Chapter IV

Transgressing Reality through Time, Solitude and Death in 
*One Hundred Years of Solitude, The Autumn of the Patriarch* 
and *Collected Stories*

Time, solitude and death constitute the fictional metaphors that recur in García Márquez’s writing. The reality that they represent is a subverted one that accepts the strange and the unacceptable as ordinary states of existence for them. The transgressing consciousness uses them as transgressive agents to challenge accepted beliefs about the human condition and human experience. Time, solitude and death are the strands by which “individual and collective destinies are meshed” (Gullon 30). By their recurrence they manifest the cycle of birth and rebirth, the transformation of reality into myth, the blessing or curse of ancestors.

García Márquez is indebted to Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinean writer, for his concept of time. Borges envisioned time as an endless repetition and García Márquez adopted this in his fiction. In “The Garden of Forking Paths” Borges says, “This web of time—the strands of which approach one another, bifurcate, intersect or ignore each other through the centuries—embrace every possibility” (qtd. in Ruch). The limitless possibility of the meandering of time, enhances the circumstance for
solitude, which causes the characters to live a death-in-life, thus bringing them closer to real physical death which they overthrow.¹

Time in One Hundred Years of Solitude, The Autumn of the Patriarch and Collected Stories, moves, as Borges says, with innumerable possibilities, with the help of the transgressing consciousness and the transgressing characters. As Rawdon Wilson says of “The Garden of Forking Paths”,

all directions are bifurcated, all spatial arrangements labyrinthine, not simply because the narrative concerns a mysterious labyrinth...but because the central narrative concept is that time bifurcates, that time is labyrinthine, not directly linear, and that fictional space mirrors what is true of time.

(Zamora and Faris 219)

The narrating consciousness therefore, inhabiting the fictional space, functions transgressively by mirroring the nature of time. It tells the story with an understanding that time is a wheel with many strands, which in turn, bifurcate and intersect other strands. The transgressing consciousness mirrors the multiplicity of time in One Hundred Years of Solitude and treads many strands to tell the story of the Buendía family.

...the history of the family was a machine with unavoidable repetitions, a turning wheel that would have gone on spilling into eternity were it not for the progressive and irremediable wearing of the axle.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 402)

These words, concluded upon by Pilar Ternera, an outsider to the Buendía family, who outlives Úrsula, and who also bears the illegitimate sons of Colonel Aureliano and José Arcadio, gives an image of the
circularity of time in the novel. Time, thus perpetually repeats, bifurcates and intersects in an irremediable circle.

Úrsula, as has been noted, realizes the circularity of time when she speaks and lives with her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren. The main purpose for García Márquez is to show the futility of successive generations to save the family and Macondo from impending destruction. As Patricia Tobin says: “Time is not spent, but is squandered and wasted”, with no productivity or knowledge, “because the past and future panels of time are collapsed into a present of eternal novelty.” She goes on to say that García Márquez has chosen the “mythical consciousness, which apprehends time as a turning and returning cycle, with all experiences being equivalent, unique, and unclassifiable in their concrete immediacy” (43-45). Every character, every event, every revelation and every struggle open new facets of eccentricity, pathos, violence and morbidity. This is true when Aureliano Babilonia discovers at the end, that Melquíades had placed the events in the parchments “in the order of man’s conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant” (One Hundred Years of solitude 421).
Yet, the disadvantage of living in an eternal present is that the succeeding generations do not learn from the mistakes of the preceding one. The novelty is actually not novel, but the characters do not know this, so they continue to cross the same boundaries and repeat the same transgressions in some form or another. For instance, besides the well-known characteristics inherited by the series of José Arcadios and the Aurelianos, other characters also repeat the qualities of their ancestors. Remedios the Beauty never marries and causes the death of her suitors, like her grandaunt Amaranta, who rejected her two suitors, Pietro Crespi, leading to his suicide and General Gerineldo Márquez, leading to his death in war. Pilar Ternera was the mistress of both José Arcadio and Colonel Aureliano. Again, José Arcadio’s great grandsons, José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo also share the same mistress, who is Petra Cotes. Both pairs of siblings have extra marital affairs with one woman. José Arcadio Segundo converses with Melquíades and is fascinated by his parchments like José Arcadio Buendía was fascinated with the gypsy’s magnets and magnifying glass. This relationship between the Buendías and Melquíades is again relived with Aurelaino Babilonia, the last of the Buendías, when after all of his family has been annihilated, finally deciphers Melquíades’ parchments. The novel ends
with another alliance of incest between Amaranta Úrsula and Aureliano Babilonia and the death of their son, who is born with a pig’s tail.

