

“POWER” IN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY
The “Double” in Gabriel García Márquez’s
The Autumn of the Patriarch

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Working Paper #125 - August 1989

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The idea of this paper was suggested to the author by his participation in Notre Dame’s CORE program during the 1988-1989 school year. The author extends his thanks to all of those who read this manuscript and offered their valuable comments: to his departmental colleagues, Steven Bell and María Rosa Olivera-Williams, and to Roberto DaMatta, Randolph Klawiter, Al Nieman, James Powell, and Samuel Valenzuela.

ABSTRACT

This study explores some rhetorical and socio-political implications of “power” in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by Gabriel García Márquez. These implications are approached through the figure of the “double”, which is one of the modalities ascribed to the literature of the fantastic. García Márquez’s novel is viewed as an original reflection on the use and abuse of power. Although the author treats these issues comprehensively through the character of the tyrant and his double, he makes surprising allusions to himself, to writing, and to all people. García Márquez’s work suggests an alternative view of the concept of power, one not contemplated in the classic theoretical study on this subject by Michel Foucault.

RESUMEN

En este estudio se exploran las posibilidades socio-políticas en el *Otoño del Patriarca*, por Gabriel García Márquez, a través del tema del doble, una modalidad frecuente dentro del género de la literatura fantástica. Se entiende la novela como un examen, desde una perspectiva muy original, sobre los efectos que produce el poder en los individuos. La alusión se amplía sorpresivamente y toca al propio autor, a su fama literaria, y también se aplica de alguna manera a todos los individuos. Estas ideas de García Márquez sobre el concepto del poder no se contemplan en las teorías que sobre el mismo tema ha expuesto Michel Foucault.

I would like to examine García Márquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* in the light of the concept of the fantastic. It is a novel about a dictator, which has been studied primarily from a socio-political perspective. Yet García Márquez combines many elements in his works, the realistic, the fantastic, the historical, the mythological, to mention but a few. As Ricardo Gullón has said, this Colombian writer creates a literary world in which he erases in a most simple and tolerable manner the frontier between the real and the fantastic. I would argue, however, that in this novel the fantastic aspect—specifically the theme of the double, which has been overlooked by critics—is a persistent motif throughout, which not only reinforces and clarifies the central theme, “power,” but also allows a broader interpretation of the work.¹ It is a motif that characterizes the main protagonist's attitudes toward individuals, society, nature and religious beliefs, and the author also makes a surprising connection with himself and all of us, as we shall see. I would first like to provide some background on the two specific areas that bear on García Márquez's novel, namely **fantastic** literature, and the theme of the **double**, in order to appreciate this author's originality.

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In recent years, interest in the literature of the fantastic has flourished.² Critics from around the world now attempt to explain this phenomenon: Todorov, Irwin, Jackson, Manlove, Rabkin,³ and others, have advanced hypotheses and explained concepts based on their

¹Critics have noted the need for a comprehensive study of the concept of power within the Latin American context as it has been understood and exercised through time and up to the present; this has led them to suggest interdisciplinary approaches, including the relationship between creative literature and political reality. See Russell O. Salmon, “The Structure of Personal Power: Politics and the Hispanic Novel,” *From Dante to García Márquez. Studies in Romance Literatures and Linguistics* (Williamstown: Williams College, 1987), pp. 297-312.

²*Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature*, edited by Frank N. Magill (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Salem Press, 1983), 5 vols.

³Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, tr. by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973); William R. Irwin, *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981); C. N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Roger Caillois, *Au coeur du*

individual selection of authors to be classed in this genre. As a result, a variety of perspectives are represented in this field today. They range from Todorov's valuable but restrictive notion that "the literature of the fantastic is nothing but the bad conscience of the positivistic era," and that it began in the 18th century with Cazotte and ended with the stories by Maupassant in the 19th century. A more socially oriented definition is that of Jackson: "The modern fantastic, the form of literary fantasy within the secularized culture produced by capitalism, is a subversive literature". And perhaps the most comprehensive is that of Rabkin, for whom fantastic literature is characterized by any deliberate reversal of the ground rules of reality in order to establish a new set of rules for the work itself; he thus views a large continuum of works starting with Genesis. Although Rabkin's theory is considered over-encompassing, it has nonetheless been pointed out that a plurality of approaches can be made from a contemporary viewpoint and that the fantastic can even be considered as a reaction to modern rationalism.⁴ In all of these important studies one notes, regretfully, the absence of Latin American authors; at most passing reference is made to Borges or occasionally some other dominant Latin American writer. This is clearly an injustice: the literature of the fantastic in Latin America has been fruitful and original since 19th century, particularly from the "Modernismo" movement onward.⁵ In part, this lack of attention has been remedied by the work of two recent critics—the Argentinian Ana M. Barrenechea, whose study criticizes Todorov's theory and

fantastique (Paris: Gallimard, 1965); Eric S. Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976)

⁴Roger C. Schlobin, *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982).

⁵*Rubén Darío: Cuentos fantásticos*, selection and prologue by José Olivio Jiménez, 2nd. edition (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1979); Oscar Hahn, *El cuento fantástico hispanoamericano del siglo XIX* (México: Premia Editora, 1978).

proposes guidelines to include Latin American authors,⁶ and the Brazilian scholar Ildomar Chiampi, whose book is a comprehensive and rigorous semiotic study.⁷

In spite of increased critical interest in this subject, a precise definition of the fantastic remains elusive. Gary Wolfe, after reviewing some of these theories, concludes that the only common feature he could discern was that all fantastic works deal with “the impossible.”⁸ He acknowledges, however, that this is a vague and unsatisfactory concept. In effect, what is possible, or what constitutes the impossible? Not much has been learned either in determining the process by which a reader is convinced to accept the world of the fantastic, or how and why he participates emotionally in such a world. Rabkin has suggested the notion that we are dealing with a realm, the fantastic, with distinct features of its own, which might be opposed to the real, and not just with a sub-genre or a different variety of realistic narrative. It is indeed an interesting idea, because to pursue such a line of inquiry would imply the redefinition from its very beginning of the concept of realism in literature. Wolfe echoes a widely-felt concern: more insights are needed into literary works of the fantastic and there should be greater communication among critics. It is hoped that this essay is a modest contribution to the dialogue.

THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT AND GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

If the situation appears complex due to the many theoretical explanations and the great variety of works now studied as “fantastic” literature (comics, the James Bond saga, the Faust figure, fantasy pulps, etc.), it does not become any simpler when we focus on the Latin American experience. The variety and quality are outstanding. In works such as *Hombres de maíz* (Asturias), *Aura* (Fuentes), *Pedro Páramo* (Rulfo), *El reino de este mundo* and *El arpa y la sombra*

⁶Ana María Barrenechea, “Ensayo de una tipología de la literatura fantástica (A propósito de la literatura hispanoamericana),” *Textos hispanoamericanos de Sarmiento a Sarduy* (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1978), pp. 87-103. Subsequently, Steven Bell reviewed her work and revised it according to Rabkin’s theory, “Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* in a new light: Toward a theory of the fantastic,” *Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century*, VII, 1-2 (1980), 29-34.

⁷Ildomar Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso: forma e ideología en la novela hispanoamericana* (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1983).

⁸Gary K. Wolfe, “Contemporary Theories of Fantasy,” in *Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature*, op. cit., vol. V, 2220-2234.

(Carpentier), as well as in the short stories of Borges, Cortázar, Macedonio Fernández, Horacio Quiroga, Lugones, and many others, the concepts behind the use of the fantastic vary significantly. We can simplify the matter by grouping the fantastic works in Latin America under two general categories. Two useful concepts have been coined by critics—**magic realism**, and **fantastic literature**—and are best explained by the critic Fernando Alegría in his recent study of the history of the Latin American novel.⁹ **Magic realism** represents an acceptance of the reality of the environment and of the interior world at a pre-logical level on which the rationalist principle of causality does not apply. **Fantastic literature**, particularly that of Borges, functions on the basis of the traditional principle of cause and effect in a logical order; it manipulates imaginatively the reality of the environment, and the abstraction achieved is then expressed on psychological, poetic, science fiction, allegorical or metaphorical levels. On the other hand, the magic realism of authors such as García Márquez, Roa Bastos, Asturias, Rulfo, and others, as Alegría correctly points out, occurs within the socio-political context of Latin America, never in the “synthetic world of logistic phantasy,” or in the world of science fiction. The art of García Márquez is, however, complex and even this definition seems reductionist, since García Márquez applies the terms of the fantastic to higher concepts as well as to common life situations. Jean Franco noted—perceptively, I believe—the relationship between the themes of death and the fantastic in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* when she stated that: “Life’s true terror is the realization that it will not be repeated, and the only way to endure this terror is to resort to humor. For this reason death is constantly presented in a magic way; the shower of flowers that falls on José Arcadio when he dies, Remedios la Bella ascends to heaven hanging from a sheet, a massacre during a carnival awakens Pierrots, Colombines and Chinese Empresses. The novel thus becomes a magic attempt to confront death. Paradoxically, the characters are monstrously alive precisely due to the

⁹Fernando Alegría, *Nueva historia de la novela hispanoamericana* (Hanover, N. H.: Ediciones del Norte, 1986), pp. 312-313. It does not strike me as useful to fuel the long-standing debate among critics of Latin American literature over such terms as “realismo mágico,” “lo real maravilloso” or “realismo alucinante,” because it tends to distract attention from the substance of the works and carry the issue to a theoretical plane, which in this particular case is not productive.

hyperbolic individualism which isolates them.”¹⁰ Humor, by the way is an essential element in the *Autumn of the Patriarch* and in all of García Márquez’s writings. Alegría notes that García Márquez’s use of humor is derived from his manipulation of hyperbolic contrasts, portentous realism, the scientifically absurd, and the historically unexpected.

The author himself has lucidly explained his narrative art and the way he understands magic realism in his works: “The Latin American environment is “maravilloso” (‘marvelous’). Particularly the Caribbean. I happen to come from the Caribbean part of Colombia, which is a fantastic place—completely different from the Andean part, the highlands...Caribbean people are capable of believing anything. We are very much affected by the influences of so many diverse cultures—African, European, our local beliefs. That gives us an open-mindedness to look beyond apparent realities.”¹¹ In his Nobel lecture in December of 1982 he is even more explicit, tracing the fantastic to Antonio Pigafetta’s descriptions of the Southern continent when he was a member of Magellan’s first voyage around the world. He then points out other extraordinary historical events that occurred in the centuries following until the present. He concludes: “I dare to think that it is this outsized reality...one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths...that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty.” When asked about the influence of Columbus’ writings on the *Autumn of the Patriarch*, he explained that Columbus’ *Diary* represents for him the first literary work of the fantastic in the New World: “[In his *Diary*] he speaks of fabulous plants, mythological animals and beings with supernatural powers that could not have existed. Probably Columbus, who was first of all a merchant, did this to make the Catholic Kings enthusiastic about his voyages so that they would continue financing his discoveries. But in any event, that text is the first literary work of the Caribbean.”¹² Thus, in short, García Márquez resorts to the fantastic to portray the reality around

¹⁰Jean Franco, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*, 2a. ed. (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1979), p. 397.

¹¹“Gabriel García Márquez: A Candid Conversation with the Nobel Prize Winner About his Novels, his friend Fidel Castro, and Life, Love and Revolution in Latin America,” *Playboy* (February, 1983), pp. 65-77, 172-178.

