CHAPTER IV

The Labyrinths of Power

Power as a subject has always fascinated the twentieth century novelist. It may be the power exercised by a system, a party, the bureaucracy or the power of dictators. Latin America, in particular has been a land of dictators and almost all writers moved by a kind of faith in the socialist realism have written on this subject. In Latin America, political reality often becomes central to life and overshadows most other things. Portraits of dictators often form a major part of Latin American literature and notable amongst these writers are Asturias, Roa Bastos and Alejo Carpentier. Marquez has been fascinated by what goes into the making and existence of dictators and has written two books, on this subject, each very different from the other. The General in His Labyrinth is about the life and time of Simon Bolivar, the extraordinary general who pushed the Spanish out of South America, while The Autumn of the Patriarch is about a nameless dictator, his power and his solitude. Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his essay titled ‘Latin America’s Impossible Reality’, says.
My most difficult experience as a writer was preparing for *The Autumn of the Patriarch* for almost ten years. I read everything I could about the dictators in Latin America, and especially in the Caribbean, so that the book I wrote would resemble actual fact as little as possible.¹

In *The General in His Labyrinth*, Marquez returns to his favourite subject: Latin American history and politics. In this novel he lives up to his reputation of being “The first international bestseller in the Latin American history”² as he tries to recreate in the fictional form the life of a famous historical figure, General Simon Jose Antonio de la Santisian a Trinidad Bolivar Y Palacios. Simon Bolivar started as a soldier and rose to the rank of a general, thank to his prowess and cunningness in political expediency. His attempts to liberate the northern part of Latin America made him famous throughout the continent and earned him the title of ‘The Liberator’. His ultimate dream was to see Latin America as one splendid nation, united and free. Inspired by Napoleon Bonaparte of France Bolivar fought long and bitter battles in order to achieve independence from Spanish colonization. Unfortunately destiny never favoured him. The internal disunity among political parties
in the newly formed states defeated his purpose and left him a disillusioned and a shattered man.

Inspired by Alvaro Mutis who wanted to write an account of Simon Bolivar’s last journey on the River Magdalena, Marquez finally published *The General in His Labyrinth* in 1989. The novel centres around the historical evidence of Bolivar’s fourteen calamitous days on the river. The fact that his “last voyage along the river is the least documented period in Bolivar’s life” does not prove to be a problem for Marquez since it gives him scope for imagination. But researching into Bolivar’s life turned out to be an extremely arduous and complicated task. Marquez had to narrate the history of Bolivar without distorting the authentic facts about his life and the historical documents themselves proved to be labyrinthine and full of contradictions. As Marquez writes:

I spent two long years sinking into the quicksands of voluminous, contradictory, and often, uncertain documentation, from the thirty-four volumes by Daniel Florencino O’ Leary to articles in the most unexpected newspapers.
Marquez's account of delving into the historical records reminds one of the Borgesian labyrinth where,

The inhabitant at the centre of the labyrinth is still locked in solitude and the penetration of the maze may bring destruction to both the one who penetrates the maze and the one whose solitude is violated.  

In trying to 'penetrate' the mystery of Bolivar's life, Marquez presents the General as an ordinary man, stripped of his glorious trappings. Yet Marquez is not absolutely sure if he has succeeded in portraying the 'real' Bolivar. Hampered as he is by the need to adhere to the historical records on the General's life, the magical quality of Marquez's narration, seen in the previous novels is somewhat missing here. The General in His Labyrinth is a recreation of history. This probably is the reason why Marquez entitles the novel as The General in His Labyrinth. The word 'labyrinth' also signifies the author's efforts to reach the 'authentic' Simon Bolivar through a maze of historical documents.

The literal meaning of the title conveys to us the General's predicaments in the vicious world of history and politics that is
Latin America. Latin America history is like the Kafkaesque world of politics where.

The institution is a mechanism that obeys its own laws; no one knows who programmed those laws or when; they have nothing to do with human concerns and are thus unintelligible.6.

This is precisely the General’s dilemma: within a short period he is reduced to a non-entity and his long cherished dream of power and of being the supreme being crumbles to the dust. He can neither trace the logic of his downfall nor does he know how to regain his former glory. He is not only plagued by the hatred of the people but also by his deteriorating health. At the fag end of his life, when he realizes that “the headlong race between his misfortunes and his dreams was at the moment reaching the finish line”, the General exclaims exasperatedly, “How will I ever get out of this labyrinth?” Death becomes his only source of release from the web of power that he himself had helped to weave.

