Chapter II

The Transgressing Consciousness in One Hundred Years of Solitude, The Autumn of the Patriarch and Collected Stories

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka made García Márquez realize that Kafka's “voice” had the same echoes as his grandmother’s: “that’s how my grandmother used to tell stories, the wildest things with a completely natural tone of voice” (Ruch). He goes on to say that in “previous attempts to write, I tried to tell the story without believing in it. I discovered that what I had to do was believe in them myself and write them with the same expression with which my grandmother told them: with a brick face” (Ruch and Kaye). This brick faced consciousness is the narrative means that García Márquez uses to cut cross accepted reality and to move into fictional realms that challenge the defining norms of fiction.

This narrating consciousness has an oral character, as García Márquez points out, that may be traced to his grandparents and more specifically, his grandmother. The oral tradition perceives the magical and real in the same way. Thus, the exigencies of the oral allow García Márquez to use the bizarre and exaggerated, facilitating the movement between the real and the magical. He emulates the speaking voice of the
oral tradition so successfully, that in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *Collected Stories*, the narrating consciousness is able to transgress boundaries in a neutral and detached tone, telling the story from an objective perspective, treating magical and real as the same. A “tonal unity” (Gullon 28) is achieved by the calm and composed narration, making the narrating consciousness, the “center of consciousness” (Gullon 28).

The narrating consciousness in the fiction discussed, has a “stance” that “is often characterized as childlike or naïve because magical events are accepted...as children seem to accept such events in stories, without questioning reality” (Faris 94). Subsequently, the narrating consciousness functions like a centrifugal force generating different methods of subverting fictional thresholds. As the oral tradition demands that the narrating consciousness accept the exaggerated and extraordinary as normal and ordinary, it informs, enlightens and communicates to the narrating consciousness its ability to overturn and transform reality and history, and thus, to produce a reality and history coloured by myth. It is in this new and unpredictable reality that the transgressing narrative consciousness thrives. Conventional ideas for instance, of time, life and death in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Collected Stories* are
replaced by radical and innovative ones; while in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the narrating consciousness magnifies reality to become more complex. Nothing can be taken for granted as the narrating consciousness gains momentum, directing the events and characters to fantastic and unimaginable lengths. Consequently, it facilitates the intersection of the commonplace and incredible, significant aspects of the charismatic, self-sufficient and transgressing consciousness of the oral tradition that was familiar to Márquez:

...they saw a youthful Melquiades, recovered, unwrinkled, with a new and flashing set of teeth. Those who remembered his gums that had been destroyed by scurvy, his flaccid cheeks, and his withered lips trembled with fear at the final proof of the gypsy's supernatural power. The fear turned into panic when Melquiades took out his teeth, intact, encased in their gums, and showed them to the audience for an instant—a fleeting instant in which he went back to being the same decrepit man of years past—and put them back again and smiled once more with the full control of his restored youth.

* (One Hundred Years of Solitude 8)

The objective speaking voice of the oral tradition is influenced by its subjective understanding of events. Thus memory forms an important aspect of the oral tradition, in the sense that a story is narrated from the mind’s recesses. In magical realism, memory feeds on reality, but because it moves in its own hybrid space, it must of necessity give birth to myth. Thus, memory changes its normal functioning, and as it conjures events from reality, it produces mythical elements reflecting back to the transgressive vision of the narrating consciousness. Memory, in the
hybrid space moves not only between the past and the present, but also between the conscious and the subconscious, as well as between reality and myth. As García Márquez says: “I realized that reality is also the myths of the common people, it is the beliefs, their legends; they are their everyday life and they affect their triumphs and failures” (qtd. in Bowers 38). The narration of events by the transgressing consciousness is thus aided by memory, which creates a space that embraces the magical and real, and employs its own motifs and hyperboles thus:

...he locked himself up until death in the run-down palace from whose highest windows we were now watching with tight hearts the same gloomy sunset that he must have seen so many times from his throne of illusions, we saw the intermittent beacon of the lighthouse as it flooded the ruined salons with its green and languid waters,...we saw below the scattered, steamy city, the instantaneous horizon of pale lightning flashes in the crater of ashes of the sea that had been sold...Not only had we ended up really believing that he had been conceived to survive the third comet but that conviction had infused us with a security and a restful feeling that we tried to hide with all manner of jokes about old age...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 107)

One Hundred Years of Solitude, The Autumn of the Patriarch and Collected Stories represent the ways in which the narrating consciousness has transgressed the familiar to defamiliarize it, for the purpose of commenting on the individual, as well as the society.

