

Dictation and Narration: A Genettian Study of Gabriel García Márquez's *El otoño del patriarca*

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The present study examines Gabriel García Márquez's 1975 *El otoño del patriarca*, with particular focus on the role of its ludic vocal mode in the fictional retelling of dictatorship in Iberia and Latin America. It calls to mind Gérard Genette's 1972 *Narrative Discourse*, which proposed that narrative voice is always understood in purely linguistic and grammatical terms. It refers also to eighteenth-century works with contrasting narrative styles, including Abbé Prévost's 1731 *Manon Lescaut* and Sterne's temporally convoluted 1759 *Tristram Shandy*, in order to present a cross-section of the function of narrative. Key Genettian ideas in this context will be the separation of author and narrator, the individuality of the narrator's voice, the relationship between narrative and autobiography and ideas relating to the temporal gap between happening and reporting. García Márquez's novel, where cacophonous narratorial voices discordantly recount the cyclical rise and fall of a perpetual Caribbean dictator, extends cornerstones of Genettian theory such as the unity of the narrative voice and ontological divide of manifest and fictional realities to their logical capacity, in order to qualify the theory's potential to comprehend this experimental variety of narrative voice. I will distance the novel *El otoño del patriarca* from Genette's particular theory of narrative discourse and propose a theoretical centre-point between Genettian narratology and García Márquez's experimental narration.

The title of *El otoño del patriarca* presents autumn as a threshold permeated by the fading, preceding summer and coming winter. The autumnal decline of a dictator on the eve of death points to one tautology in particular – the lingering yet fading presence of youth and vitality in dying days, like the leaves which fall in the autumn referenced by the title. Autumn as a metaphor entails both life and its decline. Its role in the title is thus to restate that which we already assume of the dictator as an aging man on the brink of death. The title prepares the reader for a narrative which contorts logic and reason and which allows a freedom to express itself in ways that might appear unfamiliar. The reader can expect a lively interaction between the narrator

and the author where the former may free him or herself from the latter. It thus prepares the reader for a novel in which the passage of time is haunted by spectres of days gone by and the end to come, where time is always permeated by every preceding and succeeding moment. Autumn transforms from a tautology into a paradox, as time is forever moving and forever static; yet these two states are dependent on each other, just as seasons are defined by those which precede and succeed them. This makes for a novel that is able to defy logic and language as we understand them in a way that can reveal new and previously inaccessible ideas.

It is helpful, therefore, to investigate Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, in particular the *Voice* chapter. To define voice, Genette cites the linguist Joseph Vendryès's idea that the mode of action is 'the verb considered for its relations to the subject' (Genette 213). He rejects the frequent fallacy that author and narrator are the same person and allows the narrator to become independent of his creator, the author. The intentions of the author in this way do not take precedence over the voice of the narrator. Genette separates the world of the author from the world of the narrator but also allows these worlds to interact. As a result, narratives describing paradoxical events create a world that the reader would consider incredible or impossible. A narrator who can act freely of the author becomes in some respects real. Far from 'mere' fictional contrivances he also renders these incredible or impossible worlds more real. When incredible events are narrated from the perspective of a narrator who lives freely of his creator, the concept of narration as mimesis becomes a misnomer, with far too much emphasis on the fact of the novel's creation. As we will see, the incredible representations of life under a dictatorship make the events they represent quite credible. The possible world of *El otoño del patriarca* implicates the real world without mirroring it, and creates a subjective world built up of diverse experiences of various dictatorships in differing spatio-temporal situations. A personal experience of the objective world could be considered its own possible world. That which we call the 'real' world can thus entail a theoretically infinite set of other worlds within it, and experiences of the real world subjective enough that they cannot be put into coherent familiar language and are not falsified as a result. In Genettian terms, supra-realistic representations of experiences de-fictionalise fiction, though this might seem illogical.

This relationship between the real, singular world and incredible, plural world of the text marks the key difference between García Márquez and Genette, who holds that: 'It is not the Abbé Prévost who tells of the love of Manon and Des Grieux... it is Des Grieux himself, in an oral narrative where "I" can designate only him' (Genette 214) . Citing *Manon Lescaut*, Genette proposes that the common conflation of author, in this case Prévost, and

his narrator, Des Grieux, is permissible only in the case of 'real autobiography' (213). While both unite in the ontological independence of characters, Genette considers language the structure that governs narrative and its meaning, and holds that there can be no meaning in the narrative that is not derived from language. Ironically, this superstructure requires a belief in the dissolution of borders between possible worlds, allowing the narrator to become a creation without creator – clearly illogical, but acceptable in a narrative world where history repeats itself in a static cycle. In this novel, García Márquez rejects notions of origin. The circle has no beginning, and it has no end. The narration is not created, but exists unto itself, repeating *ad infinitum*. However, Genette fails to hold to a conclusion to which he is logically committed: 'Even the references in *Tristram Shandy* to the situation of writing speak to the (fictive) act of *Tristram* and not the real one of *Sterne*' (214). But fiction that rewrites real experiences can *surely* speak to the real act of writing. That said, I would argue that the novel's point of creation dissolves in light of its infinite narrativity, in spite of the following claim by Genette:

The fictive moment of narrating has thus *in fact* shifted in the course of the real writing; today it is no longer what it was in 1913, at the moment when Proust thought his work concluded for the Grasset edition. Therefore, the temporal intervals he had in mind – and wanted to signify – when he wrote, for example apropos of the bedtime scene, 'Many years have passed since that night,' or apropos of the resurrection of Combray by the madeleine, 'I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed' these spaces have increased by more than ten years simply because the story's time has lengthened: the signified of these sentences is no longer the same. (Genette 224)

This cannot be true here. Though the narrative's infinite cyclicity certainly fulfils the 'predictive' aspect of Genette's system, in that it entails a future that is bound to occur, the narrative repeats infinitely from the point of the text's creation in 1975, destroying its point of origin through its lack of culminating point, and encompassing all possible spaces, including and in particular that of the reader, by virtue of encompassing all possible times.