The theme of death is a prominent and a regular feature in the novels of Marquez and it reminds us of the temporal nature of existence. Like some of his other novels, this novel also
commences with the reminder of death, "Jose Palacios, his oldest servant, found him floating naked with his eyes open in the purifying water of his bath and thought he had drowned. He knew this was one of the many ways the General meditated but the ecstasy in which he lay drifting seemed that of a man no longer of this world." The General's impending death is forecast in this sentence and throughout the novel the reader is not allowed to forget that Bolivar's fate is sealed.

The atmosphere of the novel is heavily laden with the gloom of death, decay and pestilence. The progression of the story encompasses the journey of the General from Santa Fe de Bogota to his death at San Pedro Alejandrino. The General's journey reminds one of a 'funeral procession' of a decreased person followed by handful of mourners.

The journey is both physical and psychic – a sort of funeral procession through ravaged cities and foul smelling streets, along the eternal currents of Magdalena, providing him with insomniac interludes to relieve, in a 'marshland of sweat' and burning in a 'bonfire of fever', conquest both military and amorous.
Wrecked with tuberculosis, the General leaves the Colombian capital with his retinue of faithful followers. In the months before his death, the General stops at several places that remind him of his glorious past and also bring back the memories of those tension filled days when he was desperately trying to hold on to his disintegrating dream.

Marquez expands a slice of history into a saga of loss and solitude. In two hundred and sixty seven pages, Bolivar’s life merges with the tragic epochs of Latin American history, a continent lost in timeless sluggishness and in the novel Marquez reconstructs the entire history of Simon Bolivar’s exploits, glories, defeats and frustrations. This he has managed to do by accommodating the ‘story time’ with the ‘narrative time’ through the use of anachronisms.

The journey of the General is woven across a span of seven months that comprise the whole novel from 8th May, 1830 to 10th Dec. 1830. The omniscient narrator tells us about the progress of the General’s voyage on the River Magdalena, the places he visits on the banks of the river, and the dates and circumstances of his visits. Marquez also predicts the General’s death at precisely seven minutes past one on the 17th of Dec., 1830. The General’s fate is preordained. The novel starts with image of death and also ends with the vision of death.
The General has experienced all the three motifs of power, love, and solitude. Sitting in his 'hammock', he swings in it leisurely or violently according to his mental condition. The hammock resembles and symbolizes the oscillations of a pendulum. Each swing forward signifies the passage of time and the backward swing symbolizes the death of that second. This is precisely how the General's life is ticking away. Each painful step forward brings him closer to death. It seems as if all his life he has been chasing a mirage, hardly, if ever arriving at his destination. The only thing that he achieves in life is to get all the more entrapped in the vicious world of politics and power. The reward for all his efforts is solitude, a labyrinth of treachery and intrigues, and the hatred of the people he has freed. Defeated and broken in spirit, Simon Bolivar is unable to cope up with the winds of change.

The General is an echo of two other characters in the earlier novels of Marquez. Just as Colonel Aureliano Buendia in One Hundred Years of Solitude and the Patriarch in The Autumn of the Patriarch attempts to exercise their control over the destinies of the people and fail in their effort, the General also fails to realize his "fantastic dream of creating the largest country in the world: one nation, free and unified, from Mexico
to Cape Town” like his counterpart, he too suffers the ignominy of existing in solitude. As Marquez says:

The Autumn of the Patriarch concerns an apotheosis of the theme of solitude of absolute power, which I consider must be total solitude. The story of Colonel Aureliano Buendia - the wars he fought and his progress to power – is really a progress towards solitude.

With the help of men like these, Marquez tries to show that history in Latin America with its leaders and its political intrigues, is an eternal circle.

We see the power of the general then and now through his past and present memories. In fact the whole novel is an understanding of Boliviar’s past and present. Boliviar reminisces and introspects his life through his memories till he comes to the final acceptance of his fate. When the General spends a night at Honda, the municipal Govt. holds a gala ball in his honour. Listening to the music (walking from the ballroom) the General asks, “Do you remember the Waltz?” These words remind Palacios of the glorious night of 8th Feb. 1826 at Lima “The day confirmed the independence of the huge continent which he
proposed to turn, according to his own words, into the most immense, or most extraordinary, or most invincible league of nations the world had ever seen."13. Whereas the music is associated in the General’s mind with waltz and his popularity with the ladies – he had danced with almost all the ladies in Lima. Jose Palacios cannot remember either the music or the waltz. The only thing that he remembers is the enthusiastic reception that was given to the General and the General’s proclamation. These two separate memories of the General and Palacios are juxtaposed together by the narrator to highlight the subjective nature of our reminiscences.