¹²Gabriel García Márquez, “The Solitude of Latin America” (full English text authorized by the author), *Chicago Tribune* (March 6, 1983).

him. The fantastic elements in his works do not create an imaginary world ruled by its own laws, nor is this imaginary world an escapist attempt to evade unpleasant or ugly realities. Paradoxically, by means of these elements (which help to express the rich, complex, and vast cultural plurality which is Latin America), García Márquez tries to bring the reader closer to reality.

THE NOVEL OF THE DICTATOR AND *THE AUTUMN OF THE PATRIARCH*

Written against a backdrop of excellent novels about the topic of the dictator—*Yo, el Supremo*, *El recurso del método*, *El Señor Presidente*, *Pedro Páramo*, *Tirano Banderas*, and *Nostromo*; and many others¹³—the *Autumn of the Patriarch* shows unique characteristics. It is not patterned after one single dictator, but rather it creates a synthesis, a paradigm of the tyrant. García Márquez has explained, tongue in cheek, that he read all the literature he could find on the subject, so that “his dictator would not resemble any one in particular.” He was also interested in the figure of the dictator in world history. (One of his favorites was Julius Caesar, a character about whom he says he would like to write a novel.) In this novel he decided to explore a fascinating and mysterious social force: “power, absolute power.” With the abundant material gathered, García Márquez has created a very difficult work. The prose is unrestrained: over fifty monologues that crisscross the narrative in a sort of spiral structure that condenses time and the testimonies of the characters. (The author has said: “I decided to go with a structure based on multiple monologues—which is very much the way life is under a dictatorship. There are different voices who tell the same thing in different ways”.) Long sentences full of twists and turns, where several narrators sometimes appear in one sentence, six chapters in the novel, each of which is a long paragraph; all of this creates a very complex and vague situation.

As a result, a variety of interpretations of the *Autumn of the Patriarch* has been proposed. For example, that the patriarch represents a historical development of the character: in many early

¹³Augusto Roa Bastos, *Yo, el Supremo* (1974); Alejo Carpentier, *El recurso del método* (1974); Miguel Angel Asturias, *El Señor Presidente* (1945), Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo* (1955); Ramón del Valle Inclán, *Tirano Banderas* (1926); Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo* (1904). There is a longer list of novels on this theme; cf. Conrado Zuluaga, *Novelas del dictador, dictadores de novela* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1977).

novels he is a barbarian from the páramos who installs by force a lawless and brutal regime. In more recent works he comes from the same oppressed people, but instead of learning from the past he becomes a worse tormentor of his fellow countrymen; he is thus a renegade.¹⁴ Many parallels have been found between the patriarch and actual Latin American dictators.¹⁵ Graciela Palau de Nemes, in fact, has shown that one of the important episodes of the novel, the sale of the sea to a foreign power, actually happened in the early part of this century in the Dominican Republic.¹⁶ The work also shows that historical facts have been manipulated and, therefore, official history in many instances is made up of deliberate lies.¹⁷ The religious aspect has been thoroughly studied, and critics agree that the author satirizes religion.¹⁸ A mythological interpretation has been advanced, based on the intertextuality of the writings of three historical figures: Julius Caesar, Columbus and Rubén Darío; and on the hermeneutic circle.¹⁹ Myth in the novel has been seen as turning against itself, as a means of shaking or destroying deeply held beliefs.²⁰ Let's now add one more, my own, to continue a game that I believe the author is consciously playing with the reader, especially with critics.²¹

THE "DOUBLE" IN THE *AUTUMN OF THE PATRIARCH*

¹⁴Angel Rama, "Un patriarca en la remozada galería de dictadores," *Eco* XXIX, 178 (1975), 408-443.

¹⁵Zuluaga, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁶Graciela Palau de Nemes, "Gabriel García Márquez: *El otoño del patriarca*," *Hispanamérica*, 4 (1975), pp. 173-183.

¹⁷Fernando Alegría observes that "History, as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, resembles the Patriarch's eternity: a poor and unfortunate act of illusionism...a contemptible manipulation," *op. cit.*, p. 319. See also Julio Ortega, "*El otoño del patriarca*: texto y cultura," *Eco*, XXXII-XXXIII, 198-200 (Bogotá, 1978), 678-703.

¹⁸Seymour Menton indicates that "the identification of the patriarch with God is used by García Márquez to ridicule the people's religious faith and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Cf. also: Katalin Kulin, "Poder y No-Ser," in *Creación mítica en la obra de García Márquez* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980); and Graciela Maturo, *Claves simbólicas de Gabriel García Márquez*, 2a. ed. rev. (Buenos Aires: Fernando García Cambeiro, 1977).

¹⁹Michael Palencia-Roth, *Gabriel García Márquez, La línea, el círculo y las metamorfosis del mito* (Madrid: Gredos, 1983)

²⁰Lida Aronne-Amestoy, "El mito contra el mito: narración e ideografía en *El otoño del patriarca*," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 135-136 (1986), pp. 521-530.

²¹Raymond L. Williams assesses two of García Márquez's short stories—"A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," and "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World"—as parodies of the interpretive process, in *Gabriel García Márquez* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. 98.

