Chapter V

Conclusion

The attempt of the study has been to examine the nature of García Márquez’s fiction, a fiction that produces a reality that is immensely magnified, containing truths that would otherwise be unknown. In his Nobel speech in 1982, García Márquez talks about this reality:

A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. ("Gabriel García Márquez-Nobel Lecture". Nobelprize.org, 29 Nov 2010 http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1982/marquez-lecture-e.html)

Thus, this lack of conventional means has given rise to magical realism which aims to capture the flux of life. What magical realism is accountable to are not strict rules of fiction, but the constant wavering of life. García Márquez goes on to say that “to oppression, plundering and abandonment, we respond with life. Neither floods nor plagues, famines nor cataclysms, nor even the eternal wars of century upon century, have been able to subdue the persistent advantage of life over death.” This in García Márquez’s fiction is the indomitable advantage of magical realism over the limits of fiction, and more importantly, the limits of life. One
*Hundred Years of Solitude, The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *Collected Stories* are evidence of the advantage that magical realism has, which arises from the fact that it has no boundaries to restrict it. The boundaries of the fictional space of magical realism allow all elements of life to pass through it. The boundaries are porous, fluid and ever-shifting in which life becomes an unpredictable experience where anything is possible.

The transgressing narrative consciousness is the foremost tool of magical realism. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude, The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *Collected Stories*, it is the transgressing narrative consciousness which lays down the parameters for the storytelling that subverts all fictional criteria. The oral tradition gives to the narrating consciousness the special transgressive trait that is crucial to magical realism. The objectivity and naivety of the transgressing narrative consciousness also play a tremendous part in enhancing the movement of the magical and the real in the hybrid space. In the three works discussed, memory, which is another important part of the oral tradition, triggers the narrating consciousness to transgress into the past from the present or from the conscious and subconscious, or from reality to myth. Memory also functions as the preserver of truths that may be lost in history to reality.
In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the transgressing narrative consciousness describes real and mythical events such as the insomnia plague, the banana massacre, the flying carpets of the gypsies, the four year rain, the unending wars, all taking place in Macondo, which can be called the hybrid space where reality and myth converge. In *Collected Stories*, the transgressing narrative consciousness again moves between past and present, history and legend. It impersonally portrays the isolation that the material and immaterial wealth of Big Mama bring her. It resembles the stream of consciousness, as it records Isabel’s confusion over the mush that time had become, and finally it places the old man with wings, the handsome drowned man and the ghost ship into a human world that accepts them.

The phantasmagoric images and events of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* are rendered by the transgressing narrative consciousness through the voices and thoughts of the many characters which populate the hybrid space of the novel. Ignoring conventional syntax and grammar it traverses the complex and painful story of the emotionally and spiritually barren. This skilful manoeuvreing of the narrating consciousness from one character’s mind to another provides an extremely detailed mosaic of the life of the Patriarch. Every chapter
opens up new windows to the anguish, self-delusion and horrors of the
Patriarch. Memory leaves nothing to be forgotten. Honest and cutting, the
narrating consciousness remembers the murder of the two thousand
children who were used to win the lottery, the preposterous canonization
of the Patriarch’s mother and his selling of the Caribbean Sea to the
Americans. The transgressing consciousness suspends the Patriarch in the
hybrid space which is its domain, while he swims in the “limbo of power”
(The Autumn of the Patriarch 109) which is his fate.

The transgressing characters of García Márquez are products of the
“unbridled reality” that he talks about in his Nobel speech. They are
created by the transgressing narrative consciousness and thereby gain
transgressive qualities. The characters feel the same emotions and do the
same things like other persons, but what makes them unique is the fact
that some of their qualities are exaggerated. Thus, they challenge reality
and normality as they move in a hybrid space. The defects or
exaggerations of the characters are actually used as indirect attacks by
García Márquez to highlight upon the evident corruption in the
contemporary society.