The public reception at Avila reminds the General of the arousing welcome given to him by the people of Caracas “When he was crowned with laurels in a carriage drawn by the six most beautiful maidens in the city and surrounded by a weeping multitude that eternalized him that day with the name of his glory: The Liberator”14. The two images, ‘this impoverished reception’ and ‘his triumphal entry’ is simultaneously presented to bring out the contrast between the General’s present plight and his past glory. The General is filled with a sad nostalgia for the days gone by. Since this is his own recollection, it is fraught with emotions. There are also memories that fill the General with exhilaration. An example of a memory associated with the
olfactory sense: The smell of guavas always fills him with pleasure. "He stood with his eyes closed, inhaling the heartbreaking aroma of days gone by until he lost his breath." He associates the aroma with his happy and victorious past. Similarly the smell of molasses is associated in his mind with the memory of his family the San Mateo Plantation: this smell brings back both bitter and sweet memories. He is drawn to his childhood home, yet he cannot go there because the people whom he loved that is, his parent and his wife, are no longer alive. The memory is filled with the sorrow for what is lost as well as the yearning for an irrecoverable past. There are memories that are so powerful that they almost overwhelm the General. The memory of an execution because it weighed heavily upon his conscience comes back to him with such a force that the General relives the horror of it for an instant forgetting that it belongs to the past and not to the present. "It was the most savage use of power in his life, but the most opportune as well, for with it he consolidated his authority, unified his command, and cleared the road to his glory." Death haunts him, now his own death is but a shadow going to overwhelm him any time as we are told that "ten days later the shell of his body, wrapped in his old upland blanket and lying in an oxcart would travel the same road in the opposite direction."
The General is condemned to a life of solitude. He became an orphan at young age. His mother and father die early and his wife also died at the age of twenty. He never speaks of his wife again and nor does he ever try to replace her. He is a man who has no future as he has no children, nothing to look forward to. There is no one to love him. The women in his life are just replacements for each other. They come into his life to fulfil his urgent needs and leave with the same urgency. The women in his life are his wife who dies early, the beautiful young woman, Miranda, who helped to save his life, Josefa Sagrario who dressed in gold and with whom he was happy in love, Camille, who revived his spirits, they all enter his life but do not fill it with love. Love ends in desolation and loneliness. In the end his cook, Fernanda Barriga insists on staying by his bedside because she says he liked women so much “he can’t die without one at his bedside, even if she’s as old and ugly and useless as I am”.

Many women comforted him in the bed but none could break his solitude and reach out to him. “For of all the women who passed through his life, many of them for a few brief hours, there was none to whom he had even suggested the idea of staying. In his urgencies of love he was capable of changing the world in order to go to them. Once satisfied, he was content with the illusion that he would keep them in his memory, give himself to them from a distance in passionate letters, send them extravagant gifts.
to protect himself from oblivion, but, with an emotion that resembled vanity more than love, he would not commit the least part of his life to them." 19. His mistress Manuela Saenz loves him and they have enjoyed a good relationship but towards the end, when he is leaving for the journey, she is left behind because from the very beginning the General leaves her behind as if to escape falling into a formal love affair. He is a continental hero, who really dies from a lack of love. Despised by many, abandoned by all except a few and even without his mistress Manuela Saenz, Bolivar dies of a broken heart with no love.

Bolivar was a dictator like the Patriarch whose commands were actually carried out, but even though he had power he did not like it. He is a man lost in his solitude. Both The General in His Labyrinth and The Autumn of the Patriarch are dark in its mood analyzing the origin structure of dictatorship, as well as a moral fable.

Although The General in His Labyrinth is, of course, a historical novel and therefore seeks to reconstruct the personality of Bolivar, it also, represents in my view, Garcia Marquez’s own meditation on death, on fame, even on love and solitude, and on memory as an
integrative process which tries to make sense of a life\textsuperscript{10}.