When we address the theme of the double, we find that though many important studies have been conducted on the subject, unfortunately once again Latin American works have been largely ignored by European and North American critics. The best known anthology on the double was published in the United States by Albert J. Guerard and included: Dostoyevsky (*The Double*), Conrad (*The Secret Sharer*), Melville (*Bartleby, the Scrivener*) and Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*).²² After Freud, the more penetrating psychoanalytical approaches to the subject have been made by Otto Rank and Robert Rogers.²³ For them the literary doubles are projections of their creators, who try to express and deal with their own internal, psychological conflicts. Another approach, mainly from a literary viewpoint, or that of the history of ideas, is found in the studies by Wilhelmine Krauss, Ralph Tymms, and Marianne Wain.²⁴ These last three scholars believe that the literature of the double is a product of the writers of the German Romantic Movement, derived from the subjective idealism so typical of this movement, where "yearning after the infinite," resulted in a dualistic splitting of the world into whatever satisfies the yearning on the one hand and whatever opposes it on the other ("I," "the double"). Claire Rosenfield moves away from German Romanticism and concentrates on authors from English and American Literature. Masao Miyoshi concentrates on 19th century English literature.²⁵ These two sociological and psychological studies would emphasize that the profound self-division and inner confusion of the writers discussed is a reflection of the situation of the period. And C. S. Keppler applies psychoanalytical theories derived from Carl Jung, and

²² Albert J. Guerard, ed., *Stories of the Double* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967).

²³ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, tr. and ed. by James Strachey, vol. XVII (London, 1953), 217-252; Otto Rank, *The Double as Immortal Self*; Robert Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature* (Detroit, 1970).

²⁴ Wilhelmine Krauss, *The Double-Motif in Romantic Literature*; Ralph Vincent Tymms, *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1949); Marianne Wain, "The double in romantic narrative: a preliminary study," *Germanic Review*, XXXVI (1961), 257-268. Eunice D. Myers applies the psychoanalytical theories of Jacques Lacan to the treatment of the double in Spain, "Beyond the Oedipal Conflict: A Lacanian Reading of Carmen Conde's *Creció espesa la yerba...*," *Self and Other. Perspectives on Contemporary Literature*, XII (1986), 94-103.

²⁵ Claire Rosenfield, "The Conscious and Unconscious Use of the Double," in Albert J. Guerard, *Stories of the Double*, op. cit. Masao Miyoshi, *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians* (New York, 1969).

from the existential philosopher Martin Buber.²⁶ Latin American authors have written extensively on the theme of the double. Jorge Luis Borges, one of its principal practitioners and theoreticians, recognized four major elements in fantastic literature, and one of them was the “double.”²⁷

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Let us now focus on the theme of the double in the *Autumn of the Patriarch* and trace the development of this theme as a function of the novel's central motif, which is “power,” as the dictator applies it to the individual, society, nature and God. Some of the consequences of the tyrant's actions are graphically depicted, as we shall see, particularly an unexpected ruse played on the tyrant. In a surprising ending, the situation of the patriarch and his doubles is brought closer to the reader, and to the experience of all of us in contemporary society.

The novel begins at its end with the apparent death of the dictator. A collective narrator, in the first person plural, enters the palace like a camera describing the rooms until we find the patriarch on the floor of his bedroom. The brief description of the body points out familiar features: his uniform, high boots, golden spurs. The person cannot be identified because vultures have devoured his face, but other details are provided: “his whole body was sprouting tiny lichens and parasitic animals from the depths of the sea, especially in the armpits and the groin, and he had the canvas truss on his herniated testicle, which was the only thing that had escaped the vultures in spite of its being the size of an ox kidney.”²⁸ By means of these

²⁶C. S. Keppler, *The Literature of the Second Self* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1972). Gladys Feijoo, in *Lo fantástico en los relatos de Carlos Fuentes: Aproximación Teórica* (New York: Senda Nueva de Ediciones, 1985), analyzes the double in *Aura* according to Keppler's theories. See also Patricia N. Klingenberg “The Mad Double in the Stories of Silvina Ocampo,” *Latin American Literary Review* XVI, 32 (July-December 1988), 29-40.

²⁷The other three elements of Borges' classification are: a work of art within another work of art, dreams invading reality, and travel through time. Emilio Carilla adds categories in *El cuento fantástico* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1960).

²⁸Gabriel García Márquez, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, tr. by Gregory Rabassa (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 6. All future references are to this edition.

unknown narrators facing a depersonalized being, the novel attains a high degree of ambiguity which is sustained throughout. Each of the five remaining chapters will start by reenacting the same scene, and the air of uncertainty will be maintained. Then one of the narrators states that “even then we did not dare believe in his death because it was the second time he had been found in that office, alone and dressed and dead seemingly of natural causes during his sleep, as had been announced a long time ago in the prophetic waters of soothsayers’ basins” (p. 6). This is a reference to Patricio Aragonés, the patriarch’s “perfect double,” thus called because of the physical similarity. We meet him in the first chapter, but in the last there will be another character, Sáenz de la Barra, who does not look like him physically, but acts as if he were his double in as much as he embodies the violent and vengeful side of the dictator: “psychic dualism,” as opposed to “physical dualism,” according to Keppler. Both of them will inspire some introspection in the tyrant, and give insight to the reader about the phenomenon of power.

How did Patricio Aragonés attain absolute power? One day the dictator heard that a man who looked like him was impersonating him among the people, for personal gain. Instead of punishing Patricio, the dictator forces him to assume completely the likeness of himself. On his deathbed, Patricio mourns the transformation he was subjected to (underwent): “flattening my feet with tamping hands so that they would be those of a sleepwalker like yours, then by piercing my testicles with a shoemaker’s awl so I would develop a rupture, then by making me drink turpentine so I would forget how to read and write after all the work it took my mother to teach me, and always forcing me to go through the public ceremonies you didn’t dare face” (p. 24).