“One Hundred Years of Solitude begins in medias res (in the middle of the events)” and in the first chapter the reader “goes back in time” to witness the “memory that opens the novel” (Pelayo 92). Thus,
one finds memory establishing its role as a transgressive vehicle, as Colonel Aureliano Buendía standing in front of a firing squad, which is a future event, remembers the day when his father, José Arcadio Buendía took him to see ice for the first time, which is a past event: “Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 1). The first chapter “serves as a paradigm of the overall narrational pattern” (Sims 11). The pattern that the narrating consciousness follows is therefore circular, a constant moving between the past, the present and the future. Thus, it remembers “the excesses of gluttony, cruelty, virility, sexual potency, violence, death, longevity, and solitude” of the characters, (Pelayo 97) talking in the “brickface” tone that García Márquez borrowed from his grandmother.

The fresh ground that the transgressing consciousness unlocks is a “hybrid space” where “eruptions occur normally and sudden folds crease the seemingly predictable…” (Zamora and Faris 222); a space that traverses unlimited possibilities, where reality and myth merge. In One Hundred Years of Solitude, the space occupied by Macondo is marked by a boundary which is new, flexible and porous because “the world was so
recent that many things lacked names,...” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 1). Becoming an expert in the use of the instruments that the gypsy Melquiades gives him, José Arcadio Buendia, the founder of Macondo, retreats into his laboratory and conceives “a notion of space that allowed him to navigate across unknown seas, to visit uninhabited territories, and to establish relations with splendid beings without having to leave his study” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 4). The patriarch of the Buendía family lays the foundation for the mingling of the magical and the real in his “imagined space” (Gullon 29). The matriarch, Ursula Iguarán, who is the embodiment of practicality and strength, impregnates the fictional space with everyday realities so that the marvelous may enter it smoothly. Thus stabilized and “normalized” the novelistic space assimilates prodigious things and converts them into acceptable phenomena which the reader can easily admit...Together, José Arcadio Buendía’s imagined space and Úrsula’s familiar space embrace everything that has ever existed or exists, from nothingness to infinity.

(Gullon 28)

The imagined and the familiar is experienced in the fictional space and expressed by the transgressing consciousness in a tone that succeeds in instilling “confidence in the listener and succeeds in making itself heard and accepted without objections” (Gullon 28). Thus, memory and space, together with motif and hyperbole work to garner command over the nostalgic and meandering pattern of García Márquez’s transgressive fictional craft.
The first large scale extraordinary event that involves all of the
Macondites is the insomnia plague, which is first mentioned with the
arrival of Visitación. Visitación is a Guajiro Indian woman who arrives
with her brother in Macondo. One is told that she and her brother were
“in flight from a plague of insomnia that had been scourging their tribe
for several years” (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* 38). Nothing more is
mentioned about the insomnia plague till the mysterious arrival of the
child Rebeca, who is adopted by the Buendías. One night Rebeca is found
on a rocker sucking her finger with her eyes lighted up like those of a cat.
Immediately, Visitación recognized the eyes which were symptoms of the
insomnia plague. José Arcadio Buendía thinks nothing of it at first, until
the family realizes that they had not slept for fifty hours. Extraordinary
things begin to happen: “In that state of hallucinated lucidity, not only did
they see the images of their own dreams, but saw the images dreamed by
others” (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* 46). The reaction of the people to
the insomnia plague is equally interesting:

No one was alarmed at first. On the contrary, they were happy at not sleeping
because there was so much to do...They worked so hard that soon they had
nothing else to do and they could be found at three o’clock in the morning
with their arms crossed, counting the notes in the waltz of the clock.

(*One Hundred Years of Solitude* 46)

The narrating consciousness communicates the lack of alarm and fear of
the people and the reader realizes that this is yet another of the incredible
episodes that will mark the novel. The people do not attribute any supernatual or magical explanation to the plague, for they come to a matter-of-fact discovery that the plague was spreading through food and drink. Together with this, the loss of memory is an effect of the insomnia plague. Aureliano ingeniously comes up with the plan to label everything with its name so that nothing is forgotten. The insomnia plague however brings a succumbing to “an imaginary reality” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 49) which was not practical, but comforting for the people who “went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which would escape irremediably when they forgot the values of the written letters” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 49). Words too, would lose their meaning and significance in the imaginary reality that makes the Macondites lose their memory and isolate them from daily life. This isolation and memory loss is destructive and initiates the decline of the Buendía family and Macondo itself.

“Memory, in García Márquez’s view, is synonymous with redemption: to remember is to overcome, to defeat the forces of evil” (Stavans 64). Thus, memory saves one from the plague of forgetting and the truth from being annihilated. The redemptive function of memory is evident in the Banana massacre which is a real event that happened in
Ciénaga, in the year 1928. What should be noticed is the fact that the transgressing consciousness brings together the insomnia plague, which is an extraordinary event, and the Banana massacre which is a real event in Colombian history. The mythical and historical events are blended together to emphasize the importance of memory.

