Chapter 2

García Márquez as Mythographer

If none of the available mythologies proves satisfactory, you can always invent your own.


Between 1947 and 1954 García Márquez published approximately a dozen short stories in the Bogota daily Espectador. These early stories, given enigmatic titles include “The Third Resignation,” “Eve is Inside her Cat,” “Tubal Cain Forges a Star,” “The Other Rib of Death,” “Dialogue in a Mirror” “Bitter Sorrow for Three Sleepwalkers,” “Blue-dog Eyes,” “Nabo,” “Someone has disturbed the Roses” and “The Night of the Curlews.”

The recurrent theme in all these stories is death. These early short stories reveal the immaturity of the author. In some of them, the events of life are narrated from within death; in some death is viewed from within life; sometimes there are recurring deaths within death. Most of the stories are located in a timeless and spaceless abstract reality. A psychological fictional reality is projected. Bizarre sensations, extraordinary emotions and impossible thoughts dwarf the actions, which are few. The thoughts and feelings of the characters are always projected and never their actions. An atmosphere of nightmare and neurosis pervades this world where dreams and self-duplications are the important themes. One can discern the influence of Franz Kafka, William Faulkner and the surrealists.
The famous novelist Mario Vargas Llosa analyses most of these pieces in his book, *García Márquez: History of a Deicide* referring to them as his Columbian colleague’s morbid prehistory. Vargas Llosa comments:

Cold and humourless—the first of them written under the devastating influence of Kafka, and the last under the influence (no less devastating) of Faulkner—they reveal a world of extreme sophistication of mannerisms of literary tics (“Morbid . . .” 451).

Mark Marcello Frosch challenges Vargas Llosa’s thesis that fantasy dominates post-solitude short stories and asserts that rather reality is incorporated into fantasy making wonders a part of everyday life. Thus, an angel with wings becomes an ordinary being, a drowned man becomes a member of the community, and the ghost ship in “The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship” is ultimately transformed into a real vessel that comes crashing ashore.

The stories which appeared in *Leaf Storm and Other Stories* (1955) include “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World,” “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” “The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship,” “Blacaman the Good,” “Vendor of Miracles,” “Monologue of Isabel Watching it Rain in Macondo,” and “Nabo.” These stories reveal García Márquez’s emerging style as a writer. A close reading of the stories in this volume provides an overview of his emerging style and shows the broad vision of the mythical world behind all his narratives.

García Márquez’s evolution into a mythmaker began with the stories in this collection. He constructs the story of “Monologue of Isabel Watching it
Rain in Macondo" around an image: the tropical rain which begins one Sunday and ends the next Thursday. On the first day they feel a bit dulled by the rain, on the second day they lose their sense of time, and towards the end they can barely think or move. The rainfall in "Monologue . . . " though disastrous, is not placed in the mythical context; it remains on a psychological level. "This powerful image of Macondo anticipates the sweep of One Hundred Years itself in that, over a span of time, it changes and destroys the lives of the townspeople," opines Palencia-Roth (Myth and the Modern Novel 36).

It is with "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" a fable about a dead man, written in subtle prose that sometimes turns comical and exuberant that García Márquez celebrates the myth-making process. In this story, told simply, lies the seed of the myth making process that García Márquez was to develop in One Hundred Years and The Autumn. "The myth-making process employed here can be very well termed Euhemerism," says V. S. Pritchett ("A Ruined Arcady: Leaf Storm and Other Stories" 200). Somewhere on the seashore, children are found playing with the body of a drowned man, burying it, digging it up again, and then burying it. Fishermen take the corpse to the village, and while the men go off to enquire about missing people, the women are left to prepare the body for burial. They scrape off the crest of little shells, stones, weed, coral and mess in which the body is wrapped and then they see the man within. The story is narrated in mythical style using hyperbole:

They noticed that he bore his death with pride for he did not have the lonely look of other drowned men who came out of the sea or that haggard needy look of men who drowned in rivers . . . he was
the tallest, strongest, most virile and best built man they had ever seen. They thought that if that magnificent man had lived in the village, his house would have had the widest doors, the highest ceiling, the strongest floor, his bedstead would have been made from a midship frame held together by iron bolts and his wife would have been the happiest woman. They thought that he would have so much authority that he could have drawn fish out of the sea simply by calling their names. (Leaf Storm . . .100).

A clear and marked shift can be observed in García Márquez’s approach to literature from No One Writes to the Colonel (1958) and Big Mama’s Funeral (1962). He now shifts his focus from fantasy, which marked his earlier fiction to myth and Latin American reality. Rather than pursue a literary path nurtured by his European literary education, García Márquez decided he would follow his own instincts and abandoning his politically committed writing, he turned to the stories that his grandmother had told him. He says:

My grandmother’s stories probably gave me the first clues. The myths, legends, and beliefs of the people in her town were in a very natural way, all part of her everyday life. With her in mind, I suddenly realised that I wasn’t anything at all but simply capturing and recounting a world of omens, premonitions, cures and superstitions that is authentically ours, truly Latin American (Interview. Fragrance 59).
“Big Mama’s Funeral” written in 1959 and first published in 1962 is almost a textbook illustration of some of the techniques of mythification in García Márquez’s work. It is a transitional work between the early short stories and his mature fiction. “Big Mama’s” realm is both mythical and magical. “Big Mama . . .” anticipates One Hundred Years of Solitude in its creation of myths and its use of hyperbolic humour. In the opinion of Robert L. Sims: “this story represents freedom and discovery: freedom to create the myth of Macondo and discovery of the techniques to achieve it” (“The Creation of Myth . . .” 22). Big Mama in her role as protagonist likewise anticipates the despot of The Autumn of the Patriarch, whose gross exaggerations nearly destroy his unnamed Caribbean nation. As Harley D. Oberhelman points out: “Both novels [One Hundred Years of Solitude and The Autumn of the Patriarch] offer a meditation on the solitude of absolute power, an idea suggested by Big Mama herself. Magical realism, so prominently seen in this short story, informs both of the novels that follow it” (35). It is here that García Márquez experiments with the mixture of precise and imprecise details, which he developed to perfection in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Palencia-Roth observes:

