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# Magic(infra)realism: Jetztzeiten of Believability and Latin American History in García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* and *Otoño del patriarca*.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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Magic(infra) realism:

*Jetztzeiten* of Believability and Latin American History in García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* and *Otoño del patriarca*.

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

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The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the idea of Colombian history as ‘random coincidence’ in Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca*. Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History* and Michel Foucault’s *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* provide the theoretical framework for the research. This thesis examines magic realism as a way of representing the true invisible past of Latin America. The combination of Foucault’s concept of genealogy, Walter Benjamin’s ‘messianic historical materialism’ and García Márquez’s ‘magic realism’ demonstrates that the combination of living and telling produce a *Jetztzeit* of believability that redeems Latin American history from historicism. By transforming Latin American History into a series of temporal tears, random events and contradictions, *CAS* and *OdP* define true History as something that happens behind the scenes of power.

**Keywords:** Gabriel García Márquez, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, magic realism, *Cien años de soledad*, *El otoño del patriarca*; Caribbean/Latin American history, historical materialism, *Jetztzeit*

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## **Introduction:**

### **Magic(infra)realism, Prophetic Visions and Latin American History**

García Márquez's fiction, Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, and Michel Foucault's *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* argue for a re-enchantment with a magic realist past: the works of each betray a desire to see the unseen, hear the unheard and catch the past in its moment of passing. *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* are genealogies that deconstruct the strata of lost elocutions and invisible contradictions before they become inscribed in Colombian History.

These moments cannot be caught in the act of their passing: the past cannot be retrieved, but leaves a trace, an eerie impression of actuality. There is a feeling that something weird happened, but it went by unnoticed and left behind an ether that cannot be picked up by the Grand Discourse of Official Colombian History. These moments then become magic: the lack of factual evidence makes them too absurd to become historicized, but their passing cannot be ignored. The fantastic and the extraordinary form a large part of Caribbean history and can only be approached via the use of literary parody. García Márquez often referred to the whisper-like precision of visions in his writing:

...in the Caribbean, we are capable of believing anything, because we have the influences of all those different cultures [...] I think that gives us an open-mindedness to look beyond apparent reality. As a child growing up in the Caribbean village of Aracataca, I heard wonderful stories of people who were able to move chairs by simply looking at

them. There was a man in Aracataca who had the facility for [sic: de-worming] cows [...] He would stand in front of the cow and the worms would start coming out of the head of the cow. (Bell-Villada 112)

The event could not be causally explained, but it could not be discarded either: man stood in front of a cow and worms started coming out. In García Márquez's opinion, life is filled with premonitions and prophecies that can only be recognized within an infra-red spectrum of causalities and contradictions that are real (true), but lie at the limit of the unconscious. Encoded in ambiguity, the ephemeral connection between two physically disparate events can only be believed within the space of the story. A space of forgetting, the story allows discontinuities and rare events to re-occur every time that it is told. When asked how he can explain the invisible reality of such events, the author replied: "Ah, if I could explain it, I wouldn't be trying to tell you about it now. That seemed marvelous to me as a child, and it still does" (Bell-Villada 113).

García Márquez experienced another one of these events when he was on a train travelling to Barcelona:

I was on a train recently, travelling to Barcelona. Back home in Mexico, a girl who works in our house was expecting a baby at any moment. So on the train, as I was taking my shoe off, I had the impression that something concerning us was happening in Mexico. I said to Mercedes, 'Teresa has just given birth.' When we arrived in Barcelona, we telephoned and they told us the exact time when Teresa had given birth. It was more or less when I had said it in my premonition. (Bell-Villada 126)

The action of taking the shoe off and the child's birth momentarily fractured temporal unity: the random confusion<sup>1</sup> of two separate events in time occurred right

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<sup>1</sup> I use 'confusion' in Baudelaire's sense: the con-fusion, or fusion of two separate events that are linked in the telling of the story.

before these events become totalizing narratives. Latin American history has always been spoken and the only (infra) real parts of its past are the vibrations left behind by the storyteller's voice. Incomplete before its telling, speaking recovers the hidden impulses of the past. The Caribbean/Latin American past has been told in the private sphere through the story (re: Gabriel Eligio García also known as the Colonel and García Márquez's grand father and Luisa Santiago Márquez also known as García Márquez's grand mother), not written in the public sphere. Because these stories were eventually written down and became *CAS* and *OdP*, they also become historicist accounts of the Latin American past. The stories told by Garcia Marquez's grand parents were multidimensional before being funneled into the novels called *CAS* and *OdP*. When Garcia Marquez's grand parents were telling the stories they had greater freedoms: they could stop when they wanted to stop telling the story only to resume at a later date, fill the stories with spaces of silence, tell different parts of the stories at different times and look above, behind and beyond facts. Spontaneity pervaded these stories, because it was impossible to tell the same story twice. The multi-dimensional aspect of the story is flattened by the genre of the novel. The novel then transforms Latin American history into a flat history and an empty chronology. However, Walter Benjamin's historical materialism and Foucault's genealogy transform the Latin American history of García Márquez's *CAS* and *OdP* into a series of random coincidences that are brought to completion through the *Jetztzeiten* of believability.

By definition, the story is the reiteration of a random coincidence that actually happened at a forgotten point in time: every event that was eventually included in the

story was unexpected and occurred outside of the text. The act of telling the story creates a *Jetztzeit* moment of believability that helps listeners accept that such a random coincidence happened in the past and that the event could also happen, *any now-time, or jetzt*. Every time the story of the man and the cow is re-told, or reiterated, its listeners believe that they are listening to the story as it happened and are made to believe that the event happened *once, the way it is being told*. What listeners do not know however, is if they are listening to the original telling. I would argue that the man's de-worming of the cow happened many times before and that each (subsequent) time *this* story is told, previous stories (happenings of the event) are forgotten and retreat into the background of the polyphonic narrative, silently ready and willing to be reiterated at a moment's notice (when the random coincidence occurs again).

*Jetztzeit* ('now time') is not a term that *directly appears* in García Márquez's work, but the concept itself provides valuable insight into the role that random coincidence plays in magic realism and the two novels that are analyzed in this thesis. In *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca*, *Jetztzeit* becomes a way to count the moments until the event could potentially happen again and reiterates the certainty that the event will (possibly) happen again at some (random) point in the future. García Márquez's belief in the magic aspect of everyday life is more than just another superstition: the magic becomes counter-memorial, a space that allows him to forget that he cannot return to the idyllic childhood that he spent with his grandparents in Aracataca, the political turmoil of his formative years (La Violencia, and the

prolonged Parisian exile during the years that Rojas Pinilla was in power), the historicist accounts of Colombian history and the certain potentiality of future reprisals.

An infra-real connection between two mutually exclusive events is established by the speaker: the man could not have dewormed the cow just by standing there, but if a bystander saw the worms coming out of the cow at the same time that a man stood in front of the cow, then a moment of believability has been born. This moment is real, yet infrarealistic because, like the infra-red rays of the Spectrum, it is not visible to the naked eye, nor can it be measured by conventional means. The random coincidence of these two separate events is reiterated every time that the story is told. An act of forgetting the forgotten, the act of storytelling is a way to naturalize two distinct events: the man and the de-wormed cow, or García Márquez's shoe and the birth. This original disjunction is by no means trivial, for Foucault's genealogy traces events back to the polyphonic whispers that hide within the story, but have been muted by other voices. Whoever witnessed the event (García Márquez) thus acquires the poetic license to listen to certain lost reiterations at the expense of others.

The infrarealism in the story can be tied to singularity: the random event happened only once, but it only needed to happen once to become true. Through each subsequent retelling, random coincidence becomes congealed into a magical causality: the man did not just stand there to de-worm the cow, but because evidence testifying otherwise has been forgotten and the speaker has complete control over the inherently polyphonic nature of the story he/she tells, the man gets to de-worm the

cow. The event describing the man and the cow is told as a story after it happens (randomly). We know that the event (about the man and the cow) has happened before. By telling the story of the event, the storyteller is not reproducing the past, but transferring the instructions of how the event is to be reiterated at some random point in the future. When the story of what happened in the past is told, the future of the past event described by the story becomes present, because it is told at that point in time. Thus, the story about the event becomes just as important as the fact that the event happened because telling the story allows the listeners and tellers to avoid thinking about whether the event is true or not. This suspension of disbelief creates a fissure in the narrative through which the different layers of the past that are added throughout time to one another are given equal weight and become contemporaneous with one another. The contemporaneous relationship between past and present will become important in the discussion of the interplay between historical materialism, magic realism and genealogical history and the rise of magic (infra) realism.

Karl Marx's historical materialism placed economy at the epicenter of all social relationships, dividing society into those who owned the means of production and those who did not. Technology and progress blinded society to the danger of self-destruction. Humankind's extreme dependence on and belief in technology could lead to self-destruction. Technology would be seen as a totality, a medium that could provide all of the answers for problems and a tool that would categorize the future as one of progress. Improved technology would automatically make everything better. Following this logic, technology would then become a totality that could control

every thought, action or deed. The totalizing fuse of technological development and Progress needed to be cut before the technology would lead to catastrophe (Lowy, 9). Destruction could happen at any possible moment, so the time to act was *Jetzt*, now. Society was thus living in a period of *Jetztzeiten*, or now-times, where now referred to any point on the temporal continuum that had the right conditions for the working class revolution. Whereas Marx's brand of historical materialism placed society's hope for salvation in the hands of the working class, Walter Benjamin's historical materialism claimed that Marx's historical materialism was just another empty totality.

Walter Benjamin infused Karl Marx's notion of *Jetztzeit* and distaste for technological progress with messianic redemption. In the *Theses*, the working class ('mob') is just as incapable of bringing about social change. A false demographic created by mass-produced experience, the mob is so dependent on the capitalist mode of production and culture that any calls for a profound actualization of the past in the future would fall on deaf ears. The eventual defeat of Marxist historical materialism is a certainty because Marxism is another totality whose success is based entirely on the ownership of the modes of production. Because modes of production are inherited by successive generations and not earned, change cannot occur. The impossibility of change makes Karl Marx's historical materialism just another totality which makes any form of change or escape impossible. True change can only occur if there is a real possibility of escape, a possibility that ignores the rules of historical materialism and Progress. A momentary lapse in judgment, this possibility must lie dormant within

historical materialism in order to prevent historical materialism from collapsing onto its' self. Walter Benjamin uses the dwarf as a metaphor for the possibility of messianic redemption and hides it within the machine of Marxist historical materialism. Disguised as a dwarf, the messiah hides in the machine of Marxist historical materialism and provides a true chance for social change.

The past can inspire future change: certain social movements or cultural currents that come to the forefront of history seem new, but after they happen, humankind discovers that these very movements had “antecedents that were forgotten by time” (Lowy, 68). These antecedents momentarily disappeared from human consciousness, only to reappear at a later, random point in time. It is impossible to predict exactly when these ideas will again become current. Until then, these ideas are subdued and lie below the surface of history (historical events). They have the potential to disrupt/rip apart the fabric of space time whenever Foucauldian discontinuities and random events produce the necessary conditions for the forgotten antecedents to reappear. The currents have the tendency to abruptly disappear from history and can reappear just as suddenly, at any moment now/jetzt, but it is not known exactly when this will occur, so the only thing to do is to constantly remain on guard in order to capture the currents whenever they become articulated in historical events. Because the currents have been articulated before, but subsequently disappeared from the historical record, they are forgotten. Their fading away from the historical record caused humankind to lose the ability to recognize them because there was no need to. Ironically, these currents reappear in the historical record when

they are forgotten. Thus, the reappearance of these currents makes humankind realize that it had momentarily forgotten about the random conditions that were already reiterated in the historical event. Their presence or absence occurs at a moment of loss, or change because random coincidences produce a moment of shock to the pre-existing system.

Whereas Benjamin's historical materialism seeks to uncover the hidden possibilities of a precise moment, Foucault's genealogy seeks to uncover the invisible discontinuities, such as power, or sexuality that cannot be measured by History and that exist outside of the historical narrative. Foucault does not just seek to uncover these hidden drives, but also tries to find out how they were articulated in order to destroy them. As currents that exist outside of historicism, these discontinuities play upon the surface of History and must be deconstructed in order to be understood. Like Benjamin, Foucault also distrusts historicism, but whereas Walter Benjamin's historical materialism adopts a binary power structure (the victors and the vanquished), Foucault's genealogical perception of History points "to the inequality of forces as the source of values or the work of *ressentiment* in the production of the objective world" (Bouchard, 22).

Foucault's interpretation of history is much more flexible than Benjamin's. Whereas Benjamin presents a binary mode of thought (victors vs. vanquished), Foucault's drives are constantly dipping into the surface of history: their ebb and flow causes temporal shifts and determines the direction of historical events. Foucault's genealogy looks for the disappearance of historical events that cannot be explained

causally, to see the role that these hidden drives played in the event's disappearance from the historical record. The interplay between García Márquez, Foucault and Walter Benjamin produces a theoretical outgrowth in the genre of magic realism, which I would like to call magic (infra) realism.

The term of magic (infra) realism would prove useful in the study of the idea of parody in García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca*. In both novels, García Márquez resorts to parody in order to describe the hidden, absent past of Latin American history. The magic of everyday life in the Caribbean (people who move chairs, Patriarchs who rise from the dead, Mauricio Babilonia's yellow butterflies) tends to obscure the spectral (infra) drives that play around on the surface of History. Because the truth is absent from Latin American History, García Márquez uses the totality of magic to examine the role played by power, sex and incest in *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca*. (Infra) realism can be likened to the unequal genealogical forces in Foucault's history and the role played by Messianic though in Walter Benjamin's brand of historical materialism. Genealogy aims to uncover the hidden drives that lie outside of history: sexuality, madness, and power are real, but invisible. The hidden (Infra) realist drives of genealogical history lie at the heart of Benjamin's Messianic theories, because the ebb and flow of these drives helps determine how the Buendía clan will perish from incest, or how Macondo will be wiped off of the map and when the Patriarch's lust for power will wane. In García Márquez's writing, magic becomes a totality that explains and justifies the random coincidence of everyday life. Random occurrences pervade the narrative of *CAS* and

*OdP* to the point of absurdity: everything that happens is magic, uncontrollable and chaotic. Magic becomes a Dionysian impulse that overrides and masks the logical genealogical tendencies that lie within the narrative. The term (infra) realism hints at the existence of logical order that lies below the surface of History. In other words, these hidden drives and lost elocutions are very real, despite being invisible to the naked eye, which is the source of the (infra) real part of the term of infra (realism). Instead of being an absurdity, magic becomes an entirely logical construct, one that predicts everything that will happen and leave, or completely dissolve the tenuous infra-red web that exists between random coincidences.

When extrapolated to include Benjamin's brand of historical materialism, these drives become the hidden elements that have the potential to alter the course of History and "blast a specific area out of history" by investing events and people with a certain power that allows them to overcome the limitations imposed upon them by the historical circumstances at that particular moment. These (infra) real contradictions can alter History at any now-time. It is not known precisely when these 'realities' will become able to alter the course of history, which is why the events in *CAS* and *OdP* never seem to happen when they are supposed to and why the future has already happened. The retro-active approach of genealogy offers an explanation as to how and why Macondo disappeared and why the Civil Wars abruptly ended and why the Patriarch's power could potentially come to an end. By looking back, the characters learn that their destinies were already inscribed by invisible (parallel) forces that lie on the outskirts of Official Historical Discourse.

In the first chapter, I argue that García Márquez's writing offers a middle-ground between the telling (magic) and the living (infrarealism) of Latin American history. In the patent absence of a historical past, García Márquez was forced to use the novel to re-create and redeem the past through parody. In the second chapter I argue how *Cien años de soledad* is a genealogical study of incest and how, as a narcissistic impulse, incest killed off the tellability of personal experience. In the third chapter, I argue that *El otoño del patriarca* is a genealogical study of power and acts as a counterweight to the totalizing powers of history, language, and myth.

## Chapter I :

### **The General's Birth into History: Magic Realism, Genealogy and Historical Materialism**

The title of García Márquez's autobiography, *Vivir para contarla* (Living to Tell the Tale) implies that experience and storytelling converge simultaneously to form a space which allows for the redemption of the story's tellability. The friction between living and writing sparks a moment of magic believability (reality) that cuts through the two binary modes of thought—totality/universalism and skepticism--that continually threaten to overpower the Benjaminian tellability of experience, replacing it with the homogeneous/empty narrative of historicism. The tellability of personal experience within the story is constantly threatened by the totality of historicism, or the godly treatment of facts and complete skepticism, or the complete disbelief in the past truth. Both of these streams have the potential to translate García Márquez's "magic realist" writing out of the Caribbean narrative and mute the text of Latin American history. Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* and Foucault's *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* help the reader liberate the events in García Márquez's novels from the totalizing narrative of historicism and myth. Foucault's genealogy is a web of hidden elocutions that act as road maps that guide the currents that allow the events of both *CAS* and *OdP* to happen not as part of a totalizing narrative, but freely. To illustrate this point, I would like to use the analogy of the

after-math of José Arcadio Buendía the Second's assassination. After José Arcadio is shot by an unknown assassin, the blood from the wound mysteriously makes its way to Ursula's house. Ursula sees this blood-stream that randomly appears in the Buendía household and follows it to outside of her household to the murder site, which itself is found in Rebeca and José Arcadio's house. The blood spills in different directions and directly connects Ursula and José Arcadio. Another analogy would be Borges' "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan": the paths randomly diverge into a web that cannot be controlled and functions according to its own laws that are not apparent to an outside observer because full knowledge of these laws would transform *CAS* and *OdP* into totalities, thereby killing off the tellability of personal experience. Foucault's *Genealogy* and Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* preserve the tellability of *CAS* and *OdP* by highlighting the hidden (infra) realist currents of power and sexuality that lie below the surface of the two novels. Benjamin's concept of *Jetztzeit* highlights the temporal homogeneity of historicism.

