

LANGUAGE AND TONE IN THE NOVELS OF  
GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

by

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## PREFACE

By 1967 Gabriel García Márquez had written four novels which recreate the social and historical life--the intimate being--of a small Colombian village. The author's first novel, La hojarasca (1955), is a lyrical, contemplative work presented through the stylized monologues of three characters. Its themes are time, death, and the decay of a community. El coronel no tiene quien le escriba (1961) is a short, realistically-oriented novel whose effectiveness arises from the conciseness of its form, the ironic attitude of its narrator, and the creation of a unique character, a starving old colonel who typifies the meagre life of the town. In 1962 García Márquez first published La mala hora, a novel that recreates the climate of life in a small town during a lull in the recurring civil strife, known as "la violencia." The appearance of anonymous pasquinades maliciously denouncing the citizens' private affairs touches off a murder and an increasing fear and resentment in the people. The novel shows the process of terror and political repression that leads to an outbreak of violence and to the men's escaping into the mountains to join the armed resistance. By his reticence in describing the terrifying incidents of the violence and by his emphasis on atmosphere rather than plot, the author creates by suggestion a horror that would be extremely difficult to present directly. The fourth novel, Cien años de soledad (1967), is García Márquez' most widely acclaimed novel, and it appears to close a definite

phase in his work. The historical and social history of the village, Macondo, takes on a fantastic and legendary aura in this novel. By leveling reality and fantasy to the same plane the author creates a fictional world that expresses themes of individual and collective experience of history.

This study treats each of the four novels separately and concludes with a discussion of García Márquez' artistic vision, those elements of theme and craft that are seen in all his novels. The study does not deal with historical and biographical background. Some information of these areas is helpful in understanding the novels and some specific historical facts about "la violencia" may be necessary to fully comprehend La mala hora. Mario Vargas Llosa's very recent book, García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio (Barcelona: Barral Editores, 1971), gives a comprehensive biographical account and includes historical information pertinent to the novels. However, the universality of the novel's themes and techniques and the cosmopolitanism of the author make the works accessible to a wide reading audience.

Of all of García Márquez' novels, Cien años de soledad has received the most critical attention. Many reviews, articles, and collections of articles have been published, and those critics who deal with all of the novels tend to see the first three as preparatory to Cien años de soledad. This study treats each novel as a whole in itself and stresses the importance of considering the first three novels on their own merits. My critical approach is less a method than an attitude. I believe that we as readers and as critics must first efface ourselves and let the work

reveal itself to us. In doing so, our immediate perception comprehends the novel's tone, that is, the central organizing principle lying beneath all the work's forms. This tone is understood as the author's attitude toward his materials, his craft, and his readers. By studying the techniques in accordance with this central organization we can then make some generalizations about the work's effect and value. The implication of this approach is simple: the individual work, allowed to open up before us, reveals the particular method appropriate to its study.

## CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. <u>LA HOJARASCA</u> : THE MONOLOGUE IN THE LYRICAL NOVEL . . . . .	1
II. THE ART OF CONDENSATION IN <u>EL CORONEL NO TIENE QUIEN LE ESCRIBA</u> . . . . .	33
III. THE CREATION OF ATMOSPHERE IN <u>LA MALA HORA</u> . . . . .	52
IV. DESIGN AND TONE IN <u>CIEN AÑOS DE SOLEDAD</u> . . . . .	70
Tone and Technique (72)	
Design, Time, and Tragedy (90)	
V. THE ARTISTIC VISION OF GARCIA MARQUEZ . . . . .	113
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	130

## CHAPTER I

### LA HOJARASCA: THE MONOLOGUE IN THE LYRICAL NOVEL

García Márquez' first novel may disturb readers by its shadowy characters and its strange, unexplained incidents; and it may seem a fragmentary work, rich in suggestions but somehow incomplete.

Actually, La hojarasca (1955)<sup>1</sup> is a lyrical novel that exploits a tension between narrative and lyrical modes to express themes of time and memory and the moral death working upon Macondo, the fictional setting which typifies a small rural town in Colombia. The novel is presented through the monologues of three characters, a young boy, his mother, Isabel, and her father, a retired colonel. Their monologues are narrated during a half hour while they wait for permission to bury the body of a strange doctor who has hanged himself. As they wait in the closed room of the doctor's house, they relate events covering a time span of about thirty years, from the arrival of the family in Macondo to the present moments of September 12, 1928.

The author's method of narration is to filter elements of past action and character through the minds of the three characters narrating in a prolonged present. The use of the monologue breaks up the narration of past events which, if related linearly, would retain their inherent nature of dynamic movement toward present time; the fragmentation

of the past events, the "story," tends to convert them into moments arrested in time. The interaction of the two time planes--the prolonged present and the past--creates a tension between narrative movement and lyrical, contemplative quiescence. The technique of the novel rests on the creation of a particular kind of monologue. As the following analysis moves from a close examination of the language of the monologues to a consideration of larger structures, it will show that La hojarasca is essentially a lyrical novel.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic and narrative elements surrounding a period of history retain part of their dynamic nature while at the same time they are transformed into patterns of imagery that objectify the themes of time, memory, and death.

The monologues that make up La hojarasca are not interior monologues designed to portray realistically the inner workings of the mind or the continuity of experience. The characters tell of their lives and their memories, but these elements function more to portray the spirit of a time and place than they do to reveal individual consciousness. Stylization turns the monologues away from the inward and gives an artistically objectified form to individual experience. The monologues are narrated in first person as if to an audience, and they could be called stylized soliloquies if the overtones of dramatic presentation in the term were ignored. Although some of the devices of interior monologue are apparent in involved sentence structure and in memory association, the language is coherent and the images employed are universal rather than personal or private.<sup>3</sup>

The monologues are all similar in style, yet they maintain enough individuality to create and distinguish their speakers. All the characters

are given the ability to recall scenes from the past, to narrate dialogues and passages in other characters' words, and to express themselves through poetic images. One of the main features of the monologues is their lack of intimacy:<sup>4</sup> all three characters tend to speak with the same voice. This voice is not just the thinly disguised voice of the author. Rather, each character's monologues show a fusion of author and character. The style of the monologues resembles a writer's formal style which differs only slightly from character to character. Thus, through stylized language the monologues blend together to form a dense, lyrical whole, yet contrast enough to reveal each character and his point of view. The characters serve a double role--they reveal themselves as individuals while serving as passive protagonists, masks for the lyrical point of view assumed by the author.<sup>5</sup>

The three characters are well suited to narrate this kind of monologue. Being representative of three generations, they can narrate events covering a long period of Macondo's history. And memory and the feeling of passing time are essential to the central theme of the novel. The characters are also relatively passive members of society--Isabel because of her sex, and the boy and the retired colonel because of their ages. During the narration of their monologues, the characters are also fairly inactive. Thus their characterizations suit their function as masks for the unified lyrical point of view.

Both Isabel and her father narrate scenes from the past. The colonel's monologues center around the life and death of the doctor and Isabel's relate her marriage and her knowledge of Macondo's history.



Only the boy is extraneous to the doctor's life and to the past. He is representative of the present and of life outside the closed circle of the room, filled with memories of his mother and grandfather. The book opens and closes with a monologue by the boy. His two monologues in the first chapter and his last monologue frame the novel and give a vivid response to the present situation. The other three monologues narrated by the boy come at strategic points in the novel to offset themes or to break the tension of other monologues.

Stylization is readily apparent in the boy's monologues. His reactions to the dead man and the scene before him are like those we would expect in a realistic portrayal. But the author has fused these reactions into an elaborate language that employs poetic images, both simple and involved sentence structure, repetition of key words, anaphora, and other rhetorical devices. The images are based on sensual perceptions: "Se oye el zumbido del sol por las calles, pero nada más. El aire es estancado, concreto; se tiene la impresión de que podría torcérsele como una lámina de acero" (p. 11). A longer example shows an elaborate sentence structure and the use of italics to mark a remembered thought:

De la mano de mamá, siguiendo a mi abuelo que tantea con el bastón a cada paso para no tropezar con las cosas (no ve bien en la penumbra, y cojea) he pasado frente al espejo de la sala y me he visto de cuerpo entero, vestido de verde y con este blanco lazo almidonado que me aprieta a un lado del cuello. Me he visto en la redonda luna manchada y he pensado: Ese soy yo, como si hoy fuera domingo. (p. 11)

Here the use of parenthesis gives some indication of added thoughts, of the incoherence often seen in more realistic interior monologues.<sup>6</sup>

And the mirror image accurately presents the appearance of the boy while creating an impression of abstractness. In the opening monologues the paragraphs often begin with a short, simple sentence: "Por primera vez he visto un cadáver" (p. 11); "No sé por qué me han traído" (p. 12); "Al entrar no vi al muerto" (p. 13); "Vuelvo a mirar a mi madre" (p. 15). This device as well as repeated phrases--"'Tienes que estar muy juicioso en el entierro del doctor'" (pp. 13, 14)--give unity and rhythm to the monologue. These opening sentences are appropriate to a child's way of speaking and to the boy in his function of naïve narrator, reporting actions he does not fully understand. Further stylization elaborates the simple constructions, adding images and anaphora to create a kind of hypnotic rhythm. The use of verbs in the present tense adds to the effect of immediate impression:

Siempre creí que los muertos debían tener sombrero. Ahora veo que no. Veo que tienen la cabeza acerada y un pañuelo amarrado en la mandíbula. Veo que tienen la boca un poco abierta y que se ven, detrás de los labios morados, los dientes manchados e irregulares. Veo que tienen la lengua mordida a un lado, gruesa y pastosa, un poco más oscura que el color de la cara, que es como el de los dedos cuando se les aprieta con un cáñamo. Veo que tienen los ojos abiertos, mucho más que los de un hombre; ansiosos y desorbitados, y que la piel parece ser de tierra apretada y húmeda. (pp. 11-12)

The bipartite constructions in this paragraph, especially of adjectives, give a slow, regularly balanced rhythm to the description.

The naïveté of the boy is expressed here in his thinking the dead wear hats, and later on he remarks about the dead man, "Sólo tiene puesto el zapato izquierdo. Está, como dice Ada, con un pie rey y el otro esclavo" (p. 15). The ingenuousness of the boy is

perhaps stressed a bit too much and is in too striking a contrast with the use of imagery and stylization in his monologues. The author reveals his presence in making the boy obviously naïve and seems to be straining to keep him in character. In spite of this defect, the monologues are generally effective, and the author shows sure psychological insight in passages that reveal the boy's horrified fascination as he sees a corpse for the first time: "Desde entonces, por mucho que me esfuerece por no mirarlo, siento como si alguien me sujetara la cara hacia ese lado. Y aunque haga esfuerzos por mirar hacia otros lugares de la habitación, lo veo de todos modos, en cualquier parte, con los ojos desorbitados y la cara verde y muerta en la oscuridad" (p. 14). These lucid observations of the child's reactions, based firmly in experience, help us as readers to accept the artifice, the stylization of the monologues.

These foregoing examples of stylization are typical of the boy's two opening monologues which are also similar to his final monologue. The three placed in the main body of the work give expression to his life outside the present situation. They begin with the scene before him and move by memory association to other material. Similar to some of the colonel's monologues, they recreate a particular scene, a trip to the river, the boy walking with his eyes closed through the house, a visit to the local madwoman. In the structuring of the novel these monologues serve to break tension and to offset themes. Noticeably, they move from a vivid scene full of life (Chapter 4) to an intermediate experience of the mysterious (Chapter 5), to a rather sordid scene with sexual overtones (Chapter 10). Of interest stylistically is the

marked use of poetic images that contrast with the funereal scene in the present. The following are from the boy's monologue describing a trip to the river with his friend:

... su silbo duro y recto resonaba en el socavón vegetal, como cuando uno se pone a cantar dentro de un tonel. (p. 53)

De repente el sol rompió la techumbre de hojas apretadas y duras y un cuerpo de claridad cayó aleteando en la hierba, como un pájaro vivo. (p. 53)

... y se tiraban fuertes patadas de esa agua crepuscular que parecía no mojarles la piel. (p. 54)

... y volvía a salir reluciente como un pez plateado y enorme, como si el agua se hubiera vuelto líquida a su contacto. (p. 54)

... levanté los ojos, derecho hacia el otro lado, hacia arriba de los árboles, hacia el furioso atardecer cuyo cielo tenía la monstruosa imponencia de una caballeriza incendiada. (p. 54)

These images are important to the overall structure of the work for their expression of life in movement and light, sun and water. In this monologue the use of short dialogue interspersed throughout gives unity and rhythm to the whole descriptive passage.

In general the boy's monologues are effective. They reveal the sensitive reactions of the boy and give him individuality, and at the same time they are expressed in a lyrical, rhythmic language, stylized to blend with the other characters' monologues.

