

Gabriel García Márquez: An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

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Bought by the Harry Ransom Center for a reported \$2,000,000, the around 270,000 papers of Gabriel García Márquez's personal archive – collected in 79 document boxes, 15 oversize boxes, 3 oversize folders and 67 computer disks – provides a literally inexhaustible archive on his life and work. Manuscript Collection MS-5353 consists of manuscript drafts of published and unpublished works, research material, photograph albums, scrapbooks, correspondence, clippings, notebooks, screenplays, printed material, ephemera, electronic files, thousands of photos, even Gabo's school reports and his passports. It is organised into four series. Series I brings together materials associated with the Colombian writer's long works (1948–2008), short works (1952–2009) and Film and Theatre (1963–97), series II contains 443 photograph albums, 22 scrapbooks and 1,482 digital images, series III contains the correspondence, both incoming (1966–2013) and outgoing (1961–2008), while series IV contains García Márquez's address books, as well as clippings and publications containing articles about and interviews by and with the Nobel laureate, along with biographical information, family papers, and financial documents. An enormous amount of this material – totalling around 25,000 items – has now been digitized in a new project, 'Sharing Gabo with the World: Building the Gabriel García Márquez Online Archive from His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center', supported by a Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources, along with funds from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. These digitalized items are available on open access, quite a revolutionary move given that Gabo's works are still under copyright.

Those of us who were eagerly awaiting the appearance of an as-yet unpublished new novel by Gabo lurking among the papers have been disappointed. A leak which emerged early on — soon after the archive was purchased – suggested that there was a new novel entitled *Nos vemos en agosto* in the archive. But Box 37, Folders 5–6, proves that this was not a novel per se but rather a composite text made up of six short stories in which the short story 'La noche del eclipse', which is, indeed, included in Box 37, was destined to be the third. As the note preceding 'La noche del eclipse' – which is also included in French translation – clearly states: 'Este cuento es el tercero de seis, en los que Gabriel García Márquez está trabajando desde hace varios años durante las pausas de sus memorias. Cada uno de ellos podrá leerse en cualquier orden como un relato independiente. Los seis se publicarán junto en un solo volumen cuando estén terminados, y podrán leerse en orden desde el principio hasta el fin, con la continuidad dramática de una novela, y con su título general: *En agosto nos vemos*'. The other texts that are included in the same folder, however, are not – as one might have expected – some of the other literary texts that GGM was putting together for the composite *En agosto nos vemos*; instead they are either letters or short commissioned journalistic pieces. It is likely, therefore, that *En agosto nos vemos* was only one-sixth written when Gabo passed away, and it is unlikely

that the other five short stories were completed, or, indeed, even started.

There was one other disappointment in the archive, waiting for me at least. I met Gabo in Cuba at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in December 2007 and I asked him about the second volume of his autobiography, having enjoyed immensely his *Vivir para contarla* (2002). He told me that he was working diligently on the sequel. Unfortunately, all we have in the archive is a file entitled ‘Vivir para contarla: volume II (inconcluso)’. It contains an admittedly beautifully written account by Gabo of his meeting with Pope John Paul II in the Vatican in January 1979 – Gabo wanted to bend the Pope’s ear with discussion of the scandal of Argentina’s ‘desaparecidos’ – but the document is a mere seven pages long. The rest of the file consists of a hand-written document listing the 15 children sired by GGM’s father, Gabriel Eligio García – of which four were illegitimate – as well as a rather dreary third-person résumé of the main events of Gabo’s life.

But these disappointments are completely dwarfed when juxtaposed by the extraordinary richness of this archive. García Márquez – we now know – was a highly meticulous collector of information, especially in the later period of his life, about his own work. He not only kept and filed away all the reviews of his novels, for example, that came his way, he also kept a copy of all the correspondence relating to his works as well as the various galleys and proofs produced during publication. In some cases there were up to ten successive proofs of his novels, and Gabo personally annotated all of them ‘de su puño y letra’. And instead of destroying these multiple palimpsestic versions once they had served their purpose, he kept them – all of them! This allows us the chance to peek over Gabo’s shoulder as he gradually honed his texts, added new words, crossed out adjectives, even sentences and paragraphs. Admittedly some of the typescripts are busier than others – the proofs of *Cien años de soledad* are not as busy as, say, the typescript of *Del amor y otros demonios* – but there are, nevertheless, lots of surprises in here. In the various files available on *El general en su laberinto*, for example, we now have access to the research notes García Márquez wrote up, showing which historical works he consulted as well as which particular ideas and details he drew upon in these texts in his splendid re-creation of Simón Bolívar. We even have little schematic drawings of the rooms in which Bolívar lived – clearly García Márquez was visualizing his hero’s action as a dramatist would.

The file on *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is particularly fascinating. It shows that Santiago Nasar was not the original name of the main character in this 1981 novel. He was always called Santiago but his original surname – though difficult to read, it looks like Aragonés – was scored out in the first few pages of the typescript and replaced by Nasar. The typescript also shows that the famous first sentence of the novel did not come to Gabo ‘de un solo golpe’; Gabo added the detail ‘a las 5.30 de la mañana’ by hand, and in the original version we can just about make out ‘madrugada’ rather than ‘mañana’. We see the point in the text when Gabo took Fidel Castro’s advice and included more technical information about the rifles Santiago Nasar possessed. Even more significant, the original typescript begins with an epilogue which provides a step-by-step account of how García Márquez came to the story of Cayetano Gentile’s death, how he subsequently interviewed all of the participants – the brothers, Angela Vicario, the priest – and shows which details he decided to include and which to exclude. As one of his friends told Gabo, ‘a esta historia le falta una pata’, and we hear about how the story finally obtained its ‘tail’. This epilogue has never been included in any edition of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* published to date, and yet it is extraordinarily insightful. Perhaps it should be transcribed one day and included in a new expanded edition of the novel?

There are some other highlights of this archive that deserve a mention. The story of how Luis Alejandro Velasco filed a lawsuit against García Márquez, claiming that the copyright for the narrative of *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* belonged to him rather than to the Colombian writer, is well known in its broad outlines. It is a fascinating story in itself, and – a true coup for this archive – all of the papers of the lawsuit are here and provide as much legal detail as any researcher might want. Another extraordinary feature of this archive are the new photos of Gabo in his everyday life that are revealed in this archive for the first time. There is a truly beautiful one of Gabo with Mercedes taken in December 1987. This archive is a truly remarkable achievement for future scholarship and research on Latin American culture and literature, and it is sure to revolutionize the field of García Márquez studies.

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