No longer trapped by universalizing concepts of time, the plots of *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* become vulnerable to Benjaminian incisions of the *Jetztzeit* that redeem the tellability of historical truth by deconstructing (dissipating) false causalities, (re-applying the strata of immanence to time) in order to focus on the rare, disparate and obscure events before they are swallowed up by the text of realistic history. Whereas historicism and History aim to uncover the hidden chronology of an event, thus leading to a true picture of the past, Foucault, Benjamin and García Márquez categorize history/historicism as a post-mortem reality of the

past. A series of temporal fissures inherited from previous generations, History and historicism have little to do with the actual past and much more to do with the ghostly impressions and invisible footprints left behind by the moment's passing through the void of time. Both Benjamin and Foucault deconstruct the link between past, historicism and fact, because the past is not the accumulation of facts of History, but the trace memories, the chips of Messianic time left behind by the passing of the past. In Foucault, Walter Benjamin and García Márquez, History is taken hold of *ex post facto*, which makes it impossible to recover the past as it really happened ("wie es eigentlich gewesen war," in Ranke's formulation), because such a constructionist approach undermines the role played by coincidence in the constitution of the past.

An incision that cuts the previous (historical) paper, coincidence is a double paper cut, a fusion that prevents time from standing still. Because the "true image of the past "flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again," it is a temporary, not a permanent, historically verifiable reality that will vanish if touched by reason. Therefore, the past does not exist as History, but is actually the trace of a memory that comes alive in García Márquez's brand of magic realism.

Held hostage in the Rankean Archive of historicism, the actual events of Colombia's History have been continually pushed by the rules and regulations of historical reality. The tight lid that is kept on Colombia's History allows the ruling ideology of historicism to control the articulation of the past, which prevents the past from being "communicated as something that has to be told and experienced in the present" by those who have lived it as a written truth and not a suppressed fantasy.

After they happen, these events confront various strata of objectivity before becoming a fictionalized truth that is trapped by the written word.

García Márquez's presence in the broken polyphonic text of Caribbean/Latin American history is apparent in both *CAS* and *OdP*. Macondo's and (by extension) the General's sudden appearance and abrupt disappearance from the text is a simultaneous/quick affirmation and denial of Macondo's and the Dictator's existence: the events are brief flashes of "eternity" and are constantly subject to "an apocalyptic objectivity" (Foucault 152). The alteration between being and non-being can be compared to a snap-shot. The camera can only capture the scene at a specific moment in time. The moment is then transformed into a scene and image. It is a reproduction of something that existed when the camera button was pressed and ceased to exist as soon as the picture was taken because the moment has already passed. García Márquez's fictional shock therapy is a type of voodoo black magic that seizes Colombia's past and gives it an air of truth that is ultimately splintered at the end of the novel when the reader is forced to accept Macondo's and the General's demise. After finishing the story, the reader realizes that the reality of Colombia and Macondo's past is only true and credible in between the covers of a book.

Colombia's past is as much a fiction as *Cien años de soledad*, all the more so of course because it is contained in words that were written, like the textbook that denies that Macondo ever had a banana plantation, and with the deliberate aim to deceive. So the final pages of *Cien años de soledad*, by showing us how Macondo can exist only within the pages of the book that depicts it, also symbolizes the fact that Colombia's past only exists within the books that have been written about it. Like the history of Macondo, the history of Colombia is a verbal fiction. (Sims 59)

Trapped by García Márquez's novel/plot, Colombia's past and Macondo cease

to exist way before the final scene when Aureliano deciphers Melquíades' manuscripts because as soon as there are not enough words to carry out both the Buendía genealogy and the Patriarch's destiny, they collapse in onto themselves, wiped out by a "hojarasca" (leaf storm) that acts as an incomplete tabula rasa because it tears apart the leaves of the book, but fails to destroy the story itself.

The final ending of *El otoño del patriarca* is similarly abrupt: the news of the Patriarch's actual death causes a scene of intense jubilation that is left behind by the narrator because the inherent/ecstatic truth of the moment surpasses the narrative's continuum. Initially, the choked endings of both novels come across as the triumphs of the homogenizing narrative of historicism. The narrator/García Márquez is forced to stop telling the story because the *Jetztzeit* has already passed, the image is no longer there. The intertwined structure of both novels however, suggests otherwise.

Instead of exemplifying hopelessness and inevitable loss, these abrupt endings simply avoid using language in order to artificially prolong the narrative past the natural breaking point between the characters and the text. Once the Buendías and the Patriarch's births into history and the events in both novels have been complete, there really is no point in continuing because the Buendías' and the Patriarch's (Nietzschean) will to power has exhausted the language that García Márquez created to write their story. In *Cien años de soledad* and in *El otoño del patriarca*, the language used to describe the characters is a direct by-product of their will to power: they create the language used to describe them, the language does not create them. Constantly pushing forward, the Nietzschean will to power prevents the characters

from becoming totalities created by their author. Therefore, these abrupt endings are an ironic proof of Benjamin's weak Messianic power and Foucault's ideas concerning randomness because the broken/chopped narrative and linguistic structure confirm that randomness, coincidence, redemption and the "rare event of history" (Foucault) can only be found/lie beyond the scope of the narrative, "at a place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponds to a truthful discourse, the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost" (Foucault, *Nietzsche Genealogy, History* 145). Any further attempt that language would make to control the characters, as opposed to just letting them be, would freeze the Buendías, the Patriarch and the events contained therein in an artificial discourse of historicist totality. By abolishing the moment of randomness/immanence and coincidence, which are cornerstones of the story's credibility, the newly-created universal history would then turn the true image of the past against itself: the historically real characters would disappear into History, if they cease to be historically incomplete. As historical totalities, the Buendías, the Patriarch and the events of both novels would no longer have anything to do with the past, because they would become linked to causalities instead of being potentialities. The past is something forgotten and cannot be directly grasped/narrated without disappearing: "[a]s true images of a forgotten past these images are beyond narration" (Hafrey, Sieburth 205).

The true image of the past is over-articulated by historicism to the point of exhaustion, thereby inducing a temporal void. Although the true events of Colombia's history have been taken away from the Benjaminian realm of *Erlebnis*, they leave

behind an eerie silence that refuses to be swept under the rug of historicism because these events actually happened. A dilemma ensues: how can it be possible to articulate the true facts of a past that can only be recognized the moment it disappears, in passing? , or A “(hi)story” that runs away in the process of telling because it ceases to be believable? How can Benjamin’s 9<sup>th</sup> Thesis, The Angel of History, stay long enough in order to “awaken the dead” (with his wisdom) before being violently blown away by the homogenizing time of progress?

As a Colombian, García Márquez inherits a broken past that does not exist because it has been silenced not only by historicism, but by the passing of time. The past has been passed down to him through the stories of his grandparents, but the contents of the stories, their internal logic does not match up with the official policy of denial that was previously practiced by the conservative Colombian government concerning the Banana Plantation Massacre, the period of La Violencia, dictatorship and the official policy of interference. The factual stories of the past are continually in danger of collapsing “under the weight of the accumulated historical material” that over-writes the true polyphony of Latin American (Caribbean) history (Ferris 134). The past is a collage that is assembled from the materials of the historicist Archive. The infinite amount of factual material within the Archive (for the Archive’s purpose is mechanically hoard material leaving the consideration of its usefulness to a later time period) collapses under its own weight: there is just so much material in the Archive and so many facts that the truth loses value because it is papered over by useless facts. There is a catch: just like the possibility to redeem the true image of the

past remains a very real, but permanently elusive possibility, the hope that the true image of the past can be recovered from the useless facts of the Archive. This razing of the true image of the past cannot be completely severed, hope for redemption cannot be completely lost because Messianic Time can interfere at any moment.

Colombian History/Colombia's narrative of the past is trapped between the grand unifying narrative of Spanish Conquista and artificially generated and preserved truth and the intimate stories told by Tranquilina (García Márquez's grandmother), which contest the official version. As Benjamin and Foucault point out (albeit in different ways), the past disappears as soon as one tries to grasp it because it is unstable and ever-changing. Without a stable theoretical platform/frame of reference, accuracy of any kind is impossible. In order to be seized, knowledge of the past must be cut instead of being understood and analyzed. (Foucault, *Nietzsche Genealogy History* 154) In the historicist version, factual truth spills over into (becomes) a mass-generated fiction. In the historical materialist and more intimate version, the polyphonic narrative endemic to the Caribbean (Arabic, African influences) cannot be grasped, or tabulated and cannot be stuffed between the covers of a book or contaminated by language, so it does not exist, yet remains as real to the people who tell it as any fiction. After being subject to this cultural cross-fertilization, the past ceases to exist because the doublet of monophony (official archival truth sanctioned by the government) and polyphony ("native" folklore told in the domestic sphere) quietly clash and produce a deafening silence that condemns history and fiction to the realm of non-being. This deafening silence results from the cancelling out that occurs

when two equally powerful, yet mutually exclusive forces (history and fiction) collide.

Gabriel García Márquez redeems the whispers of silence that were left behind, appropriates the rules of historicism and storytelling in order to write a parody of Latin American (Caribbean) history. An echo of the past (think of the 9<sup>th</sup>-Thesis Angel) that grew out of the corpse of Latin American history, García Márquez's writing manages to simultaneously redeem and preserve the cultural ruin of the Caribbean past through the telling of the stories of *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca*, but also displace the past in order to trick/seduce the reader into entering a state of credibility that lasts as long as the reader reads the book. Ultimately, the (infra) real becomes so interwoven with the magic that one cannot tell the difference – each one loses itself in the other.

Based on the principles of chronological time and the dead past, Hegel's History and Ranke's historicism exemplify the supreme faith in the divine power of fact and Reason. As totalizing theories that explain everything, historicism and History act as repositories/archives for unchanged fact and ideology. The binary secularization of Faith and Reason presents a totalizing version of the past, a past in whose jigsaw pieces can only fit together in a certain way that has been pre-ordained. In historicism, past and present are sharply differentiated concepts; the story of the past has already been told (because the past has already happened and cannot be altered), but remains hidden behind the veil of time. The historian and reader therefore, must lift the veil of the present in order to discover the past.

The paranoid tendency of 19<sup>th</sup>-century historicism placed the facts of the past on a pedestal; the past remained unchanged and could not be questioned because it was composed of facts. Invested with an aura of the divine, the godly fact could only be interpreted in a certain way, which negated the possibility of the passage of time and evolution. Historicism undermines García Márquez's writing by separating fact from fiction and cuts off the relationship between the magic and the real. Historicism invites readers to believe only in fact, thereby discounting the idea that magic can be just as real. Magic lies beyond the scope of the closed totality of historicism in which nothing is a coincidence, the reader is asked to believe everything at once and reality (truth) becomes more important than magic. The term "magic-realism" gives equal weight to both terms; the reader is invited to believe in the factuality and tellability of magic – the yellow butterflies that follow Mauricio Babilonia around, Remedios the Beautiful's ascension into heaven, Melquíades' futuristic prophecies are cautions against believing in the sacred nature of historicism – the official version of the Banana Massacre, the Patriarch's death (his image strikes the reader as one of a Christ-like macho), Bendición Alvarado's sainthood, etc. This inversion of belief counters the historicist notion of pre-ordained/empty time. Whereas historicism undermines the redeeming power of the story/magic and does not allow historical events to be released from the grips of History, the Dionysian inebriation that characterizes Marx's and Nietzsche's thinking totalizes the self-generating power of redemption and prophecy by inviting the reader to negate the notion of the past and listen for the silenced possibility of its redemption in the present.

Whereas Apollonian thinkers over-emphasize the future's dependence on the past, Dionysian thinkers tend to subject the past to the prophetic figures of the future. The total disconnect between the future and the past disavows the idea of prophecy and the redeeming possibilities of storytelling in favor of a self-generating creative instinct that destroys the past, present, future, eventually falling prey to self-destruction. Unable to self-record, these schizophrenic ideas do not have any memory, or past, which makes them unable to tell a story, or even have a history, because this schizophrenia's very potency makes the sensing of an immanent state of danger impossible. Trapped in a cycle of constant destruction and renewal, these ideas trap time and history in a closed circularity that exists outside of time, thereby preventing the story from being told. Ironically, this constant state of emergency and delirium precludes death because of the constant stream of cultural violence taking place. In turn, this precludes the emergence of hope, because both past and future are already dead.

These Dionysian thinkers mistrust historically established realisms. Nietzsche overemphasizes the will to life, the creative impulse, thereby diminishing the importance of the past. The past is over-powered by the creative impulse of the future. For Nietzsche, the stories told by humankind are manifestations of weakness because they justify a state of self-imposed servitude and laziness. The self-generating text of time and history is violently swallowed up by the next wave of will to power because "things never proceed without blood, torture, and victims, when man thought it necessary to forge a memory for himself" (*Genealogy of Morals* 42). The making of a

memory is an arduous task in Nietzsche because, in order to make a new memory, one must destroy the old memory that came before. The past is a dead carcass of meaning and tradition that encourages conformism and (in doing so) hinders the vital impulse, or will to power. Subject to continuous genealogical assault in Nietzsche, the lazy past must be prevented from weakening the vital impulse. In a Nietzschean world, Ranke's Archive of historical fact cannot possibly subsist because the past is continually being changed by successive interpretations. Historical facts, as Nietzsche put it, are mere dust. History is entirely interpretation. Such a notion of cultural violence against the past would be taken up and modified by Benjamin in his seventh Thesis.

As a Dionysian thinker, Nietzsche is suspicious of every settled expression of faith. Both faith in the past (like Hegel's and Ranke's) and faith in the prophesized future threaten to enslave the will to power and impose a slave mentality. Justifying the notion of static totality, the slave mentality was created by the vanquished in order to justify their weakness and state of servitude. Placating the vanquished slave's powerlessness, the mentality of the vanquished has taken over the instinctive power of the victors, preventing the latter from "enjoying the freedom of their soul" (*On the Genealogy of Morals* 74). The empty morality of Christianity must be destroyed in order to release the will to truth, or refusal to accept the status quo (id. 136) as it appeared in the constellation of fact. In Nietzsche, the belief in fact leads to the imprisonment of the "will to power," instills "a fear of happiness and beauty," any forms of self-assertion, change and reinvention. The slave mentality is a totality, from which one cannot escape unless a new totality takes its place.

Whereas Hegelian History and Rankean historicism propose either a moralistic (Hegel), or scientific (Ranke) approach to the study of the past, Nietzsche's past is a trap, a means of enslaving humanity that must be abolished by the "man of the future," who

will redeem us as much from the previous ideal as from what was bound to grow out of it, from the great disgust, from the will to nothingness [...]. This midday stroke of the bell, this toll of great decision, which once again liberates the will, which once again gives the earth its goal and man his hope (*On the Genealogy of Morals* 76).

Nietzsche's past is a series of failed attempts to liberate the will to power from the morality of the vanquished in a search for a fleeting redemption that flashes up for a moment and is the fearlessness of change. Mankind will only be rescued from this enslaving mentality by Zarathustra, the "godless" (*ibid.*), who will liberate the will from the nihilistic tendencies of religious and moral dogmas. In Nietzsche, redemption lies in killing off of the totality of the text and history, but also in replacing this totality with a new totality, the totality of the will to life. Nietzsche's writing merely exchanges the divine totality of fact for the instinctive totality of the will to life. Dionysian and Apollonian theories are closed systems that fail to note that the story resulted from a moment of random coincidence that was subsequently forgotten, which prevents the Dionysian and Apollonian thinkers from recording "the singularity of the event outside of any monotonous finality" (Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* 139).

Each one of these systems is a type of monotonous finality (blind belief in the Godly fact, or Dionysian disbelief) that condemns the past to an existence of pre-ordained, empty time. The past's future is already written before it happens – the past

either remains idle as an eternal present in danger of total collapse, stifled by fact, or the past is destroyed because it is subject to constant renewal by a will to power that is in danger of destroying it – the past is doomed because there is no beginning, middle or end, therefore there is no possibility for redemption. The facts, the moral lesson to be learned, become self-contained and objective truths that blot out all the irregularities of the past, condemning each era to a slow and painful death in the garbage heaps of forgetfulness. The end for events in both systems is the same.