The narrative of *El otoño del patriarca* is not so much layered as it is shared between the author's written word and the experiences of each voice that forms part of the narrator. This is especially true given the intradiegetic speech, or dialogue that is not separate from the rest of the text. Where Genette considers reported speech the autonomous words of the characters, he fails to account for speech that is woven into the narrative voice as a type of free indirect style. Beyond narrative's shift into voice, voice shifts between tense: 'Ordenó en secreto a su escolta que arrestaran a uno de los músicos, a

ése, el que está tocando el bombardino' (García Márquez 1975, 27). Two narrative voices emerge – that of the narrator and that of the dictator. Both of these, though, unify various consciousnesses in a way that the language of the novel does not adequately contain. Moreover, the recurring intradiegetic *imágenes mi general* are the words of the narrator to the dictator and an instruction to the reader outside of the text, a reminder that their understanding requires a leap of imagination and that their role as the interpreter of the novel is what gives the narrator his authority. Jo Labanyi suggests that the narrative is directed to the patriarch by his mother:

The intercalation 'my general' appears throughout, revealing that what we have been reading is a second-hand report made to the patriarch. In the same way the intercalation 'Sir' reveals that what looks like objective narration is spoken by the patriarch's mother who constantly uses this term of address [...] This kind of narrative inconsistency makes it impossible to attribute the text to anyone in particular. (Labanyi 143)

I propose that it is more likely that the patriarch's mother might be just one of the great many voices of the narrator, yet Labanyi has touched on a highly significant point. One cannot successfully locate the source of the voice without being faced with a counter-example that would attribute the voice to a different figure in the novel. Though Labanyi's conclusion must be treated with some caution:

The fact that the collective narrator can be identified only as the sum of all the individual points of view confronts the reader with the optical illusion of a narrator that is the voices it appears to report [...] The implausibility of the voice that speaks destroys the authority of what is said. (Labanyi 147)

While authority and truth are obviously closely interrelated, it is easy to conflate these two terms in an unproblematic way. Authority, I hold, is invested. It is the influence granted to an individual or set of individuals, whereas truth, in as far as it exists, does so free of any authority figure. There are certainly ways of logically reconciling the narrative that one reads with the experiences one has of the world. It is obvious that conflicting narrative appeals to the reader are a clamour of competing perspectives. But I do not agree that this voice can in any way be called a sum. That, I contend, implies that the voice can be considered an absolute set of all perspectives. The effect of the text, though, is to demonstrate that an absolute set of all perspectives is impossible to attain. The narrative of *El otoño* is certainly an uncomfortable amalgam of multifarious voices, but it cannot amass a sum of all possible voices. In this sense, narrative in *El otoño* may not take the form of a voice at all. In fact, I contend that it is a space, and one in which the narrator and the interlocutor constantly shift position – supplications from subjects of the

patriarch (including the repeated 'mi general') can also be read as supplications from the narrator to his reader to give the narrative a fair hearing. The novel's narrative mode ensures that it *must* appeal to reality in requiring real-world interpretation, as the reader is presented with a set of various truths, yet cannot establish *the* truth.

Genette, however, is aware of the tension between what he terms 'first-person narratives' and 'third-person narratives':

Readers may have noticed that until now we have used the terms 'first-person – or third-person-narrative' only when paired with quotation marks of protest. Indeed, these common locutions seem to me inadequate, in that they stress variation in the element of the narrative situation that is in fact invariant – to wit, the presence (explicit or implicit) of the 'person' of the narrator. This presence is invariant because the narrator can be in his narrative (like every subject of an enunciating in his enunciated statement) *only* in the 'firstperson'. (Genette 244)

Genette is correct: these locutions are inadequate, but not for the reason he thinks. The narrator is not merely one figure but an unimaginable number of figures, all of whom tell their story about all of the other narrators, in a sort of rhizomatic form of unending narrativity. So the notion of a 'first-person narrative' or a 'third-person narrative' is inadequate in the case of a text where the narrative perspective shifts interminably between narrators. The presence is absolutely variant, and it is for this very reason that Genette is correct. This text cannot be reduced to a first-person or third-person framework. Ultimately, the novel's use of language, from the syntactically unsound shifting of narrative voice from one person to another, to the dominion of the word of the dictator over his subjects, exerts a power over the reader that can only be escaped by successfully interpreting the words on the page. The narrator claims never to have seen the president, yet is aware that 'poco antes de las nueve tomaba un baño lento' (14), in an imperfect, repeated action. The novel is narrated in a highly imaginative, symbolic fashion, describing political advisors as *sacerdotes*. For example, taking away the need for suspension of disbelief reminds the reader that what he or she is reading is in fact fictional. Labanyi argues that 'the replacement of the patriarch's presence by hearsay adulterates his authority, inasmuch as it leads to a usurpation of his voice', adding that the reason the dictator is able to resurrect is because his subjects are unable to verify his actual identity (Labanyi 136). They are told that the man in the presidential palace is the patriarch. Hence, in its own way, it becomes true in as far as it is reported objectively by the narrator: 'lo vimos a él, con el uniforme de lienzo sin insignias, las polainas, la espuela de oro en el talón izquierdo [...] y estaba tirado en el suelo, bocabajo, con el brazo derecho doblado bajo la cabeza para que le sirviera de almohada' (10).