The Banana massacre was caused when the workers of the United Fruit Company protested against the injustice suffered by them. After many days of striking, the men and women were told to gather at the train station for a negotiation with an official from the government who would listen to their grievances. As it turns out, the government had no intention of solving the problems of the workers. The train never arrived but a Lieutenant went on the roof of the station and read out an order signed by the general and his secretary authorizing the army to shoot if the workers did not surrender within five minutes. The men and women did not surrender and what followed is related by the narrating consciousness in horrifying images:

They were penned in, swirling about in a gigantic whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicenter as the edges were systematically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodical shears of the machine guns.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 311)
José Arcadio Segundo, the great grandson of José Arcadio Buendía and the leader of the strike was not killed, but this is the searing memory he has to live with:

He realized that he was riding on an endless and silent train and that his head was caked with dry blood...Prepared to sleep for many hours, safe from the terror and the horror, he made himself comfortable on the side that pained him less, and only then did he discover that he was lying against dead people...in the flashes of light...he saw the man corpses, woman corpses, child corpses who would be thrown into the sea like rejected bananas.

*(One Hundred Years of Solitude 312)*

García Márquez recalls the massacre in *Living to Tell the Tale*, which he writes about in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

My mother’s version had such meager numbers and a setting so abject for the imposing drama I had imagined that it caused a sense of frustration in me. Later, I spoke with survivors and witnesses and searched through newspaper archives and official documents, and I realized that the truth did not lie anywhere. Conformists said, in effect, that there had been no deaths. Those at the other extreme affirmed without a quaver in their voices that there had been more than a hundred, that they had been seen bleeding to death on the square, and that they were carried away in a freight train to be tossed into the ocean like rejected bananas. And so my version was lost forever at some improbable point between the two extremes. But it was so persistent that in one of my novels I referred to the massacre with all the precision and horror that I had brought for years to its incubation in my imagination. This was why I kept the number of the dead at three thousand, in order to preserve the epic proportions of the drama,...

*(Living to Tell the Tale 69)*

García Márquez goes on to say that as a confirmation of the number of dead, on one of the anniversaries of the massacre, the speaker of the Senate asked for a minute of silence in memory of the three thousand people who died. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when José
Arcadio Segundo manages to get out of the train and reaches Macondo, he asks people about the massacre. To his shock, he finds that the women he talks to say that there have been no deaths in Macondo since the time of his Uncle, Colonel Aureliano Buendía. No one believes that there was a train full of dead bodies. His twin brother Aureliano Segundo tells him that he had read a proclamation saying that the workers had gone home peacefully. The account of the Banana massacre serves to show that reality and history can be wiped out, to become myth, and it is only through memory that any semblance of truth can be revealed. Thus, García Márquez uses the transgressing consciousness to subvert reality and history in order to show how persistently powerful memory and myth can be. After the Banana massacre, Macondo sinks deep into desolation. The rain that occurs after it ceases only after four years, eleven months and two days, leaving Macondo in a state of damp, speeding decay.

Macondo, it can be said, embodies the hybrid space of reality and myth, by which García Márquez brings in both the common and incredible to comment on society. The unending wars of Colonel Aureliano serve as a critique of war and political violence. With superhuman energy he “organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost
them all.” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 106) Hyperbole serves to amplify his portrait:

He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad. He lived through a dose of strychnine in his coffee that was enough to kill a horse. He refused the Order of Merit, which the President of the Republic awarded him...the only wound that he received was the one he gave himself in the chest with a pistol and the bullet came out through his back without damaging any vital organ.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 106-107)

This is told by the narrating consciousness in Chapter Six¹ before the events take place in later chapters. Colonel Aureliano shooting himself in the chest for example, is mentioned here but actually takes place later in Chapter Nine. The extraordinary lives of the two sons of José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula, José Arcadio and Colonel Aureliano, reflect the subversive nature of this reality that is further exposed by other episodes.

