

## Marquez Challenges the existing paradigms of Narratology through *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975)

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### Abstract:

*Narratology studies how a story is told. The study of the telling of a story constitutes narratorial nuances of time under the heading of which the time of story and the time of narrative are analyzed. The narratological analysis unravels the structure behind the meaning of a story by rendering explicit how those structures create and institutionalize meaning, concept, perceptions etc. The current article makes an in depth study of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975). Marquez's art of storytelling reaches its zenith in the novel. Gerard Genette's narratological model and terminology has been employed in the analysis and it forms its methodology as well.*

**Key Words:** Narratology, Tense, Achronic, Iterative narrative.

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**Introduction:** There is a perception in narratology that all stories are the stories about time. Genette states that every narrative is in time and about time without which no narrative would mean anything and even understanding would be impossible. He studies the temporal aspect of narrative under three categories: 'order', 'duration', and 'frequency' (ibid). For a comparative analysis of story and its narrative, Genette coins a collective term 'anachrony' for analepsis and prolepsis which are studied against the background of 'first narrative' which defines the time of the story from where the narrative begins. Genette gives another term i.e., 'achrony' for the narratorial study of narratives and stories that defy traditionally established normal notion of time and experience. An achrony is a form of anachrony "deprived of every temporal connection" and ultimately is "dateless and ageless" (84). Genette uses the term 'syllepses' for events that are taken together, in narration, forming achronic grouping governed by one or another kinship (spatial, temporal, or other). Under the heading of 'duration' Genette explains how variation in the speed of narrative and the story are examined as per the temporal modalities of 'summary', 'pause', 'ellipsis' and 'scene' (Genette 95). Finally, 'Frequency' studies the number of times an event occurs in the story and the number of times it is narrated. And its modalities are: telling once what happened once ('singulative narrative', 'repeating narrative' and 'iterative narrative').

Time pervades everything and it constitutes the fundamental obsession that occupies postmodern writers. It becomes narratologically quite complex to talk about the dimension of time as it remains embedded in the storiness/structure of a story. Marquez resists any narratological analysis by posing new questions about the nature of time and reality.

**Story:** It is nearly impossible to write the story of the novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975). The story revolves around an unnamed General, a bastard. He was born in a convent doorway, gifted at birth with huge, deformed feet and an enlarged testicle the size of a fig, which whistled a tune of pain to him every moment of his impossibly long life. He is gifted with oracular insight

and can look into traitorous cohorts well in time. He is considered as a demigod-dictator who can predict future, read the minds, direct the course of planets like an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent being. He is the patriarch of an unnamed Caribbean nation, is anywhere 'between 107 and 232 years' (82) old, sires 5,000 children, all runts, each born after seven-months of conception. He has power to order the time of day change and can bid the roses open two hours before dew time. His influence is so indelible that his cows are born with his hereditary presidential brand. His venality is such that he rigs the weekly lottery, using children under seven to draw the winning three numbers, and he always wins all three. To quiet the children about their enforced complicity, he imprisons them. When the Pope anguishes publicly over the disappearance of 2,000 children and the League of Nations investigates it, he isolates the children in the wilderness after their deportation in boxcars, and finally drowns them at sea, denying they ever existed. His most fantastic depredation is the sale of the Caribbean Sea to the gringos (Americans) who have kept him in power. The United States nautical engineers carry off the sea in numbered pieces to plant it far from the hurricanes in the blood-red dawns of Arizona. They take it away with everything it had inside it – the reflection of the cities, the 'timid drowned people' (229), and the 'demented dragons' (ibid). They 'leave behind a torn crater, a deserted plain of harsh lunar dust' (231). To replace the breezes that were lost when the sea was taken away, another U.S. ambassador gives the General a wind machine. Lastly, the general dies at the impossible age of somewhere between 107 and 232 years. His death has already been predicted and known to him.

**Analysis:** Garcia Marquez experiments with time to such an extent that he problematizes its every sense of normal understanding. He redefines what constitutes storiness of story posing new narratological questions demanding equally new answers. While equating the order of events in the story world with that of the narrative order of those events in the novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, it is observed that the narrative imitates or mimics the structure of the story to its full. It is memory that determines the structure of the story and the narrative. Memory time or the concept of time based on figurative thinking, i.e., the natural human perception of time marks the basic premise of the temporal analysis of the narrative. In this regard Genette says: "The narrative text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading" (34).

The narrative *The Autumn of the Patriarch* employs the memory of the unnamed Patriarch to narrate his story of power and prison which his life becomes on account of limitless power. These events are not referred to as they are experienced sequentially by the General in his real life but as they occupy the space in his memory. In other words, they refer to the memorized experiences. The narrative is imprint of memory conditioned by events, both the real and the imagined, in the life of General. In the novel the story time and space undergo substantially radical change as compared to the material time i.e., linear time which Genette is supposed to have in mind when he analyzed narrative time (pseudo time) and story time (real time). Any departure from this memory time which is the real time of the narrative may harm the aesthetics

intention of the writer. In the narrative, Genette's three sub-categories of 'Tense' cohabit and coexist simultaneously as the nature of time is circular and cyclic as well. The experience of time in the narrative denies its division into hierarchies of temporal levels i.e. 'first narrative', 'second narrative', 'internal analepsis' and 'external analepsis'.

*The Autumn of the Patriarch* juggles with the concepts of 'order', 'duration' and 'frequency'. It is impossible to measure the 'Tense': 'order', 'duration' and 'frequency' of the events of story-world. Studies of many recent narrative texts have shown the indeterminacy of temporality. Herman also refers to such events which cannot be placed in linear structure. He uses

"fuzzy temporality" to describe a subtype of temporal relations that involve "temporal sequencing that is strategically inexact, making it difficult or even impossible to assign narrated events a fixed or even fixable position along a timeline in the storyworld". He uses "polychrony" to cover all types of narration with fuzzy temporality, including both temporal indefiniteness (i.e., events are partially ordered) and temporal multiplicity (i.e., events are ordered in multiple sequences). "Polychrony" is related to the notion of "achrony" but with bigger scope. The latter notion is originated from Genette's idea of "timelessness" regarding those "unplaceable" events... (qtd. in Wei, Bizzocchi, and Calvert 3).