But it is also simultaneously the case that they have *not* seen the dictator, as the narrator reports, as the corpse proves to be that of his double, Patricio Aragonés, belying the repeated ‘vimos’ which indicates the first-hand experience of several witnesses. The patriarch’s power is established and enforced through language alone – it is the hearsay that the patriarch has died that feeds the resurrection myth which abounds when it is discovered that it is Patricio Aragonés who has died. The narration certainly requires real interpretation from its reader, who is invited into the creative process in order to reconstruct the narrative into a temporal order. Though, referring back to Genette’s notion of a subsequent narrative, the repeated *vimos* is problematised further:

A present-tense narrative which is ‘behaviourist’ in type and strictly of the moment can seem like the height of objectivity, since the last trace of enunciating that still subsisted in the Hemingway-style narrative (the mark of temporal interval between story and narrating, which the use of the preterite unavoidably compromises) now disappears in favour of the story. (Genette 219)

I would argue that the repetition of ‘vimos’ by the plural narrator in the presidential palace is an admission that an objective reporting of the event is impossible. That a plural narrator would refer to the senses in the verb ‘vimos’, which replaces the more natural ‘hubo’, indicates that the mutually agreed-upon reporting of the first entry into the presidential palace is the product of a collective experience, subject to the limitations of the human senses, and the difficulty that different experiences of the same environment can mutually cancel. Though the verb ‘vimos’ is naturally conjugated in the past tense, the infinite cyclicity of the text attributes it a presentness that allows us to speak of the text in terms of Genette’s definition of a present-tense narrative. What García Márquez’s narrative shows, then, is that the supposed objectivity of narration is bound, not merely by questions of time, but also by the issue of human experience and its inevitable limits.

The narrator enters the reader’s conceptual framework in a way that makes him seem somehow more real. Yet the confusion of voices continues: ‘Me llamó sin abrir los ojos, ven acá Jacinta Morales... y tú, Juan Prieto, me dijo’ (101). This first-person perspective signifies four different figures – the narrator, the dictator, and both characters addressed. This narrative voice, split between various characters, named and unnamed, is a means to narrate all the events of the dictatorship from all of the perspectives of those suffering under it. Dictatorship pervades in all of these voices – they are all dictating to the reader, and the reader must compete against these voices and separate them from each other in order to understand them. As Julio Ortega puts it, ‘Este evento de narradores es también la teatralidad de una ocurrencia

totalizada de la comunicación' (Ortega 432). So this 'I' signifies more than the self, and it is now plausible that the characters' communication with the dictator is the same as communicating with the author. In one sense it is the *author* who addresses the dictator: 'mi general' refers to the authority figure that the author has created *and* his own authority as his creator. It also functions as an address to the reader who becomes the higher authority who gives the novel's dictatorship its credibility. The fact that reported speech is inseparable from the narrative voice exemplifies the difficult search for the authority of the novel. This surely distances *El otoño del patriarca* from Genette's belief that the narrative voice is that of but one person. The novel therefore resonates in the reader's world in spite of its own fictionality.

A narrator independent of his author assumes theological significance. Fittingly, the European explorers who cannot speak the *lengua cristiana* arguably call to mind the Franco dictatorship, to name one example which used this as a pseudonym for the Spanish language. Just as Franco's denotation of Castilian as Christian aided the abolition of languages of which he lacked command, both the novel's dictator and Franco abolish the use of language in order to disempower their citizens. Limiting the words citizens are able to use limits the ideas that they are able to entertain. How can a subject rebel against a dictatorship when he lacks the intellectual means to understand why he would do so? Disempowering his citizens by removing their voices stresses that ideas are power or, indeed, power is itself an idea. In this sense, this novel's dictatorship scrutinises the paradox of all dictatorships. They must claim to be infallible and must be protected against any dissenting voices – a protection they would not need if they truly were infallible. In terms of similarities to actual historical dictators, Bell-Villada believes that García Márquez's sojourn in a Venezuela ruled by the US-sponsored General Marcos Pérez Jiménez sowed the seeds for this narrative of a Latin American dictator (Bell-Villada 12). In fact, Boldy gives various examples of the dictators embodied by particular aspects of the patriarch, suggesting for example that his expulsion from a church mirrors that of Antonio Guzmán Blanco in Venezuela, and that the death of Patricio Aragonés mirrors a political ruse by Juan Vicente Gómez to gauge popular support for the regime by faking his own death (Boldy 84–5). For a general whose appearance is entirely retrospective of his youth, his failing physical strength embodies the essential problem of dictatorship. This is also comfortably embodied, in my opinion, in Franco – a figure whose regime, as Boldy also points out, García Márquez considered 'an experiment in eternity' (85). A dictator's absence from the public eye is testament to a physical state that belies his political status. The dictator is both doomed and resurrected by the ceaseless passage of time, which causes summer to blend into autumn, which blends into winter, which promises

the coming spring. Craftily brewing a cocktail of temporal tricks and familiar faces, García Márquez shows that dictatorship is its own downfall. It will always die and will often be replaced by similar if not equivalent regimes. This is in itself problematic, as a continuous chain of dictators surely invalidates each predecessor's claim to eternity and ubiquity. While the novel certainly carries autobiographical features, the result is a more nuanced layering of various historical experiences than would be possible if Genette's insistence on the 'I' were to apply here.

In view of this, the indivisible 'I' becomes overly romantic. While Genette's approach importantly grants characters the potential to be real by emphasising the narrator's significance over the author's, this novel's use of language prevents its characters from understanding it in ways in which the reader can. The narrator, moving away from his first-hand style into a more objective, omniscient one, reports that his characters had indeed not seen the dictator but that his:

Estar simultáneo en todas partes durante los años pedregosos que precedieron a su primera muerte... era la suerte de contar con los servicios íntegros y la lealtad de perro de Patricio Aragonés, su doble perfecto, que había sido encontrado sin que nadie lo buscara cuando le vinieron con la novedad mi general de que una falsa carroza presidencial andaba por pueblos de incios hacienda un próspero negocio de suplantación. (16-17)