The wild imagination of José Arcadio Buendía and the persuasive
practicality of Úrsula allow for the easy blend of reality and magic. Their
descendants grow up in this atmosphere and exhibit a characteristic overturning of the laws of life. Remedios the Beauty’s mysterious body odour causes the death of several men. Úrsula, living between the ages of one hundred and fifteen and one hundred and twenty-two, tries to hold the family together but in vain. Colonel Aureliano’s thirty-two uprisings and seventeen sons make him realize his pride and bring him only solitude. In another instance, José Arcadio Segundo moves away from the myth that there were no protestors killed in the negotiation, repeating to himself the true number of the dead in the Banana massacre. The compulsive repetition of the names of ancestors in their descendants spells doom for the Buendías, with their past weaknesses and mistakes haunting their future. The power of death is challenged when the man in “The Third Resignation” from Collected Stories has a physical experience of death. The handsome drowned man and Big Mama are not forgotten as they achieve a myth status. Isabel too, is able to experience time as a continuous flow without its divisions. All these characters reflect the ability of the transgressing narrative consciousness to break the boundaries of reality and myth. Blurring the clarity of truth is the Patriarch ruling over his nation. History swelters and wilts in the decrepit hands of the Patriarch as he indifferently crushes it in his need for power.
Being more or less two centuries old, he jealously treasures his power like a greedy child, when what he actually does not have is love. The Patriarch believes that he will still be alive when the comet comes again, cows are born with his presidential brand, he can change time and weather and has pages of history books torn away. In the character of the Patriarch, García Márquez epitomizes the elimination of humanity and the deadening effect of power as the Patriarch perpetually saves himself from becoming mortal and real. Returning again and again after dying, the Patriarch moves within the constant revolving of time, solitude and death.

Time, solitude and death are prominent themes in the fiction of García Márquez and in magical realism, they become alternative states of existence. Taking the image of the web of endlessly repeating time from Jorge Luis Borges, the wheel of time in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* contains solitude and death also moving endlessly within the wheel. The strands of time that bifurcate and intersect evoke an eternal present, with each chapter beginning in the present, with the Patriarch’s corpse being discovered. Thus, there are new episodes from the life of the Patriarch with new memories and new characters, but what surely remains is the triumphant defiance against reality. Supporting the ahistorical and a
temporal quality of the Patriarch is the confusing change of pronouns and
the memories of the past disturbing the present. A similar collapse of the
past and the present is found in “The Monologue of Isabel Watching it
Rain in Macondo” as Isabel describes time as something jelly-like that
could be parted with the hands. Pilar Ternera from *One Hundred Years of
Solitude* says that the history of the Buendia family is like a wheel that
turns eternally, with the turning causing inevitable destruction. The
endless turning of the wheel always brings back the present. This
tragically traps the characters in a repetitive circle of futility. The later
generations do not learn anything from their forefathers. Remedios the
Beauty rejects her suitors like Amaranta, Aureliano Segundo and José
Arcadio Segundo also have a mistress like Colonel Aureliano and José
Arcadio. Finally, the last relationship that brings the apocalyptic end of
Macondo, is the one between Aureliano Babilonia and Amaranta Úrsula.
Unknowingly, they destructively repeat the incest of the patriarch José
Arcadio Buendía and matriarch, Úrsula.

Solitude pervades each generation of the Buendía family and
becomes an unavoidable part of their heritage. Held in the wheel of time,
solitude emerges again and again to cross all barriers of life. José Arcadio
Buendía becomes solitary and mad with his outrageous experimentation.
Úrsula endures trouble and pain but she is alone as the only one who thinks practically, fighting against the impending destruction to her family. Solitude, in its most extreme form drives out real emotions and this can be described most aptly as a death in life. Thus, Amaranta unfeelingly wipes out love from her life and the visit of death is not different from her daily experience. Solitude pulls José Arcadio Segundo deeper and deeper because of the trauma he experiences in the Banana massacre. As Gullon says, only love can save the Buendía family (31), but unfortunately real love does not exist in a world where everything exists to an unreal and exaggerated degree. It is important to realize that pure and wholesome love or any other genuine human sentiment cannot exist in this “outsized reality” ("Gabriel García Márquez-Nobel Lecture". Nobelprize.org. 29 Nov 2010 http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1982/marquez-lecture-e.html). Solitude is a conscious choice of existence made by the characters that can be symbolized by the chalk circle that Colonel Aureliano draws around himself, to stop anyone from coming into contact with him.