The precision with which the duration of her reign is given (92 years) pushes the reader toward ‘historical accuracy;’ but by its very improbability, the same detail forces the reader to confront a reality larger and more extraordinary than his own . . . The tension which exists between truth and exaggeration also exists between history and myth (Myth and the Modern Novel 40).
García Márquez also employed the technique of exaggeration and abstraction in “Big Mama . . .” Big Mama and Macondo virtually became synonymous in the story: she seems to own everything in Macondo, including such objects as telegraph poles and such natural phenomena as the heat, the rainfall, and even life itself. It was a technique that García Márquez was to develop in One Hundred Years and in The Autumn. In The Autumn we find the patriarch endowed with the same kind of omnipower. Robert Coover observes:

Comic hyperbole and mock mythologising of Big Mama’s Funeral contrast sharply with the objective sobriety of much of the author’s previous fiction, suggesting that he may have felt himself trapped in some kind of cul-de-sac and needed to return to his roots in Macondo (375).

García Márquez’s next collection of short stories titled The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother (1972) comprises a novella and five short stories. Eréndira once inadvertently set her house on fire, when she forgot to put out a candle before going to bed. Her cruel grand mother makes her pay the price of the house by parading her as a prostitute. Eréndira is made to work day and night. Finally Eréndira compels her lover Ulises to kill her grand mother. Many critics have commented on this story, drawing attention to its mythic undertone.

Jasbir Jain posits that the underlying structure of “Innocent Eréndira . . .” suggests a fairy tale. But in one important aspect it reverses the structure of a fairy tale: it does not have an optimistic end. Jasbir Jain holds that the reversal
of the fairy tale is brought about not only by the ending but by the subversive element which is present in the narrative and functions at three different levels: (a) the nature of fantasy (b) the intrusion of realism and the portrayal of character and (c) the mythical dimension of the story.

Viewed from Ulises's point of view, the study becomes one about his initiation into adult life, as he goes through the different trials on his way to discovering his own self. The 'bath' in mythology is a ritual which signifies 'a new awareness.' Thrice the ritual is described in "Innocent Eréndira . . ." and twice it happens to be the grandmother who is bathed. Other purifying elements in the story are the wind and fire.

Thus the mythical dimensions lead to the interpretation of the tale at many levels: of the struggle between the conscious and the unconscious, between the individual and the ego, of the growing up of individuals from adolescence to maturity, of the animal in us which betrays us, of the self's need to come to terms with reality. These interpretations, Jasbir Jain argues, subvert the fairy tale ending.

Harley, D. Oberhelman shows that Ulises in "Innocent Eréndira . . ." has a twin reference to Ulises of Homer's epic and to Theseus, the slayer of Minotaur. He says that in "Innocent Eréndira . . ." the paradigm of colonialism and exploitation produces a myth with both classical prototypes and modern archetypes. Eréndira in the text of the story is called at one point 'Aridnera,' the private name Ulises invented in the myth of the Minotaur as the damsel who fell in love with Theseus, the slayer of the monster. If Ulises is identified
with Theseus, then the monster he slays represents the heartless grandmother.

Oberhelman says:

Ulises is closely related in name and physical characteristics to the Homer epic, but he never reaches the heroic stature of his name sake or that of Theseus. While he finally rescues Eréndira (Ariadne) by killing the grandmother (Minotaur), it is he who is abandoned in the end when Eréndira keeps on running into the sunset (50).

James, J. Alstrum analyses “Innocent Eréndira . . .” about a young girl’s revenge after years of exploitation by her grandmother as a subversion of the heroic myth. He bases his discussion on archetypes and Northrop Frye’s system of irony and satire. Antonio Rojo Benitez and Hilda O Benitez treat “Innocent Eréndira . . .” in more detail, describing Eréndira as the anima of Ulises, her lover, and the latter’s ultimate defeat as his symbolic castration and return to Mother Ouroboros. Eréndira’s manipulation of Ulises and subsequent flight, moreover, represent not only her emergence from the unconscious state, but also her rebellion against the patriarchal order by which she has been victimised. This story is retold in other writings by García Márquez. Eréndira appears as a nameless victim in “The Sea of lost Time,” and the outline of the story’s action is recounted in a short episode in One Hundred Years (54).

García Márquez became famous among English readers after the publication in 1970 of Gregory Rabassa’s translation of Cien años de Soledad (One Hundred Years of Solitude), the family saga of the Buendía’s. García
Márquez had intended to title the novel La Casa (The House), but as he worked on it, the Buendian fate demanded a more thematic title. The novel so fascinated Vargas Llosa that he wrote a long critical study entitled Historia de un Deicidio (History of a Deicide), wherein he compares García Márquez’s style, his characters and the impact of his work to those of Faulkner and attributes the similarity to the common nature of the native regions of the two novelists. García Márquez grew up in a little town named Aracataca in the coastal region of Columbia, which wasn’t much different from Faulkner country.

Two principal schools of thought have grown up around One Hundred Years. One stresses the fictive, mythopoeic and alchemical dimensions of the book and has therefore tended to universalise its significance. For example, Michael Palencia-Roth’s and Robert L. Sims’ critical studies of the book. The other readings, usually by regional specialists, emphasise the condensed accuracy of its historical vision which the formal reading is likely to blur and sentimentalise. The scholar who undertakes a mythical reading of One Hundred Years should tread cautiously keeping in mind Gerald Martins warning: “No misreading has been more serious for Latin American literary history than the ‘myth reading’ of its most celebrated work, One Hundred Years of Solitude” (235).

The novel begins with an exodus. José Arcadio leads his community from Riohacha across the wilderness until they reach an (un)promised land: Macondo. Soon after settling in Macondo, the community is afflicted by a plague of insomnia. There is a deluge, which lasts exactly four years, eleven
months, and two days. Macondo is finally swept off the surface of the earth by an apocalyptic wind. Mary E. Davis traces the structure of a Sophoclean tragedy in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

There is a prognostication concerning the family, there are mythic characters, there is a matriarch of incredible vitality, a futile war, hubris, a moment of anagnorisis and a catastrophic end . . . . He uses repetitive images—the house, the river, the plague, the storm of yellow butterflies, the whirlwind.

The Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes wrote a study of García Márquez two years after the publication of *One Hundred Years* in which he emphasised the creation of a complete world in García Márquez's work, one in which certain characters "are continuously reborn, in order to assure the permanency of the cosmos with strange, ritual acts. Such mythification is not gratuitous: the characters defend themselves with their imagination against the chaos that surrounds them" (qtd. in Mary Davis 534).

Gregory Rabassa, the famous translator of *Cien años* into English has highlighted the epic quality of the novel commenting: "If viewed together, the chronicles of Macondo could stand as an epic. The epic of García Márquez is more Odyssey than Iliad, closer to the tale of 'lesser people, much in the manner of Ilanko Atikal's *Cilappattikaram*" ("A reader's Guide to García Márquez's Macondiad" 140).

The narrative of *One Hundred Years* has an Old Testament ring to it. There is an exodus, the discovery of an (un)promised land, a plague, a deluge, an
apocalypse—which is a reflection both of the cultural environment and the myth-making tendency of popular history. Palencia-Roth has observed:

From beginning to end, the general outline of Macondiad’s history is present in Evil Hour. In One Hundred Years of Solitude, García Márquez transforms this town’s individual history into a trend of universal history of mankind. The same basic world and history will be governed by mythical laws and by a more sweeping vision of reality (Myth and the Modern Novel 35).

García Márquez himself has identified the central theme of his work not as myth, or love, or politics, but solitude (Fragrance of Guava 53-54).

A close reading of One Hundred Years reveals a few mythic patterns that run through the novel. “A pattern is something which both genuine myths and mythographical motifs share,” says White (118). White has classified mythical novels into four categories. According to him the third category of mythical novels includes a novel set in the modern world, which contains a pattern of reference to mythology running through the work. Examples are James Joyce’s Ulysses, Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus, John Updike’s The Centaur, Alain Robbe-grillet’s Gommes and Bernard Malamud’s The Natural. The usual development of motifs in this type of fiction consists in the initial establishment of a highly ambiguous prefiguration; activating in its turn an extensive net of expectations about the course the plot is likely to take and thereafter the gradual offering of additional pieces of less ambiguous information until as White puts it: “the pattern emerges” (118).
“To become a myth a man must complete a pattern” according to the hero of Michael Aryton’s, *The Testament of Daedalus* (56). A pattern, a configuration of events or characteristics, which motifs and myths have in common, is called an archetype. However, the pattern to be considered in this and the next chapter are more related to the intrinsic study of literature than archetypes, which Maud Badkin and others have traced. As White avers:

Motif-patterns are more complex because they refer the reader not only to the archetypal pattern in the novel’s plot when it is actualised, but because they are presented in such a way as to generate in the reader patterns of hypotheses, conjectures and illusions concerning what is going to happen to the fictive characters. (118-19).

The mythical pattern that emerges from *One Hundred Years*, it will be my attempt to prove, are the themes of Exodus, Journey, Sisyphean cycle, the incest motif, Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, mythical grief, mythical imitation and the theme of scape-goat.

Cosmogonic myths recount the beginnings of things — the origin of the world, the creation of men and of a paradise. In *The Bible*, the first three chapters of the “Genesis” from creation to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden represent cosmogony. In *One Hundred Years*, cosmogony is scattered in the first two chapters. As the images of the second and third sentences seem to suggest, García Márquez seems to begin shortly after creation:

At that time Macondo was a village of twenty abode houses, built on the banks of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of
polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names and in order to indicate them, it was necessary to point (One Hundred Years 1).

Macondo is described in a style that is reminiscent of Eden in its simplicity. The world was idyllic, pristine and Arcadian. “Macondo was a village that was more orderly and hard-working than any known until then by its three hundred inhabitants. It was a truly happy village where no one was over thirty years of age and where no one had died” (One Hundred Years 9). It is a primordial world, remote, mysterious and mythical:

Then for more than ten days, they did not see the sea again. The ground became soft and damp, like volcanic ash, and the vegetation was thicker and thicker, and the cries of birds and uproars of the monkeys became more and more remote, and the world became eternally sad. The men on the expedition felt overwhelmed by their most ancient memories in that paradise of dampness and silence, going back to before original sin (One Hundred Years 11).

The story of Macondo reflects the general pattern of Latin American history. It reflects the evolution of Western civilisation and the progressive alienation of western man. The mythical account of its history depicts Macondo’s early years as a Golden Age and the town itself as an earthly paradise where man lived in happy innocence, in harmony with the world. ‘The Fall’ comes with its incorporation into the modern age. The mysterious gypsy Melquiades appears as a personification of the intellectual curiosity,
which impels man to pursue knowledge and progress. It is Melquiades’ tribe, which brings the first scientific advances to Macondo. The tribe is punished with extinction “for exceeding the limits of human knowledge. Moreover, Melquiades himself survives and like the Serpent in the Christian myth of the ‘Fall’, plays the role of tempter, inviting man to partake of the fruit of knowledge, and at one point Úrsula identifies “the odour of his experiments with the Devil” (One Hundred Years 7). Under his influence José Arcadio is seduced by the fascination of science and frivolously devotes himself to all kinds of experiments; his passionate pursuit of knowledge distances him more and more from reality and brings him to a state of madness, which leaves him completely alienated. Disoriented, in a world turned chaotic, he vents his rage by destroying the laboratory and the apparatus which have brought him to this sad plight and as James Higgins points out: “like Prometheus chained to his mountainside, lives out the rest of his days bound to a tree” (158). Higgins remarks that, “In a local version of the universal myth, which attributes man’s alienation, to his development of reason as tool for dominating the world, the expulsion from paradise is depicted as a punishment for the sin of acquiring forbidden knowledge” (157).

The journey or pilgrimage as means of expiation of sins and spiritual quest and salvation is a theme common to all religions. ‘The Exodus’ is the most famous journey in the Old Testament. The journey of the hero is a common theme in myth too. It is the main motif of The Odyssey, The Ramayana, The Aenid, and The Divine Comedy. Journey is a recurring motif in García Márquez’s oeuvre. We find it in One Hundred Years, Chronicle of a
Death Foretold, Love in the Time of Cholera and it is the main motif in The General in His Labyrinth.