The patriarch has used his power to alter another human being’s nature so that he will look like him. The double here is an artificial creation, a caricature. This aspect of deforming the human body of another person recalls the “imbunche” figure in José Donoso’s *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* [The obscene bird of the night], where some children are forced to undergo a slow process of disfigurement through the years until they acquire grotesque features and become fearful “hechiceros” [“witch doctors”]. Better still, it reminds us of Frankenstein, the scientist who tampered with science to create a monster, a mild-mannered monster whose terrible loneliness

drove him to a tragic end. In this situation, the patriarch's decision to create another human being like himself represents an extreme case of selfishness and arrogance. He has eliminated an intrinsic feature of another human being: the elusiveness and unpredictability of character. By muffling his voice and taking away his capacity for self-criticism, the patriarch has destroyed Patricio's ability to grow and develop as a person—he is left merely to echo the tyrant's impervious will. By annulling Patricio's free will, the patriarch commits a moral transgression. The double is used here to portray vividly the extreme abuse of power of one person over another. The double is a parody because he is an impostor (and the name Patricio has nothing to do with "patrician," as Palencia-Roth notes, p. 218). The forced loss of identity becomes ironic because the dictator has thereby duplicated his own physical and moral ugliness; now we have two gruesome figures.

The patriarch puts Patricio to work immediately. He creates confusion in the palace, since people now believe that the patriarch is in different places at one and the same time: "For it always seemed that he was in two places at once" (p. 9). Then he confuses everybody: "That simultaneous presence everywhere during the flinty years that preceded his first death, that going up as he went down, that going into ecstasy in the sea while in agony in unsuccessful loves, were not a privilege of his nature, as his adulators proclaimed...but his luck in counting on the complete service and doglike loyalty of Patricio Aragonés, his *perfect double*" (p. 10, emphasis mine). Patricio starts to perform official functions and nobody seems to notice the difference. Not only his behavior but also his physiological functions change. He begins to share the patriarch's concubines and they start giving birth to seven-month premature babies, as they do with the patriarch. As time goes by, "none of them ever knew which son was the son of whom, and with whom." The fabricated twin has fooled even mother nature. The patriarch hides and watches the people's reactions to Patricio, even when he dies and the identity is not yet clarified; in that instance, however, he is also shaken when he contemplates the dead body and suddenly imagines that *he* is really dead.

They also can influence each other's actions beyond time and space. Both the tyrant and Patricio fall in love with beauty queens, at different times and with different persons; both fail

miserably to win the love of their hearts' desire, and both end up in the house of the concubines, who detect their emotional alteration: "he plunged into the mire of the concubines' rooms trying to find relief from his torment, and for the first time in his long life as a volatile lover he turned his instincts loose, he lingered over details, he brought out sighs from the basest of women, time and again, and he made them laugh with surprise in the shadows, doesn't it bother you general, at your age..." (p. 71). Although the situations are the same and the scenes are described with identical words, the patriarch's episode occurs long after Patricio has been dead. The transcendence of these experiences is the result of having subverted the natural order.

Through the relationship of the tyrant with his double we begin to understand more about power. The absolute power of the tyrant is not based on his intellectual acuity, on an imposing physical presence, nor in his ideals of justice, moral conduct, wisdom to rule, vision of the future, sense of compassion; although he will appeal publicly to these and all other virtues. It lies rather in creating a world of illusion and lies: "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" (p. 268). To hide his true intentions becomes a fundamental principle, guided by the notion that people will be most afraid when they understand the least. He believes that people need to be kept uninformed or misinformed. He trusts nobody because he does not trust himself, in the sense that he knows that at any moment he can do anything to anybody unexpectedly. Even his closest advisers are not immune to his unpredictable changes of mood.

The next step of the dictator's self-deception is the transformation of the whole country into a double of himself. First, as we saw, the "official impostor," Patricio Aragonés, created the illusion that the tyrant was everywhere, that his power reached every corner of the nation. Then a situation is produced which is referred to as "alucinación-multitudinaria," or mass hallucination. Once the patriarch reaches his objective of controlling the people, it can be said that: "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" (p. 168, emphasis mine). He has indeed

changed time, the calendar, and altered the reality of his subjects in an effort to instill in them his own perceptions of reality. All of the excesses of power that were exercised with the individual double are now applied on a grander scale to the whole of society. As in his palace, the supreme will of the tyrant now extends over and totally dominates the entire country. Chaos and uncertainty are the norm.

In the end, the tyrant believes he is the double of God. He behaves as if he were omnipotent. He says he had to name his son Emanuel because "it is the name with which other gods know God." The dictator seemed to rule forever. Nature obeyed him: "the pensive hand...made cross signals of benediction so that the rain would stop and the sun would shine, and brought back to life the drowned chickens, and ordered the waters to come down and the waters descended." The people believed he was ever-present and protected them: "the only thing that gave us security on earth was the certainty that he was there, invulnerable to the plague and the cyclone, invulnerable to Manuela Sánchez's sneers, invulnerable to time, and consecrated to the messianic bliss of thinking for us." Others considered him superior to God: "dauntless adulators who proclaimed him the corrector of earthquakes, eclipses, leap years and other errors of God." It is ironic that the patriarch's dominance over creation is shared by the Americans, who believe that the sea around the nation can be purchased or that a plague can be brought to the country whenever they wish, to justify an invasion disguised as cooperation to eradicate the disease.²⁹

This absolute control over his people, however, is but another self-deception, merely an appearance. It did not come about as a result of supernatural powers, as the dictator wants them to believe. The truth is much simpler. The patriarch was an obscure soldier who rose to prominence by being at the right place at the right time. He was put into power by the occupation forces of the English and then by the American marines. The disdain these foreign forces feel

²⁹Other examples abound. Williams comments on this double image: "In contrast with the Godlike power that he manipulates both in the view of the citizenry and in his own self-esteem, the inside view consistently emphasizes his pettiness and puerility" (*op. cit.*, p. 126). Palencia-Roth notes that this portrayal is not farfetched: "This 'divine' selfishness...or being proclaimed as God by the people...has historical parallels" (*op. cit.*, p. 219; translation is mine).

toward the people of the country and its paper tyrant is vividly depicted. After they leave, a continuous succession of ambassadors exert strong influence on the country in order to preserve their interests. They also treat the despot with contempt. The dictator is thus dominated in turn by other forces. What we have is a stratification of power, different escalating levels of power, each subjecting the one below. The power which created the double—expressed by an individual, society, or a Godlike figure—is in itself a fantasy. Power, as seen in this novel, corresponds to the realm of the fantastic, the world of make-believe, just like the theme of the double.