José Arcadio is kidnapped by the gypsies who come to Macondo. When he returns he tells his family that

Under a bright noonday sun in the Gulf of Bengal his ship had killed a sea dragon, in the stomach of which they found the helmet, the buckles, and the weapons of a Crusader. In the Caribbean he had seen the ghost of the pirate ship of Victor Hugues, with its sails torn by the winds of death, the masts chewed by sea worms, and still looking for the course to Guadeloupe.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 94)

José Arcadio has lived the extraordinary life of a sailor and his death is equally incredible:

As soon as José Arcadio closed the bedroom door the sound of a pistol shot echoed through the house. A trickle of blood came out under the door, crossed
the living room, went out into the street, continued on in a straight line across the uneven terraces, went down steps and climbed over curbs, passed along the Street of the Turks,...made a right angle at the Buendía house, went in under the closed door, crossed through the parlor, hugging the walls so as not to stain the rugs... and passed without being seen under Amaranta’s chair...through the pantry and came out in the kitchen, where Úrsula was getting ready to crack thirty-six eggs to make bread.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* 135

Here the uncommon movement of José Arcadio’s blood enters the domestic space of Úrsula’s kitchen to tell her about José Arcadio’s death. Thus, a mingling of the imagined space with the familiar space is brought about by the transgressing consciousness.

Wendy B. Faris says that it is the “two-way street phenomenon” (Faris 115) that enables the transgressing consciousness to move in and out of reality and myth to enter the hybrid space. She also says that “the narrative is anchored in this world but ventures out of it and back in; the magical elements gnaw at its flesh, as it were, partially detaching it from concrete reality, but always inserting it back in” (Faris 96). Other incidents that occur in the hybrid space include Remedios’s ascension, death’s visit to Amaranta and consequent prediction that she will die when she finishes her shroud, the rain of yellow flowers when José Arcadio Buendía dies and the levitation of Father Nicanor Reyna after drinking chocolate, among others.

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Besides the subversion of everyday reality, the confusing repetition of the names of characters also proves to be another way in which the narrating consciousness treads beyond the normal. The recurrence of names becomes a motif that possesses much significance. The intention behind the repetition is to reinforce the feeling of circularity (Gullon 31) and more importantly, futility. This becomes clear when the narrating consciousness reveals Úrsula’s doubts about naming Aureliano Segundo’s son José Arcadio:

Throughout the long history of the family the insistent repetition of names had made her draw some conclusions that seemed to be certain. While the Aurelianos were withdrawn, but with lucid minds, the José Arcadios were impulsive and enterprising, but they were marked with a tragic sign.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 186-187)

Úrsula’s observation turns out to be true. The repetition of names from one generation to another is reason enough for the descendant to inherit the same qualities as the ancestor. For example, José Arcadio, the son of José Arcadio Buendía is good humoured but dies mysteriously; José Arcadio Segundo, the great grandson leads the Banana strike and then is fated to live with the traumatic memory of the massacre. Again, Colonel Aureliano fights many wars but ends up disillusioned making gold fishes; and finally, there is Aureliano Babilonia, who unknowingly commits incest with his aunt Amaranta Úrsula, and who deciphers the manuscript, which while he reads, simultaneously brings about the extermination of
Macondo. The process of name-giving therefore, runs counter to itself, turning back to the same mistakes, fears and failures as the ancestor. This truth is exclaimed by Úrsula: “I know all of this by heart...It’s as if time had turned around and we were back at the beginning” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 199).

Looking over the shoulder and turning back is what the transgressing consciousness also does in Collected Stories. The stories begin in media res (Pelayo 72) as memory plays an important role in the telling of the stories:

On the third day of rain they had killed so many crabs inside the house that Pelayo had to cross his drenched courtyard and throw them into the sea, because the newborn child had a temperature all night and they thought it was due to the stench. The world had been sad since Tuesday. (“A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”, Collected Stories 186)

The three collections in Collected Stories show “the development of García Márquez’s mythical world” (Dauster 467). They highlight the world view that is magnified in his novels. Bell-Villada says that García Márquez was influenced by Hemingway’s “iceberg” theory of the short story, “whereby the author makes visible only one-seventh of what is to be communicated, the other six-sevenths lying implicitly beneath the narrative’s surface” (120). The range of the narrating consciousness is sometimes subdued as in “Tuesday Siesta”, savouring the suspense, and sometimes it gets carried away to become panoramic as in “Big Mama’s
Funeral”. All in all, the short stories provide small doses of what the reader experiences in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*.

“Tuesday Siesta” begins with a train emerging from a tunnel and then being flanked by banana plantations, immediately bringing to mind the banana plantations of Macondo. A woman tells another person to close the window and the reader comes to know that the other person is a girl. The narrating consciousness describes them thus:

They were the only passengers in the lone third-class car. Since the smoke of the locomotive kept coming through the window, the girl left her seat and put down the only things they had with them: a plastic sack with some things to eat and a bouquet of flowers wrapped in newspaper. She sat on the opposite seat, away from the window, facing her mother. They were both in severe and poor mourning clothes.