As collages of fact, these events are internally generated by an Archive and emerge onto a (pseudo-historical) narrative through a will to power. Subdued by the slave mentality of a paranoia that over-emphasizes the role of a historicism that sees the past as a picture of divine immortality, Nietzschean skepticism consigns every fact to the garbage heap of forgetfulness. Whereas extreme paranoia encourages an over-writing of the past's text, extreme skepticism prevents the past's text from ever being written. These cases leave the past empty handed: without facts, the past does not exist, but if Nietzschean skepticism cannot put the brakes on the mass-production of facts, then the past-story will be overwhelmed by the white noise of empty meaning. When viewed as parallel totalities, skepticism and paranoia cancel each other out. When viewed as two different ways of saying the same thing however, complete belief (paranoia) and complete disbelief randomly converge to produce a story: paranoia becomes the paper on which the past's story can be written by the invisible hand/pen of skepticism.

Without randomness and coincidence, the story cannot be told because the

incision that cuts through the nebulous past cannot be effected, and the story cannot be used to redeem the past of Latin American history. The inherent trickery that instills a sense of belief in the tellability of the story is lost when confronted with the totality of paranoia or skepticism. Contrary to these contradictory approaches, Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* offers a syncretic approach, useful to the recovery of Latin American history, which severs the connection between the godly facts of Apollonian historicism and the complete disregard for past endorsed by Dionysian will to power. Instead, it replaces this dusty ideology with the connection between the redemption of the past and the historical materialism able to enact this redemption.

Walter Benjamin's *Theses* argue against the false causality of historical progress, the empty chronology of historicism and the didactic possibilities of the historical narrative. Because the *Theses* choose to look at History from the end point of totality (a closed system) and knowledge/facts as something that is predetermined, unchangeable and can be organized into a chronological narrative, History becomes an empty and open chronological system of flat, or dead time that threatens to disappear completely from the narrative of experience. Overwhelmed by the meta-narrative of the victors, the narrative of the vanquished is continually in danger of being used against those whom it is supposed to save. The factual meta-narrative characteristic of History interrupts the connection between history and memory in order to replace it with an empty chronology of fact that utterly resists the ideas of coincidence and randomness. These two factors imply that our relationship with the

past can be neither changed nor recovered because the past has already happened; the past is dead and it will be nothing else than its own flat reiteration.

The schizophrenic (Apollonian) and suspicious (Dionysian) theories of time project a historical closure onto the past because they are written from the perspective of the end of time, which tends to view everything that came before as having come from one particular source, or *Ursprung*. As an organizing principle of temporality, the *Ursprung* can easily become just another principle of totality, where the polyphony of the past is replaced with a religious totality. Walter Benjamin's unique combination of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) and historical materialism (Comay, "Benjamin's Endgame" 253), however, prevent the Benjaminian notion of redemption from bringing about the loss of personal experience because "redeemed time is not a continuous substance underlying past, present and future, but the Messianic interruption of the temporal order itself" (Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Destruction and Experience* 10). In contrast to Benjamin's Messianism, the traditional chronology of historicism places a greater emphasis on the chronologic relationship between past, present and future: the past precedes the present, the present comes before the future. The existence of the past in historicism is a given. This order cannot be reversed, nor can these two temporalities intermingle. History is something that has happened in the past and cannot really happen in the present, therefore events that lie outside of the historicist temporal index cannot be redeemed. The closed temporality of historicism, therefore, would make the historicization of truth that takes place in Gabriel García Márquez's fiction impossible because the removal of these events

from the annals of history could not take place; the facts of the meta-historical narrative of events such as the Banana Plantation Massacre would not be altered. An outgrowth of Walter Benjamin's Messianism and Foucault's Genealogy, the *Jetztzeiten* of believability undermine the existence of a historicist past (i.e., the carved-in-stone chronology), making it possible to look beyond the fact. Benjaminian Messianism bridges the gap between the Apollonian and Dionysian theories which makes the tellability of personal experience in *CAS* and *OdP* possible.

Benjaminian messianism has the potential to cut across and rearrange the spatial order of time because the Messiah lies outside of time (Benjamin *Theses* 253). This interruption can cut through the empty time of historicism and allow humanity to receive the "fullness of its past" only when the Messiah appears. At this point, time will stop and the past may be fully citable. Up until that point, history remains a series of abrupt beginnings and catastrophic ends. History is a cultural ruin of progress whose progress will remain forever unfulfilled. The hope for fulfillment lies in the waiting for the coming of the Messiah, which can happen at any moment.

Every moment is able to complete the unfulfilled past. The *Trauerspiel* on the other hand, gives expression to an experience of time where the present moment is incapable of complying with the requirements of the past. No historic action is capable of bringing history to completion. Historical fulfillment is no realization of temporal form. Rather, it originates in an idea. In the Bible, Benjamin says, this idea is known as messianic time (Hafrey and Sieburth, 214).

Messianic time lies beyond the scope of traditional narration. From the perspective of Judgment Day, natural history is to "be conceived of not only as the realm of decomposition and dissolution but also as the site of possible resurrection" (Hanssen 96). Whereas historicism writes History from the perspective of an eternal

(stationary and unchanging) present that seeks to uncover the true (unchanging) past, Benjamin's brand of history places emphasis on "the transitory, or the process of decay that marked history...and initiated the turn to another form of history, one no longer idealistic in nature." (Hanssen 9). Because the Messiah can arrive at any moment, the present is transitory and the past a series of attempts to jump outside of the temporal narrative of historicism, "to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history" (Benjamin, *Theses* 254).

The historical discontinuity caused by the stoppage of time is possible not only because of the inherent fluidity between the past and present, and the always-immanent arrival of the Messiah, but also because of the contemporaneous nature of the past and present. In historicism, the past and present exist in a chronological relationship; the past comes before the present, Ranke's archive becomes the source of knowledge and anything that does not fit into it is considered to be lost for History, thus dead. Frozen by the Archive, the truth is sealed off from the passage of time and in danger of being forgotten. Trapped by the bounds of Progress (moving forward), historicism does not see this as a danger. Situated at a cross-road between past and future, the *Theses* betray sensitivity to the danger of such a possibility because the past and future are intertwined to such an extent that the prophecy of doom will happen at the moment when it can do the most damage. The past will repeat itself in the future. A means of organizing unknown time, repetition assures us that we are immortal, because at every reiteration you arrive at a structure of repetition that existed before. The repetition is a defensive measure that protects humankind against

the anxiety of the future, giving the impression that time does not exist because the past can go forward into the future.

This interwoven temporal structure contains various cuts into time, introducing various strata of immanence, of random coincidence that shatter historicism and spark the polyphony of personal experience that leads to the telling of a story. These cuts introduce a constant state of emergency in Benjamin because they refer to a past that threatens to disappear if it is not redeemed (Hanssen, 96), which (on the surface) would force the collapse of Benjamin's messianism into a closed system. However, Benjamin's notion of present "holds itself apart from chronology. It cannot be defined as a mere point in time. It is not *nunc stans*. Rather it is the result of a complex act of temporalization which is always contested" (Andrew Benjamin xii). The present is not a fixed moment of transition, a fixed point on the historical narrative (a mini-*Ursprung*) in historical time, but a moment that is a transitory image that can pop-up at any random point in either the past or future. The moment is transitory because it happens at a certain point in time, as a temporal fixed image (what Benjamin refers to as monad), but disappears immediately because it is overpowered by the current of history. A weak messianic power can shed a faint light upon this fissure of history, but the break in time is too weak to be permanent and long lasting (hence the momentary 'flash' effect) to have any lasting effect on the course of history.

The momentary moment of truth alluded to by Benjamin in the 5<sup>th</sup> Thesis is destined to be a moment of silence because the second that the historian/angel opens

his mouth to speak, the storm of Paradise blows him away into the storm of Progress. Truth exists only as a moment of believability that melts away from the historical narrative as it passes by. A temporal construct that exists during the moment that it happens, the event becomes a monad (concrete image) that is suspended for a brief moment on the chronological narrative before disappearing. There is a faint hope in humanity's weak messianic power. If the messianic power manages to recognize this moment as part of its future, then the catastrophe of being silenced and forgotten can be averted. This true redemption however, is impossible because "the good tidings which the historian of the past brings with throbbing heart may be lost in a void the very moment he opens his mouth" (Benjamin, *Theses* 247). The 5<sup>th</sup> thesis reduces the truth to a present moment of believability that cannot be retrieved in the same way that it happened. All that historicism leaves us with is a trace of the memory of the event, not the event itself. Because the image passes by so quickly to the point of not being able to be seen in its entirety, the voice is condemned to silence, but the breeze of its passing remains present. The silence left behind by the event, or the spoken voice produces a moment of believability, the trace of a memory that is then appropriated by Foucault's successful impostor.

A non-arbitrary notion during its moment of passing, the vibrations left behind by the moment's passing produce a state of believability, during which anything is possible. The fine thread between time and space is momentarily broken, emptying rules of their durability because the moment's aura can only be recognized as it disappears. The life of the moment passes, but the rules, or the particular set of

coincidences that has led to its randomness remains structurally in place. Void of loss and meaning, these rules of history are then free to be bent by someone, who knows them inside out.

The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules (Foucault, *Nietzsche Genealogy History* 151)

The rules' familiarity disguises their foreign content. The rare event that has caused the break in Benjamin's narrative (*Jetztzeit*) is a temporal fissure and temporary opportunity that allows Foucault's impostor to interrupt time and momentarily engage in a successful game of make-believe, which makes the passing of Benjamin's *Erfahrung*, or wisdom drawn from experience through the telling of a story, possible.

Despite approaching randomness and coincidence from different angles, Benjamin and Foucault can both be used to counteract the mutability that accompanies the loss of personal experience in storytelling. Both thinkers reject the idea of scientific totality and the post-facto establishment of false causality advocated by historicism and History. The meaning of events and the relationship that they have with one another is a topical layer of meaning (a dogma) that actually continually threatens, if not prevents, the dead of the past from speaking. In Benjamin,

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years (Benjamin, *Theses* 255).

In Foucault "The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or

regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts” (Foucault, *Nietzsche Genealogy History* 154).

Both thinkers reject the systematic use of scientific objectivity when studying a phenomenon that does not conform to the status quo and can only be experienced through either memory and remembrance, or immanence. Although Benjamin’s work has been accused of substituting the religious totality of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) for that of historicism, the inherent messianism of the *Theses* and the idea of redemption prevent this from happening. Messianism as a concept that exists in tandem with chronological time and the possibility that the Messiah will interrupt empty time to reveal the past is very real, yet impossible. This impossible possibility prevents Benjamin’s *Theses* from becoming overrun by totality. In Benjamin, the past will be citable in its entirety at the End of Time (when time will stop), which will only happen when the Messiah arrives. Benjamin’s *Theses* are strata of religious immanence that are obscured by the ruins of cultural violence (monuments), or masks of what Foucault refers to as the self. Benjamin’s cultural ruins and Foucault’s masks constantly reappear as the past and are used as control mechanisms for the multiplicity of the narrative of the vanquished and bottle the different (emotional) impulses that make visible “all of those discontinuities that cross us” (Foucault, 162), which is what Benjamin refers to as being the “true image of the past.” Whereas Benjamin’s *Theses* favor the redemption of both minor and major events because “nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history,” Foucault’s piece goes a bit deeper in order to atomize(reduce) the events to a state of dissipation

that liberates them into a Benjaminian-like constellation, thereby “fanning a spark of hope in the past,” which points to the existence of heterogeneous systems of thought and prevents future generations (us) from submitting to a mass-produced experience with the past (Thesis XI). Both theorists point to the existence of a polyphonic narrative and a heterogeneous vision of the past, which would shed light on the redemptive powers that *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* offer for Colombian history.

The historicization of truth is a necessary evil on the way to redeeming the past of Colombia’s history. Confined to one dimension, time has a tendency to reduce the real polyphony of history to a single homogeneous narrative that erases all of the discontinuities and rare events of history and imposes a universalism that prevents these events from being redeemed and remembered. The potentiality of Benjamin’s *Theses* and the weak Messianic power allows for the faint possibility of redemption. The chips of Messianic time allow for a more fluid relationship between past, present and future. The past has disappeared in its very passing, but has also left behind splinters (of memory and emotion) in the present. The fractured imagery that results from the temporal tearing is a cultural ruin that can never be fully rebuilt. Therefore, Colombia’s history cannot really be seen in its entirety, just in bits and pieces.

The Benjaminian chips of messianic time are the clues that the past leaves behind and the only ways to awaken the ghostly past out of its stupor. To reconstruct the traces of memory into a Benjaminian Constellation of the past is to search for “the place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponded to a truthful

discourse, the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost” (Foucault 143). Because the fleeting articulation lies outside of the scope of the narrative of Colombian History we are only left with a faint impression of its transitory nature. These faint impressions cannot be captured by the text without being lost; they cannot be directly written into the text of Colombia’s past, only traced and copied, not in the form of facts that were assembled after the event took place post-mortem and did not exist during the moment’s happening, but in the form of a story. This tracing cannot be exact because the events contained a multiplicity of haphazard coincidences that were then masked by rationality as being historical. Instead of being a reproduction, the true Colombian history found in *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* are only realistic imitations of a displaced past that is nowhere to be found (from the standpoint of the present moment). *CAS* and *OdP* can only realistically imitate, not reproduce the past, they are in danger of becoming empty totalities of historicism themselves. The *Jetztzeiten* of believability prevent this from happening. As successful parodies and the re-remembering of what really happened, both novels redeem Colombia’s history by displacing it. In order to successfully redeem Colombia’s history, García Márquez must put on the mask of objective historicism (similar to the straight face his grandmother Tranquilina adopted when telling the most fantastic things) and infiltrate the memories that are kept hostage in the Rankean Archive. García Márquez uses the genre of the novel to successfully restore the polyphonic voice of Colombia’s past and re-translate it into a heterogeneous history that takes the multi-cultural influences –African, European, and

Arabic—back into the text of its endemic experience, into a story that is meant to be believable only in the act of its telling.

García Márquez's storytelling traces a (Foucauldian-Nietzschean) genealogical map of the ephemeral moment of nothingness where Benjamin's loss of personal experience and history occur. Because the historicist past<sup>2</sup> never existed, García Márquez's magic realism redefines the past as a series of torn inherent contradictions and random coincidences and not a pre-ordained, empty and prophetic chronology. This is the Benjaminian image of the past that flashes up. Instead of completely disappearing however, this image becomes transfused into a novelesque parody and re-remembrance of Colombian/Caribbean history. A product of the Grand Narrative of Origins, the novel is a space where the past is re-invented and redeemed in a *Jetztzeit* of believability. The magic realism of *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* restore the novel's internal contradictions precisely because (like the past and magic realism) the novel can only thrive as an unfinished potentiality, not as a finished genre. Self-contradiction and continual destruction are the only ways that the novel and the past can be redeemed from the over-arching enemies of tradition and historicism. By definition violent, this destruction is necessary for the true redemption of the past. García Márquez is rebelling within the novel because he uses it as a vehicle for his own storytelling and reinvention of History.

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<sup>2</sup> Historicist past: a past that is chronologically organized, over-written by words. A hodge-podge of fact, this past is a reconstruction that is so 'accurate' (i.e., due to the over-abundance of fact) that it ceases to have anything to do with truth: it is an organized chaos of sorts.

## Chapter II

### Where is the Invisible Bullet?: *Cien Años de Soledad* and the Genealogy of Narcissistic Incest

Reason is a manifestation of myth's incestuous nature, a way to mirror the other back to the self and to project that self onto the other in a never-ending narrative of tellability. As the brain child of myth, reason is the left-over by-product of a moment of potentiality, whose potency scars life and the unimaginable. Reason exists to compensate for the fact that myth is the narration of a forgotten story, an empty concept and black hole that absorbs everything that it catches without reflecting anything in return. As an outgrowth of myth, culture, tellability and writing erase the moment of potentiality, a moment during which everything is possible and chance, or random coincidence is an everyday occurrence. The experience itself then has no other choice but to become realistic and become a part of history – yet the magical aura of that moment of potentiality is never quite lost.

A constant negotiation between the real and the magical, *Cien años de soledad* acts as a historical interface that artificially preserves the *Jetztzeit* of tellability and random (yet pre-ordained) coincidence in the present. In García Márquez's brand of magic realism, the past and future are experienced as simultaneous realities in the moment of tellability: the past is indeed contemporaneous with the present, refusing to become a Proustian memory that is continually repressed by the ego. Within the orbit of magic realism, the true becomes just another mythical fiction that allows

readers (Latin Americans and others) to experience the unreality of the Caribbean past. “Latin America... had experienced the unimaginable as a reality,” which provided García Márquez with the opportunity to “tell unimaginable stories as a realist” (Spiller 82).

Instead of being a self-contained origin and cause of anxiety, or a narcissistic negotiation between rationality, anxiety and fear<sup>3</sup>, the story – of mythical proportions – in *Cien años de soledad* disguises the loss of memory that continually threatens to escape from the text and leave the realm of existence. Instead of being a form of pre-verbal hindsight, a self-replicating virus and inescapable totality of the past, García Márquez’s brand of myth predicts the past and future of *Cien años de soledad*. Thus, magic realism inverts the meaning of myth, not by destroying the (scientific) idea of origin, but by suspending it in a Benjaminian Constellation of discontinuities, sudden stops and rare events that lets the idea of origin and truth drop off into an empty void of language. The consequent blotting out of the origin allows *Cien años de soledad* to appear out of nowhere, thereby contesting the Biblical narrative of the Apocalypse that is frequently imposed on the novel’s plot line, for *CAS* begins in medias res and is constantly interrupted by sudden beginnings, middles and ends that flow into and out of one another, thereby (slightly) undermining Josefina Ludmer’s interpretation of the narrative.