The story of the Patriarch in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is also told with the bifurcation and intersection of the strands of time. Every chapter starts when the Patriarch’s corpse is found, which then moves as the transgressing consciousness traverses the strands of the wheel of time. Thus, the transgressing consciousness begins in the eternal present which is always novel, with new words, new emotions and new memories, illuminating the dark nooks and crannies of the Patriarch’s life. The echoes of the Patriarch’s killing, his vengeance and senility, his lost loves, his power and his vulnerability return again and again. The transgressing consciousness, at the end comes back to the beginning, which is the death of the Patriarch. The movement of the transgressing consciousness is enhanced by the shifting of pronouns, from “he” to “I” or from “we” to they”; the change of tenses from past to present, further supporting the atemporal and ahistorical status of the patriarch.

...eternal life to the magnificent one who is more ancient than his age, but he learned to live with those and all the miseries of glory as he discovered in the course of his uncountable years that a lie is more comfortable than doubt, more useful than love, more lasting than truth,...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,...general sir, where you yourself were only an uncertain vision of pitiful eyes,...with no destiny with our never knowing who he was,...or even if he was only a figment of the imagination...

( *The Autumn of the Patriarch* 228)
Thus, the Patriarch remains timeless in the hybrid space, being defined by the illusion of linearity and placed in a “temporal realm like the physical realm of ice, where all is ended but all is also possible” (Faris 98). The Patriarch is thus frozen like ice but is simultaneously ready for any possibility in the ever-turning circle of time.

The second time he was found, chewed away by vultures in the same office, wearing the same clothes and in the same position, none of us was old enough to remember what had happened the first time, but we knew that no evidence of his death was final, because there was always another truth behind the truth...but the more certain the rumors of his death seemed, he would appear even more alive and authoritarian at the least expected moment to impose other unforeseen directions to our destiny.

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 37-38)

Then, in the last chapter before the Patriarch dies, he is given the title “General of the Universe...to give him a rank higher than that of death” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 184). A soldier announces that the day is a national holiday and when asked why, he says

just imagine girl we don’t know ourselves either, the dead man must have come back to life, he said, dying with laughter, because nobody dared think such an earthshaking 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, once more dragging his great feet of an illusory monarch...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 185)

The Patriarch remains caught in the repetitiveness and replication of the wheel of time.

The same fluidity of venturing into the past and present is also maintained in Collected Stories but there is no repetition of events and
characters in the short stories. The stories do not allow for the wide ranging circular movement of time. The rain in “Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo” that “grew like an immense tree over the other trees” (Collected Stories 83) makes Isabel lose track of time and she says:

> The notion of time, upset since the day before, disappeared completely. Then there was no Thursday. What should have been Thursday was a physical, jellylike thing that could have been parted with the hands in order to look into Friday.

(Collected Stories 87)

This looking into the past or future brings a collapse of both into the present, and thus echoes what Tobin calls an “eternal novelty”. The narrating consciousness and the characters cut across the limits of time, transgressing into a constant newness of the present. The old man with wings appears out of nowhere in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”, as if belonging to a prehistoric past and the ship that the boy sees in “The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship” is made concrete by the alternating light of the lighthouse. Both the old man and the ship manage to break the walls of time in order to be seen by human eyes.