In One Hundred Years, José Arcadio Buendia and his wife Úrsula were originally inhabitants of Riohacha. José Arcadio Buendia murdered Prudencio Aguilar for ridiculing his masculinity. Then Prudencio Aguilar's ghost began haunting José Arcadio Buendia and so he decided to leave the town and go in search of a new place. He took his wife along and his people accompanied him. Their journey is reminiscent of Moses' journey described in The Old Testament:

That was how they undertook the crossing of the mountains.

Several friends of José Arcadio Buendia, young men like him, excited by the adventure, dismantled their houses and packed up, along with their wives and children (One Hundred Years 23).

There was one major difference though, between the journey undertaken by Moses in the Old Testament and the one undertaken by José Arcadio Buendia. The latter was not led by signs from God. They head toward a land "no one had promised them." They did not lay out any definite itinerary. They simply tried to go in a direction opposite to the road to Riohacha so that they would not leave any trace or meet any people they knew. It was an absurd journey:

One morning, after almost two years of crossing, they became the first mortals to see the western slopes of the mountain range . . . . One night, after several months of lost wandering through the swamps, far away now from the last Indians they had met on their way, they
camped on the banks of a stony river whose waters were like a
torrent of frozen glass. . . José Arcadio Buendía dreamed that night
that right there a noisy city with houses having mirror walls rose up.
He asked what city it was and they answered him with a name that
he had never heard, that had no meaning at all, but that had a
supernatural echo in his dream: Macondo (One Hundred Years 24).

In García Márquez’s oeuvre, journey is undertaken or enforced to
escape from the pangs of love or to rid one from the entanglement of love; but
invariably it fails to quench the fire of love in the person who undertakes the
journey. In One Hundred Years, when both Amaranta and Rebeca fall
hopelessly in love with Pietro Crespi, Úrsula takes Amaranta on a journey of
forgetfulness, but Amaranta returns from the tedious journey more determined
than ever not to marry Pietro Crespi, but rather to prevent Rebeca from
marrying him. Later, Fernanda takes her daughter Renata Remedios (Meme)
on a journey to make her forget her love for Mauricio Babilonia. The tedious
journey ends in a convent where Meme spends the rest of her days but her love
for Mauricio Babilonia never abates.

In Love in the Time of Cholera, Lorenzo Daza takes his daughter
Fermina Daza on a hazardous journey across the wilds of America back to
Riohacha, his native village, in order to insulate her from the enticements of
Florentino Ariza. He takes his daughter away on the journey that would make
her forget. They stay there a year and a half, when Lorenzo Daza takes it for
granted that his daughter has forgotten Florentino Ariza, he decides to return
home. But Feramina Daza’s passion for Florentino Ariza remains as strong as
ever. Later, when Fermina Daza snubs him and marries Dr. Juvenal Urbino, Florentino Ariza goes on a “journey of forgetting” up the Magdelen river in the course of which he realises that “he had the fortitude to endure forgetting” (140).

Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza, however, make a final journey, that lasts “forever”. This time, though, they are in bliss as they have each other’s company as they make a boat trip up and down the Magdelen River.

One of the mythical tools that García Márquez employs in One Hundred Years is the myth of Sisyphus. It is not only in the narration, but also in the plot, character names and traits and events, this repetition is reiterated. In narrative technique, García Márquez repeats certain incidents throughout the novel like a refrain. One such incident is the mention of Aureliano Buendia going with his father to see ice for the first time. Another is his facing the firing squad. In fact, the very first sentence of the novel combines the two.

“Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice” (One Hundred Years 1). The structure of the novel as a whole and especially its first chapter is circular. Most of the actions of the characters too, are repetitive.

The names of the characters and their actions too constantly recur, suggesting Borgesian concepts of labyrinth and the mirror. Úrsula, the archetypal mother figure with common sense, comes to realise that everything is circular. It is she who realises that in the family genealogy that she has engendered, all the José Arcadios are contemplative, self-absorbed and
withdrawn in nature. The Aurelianos, by contrast are actively selfish and individualistic, seekers of power rather than knowledge.

Throughout the long history of the family, the insistent repetition of names has made Úrsula draw some conclusions that seemed to be certain. The Aurelianos are withdrawn, but with lucid minds, while the José Arcadios are impulsive and enterprising, but they are marked by a tragic sign. The only cases that are impossible to classify are those of José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. They are so much alike and so mischievous during childhood that not even Santa Sofía de la Piedad (their mother) can tell them apart.

The love of the Buendías does not develop and flourish. Instead it is without direction and purpose; in short, circular. García Márquez says that the Buendías are incapable of love: “The Buendías were incapable of loving and this was the key to their solitude and their frustration” (The Fragrance 75).

Colonel Buendia who craves power realises this fundamental drawback of his nature. He tries to substitute love with affairs with countless number of women, but he comes to the realisation that he cannot remove the emptiness in his heart. Colonel Aureliano Buendia realises the futility of the numerous military campaigns that he carries out. The emptiness and futility of his life is vindicated by his engaging in the futile and unprofitable occupation of converting gold into fish and then melting down the fish to gold to convert it into fish again. It is only his mother Úrsula, who understands that the cause of her son’s tragic and futile life is his incapacity to love.
Colonel Aureliano discovers an essential emptiness and solitude not just in war but also in sex. The myriad anonymous loves of his military campaign years raises a theme that is developed rather differently by García Márquez in *Love in the Time where*, the love life of Florentino Ariza is depicted, which leads in turn to the love life of the general in *The General in His Labyrinth*. Whereas Colonel Aureliano’s affairs were brief and anonymous encounters in the dark, both Florentino and the General have appreciative and personal affairs with a succession of highly individual and impressive women. Florentino Arti, on the other hand, loves Fermina Daza with a deep passion. Snubbed by her, he tries to substitute her love by embarking on a sexual adventure with countless women. But ironically, even after the lapse of half a century, and sexual encounters with numerous women, he realises that he cannot quench or substitute his love for Fermina Daza with anything else. Florentino’s undying love for Fermina means that all his other affairs are, just as much as the generals, subordinate to an ideal commitment.