Genette uses the term "achrony" (79) for those "unplaceable" events. The achronical structure of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* undermines the anachronical structure of linear narratives which are strictly studied on the basis of "anachronies by retrospection and anticipation 'analepses' and 'prolepses'" (Genette 85), Genette suggests a term to study achronical structure i.e.,

... *syllapses* (the fact of taking together) — *temporal* or other— to those an achronic groupings governed by one or another kinship (spatial, temporal, or other). Geographical syllepsis is, for example, is the principle of narrative grouping in voyage narratives that are embellished by anecdotes. Thematic syllepsis governs in the classical episodic novel with its numerous insertions of "stories", justified by relations of analogy or contrast (85).

Lilla Kopar in his essay "An Intellectual Dialogue Set In Stone" also studies such narratives and brings out the thematic, characteristic, spatial, climatic and geographic union among events which he studies under the term 'figurative time', circular time which repeats and recycles. However, Genette has not deliberated much upon the 'achrony' and therefore Lilla Kopar's features of 'figurative time' (7) have been adopted in the analysis of achronical structure of the narrative.

An extract from the novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* has been quoted which can also be taken to be representing the 'achronic structure' (Genette 84) of the whole novel;

OVER THE WEEK END the vultures got into the presidential palace by pecking through the screens on the balcony windows and the flapping of their wings stirred up the time inside, and at dawn on Monday the city awoke out of its lethargy of centuries with the warm, soft breeze of a great man dead and rotting grandeur. Only then did we dare go in without attacking the crumbling walls of reinforced stone, as the more resolute had wished, and without using oxbows to knock the main door of its hinges, as other had proposed, because all that was needed was for someone to give a push and the great armored doors that had resisted the lombards of William Dampier during the building's heroic days gave way. (TAP 7).

The above quoted segment is achronical rather than being anachronical because the description of various events is sylleptically narrated. The narrative reads like “an event we must ultimately take to be dateless and ageless: to be an achrony” (Genette 84). In the quoted segment, “OVER THE WEEKEND”, “at dawn on Monday”, “lethargy of centuries” signifies datelessness, “the stagnant time inside” is psychological, “Lombards of William Dampier” and “heroic days” are references to the colonial time and the past days of dictatorial rule, “entering the atmosphere of another age” refers to the time of memory as remembered and experienced, and “the silence was more ancient” again qualifies the last time of memory. Accordingly, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, to use Genette's words, “disengages its arrangement of events from all dependence, even inverse dependence, on the chronological sequence of the story it tells” (Genette 84). The narrator of the novel exhibits a tendency towards grouping the events together by defying all chronology. The events are, however, connected by spatial proximity, climatic identity or by thematic kinship which lead to the narrative's capacity for ‘temporal autonomy’ (Genette 85). In this context Genette also deliberates that such “distortions of speed contribute to emancipation from narrative temporality quite as much as transgressions of chronological order do” (Genette, 85). The concept of ‘figurative time’ of Kopar, therefore, becomes synonymous with memory time or the time of achronical time structure of a narrative.

The novel, *Autumn of the Patriarch*, like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, is the same mix of formal exploration and extravagant fantasy that builds on history. The novel is an ambitious experiment from the minutest aspects of its delirious syntax to its daunting edifice of six long sections, temporally spanning somewhere between 107 to 232 years. Each of the six sections of the novel begins by picking up a moment in the people's discovery of dictator's rotting corpse in the Presidential Palace followed by an extended achronological flashback focusing upon episodes chosen from the General's long existence, thereby serving to highlight his larger-than-life idiosyncrasies, manias, and crimes. The events in the story of the novel do not follow the logic of cause and effect; rather, they are connected to each other through shared patterns, as they exist in the memory of the narrator. This makes the narrative non-linear with ‘figurative time’ (timelessness) as its real time. The narrative time is composite of both linear and circular, the material and psychological, and an attempt to describe a specific temporal experience as the

General gave the order that “the clock should not struck twelve at twelve o’clock but two times so that life would seem longer. . .” (*TAP* 14). Any attempt to read the novel, with its achronical structure viz-a-viz chronological structure of story, will deprive the reader of the real time experience of the story world characters. This experience constitutes indigenous, native uniqueness and its essential aesthetic as well as thematic value. The events are recounted in the ‘order of knowledge’ (Kopar, 6) rather than time. The novel has its own temporal narratology and it has been analyzed while using the terminology provided by Genette.

To make the task of temporal analysis easy, the story of the novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* has been roughly divided into the periods of time which are though simultaneous and overlapping at the narrative level. These periods are as follows:

Firstly there is a period of the general’s mother giving birth to her son, the unnamed General whose father is not known to anyone. His mother was a prostitute who did not know that her son would one day become the most powerful man on the earth. The narrative describes him as “decrepit child”. She reprimands him on his nonchalance about health and informs him that he must stay home for dinner. After his mother’s death, he marries Leticia Nazareno who assumes the role of a mother. She teaches him to read and write, and recite children’s song.

Secondly, there is a period of General’s becoming adult, all powerful, and a cruel God – like dictator. During this period, he runs numerous forced affairs with women, fathers several children, fights many wars against the opponents in his own army. He possesses the supernatural power of deciding about and changing destiny. When he justifies the assassination of officials who betray him, he does so with a God-like expression of being their creator. He seems very weak inside, feeble and paranoid.