Given that the first person plural narrator admits to never having seen the dictator, this report might be that of another narrator availed of all of the facts, considering that the narrative mode shifts from the first person to the third person plural: 'La primera vez que *lo encontraron*, la nación estaba todavía bastante viva como para que él se sintiera amenazado de muerte hasta en la soledad de su dormitorio' (13 [my italics]). And since the narrator dictates how the reader can understand him, he cannot be just one ego, as Genette would suggest. Though making the concession that a novel can bear more than one narrator, for Genette, these remain constantly distinct:

Most of *Manon Lescaut* is told by Des Grieux, but some pages revert to M. de Renoncort; inversely, most of the *Odyssey* is told by 'Homer', but Books IX-XII revert to Ulysses... if it is remarkable that Ulysses' adventures are told by two different narrators, it is proper to find it just as noteworthy that the loves of Swann and of Marcel are told by the same narrator. (Genette 214-15)

García Márquez's voice occupies an indeterminate space between these two types of narrative identified by Genette. This is not a narrative recounted by a single narrator, and it would be simplistic to conclude that this is a text with multiple, distinct narrators; rather, it is a text which is almost democratic in its dictatorship. That is, every character and event outlined in it has its own

story to tell, including and in particular those voices which the dictator, for his similarities to a narrator of a story, sees fit to quell. Any idea in opposition to the dictator is soon practically erased as those who shout *mueran el tirano* after his ostensible death are subsequently shot dead. Opposition to the dictatorship cannot be expressed directly. But this invalidates dictatorial language and the validity of the dictatorship at the same time. A narrator expected to tell his reader everything has deliberately omitted details which, in turn, causes him, and the patriarch, to lose credibility. *El otoño* presents language's obvious limitation: in saying something, it is impossible to say everything. Language loses its power to imitate the world – it cannot be a structure by which to understand everything simultaneously. The narrator and his ego have multifarious meanings, all valid depending on the conceptual framework, thus language in its most conventional usage cannot properly express the experience the narrative depicts.

These dictatorial and narratorial voices are ingeniously interwoven. Dictatorships often manipulate cultural emblems, including fictions, in order to subsume fiction into reality. Equally, and conversely, *El otoño* subsumes aspects of reality into fiction, and vice versa. The fictional treatment of his dictator, who commands that 'Son las ocho, carajo, las ocho, dije, orden de Dios' (80), is not without its irony. Referring to himself as a God, he asserts an absolute power over his subjects that is self-cancelling. He consequently changes from a physical being into a theoretical one. It is also particularly ironic that the dictator would label himself the highest power in the narrative when it is only the reader who really qualifies the dictator's authority by accepting or rejecting premises they read, and who cannot simply be dictated to like the political subjects of a totalitarian government. Ultimately there is no single authority or 'God' of this narrative but it is interesting that it takes the dictator calling himself God to exemplify the point. When words become their own antonyms, or contronyms, fiction and reality are impossible to distinguish from each other: 'Tenga cuidado, general, la patria lo necesita' (23). The novel is a *patria* in need of its narrator. As telling needs a teller, ruling needs a ruler. The novel takes the infallibility myth necessary to all dictatorships to its logical extreme. In this sense, it is impossible to express so many concurrent experiences of life under a dictatorship in consistent and comprehensible language, yet the narrator employs language to dictatorial ends, re-fictionalising this fiction and consequently the ethos of dictatorship. How can one critique dictatorship through fiction without embodying that which one critiques? Close analysis of form is equivalent to questioning dictatorial regimes, in that both involve scrutinising the word of a being which aims to dictate infallibly. So, problematised form invites the reader to inform themselves of the contradictions peculiar to the concept of

dictatorship. While the extent to which García Márquez and Genette knew of each other is unclear, this novel is inconsistent with Genette's insistence that the narrator is either a single voice, or a set of distinct and individual voices. The narrative does not in any way overstress its author. It cannot be said to be an autobiography in the purest sense – it is not a singular memory of a single life – due to its narrative voice shared between various peoples and cultures as well as different layers of authority. The author shares the voice of the narrator between so many figures and in such a way that distances it from autobiography. Hence, in this case, Genette's insistence that a division between narrator and author results in mere autobiography remains insubstantial.

Narrative Discourse cannot elucidate the novel's use of polysemantic terms, particularly that of the *patriarca*. The autumn of this patriarch reflects that of 'patriarchs' such as Franco and Gómez and, by turning language on its head, that of the narrator. Military imagery paradoxically coupled with frailty recalls, for example, Franco's later absence from the public sphere due to Parkinson's disease. Thus arises an invisible ubiquity capturing fears of many Spaniards that Franco's spirit would remain long after his death, yet points of his appearance take precedence above his name or nationally specific markers: '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 y todos los animales viejos de la tierra y del agua' (10). This represents a human sketch – the pathetic image of a feeble dictator now incarnates all dictators who can be associated with the cultural emblems in the presidential palace and attire including his canvas uniform and the golden spurs of Columbus. A self-cancelling authority therefore has inter-continental significance. In fact, Julio Ortega considers it essential that the dictator be nameless:

Si volvemos, así, al nombre ausente del patriarca, veremos que la falta de su nombre propio implica su posesión de todos los nombres. No sólo porque deriva de nuestros más visibles tiranos sino porque trasciende a la historia con su historicidad totalizada. (Ortega 426)

That is, both the chaotic narrative voice and the presentation of the dictator remove the novel from the realm of the autobiographical and into that of the historical. He also references the unnameable God of Judeo-Christian tradition. A dictator missing a name but bearing recognisable features of dictators in Spanish-speaking countries on both sides of the Atlantic becomes a dictator in the most general terms. He is able to exemplify questions of dictatorship and authority as readers from various historical contexts will understand them. Different features of different dictators embody different questions about dictatorship. How can the dictator remain authoritarian when the body

becomes frail, as in the case of Franco? How can a dictator truly be powerful when he relies on myths of his impossible powers in order to remain credible, as in the case of Gómez? Referencing dictators of this type is *not* autobiographical. It defamiliarises familiar figures and events by fictionalising them. It is the task of the reader to re-familiarise them according to their *own* knowledge and experience of dictatorial regimes. Boldy, for example, points out that the removal of the sea between this nameless country and the Arizona Desert reflects the American occupation of the Dominican Republic (Boldy 86). It constitutes an allegory for the removal of political borders between nations and subsuming one country into the auspices of another. An overtly fictional treatment of a dictatorship ironically reveals something very real – its power to move mountains. The novel then is a comment on the entire phenomenon of dictatorship written in such a way that it can reveal the powers and the paradoxes of dictatorship without becoming anecdotal or autobiographical.