While the boy's monologues tend to be a lyrical expression of the present, the colonel's tend toward the past and have more narrative structure and function. He narrates two monologues that are closely connected to actions in the present. These monologues narrate his

arrangement with the mayor for the doctor's burial, his orders to his men about the body, and so forth. Then his monologues turn to the past and narrate chronologically various scenes from the doctor's life. The stylization of these differs somewhat from one to the other, but the material is usually structured dramatically to focus on one incident. In order to recreate these scenes from the past, the colonel is given the ability to quote dialogue and to describe settings closely, even to the slightest gesture of a character. However, the narrative elements are generally diffused into a meditative, rhythmic prose that employs parallel constructions, repetitions of expressions and phrases, and figurative descriptions. This stylization slows narrative movement and maintains the novel's dominant tone of contemplation.

An incident from the colonel's opening monologue is an example of how narrative elements are merged into the lyrical form of the novel through stylization. The event of the doctor's past--his refusal to attend the wounded in an outbreak of violence--serves to awaken interest in the strictly narrative aspect of the novel. At this beginning point the reader may naturally be interested to know why the doctor refused and whether or not the town will seek revenge by denying him burial. Near the end of the novel the event is again narrated in almost the same words (pp. 123-24), but their significance is quite different. The event no longer arouses narrative interest. The intervening chapters modify the words, not by a rational cause-and-effect resolution, but by creating a larger symbolic pattern into which the event fits and assumes a different significance. The reader comes to "understand" the moral decay and economic ruin of the town and to see the doctor's life as

symbolic of that decay rather than as a fragmented narrative. Elements of action are absorbed into the lyrical design of the novel and tend to lose their purely narrative force.<sup>7</sup> In the colonel's monologues this "absorption" is achieved in two ways--by intervening monologues' breaking up linear narration and by stylization within the colonel's monologues. The passage relating the event of the doctor's refusal contains several devices of this stylization:

Es un sentimiento alimentado durante diez años, desde aquella noche borrascosa en que trajeron los heridos a la puerta y le gritaron (porque no abrió; habló desde adentro); le gritaron: "Doctor, atienda a estos heridos que ya los otros médicos no dan abasto", y todavía sin abrir (porque la puerta permaneció cerrada, los heridos acostados frente a ella); "Usted es el único médico que nos queda. Tiene que hacer una obra de caridad"; y él respondió (y tampoco entonces se abrió la puerta), imaginado por la turbamulta en la mitad de la sala, la lámpara en alto, iluminados los duros ojos amarillos: "Se me olvidó todo lo que sabía de eso. Llévenlos a otra parte", y siguió (porque desde entonces la puerta no se abrió jamás) con la puerta cerrada mientras el rencor crecía, se ramificaba, se convertía en una virulencia colectiva, que no daría tregua a Macondo en el resto de su vida para que en cada oído siguiera retumbando la sentencia--gritada esa noche--que condenó al doctor a pudrirse detrás de estas paredes. (pp. 25-26)

Here the involved sentence structure, the use of parentheses to give a hint of incoherence, and the quotation of remembered dialogue are devices similar to those found throughout all the colonel's monologues. Phrases such as "los duros ojos amarillos" and, later, "su parsimoniosa voz de rumiante" are repeated many times. And like the closed door in this passage, these phrases become increasingly symbolic as the novel progresses. The use of tripartite constructions ("el rencor crecía, se ramificaba, se convertía en una virulencia colectiva") is typical of

the colonel, who often speaks in an even more florid way: "Pero si no han de respetarme a mí, ni siquiera por ser viejo, coronel de la república, y para remate cojo del cuerpo y entero de la conciencia, espero que al menos respeten a mi hija por ser mujer" (p. 27). In quieter moments than this, the colonel uses a slow, discursive manner of speaking, seen in the use of parallel constructions similar to the above (examples on pp. 35, 69, 79, 95, 100-01).

In the colonel's monologues which narrate episodes of the doctor's life, the stylization is apparent in several aspects: dramatic focus on one incident, detailed description of the setting, quoted dialogue, and repetition and images used to create rhythm and to set the tone. The two monologues that narrate the doctor's arrival in Macondo (Chapter 3) show the method of dramatic focusing. The first begins with a description of the room behind the church, and then narrates the preparations for the reception of the priest and the unexpected arrival of a stranger, later known to be the doctor. This oblique way of telling of the doctor's first moments in Macondo heightens the mystery that surrounds him. The description of the room that the priest is to live in is detailed and concrete: "Adentro se sentía un olor a cal viva. Era ese el único olor agradable que se había sentido en mucho tiempo dentro de ese espacio y el único grato que se sentiría jamás" (p. 44). This description covering a page and a half of text, though apparently not connected with the doctor's life, serves to delay his entrance and also to set a tone. The slow accumulation of details closely related to the passage of time in itself becomes a kind of decay: "Pero ya no quedaba cal en las paredes. En el patio, sobre las piedras, se había formado

una costra de tierra endurecida por la lluvia" (p. 45). The arrival of the doctor is thus associated not with a beginning or with a tone of hope and expectation, but with a decline that comes from many years before. The narrative action, the recreated scene of the doctor's arrival, is thus fused into a lyrical expression of time and decay.

The second monologue concerning the doctor's arrival presents his first visit to the colonel's house. The colonel remembers long passages of his wife's repetitive and monotonous description of the visitor who is waiting to see him. The monotony is increased by the colonel's repetition of the phrase, "ella estaba dándole la sopa a Isabel." This repetition creates a kind of nervous tension which culminates when Adelaida is quoted as saying of the doctor, "...sentí que me estaba mirando directamente a las piernas." And the colonel adds: "Guardó silencio de pronto. En el comedor quedó vibrando el tintineo metálico de la cuchara" (p. 52). Again, the doctor is presented obliquely and the stylization serves to heighten the strange atmosphere that accompanies him. The judgments of the colonel from the present--"porque no sabía que esa tarde estaban comenzando las cosas que hoy concluyen" (p. 50)--add to this mysteriousness. The dramatic buildup and the culmination of the scene in a few phrases are effects of stylization and are typical of the colonel's monologues.

Both of these monologues concerning the doctor's arrival are perhaps overly stylized. We as readers become perhaps too much aware of the author's technique, and this consciousness breaks the illusion that it is the colonel who is remembering and narrating. The stylization is effective in creating a mysterious atmosphere about the doctor, but the distance between the colonel and his memories resembles that between



an author and his material. The stylization in the following monologue is similar but less intrusive. The colonel describes incidents from various times: "Se quedó a vivir en nuestra casa. ... Puso un aviso en la puerta (hasta hace pocos años, cuando blanquearon la casa, todavía estaba en su lugar, escrito a lápiz por él mismo en letra cursiva) y a la semana siguiente fue necesario llevar nuevas sillas para atender a las exigencias de una numerosa clientela" (pp. 56-57). This mixing of time sequences adds to the illusion that the colonel himself is narrating, and the use of parenthesis gives the impression of memory and spontaneity. This monologue also centers about one episode and has dramatic qualities in the detailed description of the scene and of the actions of each person. Its culminating point is the doctor's clarification of his eating preferences: "—Hierba común, señora; de esa que comen los burros" (p. 59).

In several of the colonel's monologues, especially in the last few which narrate the culminating scenes of the doctor's life and the colonel's meditative thoughts about Macondo, there is a wide use of figurative language. By repetition and images he recreates the dense atmosphere surrounding a conversation with the doctor: "la última noche," "aquella última noche ... una de las más cálidas y densas," "en medio de aquel horno inmenso," "los grillos solivitados por la sed de la naturaleza, y la minúscula, insignificante y sin embargo desmedida actividad del romero y el nardo, ardiendo en el centro de la hora desierta," "aquella noche monstruosamente viva" (pp. 91-92). These figurative descriptions that serve to recreate a moment of the past also tend to retard the forward movement of the narration of events.

Throughout the colonel's monologues there are expressions of the fatality he sees working in Macondo. Near the end of the novel these expressions become poetic images: "Me sentía metido en el corazón de una inmensa galería de imágenes proféticas" (p. 94); "... él estaba aquí ... acorralado quién sabe por qué implacables bestias proféticas" (p. 100). In the colonel's figurative descriptions, the repetition of adjectives similar in meaning connect the doctor's final decline with the decay of Macondo. In his last monologue the identification of the doctor with Macondo is even more concrete: "... me parece haber respirado en la primera bocanada del aire que hierve sobre el muerto, toda esa amarga materia de fatalidad que ha destruido a Macondo" (pp. 121-22). The stylization of the monologue permits this use of images by the character. The colonel is a recognizable character with his own discursive way of speaking and is also used by the author to express part of the larger, lyrical view.

The colonel's monologues are stylized to create separate, clearly visualized scenes--discrete parts of what would, in a more realistic treatment, be a continuous, flowing memory of the past--and this stylization tends to arrest chronological movement and to pattern past events. The repetition of the episode of the doctor's refusal to attend the wounded gives a circular design to the colonel's monologues. And the culmination of his monologues comes at the point when he recognizes his own guilt in relation to the doctor (Chapter 9). The patterning of events is almost always done in narrative, and even more so if a first-person narrator is used.<sup>8</sup> However, patterning in the colonel's monologues functions in at least two ways. The colonel himself sees a kind of fatality in the way things turn out because he recognizes a

design in past events. And the patterning slows the movement of the narrative and makes these chronologically oriented monologues similar to the more lyrical ones of Isabel and the boy.

Isabel's monologues show both narrative and lyrical tendencies. Like the colonel's, her monologues are stylized by a discursive prose using repetitive phrasing and repetition of quoted dialogue. The use of many poetic images and imaginative expressions make them similar to the boy's lyrical monologues. Isabel's monologues serve to clarify themes and to give coherence to the lyrical process in the larger structures of the novel. Her monologues are somewhat more chaotic than the colonel's and thematically broader. Memory association leads the character from the present scene and her resentment at having to attend the doctor's burial to thoughts of Meme and of Macondo's past. Near the center of the novel she narrates a long, meditative monologue that lyrically describes Macondo's atmosphere and the emotional impact of arrested time. She then narrates three monologues concerning her marriage to Martín and his disappearance. Her last monologues return to the doctor and to a lyrical meditation about Macondo. Throughout the novel her monologues function as a counterpoint to the colonel's narration by offsetting themes and foreshadowing incidents narrated later by him.

The stylization of Isabel's monologues is noticeable in the figurative language that is also discursive. That is, she reasons over matters, searching for answers to her questions about time and Macondo, about her father and the doctor, while expressing this reasoning through imaginative and poetic descriptions. The following

is from her first monologue:

Oigo pitar el tren en la última vuelta. "Son las dos y media", pienso; y no puedo sortear la idea de que a esta hora todo Macondo está pendiente de lo que hacemos en esta casa. Pienso en la señora Rebeca, flaca y apergaminada, con algo de fantasma doméstico en el mirar y el vestir, sentada junto al ventilador eléctrico y con el rostro sombreado por las alambreras de sus ventanas. Mientras oye el tren que se pierde en la última vuelta, la señora Rebeca inclina la cabeza hacia el ventilador, atormentada por la temperatura y el resentimiento, con las aspas de su corazón girando como las paletas del ventilador (pero en sentido inverso) y murmura: "El diablo tiene la mano en todo esto", y se estremece, atada a la vida por las minúsculas raíces de lo cotidiano. (p. 19)

Several devices in this passage are typical of Isabel's monologues: the imaginative reconstruction of what is happening in one of the houses of Macondo, involved sentence structure with the use of thoughts in quotation and of parentheses, bipartite constructions, and poetic images. Often the poetic images in her monologues are as elaborate as the one here, "con las aspas de su corazón girando como las paletas del ventilador (pero en sentido inverso)," in which the mechanical backward movement expresses concretely the feelings or spirit of Rebeca.

The descriptions in Isabel's monologues at times have a markedly literary flavor:

Si el tiempo de adentro tuviera el mismo ritmo del de afuera, ahora estaríamos a pleno sol, con el ataúd en la mitad de la calle. Afuera sería más tarde: sería de noche. Sería una pesada noche de setiembre con luna y mujeres sentadas en los patios, conversando bajo la claridad verde, y en la calle, nosotros, los tres renegados, a pleno sol de este setiembre sediento. (p. 60)

The imaginative reasoning about psychological time, the rhythmic

repetitions, and the use of descriptive adjectives ("pesada noche," "setiembre sediento") show a fusion of author and character.

One of the main functions of Isabel's monologues is to clarify themes through lyrical description. The theme of the past as a pall weighing on the present is expressed lyrically through Isabel's observation about her stepmother's memories:

Esa tarde, por la vehemencia de su voz, por la exaltación de sus palabras, parecía como si mi madrastra estuviera viviendo de nuevo los episodios de aquella noche remota en que el doctor rehusó atender a Meme. El romero parecía sofocado por la cegadora claridad de setiembre, por el sopor de las cigarras, por el jadeo de los hombres que trataban de desmontar una puerta en el vecindario. (p. 85)

The slow monotony of the parallel constructions and the heaviness in the expressions "sofocado," "sopor," "jadeo," embody the emotional tone of the weight of memory. The reference to the door is significant in the overall structure of images in the novel. Opening or breaking open a door becomes symbolic of breaking through the weight of the past.