The General, like all other human beings is time bound and therefore, subject to death. In his case the end is all the more precipitated because of his zeal to liberate and unite the subcontinent of Latin America and his final rendezvous along the river Magdalena. The General tries to move purposefully towards his goal but all he gets for his troubles is premature old age and disillusionment. He finally realizes that all his effort were in vain and he had been doing nothing but moving in futile circles. The other novels of Marquez also underline that same tragic fact of human life but in those novels this bitter truth is alleviated by cosmic irony or exaggeration. The General in His Labyrinth does not provide any such relief that is why it proves to be the most depressing of all the other novels discussed so far.

The Autumn of the Patriarch was completed after seventeen years and two truncated versions of concentrated writing. Marquez was inspired to write a novel on dictatorship after the ousting of the erst while president of Venezuela, Perez Jimenez, which ended an eight - year dictatorship on 23\textsuperscript{rd} Jan. 1958. Marquez witnessed the fall of the overthrown dictator and the subsequent public celebrations sets the tone of the novel.
This historical event became its foundation. Marquez had contemplated long and deep on the political situation of Latin America: A civilization following the semi-barbaric code of survival, coupled with the ruthless manipulation of the continent economic and foreign policies by powerful and richer nations, serve to provide an ideal haven for ambitious men like Perez Jimenez, Doctor Duvalier, Doctor Francia, Juan Vicente Gomez --- all the erst while dictators of Latin America.

Marquez in an interview with Plinio Apuley Mendoza, says:

My original intention was to make a synthesis of all Latin American dictators, especially the Caribbean ones. However, Gomez' personality was so powerful and he exercised such an intense fascination over me, that the Patriarch does contain much more of him than any of the others.

The book is thus a fictionalized version of the dictator, Juan Vicente Gomez who ruled the country with an iron fist.

The Autumn of the Patriarch is a detailed narration on the life and times of numerous dictators represented by the nameless Patriarch of two hundred and thirty-two years. The book begins
with the death of its protagonist, the old dictator in his palace that is in ruins. No one is really sure if this is the Patriarch “because none of us had ever seen him, and even though his profile was on both sides of all coins,..... we knew that they were copies of copies of portraits that had already been considered unfaithful during the time of the comet, when our parents knew who he was because they had been told by their parents, as they had been told by theirs”22. The most striking image throughout the novel is that of the Patriarch, whom Marquez describes as

The image of a very old, inconceivably old, dictator all alone in a place full of cows23.

Physically the general described is grotesque, recognized by his hugely herniated testicle in its jangling truss, his solitary gold spur, his denims.

The novel is a reconstruction of the past through a chain of memories anchored to one another. The novel is narrated in a time span of twenty-four hours, by a multitude of voices. It narrates the history of the Patriarch and incidentally of the whole Latin American continent under a totalitarian government. The novel starts at dawn, progresses into the night and ends the next day at dawn, undergoing a complete circle.
Time is deliberately lengthened by Marquez to emphasize the peoples’ agony of enduring political suffering and feeling the brunt of power of the dictator.

Obviously, time is stretched and lengthened to mythical dimensions to show how long the long night of the soul under unbridled power has been, how heavy the yoke, how never ending the plight. For the people, one dictator is no different from another, since one despot, paves the way for the other irrespective of the sorrow he causes in his wake. Under whose jurisdiction the people are mercilessly killed for personal interests such has been the frenzy for power that

The dictators have acquired unrestrained powers to transform men into corpses and the world around them into a graveyard.

Marquez depicts a coiled eternity, a never-ending cycle emphasizing the agony of the people. The novel is not only an embodiment of recurrent history but also a psychological novel where time is perceived as never-ending under the rule of a despot. The deceptive appearance of the Patriarch on account of his inscrutable looks plays upon the imagination of the people.
Physically tortured and mentally terrorized, they have lost count of time, not because they are not bothered about it but because one day is no different from the other. It is therefore possible that what may in actuality be fifty or seventy years of dictatorship seems like centuries of endless suppression: such is the agony of the power of the dictator that the bruised minds of the people cannot keep track of time so even a normal span of the dictator's life seems to them like an eternity of pain. For the people, the victims of a draconian rule, turning to the past does not give joy or tranquillity. The present instead becomes their domain of happiness and celebration as now they have the freedom to speak out about their past trials and tribulations. The past has been a long, ugly nightmare of pain and agony; the present is their freedom.