Thus, dictatorship is authoritarian in *invisibility*. The corpse of the 'dictator' occupies a space between pathos and bathos – he is feeble and frail despite the narrator's initial excitement at physically entering another era, which retrospectively disempowers him. The authority of the patriarch must remain inscrutable, his absence is a condition of his power, as illustrated in this work, which bears traces of autobiography and mimesis and in which the author is somehow present. This justifies the association between politics and narration. Both are a sort of incorporeal dictatorship; both have material hegemony in the cited *monedas* and the text respectively but remaining materially inaccessible. The coins bearing the face of the patriarch are a reminder of a distant and absent power that exerts its influence on those who carry them. In the same way, the text reminds us of a distant set of narrators and an even more distant author who exert their influence on the reader through the material text. As such, authority involves an endeavour to become material: 'Podrá ser muy papa en Roma con su anillo al dedo en su poltrona de oro, pero aquí yo soy el que soy yo, carajo' (162). As God to Moses, to the reader, the narrator simply *is*. Yet he submits to matriarchy: 'Sólo su madre lo había conocido a la luz' (185). Even de la Barra, 'Hombre [...] que era capaz de llamar por su nombre y su apellido a toda una población de las más remotas de su desmesurado reino de pesadumbre' (286), is autonomous of the dictator. It is knowledge that is power and de la Barra's knowledge of the entire population of this country frees him from the patriarch's influence. This, in fact, makes this his own kingdom of grief, and not the patriarch's. The novel's effort to do similar – to know all of these facts and present them collectively – is doomed to failure. It cannot retell the whole story and as such can only lose its rhetorical power over the reader. Yet the reader will be haunted by the memory of these voices and their message in the same way that the

landscape and people will always be haunted by the patriarch. The rejection of the idea of an ultimate truth and therefore an ultimate power divests this narrative voice its true power over the reader, yet he or she will read on, bewildered by what the novel's countless voices have to say. This becomes the ultimate success of the novel, to confound the reader into understanding that he or she will *never* understand the full history.

The patriarch's authority appears to have been inherited: 'Su litografía' and 'el dragón de la patria' are 'copias de copias de retratos que ya se consideraban infieles en los tiempos del cometa' (10), stressing that this patriarch's authority is based on an idea and probably a false one. Yet this falsity allows authority to haunt temporal generations and national spaces. In a Kafkaesque way, authority is credible only in credulity: 'Lo sabíamos [que él estaba ahí] porque la vida seguía, el correo llegaba' (11). The dictatorship is granted validity by the narrator's inductive reasoning. The palace must be inhabited, he says, given the lights visible through the windows. This probabilistic reasoning *induces* authority. Narration is presented similarly, a reader often assuming truth by virtue of being *told*. The first-person narrator reports that 'Habíamos visto una vaca contemplando el crepúsculo desde el balcón presidencial, imagínese, una vaca en el balcón de la patria', before moving into patent absurdity: 'Todo el mundo sabía que las vacas no se trepaban por las escaleras' (11–12). Any reader must forfeit this inductive process now freed from narratorial authority, discovering that 'Le mentían [al general] por miedo' (29). The dictator, though cannot fundamentally alter the structures used by human beings to understand their environment, such as the date and the time. Thus 'Estos desmerecidos desconocen mis órdenes de que ahora sean las tres' (85) indicates narratorial and dictatorial impotence to alter facts and events, such that the death of patriarch is simply the death of Aragonés allows him to die repeatedly in a cyclical/static time where authority is constantly reinstated. That is, the patriarch's power exists only because his subjects believe in it. Their belief that the dictator has died sets time in motion, and the discovery that he is in fact alive brings time back to its usual standstill. The reader must become suspicious of the kind of inductive reasoning that allows the narrator to conclude that the dictator must have been alive simply because there are lights on in the presidential palace. In doing so, he or she must also become suspicious of the patriarch's claim to authority in and of itself. García Márquez has created a novel that paradoxically has no creator. It is a set of contesting memories in a narrative without a beginning or an end. In this way, the novel aligns with and departs from certain aspects of Genette's premise that the narrator or narrators of a text are entirely individual and divisible. The author and the narrator voice are generally but not exclusively separate from each other, though when the

authorial and narrative voices combine it does not result in a simple autobiography. Instead, when the narrative voice requires interpretation from its reader who has only sporadic evidence with which to do so, not telling the reader everything tells the reader as much as they can possibly know about the various historical contexts mediated through the narrator. Knowing that they are incomprehensible is a means to comprehend them. This is a paradoxical, yet successful, fictional model that Genette would not have been able to account for.