The abrupt appearance of Macondo at the beginning of *CAS* is a quiet explosion onto the pre-verbal narrative of history/language:

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<sup>3</sup> “Myth is the civilizing hero of anxiety’s wasteland only because it has already created that wasteland” (Călin Mihăilescu).

...Muchos años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, el coronel Aureliano Buendía había de recordar aquella tarde remota en que su padre lo llevó a conocer el hielo. Macondo era entonces una aldea de veinte casas de barro y cañabrava construidas a la orilla de un río de aguas diáfanas que se precipitaban por un lecho de piedras pulidas, blancas y enormes como huevos prehistóricos. El mundo era tan reciente, que muchas cosas carecían de nombre, y para mencionarlas había que señalarlas con el dedo.... (CAS, 11)

The famous quote is an example of “ese vaivén narrativo (regresos desde y avances hacia un punto preciso)” that erases the idea of origin at the beginning of the text, that

no se repite a todo lo largo del relato; *cronológicamente*, después del hielo, una vez constituida la ficción el tiempo avanzara siempre, de un modo mas o menos lineal, hacia adelante. (Ludmer 30)

Founded on cancellation, Ludmer’s hypothesis imposes a false chronology that fails to account for the simultaneous experience of past and present in the narrative. This empty chronology establishes a temporal hierarchy between past and future, which is anathema to magic realism, and the CAS. Once the fictional chronology is established, the leaps forward and backward in time do not stop, but continue in the narrative, which is not internally chronological, but atemporal and also categorizes the past as something that is limited by memory and cannot be re-experienced, or accessed directly, which undermines the reality of the ever-changing experience with the Latin American past. The idea of origin is built and destroyed throughout the entire novel, not just at the beginning. A constant negotiation between reality and magic exists and past and present retain an equal amount of believability; it’s as if Doña Tranquilina’s fanciful truths and Colonel Márquez’s military precision are constantly engaging the reader in a playful banter of winks from beyond the grave. In short, the principle of origin undermines the contemporaneous relationship between

past and present in *CAS*, and Ludmer's limitation of the principle of destruction and creation (temporal moving forward and backward) to the beginning of the novel forms a cancellation of an origin that (ironically) then becomes an origin in itself; nothingness becomes a hyperbolic origin and limits the *CAS* narrative structure and negates the idea of negotiation in Latin American past. As Vargas Llosa points out, this constant state of suspended (unresolved) negotiation is endemic to the novel. The plot of *CAS* is "una realidad donde lo real objetivo y lo real imaginario se confunden en una sustancia irreductible: lo historico y lo fabuloso, lo cotidiano y lo quimérico, lo vivido y lo inventado" (Vargas Llosa 171). Although the *CAS* narrative infiltrates the rules and regulations of the past, it is too weak to completely redeem the past (overcome fact) and must be content with engaging the reader in a constant state of suspense. Sandwiching the truth between various layers of immanence that constantly threaten to burst through the (homogeneous) temporal narrative, *CAS* uses language in order to extract a polyphonic (historically-based) narrative of the past from historicism.

Historicism attributes a high value to certain facts at the expense of others, inevitably leading to the loss of the past, thus making the rare event of history unredeemable because it eliminates the multiple selves, emotions and accidents that randomly coincided in order to make that event possible. Therefore, one cannot adequately cite the past, which leads to an unfulfilled past, an unfulfilled prophecy of a forth-coming future. The past will only catch up with the present when Time itself comes to a halt, which itself is impossible. Inevitably, holes result from such a

narrative, thereby forcing the fulfilled past to lie hidden underneath the present, which hinders the (re)construction of a perfect past and prevents the *Jetztzeit* of believability from taking place. The literary genre of magic realism compensates for this loop-hole through the technique of the detail, which is used as a counter-weight to the empty totality of silence that is imposed on the events themselves. The transferability of the details between the real and the magical has been mentioned by Robert Sims in reference to the ice episode. Further mentioned at various points in *CAS*, ice is used as a (Benjaminian) monad that links the different parts of the disjointed narrative into a coherent plot line (Sims, 60). Furthermore, the consistent mention of ice overcomes the atemporal nature of the *CAS* plot line because it reflects the particular twists/stops that allowed the events to take place, thereby allowing mankind to fully receive the fullness of its past (*Illuminations* 246).

The truthful detail is a *Jetztzeit* of believability that mediates between the real and magic plot threads of *CAS*, acting as a threat to the universalizing narrative of historicism. Acting as a counter-weight to the culture of censorship by historicist victors, the detail gives credibility to the idea that the past was not chronologically pre-ordained, but a series of random coincidences over which the victors had no control. A parody of Latin American history, *CAS* exposes the historicist perspective of the past as an incomplete and porous narrative, a series of silly, grotesque stories that prevent the past from being relived as something that actually happened, thereby exposing the killing power of the word. In order to expose historicist interests, García Márquez was himself forced to reconstruct the past and use the detail to make his

impersonations believable. As the only events that were somewhat based in history, the Civil War (Aureliano Buendía) and the Banana Massacre are examples of how reconstruction was a necessary evil that actually prevented the true past from disappearing.

Immanent potentiality in *CAS* exists in the moments leading to Colonel Aureliano Buendía's (botched) execution. During the split second before José Arcadio's arrival, the Colonel closes his eyes and relives his childhood. Occurring in the final moments before his death, this stillness transforms the Colonel from a man organizing historical time through his numerous military conquests, a man who moves history into a man to whom history happens. Condemned to be a passive victim, the Colonel does not accept that things had happened the way that they had, but realized that they had to happen the way they did. After the final order is given, Colonel Aureliano opens his eyes "con una curiosidad de escalofrío, esperando encontrarse con la trayectoria incandescente de los proyectiles," but instead of seeing the suspended bullets, Aureliano sees José Arcadio already shoot (*Cien años de soledad*, 158). A random occurrence that over-wrote the structure of immanence, this providential salvation pushes the Colonel into history, transforming him into an omnipresent legend.

Informaciones simultáneas y contradictorias lo declaraban victorioso en Villanueva, derrotado en Guacamayal, devorado por los indios motilones, muerto en una aldea de la ciénaga y otra vez sublevado en Urumita.... (*CAS*, 160)

Every single detail pointed to a successful execution: the early hour, the beaten hero, beautiful even in defeat. The beginning of *CAS* even predicted the

successful completion of this event in the future by compressing the Colonel's memory of seeing ice into one instant: "... Muchos años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, el coronel Aureliano Buendía había de recordar aquella tarde remota en que su padre lo llevó a conocer el hielo" (CAS, 11).

José Arcadio's sudden arrival interrupts destiny, becoming the reason for stopping an execution that no one wanted to carry out. Within the context of Aureliano Buendía's military victory, José Arcadio (II) is historicized as an instrument of divine/revolutionary will, a trigger that moves events forward. Within the strata of immanence however, José Arcadio is simply the mystery man, a coincidence that happens at the same time, in the same space with the same incident. This human intervention disrupts the space-time continuum and in doing so, reshuffles the events that followed. The deity's prophecy for a military execution was left hanging and unfulfilled: the narrative rolls forward, while the bullet remains suspended in time. The stray bullet needs a random target, finding it in the very man who halted the execution: José Arcadio. "Nadie se enteró de su intervención para impedir el fusilamiento" (CAS 161).

The peculiar circumstances surrounding José Arcadio's death transform the murder into a misunderstanding of intention that came from outside of the manuscripts and momentarily interfered in their completion. A year after the Colonel's escape, José Arcadio went to his room to change clothes, while Rebecca closed herself in the bathroom, so there were no witnesses. "Ese fue tal vez el único misterio que nunca se esclareció en Macondo." (CAS 162) The blood from the gunshot wound

flowed all the way to the Buendía household. Upon seeing the blood, Ursula decided to follow it all the way to her son's house, where she "vio el hilo de sangre que ya había dejado de fluir de su oído derecho. No encontraron ninguna herida en su cuerpo ni pudieron localizar el arma" (CAS 163).

A botched case of voodoo magic, José Arcadio's pristine death consists of two layers of super-imposed immanence that are organized into a false causality, that could indicate the existence of an invisible polyphonic narrative. An abridgment of time occurred between the botched execution and José Arcadio's murder: the invisible bullet that was not fired by the firing squad remained suspended in mid-air, while subsequent events were written into the narrative. A monad of historical materialism, the invisible bullet then continued to travel forward in time until events unfolded in such a way (a particular future was written) that made its re-entry into the narrative a probable act of random coincidence. The subsequent historicization of José Arcadio's existence transformed el Coronel Aureliano Buendía (his brother) into a mythical figure (an immortal Greek god). Parody and/or magic realism were also used to redeem an event from Colombian history's hidden past: the Banana Massacre.

The Banana Massacre stands in stark contrast to the rest of *CAS* because it is the only event historically recorded: "in the fall of 1928, more than 32,000 banana plantation workers went on strike against the United Fruit Company" (Muadi-Daraj 14). A conglomerate of several American companies, the United Fruit Company had extensive holdings in Latin America. Initially, the export of bananas in Colombia totaled less than 10%, but increased steadily before reaching a peak in the late 1920s.

Workers complained of unfair treatment, but their complaints fell on deaf ears as the Company's practice of hiring workers through contractors allowed it to side-step local labor laws. In 1928, a crowd of peaceful demonstrators gathered in the public square of Ciénaga, a town in the vicinity of García Márquez's Aracataca, Colombia in a show of solidarity with the banana plantation workers, who were on strike. The banana plantation worker's petitions included shorter work-days, better sanitary conditions and better pay. The military sent General Carlos Cortés Vargas to keep peace. The situation got out of hand when the soldiers fired upon peaceful demonstrators, killing hundreds.

The event itself was shrouded by a high level of secrecy. Colombian history books and newspaper articles denied that such a massacre actually took place; instead of being fired upon, the workers chose to go home. What actually happened during the Banana Massacre was over-written by historicist accounts to the extent that the actual event was forgotten. These official accounts killed the *mémoire involontaire* by replacing the "true image of the past" with a counter memory: the small group of about one-hundred workers peacefully disbanded and there was no massacre. The event lost its aura of verisimilitude and became just another silenced fiction that was passed down in the form of a story that was told orally, not a written account, which gave birth to two equally valid versions: the official text-book version of a peaceful demonstration and the undocumented military massacre. Ironically, these two contradictory versions cancel each other out, imposing a wall of mutability between the actual event, preventing the Proustian remembrance of the event from re-surfacing into the collective consciousness and becoming what Benjamin refers to as *Erlebnis*. The stark denial of lived experience artificially sprained the true image of the past; the past ceased to exist and was considered to be lost. By being pushed back to the brink of being unable to speak and loss of language, Benjamin's Angel of History cannot even open its mouth to speak.

While García Márquez did not directly witness the Banana Massacre, he nevertheless inherited the dilemma concerning historical accuracy from the family circle, which trapped the actual event in a void of muted experience, from which García Márquez himself found it difficult to escape. The policy of suppression and censorship undertaken by the conservative Colombian government left García Márquez with no other choice than to exaggerate the event itself and transfer it to the realm of the fantastic and magical: García Márquez literally invented facts, such as the number of casualties, because such a big/important event could not have humble origins. Instead, the circumstances of the event absolutely needed to correspond to the post-facto myth of slaughter that sprouted out of the policy of silence following the Banana Massacre's aftermath. The statistics of objective reality were “‘aumentada[s]’ hasta un extreme en que es ya realidad imaginaria” (Vargas Llosa 172). Ironically, this mythification was fundamental in the creation of a counter-narrative that would rival the Official version in size and stature, thereby acquiring the same type of authority and veneer of truth:

La versión de mi madre tenía cifras tan exiguas y el escenario era tan pobre para un drama tan grandioso como el que yo había imaginado, que me causó un sentimiento de frustración. Más tarde hable con sobrevivientes y testigos y escarbe en colecciones de prensa y documentos oficiales y me di cuenta de que la verdad no estaba de ningún lado. Los conformistas decían, en efecto, que no hubo muertos. Los del extremo contrario afirmaban sin un temblor en la voz que fueron más de cien, que los habían visto desangrándose en la plaza y que los llevaron en un tren de carga para echarlos en el mar como el banano de rechazo. Así que mi verdad quedó extraviada para siempre en algún punto improbable de los dos extremos...Fue así como la cifra de muertos la mantuve en tres mil, para conservar las proporciones épicas del drama, y la vida real terminó por hacerme justicia: hace poco [...] el orador de turno en el Senado pidió un minuto de silencio

en memoria de los tres mil mártires anónimos sacrificados por la fuerza pública. (García-Márquez, *Vivir para contarla* 73)

Thus, the magical reality alluded to by Vargas Llosa eventually became fact and allowed the CAS narrative to re-enact the myth of ritual in the Banana Massacre. The ritual myth then becomes true because it develops a real imaginary logic that imposes its own standard of numerical believability on the past. Magic creates its own reality, its own inverted logic that is based on an inverted historical imperative, a system that asks readers to believe what they do not see. Thus, believing becomes seeing. By implying that readers accept the fantastic at face value and completely disbelieve the true accounts, the CAS narrative is creating a space of extreme skepticism within the text. When inserted into such a climate of absurdity (how could there have been so many bodies that were dumped into the ocean without anyone knowing about them?), the numerical detail of 3000 acquires a holy aura of believability that then illuminates the rest of the narrative. An inversion then takes place: the concrete detail of 3000 makes the idea of the massacre more logical, easier to believe without the authoritative evidence of historicism. García Márquez can now take greater liberties with the story and make believable those magical events which would sound implausible in other circumstances. In an interview with Claudia Dreifus, García Márquez mentioned that the numerical value of 3000 was chosen because he mentally calculated that that particular amount was necessary to fill the requisite amount of box-cars (Bell-Villada, 116).

The 3000 is just one example of García Márquez use of detail, as García Márquez “incorporated Carlos Cortés Vargas’ account into his own narrative. Carlos

Cortés Vargas was the acting provincial military commander when the event took place on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1928” (Sims 53). García Márquez appropriates the framework of the general’s version of events, using it to both humanize the general’s own narrative (Sims mentions that the human aspect was markedly absent from the general’s account) and boost the credibility of his own.

García Márquez quotes the basic outline of Cortés Vargas’ account in order to access the true image of the past, making it citable in all its moments and emphasize the human content (Sims, 56). This parody of the citation à l’ordre du jour mentioned in Benjamin’s third thesis (for to cite the true past is impossible), infiltrates the written account, subtly alters the details of Cortés Vargas’ military account and inserts numbers that have more of a poetic appeal, but whose presence fails to disrupt the overall flow of the story. Eventually, these seamlessly inserted alterations become indistinguishable from the original account: they do not really stand out. The number’s validity can only be questioned by those who directly participated in the event, or have seen the documents, but the very event’s grandeur blindsides the reader’s critical abilities, lulling them into passively accepting these trivial details as fact.

Whereas in Cortés Vargas’ account the troops fired above the crowd as a warning, García Márquez had them fire on a crowd of “más de tres mil personas, entre trabajadores, mujeres y niños.” In order to heighten the anticipation, García Márquez’s version had the crowd wait for the commander’s arrival for a day, which made the assembled crowd more impatient. Whereas in Cortés Vargas’ account

Captain Julio Garavito read “el decreto número 1 de la jefatura Civil y Militar” before ordering the troops to fire into the air, García Márquez’s crowd heard a reading of the “‘Decreto Número 4 del Jefe Civil y Militar de la provincia,’ which was signed by General Carlos Cortés Vargas and his secretary, Enrique García Isaza” (Sims, 54). García Márquez’s doctoring of the event extends to direct citation: (in both accounts the crowd is given five minutes to disperse) and changing of dialogue, rewriting what is said at the same ‘moment’ in both dialogues: “una voz dentro de la multitud gritó al mismo tiempo ‘tenderse!’; ‘Varias voces gritaron al mismo tiempo: ‘Tírense al suelo!, Tírense al suelo!’” (Sims, 55). The discrepancies between the two versions make the existence of a historically objective truth’ impossible. An example of literature recreating history, García Márquez’s displaced Banana Massacre narrative retains a supernatural relevance that defies both fact and fiction by creating a “lógica real imaginaria en la que el efecto puede preceder a la causa y en la que el tiempo puede ser extensible y retráctil” (Muadi-Darraj, 14; Vargas Llosa, 185). The combination of García Márquez’s fictional account of the Banana Massacre and Cortés Vargas’ military account of the Banana Massacre is an example of historical bricolage (Sims 57).

Instead of undermining the event’s historical dimension through a re-assembled causal, linear sequence, however, the bricolage process enhances the historical dimension to the point of historicist absurdity. An exercise in futility, the recreation of an event through an objective narrative underlines the emptiness of chronological time. The linear, empty temporal structure of historicism is a series of

outlets to which anyone with sufficient authority (Benjamin's victors) can plug in any type of data and make it true. A series of splices, this linear sequencing breaks the link that exists between *Erlebnis* and the past, thereby preventing the Vanquished (those who do not hold the pen to paper) from having a personal relationship with the past.