The monologues that concern Isabel's marriage to Martín have a narrative style that makes them resemble the colonel's chronological narrations. They center around one event and end with a climactic phrase. And they use descriptive detail and images to set the tone. The monologue relating her wedding day (Chapter 8) shows a careful selection of narrative details, structured to lead to a culminating point. Isabel's bare statements of fact--"Yo no conocía a mi novio" (p. 88); "La iglesia estaba vacía" (p. 90)--culminate in her final observation: "Yo sentí que algo se torcía en mi corazón: el desconocido empezaba a

tutearme. Miré hacia arriba, hacia donde diciembre era una gigantesca bola brillante, un luminoso mes de vidrio; dijo: 'Estoy pensando que lo único que falta es que empiece a llover'" (p. 91). This fusion of concisely narrated events with poetic images is typical of Isabel's narrative monologues. The accumulation of adjectives to express emotional tone is another stylistic device. The irreality Isabel feels about Martín and her marriage is communicated through the repetition of expressions concerning abstractness: "Martín venía, derecho y abstracto" (p. 88); "a todos ... los veía transformados y nuevos," "El Cachorro, ... la única persona que tenía contornos de realidad," "con el cabello corto ... más abstracto de lo que ya lo era naturalmente" (p. 90); "el desposado irreal" (p. 91). The repetition creates a unity of feeling in the passage, and this emotional tone is also given a more concrete expression in an extended image:

Me veía pálida y limpia frente al espejo, envuelta en la nube de polvorienta espumilla que me recordaba al fantasma de mi madre. Me decía frente al espejo, "Esa soy yo, Isabel. Estoy vestida de novia, para casarme por la madrugada". Y me desconocía a mí misma; me sentía desdoblada en el recuerdo de mi madre muerta. ... Y ahora, viéndome en el espejo, yo veía los huesos de mi madre cubiertos por el verdín sepulcral, entre un montón de espuma rota y un apelmazamiento de polvo amarillo. Yo estaba fuera del espejo. (p. 89)

This image expresses the alienation from self that Isabel feels as a result of memories of the past. By using this elaborate image, the author clarifies the more diffuse emotional tone of the passage. This is one of the lyrically intense moments that elucidate themes. Here the theme--the stultifying force the past exerts over the present--is given concrete expression. Isabel is so invaded by memories of her mother, whom

she has never known, that she herself feels no existence, and she says, "yo estaba fuera del espejo."

Isabel's monologues, even the most narrative ones, are expressed in a rhythmic, poetic language whose images and imaginative descriptions give lyrical form to basic themes. The fusion of the author with the character is evident in this stylization, but the author's presence is not intrusive.

The monologues of all three characters are blended together by their similar stylization. The bipartite constructions, the repetition of words and phrases, and the accumulation of adjectives give the prose a slow rhythm and maintain the tone of contemplation, which communicates the attitude of the author, the lyrical view he has adopted. The concealed author works out a design of character, scene, and image by narrating through the three characters. These are not, of course, replicas of the author, nor do they necessarily speak his opinion. Through their monologues the author projects his materials into patterns that objectify the particular vision embodied in the novel.

The monologues are fused into larger structures in the novel by various techniques which reveal the themes of time and moral decay. The unifying effect of stylization within each monologue is supported by the exterior devices of grouping monologues into chapters and of repeating motifs. The narrative concerning the doctor--artificially separated here from its lyrical aspects for analysis--is partially unified by foreshadowing and repetition of scenes through multiple points of view. These narrative elements rest on the novel's main structural devices which are the

groupings of symbols, images, and figurative descriptions. The poetic language of the monologues reaches points of intensification created by these groupings. And these intense lyrical moments elucidate themes and reveal the significance of the narrative elements.

Motifs<sup>9</sup> of sound and action occurring in the prolonged present are used to group the monologues and to unify the inward time of each character with that of the others. The repetition of a thought or a spoken phrase is usually quite effective since these motifs blend with the repetitive phrasing of each monologue. In the opening chapter, the motif is the train whistle:

... pienso de repente: "Son las dos y media". Y recuerdo que a esta hora (mientras el tren pita en la última vuelta del pueblo) los muchachos .... (boy's monologue, p. 16)

Oigo pitar el tren en la última vuelta. "Son las dos y media", pienso .... (Isabel, p. 19)

... y ellos vuelvan a levantar la tapa en el preciso instante en que pita el tren, perdiéndose en la última vuelta del pueblo. "Son las dos y media", pienso. (the colonel, p. 29)

Also used are repetitions of actions, the opening of a window, the movements of the men closing the coffin, the mayor's coming in and going out. These elements of action do not advance the narrative since they are repeated in each character's monologues. Some of the action motifs, such as the opening of the window and the door, have symbolical significance. Others have the more mechanical function of distinguishing the points of view of the characters. The latter at times seem artificial, as when the colonel stumbles and the boy thinks he has been pushed (p. 130). The motifs marking time are more effective



because they fit in with the obsessive preoccupation with time that is one of the principal themes of the novel.

Foreshadowing, multiple points of view, and counterpoint are techniques used to control narrative movement and lyrical stasis in the novel. Actually, the movement of the narrative concerning the doctor begins with the introductory quotation from Antigone, which sets a tone for dramatic action. The use of this quotation becomes ironic as the novel progresses to show a town paralyzed by inaction and moral decay. Throughout the novel, the tension between the expectation of narrative movement and the static scenes presented helps to create the atmosphere of anguished suffocation. After the setting of scene and atmosphere in the opening chapter, a series of monologues narrate arrivals. Isabel retells the family's arrival in Macondo (Chapter 2) and the colonel narrates the doctor's arrival in Macondo (Chapter 3). The colonel's monologues then recreate scenes from the doctor's life, while Isabel's center around her marriage. The line of Isabel's monologues function as a thematic counterpoint to the colonel's narration. As the novel closes, these two lines draw together and both characters narrate (in two monologues grouped together, pp. 119-26) a scene of the doctor's last visit to the colonel.

Reflecting the hybrid nature of the novel, the narrative techniques of foreshadowing and multiple point of view have a double role, one partly narrative and one partly lyrical. The narrative elements in Isabel's monologues often foreshadow the episodes later amplified in the colonel's. Among the many examples of foreshadowing that we find in the

work are the following: the disappearance of Meme, mentioned by Isabel (p. 19) and treated more fully by the colonel (pp. 110-12); Meme's life with the doctor, seen by Isabel (p. 41) and enlarged upon by the colonel (p. 100); the appearance of a pasquinade on the doctor's house, mentioned by Isabel (p. 33) and by the colonel (pp. 110-11). This foreshadowing works, as it does in more traditional narrative, to introduce events and to create interest. Some of the events concerning the doctor in Isabel's monologues are narrated more completely than those mentioned, and become a second point of view.

Since Isabel has limited knowledge of the doctor, the point of view presented in her monologues is Meme's or her stepmother's. This presentation of several points of view has the traditional effect of giving various and sometimes conflicting versions of events and at the same time of revealing character. However, foreshadowing and multiple points of view do not serve to develop a line of narrative to an ultimate resolution, as is usually the case in traditional novels. The conflicting points of view do not serve to clarify events by discounting each other until the "true" point of view is given.<sup>10</sup> Rather, they function as repetition of fragments which are never clearly resolved. For example, the disappearance of Meme is never explained in the sense that the reader learns the reason for her leaving or where she went. This fragment becomes a kind of motif standing for something more significant than the anecdote and comprehensible only as its theme is repeated in more fully treated disappearances, such as that of the doctor when he shuts himself off from the town. Thus, while foreshadowing and multiple point of view create expectation of a narrative resolution of events, this

resolution is given in the working out of themes through lyrical expression. As was seen in the analysis of the colonel's monologues, the narrative elements tend to be absorbed into the lyrical design of the novel. Although we as readers never know who put the pasquinade on the doctor's door, we come to understand the social atmosphere in which such an action could take place. And much of this understanding comes from the imaginative description and the lyrical portraits of characters.

The two narrative lines--the colonel's narration of the doctor's life and Isabel's narration of her marriage--offset each other in the manner of counterpoint, especially in chapters six through ten. The lyrical narratives of Isabel's marriage intervene between scenes of the doctor's life and break up their chronological narration. The recurring themes of Isabel's monologues are her solitude, her lack of communication with Martín, and time. Her lyrical narrations reach points of intensity in which images or figurative descriptions illuminate the themes of solitude and lack of communication that run through the scenes of the doctor's life. One of these points, the extended image of Isabel's alienation from herself, has already been mentioned. The theme of lack of communication reaches a point of intensity in Isabel's narration when she thinks of her son's resemblance to Martín. She mentions his "indiferencia abstracta y fría que lo hace idéntico a su padre," and continues: "Mi hijo va a disolverse en el aire abrasante de este miércoles como le ocurrió a Martín hace nueve años .... En vano rogaré a Dios que haga de él un hombre de carne y hueso, que tenga volumen, peso y color como los hombres" (p. 114). These lyrical points of intensity tend to arrest the narrative and to create moments of stasis in the novel,

moments when the themes are clearly expressed through imagery. The narrative of the doctor's life continues, but the resolution of events, which in a more traditional novel serves to illuminate themes, becomes less and less expected as the themes are clarified through lyrical design.

Another effect of counterpoint between Isabel's and the colonel's monologues is the structural expression of the theme of time. Isabel's marriage occurs chronologically several years after the scenes narrated by the colonel, since Isabel is a small child when the doctor arrives in Macondo. As the monologues alternate, a scene from the doctor's life is in juxtaposition to Isabel's marriage, and the effect created suggests an arrested time. The time planes which chronologically are sequential are fused into a mental time,<sup>11</sup> a continual recurrence of the same events in which nothing changes. The solitude of the doctor, of Isabel, and of her son are experiences perceived as eternal, happening in this mental time plane which is the atmosphere of Macondo.<sup>12</sup>

The overall structure of the novel rests on a patterning of images. The monologues are grouped into patterns which cause the action and characters to take on the nature of recurring metaphors. These in turn rest on the grouping of interlocking images that convey the themes of time, death, and the decay of the community. The introductory passage functions as a lyrical prelude to the novel. Three main groupings of images occur in the novel: one centered around decay, death, and the stifling closed room is found in the opening chapter; following the images of light and life in the boy's monologue of the fourth chapter, the second group (Chapter 5) links stopped time and death to the atmosphere of Macondo; a large group of expressions of fatality,

destruction, and the weight of the past fill the last few chapters. As the images are repeated throughout the novel, they grow more complex, interlocking with each other to become finally symbolic of an indefinable spiritual condition.

Images of decay begin in the introductory passage, a figurative description of the changes worked upon Macondo by the banana company:

De pronto, como si un remolino hubiera echado raíces en el centro del pueblo, llegó la compañía bananera perseguida por la hojarasca. Era una hojarasca revuelta, alborotada, formada por los desperdicios humanos y materiales de los otros pueblos; rastrojos de una guerra civil que cada vez parecía más remota e inverosímil. La hojarasca era implacable. Todo lo contaminaba de su revuelto olor multitudinario, olor a secreción a flor de piel y de recóndita muerte. (p. 9)

In the first chapter, the descriptions of the room and the dead doctor continue the images of decay. Often the same words are used: "Hay un olor a desperdicios. Y creo que las cosas arruinadas y casi deshechas que nos rodean tienen el aspecto de las cosas que deben oler a desperdicios ..." (p. 11); "un cuarto en que se han acumulado, durante diecisiete años, los residuos de un hombre" (p. 16); "este cuarto lleno de escombros" (p. 18). This decay extends outward from the room: "Veo nuestra casa descolorida y arruinada ..." (p. 24). Throughout the main part of the novel, the images of decay continue, usually with reference to the room and the solitary doctor. Toward the end of the novel, they refer again to the town:

un pueblo arruinada, aniquilado por el polvo (p. 115)

Hace diez años, cuando sobrevino la ruina .... Pero a la hojarasca la habían enseñado a ser impaciente; ... que la hojarasca se había ido .... Todo lo había traído la

hojarasca y todo se lo había llevado. Después de ella sólo quedaba un domingo en los escombros de un pueblo .... (p. 122)

Entonces veo otra vez la calle, el polvo luminoso, blanco y abrasador, que cubre las casas y que le ha dado al pueblo un lamentable aspecto de mueble arruinado. Es como si Dios hubiera declarado innecesario a Macondo y lo hubiera echado al rincón donde están los pueblos que han dejado de prestar servicio a la creación. (p. 127)

As in the above, the expressions of ruin expand to include fatality and final destruction:

... y veo ... los melancólicos y polvorientos almendros con nuestra casa al fondo. Sacudida por el soplo invisible de la destrucción, también ella está en vísperas de un silencioso y definitivo derrumbamiento. Todo Macondo está así desde cuando lo exprimió la compañía bananera. (p. 128)

habrá pasado ese viento final que borraré este pueblo (p.129)

... ese viento final que barrerá a Macondo, sus dormitorios llenos de lagartos y su gente taciturna, devastada por los recuerdos. (p. 129)

As seen in these images, the ruin of Macondo is directly associated with the banana company's exploitation of the town. More subtle is the association of Macondo's decay with time and memory. For example, the trunks mentioned throughout the novel gradually become a symbol pointing to an attitude about memory and the past. After repeated references to the trunks (see pp. 11, 28, 39), Isabel observes of her father: "Y lo dijo con la misma indolencia con que se entregó a la suerte de Macondo, fiel a los baúles donde está guardada la ropa de todos los muertos anteriores a mi nacimiento. Desde entonces todo ha venido en declive" (p. 126). The trunks, like the jasmine that the boy smells nine years after it has been cut down, symbolize the attitude of the family toward

the past. Thus, the images of decay expand throughout the novel to include the themes of the weight of memory, fatality, and destruction.