The narrative voice splintered into a collective *Zeitgeist* ironically refutes the narrator's omniscience. That is, the winding narratorial structure with little punctuation is a stream of consciousness that displaces many psyches into one. The narrators are inserted into the narrative as a first-person witness, evidenced through the first person plural 'vimos'. This points to the author's own experience given his experience as a journalist in Barcelona between 1967 and 1974, in the latter stages of the Franco regime in Spain, as well the National Front regime in his native Colombia, which saw power regularly transferred between the right and left between 1958 and 1974. The interior monologue device is ultimately employed not to create an omniscient narrator but to create a narrative voice shared between author, narrator and all of those who have experienced the history first hand. The stream of consciousness is the voice that mediates various experiences within the confines of a single, contemplative narrative voice. It is a narrative, like Heraclitus' River, in which each particle moves ever forward and blends all experiences into one voice which proceeds in the same way as conventional stream of consciousness. The reader's possible world is permeated by two others: the historical world and García Márquez's conscious world. Labanyi treats the cacophony of narrative voices as follows:

What is more, the text is the product not of one unreliable intermediary narrator, but of a bewildering profusion of intermediary narrators, all of them unreliable. It is impossible to know at how many removes we are from the original version; all we know for sure is that the version we have is adulterated. (Labanyi 142-3)

I agree, but not fully. There is not so much a removal from the truth as an attempt to recount various sets of truths which compete for our attention. There is and can never be an original version of these events; the narrator chooses to give as many versions as humanly possible simultaneously. Attempting to know all truths results in a confused narrative and a confused reader. It is possible to see the role of the narrator as an all-knowing, all-telling mediator as now somehow debased, reflecting neatly in the problematic authority of the dictator on display in this novel. When the voice of the

narrator is divided between various persons, the novel must aim to retell history from the perspective of those who experienced it from the widest variety of perspectives. A novel which drives at a more comprehensive historiography of various dictatorships can qualify Genette's notion that the 'I' of the narrator can be the voice of but one person. This narrator is the collective voice of various people whose lives, experiences, views, values and memories all differ from each other. Yet they come together, as much as they clash, in the form of one confused narrative voice.

In fact, when these voices fail to mediate a set of repeating histories in a way that is easy to consume, they become what Genette calls a 'simultaneous narration'. Recognising that a narrative recounting events that have already taken place will be most familiar to the reader, he states:

It is therefore necessary, merely from the point of view of temporal position, to differentiate four types of narrating: *subsequent* (the classical position of the past-tense narrative, undoubtedly far and away the most frequent); *prior* (predictive narrative, generally in the future tense, but not prohibited from being conjugated in the present, like Jocabel's dream in *Moyse suave*); *simultaneous* (narrative in the present contemporaneous with the action); and *interpolated* (between the moments of the action) [...]. The third type (simultaneous narrating), by contrast, is in principle the simplest, since the rigorous simultaneousness of story and narrating eliminates any sort of inference or temporal game [...]. A present-tense narrative which is 'behaviourist' in type and strictly of the moment can seem like the height of objectivity, since the last trace of enunciating that still subsisted in the Hemingway-style narrative (the mark of temporal interval between story and narrating, which the use of the preterite unavoidably compromises) now fades away in favour of the story [...]. If the emphasis rests on the narrating itself, as in narratives of 'interior monologue', the simultaneousness operates in favour of the discourse. (Genette 217-19)

Despite the novel's frequent use of the past tense, which Genette claims is 'enough to make a narrative subsequent', in his own words, a type of narrative which 'separates the moment of the narrating from the moment of a story' (220), I contend that *El otoño* occupies a space between the subsequent, the prior and the simultaneous. Though verbs are presented in the past tense, I contend that the space between the moment of the narrating and the moment of the story has largely been eliminated. Its stream of consciousness prose suggests a narrative being imagined in real time. Yet this real time is also a cyclical one. Real experiences repeat themselves in an infinite cycle that the reader must be swept away by. When the narrative time continues infinitely, it is safe to say that it takes place simultaneously for the reader – it continues whether or not the text is read. The story moves intractably on its

infinite journey forward and back again, and does so simultaneously with the reader's own time.

Genette states, however:

In order for the story to overtake the narrating [...] the duration of the latter must of course not exceed the duration of the former. Take Tristram's comic aporia: in one year of writing having succeeded in telling only the first day of his life, he observes that he has gotten 364 days behind, that he has therefore moved backward rather than forward, and that, living 364 times faster than he writes, it follows that the more he writes the more there remains for him to write; that, in short, his undertaking is hopeless. Faultless reasoning, whose premises are not at all absurd. (Genette 222)

Surely it stands to reason that the narrating time *does* overtake the story time here. The narrative takes a finite story and repeats it *ad infinitum*. So it could well be claimed that *El otoño* is an example of a narration 'overtaking' the story. Even then, the objectivity of the narrative does not fade away in favour of the story. It is a text which self-consciously fails to report objectively report a story whose events read as aspects of a discourse peculiar, in Genette's mind, to fictions that emphasise narration over story. *El otoño* does not conform to any of Genette's particular taxonomies. The story it relays is just as important to the discourse as vice versa. The narrative style results from the events which seem to repeat – when history repeats itself, its narrative is bound to do likewise. But the narrative is an important, if not crucial way of communicating experiences of living under a dictatorship to the reader, as far as that is possible. And the narrative which communicates these events brings the crucial contradictions of dictatorship to our attention, through a complex voice whose failure to tell every story from every perspective rejects notions of a single authority, be it literary or political. .

Genette's 'present-tense narration' reduces temporal space between signifier (in his own words 'the moment of narrating') and referent ('the moment of the writing') (225). Yet when narrating a cyclical present where a dying patriarch is ostensibly 'resurrected', when tripartite routines and the appearance of three *buitres* and *vacas* before the general's death recall the Greek Moira, there exists no temporal gap to close. When events occur before they occur, the cyclical present converts the habitual into the infinite such that the present becomes an ever changing and *never* changing perpetuity. As Bakhtin puts it:

When there is no passage of time there is also no *moment* of time, in the full and most essential meaning of the word. If taken outside its relationship to past and future, the present loses its integrity, breaks down into isolated phenomena and objects, making them a mere abstract conglomeration. (Bakhtin 146)