Although Sims juxtaposes Levi-Straus' bricolage theory to effectively explain the method that García Márquez used to reconstruct the Banana Massacre and clearly differentiates between the original and the fake, bricolage is also a totality that distinguishes between the conscious factual time of Cortés Vargas' account and the parallel and homogeneous time of *CAS*. (Sims 64). By elevating the historical document to the godly status of factuality and automatically categorizing anything else that García Márquez adds as a pagan fiction, bricolage prevents the events of the Banana Massacre from being accurately cited and portrayed. Sims use of bricolage to interpret *CAS* merely points out the interplay between fact and fiction that obscures the true image of the past. This sort of duality echoes the dilemma between the Apollonian thinkers who favor a fact-based account of the past and Dionysian thinkers who favor a more fictional account of the past. Whereas Cortés Vargas' historicist account would be favored by Official Discourse as being true, García Márquez's version is more likely to benefit the Vanquished, or those who were forgotten by the historicist narrative. These two narratives are doomed to run alongside one another without really intersecting because they are incompatible with one another. Because neither one of these versions is true, the reader is forced to contend with a binary opposition that obscures the truth of the event itself. This binary

opposition makes it difficult to find out what really happened because both are competing reconstructions of one particular event: the Banana Massacre. Through bricolage, Sims implies that the truth lies somewhere in between Cortés Vargas' version and García Márquez's version, but cannot exactly say where because neither reconstructions can directly narrate what happened, the story of the Banana Massacre cannot be properly told. Walter Benjamin's *Theses* however, mediate between both reconstructions by squeezing the "true image of the past" out of oblivion.

By categorizing both versions as either factual or fictional, Robert Sims' methodology merely reinforces the mutability of experience so lamented by Benjamin because neither one of these versions presents a complete/citable version of what actually happened during the Banana Massacre. The Apollonian idea of history would discard Márquez's version and Cortés Vargas,' because both versions are biased and not completely supported by evidence. The Godly Fact silences the undocumented toil of the victims by portraying them as the main characters of a fictional story and describes Cortés Vargas/the Army as a killing machine that was only following orders. The Dionysian idea of history would claim that García Márquez's version is an imaginary revenge written to justify the strikers' weakness and solicit compassion from the Victors. Cortés Vargas' account is also a Nietzschean sign of weakness: Cortés Vargas does not need to write an account of what happened in order to justify his actions, as admission and doubt limit his will to power.

These extremes avoid discussing the past either because there are not enough facts to write out a coherent narrative (Apollonian), or because the over-abundance of

facts creates a non-existent past that prevents both sides from articulating their own free will and does not allow events to happen as they should (Dionysian). The true Banana Massacre is either under-written by incomplete fact (Apollonian), or completely destroyed/over-written by fact (Dionysian). This leads to an interesting dilemma: it is impossible to effectively/truly document the past because the past has disappeared, but it is also impossible to ignore the passing of the past. The Apollonian and Dionysian versions create mutually exclusive versions of History that are a slap in the face because they do not provide a complete portrait of the Banana Massacre as something that happened instantaneously ('all at once') in the form of an image that cannot appear repeatedly, or be accurately described in words. Hence, both the Dionysian and Apollonian versions of History are descriptive and as such they remove us from the past.

Dionysian and Apollonian versions of History do not recognize the transitory nature of the past, which prevents the Banana Massacre from being fully articulated, recognized and preserved. Walter Benjamin's *Theses* allow this recognition to take place by letting the past be seen and heard, not described. The two competing truths can then intersect through Walter Benjamin's *Theses* in a *Jetztzeit* of believability: the revolutionary chance for the oppressed past and a Messianic cessation of happening can now take place (Benjamin, *Theses* 254). Without the crystallization of the past into a monad through telling, time cannot stop, the hope for the faint possibility of redemption cannot be articulated and the *citation à l'ordre du jour* will be completely forgotten. The past will no longer be remembered, but instead stifled by memory and

the polyphonic narrative that is endemic to the past and García Márquez's writing will be permanently lost.

After the Banana Massacre, José Arcadio Segundo's direct (his)story is overwritten by a policy of mass-produced historicist accounts that deny such an event even took place. These falsified truths isolate José Arcadio Segundo from his own past by labeling his lived experience as fiction and destroying the moment of believability that allows the story to be told in the first place. José Arcadio's direct experience in the Banana Massacre effectively isolates him from the rest of Macondo's population by severing the essential connection between history and remembrance. By preventing José Arcadio from remembering what he experienced as having happened, as a true image of the past, the official accounts force the past to irretrievably disappear. Macondo is forced into a policy of complicity with the official account: the quick prosperity of Macondo brought on by the Banana Company makes the townspeople willing to believe anything told through official channels, yet this comes at the price of losing the ability to tell their own personal story, to retain their own personal experience with the past. The current of progress brought by the Banana Company traps Macondo's inhabitants in an aura of historical verisimilitude: the news-papers, electric lighting (progress) became more real than their actual past.

Trapped by Progress, Macondo's inhabitants fail to see how they are being exploited by progress. Their ready belief in the mass-produced media effectively murders the striking workers a second time, for not only were the striking workers killed by Cortés Vargas' Army (and dumped into the ocean), but (in a culture where

the miraculous ghosts of the dead have just as much right to exist as the living) by the very people who refuse to remember them. Consumed by technological progress, Macondo fails to concern itself with the actual account of the past and looks at people such as José Arcadio Segundo with pity. After jumping off of the train, José Arcadio Segundo makes his way to Macondo in order to tell its inhabitants what has happened. Tired and dirty, José Arcadio stops at a house to rest. José Arcadio Segundo's claim that a massacre has taken place is met with pity and disbelief:

Atraído por el olor de la carne, entró en una cocina donde una mujer con un niño en brazos estaba inclinada sobre el fogón. /Buenos - dijo exhausto-. Soy José Arcadio Segundo Buendía. / Pronunció el nombre completo, letra por letra, para convencerse de que estaba vivo. Hizo bien, porque la mujer había pensado que era una aparición al ver en la puerta la figura escuálida, sombría, con la cabeza y la ropa sucias de sangre, y tocada por la solemnidad de la muerte. Lo conocía [...] José Arcadio Segundo no habló mientras no terminó de tomar el café. /-- Debían ser como tres mil—murmuró./--Qué?/--Los muertos—aclaró el--. Debían ser todos los que estaban en la estación. /La mujer lo midió con una mirada de lástima. 'Aquí no ha habido muertos' dijo. 'Desde los tiempos de tu tío, el coronel, nada ha pasado en Macondo.' (CAS 360)

José Arcadio's twin brother, Aureliano Segundo, also fails to believe that a Massacre actually took place, because of what he had read in the national edict:

La noche anterior habían leído un bando nacional extraordinario, para informar que los obreros habían obedecido la orden de evacuar la estación, y se dirigían a sus casas en caravanas pacíficas. El bando informaba también que los dirigentes sindicales, con un elevado espíritu patriótico, habían reducido sus peticiones a dos puntos: reforma de los servicios médicos y construcción de letrinas en las viviendas. (CAS 362).

In short, the Massacre was erased from the official narrative and replaced by a fictional truth. The workers' toil was appropriated by History and transformed into a happy story that benefited only the plantation owners and the Colombian government.

García Márquez's retelling of the Massacre in *CAS* parodies the tacit pact of silence produced by the mass-produced experiences that ensued between the people and the Colombian government after the historical Banana Massacre: "The Colombian government clearly had nothing to gain from a revelation of the truth, and the people living in the banana zone were understandably reluctant to expose themselves to further reprisals" (Minta 169). The historical Banana Massacre remained an open secret of Colombian history: everyone knew something had happened, but no one had any interest in talking about it. The social omertà of the Banana Massacre was broken a short while later by Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, a young Colombian lawyer, who travelled to the banana zone, collected oral and written testimony about the massacre. After being successfully elected to the Colombian Congress in September 1929 (about a year after the Massacre), Gaitán denounced the government's conduct (Minta 169) during a debate. During a parliamentary session in the 1960s and after García Márquez's novel was published, a moment of silence was held in honor of the 3000 workers, who had lost their lives in the Massacre (Bell-Villada 116).

The Banana Massacre narrative in *CAS* questions the recoverability of certain physical and temporal artifacts from the past and the possibility of constructing an objective of assembling a true account from the bits and pieces of data/testimony that has been left behind (Minta 172). Written against the grain of historicism, these bits of truth question the validity of the official narrative, but also point out the impossibility of reconstructing a perfectly objective account of the past. In this light, García

Márquez's grand counter-narrative is just another conscious exaggeration that underlines the past's fictional nature. Subtly urging readers to mistrust each individual written account, such extreme skepticism implies that the actual truth is an artificial construct and is nowhere to be found. While the *CAS* version no doubt underlines the anonymous toil of the vanquished, it is more than just another self-dramatizing satire. Instead of being just another example of cultural relativism and adding to the schizophrenic state of disbelief in historical data, the *CAS* version fans hope in the past by acting as the antidote to forgetfulness.

The *CAS* version urges us to mistrust history because words sever the contact between a memory and the past. The multiplicity of narratives makes it impossible to re-construct the Grand narrative, which transforms the word into a poison that is to be avoided at all costs because it prevents us from remembering the past. What Sims, Minta and Ines Mena fail to point out is that the *CAS* version can only show how the act of writing can act as a pharmakon, a defense against the mutability of personal experience in historicism. Derrida's interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus* questions Socrates' strict interpretation of the concept of pharmakon in relation to writing and truth. In the dialogue, Socrates reiterates the Egyptian myth that implies that writing reduces wisdom instead of enhancing knowledge. Derrida's interpretation instead focuses on the multi-faceted meaning of the word pharmakon, stating that

the beneficial essence or virtue of a pharmakon does not prevent it from hurting. The Protagoras classes the pharmaka among the things that can be both good (*agatha*) and painful (*aniara*)...an example of hubris, that violent, unbound excess of pleasure that makes the profligate cry out like a mad man (Derrida 1850).

The painful pleasure experienced in the malady and treatment is a pharmakon.

When the painful pleasure principle is applied to García Márquez's writing, the notion of historical verisimilitude, the historicist desire to control the past and the impossibility of arresting/eternalizing the true image of the past, an interesting conclusion can emerge. Since written accounts further obscure an already irretrievable past, the only defense against forgetting/misplacing the Colombian past (for the Colombian people/García Márquez) is to make up their own story. It doesn't matter if it is true. What matters is that the act of writing can be used as a proxy for storytelling, not in recovering the past, but in retaining the ability to tell a story of that past. The process of telling a story of the past is the only defense against forgetting and teaches the Buendías/José Arcadio Segundo to believe in their past and not the eternalizing present. In *CAS*, writing becomes an incomplete proxy for speech that invites the reader to talk with the text and participate in the ongoing process of making whole that which has inevitably been lost. An event like the Banana Massacre only becomes lost for history when stories about it cease to be told.

La peste del insomnio promotes forgetfulness by preventing Macondo's inhabitants from dreaming. By erasing the lid of individual memory, sleeplessness sets individual dreams free and leaves them to free to infiltrate the minds of others. The waking fantasies keep the world afloat, but eventually bring Macondo to the point of exhaustive boredom and forgetfulness. Instead of giving more time to live, la peste induces a state of forgetfulness and the loss of an identity.

Visitación, who is one of the native servants living in the Buendía household, immediately foretells the effects of la peste:

Era la peste del insomnio [...] Nadie entendió en la casa la alarma de Visitación. ‘Si no volvemos a dormir, mejor,’ decía José Arcadio Buendía [...]. Pero la india les explicó que lo más temible de la enfermedad del insomnio no era la imposibilidad de dormir, pues el cuerpo no sentía cansancio alguno, sino su inexorable evolución hacia una manifestación más crítica: el olvido. Quería decir que cuando el enfermo se acostumbraba a su estado de vigilia, empezaban a borrarse de su memoria los recuerdos de la infancia, luego el nombre y la noción de las cosas, y por último la identidad de las personas y aun la conciencia del propio ser, hasta hundirse en una especie de idiotez sin pasado. (CAS 61)

Visitación knows about the ill-effects of la peste because the same illness had forced her to flee the kingdom where she was a princess. La peste is, thus, an example of reverse colonialism: the loss of the Buendía family’s ability to dream symbolizes the loss of their ability to communicate and speak, thereby separating them from their past. Over-written by a colonial (outside) influence, the Buendía’s history disappears. Melquíades’ return to Macondo, the writing of the manuscripts, and the subsequent establishment of chronological time in Macondo by writing ultimately separates the Buendías from maintaining a personal relationship with the past. No longer able to tell their own stories, the Buendías become automatons that adopt the mass-produced notions of personal experience produced by the manuscripts.

The descendents of the Spanish conquistadors, the Buendías themselves become victims of outside conquest because the world is made for them. The subsequent arrival of Don Apolinar Moscote reinforces this post-colonialist interpretation. A government official who comes to rule with paper, Don Apolinar Moscote and Melquíades arrive immediately after the inhabitants of Macondo recover their ability to remember through writing. A substitute for speech, writing is a device that is used to control the Buendías and diminishes their independence. Through the

prism of Walter Benjamin's *Theses* however, la peste del insomnio and the following recovery of memory (through a magic potion invented by Aureliano) are the exact opposite of what they were initially meant to be.

Instead of being a pharmakon against the past, a symbol of death and a fall from grace (see explanation of Derrida above), writing is a chronological marker of time. Melquíades comes back to Macondo to hide in "aquel rincón del mundo todavía no descubierto por la muerte" (*Cien años de soledad* 67). No one has yet died in Macondo: the village (*aldea*) still exists in an illusive state of immortality, where the present is constantly re-recycled ad nauseam. A semi-divine state (see "Phaedrus"), the oral culture does prevent Macondo's inhabitants from losing wisdom and their independence, but at the cost of living without a past, or the means to properly chronicle and cite that very past.

Orality does preserve a polyphonic narrative of the past by giving Macondo an opportunity to tell itself from within and keep ghosts of the past alive (see José Arcadio's constant communication with Prudencio Aguilar's ghost). An oral culture, however, fails to account for the physical reality of death in *CAS* and the consciousness of immortality. While ghosts, ancient tales, legends and superstitions are as alive as the dead, they are part of an atemporal world that does not remember/account for the notion of mortality, which (ironically, also) traps Macondo in an artificially created self, prevents its inhabitants from having any notion of a past, or present and leaves them vulnerable to the onslaught of progress brought by the Banana Company. In this context, writing becomes a tool that instructs the Buendías

in remembrance.

In *CAS*, writing gives Macondo a chance to articulate and remember a past by making inhabitants aware of (their own) mortality. As a means of overcoming the defects of memory, writing places limitations on the Buendías while also allowing them to exceed these very limitations and fan the spark of hope in the past. Instead of stripping the future and past of its magical qualities, writing actually prevents these magical qualities from becoming prey to the ravages of historicism and homogeneous time. Rather than being used as a tool of domination in *CAS*, writing is a chronological marker of time that preserves the ghosts of Colombia's history in the hope that Judgment Day and the Messiah will come.

The act of writing in *CAS* is an act of disclosure, one that keeps Macondo afloat. An act of freedom, the writing and manuscripts of Melquíades allowed Macondo to escape its own mortality through the artificial preservation/creation of the magic realist past. By making the Buendías aware of their mortality and allowing for the subsequent reorganization of magic-time and remembrance, writing becomes a way to forget forgetfulness. A trick used to over-write the accuracy of memory in depicting the historicist past, writing actually has the potential of writing the past out of existence. An over-reaction on the part of a jealous deity, Melquíades' writing/manuscripts (after the insomnia plague) allows Macondo to deal with the cumbersome reality of remembering too much and liberates Macondo from the weight of its own solitude. To remember everything can become a deadly self-destructive echo of nostalgia that can flash up at the moment when it can do the most damage.

Nostalgia's narcissistic attempt to transform itself into reality, as exemplified by the Catalan's return to his home country towards the end of *CAS*, traps those who visit in an inescapable totality of nothingness and emptiness worse than death.

Macondo appears out of nowhere in the *CAS* narrative and disappears just as quickly as soon as Aureliano Babilonia deciphers Melquíades' manuscripts. The apocalyptic spirit that seems to pervade the entire Manuscript comes to a sudden end when the *hojarasca* (leaf storm) wipes Macondo off of the map, leaving readers with a manuscript describing the instantaneous existence of a family condemned to die of solitude. The apocalyptic prophecy of the *estirpe* whose last descendant was to be born with a pig's tail, itself the sign and symptom of incest, has been fulfilled. The biblical hurricane ending is counter-intuitive: Macondo is

no more than a rural village in the obscure wilds; it is virtually unheard of in the nation's capital [...]. Any heavenly punishment, [...] will escape our notice and fall upon deaf ears...Clearly we encounter here some kind of overreaction on the part of the Deity, an effect in excess of the cause, a response wildly overreaching the stimulus. (Clark 172)

As an isolated village in the middle of nowhere, Macondo hardly deserves the epic send-off that should be reserved for a more illustrious town. Macondo's random entry into the historical record coincides with the arrival of the gypsies, continues with Don Apolinar Moscote's arrival and (trapped by the nostalgia for the prosperity of the Banana Craze) ends with the (United Fruit) Banana Company's departure. The Buendía family's pre-ordained destruction from incest and the fascination that Macondo has with things like ice, electricity and the photograph, which are things that modern-day society takes for granted, mocks the epic proportions of the *hojarasca*.