General Simón Bolívar is so carried away by his political ambition that he loses his capacity for love, despite his numerous encounters with impressive and successful women. The General, like Colonel Aureliano Buendia is aware of his failing, and is highly sensitive of criticism on this count. José Palacios knew how sensitive the general was to such reproaches:

Nothing pained or bewildered him more than people casting doubts on his affections, and he was capable of parting oceans and moving mountains with the terrible power of his charm until he convinced them of their error.
During the plenitude of his glory, Delfina Guardiola, the belle of Agnostiela, became enraged by his inconstancy and slammed the doors of her house in his face. "You're a great man, General, greater than anyone," she told him. "But love is still too big for you." He climbed through the kitchen window and spent three days with her, and he almost lost a battle as well his life while he was persuading Delfina to trust in his heart. (The General in His Labyrinth 217).

As Michael Bell puts it, "In this regard, Florentino and the general, who sail into their respective eternities of fiction and myth on the Magdelana river, are opposite aspects of each other" (137-38).

The plot does not progress but moves in a circle; events and time too move in circles:

Without knowing it, he [José Arcadio Segundo] repeated an old phrase of Úrsula's.

"What did you expect?" he murmured.

"Time passes"

"That's how it goes." Úrsula said,

"but not so much."

When she said it she realised that she was giving the same reply that Colonel Aureliano Buendia had given in his death cell, and once again she shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing, as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle.
But even then she did not give resignation a chance (One Hundred Years 341).

The story of the Buendias reveals the limited nature of the individual’s control of his own destiny. Experience teaches Pilar Ternera that the history of the family was a mechanism of irreversible repetitions while Úrsula observes twice that “time wasn’t passing . . . but going round in a circle” (One Hundred Years 127, 341).

These insights are spurred off by the perception that the same character traits are passed on from generation to generation and that each new generation engages in activities which echo those of its predecessors. Thus, Aureliano Tristes’ sketch of the railroad is a direct descendent of the diagrams which José Arcadio Buendia illustrated in his scheme of solar warfare. When José Arcadio Segundo, following the precedent of other members of the family, shuts himself away to study Melquiades manuscript, his face reflects “the irreparable fate of his great grand-father” (One Hundred Years 319). Commenting on this character trait Higgins remarks:

Implied here is not merely that the human personality is largely shaped by hereditary and environment, but that individual life is subject to generic laws in that, since all men live out limited range of experiences, every human existence corresponds to an archetypal pattern. (156).

The character with the greatest sense of futility is the disillusioned colonel Aureliano. After undertaking thirty two armed uprisings, he comes to the conclusion that he has squandered twenty years of his life to no purpose
and withdraws to his workshop, where he devotes himself to making the same little golden ornaments over and over again. This routine represents a recognition of the vanity of all human enterprise: it is completely senseless, but for the colonel it is no more absurd than his previous activities and it is a means of filling in the time while he waits for death.

With her terrible practical sense, Ursula could not understand the colonel’s business as he exchanged little gold fishes for gold coins and then converted the coins into little fishes, and so on with the result that he had to work all the harder with the more he sold in order to satisfy an exasperating vicious circle. Actually, what interested him was not the business but the work:

He needed so much concentration to link scales, fit minute rubies into the eyes, laminate gills, and put on fins that there was not the smallest empty moment left for him to fill with the disillusionment of war . . . but the implacable concentration warded him with a peace of the spirit (One Hundred Years 204).

A few moments before he dies a circus parades down the street and in it he sees a tableau of his own story, “a showy, ridiculous spectacle that had given way to an emptiness as blank as the deserted street” (One Hundred Years 272-73).

Gerald Martin comments on the circular nature of the novel highlighting the futility of the life of the characters:

Ploughers of the sea, they are unable to make their lives purposive, achieve productiveness, break out of the vicious circle of fate . . . .

The characters all believe that their actions are purposive, but
whenever they follow their logical chain to its conclusion, they find that they have come in a circle. Yet, despite the historical immobility which lies at its heart, the narrative literally teems with actions (226-27).

Colonel Aureliano’s practice of making gold fishes is done by choice. He does so realising that work—even unproductive, repetitive work—gives meaning to existence. But the mere fact that Colonel Aureliano Buendia has the option of choosing not to work makes him different from Sisyphus. Sisyphus was cursed by the gods to roll a stone up hill, ad infinitum. He had no choice to opt out. Colonel Aureliano, therefore, bears more resemblance to the mythical character, Naranathu Bhrandan (the mad man of Naranathu) from Kerala.

Naranathu Bhrandan, like Sisyphus, used to roll a boulder up a mountain from where it would roll down again. But Bhrandan did it by choice and he used to celebrate the futility of his labour by clapping his hands and jumping about in glee. Naranathu Bhrandan, through his action, declared that all human labour was futile, but in spite of which one can make life a celebration (Sankunni 48).

Úrsula could not understand her son’s Sisyphean behaviour but colonel Aureliano’s sister Amaranta understood him perfectly. Of all the members of the Buendia family, Amaranta was the most prone to solitude. While her brothers, Colonel Aureliano and José Arcadio were notorious for their debauchery, she guarded her virginity and had a morbid fear of marriage. She
put off all the proposals that came her way – Pietro Crespi’s and Colonel Gerineldo Márquez’s—under some pretext or other.

When Pietro Crespi’s proposal was turned down by Amaranta, he committed suicide. Driven by guilt over his death, Amaranta burned and disfigured her hand in penance and wore a black bandage on the burned hand for the rest of her life. Amaranta seemed to carry the cross of ashes of virginity on her forehead. In reality she carried it on her hand in the black bandage, which she did not take off even to sleep and which she washed and ironed herself. Her life was spent in weaving her shroud: “It might have been said that she wove during the day and undid her work at night not with any hope of defeating solitude in that way, but quite the contrary, in order to nurture it” (One Hundred Years 264).

Like Penelope of Greek mythology, Amaranta had a hard task of putting off her suitors, but unlike her, Amaranta wove and unwove her shroud not to ward off her suitors but under the weird illusion that it would put off her death. She has been reliably informed that she will die when she finishes the weaving, and she wants to outlive her rival Rebeca, so she resists finishing.