Solitude is certain if the sole aim in life is an amoral pursuit of power. This is the fate of the Patriarch that drags him into an endless death in life. Thus, his people and nation possess a loss of reality and he
too, possesses a loss of everything real in his life. His wife Leticia Nazareno and their son Emanuel, do not bring him love but instead bring him more bitterness and solitude. Death is the result of his friendship with General Major Rodrigo de Aguilar and his mother, Bendición Alavarado becomes a haunting memory. The clamour of voices which surround the Patriarch ironically cause him to become more alone. The image that rises is that of the man in “The Third Resignation” whose immobility is what can be imagined to be the physical manifestation of death, as well as that of solitude. The man whose death is diagnosed as an illness by the doctor experiences the feverish grip of solitude that outgrows into an unceasing hammering in his head.

In García Márquez’s fiction, death activates another chapter of existence. In One Hundred Years of Solitude, the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar continues to haunt José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula in Macondo. The ghost becomes the constant companion of the mad José Arcadio Buendía, having conversations with him and finally taking José Arcadio Buendía into an intermediate existence. Death is also defied when Melquiades dies in the time of Colonel Aureliano and then appears alive again to Aureliano Segundo in his room, when Aureliano Segundo tries to decipher the parchments. The Patriarch living between the ages of one
hundred and seven, and two hundred and thirty-two years, defies death with a determination that is borne out of the insecurity and paranoia of his reign. His immortality is cemented by the fact that he emerges after the death of his double Patricio Aragones. The corpse of the Patriarch that appears at the beginning of the chapters of the novel is resurrected repeatedly, and thus the Patriarch is revived from death to repeat his subversion of reality and history. The Patriarch is condemned to be preserved in the eternally moving wheel of time, lying dead in his denim uniform, only to open his eyes and live inexhaustibly.

With the breaching and abolition of the boundaries of fiction, they can no longer be defined by conventional standards and have to be remade and reinvented with a different perspective. The reality that is necessarily created is a porous one in which the narrating consciousness, the characters, together with time, solitude and death become flexible, allowing themselves to be moulded in such a way as to suit the transgressive and subversive demands of García Márquez's fiction. Hence, the “mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other... are boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred...” (Zamora and Faris 6), in a bid to critique society. What is important to understand, is that behind the spectacle of magical realism
lies the ingenious significance with which the stories are embodied. They are ultimately vivid explorations of human life; idealism and its pitfalls, the desire for power and legacy, the failure of love and the triumph of discord.

The transgressive character of magical realism, brought about by the merging of reality and myth, captures the potentiality of human aspiration, inspiration and imagination. It captures the essence of human life in all its overwhelming and stark complexity. This is discovered when that which is possible in reality and that which is amplified in myth is made concrete in the hybrid space of a magical realism. The transgressive technique provides insight to an aimless generation who alienate themselves without purpose, who learn that power festers when used wrongly and that the present cannot repeat the past, but make it an opportunity to create new history.

Having transgressed all perceivable boundaries, it may be said that García Márquez’s vision is not to be understood in the Aristotelian sense as being an imitation of life but that the reality is mythic because it unleashes the hidden motives of his characters, as well as the dark recesses of their personality. These elemental energies generate the kind of logic that may be identified with García Márquez’s world of magical
realism. It may be said that García Márquez’s vision is mystical, in that, it perceives the corrupt and diseased in a manner that exposes a reality, piercing and jagged, mundane and fabulous, in its truthfulness.
Works Cited