*(Collected Stories 90)*

Now that the narrating consciousness has revealed the relation between these two people, the purpose of their journey however, is still unknown. Time is recorded and it is eleven o’clock in the morning when the train reaches the banana plantations. The heat is “stifling”, the surroundings are “dusty” and there is a “mysterious silence”. The woman and her daughter reach on a “bright August Tuesday” and it is almost two o’clock when they reach the town during siesta time. They go to the parish house where the woman asks for the priest. When the priest finally comes to meet her, it is revealed that the woman is the mother of Carlos
Centeno, a thief who was killed the previous week. At this point, the narrating consciousness moves into the previous week and tells of Rebeca, a widow who had lived in an old house for twenty-eight years. This might be a reference to Rebeca from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* who was the widow of José Arcadio. Colonel Aureliano is also mentioned when we are told that Rebeca used an ancient revolver that had not been fired since the days of Colonel Aureliano. Rebeca had heard something outside her door and took the revolver and shot straight at the lock. In the morning it was discovered that she had killed a man out of self-defense. The man was the woman’s only son. The ending of the story is open ended with the woman and her daughter leaving for the cemetery while the whole town watches them. The transgressing consciousness presents the reader with numerous possibilities of what the story may be about; most of those possibilities appear to be eliminated after a reading of the flashback; but then the end of the story leaves the reader, as the opening did, with numerous possibilities of interpretation.

(Pelayo 74)

In “Big Mama’s Funeral”, the narrating consciousness starts with the death of Big Mama and then goes back to describing her life. The first sentence of the story emphasizes that the story is a confirmation that Big Mama is a real person:

This is, for all the world’s unbelievers, the true account of Big Mama, absolute sovereign of the Kingdom of Macondo, who lived for ninety-two years, and
died in the odor of sanctity one Tuesday last September, and whose funeral was attended by the Pope.

(Collected Stories 170)

The mention of the Pope and Macondo in the same sentence however, shows the merging of reality and myth. Bell-Villada says: “The piece is told in the highly oral style of a public storyteller or carnival Barker, who leans on his ‘stool against the front door,’ intent on preempting ‘the historians’” (127). Reality and history therefore take a back seat as the transgressing consciousness focusses the spotlight on myth.

Big Mama’s ancestors had ruled the district of Macondo with “a dominance which covered two centuries” (Collected Stories 172) and now that she was dying, she wanted to express her last wishes. Big Mama had never married and she was surrounded by her nieces and nephews.

The transgressing consciousness uses hyperbole to describe her power:

No one knew the origin, or the limits or the real value of her estate, but everyone was used to believing that Big Mama was the owner of the waters, running and still, of rain and drought, and of the district’s roads, telegraph poles, leap years, and heat waves, and that she had furthermore a hereditary right over life and property.

(Collected Stories 172)

Added to this, is the absurdity of her doctor’s treatment of her:

...for three weeks he besmeared the dying woman inside and out with all sorts of academic salves, magnificent stimulants, and masterful suppositories. Then he applied bloated toads to the site of her pain, and leeches to her kidneys...

(Collected Stories 173)
The death and funeral of Big Mama becomes a spectacle, with a carnival and hawkers, lottery stalls and men who sold a balm that was supposed to cure erysipelas and give eternal life. This atmosphere triggers off a recollection of Big Mama celebrating her birthdays. The celebrations would begin two days before and end on her birthday. But now, that she was dying she lists her material possessions and then her “immaterial possessions”:

- The wealth of the subsoil, the territorial waters, the colors of the flag, national sovereignty, the traditional parties, the rights of man, civil rights, the nation’s leadership, the right of appeal, Congressional hearings, letters of recommendation, historical records, free elections, beauty queens, transcendental speeches, the Supreme Court, the purity of language, public opinion, the lessons of democracy, Christian morality, the Communist menace, the high cost of living, statements of political support.

(Collected Stories 178)

The Pope, the President of the Republic and his ministers, the Council of State, the clergy, representatives of banking, commerce and industry and many others come to the funeral, while Big Mama in her “formaldehyde eternity” does not see any of it.

“Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo” is narrated in the first person and has elements of the stream of consciousness technique. “The story is a portrait of a woman whose incipient emotional depression is exacerbated by the rain and, extension, by the ever-present and overpowering tropic” (Dauster 467). The rain in the story lasts only
for four days, starting on Sunday and ending on Wednesday, but to Isabel it seems as if it had lasted for weeks and months. Quickly, the rain turns from welcome respite into resented blessing. “But without our noticing it, the rain was penetrating too deeply into our senses…our senses had been filled with rain. And on Monday morning they had overflowed” (Collected Stories 83). When the rain starts, Isabel and her family had just come from Sunday Mass. It then increases, growing “like an immense tree over the other trees” (Collected Stories 83). Here the rain falls on the familiar space only to seep through the walls and then to turn it into a dream-like space of “immense emptiness” (Collected Stories 88). This rain is similar to the rain that fell on Macondo for four years that stopped daily life and made reality stagnant. In the story, the transgressing consciousness uses the rain to blur the passage of time and the human senses, taking Isabel into the “labyrinth of the rain” (83). This labyrinth obscures Isabel’s mind. It becomes a mush of distant voices and memories. As in the insomnia plague in One Hundred Years of Solitude, Isabel and her family succumb to an impractical reality: “We were paralyzed, drugged by the rain, given over to the collapse of nature with a peaceful and resigned attitude” (Collected Stories 85).
“A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” and “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World” involve a “rupture with objective reality as we know it; they deal with a world in which the most extraordinary fantasy is accepted without question or surprise” (Dauster 470). Pelayo, a character in the story, discovers the old man who was dressed like a ragpicker. There were only a few faded hairs left on his bald skull and very few teeth in his mouth, ... His huge buzzard wings, dirty and half-plucked, were forever entangled in the mud.

(Collected Stories 186)

Similarly, the drowned man is first discovered by children who play with him and bury him in the sand. It is only when the men see him that “alarm” (Collected Stories 212) spreads in the village. They notice that he is heavier than any other dead man and attribute it to the water that has entered his bones. It is only later that they realize that the man is taller than usual. The alarm easily subsides and they reason “that maybe the ability to keep on growing after death was part of the nature of certain drowned men” (Collected Stories 212). The old man with wings speaks in “a strong sailor’s voice” and the people “skipped over the inconvenience of the wings” and conclude that he is a shipwrecked sailor. Finally, the old man is called an angel by a wise neighbour woman, who was knocked down by the rain. Soon everyone comes to see the “flesh-and-blood angel” (Collected Stories 187). Father Gonzaga notices that the angel
was much too human: he had an unbearable smell of the outdoors, the back side of his wings was strewn with parasites and his main feathers had been mistreated by terrestrial winds, and nothing about him measured up to the proud dignity of angels.

(Collected Stories 188)

The doctor too is surprised by “the logic of his wings. They seemed so natural on that completely human organism that he couldn’t understand why other men didn’t have them too” (Collected Stories 192). The drowned man is “never treated as a cadaver, but as a man” (Frosch 498). The people imagine his name is “Esteban” (Collected Stories 214), they imagine that he had a wife and think of the usual problems that a tall man would have. The people are thus keen to fit the old man with wings and the enormous drowned man into familiar categories (Frosch 497), even though they belong to a mythical world.

“The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship” moves between the voice of the first person narrator who is the boy and the narrating consciousness. It intersects the voice of the boy and the voice of his mother, at certain points in the telling. The boy becomes an orphan later in the narration, an outcast in society, with the secret determination to prove the reality of a ghost ship that he sees. Another unique feature besides the intersection of voices is that the story is made up of one long sentence that transgresses conventional grammatical rules:
I fell asleep counting the stars and I dreamed about that huge ship, of course, he was so convinced that he didn’t tell anyone nor did he remember the vision again until the same night in the following March...he ran to tell his mother and she spent three weeks moaning with disappointment, because your brain’s rotting away from doing so many things backward, sleeping during the day and going out at night like a criminal,...

(Collected Stories 229)

The story begins in the present with the boy saying “Now they’re going to see who I am”, and then moves into the past when the boy first sees the “illusory liner” by the intermittent light of the beacon and ending in the present, when he finally guides the ship into the town where everyone can see it. The intersection of voices and the moving from the past to the present in “The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship”, prepares one for the bolder transgressions of the narrating consciousness in The Autumn of the Patriarch.

The narrating consciousness in The Autumn of the Patriarch is brought to life by the memory of the people who discover the corpse of the dictator in his crumbling palace:

...there we saw him, in his denim uniform without insignia, boots, the gold spur on his left heel, older than all old men...and he was stretched out on the floor, face down, his right arm bent under his head as a pillow, as he had slept night after night every night of his ever so long life of a solitary despot.

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 3-4)

All the chapters of the novel begin with this discovery, and then the narrating consciousness goes in different directions into the past, present and future, to reveal varied events from the Patriarch’s life and aspects of
his personality. The qualities of the Patriarch and events in his life emerge in each chapter like new sand dunes constantly being formed in the desert. The reader is taken on a dense and serpentine transgression of fictional barriers by the use of the stream of consciousness technique, the shifting of pronouns, hyperbole and repetition. It may be seen that the narrating consciousness is an amalgamation of the voice of the Patriarch, the voices of his officers and people, speaking slowly, at times uncomprehendingly, often unconsciously and puzzlingly, they recreate out of their memories and experiences a history of Latin American dictatorship. Sometimes their sentences coil around shared memories or crumble into fragments in incomprehension, sometimes their sentences spill over with marvelous images that make a landscape of myths or corrode with bitterness and rage; sometimes they speak as victims, at other times, as collaborators.