Thirdly and lastly the period of old age when he becomes weak both physically and mentally. He cannot make love to women anymore and becomes a very solitary figure. He suffers from many diseases and lives in the memories of the past which for him are there as if he has been living them all at once and simultaneously. All the memories of the past are no more memories for him as he relives them as if they are real experiences. This is what fashions the narrative where his memories are narrated as they are there in his mind, as he relives them in dream-like state of mind. And finally he dies the death which he had envisioned many years ago.

In all the three periods of the story, the dictator remains as an overarching figure which gives meaning and unity not only to the narrative but also to the lives of the people. Garcia has shaped the narrative in a way that the content gets precedence over the structure. He does not provide us with specified and historical periods, thereby, debunking the main-stream thrust on the linear progression of history and memory. In terms of the figural understanding of time, the themes of limitless power and powerlessness, politics, violence, love in all its forms, time, old age, religion and God describe the narrative in the light of ‘unity of time’ (Kopar, 7). The recurrence of these themes create parallels among different sections and unite them in a sense that time seems static.

The unity of time is fundamental to the narrative. Instead of change and progress (features of linear time), it lays emphasis on the recurrence and the stability of time. To represent the unity of time among the sections and the segments of the narrative, the narrator orients the narrative on the basis of figurative thinking.

Each of the six sections relates a story of the life of the same character i.e., the General. Memory and the ‘hermeneutical code’ (Barthes 21) telling of the story are used as techniques to represent the nature of time of the narrative. The relations among the events are based on imagination, association of feelings, emotions and images in the memory. The Memory remains the board-like background against which or on which all the narrative elements are present all at once. We can even say that the novel is a memory in textual form. Thus, ‘unity of time’ is created and temporality is dissolved and thrown into doubt. The narrative emphasizes figurative relation between events separated by time in contrast to their chronological relationship. It is not that there is no time but it shows lack of “interest in chronology” and the interrelatedness of past, present, and future something that characterizes the perception of time and history.

In the first section of the novel, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the mysterious mention of the “the stagnant time inside”, and “the silence was more ancient” indicate that time has not been treated mathematically or scientifically. Time has more to do with the way it is or has been felt, experienced and lived. Elsewhere the time is expressed as ‘the lethargy of centuries’. Moreover the use of phrases like, ‘the lombards of William Dampier’, ‘disorder of the post guard guards who had fled’ etc. refer to the time of these events in past having a recurrent/repetitive theme of colonialism. Instead of a mechanical measuring of the length of time, its reckoning is based on content. The duration of time is always content specific. Figuratively speaking, the multiple references to different ‘dateless and ageless’, which are necessary conditions for a narrative to be achronical (84), events of the past do not merely mean the duration of time but always has some specific content. These events designate different times of days, seasons of a year with periods of uncertain duration, and at the same time it may refer to ‘harvest, crop, abundance’ (Kopar 8). The time remains subject to human perception i.e., “filled with human substance” (8). The dependence on nature and its cycles also influenced the view on history – instead of change and progress the emphasis has been laid on recurrence and stability (the fundamentals of time-perception). Events (like the death of the General) and actions (which follow his supposed death) are regularly repeated and have more significance than the unique ones, and the characters especially the General excels by repeating the actions previously performed by others. For example, the temporal understanding and the significance of the General’s deeds is demonstrated by being compared to those of others in the past, and it is his share in the tradition of long-standing heroic ideals that make him an outstanding man, not his personal traits. The veneration of tradition orients the minds of the people towards the past, and “ensures stability and continuity in their communities” (Kopar 8). Participation in the past through acts in the present secured the way to the future, and at the same time connected the three temporal layers (past, present, and future) by repetition and recurrence.

The novel begins in 'ultima res manner', the last period of story, i.e., 'zero degree' (Genette, 36) of the narrative, which contains references to almost all the other periods of the story. Almost all the novels of Garcia have same time-scheme and model of representation. The first section of the novel begins towards the end of the General's life when his double (duplicate) Patricio Aragonés dies. In the beginning of the first section, after the two and half page description of the physical surroundings in which the narrator makes many incursions into the past within the present day of the General's death, the narrator provides the first description of the General's body, an image that recurs throughout the novel, and this recurrence serves as a point at which 'iterative syllepsis' functions and synthesizes the period of time somewhere between 107 and 232 years. After many achronic roundabouts the narrative gives the first pinpointed description of the General's dead body:

...and there we saw him, in his denim uniform without insignia, boots, the gold spur on his left heel, older than all old men and all old animals on land or sea, and he was stretched out on the floor, face down, his right arm bent under his head as a pillow, as he had slept night after night every night of his ever so long life of a solitary despot (*TAP* 10).

Marquez describes the way the General has been sleeping throughout his life which Genette calls 'pseudo iterative' not to be taken literally. Here 'syllepsis' condenses the 'ever so long life of a solitary despot' (*TAP* 10) by abolishing the duration and the succession of those years of the General's life. The General being 'older than all old men and all old animals on land and sea' (*TAP* 9-10) implies that this experience of time dates back to the time of Genesis. Here the experience of time shows substance i.e., the solitariness of the nameless despot, the patriarch. Here is another instance of how 'iterative syllepsis' functions in the novel. The engraved picture of the dictator 'was displayed at all times in all places' (*TAP* 10) as if he was all present and beyond time:

...his profile was on the both sides of all coins, on postage stamps on condom labels, on trusses and scapulars, and even though his engraved picture with the flag across his chest and the dragon of the fatherland was displayed...they were copies of copies of portraits that had already been considered unfaithful during the time of the comet, when our parents knew who he was because they had heard tell from theirs, as they had from theirs before them, and from childhood on we grew accustomed to believe that he was alive in the house of power because someone had seen him... at some festival... (*TAP* 10).