The formlessness, fickleness, and unreality of power begin to dawn on the dictator when he experiences some of its effects, especially when he realizes that he himself has become the victim of his own methods. Those closest to him cause such a process.

The exercise of power produces a curious mixture of acquiescence and hate. Patricio Aragonés, the “perfect double,” who enjoyed all the trappings of power, including access to the dictator’s concubines, confesses to the dictator on his deathbed: “I can tell you now that I never loved you as you think but that ever since the days of the filibusters when I had the evil misfortune to chance into your domains I’ve been praying that you would be killed, in a good way even, so that you would pay me back for this life of an orphan you gave me” (p. 24). Yet he always obeyed. Strangely, even the dictator experiences the same contradictory feelings in dealing with his other double, Sáenz de la Barra. He hired this handsome and blood-thirsty mercenary to punish the people because of the horrible death suffered by his wife Leticia and his only legitimate son, who were attacked and eaten alive by raging dogs during a visit to the city’s marketplace. Sáenz controls the tyrant, and becomes a loose cannon in the country. The patriarch realizes that Sáenz dominates him, and he hates him for this, but submits to him: “and he ended up accepting it, agreed, dazzled one more time by the personal fascination of José Ignacio Sáenz de la Barra...whom he had degraded and spat upon so many times in the rage of his sleeplessness but he would succumb again to his charms as soon as he entered the office with the light of day leading that dog with the look of human people whom he doesn’t leave even to urinate and who

has a person's name, Lord Köchel, and once more he would accept his formulas with a meekness that rose up against himself, don't worry Nacho, he would give in, do your duty, so that José Ignacio Sáenz de la Barra would go back once more with his power intact to the torture he had set up less than five hundred yards from the presidential palace" (pp. 227-28). But he tolerates Sáenz because he is doing what the tyrant wants. Once his job is done, the dictator will withdraw his support and that will be the end of Sáenz. This episode proves again that loyalty between the tyrant and his collaborators is only skin-deep. His closest adviser, General Rodrigo de Aguilar was punished by being cooked and served whole on a huge platter to his dinner guests. Even in dealing with his doubles, Patricio and José Ignacio, treachery is always around the corner.

Another contradictory effect of power takes place in a tragicomical scene. The people spill into the streets singing and dancing because the dictator has died. It is in reality Patricio Aragonés who has died, although they do not know this, and the patriarch watches their behavior from a hideout. As the enthusiasm grows, his own small children join the crowd: "he saw his seven-month runts making music of jubilation with kitchen pots and treasures from the crystal set and the table service for pontifical banquets singing with street-urchin shouts my papa is dead, hurray for freedom" (p. 30). He sees the people go and steal the corpse which is on display, drag it through the rubble stones of the city's streets and head for the slaughterhouse dump. He then sees high officials in the cabinet room plotting to divide his power. The patriarch cannot tolerate the situation any longer and so he emerges, destroys the opposition and soon has everything under control once again. When the people outside hear that he is alive, they continue celebrating his reappearance without missing a beat: "in through the windows came the music of glory, the same Roman candles of excitement, the same bells of jubilation that *had begun celebrating his death and went on celebrating his immortality*, 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, an endless celebration that he did not have to prolong with any secret maneuvers as he had done at other times" (p. 34, emphasis mine). Curious reaction to power: despite deep hate, an almost unconscious submissiveness.

Although the aura of power causes the people to yield to it so easily, they never give their love to the tyrant. The patriarch will seek anxiously and obsessively the love of those around him, but he never obtains it. He is condemned to a loveless life no matter how hard he tries to be loved. Patricio Aragonés, who did everything he did, explains to him that love is not what he believes, that love cannot be forced on people, be it either Manuela Sánchez, the beauty queen with whom he is infatuated, or the people of his country. The tyrant will not listen to anybody and continues to create this illusion of love: he adjusts the meaning of events, for example, by interpreting the frequent attempts to kill him as the work of political extremists and mercenaries; he rejects the suggestion that it might be the people, because he is convinced that they love him. There is only one person with whom the tyrant enjoys a close and smooth relationship: his mother. He idolizes her, tends to her every need, and even attempts to have her canonized by Rome. In fact, García Márquez discovered during his research that the most famous tyrants had lived only with their mothers. She is always beside her son but seems to be indifferent to and unconcerned about his actions. She still treats him like a child, she does not take him seriously, she scolds him, treats him often as a spoiled brat. At one point she says that had she known that he would become president of the country, she would have sent him to school when he was a child. Beyond this basic relationship which reveals the patriarch's childishness and emotional immaturity, love is understood as a derivative of power.