Alan Kennedy draws attention to the similarity between Amaranta and Penelope:

This vicious circle reminds us of Penelope, but on this occasion we know that Amaranta has forever missed her Odyssey and she is not likely to experience any spiritual peace from her vicious circle. Her egoistic rivalry with Rebeca is what keeps her in solitude; she is not working for the sake of work itself, but in order to have a rebellious
triumph. So she is trying to rebel against time by undoing her work (65).

As she gets closer to the unavoidable end, Amaranta begins to realise that only a miracle would allow her to prolong the work past Rebeca’s death but the very concentration gives her the calmness that she needs to accept the idea of frustration: “It was then that she understood the vicious circle of Colonel Aureliano Buendia’s little gold fishes” (One Hundred Years 284-85).

Amaranta’s grandniece, Amranta Úrsula continued the family legacy. Her secret seemed to lie in the fact that she always found a way to keep busy resolving domestic problems that she herself had created and “doing a poor job on a thousand things which she would fix on the following day with a pernicious diligence that made one think of Fernanda and the hereditary vice of making something just to unmake it” (One Hundred Years 387).

The circularity and futility of their lives is best emphasised by the story of the capon which the people of Macondo narrated to pass the time when they were afflicted by the plague of insomnia:

Those who wanted to sleep not from fatigue but because of nostalgia for dreams, tried all kinds of methods of exhausting themselves. They would gather together to converse endlessly, to tell over and over for hours on end the same jokes, to contemplate to the limits of exasperation the story of the capon, which was an endless game in which the narrator asked if they wanted him to tell the story about the capon, and when they answered yes, the narrator would say that he had not asked them to say yes, but
whether... he had not asked them to say no... and so on in a vicious circle that lasted entire nights. (One Hundred Years 47).

By highlighting the circulatory nature of the life of the characters, the repetition of their names, meaningless repetition of actions and by suggesting parallels with the myth of Sisyphus and Naranathu Bhrandan, the novel draws attention to the futility of the actions of the characters and the meaninglessness of their life.

Another significant mythical pattern, which runs through the novel, is the theme of incest. The anthropologist George Murdock surveyed 250 primitive societies in 1949 and found the incest taboo in all of them. He is generally credited with establishing the universality of the sanctions against incest. The taboo against sexual relations within the nuclear family has been particularly strong and has been almost universally observed.

Though incest and incestuous marriages have occurred and have been sanctioned in history especially among royalty, the rarity with which they appear attest to the universality and effectiveness of the taboo. Its success has been such that, in fact, that its importance to man and to his evolution cannot be ignored; it is considered by many anthropologists to provide the very key to our humanity—to mark "the breakthrough from nature to culture" and to be "the basic concept on which all human societies are founded." Claude Levi-Strauss and George Murdock, are among the most recent and most forceful proponents of this theory.

In the eyes of the anthropologists, then, the purpose of the incest taboo is survival; it encourages the propagation of the species, the cohesion of the
society, the preservation of the family, and the integration of the individual. It is a view that is shared by García Márquez, who dramatises in his work the disintegration and destruction that follows in the wake of the ban's violation.

The theme of incest has been quite frequent in western literature. It appears in Homer and is suggested in Aeschylus but becomes a major theme first in Sophocle's play Oedipus Rex. In American literature the theme of incest finds expression in "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Alan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Alice Doane's Appeal," Herman Melville's Pierre: or the Ambiguities.

The theme of incest continues to thrive in the literature of the twentieth century. In most of them, incest is committed knowingly and deliberately by a couple fully aware of their blood relationship. This is the case in Somerset Maugham's "The Book Bag," in Iris Murdoch's A Severed Head, Robinson Jaffer's "Tamar," and "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," The Velvet Horn by Andrew Lyttle, and Thomas Mann's Holy Sinner and "The Blood of Walsungs." Also belonging to this category are the works of Gacia Márquez's 'Master' and greatest literary influence: William Faulkner.

The curse of incest is a legacy the Buendian family has to live with for generations. José Arcadio Buendia and Úrsula "were joined till death by a bond more solid than love: a common prick of conscience. They were cousins." Although their marriage was predicted from the time they had come into the world, when they express their desire to be married, their own relatives try to stop it. "They were afraid that those two healthy products of two races that had interbred over the centuries would suffer the shame of breeding
iguanas” (One Hundred Years 20). Úrsula’s morbid obsessional phobia was that incest would generate pigs. There had already been a precedent. An aunt of Úrsula’s married to an uncle of José Arcadio Bluendia had a son who had “a cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew and with a small tuft of hair on the tip. A pig’s tail. (One Hundred Years 20-21).

José Arcadio’s and Úrsula’s children continue the legacy of incest. The brothers José Arcadio and Aureliano both have children by the same woman—Pilar Ternera. Aureliano’s seventeen sons die heirless; but José Arcadio’s son José Arcadio called Arcadio sired a family that continues the legacy of incest.

José Arcadio reveals his incestuous predilection when he marries Rebeca, who though technically is not his sister, was adopted by his parents. In fact, Father Nicanor who officiated at their wedding made the indelicate statement that they were not sisters. Pilar Ternera, the stranger with a horse’s laugh, was a siren, who excited the lust of the male members of the Buendia family. She not only shares bed with the brothers, Aureliano and José Arcadio but becomes the mother of the children of both and even her own son comes seeking her company in bed.

The incestuous aunt-nephew relationship that began with Amaranta and her nephew Aureliano José is one that would continue down the line between Aureliano José’s daughter, Amaranta Úrsula and her nephew Aureliano. But while the relationship did not lead to consummation in the first case because of the habitual inhibition of Amaranta who would withdraw from a relationship before it was consummated; in the latter case, their relationship resulted in the
birth of a child with the predicted and much feared pig's tail. Aureliano José's infatuation for his aunt breaks the barriers of sibling and calf love:

Aureliano José awoke with the feeling that he could not breathe. He felt Amaranta's fingers searching across his stomach like warm and anxious little caterpillars... Although they seemed to ignore what both of them knew and what each one knew that the other knew, from that night on they were yoked together in an unviolable complicity (One Hundred Years 140).