This extract from the novel informs how the image of General was carried from one generation to another as ever alive and ageless. At all times it was the same image of the timeless dictator which persisted. It reminds us of Faulkner's views on one's consciousness that 'No man is himself; he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as was because the past is. It is a part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his and her ancestry, background, is

all a part of himself and herself at any moment” (Welty 59). *The Autumn of the Patriarch* narrates the story of the figure of a dictator who is a compendium of various dictators the world over. Garcia Marquez based the story of the novel on the dictators like Gustavo Rojas Pinilla and his military regime in Colombia and Juan Vicente Gomez. Ilan quotes Garcia Marquez having stated that, “My intension was to make synthesis of all the Latin American dictators, but especially those from the Caribbean” (63).

The narration of the death of the double makes references to several events in the past without making any conspicuous temporal shift. The narration makes these levels of past comingle with the present of the dictator, i.e., the present of the narrative. The narrator along with many others notices that none of them had ever seen the General before his death. The narrative then, becomes a melting pot of many temporally dislocated events and incidents. Last century and yesterday remain temporally one and the same because the natives “had lost count of his age . . . he presided over solemn ceremonies which they said had taken place yesterday but which had really taken place during the last century...” (TAP 121). The narrator makes several incursions into all the periods of his life, intermingles the past and the present and future of the story as figural experience of time as suggested by Kopar. The whole of the novel narrates the stories of the characters which overlap temporally and thematically, fall into the same period and different periods as well making the narrative an apparent pot-pouri of events and happenings. To illustrate the characteristic trait of the time scheme of the novel the abovementioned passage from *The Autumn of the Patriarch* may be invoked once again. It has several indeterminable degrees of ‘anachrony’ and the hierarchy of one temporal level over the other is undermined. The last section depends on past for its meaning and the past is refined in the present which is the future of the story or, in other words, time seems to pass or move, but remains static through all the periods. We, at the same time, have access to different degrees of the past of the story. The whole of the narrative neglects the temporal hierarchies and the novel can be read as a large and extended anachrony which mimics the mental landscape of the General. The narrative seems like a montage defying hierarchies of temporal levels where of linear narrative i.e., ‘first narrative’ and ‘second narrative’ does not apply. Instead, there are parallel temporalities which are continuous and unbreakable.

In the novel as a whole, the linearity is traceable at the level of periods but the events of these periods are narrated with no cause and effect logic. The narrative representation becomes mere mental-hodgepodge of the story world description following reverse chronology while keeping intact figural links in the form of experiences, memories, characters, themes etc. The sophisticated narrative technique of the novel comprises of dream-like stream of consciousness and shifting narrative voices which help the author to compact the narrative time. The anonymity of the despot and the country lend the text thematically and temporally timeless meaning. The title of the novel indicates the moment of the dictator’s life. The dictator in his autumn remains prosecuted by victims’ ghosts and the memories of his own glorious (in his own view) past, on account of which he simultaneously and increasingly grows nostalgic and pessimistic. The

whole structure as well as the narratology of the novel takes birth from the unfolding and the exploration of a particular moment in the life of the General that has been referred to. For Latin America, history remains a conglomeration of memories of extortion, economic exploitation, and military intervention by the USA. The General, the characters and the whole nation is obsessed with the past and the events in their daily life are the manifestation of the memory and nostalgia. The narrative recreates the process of memory through the repetitive references to the events of the past. Apart from this, the narrative is replete with the motifs of terror and violence propagated by colonial powers. Let us consider the repeated references to the ‘ambassadors’ and what they ask and sometimes demand of the patriarch. At the textual level there are repeated attempts by the US government as follows:

...Ambassador MacQueen answered him that conditions don't warrant any more discussion...either the marines land or we take the sea, there is no way, your excellency, there was no other way, mother, so they took the Caribbean in April, Ambassador Ewing's nautical engineers carried it off in numbered pieces to plant it far from the hurricanes in the blood-red dawns of Arizona, they took it with everything it had inside general sir... (TAP 229).

Lois Parkinson Zamora in his book *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas* contends that “*The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975) also cycles and recycles a character, a nameless dictator who dies and returns from death to impose an endlessly repeating series of political abuses. His status as an archetype depends on this sense of repetition and return ...” (82). The image of the cow also returns again during the course of the story. The cows are, however, symbolic of the people of the country over whom the patriarch has ruled for so long. The image of the general also recurs many times. The repetitions help us to study the attitudes of the people whether they are convinced that the body is that of the General or not, and the ambiguousness prevails that if the people are happy with his death or not. Lopez Mejia sees one of the onlookers’ motives as “the possible satisfaction they derive from gloating over the body of the man who formerly ruled them”, but she also raises the possibility of the people’s “complicit dependence upon him,” arguing that “in their fascination with the dictator’s body they remain under its sway” (qtd. in Eric 184). The narrative, through a series ‘anachronies’, captures/represents the time span from the time immemorial – during the days of war the invading crowd was more ‘turbulent and frantic than any that had ravaged the country during the adventures of federalist war... (TAP 133). It seems that the time has not changed rather the natives has experienced the repetitively transformed sense of temporality where there is no use of remembering the point and the period of time. The dictator, hence, describes the fear and the inevitability:

...when I die the politicians will come back and divide up the mess the way it was during the times of Goths, you'll see...nothing for the poor ....He was right...there was no other nation...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 ever since the most uncertain origins of his memory as he wondered at random through that house... (*TAP* 159).