> three hundred thousand tons of shark smell passing so close to the boat that he could see the seams of the steel precipice, without a single light in the infinite portholes, without a sigh from the engines, without a soul,…its errant sea in which a whole world of drowned animals floated, and suddenly it all disappeared with the flash of the beacon and for an instant it was the diaphanous Caribbean once more,…

(Collected Stories 231)
Caught in the circle of time, is solitude, an aspect of the fiction of García Márquez that cannot be escaped. Here, solitude possesses physical, metaphysical and emotional facets. It assumes an omnipresence that transgresses the divisions of time and the finality of death. Physically, solitude afflicts Úrsula, Amaranta her daughter, José Arcadio Segundo her great grandson, and Aureliano Babilonia her great great grandson. The Buendías are a family who ultimately drift apart because of solitude. The immobilization of the dead man in “The Third Resignation” too, is a clear confrontation of the physical isolation caused by solitude. Metaphysically, solitude condemns the Patriarch to a loss of love and happiness, maiming him into a deformed and sordid human being with no morals. Solitude alone prevails in his life and seems to resurrect him continually in order to feed his hankering for power. In the same way, solitude becomes an overwhelming emotional state for Big Mama and Colonel Aureliano. It overflows to the point that it is the only emotion the characters are able to feel.

In an interview with Plinio A. Mendoza, García Márquez describes *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a story about the “solitude of everyday life” (qtd. in Zamora and Faris 155). It is ironic that a big family like the Buendías is plagued by a solitude that becomes an inevitable part of their
spiritual inheritance, “which they brought on themselves for their inability to fall in love, their strongly held superstitious beliefs, and the foundation of the family from an incestuous marriage” (Pelayo 101). All the characters suffer from varied transmutations of solitude, which brings about the corrosion of the circle’s axle as Pilar Ternera says.

José Arcadio Buendía with his fascination for new inventions and experimentation descends into the “solitude of madness” (Gullon 30), when he tries to burn down the house and starts to speak in Latin. No one can understand him and he is tied to the chestnut tree till the end of his days. Úrsula too, bears the solitude of holding the family together with a husband who has become incapable of doing it. She is alone, striving to go against the destructive repetition of time. José Arcadio, the first born, leaves Macondo to wander as a sailor. When he comes back he marries Rebeca “although he is not in love” (Pelayo 102). Amaranta bears her loneliness by rejecting Pietro Crespi and Colonel Gerineldo Márquez and dying a spinster. Her solitude “is that of rancor and death in life. She lives alone with her hate and solely for it. Her communication with Death is normal and no different from that which she has with people around her” (Gullon 31). José Arcadio Segundo’s memory of the Banana massacre draws him into a solitude that he spends in Melquiades’ room. Aureliano
Segundo on the other hand, surrenders to the solitude of his eating and
drunken sprees. Aureliano Babilonia treated by Fernanda as non-existent,
strikes a relationship with José Arcadio Segundo when he ventures into
Melquíades’ room, where everyone forgets about his existence till the
arrival of Amaranta Úrsula.

“There is only one way for mortal beings to transcend this common
solitude: through love. But love during these hundred years (or centuries)
is precarious and always in danger of ending in a catastrophe.” (Gullon
31). No character finds real love. Aureliano Babilonia is a “hermetic man
with a cloud of mystery that time was making denser” (*One Hundred
Years of Solitude* 388). He and Amaranta Úrsula find love in the house
that has started to show signs of death: “...both of them remained floating
in an empty universe where the only every day and eternal reality was
love” (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* 412). They discover love but it
enshrouds them in its solitude, where they remain oblivious to the storm
that will destroy them. Úrsula, years before had realized this incapacity
for love when she pondered over her son, Colonel Aureliano.