The aroused people in the form of a mammoth gathering, speaking all at once, present a very striking picture of an enraged crowd. They all speak simultaneously, pouring out their tales of woe and then their voices recede when the Patriarch's own voice drowns theirs with his thunderous orders and commands. Their recollections are hazy and mixed up. There is no clear-cut commentary on the Patriarch. Some of them are exaggerations, hysterical renderings, and biased opinions that trail off in frustration because these views stem from their
experiences as victims. One thought leads to another, so the voices move back and forth on the mental plane with memories of distant and immediate pain and come back to the factual present. The minds of the people are predominantly concerned with the past it is necessary to move to the 'present' the point of departure.

It is the people who are alive in the present who make it possible for us to know what a despot is like. It is the present that makes the past believable. They are the ones who lived in fear, day after day, hoping against hope, for the end of the Patriarch. They had become so used to the falseness of rumors regarding the Patriarch's death that when he finally dies they can't believe it. "Nobody dared think such an earth shaking event could have happened, rather on the contrary, we thought that after so many years of negligence he had picked up the reins of his authority again and was more alive than ever"26. The live agony in their voices make the novel poignant and heart wrenching. The undisguised hysteria of joy and relief mixed with perplexity and bewilderment help to make the novel vibrant in tone. Interspersed within these voices is the Patriarch's own voice. He conveys to us his own dilemmas of holding the highest office. "Oh Bendicion Alvarado, my mother, if you only knew that I can't stand the world any more, that I'd like to go"
away I don't know where, mother, far away from so much injustice." His voice mingles and merges itself with the voice of the people. We once again see him telling his mother of his problems when the people celebrate his death, "Mother, look what they've done to me, he said, feeling in his own flesh the ignominy of the spitting and the sickbed pans that were thrown on him." 

The manner in which the voices are presented in The Autumn of the Patriarch reminds one of the waves spilling out from the vast ocean of humanity. The waves advancing and retreating, beating and splashing layer after layer, in the form of voices, now passionate and angry, now reduced with pain and agony, emptying their hearts: "they were shouting out the words on them from the balconies ----- the whole country was awakening from its age old sleep.”

The title, ‘The Autumn of the Patriarch’ depicts death and decay, the yellowing and withering not only of nature but also of man. It is like the eve of death. The Patriarch in his cotage is entrapped in the labyrinth of power. He is nameless and alone, a decrepit man burdened with personal and health problems, clutching at the last remnants of power, dithering on the brink of death. He is described as a man, “older than all old men and all old animals on land or sea” but his old age has not diminished
his love for power and supremacy. He decides how long or short a day should be, "the clock in the tower should not strike twelve at twelve 'o' clock but two times so that life would seem longer". Thus we see a man tottering on the edge of death, frantically trying to hold on to power to sustain him. Hence the title justifies itself.

It is therefore not surprising that seventy-two years since the Patriarch's ascendance to the throne of power time has become a never ending cycle for the people. The Patriarch in his power to command even tries to control time and one day decides at three am that it is eight in the morning. All efforts are then made to make it seem like morning, reveille is played in all the garrisons at three, sunflowers are made to open by painting gilt paper suns on the windows so that it may seem to be day and the Patriarch's wish be fulfilled.

It had been pre-ordained that the Patriarch's life would be measured, not by the cycle of seasons or years but by the coming of the comet. The arrival of the comet had announced the beginning of the reign and its re-appearance after duration of seventy-two years spell the end of the rule of despotism, which is enough to make the sanest men insane.
Historical events placed out of context for example when the patriarch opens the window of his presidential palace, he sees Christopher Colombus’ three ‘Carovallas’ next to the battleship left by the marines. These two historical facts - the arrival of Columbus and the departure of the marines are placed together with no respect for the chronological order because history has become redundant in the face of arbitrary power. When a dictator fixes his own timings, what difference does it make if certain events are misplaced on the chronological map of human civilization?

Julio Ortega observes,

The political code implies recognition of the norms that shape the historical consensus. But here this consensus involves a distortion: history has been usurped by the dictatorial powers. Political tyranny - with its violence, arbitrariness, and indulgence - replaces history and the discourse of history is then in fact only a discourse of power.