Anti-climatic to the extreme, Macondo's hyperbolic end rings hollow, because

the big ending does not correspond to the humble, yet sudden beginning. Subject to a dynamic in which the effect outweighs the cause, Macondo ends up overcoming its own truth, ceases to have physical ramifications and mythologizes its' own existence. Originally the name of a banana plantation that Márquez saw on his way to Aracataca, Macondo becomes an interface, an artificial construct in which magic and reality (truth) coincide. The veil of Macondo is an interface that reveals a series of *Jetztzeit* potentialities that just happened to randomly coincide and intersect at a moment of (temporal) loss. Momentarily escaping the text's narrativizing powers, this moment is then reflected in a mirror-like catharsis of meaning, proving that Macondo never existed in the first place and leaving Aureliano Babilonia/the Buendías staring at their own reflection in a mirror. Without realizing that they are staring at a totality, an image of their own self, the Buendías become so enamored of their image that (like Narcissus) they become unwilling/unable to escape their own misfortunes and the destiny that they have unconsciously set out for themselves.

When Aureliano recognizes the image the Other that he sees is his own Self in the mirror of Melquíades' manuscripts, that he (Aureliano) is reading his own story, the future becomes a totality that represents the true image of the past (his own). Because of this clashing recognition, Aureliano Babilonia trips over the totalizing power of language and falls into his-own-story (history) of solitude. The collision between self and other at the end of *CAS* seems to point to an Apocalypse: Judgment Day came, Macondo was wiped out by a biblical hurricane because the Buendías committed the sin of incest. The resulting biblical totality of interpretation ignores the

following reality about Macondo found in the pages of Melquíades' manuscript and the CAS narrative: non-existence.

Read forward into the past, Macondo is not a physical place, but a “ciudad de los espejos (o espejismos)” and a series of lost, nostalgic interpretations (CAS 485). Knowledge of the reality of Macondo's non-existence is as deadly as Aureliano Babilonia's deciphering of the manuscripts demonstrates. In the sanctuary of Pilar Ternera's brothel, Aureliano confesses to his unknowingly incestuous passion for Amaranta Úrsula. The heart of each member of the Buendía Family is an open book for Pilar because

un siglo de naipes y de experiencias le había enseñado que la historia de la familia era un engranaje de repeticiones irreparables, una rueda giratoria que hubiera seguido dando vueltas hasta la eternidad, de no haber sido por el desgaste progresivo e irremediable del eje. (CAS, 461)

Instead of revealing the relationship however, Pilar refuses to desacralize the prophetic power that her fortune-telling cards have over the past. Pilar Ternera's death (in the beginning of the last chapter) is a dark omen predicting Macondo's demise. Without Pilar's ability to foretell the past through fortune-telling cards, the Buendías can no longer organize time: “era el final. En la tumba de Pilar Ternera, entre salmos y abalorios de putas, se pudrían los escombros del pasado” (CAS 464).

As a case of inverted nostalgia, Pilar's death refers the Buendía secret of incest of potentiality to a structure of repetition that existed before: the past can now happen. The veil preventing Aureliano Babilonia from discovering the immediacy of his own being can now be lifted. Unaware of Úrsula's fear of incest, Aureliano Babilonia falls desperately in love with Amaranta Úrsula in a cry of passion that Amaranta Úrsula

reciprocates. Aureliano and Úrsula do not notice Macondo's gradual transformation into nostalgia because they lost "el sentido de la realidad, la noción del tiempo, el ritmo de los hábitos cotidianos" (id. 471) and their love-making is broken by "pausas del delirio" when they discover that "los tedios del amor tenían posibilidades inexploradas, mucho mas ricas que las del deseo" (id. 472). Born with a pig's tail, their last child (Aureliano III) is carried off by ants after Amaranta Úrsula dies in child-birth, which causes Aureliano to realize that the keys to his destiny are to be found in the manuscript.

Written in a language that was undecipherable to previous generations of Buendías, the manuscripts are now read with surprising clarity. The inverted historicism of the manuscripts allows for a cancellation effect: each event is translated in order to be discarded into the wasteland of non-memory. Consumed by a sense of foreboding, Aureliano Babilonia feverishly continues to decipher the manuscripts, learning that "Melquíades no había ordenado los hechos en el tiempo convencional de los hombres, sino que concentró un siglo de episodios cotidianos, de modo que todos coexistieran en un instante" (CAS, 483).

As the events of the *estirpe* are translated from a future into a distant past, they become (historicist) totalities that exist only so that Aureliano Babilonia can exist/be born into the historical text of the manuscripts in order to discover that

Francis Drake había asaltado a Riohacha solamente para que ellos pudieran buscarse por los laberintos más intrincados de la sangre, hasta engendrar el animal mitológico que había de poner término a la *estirpe* (CAS 484).

The compression of time and organization of the one hundred years of solitude

into a chronological historicist narrative of false causality is a tacit acceptance of and resignation to fate. Aureliano Babilonia fails to realize that to translate the circumstances of his own birth means to translate his own being into a totalizing mask of the self from which the intricacies of Aureliano Babilonia's being cannot escape. A totality that is about to be wiped out of the story and translated out of language, Aureliano Babilonia makes a last ditch effort to preserve his own random existence as a magic entity in Melquíades' manuscripts by prophesying himself out of existence and then hiding within the pages of *CAS*.

### Chapter III:

#### A Myth of Perpetual Decline: *El otoño del patriarca* and the Genealogy of Power

Historicism and hyper-textuality transform *El Otoño del Patriarca* into an empty totality of language. Over-description suffocates the hidden sparks of *Jetztzeit* potentiality found at every point in *OdP*: the Patriarch's real body is cannibalized by an infinite array of words (language). Held hostage in the Once upon a time bordello of historicism, the Patriarch becomes a servant of the very totality that he helped create. Repetition of hyper-textuality condemns the Patriarch to a never-ending oblivion of an infinite number of deaths. Hence, the endless (possibilities of) re-naming of a forgotten past in *OdP* lead to a state of perpetual decay. Power – a self-contained labyrinth of polyphonic memory from which one cannot escape – induces a state of perpetual deterioration: each subsequent re-telling of a mythical story about the Patriarch becomes a way to purify its content in the hope of arriving at an indivisible reality: the Patriarch's true identity. A Benjaminian *Ursprung*, the name of a mythical character is a manifestation of every metamorphosis undergone by the Patriarch's true being: like Úrsula Iguarán and Melquíades, the Patriarch is a mere recollection that threatens to exhaust the tellability of personal experience.

Symbolizing the fear of letting go of anxiety, myth homogenizes history and language because each subsequent re-telling of the Patriarch's story is the re-production of a re-production (of a re-production) of a forgotten moment of

believability. As an inescapable totality however, myth of power becomes destructive; full knowledge of the self is deadly. When the Patriarch gets too close to the totalizing myth of power and tries to imitate it perfectly, like Icarus who died from flying too close to the sun, the Patriarch too dies from the incestuous myth of his own greatness. Because myth and power are inescapable totalities and the Colombian past cannot be viewed as an entity, but as a series of images, García Márquez is forced to resort to parody in order to depict the nakedness of power in *OdP*.

The interplay between language, history and speech creates strata of immanence that momentarily redeem the Patriarch from the totalizing powers of myth. In *OdP*, language acts a necessary interface that protects the Patriarch from the viral properties of myth and historicism. Trapped by language in an aural strata of immanence found beyond the text, the Patriarch's body becomes a testament to the momentary rejuvenating power of the Proustian *mémoire involontaire*. A way of creating distance between the self-perpetuating myth-virus, the *mémoire involontaire* triggers a *Jetztzeit* of believability that prevents the Patriarch from being lost in and to historicism. A unique way of re-experiencing the past, the *mémoire involontaire* underlines the rejuvenating properties of myth and history. A counter-code to the viral properties of myth, language extracts the Patriarch from the text in order to desacralize his power. A monad of historical materialism, the Patriarch's body contains an entire world of potentialities that categorize and preserve myth as a transient reality, not a viral totality, capable only of empty self-reproduction.

The textuality of the Patriarch's body naturalizes the historical accident of his

rule by becoming a magic-realist narrative of power and dictatorship in Latin American history. A reality that becomes magical at the moment of its telling, true Latin American history is a series of events that occur behind the scenes of historicism. Latin American history is never written, but told, because the Official Historicist narrative of Latin American history (see the Banana Massacre analysis) does not bring magic, but merely describes a series of empty events that are merely stated, never resolved. A catharsis of meaning, a temporary (satisfactory) resolution occurs during the telling of the story. By splicing the historicist narrative of empty time, the storyteller (and the act of storytelling) induces a momentary state of believability from which the actual past is not evacuated. A (Benjaminian) cessation of happening occurs: the past becomes lost in the story that is being told about it. Thus, in the true image of the Latin American dictatorships, reality (what is seen) cannot be divorced from magic (what is told): telling becomes a form of seeing that is just as true – if not more so than – as what is experienced in daily life. The resulting symbiotic relationship between the magic and the real momentarily desacralises power and solitude in *OdP*, thus allowing the author to describe a random particularity that existed outside of reality and could not be integrated into the historicist narrative.

The spaces of silence surrounding the Patriarch's body create such particularities: the we narrator who finds his body does not know if the body he sees is the Patriarch's. The body creates a state of doubt concerning the Patriarch's existence: the death is so suspicious that it remains beyond reality ("magic"). The lack

of evidence makes doubt or uncertainty, not absence, the only tangible reality in *OdP*, a reality that can only be confirmed through the telling of stories about the Patriarch. There is no true absence in the *OdP* because absence would imply the Patriarch truly existed at a certain point in time and that he really died. Products of popular fantasy, the stories that make up the bulk of the *OdP* narrative are the only consistent sources of information about the Patriarch in the novel and transcend the Patriarch's existence. Filling the holes of silence left behind by incomplete evidence, these anecdotes exist on the peripheries of myth, between knowledge (history) and fantasy (language), transforming the Patriarch into an entity projected beyond the narrative.

Unburdened by the constraints of language, history and speech, the Patriarch's existence, non-existence and power are reiterated every time someone tells a story about the effects that this dictator had on their own lives. The Patriarch becomes the common denominator of multiple story-tellers in the *OdP* polyphonic narrative. Every anecdotal story casts the Patriarch in a different light: he is a heartless ruler, who kills his most trusted advisors, an incompetent fornicator, a mama's boy, a saintly benefactor to the poor. These multiple identities, each one more real than the last, flesh out an indivisible reality, the Patriarch's name, but are more than mere manifestations (testaments) of the Patriarch's mythical stature, when examined in the context of Latin American magic realism and the dictatorial novel.

Instead of fleshing out a (perfect, Aristotelian) being in order to arrive at some pre-verbal (prelapsarian) memory of something that didn't exist but became real with time (acquiring the interface of a name in the process), or something that existed but

crossed the boundaries of its existence, myth merely indicates an empty space filled with (the potentiality of) forgetting.

Instead of describing the Patriarch's (non)existence, the anecdotes indicate that the Patriarch is an ephemeral/empty memory that is constantly forgotten. Indicating a moment of forgetting, the anecdotes are not meant to answer the "what" of the Patriarch's existence, but indicate the temporal landscape of forgetting. Therefore, the Patriarch's myth is not a description of a mythical being, but an affirmation of loss and silence that accompanies the necessary process of forgetting.

The polyphonic narrative in *OdP* exists not to be remembered, but to be forgotten. The statement of "Myth is what." indicates that a memory of a by-gone event existed, but was forgotten. The idea of the Patriarch's existence, or not-existence itself points out the Patriarch's resolved identity and undermines the magic realist aspect of the Patriarch's existence. The presence of incomplete evidence (anecdotes) proves that the Patriarch is an identity that is never settled or decided. Thus the anecdotes indicate a space of potentiality, of a speech that was forgotten during the telling of the story. The Patriarch myth is not a "what." Instead, the anecdotes merely indicate a space in which a story could be told in order to be forgotten. Instead of asking, "the Patriarch is what," or "Myth is what," a better way of looking at the Patriarch's myth in magic realism would be: "the Patriarch is ( *empty space* ) or "Myth is ( *empty space* )." The latter paradigm better defines Benjamin's tellability of personal experience within magic realism.

An indication of the intimate relationship between remembering, telling and

forgetting the already forgotten, the *OdP* narrates the perpetual decline of the Dictator's myth. Filled with the magical brilliance of autumn, these anecdotes are the only enduring testament of the Patriarch. *OdP*'s polyphonic narrative indicates the parallel reality of daily life under a Latin American dictator: on the one hand, there is the reality, the performativity of everyday life; on the other, the magic reality that exists behind the scenes. The random intersection between these two realities takes place behind the scenes in the theatre of the Patriarch's power.

Each anecdote is a theatrical melodrama that reenacts the myth that the Patriarch is all-powerful: the sense of play between remembering the forgotten and forgetting the forgotten through the tellability of personal experience indicates the necessity for a Messianic cessation of happening to take place, so that the true image of the past can be blasted out of the continuum of historicism. Faced with inconclusive evidence, García Márquez writes a parody of the (historical) Latin American dictator not only because the historicist past never existed and cannot be recovered in its true form, but because the process of handing-over that takes place during the telling of a story destroys the very Latin American history that García Márquez is trying to save. Therefore, the true image of the Latin American dictator must remain a peripheral fantasy, a Proustian *mémoire involontaire* ready to be told at a moment's notice. Narrated backwards, García Márquez's *OdP* deconstructs the dictatorial novel: the past of Latin American history is spoken, rather than written and remembered. Thus, the traditional novel was an insufficient medium for García Márquez's message because it undermined the tellability of personal experience. The

solution for this problem was two-fold: García Márquez used the genre of the (dictatorial) novel in order to write “a poem about the solitude of power” (Bell-Villada, 125). García Márquez was not the first Latin American author to examine the intangible nature of power in a Latin American dictatorship.

The Latin American dictator grew out of the political instability that followed the gradual decline of Spain’s influence in the Latin American Colonies. The internal instability and economic uncertainty that followed the Latin American Colonies’ independence from Spain crushed any hope for freedom and democracy: private land-owners and merchants increased their own fortunes at the expense of a population mired in poverty. Seeking financial compensation for their war-time struggles, the generals became politicians who used violence to gain personal control of countries and ruled according to their personal whims. The Spanish Caribbean also had its share of dictators, who ruled the Dominican Republic (Rafael Leonidas Trujillo) and Cuba (Fulgencio Batista) by selling out to the United States, or using their own connections to acquire ownership of their respective countries. Trujillo in particular “changed the name of the legendary capital of Santo Domingo for Trujillo City and changed his name to Generalissimo” (Bell-Villada, 19).

Gabriel García Márquez’s Colombia did not remain immune to the instability of other Latin American countries and was subject to its own internal struggles. The 1948 assassination of Liberal Jorge Eleicer Gaitán (the very one who compiled evidence of the Massacre de las Bananeras) caused a period of bloody rule, commonly referred to as La Violencia, which lasted until 1964. In the meantime, Gen. Gustavo

Rojas Pinilla came to power in 1953. A populist leader, Rojas Pinilla modernized Columbia's infrastructure – he built highways, a train leading to the sea –, but eliminated the Liberal Opposition and dissolved the Senate.

The 1970s saw a resurgence of Latin American dictatorships: Pérez Jimenez and Augusto Pinochet are only two of the dictators emerging in this period. Covertly led by the United States, Operation Condor was a military-led assault that sought to eliminate left-wing activists in various Latin American countries located in the Southern Cone. With the full cooperation of the local military (i.e., Pinochet in Chile, Goulart in Brazil, Hugo Bazner in Bolivia, Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay), the CIA instituted a series of intelligence operations designed to eliminate the Communist influence in South America. “As if by tacit agreement, major novelists, such as Alejo Carpentier (*El Recurso del Metodo*, 1974), Augusto Roa Bastos (*Yo, el Supremo*, 1975) and García Márquez all published novels on dictators” (Williams 123).

Written in 1975, *OdP* is part of a tradition of dictatorial novels that use literature in order to talk about daily life under Latin American dictatorship, without really talking about daily life under a particular Latin American dictatorship. The necessary divorce of official history from polyphonic history (magic) in Latin America provides a unique vantage point for Latin American authors, in that it allows them to chronicle the different facets of dictatorship without being held accountable by historicism for factual inaccuracies, or, otherwise, face censorship.

On the contextual side, the genre of the Latin American dictatorial novel grew out of the political instability of Latin American history. A bastion of stability in a

politically unstable society, the military has always been intimately linked to Latin American governments. Military Juntas (and their leading caudillos) have always remained in the wings, behind the scenes of political power ready to rescue their respective countries from political power and provide stability in political chaos at a moments' notice. The military's sudden appearance on the political scene at just the right moment, when all hope for stability has been lost, invests the Latin American dictator with an aura of magic: like García Márquez's nameless Dictator, the historically attested Latin American dictators have often pursued fast-paced modernization at the expense of democracy and relied on foreign intervention (mainly from the United States).