While resisting the modalities of linear time, the beginning of the novel foregrounds almost all the important themes and the characters which constantly repeat and recur throughout different achronological and simultaneous segments of the narrative. The narrative shows the figuratively diachronic nature of time and thereby foregrounds the future of the story to display that the future is determined by the past of the story without which it is meaningless. In *Bloom's How to Write about Gabriel Garcia Marquez*, Eric quotes Lois Parkinson Zamora as follows: "The most striking aspect of the book is almost certainly its style... Garcia Marquez's principal inspiration in this area was...Faulkner major works such as *Absalom, Absalom!* or *The Sound and the Fury*..." (184-85). In the same book William Kennedy is also quoted who writes that the novel was "deeply influenced by the work of Faulkner" (Eric 185). "There are numerous stylistic similarities between Garcia Marquez's dictator novel and Faulkner's fictionalized accounts of the American South" as, according to Harley D. Oberhelman, in many of Faulkner's writings and in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, "the narrative begins at or near the end of the action, and flashbacks related by different narrators fill out the picture. Each point is incomplete; often it is the memory of the past as recalled by the nebulous present. Often there is incompleteness at the end of the work, and the reader is called upon to "finish" the novel" (qtd. in Eric 185). Both the writers wrote in two distinct time periods but there are similarities between them. According to Hamilton,

Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Garcia Marquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* flamboyantly exemplify 20th Century experimentalism, including stream-of-consciousness techniques and, in some sections, a total dissolution of the concept of time. These works are profoundly regional—Garcia Marquez's works deal with his native Columbia and the Caribbean, with its jaguar-infested jungles, afternoon siestas, and 2 autocratic generalissimos. Faulkner's books resonate to the themes of the American South, authentically documenting the tensions between whites and blacks, the haunting legacy of the Civil War, and the smell of a small-town general store. But perish the thought that these works are mere "folksy" yarns or the products of some form of chauvinistic regionalism. The men who penned these novels view their native lands with respect, but they transcend regionalism to delve into universal human concerns—the nature of man, the dangers of love, the passing of time. They work wonders in small spaces, building metaphors of all mankind out of their own lives and native clay (1-2).

Like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, this novel also deals with time as if all the events are predetermined. The General accepts the reality of his envisioned

death as something inevitable. The narrative reflects that the future is prefigured in the past. The following text has been quoted for illustration:

...he knew that he was remorselessly condemned not to die of love, he had known it ever since one afternoon during the first days of his empire when he went to a Sybil for her to read to him in the waters of her basin the keys to his fate which were not written in the palm of his hand, or in the cards, or in his coffee grounds, or any other means of inquiry, only in that mirror of premonitory waters where he saw himself dead of natural causes during his sleep in the office next to the reception room, and he saw himself lying face down on the floor as he had slept every night of his life since birth, with denim uniform, with insignia, the boots, the gold spur, his right arm folded under his head to serve as pillow, and at an indefinite age somewhere between 107 and 232 years (*TAP* 82).

It is not clear what the text means by 'between 107 and 232 years' (*TAP* 82). As on another occasion the text describes the day of his death as predicted by a sick woman 'crippled and half blind' "that he could sleep peacefully because it would not take place before you reach my age, which was 107, but also not after 125 years more..." (91). Between 107 and 232 there is a gap of 125 years that may be the exact age of the General. He also comes to know about his instant future and got his assassin eliminated well in time. The cards revealed "the green mask was that of perfidy and treason, and he said aha, with a stress of triumph, I already know who he is, God damn it, he exclaimed, and it was colonel Narciso Miraval, one of his closest aides who two days later put a bullet in his ear with no explanation, poor man, and that was how the destiny of the nation was arranged and its history anticipated according to the predictions of the cards ..." (90). There are numerous other events in the novel where the future is already known to the General.

The events in the life of the General are visited and revisited in a series of overlapping temporal segments (which Genette calls 'repeating'/'completing analepsis') each revealing some new information about the life of the General. The narrative of the novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, while referring to the fictional or real events, is the exact replication of the temporal form and the structure of the story-world. Whereas the word 'order' implies, directly or indirectly, some trace of linearity but in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* there is no sense of what precedes or succeeds a particular story event. The concept of 'analepsis' roughly remains confined to the duration of aforementioned three periods. But within these periods the reverse chronology of narration is followed. Lets us take the last period of the General's life, before he dies, where he had lost contact with the reality of life, he could not understand that he is not as powerful as he was in the days of his youth as a dictator. The narration of this period, then, uses the dead body as a point of departure and to refer to the death of his double, the past days of Christianity and colonization, referred to as 'stirring days' (*TAP*, 8), 'first century of peace' (*ibid*, 8), 'and soldiers from colonial basilica' (*ibid*), 'the great days of the house' (*ibid*), etc.

In the novel the time of memory and time of dream have been made to overlap so that the reader is unable to tell one from the other and hence remains in limbo i.e., in the imagined memory. The 'we' narrative voice narrates thus;

...one January afternoon we had seen a cow contemplating in the sunset from the presidential balcony just imagine, a cow on the balcony of the nation, what an awful thing, what a shitty country and all sorts of conjectures were made about how it was possible for a cow to get unto a balcony since everybody knew that cows cannot climb stairs even less carpeted ones, so in the end we never knew if we had really seen it or whether we had been spending an afternoon on the main square and as we strolled along had dreamed that we had seen a cow on the presidential balcony where nothing had been seen or would ever be seen again for many years until last Friday when the first vultures began to arrive...(*TAP* 11).

In the process of repetition of the image of the dead body, the narrative becomes self-referential, self-contained whole, all at once and simultaneous. Within a few pages there is repetitive reference to present of the narrative: "Over the weekend the vultures got into the presidential palace" (*TAP* 7), on account of the death of the double of the general, "we smelled the vultures' carnage for the first time" (9), "even though his face had not been pecked away by the vultures" (10), and "last Friday when the first vultures began to arrive" (11). Thus, the narrative becomes an amalgam of numerous images of past which are in constant state of flux in the present of the narrative.

The omniscience of the dictator is not something fictionally generated to create specific effect on the readers but it is a reality which is a part of daily life of the natives of the town Macondo. The dictator remained

...present at every moment at everywhere with a flinty parsimony but also with a diligence inconceivable at his age, besieged by mobs of lepers, blind people and cripples who begged for the salt of health from his hands, and lettered politicians and dauntless adulators who proclaimed him the corrector of earthquakes, eclipses, leap years and other errors of God ... (*TAP* 13).

