

GABO IN HIS PICTURES: THE ARCHETYPE OF THE NETWORKED INDIVIDUAL

Authors: *Juan Luis Suárez* | These portraits tell a life story, and chart a network that helps explain a man and his time.
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SUMMARY

The García Márquez Archive at the Ransom Center preserves “more than 40 photograph albums documenting all aspects of his life over nearly nine decades”¹. The digital visitor can view some of the photos ([1930-2011](#)) and browse available parts of the collection by different categories: photographers (Peter Badge and Helmut Newton, although most of them remain unidentified and belong to the realm of family and friends); format and date (the majority are undated); and subject (who is in the picture). The metadata of the 216 photographs made digitally accessible include information about people, spaces, actions, and cities. In many cases, we are faced with a silent image of Gabo (no date, no place, no names) daring us to interpret chapters of his life².

COMPOSITION ►

Ransom’s Center Archive shows Gabriel García Márquez photographed with more than 100 personalities from all over the world



Figure 1. Composition of Gabo with different personalities³ [<https://gettyimages.ca>]. All the credits of the images appear on the last page.

1 Henry Ransom Center.

2 Although Ransom Center’s collection is browsable through various categories, most of the photographs do not have this information available.

3 Due to copyright restrictions we selected photographs from Getty Images resembling those at the Ransom Center from Gabo’s archive.

The act of interpreting a person's life remains an Olympic sport, a test that questions our ability to stay focused, and avoid false cues and distractions that images tend to project on the untrained mind. In Gabo's case, we need to make an extra effort to resolve the tension created by the strong, decisive, and tranquil face that we encounter in each photograph, and the places, dates and accompanying figures that pull us away from the writer. Only then we realize that Gabo's photographic archive is just another exhibit of the archetypical networked individual that he became.

GABO'S NETWORK ►

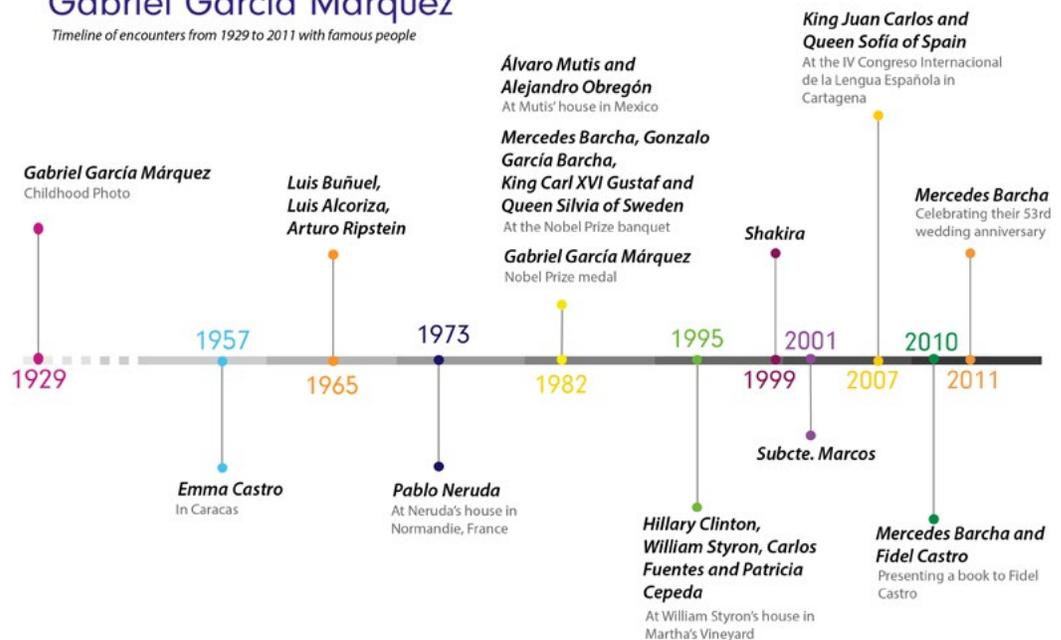
As an archetype of the "networked man", Gabo established strong ties with people of diverse backgrounds.

