman explained that she saw her being carried away by the wind, higher and higher, until her granddaughter was lost in the blue sky.

The Beatles' "She's Leaving Home" is also drawn from a real incident, as reported in a British newspaper: the story of a seventeen-year-old girl, Melanie Coe, who left home with a man—the "man from the motor trade" in the song.⁶ In his documentary, Goodall stresses the polyphony and the counterpoint as the main musical and narrative ingredients of "She's Leaving Home." The different viewpoints presented—the neutral observer, the runaway protagon-

ist and the distressed parents— assembled simultaneously, play along with the modal melody style chosen by Paul McCartney. All of these provide ghostly and magical realist elements to the song. Goodall holds that McCartney relied on the tradition of modal melody he was familiar with as a child to write this song. He points out the eighteenth-century Anglo Celtic folk song "The Lover's Farewell" as a lyrical and musical model for "She is Leaving Home."⁷ The fictional and real-life female characters associated with all of these runaways girls are looking to escape from confinements of loneliness and incomprehension. But only Remedios, la bella, seems to attain the highest and most implacable burden, or reward, of solitude.

The way people contemplate Remedios, la bella, whether on earth or as she rises up to the sky, is akin to the way the narrator in "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" contemplates Lucy. Lennon's singing depicts a narrator who, while on a solid surface (a boat on a river, a train in a station), is surrounded by psychedelic imagery: tangerine trees, marmalade skies, cellophane flowers of yellow and green, a fountain where rocking horse people eat marshmallow pies, newspaper taxis and plasticine porters with looking glass ties. As the song progresses, the narrator begins to see and feel an otherworldly presence emanating from the sky: Lucy, a girl with the sun in her eyes, a girl with kaleidoscope eyes. Goodall contends that this song evokes musically and lyrically a child's eye view of the world and therefore transmits a dreamlike atmosphere that is both disorienting and ethereal. Most of this atmosphere is achieved by means of the musical structure of the song. The clever use of modulation (the change from one tonality to another) alters the mood of the song and creates an impression of instability and unpredictability. This is equivalent to the wavering effect García Márquez achieves with the baffling story of Remedios, la bella, who is but one of several examples of bridges between real and magical jurisdictions in the novel. Remedios, after leaving home, seems to be alone and far above, most likely in the sky with diamonds. It might be that lonely beings are either pouring down from isolated and distant clouds or rising up to the sky. Or both.

Yellow Ships of the Imagination

The Beatles also share the notion of a yellow ship with García Márquez. On September 20, 1954, when he was only a celebrated 26-year-old journalist and aspiring novelist (his first novel, *La hojarasca*, was published a year later), a young García Márquez gave an interview to a Colombian radio station. In the interview, recorded as an episode of a show called "¿Cuál es su hobby?," García Márquez explained that his hobby was superstition (Camacho Ramírez, "García Márquez: Hobby es la superstición"). But, he clarified, not in the sense of avoiding walking under a ladder or fearing a black cat or a Friday the 13th, but rather in the sense of playing along with presages. He declared that he had hitherto played along with nightmares, plaid shirts and with the most beautiful of all presages: the yellow train. That yellow train, like any other useless object—he

explained—, had to be built mentally from all of the possible scraps one can find, on the condition that the making of the train begins with a forgotten can of yellow paint. The existence of the yellow train precedes that of the towns it will later pass through. Those towns are actually built following the path of the train. This guarantees that any passenger can easily get out right in front of his or her own house.

The yellow train is essentially a ship of the imagination sailing through a sea of lost stories. A more worldly incarnation of the yellow train would become the symbol of both modernity and infamy in *Cien años de soledad*. When the banana industry takes off in Macondo, the train pushes the progress as it is used to transport people, banana and other products to and from shipping ports. Tensions between the Banana workers and the management of the American United Fruit Company culminate in a series of strikes that were dissolved when the workers were massacred by the Colombian army. It is believed that, as part of the government's cover up, the bodies were transported by the yellow train to the coast and dumped in the sea at night. This was the beginning of the end for Macondo. Right after the massacre, the yellow train started to run with empty and waned wagons until it eventually stopped running for good.

There is a clear connection between that yellow train and another yellow ship of the imagination, the one that once sailed to the land of submarines. The Beatles' yellow submarine. "Yellow Submarine" was first a song, released as a double A-side single, coupled with "Eleanor Rigby," on August 1966. Although intended as a song for children, the lyrics initially seem to be a short account of a trip to a wonderful land of submarines by a man "who sailed to sea." Thus, the narration has essentially the same elements of any Chronicle of Indies. That man could easily be, for example, Sir Walter Raleigh. Or Antonio Pigafetta, the Florentine navigator who went with Magellan on the first voyage around the world. García Márquez explains in "La soledad de América Latina" that Pigafetta witnessed the most extraordinary things, like hogs with navels on their launches, or clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the back of their mates. And that he wrote a chronicle upon his passage through the southern lands of America where he included these types of accounts.

The itineraries of both the yellow train and the yellow submarine lead to the fictional places of Macondo and Pepperland, respectively. Pepperland is a fantastic paradise by the sea whose inhabitants love music. The 1968 *Yellow Submarine* animation film (Dunning, *Yellow Submarine*), created around the music of the Beatles, depicts this fantasy place under siege by the Blue Meanies, a nasty group of music-hating creatures. The Lord Mayor of Pepperland dispatches sailor Old Fred to Liverpool to recruit the help of the Beatles. Riding a yellow submarine, they manage to get to Pepperland, defeat the Blue Meanies, and restore order and harmony there. According to the plot, before getting to Pepperland, the yellow submarine traveled through seven different seas: Sea of green, Sea of monsters, Sea of holes, Sea of Science, Sea of Nothing, Foothills of the Headlands and Sea of time.