Often however, the Latin American dictators' power teeters on the brink of collapse: the same brutality that brought them to power has also undermined that power. Latin American dictators always found themselves in a state of political emergency; they were always in danger of losing power, but needed to sow seeds of uncertainty in order to keep that power. The means of control just became more sophisticated with time. The genre of the Dictator novel also underwent similar changes. Whereas the first dictatorial novels tended to portray the Dictator as a tyrant without a conscience whose alliance with the military kept him in power, the later examples of the genre tended to examine the Dictator from within (Ramos, 37).

The evolution of the Dictatorial novel parallels the evolution of history mentioned in the First Chapter of this thesis. Whereas History and historicism tend to view the past as a series of political intrigues by a few key players who are at the

service of great men, Benjamin's *Theses* and Foucault's *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* rescues the past from historicism by focusing more on the type of past history that historicism has left behind and see history, not as a chain reaction of empty chronology, but as a series of images, or flash-points that occur before being contaminated by historicism. The Dictator in Martín Luis Guzmán's *La sombra del caudillo* and Miguel Angel Asturias' *El Señor Presidente* is a remote, or invisible figure, whose underlings obey every order out of fear. Guzman's and Angel Asturias' Dictators become victims of the machinery of power. Written by Demetrio Aguilera-Malta, *El secuestro del general* transforms the Dictator from an element of power into a human being without a conscience. The Latin American Dictator's transformation from a servant of power into a human being introduces a moral dilemma of empathy into an equation of power that demotes the Dictator's status from God to that of limited man, thereby placing him on an equal footing with the reader.

Little by little, the Dictator ceases to be a divine authority and becomes a man. Initially an invisible figure who does not speak and whose orders are removed from their source, the Dictator becomes a human being who rules not through physical murder, but through language. The Dictator of Roa Bastos' *Yo, el supremo* is a product of his times and suffers the same physical calamities as any human being. Whereas Guzmán's and Asturias' Dictators were enigmatic for the reader, Roa Bastos' Primer Ministro is a man completely obsessed with the pathology of power and uses an intermediary (Holofernes Verbofilia) to carry out his bidding. In Alejo Carpentier's *El recurso del método*, the Latin American Dictator has evolved from a military man

who rules from a remote distance to a fantastic orator who physically enters his own kingdom in order to calm a resurrection, but eventually loses control of the machinery of his own power. Carpentier's Latin American Dictator brings together the two faces of the Dictator that were analyzed beforehand. El Primer Ministro lives in a semi-isolated state which gives him a semi-divine status (Guzman, Angel Asturias) and rules by issuing direct orders through language (Roa Bastos). Alejo Carpentier however, transforms his Dictator into a powerful orator, who uses speech to trap his advisors and people in a game of manipulation and deceit. Thus far, the Latin American Dictator has been bound by the constraints of history and popular perception. An image of the archetypal/stereotypical Latin American Dictator emerges: the Dictator is a stoical military man, a virile macho, who is completely comfortable in his position of power and never doubts himself. In contrast, García Márquez's Dictator is a man who is unsure of his grip on power (Ramos, 53).

García Márquez's *OdP* is a poem about the solitude of power and a psychological analysis of the Latin American Dictator. Whereas previous Dictators were portrayed as subjects of chronological time and described at various points of their lives in power, the image of García Márquez's Dictator (Patriarch) is that of an old man. Instead of a chronological narrative, the *OdP* is a polyphonic narrative describing the personal relationship that various people (young girls, generals) had with the General. "The narrative focus in which each chapter begins is relatively limited; then it opens to other points of view, and in some cases to multiple points of view within the same sentence" (Williams, 133). The novel consists of six chapters:

chapter 1 begins with the fake death of the Patriarch's double Patricio Aragonés; Chapter 2 describes the Patriarch's love for Manuela Sánchez; Chapter 3 describes how the Patriarch seeks retribution for a (failed) military coup when he decides to kill General Rodrigo Aguilar and serve Aguilar's remains on a platter; Chapter 4 describes the failed canonization of Bendición Alvarado (the Patriarch's mother) and Leticia Nazareno his future wife; Chapter 5 describes Leticia Nazareno and his son's assassination; Chapter 6 ends with a meditation on the uncertainty of the General's power and the celebration of his death (Williams, 125-127). In each chapter, the Patriarch assumes a different identity: in Chapter 1 he is a calculating murderer, in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 he is the lover, in Chapter 3 he is the loving son and in Chapter 6 he is a man who is removed from his seat of power. Various other voices, (the servant girl, the narrator who enters the Mansion) exist as back-ground noise in these chapters. The Patriarch's various faces are masks that allow the reader to meditate upon the Patriarch's true identity through the production of a series of Counter-Memories that act as parodies of historical Latin American Dictatorships.

The Patriarch's multiple deaths are meant to test the boundaries of the peoples' loyalty and control an unruly populace. Part of a game of manipulation, these deaths momentarily breach the historicist continuity of the Patriarch's rule: initial caution is replaced by the euphoria of people dancing in the streets. Happiness quickly turns to horror as the Patriarch reappears to punish those who did not show the requisite amount of loyalty by mourning for his death. The momentary release from tyranny that follows the announcement of the Patriarch's second death resurfaces at the end of

the novel. Despite having been punished for celebrating the tyrant's death before, the people take to the streets yet again without giving much thought to the idea that this death could also be just another political ruse. The crowds are lulled into a false sense of security and forget past reprisals at a moment of danger when faced with the same situation.

The potentiality for the reiteration of the past at a random, yet specific point in the future is greatest when the past randomly coincides with a similar point in the future. In the brief moments that follow the Patriarch's death therefore, the past ceases to be contemporaneous with the present, which prevents the people from appropriating their own past. Unable to make use of the memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger because they have not yet transformed the rarities and discontinuities of the past into a memory, the people dancing in the streets in Chapter 1 can potentially be subject to the same reprisals in Chapter 6. By examining the pathology of power, García Márquez's *OdP* allows the reader to go behind the curtains of the Patriarch's Dictatorship, letting us examine the machinery of the Patriarch's power. Whereas the people consider the real to be that which they can see and the magic as something uncanny (mysterious) that happens beyond the level of their immediate experience, the reader is granted access to both the real and magic realities of the Patriarch's rule as part of one narrative rather than two.

A perpetually absent figure, the Patriarch rules through ambiguity and doubt. The alternation between states of being and non-being introduces a state of perpetual doubt concerning the Patriarch's existence: he is both present and absent. Describing

various manifestations of the Patriarch's power, the histories, photographs and stories are the only constant true testimonials of (a) Patriarch's existence. These artifacts form the bulk of what the people know about the Patriarch. Physical manifestations of the Patriarch's power, these objects and stories are not testaments of the Patriarch's absence because absence would imply that there is a presence, but the people were never sure that someone was physically living in the Presidential palace because they had not seen him in the flesh. The corpse (of someone) is the only unrecognizable certainty that exists and is the only fact that the we narrator can report with absolute certainty, after he/she enters the forbidden quarters of the Presidential Palace:

...entonces empujamos una puerta lateral que daba a una oficina disimulada en el muro, y allí lo vimos a él, con el uniforme de lienzo sin insignias, las polainas, la espuela de oro en el talón izquierdo, más Viejo que todos los hombres [...] Solo cuando lo volteamos para verle la cara comprendimos que era imposible reconocerlo aunque no hubiera estado carcomido de gallinazos, porque ninguno de nosotros lo había visto nunca, y aunque su perfil estaba en ambos lados de las monedas[...] sabíamos que eran copias de retratos que ya se consideraban infieles en los tiempos del cometa, cuando nuestros propios padres sabían quién era el porqué se lo habían oído contar a los suyos, como estos a los suyos. (*OdP* 4)

With the enigmatic Patriarch's consent, the government mounts an elaborate spectacle of a funeral: the Patriarch's own mother (Bendición Alvarado) is told to appear sad in public. The 'death' proves to be just another one of the Patriarch's ruses: the dead body found in the Presidential Palace belongs to Patricio Aragonés, the Patriarch's double. Instead of feeling anger, the Patriarch feels betrayed and orders a series of military reprisals. The reader learns that this is not the first time that Patriarch has used death to increase his grip on power:

...la respiración natural de la vida diaria que volvía a ser la misma

medida que su muerte se convertía en otra muerte mas como otras tantas del pasado, el torrente incesante de la realidad que se lo iba llevando hacia la tierra de nadie de la compasión y el olvido, carajo, a la mierda la muerte. (*OdP* 14)

A series of multiple rebirths and re-entries continually recast the Patriarch as the hero in a sadistic melodrama and the people under his rule into an unwilling audience that is forced to endure the many spectacles of his power. Subject to endless displays of the Patriarch's power, the people are no longer able to tell truth apart from fiction and end up questioning their own sense of reality. The magic of resurrection becomes more real than the truth of manipulation: the truth and the image of the truth become interchangeable and superimposed on one another. Finding themselves at the mercy of the Patriarch's desire for escapism, the people learn to believe in multiple truths:

La segunda vez que lo encontraron [...] ninguno de nosotros era bastante Viejo para recordar lo que ocurrió la primera vez, pero sabíamos que ninguna evidente de su muerte era terminante, pues siempre había otra verdad detrás de la verdad. (*OdP*, 20)

The state of suspense reappears when

Así lo encontraron en las vísperas de su otoño, cuando el cadáver era en realidad el de Patricio Aragonés, y así volvimos a encontrarlo muchos años mas tarde en una época de tantas incertidumbres que nadie podía rendirse a la evidencia de que fuera suyo aquel cuerpo senil. (*OdP*, 37)

Eventually, the Patriarch becomes more dangerous when dead, rather than alive. Each chapter of *OdP* begins with a description of the Patriarch in various stages of decay, or death. Not only do these multiple deaths transform the Patriarch into a mythical figure, but the Patriarch becomes more visible in order not to be forced to retreat into a mythical past. Military reprisals follow each death, yet the notice of the Patriarch's death at the end of the novel is again met with signs of great joy, but again

the people cannot be sure if the Patriarch is really dead.

Repeated ad nauseam, the cycle of death and rebirth transforms the Patriarch into a myth of perpetual decay. Constant reiteration of death ends up producing predictable results: the Patriarch dies to test his subjects' loyalty, the Patriarch is reborn. By organizing time and space into a homogenizing narrative, the Patriarch creates "el tiempo incontable de la eternidad," which effectively destroys any hope for salvation (García Márquez, *OdP*, 111). The Patriarch is constantly on the verge of dying, leading to the realization that the Patriarch's actual death is a rare event in history that takes place outside of the text, preventing the people from conceiving of an existence without him. The constant spectacle of death makes it impossible to know if the Patriarch has ever died and should be a sufficient motivation for the people to be more cautious about being too content upon hearing news of his death at the end of the novel.

The looming threat of yet another possible massacre does not stop the people from celebrating the Patriarch's death at the end of the novel:

...las muchedumbres frenéticas que se echaban a las calles cantando los himnos de júbilo de la noticia jubilosa de su muerte y ajeno para siempre jamás a las músicas de liberación y los cohetes de gozo y las campanas de Gloria que anunciaron al mundo la Buena nueva de que el tiempo incontable de la eternidad había por fin terminado. (*OdP* 111)

Part of the group, the 'we' narrator shares in the joy, but the reader is left in a constant state of doubt. The Patriarch's return is always immanent because the 'historical' discontinuities and rare circumstances that contributed to the Patriarch's previous entries into truth have been transformed into a historicist memory of the past. An organizing principle of time, the memory of the Patriarch arose from the

(particular) combination of discontinuities that sliced through (interrupted) the past at a random point of temporal immanence, thereby supplying humankind (the people in the Dictatorship) with a unique experience with what became the past. A way to organize time, the memory thus becomes the organizing principle of the past's cemetery: an image of the past becomes encoded in memory and deprives the past event of its uniqueness. Both factors transform the event into a historicist fact and image of the past, which allows the event to be transposed into the future. The image of the brutal dictator becomes an alien truth, a relic of the past for the people every time that they hear news of his death and go out into the streets to celebrate. Thus, when confronted with a similar state of immanence, the people discard the image of the brutal Dictator by categorizing it as something of the past.

The ego of memory organizes the past, transforming it from an actuality - something that is closer, more immediate to our experience- into a potentiality - something more remote that contains a superstition, a coincidental reiteration left by a random event-. The transformation of a past event into a memory is a tacit agreement with the random incision of historical materialism: memory is not a killing off of the past, nor is memory a way of dragging up the hidden remains of the past.

Memory is more than a way to simply address the principle of the cemetery of the past. In *OdP*, memory is the crucial process of realizing that things had to happen a certain way, so that the fear of the future can have a precise cause. The people celebrate in the streets because they realize that the brutal dictatorship happened, but they do not stop celebrating because the potentiality of future trauma of dictatorial

power cannot be as bad as the past actuality of dictatorial power. At the moment of the Patriarch's death(?), the future trauma is still a possibility and, as such, is not as bad as past trauma, which itself is the worst thing that could possibly have happened. Trapped between these two realities, the people have no choice but to dance.

When the conditions conspire to create a new Patriarch however, the forgotten memory of past traumas can have the potentiality to be recovered at a moment's notice and serve as a warning of doom. The dancing people may then recover and draw strength from this momentarily forgotten event. The silent warning of the past often falls on deaf ears: when (if) the next Patriarch arrives, the memory of this one will have been already over-written by historicism to the point of being transformed into a totality of pure evil. A totality of language, this Patriarch will become road-kill for future historicism: eventually, new Dictators will replace him and will be worse than him. After death, the Patriarch will cease to be a living thing and language will be the only thing that will indicate that such a horrible Dictator existed in the first place: the horrors of his Dictatorship will be transfused into language. It is certain that future dictatorships can never be as bad as the one that just happened, because prophesying future horrors is impossible as the language does not yet exist to describe them. The chance of a new repression lies behind the scenes of future truth, but there is the faint hope that past traumas will not have to be fully articulated in the future.

A perpetually immanent reality, the Patriarch's death allows him to transcend the truth of his own narrative and momentarily escape the dictator mask of the self that he was forced to wear when he rose to power. The Patriarch's multiple deaths

reflect his short-term fear of being wrong and (ironically) absolve him of all personal responsibility, while simultaneously allowing him to retain his grip on power. Living a life of permanent chaos, the Patriarch is always at the brink of either relinquishing his power by dying, or regaining his power by living: the Patriarch is either coming, or going. The state of perpetual crisis in the Dictatorship reflects the delicate balance between remaining in power and losing power. García Márquez's Dictator is:

...a really cowardly sort, very hesitant, always filled with great uncertainties, and he's always in permanent crisis. That is to say, the life of this guy is limited to conjuring up a crisis only to fall into another one, and there are two hundred-some years of permanent crisis. (Bell-Villada, 23)

A series of permanent discontinuities, the state of crisis (always) brings the Patriarch to the brink of losing control by temporarily distancing him from power, but actually brings the Patriarch closer to power by preventing him from being held accountable for the very crisis that he provoked in the first place and allowing him to test his subjects' loyalty. Absolute power becomes a brief truth for the Patriarch in the moment of uncertainty between his death and his resurrection. The deaths ultimately test the limits of the dictator's power by creating two parallel realities, which can momentarily intersect but cannot be superimposed on one another.

The forced sainthood of Bendición Alvarado undermines the Patriarch's absolute power and brings these two truths into conflict. Within the Dictatorship, the Patriarch creates the "tiempo incontable de la eternidad": he writes the passing of a comet in the sky into History, so that it would coincide with an important event in his rule, his kidnapping of a Caribbean beauty queen becomes an act of love, he cures the sick through touch etc. Forced to live in a society where the flow of information is

strictly regulated, the people have no choice but to 'see' these events as a truth. The truth, or the truth created by the Patriarch exists in tandem with yet another equally potent truth: Christ and myth of Immaculate Conception. Trapped between a tyrant and a divine being, the people pray to and obey both with equal fervor. The parallel nature of the two truths can be likened to the double-think in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Wilson's acceptance of Big Brother's truth at the expense of the other hidden truth however, fails to explain exactly why the Patriarch's attempt to have his mother canonized fails. A fair amount of Latin American history has been founded on the parallel relationship between Catholicism and Dictatorship. The we narrator's oblique references to the Patriarch acting like Christ subtly indicate that the Patriarch rules a semi-secular Caribbean Country, where the people pray to the Dictator and Christ. The Patriarch's attempt to further extend his power by appropriating the myth of Immaculate Conception is, therefore, seen as sacrilegious and unacceptable. Hence, the Patriarch's attempt to become a divine being underlines his own humanity.

In order to forget his humble origins, the Patriarch tries to reinvent his mother as a Saint. A barmaid who made a living by painting birds, Bendición Alvarado is the Patriarch's closest consort.