She realized that Colonel Aureliano Buendia had not lost his love for the
family because he had been hardened by the war, as she had thought before,
but that he had never loved anyone, not even his wife Remedios or the
countless one-night women who had passed through his life, and much less his
sons. She sensed that he had fought so many wars not out of idealism,...but
that he had won and lost for the same reason, pure and sinful pride. She
reached the conclusion that the son for whom she would have given her life
was simply a man incapable of love. One night when she was carrying him in
her belly she heard him weeping...an unmistakable sign of an incapacity for
love.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 254)

This observation of Úrsula confirms that Colonel Aureliano is a victim of
solitude. The chalk circle that he draws around himself, obstructing any
person from entering, can perhaps be enlarged to contain the whole
family. A family that is condemned to know isolation and not love, is
thus driven to solitude.

The Patriarch in The Autumn of the Patriarch sinks into an abyss of
solitude, in which he spends his days. In an interview with Plinio A.
Mendoza, García Márquez said that the novel deals with the “solitude of
power” (qtd. in Zamora and Faris 155). The desire for power pulls the
Patriarch away from truth and reality, thus allowing solitude to seep
gradually into his life. When he was young

power was still not the shoreless bog of the fullness of his autumn but a
feverish torrent that we saw gush out of its spring before our very eyes so that
all he had to do was point at trees for them to bear fruit and at animals for
them to grow and at men for them to prosper, and he had ordered them to take
the rain away from places where it disturbed the harvest and take it to drought-
stricken lands, and that was the way it had been, sir, I saw it, because his
legend had begun much earlier than he believed himself master of all his
power,...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 76)

The frenzy of the spring of his power has turned into the apathy of the
autumn of his power. The word “autumn” in the title of the novel
signifies the “timeless autumn of his dying” (Luna 26). His life therefore, has become an endless death in life, his kingdom a “measureless realm of gloom” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 66) and his heart bears an “incapacity for love” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 227). Seen from the eyes of Manuela Sanchez, the young beauty queen whom he desires, the Patriarch has become a walking relic:

I pitilessly scrutinized the bat lips, the mute eyes that seemed to be looking at me from the bottom of a pool, the hairless skin like clods of earth tamped down with gall oil...and the ring with the presidential seal exhausted on his knee, his baggy linen suit as if there were nobody inside, his enormous dead man’s shoes, his invincible thought, his occult powers, the oldest ancient on earth, the most fearsome, the most hated, and the least pitied in the nation... (The Autumn of the Patriarch 63)

Manuela Sanchez’s view of the Patriarch as the most hated and the least pitied man in the nation, contradicts the Patriarch’s reassurances to himself that his people love him. He alone deludes himself and is ruined by the “stigma of his solitude” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 88).

The circling of time forges a pattern in which solitude revolves tirelessly around the Patriarch. He cannot form lasting relationships with anyone because of the predestined path of his rise to the “solitude of power”. His body double, Patricio Aragonés, dies; he has Major General Rodrigo de Aguilar, whom he calls his “comrade” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 98) killed and served on a plate; Manuela Sánchez disappears; his mother Bendición Alvarado remains an “indestructible memory” (The
Autumn of the Patriarch 110) and cannot save him from sinking into solitude; his only legitimate wife, Leticia Nazareno and their son, Emanuel are killed by dogs; and finally, the Patriarch has José Ignacio Saenz de la Barra, the man employed by him to find the people responsible for the killing of Leticia Nazareno and Emanuel, gruesomely executed. These are characters who come into contact with the Patriarch, but as it is “a vocation imposed by birth”, (Gullon 30) the relationships he has with them never help to cure his solitude.