That is, there is now no longer any causal, sequential relationship between the past, the present and the future. Events do not effect events but take place in a pre-determined sequence. Genette indicates that this type of closing the temporal gap is commonplace when the narrator is present as a character (Genette 245), implying that heteronymity is most appropriately conveyed through present-tense narrative. It entails fictionalising the self – that is, this narrative consciousness is best for reporting subjective experiences in an objective fashion: the repeated *vimos* here represents a collective consciousness *and* first-hand knowledge of events. These subjective experiences can transcendentalise the manifest world: a *limusina* can be *sonámbula*, the *rosales* appear *nevados de polvo lunar*, imbuing objects with qualities of human experience. Snow, which is unlikely given this Caribbean setting where autumn is a foreign concept, has literally fallen from the moon, as if guided by celestial forces. These images tie in neatly therefore with the novel's deterministic feel as well as the dictator's presentation as an infallible messiah with the ability to determine. This super-real adjectivisation also captures the cautious optimism associated with political upheaval that now requires otherworldly intervention. Language struggles to support its new usage, as the purely subjective is expressed through this most objective model. A narrative that moves in a never-ending cycle must by definition be read cyclically. The reader is constantly taken from the end to the beginning and back again, until such concepts as ends and beginnings lose their distinction from each other. The cyclicity of time in the novel likely reflects real human experiences of dictatorships – feelings that time has stopped, that regimes will continue to rise and fall like the tides and that the political situation will never change are reasonable explanations for the use of cyclical time in a novel such as this. The difficulty of the text is that the narrative voice attempts to retell a holistic experience of dictatorship itself by collating various experiences of various dictatorships into the one voice. The following exchange is a perfect example of shifting perspectives:

A él no le importaba la insolencia sino la ingratitud de Patricio Aragonés a quien puse a vivir como un rey en el palacio y te di lo que nadie le ha dado a nadie en este mundo hasta prestarte mis propias mujeres, aunque mejor no hablemos de eso mi general. (32)

The story is told from the perspective of the dictator, one of his subjects and a third party, all at the same time. There are simply too many stories to retell, and the patriarch of this text – the author/narrator – cannot declare an absolute truth, or a single story created of so many. So *El otoño* should not be read as a factual account of various historical situations that need only be unpicked. We must credit that these are ultimately human responses

to specific political situations, but that does not rescue this text from the realm of the fictional. The text contains a kernel of something that is true, though the reader cannot identify what that is. It would be inappropriate to argue of this text, which denies the existence of ultimate truths, that the real-world experiences it appropriates into fiction can be considered objectively true. Yet in the same way, it cannot thereby be said to be false. The text occupies an unidentifiable space in between fiction and truth. But in spite of its obvious fictionality, it can show its reader a reality to which they cannot relate. Paradoxically, then, the text appeals to a real world interpretation. It transcends its own boundaries in a way that Genette rejects: 'The narrating situation of a fictional account is *never* reduced to its situation of writing' (214). By denying its reader a straightforward historiography of the events it appropriates, the novel tells the reader all that he or she could ever hope to know.

In fact, Genette does account for the types of narrative shifts that cause the general to address and be addressed within the space of a sentence:

In *Autre étude de femme*, Bianchon moves all of a sudden from 'I' to 'he', as if he were unexpectedly abandoning the role of narrator; for instance, in *Jean Santeuil*, the hero moves inversely from 'he' to 'I'. In the field of the classical novel, and still in Proust, such effects obviously result from a sort of narrative pathology, explicable by last-minute reshufflings and states of textual incompleteness. (Genette 246)

To suggest that, though, this necessarily results of an eleventh-hour revision on the part of the author would be to miss the point. The crux of the matter here is not an authorial revision, but an authorial incapability to fully tell a story from so many perspectives. Genette's argument fixes the story to a moment of writing that I consider to no longer exist. This becomes a temporally interpolated narrative, a type of narrative in which the reporting takes place between moments of the action. Genette considers this the most complex breed of narrative, 'since the story and the narrating can become entangled in such a way that the latter has an effect on the former' (217). Story and narrative are intertwined to both affect and effect each other, resulting in 'a very subtle effect of friction... between the slight temporal displacement of the narrative of events... and the complete simultaneousness in the report of thoughts and feelings' (217). Thus, a reported event may depict merely a subjective perspective. In the opening, the *gallinazos* release a *tiempo*, clearly interplay of the manifest and theoretical in an act of *intense* friction that interweaves these two diametric opposites. Wherever narration 'eliminates any temporal game' it expands a single idea through a series of conflicting voices. Genette also states: 'The simultaneousness operates in favour of the

discourse; and then it is the action that seems reduced to the condition of simple pretext, and ultimately abolished' (219). That is, such narratives do not allow actions under the narration independence when all events are pawns in an ideological game. Genette states this only implicitly and it is unclear whether he intended to imply this type of continuous narrative also. Either way, *El otoño* can significantly qualify Genette's approach to temporality, allowing the narrative to retell an infinite history in order to inform its reader, with the denouement: 'El tiempo incontable de la eternidad había por fin terminado' (299), perfectly echoing García Márquez's fears that the Franco dictatorship, for example, may be an experiment in eternity.

The releasing of a time trapped inside the presidential palace falsifies the real and hence fictionalises the audience. Here, time is a countable noun, contrary to linguistic stricture, existing not as a single structure experienced subjectively but as a base of structures *created* by subjectivity. Time and associated terms are not a superstructure. Time can be manipulated and space becomes the canvas on which memories, experiences, thoughts and emotions are painted. Time is released from the internal space of the physical presidential palace and arguably a spiritual, internal space. History can apparently now continue its course but may well be released by those also experiencing this static time and who have been clearly moulded by the historical situation they have survived and their experiences of it. Language is made unfamiliar to itself: 'Fue como penetrar en el ámbito de otra época' (7), and distances space from time, itself simply an interpretation of space. Time comes to a standstill due to events on the physical landscape. Bakhtin, however, argues: 'In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always coloured by emotions and values' (Bakhtin 243). It is certainly true that time and space share a relationship, considering that the dictator 'Desbordaba la faz de la tierra, y el espacio y el tiempo' (García Márquez 16). This moment precedes the verbatim repetition of the dictator's death in the narrative and perpetuates the temporal cycle. It is true that they causally affect each other, yet it is difficult to argue that time and space are inseparable. I prefer to think that a change in one will always precipitate a change in the other. A dictator who defies time and causes it to stand still will give rise to a physical landscape that never changes. The entire presidential palace is a never changing space in a state of degeneration. Its fortified stone walls are said to have been eaten away. Its cupboards are full of abandoned firearms. A courtyard is home to a carriage from the year of the comet and the funeral car of progress. Yet to Bakhtin's credit, García Márquez unites various national spaces, from Spain, to the Caribbean, to Latin America, across various different epochs, and unifies them into a single space and time. This now unknown space