The themes of time in the novel are expressed by the structuring of the monologues, as has been indicated, and through the use of specific images these themes are clarified. The feeling of static time is oppressive to the boy, "acosado por el calor sofocante, por el minuto que no transcurre" (p. 22). And in Isabel's long monologue near the center of the novel, a group of images express the suffocating atmosphere of Macondo, where time seems to stop: "Hay un minuto en que se agota la siesta. Hasta la secreta, recóndita, minúscula actividad de los insectos cesa en ese instante preciso; el curso de la naturaleza se detiene; la creación tambalea al borde del caos y las mujeres se incorporan, babeando, con la flor de la almohada bordada en la mejilla, sofocadas por la temperatura y el rencor; y piensan: 'Todavía es miércoles en Macondo'" (p. 60). The feeling of stopped time is associated with the spirit of the people of Macondo, and with the heat and sun in the tropical town: "... y la calle limpia, sin una sombra en el polvo limpio y virgen desde que el último viento barrió la huella del último buey. Y es un pueblo sin nadie, con las casas cerradas en cuyos cuartos no se oye nada más que el sordo hervidero de las palabras pronunciadas de mal corazón" (p. 61). This description with the repetition of "limpio" and "último" creates a poetic image suggesting the death of the town, a physical and also a spiritual condition. And Isabel then expresses the relation between time and death: "Mientras se mueva algo, puede saberse que el tiempo ha transcurrido. Antes no. Antes de que algo se mueva es el tiempo eterno, el sudor, la camisa babeando sobre el

pellejo y el muerto insobornable y helado detrás de su lengua mordida. Por eso no transcurre el tiempo para el ahorcado: porque aunque la mano del niño se mueva, él no lo sabe" (p. 62). The death associated with arrested time is thus separation and lack of movement, "el reloj muerto a la orilla del minuto" (p. 63). When Isabel's father enters the room, inner time and outer time are reconciled, and the stopped clock "bosteza, ofuscado, se zambulle en la prodigiosa quietud del momento, y sale después chorreante de tiempo líquido, de tiempo exacto y rectificado" (p. 63). That inner time should be arrested time is significant. The images suggest an inner death at work in Macondo. The apparently cryptic phrases of Adelaida connect this feeling of stopped time, or the continual repetition of the same thing, with her feelings of doom and fatality. She is quoted as saying:

"Ni siquiera voy a rezar. Mis oraciones seguirán siendo inútiles mientras esa mujer venga todos los martes a pedir una ramita de toronjil". Y había en su voz una oscura y trastornada rebeldía:

—Me quedaré aquí, aplanada, hasta la hora del Juicio. Si es que para entonces el comején no se ha comido la silla. (p. 119)

The images expressing the decay of Macondo--the feeling of time arrested, death, and fatality--are grouped to create a circular structure in the novel. The opening and closing monologues of the boy reinforce the circular effect by the repetition of similar images:

Quando el agente golpea el picaporte con la culata del fusil, tengo la impresión de que no se abrirán las puertas. La casa se vendrá abajo, desmoronadas las paredes pero sin estrépito, como un palacio de ceniza se derrumbaría en el aire. ... Pero al segundo golpe la ventana se abre y la luz penetra a la habitación; irrumpe violentamente, como cuando se abre la puerta a



un animal sin dirección, que corre y husmea, mudo; que rabia y araña las paredes, babeando, y retorna después a echarse, pacífico, en el rincón más fresco de la trampa. (pp. 23-24)

The traditional association of darkness with death and decay and of light with life is extended in these passages and made somewhat ambiguous. The paragraph following the above excerpt expresses the imaginary, unreal quality of the objects the boy sees through the window. The similar image near the end of the novel also draws on the light-darkness association:

Pero cuando uno de los hombres se apoya contra la puerta y golpea, se levanta en la habitación un ruido de madera, de goznes oxidados, de cerraduras soldadas por el tiempo, chapa sobre chapa, y la puerta se abre, enorme, como para que pasen dos hombres, el uno sobre el otro; y hay un crujido largo de la madera y los hierros despertados. Y antes de que tengamos tiempo de saber qué sucede, irrumpe la luz en la habitación, de espaldas, poderosa y perfecta, porque le han quitado el soporte que la sostuvo durante doscientos años y con la fuerza de doscientos bueyes, y cae de espaldas en la habitación, arrastrando la sombra de las cosas en su turbulenta caída. Los hombres se hacen brutalmente visibles, como un relámpago al mediodía, y tambalean, y me parece como si hubieran tenido que sostenerse para que no los tumbara la claridad. (pp. 131-32)

The breaking open of the door is symbolic of breaking through the weight of the past, associated throughout the novel with a closed room.

Noticeably in both passages cited, the boy sees this action as violent.

The images of light and darkness finally remain ambiguous and complex.

The images used by Isabel associate luminousness with the decay of

Macondo (pp. 61, 127), and the passage of time and the smell of death

are both symbolized by the song of the alcaraván (pp. 127, 132-33). The

ambiguity created by the extension of the traditional images deepens the

shadowy half-light of the novel, an atmosphere which resembles the tragic in its closeness to mystery and the unresolved.<sup>13</sup>

The circular effect of these repeated images is strengthened by the novel's ending. The final images create a feeling of sudden suspension: "... el ataúd queda flotando en la claridad, como si llevaran a sepultar un navío muerto" (p. 133). The unresolved dramatic aspects--whether or not the town even remembers the doctor or is capable of any action--give the novel an abrupt ending, and have the effect of sending the reader back to further contemplation of the work. The circular structure is the formal aspect of the themes of repeated events, the unending tediousness of the stifling atmosphere of Macondo.

As the three narrators are masks for this unified lyrical view, clearly seen in the structure of images, so they and the other characters are figures. The central figure is the doctor, whose life and death and death-in-life are metaphoric of the decay of Macondo. If the novel were more truly narrative, the doctor might be perceived as an ironically tragic victim of the society that refuses to accept him. The scenes of his arrival in Macondo could exploit the ironic possibilities of coincidence and mistaken identity. As the novel tends toward the lyrical, the doctor becomes a figure, a grotesquely tragic symbol of the community's decay. This figure is built around mystery and the grotesque. The doctor's terrible solitude gives him beastly or innocent characteristics.<sup>14</sup> His vegetarianism and his solitary habits are seen by the other characters as animalistic. One character, Adelaida, thinks of him as diabolical. And the association made throughout the work between him and the priest

suggests both an evil in him--in opposition to the priest--and an innocence gained through suffering. He resembles the solitary outsider, the ambiguous character so often encountered in contemporary literature. The grotesque elements deepen the aura of mystery surrounding the doctor, and, as the whole history of the community is symbolized through him, he becomes more than a pathetic victim. His frustration, solitude, endurance, and final self-destruction, as they reflect the themes of the dying community, enlarge the scope of the figure to nearly tragic proportions.

The lyrical nature of the novel is apparent in the stylized language of the monologues and in the tension between narrative expectation and the lyrical resolution of events as they are absorbed into the structure of images. The narrating characters, masking the unified view, become figures along with the central character of the doctor, an enigmatic figure who embodies part of the tragic vision. The careful notations of historical time firmly place the setting in the past and increase the tone of contemplation, sustained throughout the novel by the stylized language. Although some defects distract the reader's attention from the experience of the novel to its technique, the work is generally effective in creating a lyrical, nearly tragic view of a dying community.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, La hojarasca (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1969). All references are to this edition and appear in parentheses in the text. The novel was first published in 1955 by Editorial Sipa, Bogotá.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 1-17. The lyrical novel "assumes a unique form which transcends the causal and temporal movement of narrative within the framework of fiction. It is a hybrid genre that uses the novel to approach the function of a poem." p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1954), p. 81. Humphrey discusses the use of symbols with a private meaning, employed to portray the workings of the individual mind.

<sup>4</sup> Luis Harss, "Gabriel García Márquez o la cuerda floja," Mundo Nuevo, 6 (1966), p. 68. Harss notes that the characters speak with the voice of the author. Although he comments on the main features of the book, his remarks lose force because of numerous errors in relating the incidents of the novel.

<sup>5</sup> Freedman, p. 8. Freedman discusses the difference between the "fictional world" in conventional narratives and in lyrical novels: "In the lyrical mode, such a world is conceived, not as a universe in which men display their actions, but as a poet's vision fashioned as a design. The world is reduced to a lyrical point of view, the equivalent of the poet's 'I': the lyrical self. In the masquerade of the novel, this point of view is the poet's mask as well as the source of his consciousness, whether it appears as one or more disguised personae or in the more direct function of the diarist, the confessor, or the first-person narrator."

<sup>6</sup> For an explanation of the techniques of incoherence, discontinuity, and the use of private images in the realistic interior monologue see Humphrey, pp. 62-84.

<sup>7</sup> Freedman, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> A. A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (London: Peter Nevill Ltd., 1952), p. 90.

- <sup>9</sup> Motif is defined by Humphrey, p. 90-91, as a "recurring image, symbol, word, or phrase which carries a static association with a certain idea or theme."
- <sup>10</sup> Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 285.
- <sup>11</sup> Mendilow, p. 75. Mendilow refers to the device of transferring events to the mental plane where time sequence and continuity are not appropriate to the individual memory.
- <sup>12</sup> Juan Loveluck, "Gabriel García Márquez, narrador colombiano," Duquesne Hispanic Review, 5, No. 3 (1967), pp. 149-150. This critic points to an intention in the novel to create the illusion of a solid block of time, the past put on a time level with the prolonged present.
- <sup>13</sup> Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959). See particularly his commentary on Faulkner, pp. 133-47.
- <sup>14</sup> Richmond Y. Hathorn, Tragedy, Myth, and Mystery (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1962), p. 18. Hathorn discusses solitude as the condition of man and quotes Aristotle's saying, "He who can live in solitude is either a God or a beast."

## CHAPTER II

### THE ART OF CONDENSATION IN EL CORONEL NO TIENE QUIEN LE ESCRIBA

The technique of condensation is the most striking formal aspect of García Márquez' second novel, El coronel no tiene quién le escriba (1961).<sup>1</sup> Condensation at every structural level gives this short novel its organic unity and its expressiveness. This economy or implicitness is, of course, a basic technique in art form. Arthur Koestler explains condensation in artistic expression as "infolding:" the artist presents only the hint, symbol, or allusion which must be "unfolded" by the reader who would discover its implicit or infolded meaning.<sup>2</sup> An example from García Márquez' novel is one of the colonel's statements: "Este entierro es un acontecimiento. ... Es el primer muerto de muerte natural que tenemos en muchos años" (p. 12). This brief, oblique reference to violent death is sufficient to bring the political situation to our minds. The force of these condensed expressions arises from the impression they give of power held in check. The writer could say much more but chooses to say very little. And part of the reader's experience comes from the shock of recognition as he sees through the symbol or understands the hint. Since the expressive forms of El coronel are forms of condensation, we as readers are given the liberty and the obligation to actively participate

in the work.<sup>3</sup>

Economy in art form posits selection, exaggeration, and simplification.<sup>4</sup> This novel presents a few months in the life of an old, starving colonel who spends his days waiting for a pension due him for his part in a civil war. Outwardly, very little happens in the novel. The colonel goes about his daily routine of trying to eke a bare sustenance out of his meagre resources. The character's existence--his frustration, poverty, and helplessness--reflect and form a part of the setting, the small, stagnant Colombian town of the 1950's. By condensing a wealth of implied meaning into this brief, realistic account, the author creates an ironically tragic character whose inner struggle is the plot of the novel. The author simplifies and selects. He focuses on one character and limits the narrative time. By simplifying the colonel's personality into two main traits--childlike innocence and stoic endurance--the author exaggerates these traits. In this kind of characterization, as in graphic caricatures, simplification and exaggeration complement each other. The narrative techniques are traditional. An omniscient narrator relates in third person and in past tense, employing dialogue and schematic narration of events. These techniques are conventional, but the author's originality is that which does not make him unconventional but "drives him further into convention, obeying the law of the art itself."<sup>5</sup> Simplification of conventional narrative techniques creates condensation in the larger structures of tone, characterization, and dialogue. The dialogue, which in more traditional fiction serves to further action and reveal character, is stylized into patterns in this novel. The characterization is not a

conventional, exhaustive analysis. Rather it also is patterned to create the colonel in bold strokes. And the irony communicated through the uniformly detached tone is another type of condensation. These forms of condensation in turn depend upon the language and its use of allusion, detail, image, and symbol. The following study of these formal aspects will reveal the import of the novel. The insistence on the unique life of an isolated character suggests the tragic vision. And the final breaking of patterns of dialogue and characterization, the explosion of these designs, deepens the irony. Irony here is not just ambiguity. It is fused into an ironically tragic view of life that continues to question the human condition, refusing to minimize the existence of even this apparently insignificant character.