Later, they not only slept together, naked, exchanging exhausting caresses, but "they would also chase each other into the corners of the house and shut themselves up in the bedroom at any hour of the day in a permanent state of unrelieved excitement" (One Hundred Years 147). Aureliano José then joins the army with the hope of forgetting Amaranta:

He had fled from her in an attempt to import her memory, not only through distance but by means of a muddled fury that his companions at arms took to be boldness, but the more the image wallowed in the dunghill of the war, the more the war resembled Amaranta. That was how he suffered in exile, looking for a way of killing her with his own death (One Hundred Years 153).

Two weeks later, he deserted the army to go in search of his aunt. "You are a brute," Amaranta would tell him as she was harried by his hounds. "You can't do that to a poor aunt unless you have a special dispensation from the pope." Aureliano José was so desperately in love that he promised to go across Europe on his knees to kiss the sandals of the Pontiff just so that she would
“lower her drawbridge.” “It’s not just that” Amaranta retorted. “Any children will be born with the tail of a pig” (One Hundred Years 153). Aureliano José continues with his infatuation until Amarata rejects him with an inflexible and unmistakable determination and she bars the door of her bedroom from him forever.

Another character to exhibit incestuous predilection is Aureliano Segunda. His incestuous love towards his daughter Meme is subdued and not understood even by his wife Fernanda:

At that time Aureliano Segundo postponed any appointments in order to be with Meme, to take her to the movies or the circus, and he spent the greater part of his idle time with her . . . . The discovery of his daughter restored his former joviality and the pleasure of being with her slowly leading him away from dissipation (One Hundred Years 277-78).

However, Aureliano’s mistress, Petra Cotes realises that the real threat to the love from her lover came not from his wife, but from his daughter: “Petra was tormented by an unknown fear, as if instinct were telling her that Meme, by just wanting it, could succeed in what Fernanda had been unable to do: deprive her of a love that by then she considered assured until death” (One Hundred Years 279).

Aureliano, the son of Mauricio Babilonia and Renata Remedios is the last Buendia to inherit and continue the family legacy of incest. He expresses his incestuous intentions to his aunt Amaranta Ursula who is married to Gaston. Despite all the valiant efforts to resist their instincts and nature,
Aureliano and Amaranta Ursula end up living as husband and wife. Finally, nemesis catches up with the Buendias. The cursed child with the tail of a pig is born to the incestuous couple. Amaranta dies soon after giving birth to the child of haemorrhage while the child “was a dry and bloated skin that all the ants in the world were dragging towards their holes along the stone path in the garden” (One Hundred Years 420).

By making the race of the Buendias vanish, García Márquez endorses the view of biological science and of mythology that incest results in the end of humanity. The mythical view propounded by Sophocles in Oedipus Rex that nemesis is the fruit of incest is vindicated in One Hundred Years.

Yet another recurring mythical pattern in One Hundred Years is Apollonian- Dionysian dichotomy. Friedrich Nietzsche has dealt extensively on the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy. Nietzsche first introduced the contrast of the Apollonian and the Dionysian in his first book, The Birth of Tragedy. According to Nietzsche, “the eternity of beautiful form” is the “deception of Apollo.” While Dionysus represents “sensuality and cruelty. Transitoriness could be represented as the enjoyment of productive and destructive force as continual creation.” According to Nietzsche, Dionysian means:

An urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, the everyday society, reality across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate—painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all
change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life, the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction. (The Will to Power 539).

The word "Apollonian" according to Nietzsche means:

The urge to perfect self-sufficiency, to the typical ‘individual’ to all that simplifies, distinguishes, makes strong, clear, unambiguous, typical: freedom under the law . . . The further development of art is as necessarily tied to the antagonism between these two natural artistic powers as the further development of man is to that between the sexes (The Will to Power 539).

Nietzsche’s Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy can be applied to classify the characters of One Hundred Years. Nietzsche suggests the division between the sexes and García Márquez endorses this view that the sexes are divided by the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy. Thus the male characters of García Márquez exhibit Dionysian traits and the female characters exhibit Apollonian traits. García Márquez has stated:

I have found that it does in fact correspond to my view of the historical role of the sexes: namely, that women uphold the social order with an iron-hand while men travel the world bent on boundless folly which pushes history forward. I’ve come to the conclusion that women lack any sense of history. Otherwise they
This dichotomy is most pronounced in José Arcadio and his wife Úrsula. José Arcadio is a typical Dionysian who exhibits Dionysian madness, superhuman strength, and a frenzied joy of life. Apollonian traits are exhibited by all the female characters except perhaps Úrsula Amaranta. “The presence of mythological motifs adds a touch of fatalism to the plot,” says White (150). The name José Arcadio stamps his Dionysian character once for all. The Dionysian frenzy and superhuman strength of the first José Arcadio is elaborated in One Hundred Years:

Then he grabbed the bar from a door and with the savage violence of his uncommon strength he smashed to dust the equipment in the alchemy laboratory, the daguerreotype room, the silver workshop, shouting like a man possessed in some high sounding and fluent but completely incomprehensible language. He was about to finish off the rest of the house when Aureliano asked the neighbours for help. Ten men were needed to get him down, fourteen to tie him up, twenty to drag him to the chestnut tree in the courtyard, where they left him tied up, barking in the strange language and giving off a green froth at the mouth (81).

José Arcadio Buendía’s eldest son José Arcadio inherits the Dionysian trait of superhuman strength, abundant energy and madness from his father.

His monumental size provoked a panic of curiosity among the women. He called for music and cane liquor for everyone, to put on
his bill. He would Indian wrestle with five men at the same time. "It can't be done," they said, convinced that they would not be able to move his arm. "He has ninos-en-cruz." Catarino, who did not believe in magical tricks of strength, bet him twelve pesos that he could not move the counter. José Arcadio pulled it out of its place, lifted it over his head, and put it in the street. It took twelve men to put it back. (One Hundred Years 93).

Added to this he had the additional Dionysian characteristics of debauchery, lechery, irresponsibility and impulsiveness: "In the heat of the party he exhibited his unusual masculinity on the bar, completely covered with tattoos of words in several languages intertwined in blue and red (One Hundred Years 93).