and unknown time are brought to our attention by the narrator's numerous voices, whose particular experience of their historical and geographical situation alters both the behaviour of time and space within this novel's space. Moreover, 'Aquel estar simultáneo en todas partes durante los años pedregosos que precedieron a su primera muerte' (16) ensures that the narrator is also present in all parts of the narrative, and therefore has the potential to be a sort of omniscient narrator. But he fails to convey his narrative comprehensibly. Language, then, has failed the patriarch. This may be the cause of the narrator's own *primera muerte*, but it paradoxically brings forth his rebirth. The more confusing the narrative, the more reliant is the reader on the narrator to make sense of the reporting. Problematised authority of narration is flawed yet necessary. When: 'El tiempo incontable de la eternidad había por fin terminado' (299), we are conversely instructed *not* to celebrate the death of narrator and dictator. The former lives on by necessity, the latter by retelling of his story. Narration is necessary to storytelling but need not take a logical form.

Genette's discussion of metalepses, that is, 'any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe' evinces a 'double temporality' (Genette 234). That is, when the author's voice spills over into the narrative, the text occupies a space between the time of the narrative and the author's own time. I would suggest that this over-stresses the authorial presence. As a narrative device, it indicates a universal time common to the narrator and characters and which the author enters by way of writing and the audience by way of reading. Narration and narrated are in constant temporal flux. But, according to Genette, diegetic metalepsis, where the author's voice enters the narrative voice, oversteps the boundary of narrating: 'a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells' (236). He concludes that narration can dissolve boundaries between possible worlds but fails to argue the converse: that various possible worlds can dissolve the narrative voice. García Márquez successfully establishes distinct possible worlds within one and allows these to interact. Genette then is not wholly sufficient to grasp a cyclical, fictionalised history. His rejection of Borges's suggestion that 'si los caracteres de una ficción pueden ser lectores o espectadores, nosotros, sus lectores o espectadores, podemos ser ficticios' (Borges 1952: 69) appeals excessively to the Cartesian self it might seem absurd to deny but which cannot prove itself. Yet, just as Cartesian logic cannot prove the existence of the ego, logic may neither confirm nor deny the validity of García Márquez's possible worlds. Though allusions to Borges are exceptionally enlightening: referring to the phenomenon of a narrator reporting their own story in the third-person, Genette states:

the most spectacular example of this violation – spectacular precisely because it is put down in a completely traditional narrative system, which accentuates the contrast – in the story entitled ‘The Form of the Sword’ the hero begins to tell his vile adventure while identifying himself with his victim, before confessing that he is in fact *the other*, the dastardly in former who until then was dealt with, with all due contempt, in the ‘third person’. Moon himself supplies the ‘ideological’ comment on this narrative technique: ‘What one man does is something done, in some measure, by all men.... I am all others, any man is all men.’ The Borgesian fantastic, in this respect emblematic of a whole modern literature, does *not accept person*. (Genette 246–7, emphasis in the original)

Borges’s *La forma de la espada* is a text that must be re-read and revised when the reader discovers that the narrator is the same as the narrated Vincent Moon. But *El otoño* differs, in that the narrative cannot be identified as a first- or third-person account, irrespective of possible revisions. It is a narrative constantly filtered through a narrative ‘I’ – the referring article never changes, though its referent always does. So this is a text in which the narrating subject and narrated object constantly fight for possession of the ‘I’, termed by Genette, the *erzählendes Ich*. This *erzählendes Ich*, I argue, is a false centre. The complication of this plural ‘I’ is that it is an amalgam of solipsistic voices, distinct entities bound by a common desire to dictate.

It stands to reason, in as far as reason can now be understood, that the manifest and fictional can mutually resonate in a static yet cyclical perpetuity where both creator and created for are fictionalised. García Márquez, problematising the relationship between dictator and dictated to, fictionalises the self by bringing the fictional closer to the reader’s realistic sphere, departing from Genette by allowing a fictional and realistic sphere to echo respectively. With this in mind, the novel frees itself from this particular theory on experimental narratives. Genette convincingly anticipates the realism imputed to the world that the novel creates in warning against autobiographical narration. Yet he fails to prepare for this breed of experimental narrative. This created world is a component and interpretation of the real world. The real world then is fictionalised in a way prohibited by Genette. Fictionalising reality and splintering Genette’s narratorial ego elucidates the essential premise of the narrative’s form: a political dictatorship is as prescriptive, deterministic, even messianic in its authority, as any narrative which wishes to tell the tale. In this sense, the contortion of time and the authority of the voice in the narrative, far from vindicating Genette’s ostensibly reactionary narratorial approach, strongly suggest that an ontologically unified narratorial voice and linear temporality are not necessary to a successful fiction. This novel collapses many familiar narratorial mores in a

demonstration of fiction's capacity to narrate experiences and qualify history as something that cannot be understood collectively. Cacophonous voices and paradoxical temporality harmonise to recount the purely subjective, collective experience which superstructures of reason and logic, and by extension Genette himself, simply cannot account for. Experience has become a superstructure unto itself. It is now the challenge of the narrator to convincingly retell this experience free of rational considerations.

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