Being an archetype is the opposite of being an ideal. As Ortega y Gasset wrote in his 1927 essay *Mirabeau or the politician*, the ideal requires a utopian approach that does not exist anywhere in reality. An archetype is conditioned by life circumstances. However, it is the anchoring of the archetype in his circumstances that allows us to understand the exemplarity that Gabo's life encompasses, and the true dimensions of his life's project.

In these photos, García Márquez writes, reflects, and reads. He seems deep in thought, in the privacy of his home with his beloved wife, Mercedes Barcha. In many open and closed spaces, circumstances and encounters expose the inner and the public self. It is this combination of the inner self (the intellectual, the creator, the partner, the friend) and the public man (the one receiving awards, recognition by people, and addressing a crowd) that is most fascinating about Gabo.

Gabriel García Márquez

Timeline of encounters from 1929 to 2011 with famous people



TIMELINE ►

The photographic collection shows us Gabo's wide range of personas both public and private.

Figure 2. Featured moments (the metadata and titles used for this timeline were consulted in the Ransom Archive).

The many dimensions of Gabriel García Márquez emerge from the relationships he had with people such as Castro, Buñuel, Clinton, Salinas, and Cortázar. Whether alone, with his life partner, diplomats, entrepreneurs, writers, filmmakers, painters, politicians, presidents, or friends, Gabo was a charismatic man that embodied many personas. But, above all, he was the archetype of the networked individual. Influence, power, intelligence,

sociability, and creation: all these qualities offer a portrait that can only be understood through his remarkable network.

GABO'S CONNECTIONS ▶

Gabo was connected to personalities with noteworthy professions, especially to other writers and politicians

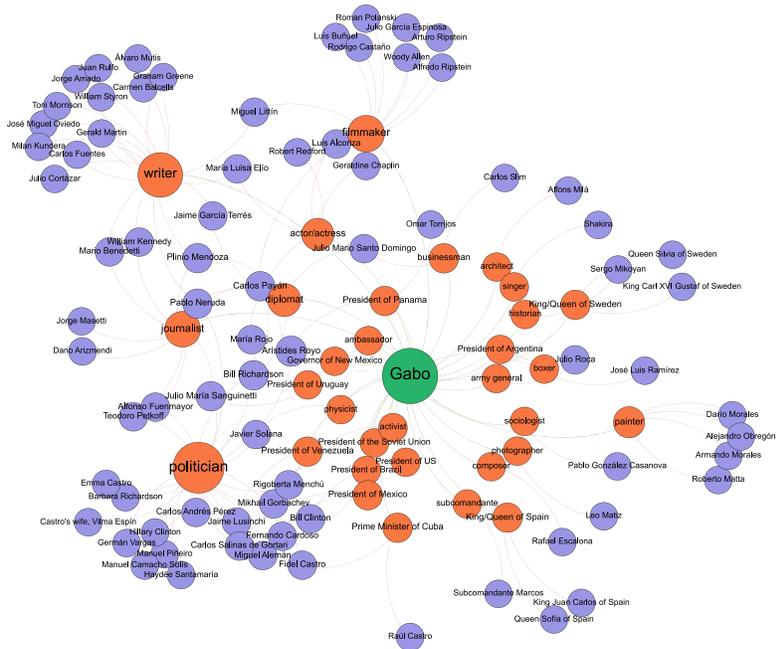


Figure 3. Gabo's connections to personalities through their professions.

* IMAGES' CREDITS:

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METHODOLOGY

First, we applied Natural Language Processing to extract the date, people, actions, and locations from the metadata associated with the Ransom Center's photo collection of Gabriel García Márquez. Then, we searched for people's information on Wikipedia, and created a Cultural Network of personalities connected to García Márquez through their professions.

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