The technique of the omniscient narrator appears in the novel in a simplified form. The narrator's omniscience is not used to explain or probe the characters and action as in more traditional fiction. The narrator is limited to a schematic relation of events and to a detached tone, both of which become forms of condensation by means of the irony they create. The detached tone creates irony by freeing the point of view. Since the narrator assumes no attitude, no point of view, we may see the characters and action alternately through various points of view. These changing points of view create irony by contrast. We may see the colonel alternately as pathetic and heroic and comic. And the schematic narration creates irony by implying more than is said. What is said and the tone it is said in contrast with what is implied.

The following excerpt is from the scene of the colonel's visit to



his lawyer, "un negro monumental sin nada más que los dos colmillos en la mandíbula superior" (p. 40). The colonel has assumed "una actitud trascendental," and says:

—Pues yo he decidido tomar una determinación.

El abogado quedó en suspenso.

—¿Es decir?

—Cambio de abogado.

Una pata seguida por varios patitos amarillos entró al despacho. El abogado se incorporó para hacerla salir. "Como usted diga, coronel", dijo, espantando los animales. (p. 43)

The detached tone contrasts ironically with the implications of what is related. The narrator could have explained the incongruity of the colonel's attitude with his surroundings. Rather, narrating schematically, he implies this incongruity and draws our attention to it by a realistic detail, the ducks' entering at one of the colonel's solemn moments. The detached tone through irony is a form of condensation, a way of implying the several points of view we may take. Here we may see the whole scene as comic only, or we may see it ironically as comic and pathetic. The sustained, detached tone and the schematic narration are derived from conventional realistic techniques and by creating irony they function as forms of condensation.

The essence of the novel lies in the portrayal of the colonel's existence, an ineffable feeling about the totality of his character, attitudes, and circumstances. As the critic Ernesto Volkening explains, García Márquez' characters are social types, but more important is that they are individuals. This individuality is "... el hombre tal cual, algo indiviso e irreductible, una totalidad, ... y el hombre que en medio

del ajeteo de la vida cotidiana ... descubre que está solo, solo con su destino, su enfermedad, su infortunio y su muerte."<sup>6</sup> The techniques used to convey this feeling of individual existence are derived from conventional narrative and dramatic techniques. The main character's past is narrated, he is described physically, and he is presented through action and dialogue. Yet the outward action forms no plot and the characters are not involved in dramatic conflict. The conventional techniques are transformed to create patterned characterization and patterned dialogues. And these patterns are set up to be broken in a twisted ending that throws a different light on the protagonist, obliging us to reconsider his whole existence. The novel's structure is similar to many used in the short story. Like many short stories, El coronel has a closely knit structure which depends for its effect on the ending. One critic comments: "Se cierra con una palabra ... que opera como cifra de la vida del personaje y al servicio de la cual parece estar cada momento anterior del relato."<sup>7</sup> Because the ending breaks patterns of characterization and dialogue, much of the novel's expressiveness depends on the strength of those patterns.

The characterization of the colonel involves two types of condensation. One type is the use of realistic descriptive details that imply the whole. The other is the forming of these details into a distinct design which is broken in the final paragraph. The patterning of details makes the colonel appear abstracted, sketched in two bold outlines. On the one hand he is pathetic and childlike, and on the other he is heroic in his ability to survive and endure. This characterization falls on a fine line between the comic and the tragic. The colonel is seen wavering ironically between

the heroic and the pathetic. This schematic characterization is apparently simple. But this simplicity is belied by the ending that breaks the pattern and shows the colonel to be enigmatic and complicated.

The colonel's childlike simplicity is conveyed by the narrator's descriptions of him at just the precise moment when his attitude conveys a condensed version of his orientation toward life. He is described writing a letter: "Escribió con una compostura aplicada, puesta la mano con la pluma en la hoja de papel secante, recta la columna vertebral para favorecer la respiración, como le enseñaron en la escuela" (p. 47). And the description continues later: "El coronel llenó una hoja de garabatos grandes, un poco infantiles, los mismos que le enseñaron en la escuela pública de Manaure" (p. 48). He is described combing his hair: "El trató de dobligar con un peine de cuerno las cerdas color de acero. Pero fue un esfuerzo inútil" (pp. 12-13). There are many shorter descriptions which express this childlike quality. When once again he receives no mail, he says: "—No esperaba nada —mintió. Volvió hacia el médico una mirada enteramente infantil—. Yo no tengo quién me escriba" (p. 23).

The endurance of the colonel is evoked by details suggesting a lifetime of frustration and poverty. The physical descriptions of him suggest his character: "Era un hombre árido, de huesos sólidos articulados a tuerca y tornillo. Por la vitalidad de sus ojos no parecía conservado en formol" (p. 13). The force of these descriptions arises from the selection of the detail, the economy and directness of the expression. His clothes reflect the same stoical characteristic: "La camisa color de cartón antiguo, dura como cartón, se cerraba con un botón de cobre que

servía al mismo tiempo para sostener el cuello postizo. Pero el cuello postizo estaba roto, de manera que el coronel renunció a la corbata" (p. 12). One typical attitude of the colonel is condensed into the word "renunció." These descriptions tend to present the colonel abstracted, as if worn down to the essential: "Botines de charol, pantalón blanco sin correa y la camisa sin el cuello postizo, cerrada arriba con el botón de cobre" (p. 21). The language reflects the condensation in the sentence structure. Also the use of the definite article--"la camisa," "el botón"--reflects an insistence on the unique, concrete object. The visual details thus emphasize the individuality of the character. The technique of physical description to reveal character is not here the conventional documentary of realistic fiction. It is simplified to portray the uniqueness of the character.

The colonel's ability to survive and endure is brought out by repetition of details concerning past events and the passage of time. One form of these expressions is a pattern which is repeated in the final paragraph. Each expression refers to the colonel's becoming aware of something after many years:

—En este caso no la hizo—dijo el coronel, por primera vez dándose cuenta de su soledad—. Todos mis compañeros se murieron esperando el correo. (p. 42)

El coronel comprobó que cuarenta años de vida común, de hambre común, de sufrimientos comunes, no le habían bastado para conocer a su esposa. (p. 71)

Necesitó medio siglo para darse cuenta de que no había tenido un minuto de sosiego después de la rendición de Neerlandia. (p. 73)

The final phrases of the novel repeat the form of these expressions and imply, by exaggeration of detail, the colonel's even deeper awareness: "El coronel necesitó setenta y cinco años--los setenta y cinco años de su vida, minuto a minuto--para llegar a ese instante" (p. 106). This repetition of forms is a type of condensation since the last example carries implicit in it the force of the preceding examples.<sup>8</sup>

The pattern of this tragicomic characterization is broken in the final paragraph when the colonel loses his childlike simplicity and his outward stoicism, when he becomes lucid and desperate. The effect created by breaking the pattern is an ironic questioning of that pattern. Neither the colonel's innocence nor his endurance is sufficient to explain him fully.

The patterned characterization is reinforced by dialogues that show the character's biting humor and his stoicism. The dialogues in the novel fall into two general patterns, and one of these is the combative exchange that ends with a humorous or stoical remark by the colonel. The form of these dialogues reflects the underlying structure or plot of the novel, the continuous battering away at the colonel's defenses until he becomes desperate. And the repetition of the form of dialogue sets up a definite design that is broken in the final dialogue. In the combative dialogues between the colonel and his wife, he maintains his attitude of hope against her implacable statements of fact by turning to humor. After one such extended give and take, the colonel says, "Pero si nos fuéramos a morir de hambre ya nos hubiéramos muerto" (p. 53). And another combative dialogue ends, after a flash of lightning scares the colonel's wife, with his

remark: "~~—Esto te pasa por no frenar la lengua—dijo—~~. Siempre te he dicho que Dios es mi partidario" (p. 73). His humor grows increasingly black as his situation becomes more clearly helpless, and he often turns his humor against himself or his condition. This type of humor fits well with the tragicomic characterization. The combative dialogue he has with the lawyer (pp. 45-46) ends with one of the colonel's typical stoical retorts. The lawyer puts before him a bleak picture of the labyrinthine bureaucratic process and insists that a solution "será cuestión de siglos." And the colonel replies, "No importa. El que espera lo mucho espera lo poco" (p. 46). The final dialogue breaks this pattern. The colonel turns neither to humor nor to stoical remarks, but his reply shows desperation. The repetition of the combative dialogue is a form of condensation. All the foregoing combative dialogues are held implicit in the final one which brings into swift, momentary, and ironic contrast the colonel's previous humor and strength and his ultimate desperation.

While conventional uses of characterization and dialogue function to work out a design of plot and character, in this novel these techniques, refined and transformed, function to create an ineffable feeling about the character's existence. The plot is not based on outward action. It is the inner life of the colonel, his struggle to keep hoping and his final desperation. His existence is closely bound up with the social and political climate. As the author turns to symbol and reticence to convey the more intangible aspects of the character's inner life, so he turns to the oblique reference or allusion to portray the social setting. These methods are closely related since they are both forms of condensation and they both avoid the documentary and exhaustive details or explanations

encountered in more conventional fiction. And at the same time they make use of realistic "material," recognizable and believable characters, dialogue, and narration of events.

The oblique reference is used to create the setting, the social and political atmosphere in the novel. The schematic narration gives only the allusion in a detached tone, and the irony the tone implies unfolds these allusions, suggesting a background that is well known. The opening section affords an example of how this method of condensation creates the political climate. The colonel's remark--"Es el primer muerto de muerte natural que tenemos en muchos años" (p. 12)--alludes to the prevalence of violent death. The underlying violence and fear are conveyed by the scene in which the mayor orders the funeral procession not to pass in front of the police quarters (pp. 16-17). The dialogue of this scene implies the stagnation of the political situation. The colonel is talking with his old friend Sabas, who, as is revealed later in the novel, became rich by betraying their fellow party members. Sabas says, "Siempre se me olvida que estamos en estado de sitio." And the colonel's reply alludes to the fear behind the mayor's disproportionate use of force: "Pero esto no es una insurrección. ... Es un pobre músico muerto" (p. 17). These few allusions to the political situation are held in the background as the narrator focuses on the colonel's daily activities. The method artfully communicates the town's atmosphere in which violence, partially concealed and underlying, creeps into the uneventful and stifling daily routine.

As the condensation by hint or allusion avoids the documentary methods of realistic fiction, so the portrayal of the colonel's emotions

avoids explanatory or searching methods. The technique of the omniscient narrator allows for direct references to the colonel's feelings at a particular moment. As he is waiting for the mail, his emotion is explicitly described: "El coronel sintió el terror" (p. 38). And he feels "desolado" (p. 21), "demolido" (p. 28), "amargo" (p. 71). Those feelings which are more complex or less accessible to direct expression are conveyed by silences, images, and symbol.

The silence is a form of condensation often used in the novel after a short, inconclusive exchange of words. The following is an example of this second type of dialogue used throughout the novel:

—Ya esos zapatos están de botar—dijo—. Sigue poniéndote los botines de charol.

El coronel se sintió desolado.

—Parecen zapatos de huérfano—protestó—. Cada vez que me los pongo me siento fugado de un asilo.

—Nosotros somos huérfanos de nuestro hijo—dijo la mujer. (pp. 20-21)

The silence that follows his wife's pitiful summing up of their situation suggests the colonel's emotion. This type of condensation is also used by the narrator in the concise glimpses given of the colonel's past. A longer passage shows how the dialogue fits into this schematic narration:

Encontró en el baúl un paraguas enorme y antiguo. Lo había ganado la mujer en una tómbola política destinada a recolectar fondos para el partido del coronel. Esa misma noche asistieron a un espectáculo al aire libre que no fue interrumpido a pesar de la lluvia. El coronel, su esposa y su hijo Agustín--que entonces tenía ocho años--presenciaron el espectáculo hasta el final, sentados bajo el paraguas. Ahora Agustín estaba muerto y el forro de raso brillante había sido destruido por las polillas. (p. 11)



This passage suggests the contrast between a hopeful time in the past and the colonel's desolate present condition. The suggestion avoids direct statement at this point where emotion could easily become sentimental. The author selects the most expressive details to convey feelings. The past enthusiasm is implied by the phrase "que no fue interrumpido a pesar de la lluvia," and the present hopelessness by the last sentence. The dialogue immediately following reflects the same reticence:

—Mira en lo que ha quedado nuestro paraguas de payaso de circo—dijo el coronel con una antigua frase suya. Abrió sobre su cabeza un misterioso sistema de varillas metálicas—. Ahora sólo sirve para contar las estrellas.