The transgressing consciousness which speaks in many voices, serves to enlarge the shadow of solitude and isolation of the Patriarch. Through the polyphony of voices, as Bell-Villada says, the transgressing consciousness shifts from one person to another to draw out the misery, desolation and desperation of the soul of the Patriarch. The kingdom of the Patriarch disintegrates bit by bit as he dreams of the sea that is coming back (The Autumn of the Patriarch 73). The crater caused by the absent sea reflects the growing emptiness of the Patriarch’s soul because “he knew himself to be hated by those that loved him most...he felt his memory exalted by the same ones who cursed his mother” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 226). It is the people themselves, who are his subjects and who live under his rule, who bear an undercurrent of hate, which only
increases his solitude. Like Colonel Aureliano, the Patriarch has an incapacity for love and so he tried to compensate for that infamous fate with the burning cultivation of the solitary vice of power, he had made himself victim of his own sect to be immolated on the flames of that infinite holocaust, he had fed on fallacy and crime, he had flourished in impiety and dishonor...he learned to live with those and all the miseries of glory as he discovered in the course of his uncountable years that a lie is more comfortable than doubt, more useful than love, more lasting than truth, he had arrived without surprise at the ignominious fiction of commanding without power,...that he was condemned not to know life except in reverse,...

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 227-228)

To make up for the lack of love therefore, the Patriarch immerses himself in the pursuit of power, which is inevitably a solitary pursuit. The transgressing consciousness successfully transforms solitude into the air that fills every voice in The Autumn of the Patriarch. The hopelessness and desolation of solitude engulfs the story. As Lois Simpson says, death can also seek the characters in the form of solitude which “separates them physically, psychologically, and emotionally from those around them” (qtd. in Ruch).

The death in life that solitude brings is literally captured in “The Third Resignation” from Collected Stories. Solitude immobilizes the man like death does. The doctor in the story tells the man’s mother:

‘Madam, your child has a grave illness: he is dead. Nevertheless,” he went on, “we shall do everything possible to keep him alive beyond death. We will succeed in making his organic functions continue through a complex system of autonutrition. Only the motor functions will be different, his spontaneous
movements. We shall watch his life through growth, which too, shall continue on in a normal fashion. It is simply “a living death.”

(Collected Stories 3)

What the doctor says is contradictory to the usual understanding of death. The words “living death” is an oxymoron that treats death like an illness. Perhaps, what can be drawn from this is that it is a spiritual death caused by solitude.

...something that had functioned normally ‘at other times’ and now was hammering at his head from within with dry and hard blows made by the bones of a fleshless, skeletal hand, and it made him remember all the bitter sensations of life.

(Collected Stories 1)

Solitude is a part of his life which functioned normally, but now has become more intense, evoking harsh memories where “a kind of emptiness” had “begun.” (Collected Stories 3) The man says that he had heard the noise in his head when he died for the first time. It was the time when he saw a corpse and realized it was his own corpse. The image of the corpse brings to mind the recurring corpse of the Patriarch. The man debates whether he really heard the doctor say “living death”, or whether it was because of his fever. Delirium causes him to doubt himself, but the fact remains that he has been lying in a coffin for eighteen years. “The Third Resignation” is perhaps, a literalizing of the fever of solitude: the hammering in the head, the emptiness, the hallucination and delirium. All this is felt with the strong presence of his mother and his family. As
Pelayo says of solitude: “...it is a natural condition for humankind. Ironically, to be alone, in solitude, the individual needs the presence of others. Only when the individual is aware of others can he or she experience solitude” (83). Thus, the transgressing consciousness opens unusual curves to the experience of solitude.

The solitude of Big Mama in “Big Mama’s Funeral” is the same solitude that Pelayo talks about, because even though she is surrounded by her subjects and her nieces and nephews, she is alone. Big Mama seems to experience the solitude of power like the Patriarch. When her nieces try to take off her rings made of precious stones before she dies, Big Mama clenches her fists and calls them “highway robbers” (Collected Stories 173). She suffers from an incapacity to love like the Patriarch and Colonel Aureliano. Her power has made her alone and suspicious of her heirs. The narrating consciousness undermines her grand funeral by using satire.