The omniscience and the omnipotence are the outside/people's views of the dictator where as his inside view is that of normal human being feeble and helpless. Whether the narrative voice is that of the powerful, dictatorial general of the past or that of the weak, old and feeble one of the present, the narrative comingles the two. Sometimes the narrative does not make any conspicuous temporal shift while describing a character's past and the present. The following passage illustrates this experimentation:

...his mother Bendicion Alvarado during the forbidden times when she was still young, was languid, went about dressed in rags, barefoot, and had to use her lower parts in order to eat, but she was beautiful, father, and she was so innocent

that she fitted out the cheapest lorry parrots with tails from the finest cocks to make them pass for macaws, she repaired crippled hens with turkey-feather fans and sold them as birds of paradise, no one believed it, of course no one was innocent enough to fall into the snare of the solitary birdwoman who whispered in the mist of the Sunday marketplaces to see who would say one and take her for nothing, because everybody on the barrens remembered her for her innocence and her poverty, and yet it seemed impossible to discover her identity ... (TAP, 142).

Initially in the extract, Bendicion Alvarado is described as 'still young' (*ibid*), 'innocent' (*ibid*) and the narration goes on without any indication of point of time. But in the seventh sentence, there is a silent shift from 'still young' to 'solitary birdwoman' (*ibid*) and the next statement 'everybody on the barrens remembered her for her innocence and her poverty' (*ibid*) is 'iterative imperfect' meaning that they remembered her and are still remembering her.

To depict the cyclic nature of time, the narrator makes mention of seasons and seasonal winds. The time of the day is referred to as 'nocturnal harp of the wind' (TAP, 14) time of the year by, 'tremendous August Saturday' (*ibid*), etc. General temporal references which are made render the time universal, collectively experimental and psychological. Moreover time has also repeatedly been referred to as 'that year', 'that day', 'many years later', 'many years ago'. The narrative as a whole seems to mirror the jigsaw memory of the General and his subjects as the text describes that he 'would wake up suddenly when he managed to grasp a memory like a piece in a limitless jigsaw puzzle of the nation that lay before him, the great, chimera, shoreless nation, a realm of mangrove swamps with slow rafts and precipices that had been there before his time when men were so bold that they haunted ... (*ibid*). The reader and the General seem to share same experience while confronted with the narrative and the memory.

Garcia's fiction is a vitriolic criticism of Christianization of the world and the slogans of so called progress, change and development. The General

had seen a man who tried to hang himself ...the rotted rope broke ...the ladies coming out of mass... beat him awake with sticks without bothering to find who he was because in those days no one knew who was who if he was not known to the church ...that was what the times of Goths were like when God ruled more than the government ... (TAP 160).

The narrative is self-analytical in drawing an analogy between the Christians and the Goths, two sides of the same coin, a *mise en abyme*.

Garcia's fiction focuses on the timeless i.e., the essence from within the perishable bodies of the human beings. In *Love in the Time of Cholera* Garcia writes: "Age has no reality except in the physical world. The essence of a human being is resistant to the passage of time. Our inner lives are eternal, which is to say that our spirits remain as youthful and vigorous as when we were in full bloom. Think of love as a state of grace, not the means to anything, but the alpha and omega.

An end in itself” (*LITC*, 293). The very cyclic and circular nature of time renders it predictable and predestined as the general ‘was to die according to the prognostications of oracles that he himself had forgotten... he was at the mercy of his dreams of a solitary drowned man until dawn ...would browse through his insomnia... felt the steps of time in darkness ... (*TAP*, 234). The dictatorship was thrust upon the community ‘for the reestablishment of order and the economic balance of the nation’ (*ibid*) the false slogans of modern/linear time where the dictator ‘couldn’t find where to begin to govern in that disorder’ and where ‘everything had been carried off little by little by previous presidents for their private domains’ they did not even leave the ‘wallpaper’ (*ibid*) and ‘everywhere there were the forgotten traces of historic massacres written with a bloody finger by illusory presidents who lasted one night’ (*ibid*) etc.

Since the structure of the novel is achronical, ‘syllepsis’ plays a fundamental role in the composition of the text replete with subjective and qualitative experience of time constituting human condition. The structure of time can roughly be apprehended and it reflects the life and the experiences of individuals and communities.

It is almost an impossible task to determine the duration of the story-world events because the narrative of the novel, at no point of narration, does indicate the exact duration of story time. The readers have to imagine, guess and inculcate the period of story-time at the narrative with psychological clocks in view. The passage, period and the ‘speed’ of the story time remains elusive as the events represented repeat and recycle endlessly. Memory plays an important role in all the walks of life. The important memories like that of violence, exploitation, bloodshed etc. determine once and for all the taste, fragrance, texture and the experience of the future events. The characters associate or see their present through the spectacles of happy or sad moments of past. This tendency is so intense that they start believing that it was the same past which keeps on repeating and recurring. The time seems repetitively circular where there is no beginning or end. The beginning itself is end and the very end itself is the beginning of time. Time and action are synonymous are as one denotes the other. It means that action is very important in order to experience time. Accordingly, as it is in ‘figurative time’, it is not the duration which matters but it is the experience in time which overtakes.

The narrative time is just a moment devoid of the spacio-temporal limitations of past and future. The very narrative moment is packed with the past and the future all indivisible and coexisting. The tendency of the people, their thoughts and psychology determines the way time is experienced. An important event or epoch in history or in the life of a character becomes a spacio-temporal reference e.g. ‘last century’, ‘heroic days’, ‘during the week of evil omens’, ‘so many years of postponed ambitions’ etc. The ‘reach’ and ‘extent’ of distinct temporal periods remain elusive and a matter of deliberation and conjecture.