The Patriarch tries to appropriate history and gain mastery over time. As long as the Patriarch was alive power was the order of the day. We feel the power, not only in the dictatorial
works of the Patriarch but the popular voices narrate a past which entirely belonged to a realm of power manifested in the monumental figure of the dictator as a “terrifying hyperbole of power”\[3\]. Marquez draws us into the psyche of the people. The power of the dictator comes alive through the renderings of the people and what is unfolded is the larger than life image of the dictator. The Patriarch misleads the nation by reconstructing the history of his life because of his desire to rule forever and the power which, he has attained as the head of the state enables him to distort the facts of history. Unfortunately no distorted history on his life can conceal the Patriarch’s true nature. He is the archetype of all dictators; an ill begotten, conniving and mysterious bastard servile only to superior powers that is beneficial to him.

In the autumn of his life, we see that the Patriarch, like Colonel Aureliano Buendia gets lost in the solitude of immense power. The image that emerges of the Patriarch here is in stark contrast to the image that the people have in their mind of a monster. Instead we see the human side of this man, pathetic, pitiable in his old age. Power and solitude go together, each nurturing the other. Entrapped in the vicious circle of power, “he had arrived without surprise at the ignominious fiction of commanding without power, of being exalted without glory and
of being obeyed without authority when he became convinced in
the trail of yellow leaves of his autumn that he had never been
master of all his power, that he was condemned not to know life
except in reverse."34.

Marquez has presented two perspectives, first the
picture of the tyrant through the voices of the people and
secondly the picture of the Patriarch as it emerges from the
Patriarch's own voice. In this way Marquez has left it to the
reader to form his own conclusions. Marquez follows a definite
pattern in the novel. Each chapter begins with death, with a
different stage of discovering the General's corpse and then
relates the incidents that lead to his physical and moral death.
The autumn in the title is both the physical and personal decay.

In John. S. Brushwood's words:

The novel is divided into six parts, each
beginning with an awareness of the
protagonist's death. This condition
emphasizes the notion of the dictator's
persistence - the presence of his power if not
of his person.35.

Also each of the novels six chapter's, re-enacts the death
or disappearance of a man or woman the dictator allowes to draw
close to him. In the first section, the despot is utterly desolate, caught in the solitude of power vulnerable to the dangers surrounding him. The death of his double, Patricio Aragones is a kind of dress rehearsal of his own final fate he foresees the reaction of the others to his death.

The second and third sections explicate the Patriarch’s relationship with his mother Benedicion Alvarado and his life of solitude respectively. The fourth and fifth sections describe his relationship with his wife Leticia Nazareno. The sixth section tells us of his vision of death in the person of Nicanor, under whose shadow he lives for the rest of his life. The regressive movement of the novel where the Patriarch’s death provides an impetus for going back into the past, reminds us of the wheel metaphor that shows time moves in circles.

His unlimited nostalgia for his mother is the main form of his desire for continuity in time. The dictator has a fixation for his mother and after her death on mother substitutes. The three central women around the Patriarch are Bendicion Alvarado, his mother, Manuela Sanchez, his love and Leticia Nazareno, his wife. The death of his mother effects him deeply and even in his extreme old age the only memory left to him is of his mothers illness and how he cared for her wounds with the assiduity of a
lover. His attempts to canonize his mother after her death are a sign of love. He has intense filial affection for his mother. Manuela Sanchez is associated with failure and unrequited love. She is a whore but the patriarch looks at her with reverence. He is hopelessly in love with her but she tolerates him only because he is the President of the Republic. He is fascinated by her smell of roses but he cannot seduce her and the relationship remains platonic. After losing her, he becomes obsessed by her absent presence through his memory of her. He thinks of Manuela Sanchez and Leticia as remote unattainable women of power whom he relates to submissively. “He would overwhelm her in silence with those demented presents to try to tell her with them what he was capable of saying, for he only knew how to show his most intimate urges with the visible symbols of his uncommon power”\(^3\). She then in front of him finally ascends to heaven. The disappearance of Manuela Sanchez and the loss of his army to bring her back infuriates him deeply especially the realization of the fact that his power is undermined as his orders are not carried out. In case of Leticia the army deciphers the dictators unvoiced desire for the exiled nun, his future wife and smuggles her back to him. Leticia his wife and he have an orgasmic encounter that does not result in semen but excrement. Leticia wields power and manipulates him. Her power eventually leads her to lose her and her child’s life, they are eaten up alive
by ferocious dogs that the dictator had especially trained for this purpose.