Sonrió. Pero la mujer no se tomó el trabajo de mirar el paraguas. "Todo está así", murmuró. "Nos estamos pudriendo vivos." Y cerró los ojos para pensar más intensamente en el muerto. (p. 11)

The silence here leaves the colonel's real emotion ambiguous, perhaps suggesting the confusion he feels when his humor is no defense. The silence is a method of condensing the character's emotion, his feelings which could easily be changed to sentimentality or destroyed altogether by a direct statement.

Much of the colonel's dilemma is condensed into the paradoxical symbol of the fighting cock. Traditionally, and for the characters, the fighting cock is a symbol of political struggle. Since the fighting cock has this meaning for the colonel, he cannot fully decide to sell it. And after the doctor raises doubts in the colonel's mind about Sabas (pp. 86-87), the colonel becomes less decisive. But it is not until the colonel experiences again the strong connection between the fighting cock

and the people's political impulses that he decides definitely not to sell it: "El coronel observó la confusión de rostros cálidos, ansiosos, terriblemente vivos. Era gente nueva. Toda la gente nueva del pueblo. Revivió--como en un presagio--un instante borrado en el horizonte de su memoria" (p. 95). And he feels the bird's life, much as he feels the reawakening of the political struggle it symbolizes: "Y no dijo más porque lo estremeció la caliente y profunda palpitación del animal. Pensó que nunca había tenido una cosa tan viva entre las manos" (p. 95). Later his wife says, "Dijeron que el gallo no era nuestro sino de todo el pueblo." And the colonel replies, "Hicieron bien," and, "El gallo no se vende" (pp. 97-98). Before the colonel feels this renewal of the political implications of the fighting cock, the symbol reflects his inner dilemma.

The colonel's wife sees the bird as "feo," "un fenómeno" (p. 19), and she remarks, "Es una ilusión que cuesta caro. ... Cuando se acabe el maíz tendremos que alimentarlo con nuestros hígados" (p. 20). The colonel tries to justify keeping it by saying it is worth fifty pesos, but the connection with their dead son is implied as one of the reasons he keeps it: "Tuvo la certeza de que ese argumento justificaba su determinación de conservar el gallo, herencia del hijo acribillado nueve meses antes en la gallera, por distribuir información clandestina" (p. 20). Despite the colonel's attempt to see the bird as simply a rooster (p. 32), he and his wife cannot ignore its symbolic importance, and they spend their last few cents on corn for it (p. 33). The fighting cock gradually takes the place of the pension in the colonel's mind, and he tries to keep his wife in agreement with his decision not to sell it by appealing to her memory of their son. This attempt fails and the fighting cock symbolizes

a more and more illusive hope. It is a paradoxical symbol of the colonel's situation. If he sells it, he betrays his hope in the future and his political stand, and while he keeps it, they starve. The bird is strong and healthy and they are starving: "El gallo estaba perfectamente vivo frente al tarro vacío. Cuando vió al coronel emitió un monólogo gutural, casi humano ..." (p. 53). It seems almost human, grotesquely alive. The colonel's wife says, "A veces pienso que ese animal va a hablar" (p. 67). As they eat the bird's corn and the colonel says it will provide them food for three years, his wife points out one truth to him:

—La ilusión no se come—dijo la mujer.  
 —No se come, pero alimenta—replicó el coronel—.  
 Es algo así como las pastillas milagrosas de mi compadre Sabas. (p. 68)

And the colonel's truth also stands since his illusion sustains him emotionally.

A part of what the symbol embodies is, then, the paradoxical nature of the colonel's hope or illusion. And the fighting cock has a grotesqueness that reflects the paradoxical and the tragic in the colonel's existence. The colonel's poverty has no solution, and the illusion he tries to maintain with the fighting cock prolongs his mental suffering and, paradoxically, sustains him emotionally. Ernesto Volkening comments on the grotesque aspect of the fighting cock: "Resalta en este detalle un aspecto de la visión del mundo de García Márquez que va más allá de la sequedad realista del relato condimentado con uno que otro grano de feroz humorismo: la propensión a lo grotesco, en la cual se esconde su modo, nada pretencioso, si bien personalísimo, de acercarse al lado trágico de la existencia humana. El gallo, cuya imagen va arrimándose, poco a poco, al sitio que ocupaba en

la conciencia de su dueño la carta vanamente esperada, parece un animal como cualquier otro, pero en realidad es una quimera, un monstruo insaciable, la emplumada encarnación del anhelo que, compitiendo con el gusano en las entrañas del coronel, le devora el alma."<sup>9</sup>

The fighting cock is a complex symbol. As a traditional symbol of political revolution, what it symbolizes is readily accessible. This political symbolism of the fighting cock can and does exist outside the novel. But when the symbol embodies the paradoxical, existential condition of the character, its meaning is never fully accessible to explanation. This part of the symbol is wholly contained in the work, referring only to the particular character's private world. At the same time, the fighting cock is also a simple, realistic fact in the Colombian setting, and to ordinary perception it has no unusual qualities.

The symbol of the fighting cock is not a metaphor in the sense of a rhetorical device and, in fact, the author uses few images of this type in the novel. The colonel's dream--"Era otra vez el sueño de las telarañas" (p. 27)--is an example of a recurring image in the novel. Yet it would be misleading to say that there are few poetic images in the work. The novel's language is derived from the simple constructions and vocabulary typical of the characters themselves. Each element García Márquez employs in the work is a realistic, easily recognizable one. But these elements are so individualized that they become unique. This, I believe, is a key to the novel's technique and to the author's vision. The critic Angel Rama seems to suggest this interpretation: "La primera virtud narrativa de García Márquez ... es la de su extremada concisión .... Radica en la rígida y austera selección del hecho, el gesto, la palabra, donde se

concentre de modo definidor la cosa enunciada o aludida. Pero esa selección no apunta a lo trivial y repetido, sino justamente a lo insólito, que se vuelve definidor al emerger repentinamente de la costumbre."<sup>10</sup> Modifying this critic's comments, I would say that the author's art of selection finds the unusual and unique in precisely those things which are trivial and repetitious.

The colonel's very existence is trivial and repetitious. But it is presented as a unique, individual life. The methods of condensation work together to reveal this core of the colonel's existence. The detached tone is compatible with the realistic material, the recognizable characters and setting. The irony created by the tone functions to unfold the silences, allusions, and details. The breaking of patterned dialogue and characterization depends upon irony's inconclusive, double vision. And the irony is never satiric: "Irony with little satire is the non-heroic residue of tragedy, centering on the theme of puzzled defeat."<sup>11</sup> Thus the methods of condensation reveal the import of the novel. They make the trivial unique and this very uniqueness of the individual existence is ironically tragic.

The character's existence is tragic. He is solitary in a "boundary-situation."<sup>12</sup> He is led through a series of self-revelations that end in pure lucidness: "Se sintió puro, explícito, invencible, en el momento de responder" (p. 106). But this end is also a failure--the colonel's loss of hope and his desperation--that reveals the life and strength that are finally consumed by poverty, frustration, and bitterness. And finally he is separated even from his wife as his last answer closes their dialogue.

The character is not the heroic figure of full tragedy. Ironically, his "boundary-situation," a chronic and insoluble poverty, is not a situation against which he must match his strength. It is the condition of his whole life. His suffering and isolation are not the outcome of what he has done, but a part of what he is. His situation has that "inevitable irony of human life."<sup>13</sup> And in spite of what we learn about the colonel's poverty, his illusions, and his inner life, he remains something of a mystery. What puzzles is not his final desperation, but the inexplicable combination of simplicity, humor, and endurance that have kept him from becoming hopeless for almost a lifetime. The tragic and ironic elements are fused in the novel and both are inconclusive. The author presents the seemingly insignificant characters, makes their lives unique and therefore ironically tragic, and presumes no special answers beyond that of the work itself.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, El coronel no tiene quién le escriba, 3rd ed. (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1966). Further references appear in parentheses in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 333-44.

<sup>3</sup> Angel Rama, "García Márquez: la violencia americana," Marcha, No. 1201 (April 17, 1964), p. 22. Referring to the reader's participation in a slightly different context, this critic comments of García Márquez' works: "A pesar de que estamos ante un determinismo social muy acusado, esta obra convoca la libertad del lector, la hace posible por su participación creadora."

<sup>4</sup> Koestler, p. 333.

<sup>5</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> Ernesto Volkening, "Los cuentos de Gabriel García Márquez o El trópico desembrujado," in Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel viendo llover en Macondo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Estuario, 1967), p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Juan Flo, "Sobre la ficción (al margen de Gabriel García Márquez)," Revista Iberoamericana de Literatura, 1, No. 1, rpt. in Recopilación de textos sobre Gabriel García Márquez, ed. Pedro Simón Martínez (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1969), p. 220.

<sup>8</sup> Carlos Bousoño, Teoría de la expresión poética, 4th ed. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1966), pp. 254-55. Analyzing reiteration of elements, Bousoño comments that "... las sucesivas reiteraciones han inculcado todo su contenido en el último de la serie." I have extended this explanation of the function of repetition to apply also to larger forms.

<sup>9</sup> Volkening, pp. 38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Rama, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Frye, p. 224.

<sup>12</sup> Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), p. 5. Sewall explains that the tragic vision "impels the

artist, in his fictions, towards what Jaspers calls 'boundary-situations,' man at the limits of his sovereignty--Job on the ash-heap, Prometheus on the crag, Oedipus in his moment of self-discovery, Lear on the heath, Ahab on his lonely quarter-deck."

<sup>13</sup> Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 42. "Thus the incongruous and the inevitable, which are combined in tragedy, separate into opposite poles of irony. At one pole is the inevitable irony of human life. What happens to, say, the hero of Kafka's Trial is not the result of what he has done, but the end of what he is, which is an 'all too human' being."



## CHAPTER III

### THE CREATION OF ATMOSPHERE IN LA MALA HORA

García Márquez' third novel is set in the same isolated Colombian village that is the background for El coronel no tiene quién le escriba. The violence lying partially hidden under the stagnant daily routine in El coronel is shown in the process of breaking out into open conflict in La mala hora.<sup>1</sup> The seventeen days represented in the novel are a nightmarish period just before another eruption of open violence. Although the Government has declared "peace," there is no peace, and the pasquinades appear to set in motion an almost ritualistic, repetitive return of terror. The social and political ills the country suffers are exposed in the novel, and it requires no great moral sensitivity to see where they lie. But the novel seeks understanding at a deeper level. Its emphasis is on creating an atmosphere that communicates the quality of life in such a town, raising questions of the relation between society and the individual and of the rational and irrational in human behavior.

The techniques García Márquez uses to create this atmosphere are organically united by the tone of the work. The novel depends for its effect not upon a carefully worked out plot but upon an intense tone and an increasing and largely unresolved tension. The structure, the impersonal attitude of the narrator,<sup>2</sup> the accumulation of images, and the symbolization

of the pasquinades work together to create the particular atmosphere that resembles the closed and hellish world of fiction that "presents human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage."<sup>3</sup>

The novel's closed atmosphere is communicated through a generally circular but otherwise plotless structure. The opening scene is similar to the closing scene. Both scenes show the priest rising and beginning another day's routine. The repetition of motifs--the priest's conversation with Trinidad in the first scene and with Mina in the last, their attitude toward the pasquinades, the lines from Pastor's song--has the effect of closing a circle by bringing the final moments into correspondence with the opening scene. The similarity between the two scenes is reinforced by the repetition of expressions and phrases. The following excerpt is from the opening scene:

El padre Angel se incorporó con un esfuerzo solemne. Se frotó los párpados con los huesos de las manos, apartó el mosquitero de punto y permaneció sentado en la estera pelada, pensativo un instante, el tiempo indispensable para darse cuenta de que estaba vivo, y para recordar la fecha y su correspondencia en el santoral. "Martes cuatro de octubre", pensó; y dijo en voz baja: "San Francisco de Asís". (p. 7)

And the closing scene repeats several expressions:

A las cinco menos diez se dio cuenta de que estaba vivo. Se incorporó en un esfuerzo solemne, frotándose los párpados con los dedos, y pensó: "Viernes 21 de octubre". Después recordó en voz alta: "San Hilarión". (p. 197)

The effect of the circularity is to mark off the period of time. What has occurred in the town appears as a completed stage, and the circle

becomes a spiral as the final paragraph suggests that the pasquinades continue.