Then one day the patriarch realizes that he himself has been set up. The dictator falls victim to his own game. His reality is transformed; his perceptions, manipulated. Somebody makes another double of the patriarch, to take advantage of him, just as he acted toward Patricio Aragonés. This is how it happens. One evening, while the dictator is walking down the corridors of the palace toward his bedroom, he sees a television set on the window of the guard quarters across the patio. He sees himself on the screen, speaking to the nation, yet nothing of what he is talking about makes sense to him: "he was reciting from memory an analysis of the nation's finances with the words of a sage that he never would have dared repeat" (p. 233). He stops and feels the strange sensation that he is contemplating the image of his double. He will find out

eventually that Sáenz de la Barra has created all of this without his authorization. Sáenz has videotaped private conversations with the unsuspecting tyrant. Through ingenious splicing and the use of old footage, Sáenz produces a television program, which he airs the last Wednesday of every month. By broadcasting that speech to the nation, the patriarch renders a “soothing report” in order to “conjure away the uncertainty of the people” (p. 234). Sáenz is actually trying to save his own neck, because he has tortured and killed so many and so savagely that the people are about to explode. By means of the TV ploy, Sáenz is merely using the patriarch to calm the people, to take off some of the heat, and thus, he hopes, survive. The whole scene jolts the dictator; it represents a confrontation with the truth; he recalls the scene when he contemplated Patricio Aragonés in the funeral parlor, and for the first time became aware of his own physical misery and mortality. This is now more upsetting than seeing yourself dead, he exclaims. In fact, to explain, to elucidate, to calm the people down goes against his style and principles. He always avoided direct confrontations, he dealt with people from the background, manipulating behind the scenes. No wonder that he experiences “one of the few explosions of rage that he permitted himself in the uncountable years of his regime” (p. 234). Sáenz de la Barra is finished, and the dictator will later remember him in unkindly terms: “the sudden downfall and public death of José Ignacio Sáenz de la Barra whom God keep roasting on an open flame in the cauldrons of his deep hell” (p. 222).

The theme of the double has been seen in this episode from an interesting perspective. It is a false double created for mass consumption, for a television audience. The parallel is intriguing and we should not miss its satiric intention. The point is the manipulation of reality in order to deceive the public. In this respect, television and the dictator appear together as instruments of deception.

The tyrant never admits a mistake and proceeds along an invariable course of action with absolute confidence. The result of his stubbornness and lack of flexibility is loneliness. Not even the company of the double cheers him. In the novel, the sea is the great symbol of power and also of solitude, closely identified with the dictator. He finds himself visiting more and more often a

group of former despots, who are as lonely as he is, for whom he has provided asylum in a high and remote place, which the author describes using sea imagery: they lived in a “big house that looked like an *ocean liner aground on the top of the reefs*”; his guests were “dying dead in the rest home he had built for them *on the balcony of the sea* (p. 18, emphasis mine).” From this high vantage point they have an unimpeded view of the vast and solitary ocean, and they spend most of the time contemplating it from the terrace. In a fantastic scene there appear together simultaneously the three caravels of Columbus, an abandoned destroyer left by the U.S. marines, and the dictator watching the inscrutable sea, Napoleon style, from a palace balcony. It is suggested that from the discovery of America up to the present time, there has been a continuity of the use and abuse of political power. And, of course, the Americans’ purchase of the sea from the tyrant suggests who has the real power at present.

This close connection between the dictator and the sea as a symbol of power could also be applied to an explanation of the death of the tyrant. The death of the dictator is the central theme of the novel, yet it still remains puzzling; I do not know of any critic who has attempted a clarification. Let’s recall that the dead body of the tyrant is covered with living sea creatures. They will try to pull them out but they are stuck too fast, suggesting a long stay in the sea. From this fact, the manner of the tyrant’s death could be explained in two possible ways:

One of the ambassadors reports seeing those creatures of the ocean stuck on the patriarch’s body when he was still barely alive; the old and sick man attributed them to the expected recovery of the sea that had been taken away by the Americans: “Ambassador Kipling said in his suppressed memoirs that around that time he had found him in a pitiful state of senile unawareness which did not even permit him to take care of himself in the most childish acts, he told how he found him soaked in an incessant and salty matter which flowed from his skin, that he had acquired the huge size of a drowned man and he had opened his shirt to show me the tight and lucid body of a dry-land drowned man in whose cracks and crannies parasites from the reefs at the bottom of the sea were proliferating, he had a ship remora on his back, polyps and microscopic crustaceans in his armpits, but *he was convinced that those sproutings from reefs were only the*

first symptoms of the spontaneous return of the sea that you people carried off, my dear Johnson, because seas are like cats, he said, they always come home” (p. 255, emphasis mine). In another instance, during his visit to the exiled dictators, the patriarch describes the ceremony when one of them dies: they wrap the body in his flag, sing his national anthem, throw him into the sea from the high cliff, and then divide all of his possessions among themselves (p. 39). García Márquez has established a close connection between the dictator’s death and the sea. From these passages we can deduce that the references to the sea are either merely symbolic or that possibly a rite was performed similar to that for the other dictators, his body thrown to the sea and later recovered (by the people or due to the sea current), taken to the palace and propped up in the bedroom just as Patricio Aragonés had been after his death. Whichever way, real or symbolic, the tyrant appears separated from the sea, the symbol of power. He has been disavowed, expelled, thrown out. The idea of rejection by the sea increases the loneliness that surrounds him at his final moments.