The dictators deformed and herniated testicle is related to his immense appetite for more power. It is both a sign of his autocratic power and the inability to love. He is neither impotent, nor infertile yet he fails to satisfy sexually. Power is a substitute for love in the novel. The inability to love is what derives him to seek consolation in power. The Patriarch is incapacitated to feel love making the novel Marquez's intense and extreme vision of isolation, “A book about the enigma of power, its solitude and its squalor”.

The book is thus about the potency and power of a Caribbean dictator who rules army, church, economy and citizenry with an absolute murderous tyrannical hand. The patriarch does not aspire to any greatness beyond absolute power. He is a paranoid tyrant and according to Marquez,

The lieutenant of In Evil Hour was my first real attempt to explore the mystery of power and the Patriarch was the most complex effort.

He is a bestial and vindictive man who behaves like a murderous child and does not get any obvious pleasure from his
authority beyond the easy, instant satisfaction of his elementary lusts. He is very wealthy, bargains shrewdly and secretly with a succession of foreign nations emissaries. He manipulates elections, liquidates enemies, terrorizes intimates, exercises absolute legislative and judicial power, and creates himself as the center. He is the embodiment of egocentric evil, unleashed power.

The book becomes ultimately a supreme polemic, a spiritual expose, an attack against any society that encourages or event permits the growth of such a monstrosity.”

The stronger the general becomes, the more removed from humanity and truth he becomes. He seems to be in limbo, marking time as he waits for an end that refuses to come. A pervasive feeling of solitude dominates the action. The title itself suggests death and decadence. He rules for an indeterminate period. The details of the Patriarch’s rise to power is offered as reminiscences by the Patriarch himself - his story, his birth as a bastard son, his rise to power with the support of British and the Americans, the disappearance of his favorite mistress Manuela Sanchez and the death of his wife
The episode of the eclipse is interpreted as an example of his power. He had learned of his incapacity for love, "he was remorselessly condemned not to die of love". He had tried to compensate for that infamous fate with the burning cultivation of the solitary vice of power. The General’s power is exercised through his terror, a man who is an absolute power and is obsessed with the manifestation of power. This power leads him to loneliness and isolation. In the end he outlives even the pleasures of power to live a lonely fragmented existence. The dictator lives for more than two hundred years. He has been in power, he is the power and

His is the greatest solitude of all: that of the unloved dictator, perpetuating his unearned power.

The history of Latin America is reconstructed in the dialogue between this collective narrator and the nameless power. Power is not only the govt. or the general’s authoritarian form but is the distortion of communal norms, the model of domination. The Patriarch’s arbitrariness is rooted in power. Power is thus established as a natural order, but is perceived as a natural disorder.
The Patriarch’s self proclaimed title is that he is the General of the universe, even though his domain is a poor Caribbean country. In fact the beginning of The Autumn of the Patriarch depicting the death of its protagonist is a symbol of the end of such like power structures as the General. His was a one-man dynasty in which absolute power ordained for such an end. The novel is not only a political novel but also a moral fable. The Patriarch’s voice is not heard directly but his commands are revealed at second hand from an invisible center of power. The gross misuse of power leads him to murder and other tyrannous acts. He gives order to dynamite two thousand children held prey to lottery scheme, crushes a series of military revolts and murders his double, Patricio Aragones. Aragones is the dictator’s double who gives him the power to appear to be in various places at once and the freedom to roam his beloved city alone. After his death he himself becomes “the most solitary man on earth”.

His general, Rodrigo-de-Aguilar then becomes the dictators right hand man and he is even given permission to win at dominoes which is the closest example of friendship that we will see. Like Simon Bolivar in The General in His Labyrinth, the Patriarch also cannot bear to lose because their pathological need for mastery both tarnishes and constitutes their political
genius. The same general Rodrigo-de-Aguilar, his closet aide is served for dinner at a posh banquet for presidential guards, because the dictator thinks he has been betrayed by him and he wishes to teach a lesson to all the other men of his regime. "The distinguished Major General Rodrigo-de-Aguilar entered on a silver tray stretched out full length on a garnish of cauliflower and laurel leaves, steeped with spices, oven brown, embellished with the uniform of five golden almonds for solemn occasions and the limitless loops for valor on the sleeve of his right arm, fourteen pounds of medals on his chest and a sprig of parsley in his mouth, ready to be served at a banquet of comrades by the official carvers to the petrified horror of the guests as without breathing we witness the exquisite ceremony of carving and serving, and when every plate held an equal portion of minister of defence stuffed with pine nuts and aromatic herbs, he gave the order to begin, eat hearty gentleman." The book is full of images of such death, destruction and decay.