This circular structure is reinforced by the characters' own presentiments about the repetitiveness of what is happening. The eruption of violence is seen as inevitable: "—Cuando vuelva a haber elecciones volverá la matanza—replicó el empresario, exasperado—. Siempre, desde que el pueblo es pueblo, sucede la misma cosa" (p. 25). The political and social reasons for this attitude are clearly shown, and the woman of the poorest class who says, "Son los mismos con las mismas ..." (p. 76), expresses the conviction of all the characters. Even the priest, who would like to believe that things have changed (see pp. 46-47), shows the same attitude: "Entonces volvió a destapar el tintero y escribió una postdata: Está lloviendo otra vez. Con este invierno y las cosas que arriba le cuento, creo que nos esperan días amargos" (p. 26). When the mayor announces the curfew with "el mismo decreto de siempre" (p. 137), he discovers that the people feel "una sensación de victoria colectiva por la confirmación de lo que estaba en la conciencia de todos: las cosas no habían cambiado" (pp. 137-38). And the circulation of clandestine information is also seen as a return, a repetition (p. 159). The effect of this repetitiveness is the expression of something uncontrollable. The town itself and each individual are seen as if caught up in a senseless ritual rather than in rationally directed action. In a community not "atado a la crueldad de su propia historia,"<sup>4</sup> similar injustices might call forth different actions. Here the town can only enter the same vicious circle of events it has experienced before.

The plotlessness of the structure<sup>5</sup> also expresses this aura of irrationality. The action is discontinuous and several sequences are left unresolved at the end of the novel. We do not learn the final outcome of César Montero's murder of Pastor, the fate of Arcadio who leaves the town, nor, finally, who is author of the pasquinades. The action is given in short, vivid scenes, presented mainly through dialogue and concise description. These scenes appear chronologically through the time represented, October 4 to 21. The novel is divided into ten unnumbered sections, and each section except the final one covers roughly a day's time. As the narrator passes from scene to scene, following the time scheme of each day, he forms no coherent plot based on action. This method lends a naturalness to the novel and creates the illusion that we are seeing the whole town at the same time.

The inclusion of many short scenes also permits the development of several aspects of the main characters. The priest and the mayor are not static characters, seen only in their official roles. Their private lives are also revealed in short, intense scenes, and this complex characterization prevents our perceiving them allegorically. The mayor does not stand for the Government, nor does the priest stand for the Church. The mayor, who is cruel and corrupt, is seen suffering from solitude and is shown in a moment of simple kindness. And the priest's poverty and solitude are shown along with his inflexible domineering of the people.

The juxtaposition of scenes unrelated to a central plot has several effects. Since the action of the characters is not formed into a plot, the characters seem to act from uncontrollable impulse. And the

discontinuous action causes each scene to appear as a separate action, thereby increasing the intensity of each scene. The symbolic meaning, which in more traditional fiction might be communicated through plot structure, is expressed in this novel through the intensity of each scene, the rhythm of movement from scene to scene, and the accumulation of images by the juxtaposition of scenes--or in other words by the tone and tension of the narrative.

The control of tone and of narrative tension may be understood in part by examining the narrator's attitude and the narrative point of view. The narrator is impersonal. He is not dramatized, nor do we feel his presence as something apart from the author. There is no play of contrast between author and narrator, nor does the narrator attach himself to one central character. The novel is narrated in past tense and the technical point of view shifts from character to character, drawing us as readers close enough to several different characters so that we enter their worlds of feeling. This method of narrating creates a special distance between the characters and us as readers. We are bound closely to them and at the same time are forced to see them objectively.

The point of view close to the character generates a sympathy that is often powerful enough to overcome the moral or physical repulsion we may feel toward the character.<sup>6</sup> The following excerpt refers to the mayor shortly after he has denied Arcadio a safe-conduct pass: "Permaneció inclinado, pendiente de la reacción del juez Arcadio, hasta cuando se cerró la puerta y otra vez quedó solo con sus recuerdos. No hizo esfuerzos por dormir. Estaba desvelado en pleno día, empantanado en un pueblo que

seguía siendo impenetrable y ajeno, muchos años después de que él se hiciera cargo de su destino. La madrugada en que desembarcó furtivamente con una vieja maleta de cartón amarrada con cuerdas y la orden de someter al pueblo a cualquier precio, fue él quien conoció el terror" (p. 156).

This type of narration brings us close enough to the mayor so that we may feel sympathy for his solitude while we are still aware of his cruelty and violence. This closeness of point of view is used often in the narration concerning the priest and the mayor. The description of the mayor's toothache is a forceful manner of arousing a basic sympathy for him, and the toothache becomes an almost ironic symbol of his isolation and suffering, while at the same time serving as a basis for one of the most violent, politically oriented encounters. The sympathy created by this narrative point of view exists, then, only at the very basic level of solidarity with the human condition of the characters.

The shifting of distance in the point of view, from near the character to farther from him, also allows for complexity in characterization. The final part of the paragraph cited above shows how the narrator widens the distance and gives a view of the character that he himself is unaware of: "Con sus indicaciones, y la entraña implacable de los tres asesinos a sueldo que lo acompañaban, la tarea había sido cumplida. Aquella tarde, sin embargo, inconsciente de la invisible telaraña que el tiempo había ido tejiendo a su alrededor, le habría bastado una instantánea explosión de clarividencia para haberse preguntado quién estaba sometido a quién" (p. 157). The irony of these lines depends not only upon the shift in distance of point of view but also upon the overall

tone of the work.

The shifts of point of view create the type of irony in which we as readers see the characters more completely than they see themselves. The novel's circular structure and the entrapment of the individual make this irony tragic. Several characters' individualities are created by shifting the point of view to them, and at the same time all the characters are seen as a group. This double, ironic view brings out the theme of the relation of society to the individual. The critic Angel Rama comments on this relation: "Los hombres están condicionados por el medio social en que se han desarrollado, en una inextricable interacción permanente que les permite reconocer su efecto perjudicial cuando se llega al extremo de la distorsión violenta, --y por lo tanto reaccionar con la misma fuerza--, pero que por lo común los dirige en su comportamiento sin que tomen nítida conciencia de la significación oscura de sus actos."<sup>7</sup>

The irony created by the shifting of distance in narrative point of view and by changing the point of view from character to character blends with and reveals the tone of the work. The tone, which in this sense is the unified attitude lying behind the selection of all the elements of the novel, is easily perceived through the affair of the pasquinades. The appearance of the pasquinades in the first part of the novel creates a kind of easily aroused tension since the reader is naturally interested in knowing who their author is. As the novel progresses this type of interest is soon "corrected" by the characters' attitudes. When Arcadio refers to the matter as "un caso sencillísimo de novela policiaca" (p. 33), we are warned almost sarcastically against assuming a similar attitude. The irony

in the novel's tone is, then, a humorless, distant, and almost aggressive irony that aims toward a lucid view of the characters and their condition. The critic Rodríguez Monegal calls the tone one of "quieta violencia y total rechazo ... encrespado, tenso y violento."<sup>8</sup>

The novel's tone is sustained by the narrative tension, and this tension is largely created by the dramatic intensity of the individual scenes. In the overtly violent scenes, such as the one in which César Montero kills Pastor or the scene in which the mayor forces the dentist to pull his tooth, the dramatic intensity is obvious, arising from a careful setting of the scene before the action and from the rapidity and compulsiveness of the action. These openly violent scenes are modified by others that reveal the inner violence, the day to day fear, frustration, and solitude that form the atmosphere of life in the town. The scene in which César Montero kills Pastor and the one immediately following in which the mayor takes César into custody are modified by the descriptive scene that shows César as he wakes up and prepares to leave the house (pp. 10-13). The slow, detailed description of the room and of César's movements as he dresses and as he saddles his mule creates a heavy, lugubrious mood in the scene. And this tone is increased by expressions of corruption and violence in the description of nature: "Un viento bajo arrancó a los almendros de la plaza sus últimas hojas podridas. Las luces públicas se apagaron pero las casas continuaban cerradas" (p. 12). "Las gotas del alar reventaron como perdigones en sus espaldas. ... César Montero miró hacia arriba y vio el cielo espeso y bajo, a dos cuartas de su cabeza" (p. 13). The dialogue in this scene reveals the solitude of



César and his wife. They talk as if each were alone, in short, unconnected phrases. César's wife comments, "Todavía está lloviendo. ... Me siento como una esponja." And César later responds, or comments separately, "El tigre engorda en octubre" (p. 11). These scenes create individual characters by the attention given to details that are unusual and sometimes grotesque. In this scene César's repeated references to his dream about elephants give just the touch necessary to make him unique. The stylized dialogue and the imaginative description create an inner tension in the scene. And this scene modifies the more openly violent ones by its dismal, internally violent atmosphere.

The scene between the priest and Arcadio's wife (pp. 79-80) is another example of a scene that is intensely dramatic without being openly violent. The scene occurs in the fourth section, and the tone of the whole narration has become more intense. As the priest is imploring the woman to legalize her marriage, he looks toward the river: "Una vaca ahogada, enorme, descendía por el hilo de la corriente, con varios gallinazos encima." This bit of description sets the background for a dialogue that reveals two people talking on levels that never meet. The woman explains why she does not insist that Arcadio marry her:

"Ni esperanzas, padre", repitió, pues el padre Angel permanecía silencioso. "Don Sabas me compró por 200 pesos, me sacó el jugo tres meses y después me echó a la calle sin un alfiler. Si Arcadio no me recoge, me hubiera muerto de hambre". Miró al padre por primera vez:

—O hubiera tenido que meterme a puta. (pp. 79-80)

The next words are spoken by the priest: "—Debes obligarlo a casarse

y a formar un hogar—dijo—. Así como viven ahora, no sólo estás en una situación insegura, sino que constituyen un mal ejemplo para el pueblo" (p. 80). And the priest continues to insist, as if the grotesquely inhuman treatment the woman has lived through did not exist. By these separate, short scenes, the author reveals the daily violence operating at the core of the characters' lives. The accumulation of these internally violent scenes maintains and increases the tension as the novel progresses.

While the intensity of the individual scenes and the plotlessness of the novel tend to separate scene from scene, the larger structural elements, time and place, are strong unifying techniques. But the most effective unifying elements are the tone and the accumulation of images that maintain the tension, "images" in this sense being elements of action and description. An example of how the scenes are related by these unifying elements can be seen by analyzing one section of the novel. The principal scenes of the third section, noting only actions in the novel's present, may be summarized as follows: Carmichael watches the poor people moving their houses from the flooded areas; he has his hair cut and the barber talks politics with him; the barber talks with the Syrian Moisés; // <sup>9</sup> the mayor eats in the hotel; he sees the people moving and orders them to put up their huts on land near the cemetery; he goes to the jail and lets out a woman his agents have imprisoned; // the priest takes his evening walk; he is shown a dying child by the doctor; he goes to see the mayor who is suffering from a toothache; // the mayor buys a remedy for his toothache from the druggist; he passes the first part of the night suffering, afraid the druggist might poison

him; at midnight he calls his agents, assaults the dentist's house, and forces him to pull the tooth. Thematically the section is unified by scenes of suffering and violence: the flood, the mistreated woman, the dying child, and the violence of the mayor's suffering and his brutal coercion of the dentist. The open violence of the final scene is thus put in relation to the scene of social "violence:" the scene depicting the child that reminds the doctor of concentration camp victims.

This thematic unity is reinforced by details in the narration that maintain the atmosphere of violence and death: "Los hombres que transportaban las casas, hundidos hasta los tobillos en el barro, pasaron tropezando con las paredes de la peluquería. El señor Carmichael vio por la ventana el interior desmantelado, un dormitorio enteramente despojado de su intimidad, y se sintió invadido por una sensación de desastre" (pp. 49-50). Even these most realistic descriptions convey the feeling of invasion, of the town's being overwhelmed in violent disaster. The group of boys playing war "lanzó una bola de barro que se aplastó en la pared ..." (p. 50). These minimal details maintain the tone, as later on the description of a dog fight (p. 57) suggests the senseless, incomprehensible violence in the town's atmosphere. Throughout the section the descriptions of natural surroundings sustain the tone:

Había dejado de llover, pero una nube cargada se mantenía inmóvil sobre el pueblo. (p. 53)

... fue hasta el sector de las inundaciones. Sólo encontró el cadáver de un gato flotando entre las flores. (p. 58)

Cuando regresaba, la tarde empezó a secar. Se volvió intensa y brillante. Una barcaza cubierta de tela asfáltica descendía por el río espeso e inmóvil. De una casa medio derrumbada .... (p. 58)

La tarde se moría en nubes de un rosado intenso y en el alboroto de los loros y los micos de la ribera opuesta. (p. 58)

... bajó a la plaza aletargada por una densa onda de calor. (p. 62)

The novel's excellence can be seen at the level of sentence and word. The choice of the exact word that maintains the tone and expresses the atmosphere of heaviness, corruption, and violence is evident in each passage. Even the brilliance of the afternoon light is made to express this atmosphere by the reference to the river, "espeso e inmóvil." The critic José Miguel Oviedo comments, "El lenguaje del narrador busca obsesivamente la frontera en que las percepciones y sensaciones se vuelven atroces, delirantes, distorsionadas; la concisión con que se nos comunican no hace sino concentrarlas."<sup>10</sup> The quality of the narration can be felt in the unity of the tone. The language that seeks out the grotesque and distorted supports the larger structures that express the irrational, compulsive, and grotesque.