What else is new in García Márquez’s portrayal of the dictators’ loneliness? After all, Plato in *The Republic* lucidly described the woes of the tyrant: “Isn’t the tyrant condemned to a prison?...He is full of all sorts of fears and lusts...and yet alone, of all men in the city, he is never allowed to go on a journey...he lives hiding in his palace...and is jealous of the happiness of any other citizen...He who is the real tyrant, whatever men may think, is the real slave, and is obliged to practise the greatest adulation and servility, and to be the flatterer of the vilest of mankind. He has desires which he is utterly unable to satisfy, and has more wants than any one, and is truly poor, if you know how to inspect the whole soul of him: all his life long he is beset with fear and is full of convulsions and distractions.”³⁰ This is a remarkably similar description to that of García Márquez’s tyrant. But toward the end of the novel, García Márquez broadens the scope of the allusion. One of the narrators mentions that the tyrant had finally come to realize that he has seen the false side of reality: “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 to know life only through its

³⁰Plato’s *Republic*, tr. by G. M. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), Book IX.

reverse side. He has deceived himself by believing he could mold life according to his wishes. The exiled dictators shared the same predicament: all of them had escaped their country and arrived “in the dress uniform they had *put on inside out* over their pajamas” (p. 17, emphasis mine), condemned to decipher the seams and straighten the threads of the fabric and the knots of the tapestry of illusions of reality without ever suspecting that the only life worth living was the one *we saw from this side which wasn't your side, general sir*” (p. 268, emphasis in original). García Márquez expressed on several occasions a deep concern for the problem of authenticity in life. For example, he said in a film interview that *The Autumn of the Patriarch* was a book that contained many autobiographical elements in code (*elementos cifrados*).³¹ He was more specific in a conversation with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, where he associates the loneliness of the dictator with that of a famous writer like himself: “Loneliness caused by fame is very similar to that brought about by power...The strategy to maintain either power or fame is the same. This contributes to the feeling of loneliness. But there is more: the problem is compounded by lack of communication. Due to an increasing lack of information, both of them (the writer and the dictator) end up isolated from a reality which is ever evasive and changing.”³² He elaborated in a recent interview that anybody with power becomes isolated by what he calls “insulation from information.” He explains that even though a person with power may be flooded with information, problems will still arise since “there is a point at which it is difficult to know what you know and what you don't know” because those people one relies upon for advice or to provide information may lie, or hide the truth, or give partial truths. Or it may be due to a natural phenomenon, the closing of the mind: “there is a moment in which you know only what you want to know.”³³

Isolation distorts an author's perception of life and affects his writing. A responsible writer fears he may misuse the power of words and misguide the public—a fear of not expressing true experience, of writing about life without having lived sufficiently, of exploring the human condition

³¹ *Gabriel García Márquez: La magia de lo real* (Films for the Humanities, Inc., Princeton, 1981).

³² Gabriel García Márquez, *El olor de la guayaba. Conversaciones con Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza* (Bogotá: Editorial La Oveja Negra, 1982), p. 91.

³³ “Love and Solitude,” *Vanity Fair* (March, 1988), p. 129

without having observed it in sufficient depth, or of describing the experiences of others and passing them off as his own. In other words, García Márquez recognizes that words have the power to deceive. In my opinion, therefore, the central issue in the *Autumn of the Patriarch* is in essence the manipulation of reality by words, images, or whatever means, in order to deceive people. The “double” epitomizes that concern. For this not to happen we must be on constant watch, encouraging critical thought. As Mario Vargas Llosa puts it, “I believe that power, not only today but always, and not only in Latin America but everywhere, has brought out the worst in man: ambition for power, struggles to obtain it or to retain it...the worst instincts of the human being. This is one of the reasons why I believe that democracy is the best system, or the least deficient, which societies have invented. Democracy, with its network of powers and counterpowers, of counterweights and reciprocal checks and balances, prevents politics from degenerating into barbarism, which occurs when criticism is absent.”³⁴

This problem is particularly relevant today when we see a pervasive manipulation of the truth at all levels of society. Once truths are accepted as relative, anything one may think or do is just as good as anybody else’s thoughts or deeds. The next step comes easily, just as it did for the tyrant: excessive confidence in oneself leads to a feeling of being equal or superior to God. Curiously, Patricio Aragonés, the perfect double, who tasted absolute power, who knew the dictator best, gave the following verdict about the tyrant: “I’m the man who most *pities* you in this world because I’m the only one who looks like you, the only one honorable enough to sing out to you what everyone says that you’re president of nobody” (p. 25, emphasis mine). García Márquez has repeated these same words in many interviews, namely that the tyrant is a man to be “pitied.” Think of it, after all his excesses he should not be condemned, we should not even feel outrage or shock, but “pity.” In García Márquez’s view, the dictator is both a victimizer and a victim. In this respect, he looks just like the author or any of us. And anybody who has or has had power in his or her hands probably knows its pitfalls. Power attracts, and is sought with passion. Yet power is

³⁴Cristián Pizarro Alard, “Hacia una cultura de la libertad.” Interview with Mario Vargas Llosa, *El Mercurio*, “Artes y Letras,” 13 August 1989, p. E1 [translation by the author].

one of the greatest illusions for human beings, the source of the greatest feelings of emptiness in life.

To summarize, I believe that García Márquez has treated with originality both the theme of power and its related theme of the double in the *Autumn of the Patriarch*. The theme of the double goes against the conventional representation in literature. In that tradition there are two general types: first, the *division* of the self into incompatible or conflicting parts, which may be the conscious and unconscious selves (Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*); and second, the double based on *duplication*, which in psychiatric literature is called the autoscopic syndrome (Dostoyevsky's *The Double*). In García Márquez's novel, instead of a split of the self, we have an enrichment of possibilities, a broadening of the experience of the self, which eventually can be projected to the author and to the reader as well. He has explored ramifications and broader implications of these phenomena. The concept of power is also treated from an interesting perspective. Michel Foucault believes that power is exercised in situations of "order," which operate in the internal workings of discourse. At that deep structure, "order," or organized knowledge, creates power through systematization; that is, orderly systems with intrinsic power. This internal "power of order" gives unconscious and silent commands that we all obey, and which constitute the fundamental codes of a culture: language, values, techniques, hierarchy of practices, etc.³⁵ García Márquez has explored, on the other hand, the power that rests on "disorder" and "confusion," a power which can be just as effective and long lasting.

³⁵Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, translation of *Les mots et les choses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); cf. also *Microphysique du pouvoir*, edited with an introduction by Donald F. Bouchard; and *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).