The death of his men, his double Aragones, his general, Rodrigo de Aguilar and others is not mourned by the dictator, he remains unfeeling towards them and their deaths do not traumatize him. Power and the desire to retain it has made the General devoid of humanity, fellow feeling and generosity. Aragones and Saenz de la Barra before dying confront the
dictator with his incapacity for love, an inability directly related
to his monumental genius for power. The dictator's fear is that if
his affection or attraction turns to trust his power will falter.
The dictator believes that in controlling or conquering, the
dangerous emotional urge to trust others holds the key to power.

The General most cherished fantasy is that his
people should love him unconditionally and intensely as in the
idealized relation between the mother and her child. He refuses
to accept the fact that people fear him rather than love him and
they don't see him as a maternal provider but as a repressive
force, a ruthless man a dictator, whom they hate. The dictator's
spectacular identification of himself with the people results in
many of his actions.

According to Marquez, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*
is like a poem on the solitude of power and he delves deep into
the alienation experienced by the dictator to depict remarkably
the isolation and loneliness suffered by such men. Power cannot
be achieved without solitude, at the canonical center of power
one is always solitary. Solitude is linked with the possession of
absolute power. The dictator survives every attempt on his life
and he counterfoils the various plot's, betrayals and
assassination attempts. It is no wonder that the Patriarch is
thought to be "a man of the upland plains because of his
immense appetite for power, the nature of his government, his
mournful bearing, the inconceivable evil of a heart which had
sold the sea to a foreign power". Conspicuously interwoven
into the circular narrative frame is the impression of time on the
readers consciousness where time is perceived as endless and
sits heavy on the dictator as he walks in his palace. The slow,
tedious narration of ceaseless thoughts, monologue's, hysterics
e etc. gives feeling of an unendurable length of time.

In Marquez's novels we find that cosmic time generally
retains its superiority over the order imposed by man.
Considered to be the favorite novel of Marquez, The Autumn of
the Patriarch is technically speaking, one of the most innovative
works by Marquez and is a psychological masterpiece. The
Autumn of the Patriarch neither has a story nor a single
omniscient narrator. The linearity of narration is done away as
there is emphasis on the psychological.

Marquez has dealt with certain facets of power, its
endlessness, its solitude, its mystique and its power. The
Autumn of the Patriarch, then, lies in its stark delineation of the
incapability between the desire for power and the capacity to
love. The dictator himself suspects that the roots of his power lie
intertwined with his emotional avarice. He is accused of not
fearing death because he has never felt happiness.
Power as seen in Marquez's novel is the absolute power, it may be the power of Colonel Aureliano Buendia and his many battles, the Generals autocratic power or the Patriarchs terrifying and brutal power. All three have seen power and its glory. They themselves have been the power but they also see the solitude and alienation, the lack of love and emptiness that power brings for them.
Works Cited

1. Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. “Latin America’s Impossible Reality”. Translated by Elena Brunett. 

2. Martin, Gerald. “Journey through the Labyrinth; Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century.” 

3. Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. The General in His Labyrinth. 

4. Ibid., p. 272.

5. Hall, Linda B. “Labyrinthine Solitude” The Impact of

7. Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. The General in His Labyrinth.
   Translated by Edith Grossman. New York:

8. Ibid., p. 3.


10. Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. The General in His Labyrinth.


13. Ibid., p. 74

15. Ibid., p. 107.


17. Ibid., p. 253.

18. Ibid., p. 263.

19. Ibid., p. 183.


22. Marquez, Gabriel Garcia, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*.


27. Ibid., p. 18.

29. Ibid., p. 19.

30. Ibid., p. 3

31. Ibid., p. 7.


33. Ibid., p. 169.


38. Ibid., p. 109.


41. Epstein, Joseph “How Good is Gabriel Garcia Marquez” *Commentary* 75. May 1983, p. 64.


43. Ibid., p. 105.

44. Ibid., p. 40.