The text also refers to the time of *Genesis* as the General looked ‘older than all men and all old animals on land or sea’ (*TAP*, 10) and time from the arrival of Columbus to the heyday of U.S. imperialism, from the time of colonialism and neocolonialism, and foreign intervention which

Eric says is ‘as nefarious as dictatorship’ (178). According to Eric the novel recounts ‘century long rule of Caribbean despot known only as the general’ (170). There are two durations one at the level of telling and the other which is embedded in it or outside it. The duration of the telling seems one of short period of time, a moment as it takes place in the waning moments of the dictator’s life which seem like a flash because the narrative begins and ends with the same scene making the structure cyclic, repetitive, a means to hope of fresh beginning, perhaps a chance to correct the mistakes made. This moment is extended beyond proportion to include the other duration that of the past of the General and the two coincide and are synthesized to the point that no individual identity remains. By the end of the narrative the long life of the General seems like a flash, an event between life and death. The duration of the event is like a bolus; intermix of intricately overlapping, separate and simultaneous temporalities. The use of phrases indicating time as, “Over the weekend ...stagnant time inside ...dawn on Monday ...lethargy of centuries ...Lombards of William Dampier ...heroic days ...atmosphere of another age....silence was more ancient...” (*TAP* 7) reflects the arbitrariness of time more felt than passed.

The memorable events are reflected through the objects like ‘the courtyard’ ... ‘where more than five generations had been christened’, ‘berlin from stirring days’ (*TAP* 8) etc. Moreover the events like war, violence, and even memorable moments stand for the period in which they have occurred. So, there is no clarity as to what lasts for what amount of time but the sense of duration of events roughly depend on the intensity of an event upon the psyche of the characters and therefore occupy larger textual and temporal space.

The text remains silent about the vast duration of the historical episodes and the narrative manipulates the distance between the present and the past without any hint of a transition – ‘time ceases to be a matter of mere successive quarters of an hour, and appears to us in the guise of years and decades ...’ (Genette 98). The description is less a description of

object contemplated than it is a narrative and analysis of the perceptual activity of the character contemplating: of his impressions, progressive discoveries, shifts in distance and perspective, errors and corrections, enthusiasms or disappointments, etc. ...highly active in truth, and containing “a whole story” (Genette 102).

The narrative seems to have arrested the life, a first-hand impression rather than its sensation. The narrative description does not at all stop the story time. In other words, description, in Garcia becomes absorbed into narration and that with Garcia description is everything except a pause in the narrative.

It seems that in Macondo, the time is kept by ‘Salvador Dali’s melting clocks’ (Cadre, web). The narrative time seems ‘frozen’ as it endlessly evokes the day when the General’s body was found, and ‘disjointed’ as the characters know their future in advance. This is not just a storytelling gimmick; it reflects the subjective experience of time much better than a metronome does. Time races and crawls, loops around on itself, and eats away everything which represented it and

begins once again. Moreover, the narrative uses the 'iterative syllepses' as a technique to abolish the succession of events which governs the numerous digressive insertions of stories. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is the enumeration of a certain categories of occurrences, each of which synthesizes several events that are, in fact, scattered throughout the life of the General. The achronic structure uses the 'iterative syllepses' as an aspect of frequency which effects sequence by synthesizing similar events abolishing their succession and duration. At the same time it eliminates their time intervals by condensing several events into a single narrative. These paradigmatic repetitive shifts to the day of General's death 'around the gathering-as-pretext a cluster of events' (Genette 111), is what Genette calls 'iterative syllepsis', 'an internal or synthesizing iteration' in the sense that the 'iterative syllepsis' extends not over a wider period of time but over the period of time of the scene itself. The duration of the act of interior monologue (or telling) is fused with that of wider period of time.

The narrative iteration mainly occurs to the mind of the characters like 'motionless moments when the passage of time is masked behind repetition' (Genette, 156). The anachronism of the memories ('voluntary' or not) is static in nature "which reduces (diachronic) periods to (synchronic) epochs and events to pictures—epochs and pictures that memory arranges in an order not theirs, but its own" (Genette 156).

Moreover, in the narrative, the reader also touches upon another temporality, no longer the temporality of the narrative but of the 'narrating instance': the temporality of the 'narrating' itself. The 'interpolations', 'distortions', 'temporal condensations' invoke the concern to tell things as they were lived at the time and the concern to tell them as they were recalled after the event. Thus, according to Genette, the anachronism of the narrative becomes a "part of existence itself, and that of memory, which obeys other laws than those of time" (Genette 157).

The beginning of the narrative is like a 'scene' – taking the term in the temporal sense (Genette, 109), which becomes a medium of an accumulation of several iterative traits of the narrative. The singulative narrative, singulative iterative narrative and the iterative narrative scenes are conglomerated, thereby, making the novel like an event, a picture. The diachronic unfolding and succession of events of the traditional narratives is totally done away with. Taken as simultaneous, all the six beginnings of the same story constitute an 'internal or synthesizing iteration', in the sense that the iterative syllepsis extends not over a wider period of time but over the period of time of the zero degree itself.

The finding of the dead body and the repeated references to the event in diverse ways within the section and in all the sections synthesizes repeating or diverse actions of the same day. The passage which has been quoted in the same chapter under the heading of Tense can well be taken as an illustration of how the narrative represents time in the novel. "Over the weekend ...dawn on Monday ...soft breeze of great man dead and rotting grandeur. Only then ...It was ...things were hard to see in decrepit light. All across... long rough-planked tables ...in the centre of the courtyard we saw..." (*TAP* 8) and so on refer to the same opening situation of the narrative like

a single event in form of a collage. But the repetition carries its symbolically temporal ties with the past i.e., ‘...the vultures got into the presidential palace by pecking through the screens’, ‘...the city awoke out of its lethargy of centuries’, ‘...doors that resisted the Lombards of William Dampier during the building’s’, ‘...heroic days.’ Other such temporal references are ‘...entering the atmosphere of another age’, ‘...silence was more ancient...’, ‘The post of the guards who had fled’, ‘...the baptismal font where more than five generations had been christened’, ‘...berlin from the stirring days’, ‘... time of plague’ and ‘...progress in order...’ (*ibid*) etc. are references to the past in the ‘iterative imperfect’. Sometimes ‘iterative pluperfect’ is used to synthesize temporality as: ‘we saw the ancient viceregal stable which had been transformed into a coach house...’ (*ibid*) The repetitive reference to the same day and the day’s melting into its past, as we have just seen, thereby denies any division into the subcategories of ‘iterative narrative’.