The journey of the characters Tobías and Mr. Herbert to the bottom of the sea in "El mar del tiempo perdido," another short story by García Márquez, originally written in 1961, is very similar, in principle, to the expedition of the Beatles to the land of submarines in the film. Besides both being rides through time—the Sea of Lost Time in the case of García Márquez—Tobías and Mr. Hebert also go through several seas. First, the Sea of Shipwrecks, then the Sea of Common Catastrophes, and lastly the Sea of the Dead: "Había tantos, que Tobías no creyó haber visto tanta gente en el mundo. Flotaban inmóviles, bocarriba, a diferentes niveles, y todos tenían la expresión de seres olvidados" (G. García Márquez 43). On their returning trip to the village, they can see a woman who, according to Mr. Herbert, is the most beautiful he has ever seen. She is floating sideways, eyes wide open, followed by a current of flowers. It is as if Lucy in the sky were reflected in the bottom of the sea. Or perhaps she is Julia, the ocean child with seashell eyes and hair of floating sky shimmering and glimmering in the sun.

A groundbreaking interrogation of reality characterizes the sensorial and adventurous aesthetic experiences of the music and visuals of the Beatles, as well as the magical narrative of García Márquez's stories. Both cultural sensations present a distorted, brighter and more colorful version of the real. The seas invoked by the Beatles and by García Márquez are precisely corridors, entities for which there is an intrinsic connectedness, a continuum, of time and space. This multidimensional feature, a literary version of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, is perhaps one of the common signature aspects of the creations of the Beatles and García Márquez.

One main consequence of what have been discussed here is that, through their dialogues, intersections and implicit collaborations with García Márquez, a new approach to Beatles Studies emerges. This approach reorients the group towards a clear engagement and dialogue with Latin America, rather than a mere one-sided influence on the region. Moreover, this shared culture of borrowing and interplay testifies to a more nuanced engagement between Europe and Latin America, one that is not purely informed by colonial dynamics, but rather, through a shared experimental culture during the 1960s.

Images, sounds, textures and stories, along with the polyphony and counterpoint of narrative planes, itinerant spectacles creatures and troubadours with accordions and looking-glass ties, collide to alter reality and consciousness and to present the magical in an ordinary way. Childhood stories and memories from distant lands bend the space-time and disturb the fabric of fiction-reality. The footsteps of lonely people walking down the streets of New York in 1980 or of Mexico City in 2014 resonate in the neighborhoods of Pepperland and Macondo. Because these towns, like Eldorado, constantly shift their places and forms to disconcert cartographers, for they can not only be located in real world maps, but also in the hearts and minds of far too many people. Now we all know how many years of solitude it takes to be a member of the Sgt. Pepper's lonely hearts club band.

NOTES

¹ A paper published in 2009 by BRAIN, A Journal of Neurology, "The Quicksand of Forgetfulness": Semantic Dementia in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, contends that the pattern of memory loss described in the novel is comparable to that exhibited by patients with semantic dementia (SD): "The cognitive impairments experienced by Macondo's inhabitants are remarkably similar to those observed in semantic dementia (SD). Semantic dementia is a clinical syndrome characterized by a breakdown of conceptual knowledge (semantic memory) in the context of relatively preserved day-to-day (episodic) memory." (Rascovsky, Growdon and Pardo)

² This is not different than what happened to the River Plate tango music. In this case another device of European origin, the bandonion, became the main instrument.

³ Three of the events that affected everybody at the time were the Cuban Revolution, the May 1968 students protests and the Vietnam war. These historical episodes not only tuned in with the rise of the Boom and of the Beatlemania, but also with the disaffected youth culture in Latin America and in the rest of the world. According to critic John King, the Cuban Revolution "...was held by most at the time in Latin America to be an exemplary nationalist and anti-imperialist movement that seemed to demand an intellectual and practical commitment and offered the utopian promise of uniting the artistic and political vanguards" (King 59). In his column on

Lennon, García Márquez writes about the sixties as "los años fragorosos de la guerra de Vietnam y la rebelión universitaria" (*Notas de prensa* 65).

⁴ The topic of dementia was revisited by Paul McCartney in 1989, when he collaborated with fellow musician and composer Elvis Costello in the writing and recording of the song "Veronica." Veronica is an old woman who is experiencing severe memory loss. She used to have a carefree mind of her own and a delicate look in her eye, but now she's not even sure if her name is Veronica.

⁵ The story of Rebeca, Father Antonio Isabel and the disoriented birds appears to be much more developed in "Un día después del sábado," a short story García Márquez wrote around 1954 that was included in his 1962 collection *Los funerales de la mamá grande*.

⁶ "A-Level Girl Dumps Car and Vanishes," was the headline in the February 27th, 1967, issue of London's *Daily Mail*.

⁷ In his 2013 book *The Story of the Music. From Babylon to the Beatles*, Goodall holds that *The Beatles* plundered music hall, centuries-old Anglo Celtic folk and the sounds of the 1960s electronic avant-garde, intuitively reaffirmed the supremacy of the Western system of key-families, and ventured eastwards into Indian music and instruments prefiguring the later boom in world music (Goodall 307-16).

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