Convencido por la evidencia, el salió al fin de las brumas de su duelo, salió pálido, duro, con una banda negra en el brazo, resuelto a utilizar todos los recursos de su autoridad para conseguir la canonización de su madre Bendición Alvarado con base en las pruebas abrumadoras de sus virtudes de santa, mando a Roma a sus ministros de letras, volvió a invitar al nuncio apostólico. (*OdP*, 59)

Pointing out the limits of the Patriarch's power, the failed canonization of Bendición Alvarado symbolizes the Patriarch's failure to inscribe his divine origins

into the narrative of historicism. The Patriarch's humble origins cannot be written into the people's consciousness, which prevents the Patriarch from transforming his existence into a (future) retrievable image of the past and from telling a story that would prevent him from becoming an evil Dictator for posterity.

Bored by the idea of being an absolute ruler, yet unable to relinquish this same power, the Patriarch constantly looks for new ways to relate to his own power. Different manifestations of the Patriarch's power such as the Patriarch as Christ, the Patriarch as tragic hero, the Patriarch as loving son, the Patriarch as artistic connoisseur (among others), do not conform to the traditional perception of the Dictator as a cruel, cold-blooded tyrant. The relationship between the Patriarch's tyranny and the Patriarch's admiration cannot be examined as an empty causality (one does not necessarily link to the other), but as an attempt to deconstruct the unity of the Patriarch's self. Previous representations of the dictatorial novel (Guzmán, Roa Bastos, Carpentier) have included cold, heartless tyrants and Latin American Machos, who asserted their masculinity by being despots and wonderful lovers. These historicist perspectives resulted from scientific objectivity and were based on written documents. Guzmán's, Roa Bastos' and Carpentier's dictators were uniform characters who used power to rule their Dictatorships. García Márquez's Patriarch on the other hand is a man already past the prime of his life, extremely emotionally dependent on his mother, a failed poet, sexually dysfunctional and an emotionally sensitive man.

The polyphonic narrative of *OdP* deconstructs the traditional Dictator persona

into a series of intersecting mirror images: the loving son dismembers a loyal advisor, and the rapist becomes a devoted husband and father. García Márquez deconstructs the Patriarch's identity in order to de-historicize his image and recover the lost potentialities, or incongruous accidents that had to happen so that the man could become the Patriarch. The incongruities are never resolved by the *OdP*'s 'we' narrator, for to do so would imply establishing a false causality, but are simply enunciated.

Like Foucault, García Márquez defines his Patriarch in terms of a reverse genealogy: the Patriarch's self becomes a point of departure (a mirror) through which García Márquez analyzes the very set of potentialities and spatio-temporal contradictions that spliced the homogeneous continuity of time and allowed the nameless man to become a Patriarch. Thus, the Patriarch ceases to be the narcissistic totality of his being and becomes a feeble-minded human tyrant, not a monster. The polyphonic narrative in *OdP* exposes the illusion of a Dictator's human monstrosity as an outgrowth of the Patriarch's humanity, not as an alien psychosis. By placing the Patriarch (a bad guy) on the same level of humanity as the people (the good guy), *OdP* rejects the establishment of moral categories that fail to account for the role that passions play in historical events.

The actual discontinuities of the Patriarch's being have spliced the historical narrative and disappeared. Leaving behind a trace memory of their passing, these moments are then re-assembled into a historicist narrative. Thus, the Dictator becomes a man of humble origins who becomes a fearless, self-controlled tyrant; not

a scarred child who suffers from erectile dysfunction. Done through the medium of language, this desacralization of the dictator figure does transform the Patriarch into a totality, but it also brings him closer to power.

The act of telling/speech temporarily liberates the Patriarch from the totalizing power of language before re-transforming him into a forgotten potentiality of memory and historicism. The only possible way to retrieve the random coincidence of the past is through language. Acting as a counter-memory of the past, written language dilutes the spontaneity of speech and creates a power vacuum between the Patriarch and his authority. The hyper-textuality of written language diminishes the Patriarch's authority by transforming the Patriarch into a written totality of himself. Deluded with visions of power and grandeur, the Patriarch never becomes aware that "he is indeed the creation of a written text that his invention by García Márquez means that he exists only in words" (Labyani, 148). The oral discontinuities of (spontaneous) speech become mere traces of ether after being spoken and are adulterated by the written word. This adulteration transforms the Patriarch into a myth by providing the people with the illusion that the Patriarch was in multiple places at once.

The Patriarch's omnipresence through language does undermine his authority, but does not completely "subvert the concept of language as an instrument of power" (Labyani, 156). Indirect speech in *OdP* does indicate the existence of a multiplicity of narratives that report events at second, third hand and does mythologize the Patriarch's existence (allows the Patriarch to transcend his physical limitations), but the distance provided by the written word does not diminish the Patriarch's authority

with his people. In fact, I would argue, the written word actually has the potential to increase the Patriarch's power by absolving him of personal responsibility precisely because of the adulterated nature of the written word.

Despite adulterating the Patriarch's speech, the written word is an effective weapon that allows the Patriarch to issue wordless orders without being held fully accountable for having issued the orders. The magical space between the speaker (sound) and the written word becomes filled with the potentiality of forgetting and willful misinterpretation. Free to say whatever he wants, the Patriarch purposefully isolates himself from his people through the written word in order to forget the severity that the consequences of these actions have on the people. Writing prevents the Patriarch from being physically present at the scene of his atrocities, but does not displace the Patriarch's power. By isolating the Patriarch from the consequences of his actions and the effects that these actions have on the people, writing gives the Patriarch greater political (moral) clout. The Patriarch no longer has to see the fatal and determining consequences that a lifting of his finger, or a few scratches on a piece of paper have on the people. By providing the Patriarch with a healthy degree of separation from his actions, writing acts as a form of mental insulation that allows the Patriarch to remember his own reality and prevents him from being accurately judged by posterity. The Patriarch writes orders, but does not carry them out himself, so that he can grant himself a loophole, a way out of being held accountable for what he did.

A semi-literate individual, the Patriarch has other people write for him because he wants to re-cast himself (and his actions) in a more conciliatory light. The

act of writing out military commands or disseminating false news in newspaper articles is an act of shedding of the self: the Patriarch writes out the orders so that he will not have to remember them. Eventually carried out by his military advisors and a carbon copy of speech, the written word becomes an image of the actual word, a potentiality that will eventually be carried out by his military advisors. The shed potentiality becomes a necessary parody of the Patriarch's speech. When the contents of the written word are carried out, they become the actions not of the General's self, but of a parody of that self. A mental alienation, the separation of speech from deed allows the Patriarch to dissociate himself from the memories of the past. The (momentary) escape offered by the written word transforms the Parody of the Patriarch's self into another because it is impossible to mechanically reproduce a true image of the Self.

A random (or coincidental) splicing occurs and produces two separate beings: a magical Patriarch, who listens to poetry and is a good son; and a real Patriarch, who drowns the children because they witnessed the corruption of the lottery system (from the Patriarch's perspective). The disjunction between the (Patriarch's) self and the other causes a clash: the self and the other are so different from one another that they become two parallel truths that cannot coincide with one another. This parallel potentiality prevents the Patriarch's self (the Patriarch's self perception) from seeing (coinciding with) the other (the killer, the rapist). Whereas Narcissus recognizes the physical echo of his self as the reflection he sees in the mirror and dies (Aureliano Babilonia in CAS becomes a totality), the Patriarch uses writing to transfuse the (bad)

echo of his self into an other.

The blotting out of the echo through the creation of an other prevents a Narcissus-like recognition between the self and other (true) self from occurring because the Patriarch's other (the reflection that he sees) does not correspond to the self (who he really is). Unlike Narcissus therefore, the Patriarch does not have a mirror-image of the self, which prevents him from knowing (recognizing) himself as the tyrant that the people (except Bendición Alvarado and some Generals) know he is. Causing the Patriarch to identify himself as the self, the psychological/internal disconnect that takes place explains how a monstrous dictator could feel betrayed and humiliated when the people, for whom he has done so much, go out dancing into the streets instead of mourning. The Patriarch cannot see the other as a mirror image of the (Patriarch's-his) self, which transforms the military reprisals that he orders into a defense mechanism that allows him to protect the nation from internal instability rather than an attack on an unruly populace thus blurring the line between victim and perpetrator. Masking the heterogeneous systems which constitute the Patriarch's self, the other's presence offers the reader an incomplete portrait of power. Ironically, full knowledge, a clash between self and self(2) would transform the Patriarch into a (hyper-textual) totality of language. The disconnection between self and other, between magic and the real is necessary therefore, because it creates a space in which the *Jetztzeit* of tellability can take place.

“What attracts the Patriarch in Dario's poetry is his attempt to create an eternal, universal poetic language that transcends the limitations of human existence,”

but does not necessarily have the value of memory, nor is it an attempt to “perpetuate through repetition that which otherwise is condemned to oblivion” (Labyani, 148). Instead, the repetitive powers of writing in *OdP* delineate the limits of forgetting to remember to forget. The written testimonials left behind by the Patriarch (the orders for massacres etc.) create a disjunction between magic and reality that will not be condemned to oblivion, but will be (forever) re-created (repetition as a carbon copy is impossible) and parodied (in order to be forgotten) in the stories that the ‘we’ narrator and the sub narrators tell to the point of dissipation. A genealogical approach to the tellability of personal experience, the anecdotes told by the ‘we’ narrator and others are a way of deconstructing their memory of the Patriarch and a way to preserve the potentiality of forgetting without having to remember the true past that took place.

A parody of Latin American history, each anecdote in *OdP* tests the limits of non-memory. The anecdotal stories told by Bendición Alvarado, the ‘we’ narrator, the raped school girl are not acts of remembering, but acts of forgetting. In *OdP*, the telling of a story is not a mechanical retrieval of an event from historicism. Historicism transforms the story into a mask for the self that strangles the narrated events to death. Establishing a series of false causalities between events of the past, historicism homogenizes time and nullifies the tellability of personal experience. Discarded by historicism, the anecdotes are parodies of the trauma that the tellers (the people) experienced at the hands of the Patriarch. An image that flashes up only to disappear, the true past becomes momentarily visible in the telling of each anecdote, but fades away immediately after the story-teller has finished speaking. Existing in a

polyphonic narrative, each storyteller appears only to tell his/her story, yet continually remains in the background of the narrative, always ready to interrupt the homogenizing power of language at a moment's notice. Because each anecdote is an incomplete copy of the irretrievable past event, the anecdotes are flashbacks and narrate the process of retrieving not the events themselves, but the different ahistorical whispers, the states of immanence that allowed the event in question to take place. The act of telling thus becomes a means to retrieve and discard the memory of an event.

Producing a moment of believability, telling becomes a way to retrieve a forgotten space of potentiality (from a forgotten strata of immanence). Every one of the narrator's tales becomes a way to forget the Patriarch, not to remember the Patriarch. Told in the future, the anecdotes become ways to narrate the non-narratable aspect of a past that does not fit into a mask and lies on the outskirts of myth (remember that "Myth is (*empty space*)). Orbiting around the forgotten potentialities of myth, the anecdotes (polyphonic narrative) carry a forgotten past, an un-named genealogy of potentialities that are liberated in the telling of the story. These rare events and causalities are too quiet to be picked-up by the Narrative of Grand Origins of historicism and are found outside the scope of totality (myth, history, language) in a condition of enunciation/elocution that can only be deconstructed through the act of telling. The product of an incomplete narrative, the Patriarch is momentarily redeemed and rescued by language, before being wiped out yet again by his own narrative and transfused into the reader's own experience.

## Conclusion:

### **“If It Is Not True Now, It Will Become True in Time: *Cien años de soledad*, *El otoño del patriarca* and the Drawback to Remembering Everything”**

Truth lies at the heart of García Márquez’s novels: “With *Love in the Time of Cholera*, the image was of two old people dancing on the deck of a boat, dancing a bolero” (Bell-Villada, 142). With “*The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the image was of an officer retreating from a Chamber in Miraflores Palace after the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez had come to an end. With *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the image was “an old man who takes a kid to discover ice” (Bell-Villada, 15). These images briefly flash up before being devoured by language. Impatient to meet the real of a historic event, Melquíades, the Buendías and the Patriarch arrive too early to be documented by the language in the story. These characters are engaged in a perpetual game of catch-up with a past that is constantly racing ahead, getting smaller and smaller to the point of vanishing into a place of melancholy longing, a stratum of forgotten elocution that goes undetected by Grand Origin historicism.

A mirror that reflects everything back as a totality, historicism rejects random coincidence by categorizing the term as a type of black voodoo magic that prevents the reader from developing an objective, factually-based portrait of the past. By introducing something so suspicious that it remains beyond truth, magic is thus seen as a threat to the Realist narrative of homogenized time. An empty chronology of fact,

historicism rejects the idea that an event can be random; it must be backed by empirical proof in order to be valid. When applied to Colombian history, this standard of objectivity makes it impossible to talk about the unseen, or unproven events. The unexplained events acquire an aura of magic because they happened, but are so suspect that they remain beyond belief. Doubt of truth and random coincidence has no place in Official Colombian history, yet the suspicion that something weird happened remains. Existing on the periphery of Official Colombian history, the magic accident becomes real/true.

*Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* become spaces where the two parallel truths, the magic and the real, can intersect and momentarily redeem the true (forgotten) image of Colombian history before it disappears into the past. Lying at the limit of what can be said about the past, García Márquez's brand of magic realism, Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, and Michel Foucault's *Nietzsche, Genealogy and History*, redeem the spontaneity and random coincidence of the past. The discourse of magic realism, historical materialism and *Genealogy* places the *Jetztzeiten* of the past in "a recess of time, in the space proper to it," a space in which the false causalities of the past cease to matter (Foucault 53). The act of telling and reading becomes a momentary organization of fractured and unfulfilled time. The storyteller's voice glues the chips of Messianic time together into a coherent narrative that is believed during the *Jetztzeiten* of that story's telling.

Characters and events in *Cien años de soledad* and *El otoño del patriarca* are

not manifestations of a language that will come true in time, but sparks of believability that have arrived ex-post-facto, after the passing of the past. Trapped in a state of perpetual immanence, the Buendías, Pilar Ternera, the Patriarch keep on chasing the past, yet are unable to find it, because the past does not exist as a specific image, or at a specific point in time, but is merely reflected in a mirror of infinite potentialities. Invisible to the naked eye, these potentialities push back at the totality of myth, history and language, while running off to cause yet another tear in the fabric of (space-) time.

Preventing Benjamin's brand of historical materialism from becoming another totality, Foucault's concept of Genealogy traces these *Jetztzeiten* of believability to the point of no-return, a microscopic point of nothingness that dissipates into barely perceptible whispers filled with polyphonic meaning. In *Chapter 1: Living, Memory and the Story: Magic Realism, Genealogy and Historical Materialism*, García Márquez's magic realism creates a place where the voice of the madman, the crazy other, the can be heard. Coming from the past's graveyard, the voice becomes a silent scream for the hope of redemption. Because the true past is irretrievable (passes in its passing), parody becomes the only way to forget the forgotten and count the moments until the Messiah's arrival.

Magic is felt more acutely than the "real" in *Cien años de soledad*: sex and incest become genealogical impulses that deconstruct the Grand Narrative of historicism, seize hold of the chips of Messianic time and "articulate the past

historically.” In Chapter II: *Where is the Invisible Bullet ? : Cien Años de Soledad and the Genealogy of Narcissistic Incest*, I argue how the Buendías and Macondo unknowingly arrive on the historical scene after the past’s genealogy has already been written. A bunch of shattered “espejos (o espejismos),” Macondo is a random coincidence that disappears into the pages of Melquíades’ manuscript (CAS), only to be caught (redeemed) and released by the reader. Macondo’s sudden appearance is mirrored by its sudden disappearance: the *hojarasca* could not have put an apocalyptic end to a town that was a transient reality and did not exist in the first place.

The inability of magic to find a resting place in the real is a persistent theme in *El otoño del patriarca*: power and solitude become genealogical impulses of boredom, which symbolize the perpetual decay of a tyrannical past that never completely disappears. In Chapter III, *A Myth of Perpetual Decline: El otoño del patriarca and the Genealogy of Power*, I argue how the stories that the people tell about the Patriarch become ways to momentarily forget the forgotten. The space created by forgetting becomes a splinter of *Jetztzeit* potentiality through which the story can enter and prevent the “misfortunes of the past from being fully realized” (Foucault 54). The constant negotiation between language and history in *El otoño del patriarca* tests the limits of remembering a past. By talking about the Patriarch, the ‘we’ narrator creates a repository for the loss of memory and a possibility for the redemption of the tellability of personal experience.

This thesis examines the concept of Latin American history as an absurd truth that obscures the magic reality of what actually happens behind the scenes of historicism. As a journalist, Gabriel García Márquez defines the magical as that which really happened when no one was watching. Michel Foucault's concept of genealogy and Walter Benjamin's ideas about History recapture the traces of memory left behind by lost events of the past. The scope of the research in this thesis can be broadened to include the works of other Latin American authors who were active during the Boom of Latin American literature in the 1960s and 70s. Written during a time of great political turmoil, the works of Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes could also help explore the danger of forgetting, the danger of remembering everything and the boundaries of truth. Mark Twain has made a case for the truthful story and 'remembering': "If you tell the truth then you don't have to remember anything." It would be an intriguing study to see how the past and truth coincide in literary portrayals of Latin American history.

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