The ‘ultima res’ manner defines the present moment of the whole narrative. The figurative or sylleptical structure of the narrative represents the past events as submerged in the present in all their essence and spirit. The present becomes redolent of past events with no regard for duration and chronology. The ‘iterative narrative’, ‘singulative narrative’ or ‘repetitive narratives’ are not subordinated to one another; rather, they form an inextricably unified mass which the narrative becomes. The time of memory and the time of real life complement each other.

The ‘zero degree’ i.e., the present moment of the novel is all we have where the past and the future are manifested. The repetition is not blunt and stark but it brings forth different contexts, points of view, voices, meanings, experiences, etc.

‘External iterations’ and the ‘internal iterations’ are fused through memory. The external iteration synthesizes several months or even several years of the life of the General, and thus a period of time very much longer than that of the scene of the day of the death of the General. But it also happens that the two types of iterations blend to the point that the reader can no longer differentiate between them, or untangle them. At the micro-syntactical level the internal and external narrative iteration can be traced, but at the macro level they seem interspersed. We, therefore, cannot tell whether we are dealing with the story of the day of death of the General or that story of his past life.

The ‘pseudo iterative’ i.e., ‘every day’, ‘every year’, ‘night after night’ and so on, is also employed which is to be understood figuratively as ‘every day something of this kind happened, of which this is one realization among others’ (Genette 122). Moreover, there are random references to days, months, years, seasons, annual celebrations, and festivals and the circularity of the cosmic movement, remains both the most constant motif and the most exact symbol of what can be called Garcian ‘iteratism’ (Genette 139).

Like Proust, Garcia remains constant in his extraordinary sensitivity to variations in climate and the obsessive attention to the movements of the barometer within, the characteristic fertile bond between the temporal and the meteorological. For example:

They were the March trade winds ... but now they said they were the winds of peace ...it was the same buzzing in the ear drums that he had had for many years but even the physician told him that it was the buzz of peace general sir ...he believed it so much that in December he went back to going up to the house on feet to seek solace in the misfortune of the brotherhood of nostalgic former dictators ... (*TAP* 32).

Garcia uses the language of singular narrative events to manipulate time its referents during discrete events in order to create a particular sense and movement of time in the reader, sometimes in the course of a single sentence and a single paragraph. Garcia indulges in repetition and gradual expansion of the same events in the narrative. Past and the future are contained in the present where ‘Memories become hazy and blurred with time and re-remembering’ (Bondada 47).

Garcia’s novels also read like a collage whose unity has been constructed laboriously ‘after the event’ (Genette 149). In this context, Genette has opined that ‘this type of unity is not judged by Proust as illusionary fictitious, rather all the more real for being ulterior, for being born of a moment of enthusiasm when it is discovered to exist among fragments which need only to be joined together’ (*ibid*). The complex intermix of iterative and singulative, with no assignable temporal relationship, is ‘neutral’ (Genette 151) whose aspect is indeterminate, whose function seems to be to prevent the reader from noticing the change of aspect.

The temporal indications are denoted by important events in history as ‘when the corpse was really that of Patricio Aragones’, “many years later during a moment of such uncertainty (*TAP* 72), ‘during the noisy times (*ibid*), ‘in our days’ (*ibid*), ‘during his time of great glory (*ibid*), ‘periods of confusion (*ibid*), ‘he seemed to be eighty years old at charity raffles, sixty at civil receptions and even under forty during the celebration of national holidays (*ibid*)’ and so on. It is within the nineteen lines of the third section that this much of experimentations with the experience of time has been done and remains a recurrent feature in whole of the narrative.

The act of remembering on the part of the General as well as other characters is a factor and a means of emancipation of the narrative with respect to ‘diegetic temporality ... on the two connected planes of simple anachronism and iteration, which is a more complex anachronism’ (Genette 156). The use of ‘syllepses’ and ‘ellipsis’ no longer comes from the narrator rather they are the subjective temporal experiences of the characters.

The memories of different periods of the life of General are ‘like geological formations where lava from different epochs lies intermingled’ (Genette 157). Such an experience of time has also

been noticed in Proust's *The Remembrance of the Things Past* where the duration of time depends upon human experience:

As our memory presents things to us, as a rule, not in their chronological sequence but as it were by a reflection in which the order of the parts is reversed (Proust, *Vol. I* 532).

... Oblivion does not fail to alter profoundly our notion of time. There are optical errors in time as there are in space. . . . This oblivion of so many things . . . by its fragmentary, irregular interpolation in my memory ... confused, destroyed my sense of distances in time, contracted in one place, extended in another, and made me suppose myself now farther away from things, now far closer to them than I really was (Proust *Vol. II* 799).

Somewhere in the same book Proust talks about his theory of art: "I make use, not of "fact," but of something in which I find a greater degree of purity and significance, as a link—namely, a phenomenon of memory" (Genette, 159). Like Proust's characters Garcia's characters also remain absorbed in the search of temporal and the timeless, extra-temporal and time in its pure state. In the same way fiction of Gabriel Garcia Marquez is, undoubtedly, about time that is "lost and found again, but it is also, more secretly perhaps, a novel of Time ruled, captured, bewitched, surreptitiously subverted, or perverted" (*ibid*). The novel has its own temporal paradigms taking their effect and meaning on the basis of pre-modern thinking about time. This creates space for the different meaning of life to be lived and enjoyed as mystery. Life and death are the two sides of the same coin and coin is the being of humans which repeats, recycles, recurs as we feel, and believe in it.

### Abbreviations

TAP: *The Autumn of the Patriarch*

LITC: *Love in the Time of Cholera*

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