In her coffin draped in purple, separated from reality by eight copper turnbuckles, Big Mama was at that moment too absorbed in her formaldehyde eternity to realize the magnitude of her grandeur. The Supreme Pontiff himself...conquered the heat with a plaited palm fan, and honored with his Supreme Dignity the greatest funeral in the world. (Collected Stories 184)

The pomp and splendour that Big Mama dreamed of could not be experienced by her. Indeed, satire is implicit in her name. The word
“Big” highlights the massive solitude Big Mama is sinking into. Pelayo says: “She is indeed the epitome of solitude, alone in the forgotten town of Macondo, where, according to the narrative voice in One Hundred Years of Solitude, none of its inhabitants will have a second opportunity on earth” (84).

In the fiction of García Márquez, death is not the end of life but it is life itself. The transgressive mode he employs allows characters to continue living as ghosts or resurrects them back to life. The certainty of death is swept away and is replaced by the certainty of an alternative existence. In One Hundred Years of Solitude, the reason that José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula leave their village is because the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar, the man whom José Arcadio Buendía killed, starts to haunt them. But the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar follows them to Macondo. When José Arcadio Buendía breaks down mentally and is tied to the chestnut tree, Prudencio Aguilar becomes his companion.

Úrsula took care of him, fed him, brought him news of Aureliano. But actually, the only person with whom he was able to have contact for a long time was Prudencio Aguilar. Almost pulverized at that time by the decrepitude of death, Prudencio Aguilar would come twice a day to chat with him. They talked about fighting cocks. They promised each other to set up a breeding farm for magnificent birds, not so much to enjoy their victories, which they would not need then, as to have something to do on the tedious Sundays of death. It was Prudencio Aguilar who cleaned him, fed him,...But one night, two weeks after they took him to his bed, Prudencio Aguilar touched his shoulder in an intermediate room and he stayed there forever, thinking that it was the real room.

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 143)
In the “imagined space” (Gullon 29) of José Arcadio Buendía, boundaries collapse and death is subverted. Being used to the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar, José Arcadio Buendía in his dementia, converses with him and gradually slips into an intermediate space of reality and dream. This is the “intermediate room” the narrating consciousness mentions, into which José Arcadio Buendía enters.

Melquiades, the elusive and wise gypsy who brings magic to Macondo also dies but returns alive again. He becomes old, difficult to communicate with and solitary. He is engrossed in the parchments that nobody can understand. One day he tells Arcadio that he has found immortality and on another day, Colonel Aureliano hears him say “I have died of fever on the dunes of Singapore” (One Hundred Years of Solitude 75). Melquiades then dies on the same day, drowning in a river where he takes his bath. It is when Aureliano Segundo tries to decipher the documents in Melquiades’ room, that Melquiades appears to him.

One hot noontime, while he was poring over the manuscripts, he sensed that he was not alone in the room. Against the light from the window, sitting with his hands on his knees, was Melquiades. He was under forty years of age. He was wearing the same old-fashioned vest and the hat that looked like a raven’s wings...

(One Hundred Years of Solitude 189)

Aureliano Segundo, immediately recognizes him because of the hereditary memory transmitted from his grandfather. From this point on,
Melquíades and Aureliano Segundo meet for many years. Melquíades, however, refuses to translate the parchments and tells Aureliano Segundo that no one can know the meaning of the parchments until they reach a hundred years. Thus, the reality of death is transgressed since “fluid boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead are traced only to be crossed” (Faris 22). Úrsula, the matriarch, exhibits what Zamora calls the “simultaneity of selves” (503). This is most apparent when Amaranta Úrsula and Aureliano Babilonia find her dead but she has not realized it yet, and yells that she is alive. A moment later, she says to herself that she really is dead.

The circle of repetition takes with it death, time and solitude in a resurgent movement that emerges with every turn of events. The limits of death are overturned and its finality shattered. In some cases, its hold on the body disappears and is transformed into a living experience. This is seen in the Patriarch’s repeated defiance of death: “…a solemn message was made public in which he had expressed my unique and sovereign decision to be in my post of service to the nation when the comet passes again,…” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 69). He defies death, supplanting its reality with an existence that endures through treason, insecurity, violence and lovelessness. When the Patriarch appears after the death of
Patricio Aragones, his double, he is believed to be immortal. The title of “General of the Universe” clearly equates his power with the power of God.