It was this Dionysian trait again which drove the last José Arcadio, the son of Aurieliano Segundo and Fernando del Carpio to a frenzy when he saw the debauchery of his friends:

Inflamed, not so much because of the damage as because of the disgust and pity that he felt for himself in the emptiness of the saturnalia, he armed himself with an ecclesiastical cat-o-'nine tails that he kept in the bottom of his trunk along with a hair shirt and other instruments of mortification and penance, and drove the children out of the house, howling like a madman, and whipping them without mercy as a person would not even have done to a pack of coyotes (One Hundred Years 378).
All the José Arcadios like Dionysius are also marked by virulent sexual energy, super-human strength, tempestuousness of nature and they are all extroverts. Aureliano Segundo is the only Aureliano who behaves like a José Arcadio. But then he was so identical to his twin José Arcadio and the two used to swap their identities and names so often that it was difficult to tell one from the other. García Márquez says that the identity crisis of José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo arose “probably because being identical twins, they got them mixed up at birth.” (The Fragrance 76).

Aureliano Segundo is a character who has his temper and Dionysian trait well under control. But when he becomes irritated by his wife Fernanda’s tirade which went on and on and on like the rain, Aureliano Segundo’s frenzy is aroused though subdued:

Then Aureliano Segundo lost control. He stood up, unhurriedly, as if he only intended to stretch, and with a perfectly regulated and methodical fury he grabbed the pots with the begonias one after the other . . . he smashed them to the floor . . . Systematically, serenely . . ., he then set about smashing the Bohemian crystal ware against the walls, the hand-painted vases, the pictures of maidens in the flower-laden boats, the mirrors in their gilded flames, everything that was breakable, from parlour to pantry, and he finished with the large earthen jar in the kitchen, which exploded in the middle of the courtyard with a hollow boom (One Hundred Years 332-33).
Making use of the Dionysian-Apollonian dichotomy developed by Nietzsche, García Márquez has succeeded in drawing the contrast between the male and female characters of *One Hundred Years*. He explores the possibilities thrown open by the mythical pattern with that of the Greek and Roman gods of whom they are the prototypes.

García Márquez describes grief in mythical terms or in epic style. The heart broken characters of García Márquez express their love and sorrow in Petrarchean or Homeric terms. The "sisters" Amaranta and Rebeca fall desperately in love with their music teacher Pietro Crespi and both of them use all the tricks available, to win his heart. Finally, when Rebeca marries her "brother" Jose Arcadio, Pietro Crespi decides to accept Amaranta. But Amaranta, who, despite the bold facade that she puts up, is a coward at heart and withdraws from the relationship when their marriage is about to be fixed. Pietro crespi is inconsolable and his grief is described in epic, hyperbolic terms:

Pietro Crespi lost control of himself. He wept shamelessly, almost breaking his fingers with desperation, but he could not break her down . . . Pietro Crespi exhausted all manners of plans. He went through incredible extremes of humiliation. He wept one whole afternoon in Úrsula’s lap and she would have sold her soul in order to comfort him. On rainy nights he could be seen prowling about the house with an umbrella, waiting for a light in Amaranta’s room . . . He neglected his business. He would spend the day in the rear of the store writing wild notes which he would send to Amaranta
with flower petals and dried butterflies and she would return unopened (One Hundred Years 112-13).

In Love in the Time of Cholera, When Florentino Ariza learned that his beloved Fermina Daza was going to marry a physician with family and fortune, “there was no power on earth that could raise him from his prostration” (137). Florentino’s mother, Transito Ariza, did all she could and more, using all the stratagems of a sweetheart to console him when “she realised that he had lost his speech and his appetite and was spending nights on end in constant weeping.” (137).

García Márquez creates characters who have mythical reverberations. His mythographical genius is revealed not in the creation of new characters but in the invention of characters with echoes and reverberations of mythical characters. Thus Rebeca in One Hundred Years suggests the classical Greek mythological character Echo. In Greek mythology, Echo was cursed by Hera, and unable to declare her love for Narcissus, retreated to a cave, where she pined away until only her voice was left. Similarly, when her husband José Arcadio was killed, Rebeca lives in a secluded house forgotten by everyone except Amaranta who bore a grudge against her. She is discovered by Aureliano Triste. The description of Rebeca, by the novelist, invokes the image of a spider, as if she were the prototype of Echo of Greek mythology:

Aureliano Triste stood on the threshold waiting for the dust to clear and then he saw in the center (sic) of the room the squalid woman, still dressed in clothing of the past century, with a few yellow threads on her bald head, and with two large eyes, still beautiful,
which the last stars of hope had gone out, and the skin of her face was wrinkled by the aridity of solitude. (One Hundred Years 223-24),

When Úrsula became totally blind, she was blessed with an insight, denied to those with sight, by which she was able to get to the bottom of things. Making use of her four other senses, she not only hid the fact of her blindness from others in the house, but from herself. It was in her senile blindness that she realised her son colonel Aureliano Buendia had not lost his love for the family because he had been hardened by the war, as she had thought before, but 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 sons. “She reached the conclusion that the son for whom she would have given her life was simply a man incapable of love” (One Hundred Years 254).

Blessed with an insight into people and events, Úrsula like Tiersias in her blind old age, makes the right evaluation of Amaranta. Úrsula realises that despite the cruel and bitter façade that she put up, Amaranta, was a woman with the most tender heart: “Amaranta, however, whose hardness of heart frightened her, whose concentrated bitterness made her bitter, suddenly became clear to her in the final analysis as the “most tender woman who had ever existed” (One Hundred Years 254). It is again in her blind old age, that Úrsula comes to understand why Amaranta had frustrated and repelled the love showered on her by both Pietro Crespi and Gerineldo Márquez: “Not out of
bitterness but that both actions had been a mortal struggle between a measureless love and an invincible cowardice” (One Hundred Years 255).

García Márquez started making use of mythical devices in his fiction from Leaf Storm and Other Stories. But it is in One Hundred Years that he has exploited the possibilities of mythical patterns in developing the plot as well as the characters. García Márquez has never made use of myth overtly in his fiction. The mythical pattern and design always lies hidden and beneath the surface. By incorporating the biblical style and Homeric similes he has achieved a mythical style.