(Bhalla 1597-1598)

The hybrid space of the story is filled with the extraordinary life of the Patriarch and functions like a sponge absorbing the waters of the real and mythical worlds:

there was no other nation except the one that had been made by him in his own image and likeness where space was changed and time corrected by the designs of his absolute will, reconstituted by him ever since the most uncertain origins of his memory...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 143)

Bell-Villada says: “As he prepared to anatomize a phenomenon so grotesque as Caribbean dictatorship, García Márquez found himself faced with a daunting problem of narrative voice, with serious limits inhering in
any of the traditional approaches.” Bell-Villada goes on to say that García Márquez had to think about the options that were available to him. Firstly, if the story was narrated by the dictator’s enemies and victims there would be “much suffering and gore—but few real tensions and surprises.” Secondly, if the story was narrated as a monologue by the dictator “the apparent effect would be one of tacit endorsement or obvious caricature, and in either case a narrow range of experience and emotions.” Thirdly, if the story had a narrator “more or less loyal to the dictator, there would have been the familiar difficulty in perceiving and being fair to the varied response of the larger population.” Fourthly, if it was narrated by an objective and “omniscient onlooker, the tone of evenhanded objectivity toward both dictator and oppositionists would have produced an unconvincing and stillborn text” (176-177).

What García Márquez finally did was
to compose a polyphonic text featuring the extensive solo arias of the dictator, accompanied in turn by the briefer recitatives and ariettas of his intimates and subordinates, contenders and followers, these ever-shifting ensembles further backed by a vast chorus of anonymous supernumeraries, who have their own once-in-a-lifetime stage entrances as observers, admirers, and sufferers of the patriarch, everything from ambassadors to concubines.

(Bell-Villada 177)

This all-encompassing transgressing consciousness made up of myriad voices, stirs repulsion and pity simultaneously. “The net effect of this approach is that García Márquez deals with all sides equally objectively
but also equally sympathetically” (Bell-Villada 177), since each voice expresses purely its own experience. The monologues of the dictator, for instance, take the reader through his rise as the ideal leader who becomes a terror, to his decline into an isolated decrepit man, incapable of ever knowing happiness or love.

...no one except him knew that all he had left in the pockets of his memory were a few odd scraps of the vestiges of the past, that he was alone in the world, deaf as a post, dragging his thick decrepit feet through dark offices...His only contacts with the reality of this world were by then a few scattered scraps of his largest memories, only they kept him alive after he had been despoiled of the affairs of state and stayed swimming in a state of innocence in the limbo of power,...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 108-109)

This limbo of power reflects the space of limbo, an in-betweeness, into which the narrating consciousness enters.

The Patriarch is the son of Bendición Alvarado, a former prostitute, whose origin is as obscure as his. In her youth, she sold “chicks painted as nightingales, golden toucans, goatsuckers disguised as peacocks” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 125). The Patriarch’s indifference to convention and order is seen in his mother’s canonization. She is canonized by the Patriarch after her death, based on the imprint her body leaves on her shroud. When the nuncio confirms that the “body printed on the linen was not an act of Divine Providence”, (The Autumn of the Patriarch 120) the Patriarch only listens quietly. A group of hired fanatics then destroy the
palace of the Apostolic Nunciature. The nuncio is paraded on a donkey and with orders from the Patriarch, he is kept half dead on a life raft with provisions for three days, on the same route taken by the European cruise ships, so that

the whole world will know what happens to foreigners who lift their hands against the majesty of the nation, and the Pope will learn now and forever that he may be Pope in Rome with his ring on his finger sitting on his golden throne, but here I am what I am, God damn it....