The truth about the Patriarch’s reign is revealed to him by the dying Patricio Aragones. Aragones tells the Patriarch that he never loved him and that he had been praying for the Patriarch to be killed as payback for his ruined life.

...look truth in the face general, so you can know that no one has ever told you what he really thinks but that everyone tells you what he knows you want to hear while he bows to your face and thumbs his nose at you from behind...I’m serious general, take advantage of the fact that I’m dying now and die with me, no one has more right than I to tell you this because I never had any intention of looking like anyone much less a national hero but only a sad little glassblower making bottles like my father.

(The Autumn of the Patriarch 21-22)

Patricio Aragones is the only person in the novel who tells the Patriarch the truth. When Patricio Aragones dies, the Patriarch becomes even more determined to escape the clutches of death and to eliminate his enemies.

What is also revealed in Patricio Aragones’s words is the ambivalent nature of the Patriarch’s relationship with his people. They are jubilant when they hear the news of the Patriarch’s death, but they are unsure of how they would survive without him.

for the only thing that gave us security on earth was the certainty that he was there, invulnerable to plague and hurricane,... invulnerable to time, dedicated to the messianic happiness of thinking for us, knowing that we knew that he would not take any decision for us that did not have our measure, for he had not survived everything because of his inconceivable courage or his infinite
The people feel that their survival will be ensured if the Patriarch’s survival is ensured. The Patriarch therefore, will not die. He is above death, even though the pestilence of death surrounds him. The people around him die: Patricio Aragones, General Major Rodrigo de la Aguilar, the two thousand children who win the lottery for him, his mother Bendición Alvarado, his wife Leticia Nazareno, his son Emanuel and José Ignacio Saenz de la Barra who tells the Patriarch that what he has is “the only power possible in the lethargy of death” (The Autumn of the Patriarch 181). The transgressing consciousness now leaps over death, feeding the Patriarch with superhuman resilience, while compelling the Patriarch to wade in the sluggish solitude of death in life. The infinite conflation of time, solitude and death in the Patriarch’s life is motivated by his pursuit of power. Power has maimed the body and soul of the Patriarch and he is “condemned, along with his people, to the frozen eternity that is power...Power is the only thing he has ever wanted, and it has ossified him in his spectral world” (Luna 31).

The ghost ship in “The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship” appears every year in the month of March. The ship challenges the boy’s notion of reality and repeats its journey and he sees it moving
toward the shoals, ran aground, broke up, and sank without a single sound, even though a collision against the reefs like that should have produced a crash of metal and the explosion of engines that would have frozen with fright the soundest-sleeping dragons in the prehistoric jungle...

(Collected Stories 228)

The ship exists as a ghost “carrying its own circle of silence with it, its own dead air, its halted time,” (Collected Stories 231) The endless breath of time, solitude and death is borne by the ship as it treads the reality of the sea. The ship’s name is Halálcsillag, which aptly means “Star of Death” in Hungarian. (Bell-Villada 135) By equating death with a star, which is a part of the infinite universe, García Márquez implies that the infinite nature of the star is reflected in death.

The transgressive states of time, solitude and death seem to bring about inevitable havoc and destruction on characters who surrender to their obsessive pattern. They radically transform human existence into a fluid and malleable form and surround the characters in an environment of flux which revolves around them. Time, solitude and death constantly move, rotate and expand, in the blending of history and myth, to accommodate the transgressive dimension of the narrating consciousness.
Note

1 In the eternally moving wheel of time, the strands of time intersect, bifurcate and embrace the strands of solitude and death. These three prominent themes of García Márquez’s fiction circulate and repeat their effect as they are held in the ever-moving wheel.
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