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 121)

What follows is a throng of miracles allegedly performed by the dead Bendición Alvarado: the curing of lepers, consumption and impotency; lost relatives and friends found, lost drowned people found. But later, the narrating consciousness reveals that the government had paid the false dropsy victims, the dead man who rose from the grave and the gypsy woman who gave birth to a two-headed monster. Inevitably, Bendición Alvarado is given a “civil sainthood” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 133) based on four articles as follows: the proclamation of her civil sainthood by the supreme will of the people, making her the patroness of the nation; the declaration of a war between the nation and the Holy See; the expulsion of the archbishop, bishops, priests and nuns from the nation; and lastly, the expropriation of all the goods and property of the church, which were to be used for the “posthumous patrimony of Saint Bendición Alvarado” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 133).
A deliberate indifference to conventional grammar allows for the polyphonic character of the narrating consciousness to express the sordid and shocking life of the Patriarch in the most intricate ways. The Patriarch is the archetypal dictator who undergoes “a process of mythification” (Luna 26), not only through his own words and actions, but through the words and actions of his people, forming a collective body of words, voices and emotion:

and there was a great permanent rally on the main square with shouts of eternal support and large signs saying God Save the Magnificent who arose from the dead on the third day...he alone was the government, and no one bothered the aims of his will whether by word or deed, because he was so alone in his glory that he no longer had any enemies left,...large banners saying God Save the All Pure who watches over the cleanliness of the nation...opening a way among the lepers and blind men and cripples who begged the salt of health from his hands, baptizing with his name at the font in the courtyard the children of his godchildren among persistent adulators who proclaimed him the one and only...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 29-31)

García Márquez, creates in the Patriarch, a character who is master of his realm. The narrating consciousness constantly affirms the inconceivable reach of his power, proclaims him “the corrector of earthquakes, eclipses, leap years and other errors of God,...” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 7) because he can “seize history”, “deny people a common purpose and a recognisable set of moral or political reasons for united action” (Bhalla 1598). This is proven in a vision he has of his mother resurrected from death where she returns
free forever of the risks of the world because he had them tear the pages about the viceroy out of school primers so that they would not exist in history, he had forbidden the statues that disturbed your sleep, mother...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 117)

The most outrageous and bizarre subversion of reality is the sale of the Caribbean Sea by the Patriarch to the Americans:

This country isn't worth a plug nickel, except for the sea, of course,...so think about it, your excellency, we'll accept it on account for the interest of that debt which is in arrears and which won't be paid off even with a hundred generations of leaders as diligent as your excellency...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 204)

The Patriarch is actually left with two options. Either the marines come to the city or the Americans take the sea. In the end, the sea is bartered for the city:

there was no other way, mother, so they took away the Caribbean in April, Ambassador Ewing's nautical engineers carried it off in numbered pieces to plant it far from the hurricanes in the blood-red dawns of Arizona, they took it away with everything it had inside general sir, with the reflection of our cities, our timid drowned people, our demented dragons,...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 208)

The nation that was made in the image and likeness of the Patriarch inherits the eccentricities, crimes, trauma and violence of its father. The Patriarch and his nation inhabit the hybrid space, produced by the disruption of the walls of reality and myth by the transgressing consciousness.

"The multivocal nature of the narrative and the cultural hybridity that characterize magical realism extends to its characters, which tend
toward a radical multiplicity” (Faris 25). The narrative consciousness lends itself to a multiplicity of utterances, therefore, that tell the story to suit each character. Throughout the novel, García Márquez uses an array of pronouns to give a panoramic view of “despotism and its both systematic and arbitrary network of relationships” (Bell-Villada 179). The “I”, is usually but not always the dictator; “thou” is addressed to the beauty queen Manuela Sanchez and Leticia Nazareno; “he” refers to the dictator or any other male character; a “you” informs the dictator or the reader of important knowledge; the broad “we” represents the people; a plural “you” by which the dictator gives orders and “they” is also used when the dictator refers to the people who love him and also, the people who find the body of Patricio Aragones, the dictator’s double. (Bell-Villada 178)

Nearing the end, the transgressing consciousness retraces its path to close the circle, by an echo of the memory that began the narrative. The body of the Patriarch now lies unfeeling, alien to the clamor of the frantic crowds who took to the streets singing hymns of joy at the jubilant news of his death and alien forevermore to the music of liberation and the rockets of jubilation and the bells of glory that announced to the world the good news that the uncountable time of eternity had come to an end.

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 229)
The transgressing narrative consciousness displaces the bricks in the wall of reality, to see beyond reality and to embrace magic and myth. García Márquez has crafted the narrating consciousness in such a way, that it transgresses into a world where reality and magic overlap: the world of his grandmother that converges with the world of modern fiction. What makes García Márquez’s narrating consciousness different is the way in which he has incorporated the outlook of the oral tradition of his community into it. He gives to the narrating consciousness knowledge and understanding of the two worlds. The power and reach of the narrating consciousness is therefore enhanced by its transgressive facet, given to it by the oral tradition. Finally, García Márquez’s transgressing consciousness weaves a narrative that is a juxtaposition of the imperfection, weakness and brutality of reality and history.
Note

1 In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, Gabriel García Márquez does not number the chapters. The numbering of the chapters has been done for the purpose of explanation.
Works Cited