The characteristic rhythm created by the juxtaposition of scenes can also be seen in this section. The internally tense scenes precede the openly violent ones. The movement through a day, as each scene follows chronological time, creates a slow, tense rhythm followed by an outburst of violence. The violence then appears as an eruption, and this is followed by a break in the narrative. In the final scene of this section the characters feel a dismal emptiness after the violence: "Todo había terminado. En el cuartito caluroso quedaba entonces esa rara desazón que sólo conocen los barrenderos de un teatro después de que sale

el último actor" (p. 68). The mood set after the break is a kind of stunned mindlessness. The rhythm of the whole novel follows this pattern. The pasquinades set off the inner tension and fear that gradually increase, causing small outbreaks, until the final, culminating action, the murder of Pepe Amador in the jail and the open political repression. And this violence is followed by scenes showing the priest stupefied and despairing. The rhythm underscores the feeling of irrationality as the characters are not in control of what is happening, nor do they understand it. They experience the violence as a recurring and senseless pattern.

The unity seen in the section I have analyzed is characteristic of the whole novel. As the accumulation of intense scenes increases the narrative tension, elements of description and narration of past events increase the atmosphere's tenseness. Some of these elements assume the proportions of extended images, similar in their function to the extended poetic image. The mice that overrun the church and the putrefying carcass of the cow in the river are elements symbolic of the atmosphere: "La ventana daba sobre el río. César Montero no lo reconoció. Se vio en un pueblo distinto, frente a un río momentáneo. 'Estoy tratando de ayudarte', oyó decir a sus espaldas. 'Todos sabemos que fue una cuestión de honor, pero te costará trabajo probarlo. Cometiste la estupidez de romper el pasquín'. En ese instante, una tufarada nauseabunda invadió la habitación" (p. 84). At this moment when the mayor is setting the amount of the bribe César Montero is to pay, the stench of the carcass "invades" the room. The mice that defy

Trinidad's and Miná's efforts at extermination also suggest a type of invasion. These elements, although extended through large parts of the narration, are not allowed to become obvious symbols. They retain their properties of realistic, everyday occurrences while suggesting the atmosphere of corruption and the town's feeling of helplessness against the rising terror.

Also woven into the novel's pattern of images is a definite strain of elements that are grotesque or that tend toward the irrational. Some of these elements have a kind of ferocious black humor that often depends on the sadistic or crudely sexual nature of the incidents. An example is the legend about Sabas, who says, "Corrió la bola de que era yo mismo el que entraba de noche a las huertas y les disparaba adentro a los burros, metiéndole el revólver por el culo" (p. 100). Whatever humor this legend has gives way to a bitter irony when police agents murder Pepe Amador using the same method. Other elements that are grotesque or irrational deal with madness or death and lend a tragic, doomed quality to the town's atmosphere. Of the many elements of this type found in the novel are the following: the story of the hundred-year-old priest who reported a rain of dead birds and played at bandits and police with the children (p. 48); Trinidad's confessing that her uncle wanted to sleep with her because he was afraid of the roosters (p. 111); the old blind grandmother's prediction that "la sangre correrá por las calles y no habrá poder humano capaz de detenerla" (p. 161). The author uses these narrated elements to create atmosphere

in much the same manner that imaginative description is used traditionally. These elements bordering on the insane and the inhuman make the atmosphere even more infernal. However, these expressionistic elements are not allowed to dehumanize the characters. As in the similar images of the carcass and the mice, the author shows restraint and balance. No main character is modified by these grotesque elements and they remain in the background, suggesting the atmosphere of irrationality.

The one element that grows into a complex symbol is the affair of the pasquinades. Functioning much as does the symbol of the fighting cock in El coronel, the symbolization of the pasquinades pervades the whole novel, giving thematic coherence to many scenes and allowing us as readers the liberty of our own interpretations. Many characters evaluate the town's condition. For the judge the appearance of the pasquinades is a case of "novela policiaca." Casandra dramatically says their author is "todo el pueblo y no es nadie" (p. 146). For Benjamín the pasquinades are "un síntoma de descomposición social" (p. 120), and for the priest the affair is a case of "terrorismo en el orden moral" (p. 127). All of these evaluations are mocked by the ironic tone of the novel. The suggestion is that the pasquinades' appearance and the fear they touch off cannot be fully understood by attaching a comforting label. The author here is recognizing the limits of reason, much as the novel's techniques lie on the very borders of realism. The symbol is allowed to grow even more enigmatic by the suggestion that the pasquinades continue after the mayor has unleashed

full and violent repression. And the symbol's power lies in its complexity and suggestiveness rather than in a clearly indicated significance. The symbol unites various themes and the inextricability of the themes is part of the symbol's meaning. While it reveals the close relation between the moral and political corruption and the rising terror, it also points to the irrational and to the feeling of senselessness experienced by the characters of the community that is in the process of decomposition.

At all levels of the novel the expressiveness of the forms is clear. The language turns constantly to reveal fear and inner violence by imagery and detail, and the dramatic intensity of each scene maintains the narrative tension, expressing the rising fear. The rhythm of each section and of the whole novel supports the feeling of sudden outbreak that is fed by inner corruption. And the plotless and closed form increases the sense of the irrational and infernal. The method of close and shifting point of view creates a biting irony while maintaining the feeling of solidarity with the characters' suffering. The novel's technical quality is apparent in the unity and harmony of the forms, and the narration's "quality of mind"<sup>11</sup> can be grasped as we judge for ourselves the relation of the fiction to our own reality. The novel's theme refers directly to the Colombian condition and the work is one of many that have been written about the violence.<sup>12</sup> By treating this theme with sensitivity and depth, the author has created a novel of universal significance.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, La mala hora, 3rd ed. (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1968). An edition published in 1962 was not accepted by the author. All references to the novel appear in parentheses in the text.

<sup>2</sup> The narrator is the voice assumed by the author. Using impersonal narration, the author does not comment directly. For a full discussion of impersonal narration see Wayne C. Booth, "The Uses of Authorial Silence," The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 271-309.

<sup>3</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 238. Referring to the sixth phase of the "Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire," Frye writes, "In our day the chief form of his phase is the nightmare of social tyranny, of which 1984 is perhaps the most familiar." The novel could also be related to his sixth phase of tragedy, a phase that is "a world of shock and horror." p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> José Miguel Oviedo, "García Márquez, la infinita violencia colombiana," Amaru, No. 1 (Jan. 1967), p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> Oviedo, p. 89. "La mala hora es una novela de clima, no de acción ni de personajes."

<sup>6</sup> Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 281-82. Booth explains how Kafka creates sympathy for Gregor, the man-cockroach, in The Metamorphosis by narrating from Gregor's point of view. The narration is impersonal but at the same time binds us as readers to the character, giving us a "sense of being trapped in the disgusting," as the character is trapped. And this feeling is part of the story itself. In La mala hora García Márquez uses a similar method, and part of the confusion, fear, and helplessness experienced by the characters is communicated to us by keeping the point of view close to several characters.

<sup>7</sup> Angel Rama, "García Márquez: la violencia americana," Marcha, No. 1201 (April 17, 1964), p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Novedad y anacronismo de Cien años de soledad," Revista Nacional de Cultura, 185 (1968), p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> The double slash indicates a spacing in the text. These spacings group scenes within the chapter.

<sup>10</sup> Oviedo, "García Márquez, la infinita violencia colombiana," p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 239. "What we respond to in the greatest narratives is the quality of mind transmitted to us through the language of characterization, motivation, description, and commentary--the intelligence and sensitivity with which the fictional events are related to the perceivable world or the world of ideas."

<sup>12</sup> Helpful in situating this novel among others appearing during the period are: Nestor Madrid-Malo, "Estado actual de la novela en Colombia," Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía, 17 (1967), pp. 68-82; and Gustavo Alvarez Gardeazabal, "Mexico y Colombia: Violencia y revolución en la novela," Mundo Nuevo, 57-58 (1971), pp. 77-82.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESIGN AND TONE IN CIEN AÑOS DE SOLEDAD<sup>1</sup>

Since its publication in 1967, Cien años de soledad<sup>1</sup> has claimed a wide and appreciative audience among both readers and critics. It has been recognized as a major novel and as one of those rare works of art that appeals to many different readers and that can be read at varying levels of understanding. On its most accessible level, the novel tells the adventurous story of the Buendía family from before the foundation of Macondo until its destruction over a century later. The family struggles through plagues, civil wars, foreign exploitation, and abandonment only to come finally to incestuous love and extinction. This narration about a rural Latin American village also gives expression to the most urgent themes of contemporary life. While capturing the essence of the Latin American experience--its history, culture, and inner spirit--the novel treats the universal themes of time, discontinuity, and solitude.

García Márquez does not, however, use the techniques the modern novel has developed to deal with these themes, such as the interior monologue or the destruction of coherent language. The author has achieved the most radical originality by going back to basic, age-old

methods of telling a story. Once again, it is obvious that originality and convention do not contradict each other in literature since, "originality returns to the origins of literature as radicalism returns to its roots."<sup>2</sup> In Cien años de soledad the author has courageously declared his artistic freedom and has broken the confining norms of both the realistic novel and the hermetic "experimental" novel. The realistic novel's basic convention--its need for plausible content--is always in opposition to literary form. The shape a story must have to be expressive comes not from life, but only from literary tradition.<sup>3</sup> Freed from the need for making his narration entirely plausible, García Márquez has discovered the narrative power of the oldest literary traditions--fantasy, episodic adventure, and omniscient narration. By rejecting mimetic conventions, he is also rejecting the traditional novel's assumptions about reality. García Márquez has defined the ideal novel as "una novela absolutamente libre, que no sólo inquieta por su contenido político y social, sino por su poder de penetración en la realidad; y mejor aún si es capaz de voltear la realidad al revés para mostrar cómo es del otro lado."<sup>4</sup> By opening the form of his novel to imagination and fantasy, García Márquez has done just that. In Cien años de soledad he employs narrative forms that are able to discover contemporary reality as the realistic novel can no longer do.

The novel's form requires us as readers to disentangle ourselves from the conventions of traditional realism and from our expectations of what a novel should be. And the implications for criticism are that

it, too, should disregard the categories used for realistic fiction in order to judge the novel on its own terms. The following study seeks to show how the novel is what it is, rather than what it means.<sup>5</sup> This aim implies emphasis on form and on discovering theme through form as we do when we read the novel. The novel's meaning--the experience of it which can never be fully stated in analysis--can be more adequately disclosed by enhancing our perception of its form. The first section of the study treats tone and the techniques through which it is felt. The second section considers imagination as the structuring principle and the expression of themes through the larger structures of the novel.

### Tone and Technique

The tone of a novel usually is defined as the author's attitude that we sense underlying and directing all the forms of expression in a work. Simply perceived, this attitude may be, among other things, playful, sober, serious, or ironic. The term also designates the mood of the work itself, arising from the artistic devices the author uses, such as imagery, repetition, symbols. These two uses of the term often merge imperceptibly into one another since we experience the work only through the written word, and since it is through the devices of language that we sense the author's attitude toward his subject and his public. The author may create various tones or moods in the work through which we feel an overall tone, his unified

attitude. In dealing with tone in Cien años de soledad, I analyze the artistic devices the author uses to create the tone, the mood of the novel itself. Through an understanding of these devices we can more easily grasp the unified attitude lying behind the selection of these techniques.

From page to page the mood of the novel changes rapidly from humorous to pathetic, melancholy to tragic. These moods are communicated through the voice of an omniscient narrator, whose range of feeling seems unlimited. The novel's dense paragraphs in twenty unnumbered divisions are directed and controlled by this voice. The narrative voice assumed by the author speaks in past tense and uses little direct dialogue of the characters. We feel the presence of the voice throughout the novel, purporting to tell us a story completely, from beginning to end. Such narrative authority is an anachronism.<sup>6</sup> The narrators of epic and of medieval romance based their authority on tradition, and the writers of realistic fiction claimed the authority of the eye-witness. García Márquez seems to be insisting on omniscience at a time when omniscience is an anachronism.<sup>7</sup> He is using this narrative authority intentionally and ironically. A fertile irony arises from the contrast between the serene narrative voice and the absurdities of the story it tells.<sup>8</sup> Since he appeals neither to tradition nor to eye-witness account for authority, the author uses other means to maintain our belief in his narration. To impel us as readers to accept this apparently omniscient voice, he uses fantasy and the

supernatural.

Fantasy in the novel functions in several ways. One of its most important functions is to emphasize that the narrative is fiction, that it is art which depends upon no extrinsic authority. The opening chapter emphasizes the fantastic and the remote to such a degree that we realize immediately that this is no ordinary realistic novel. The fantastic adventures of Melquíades suggest the magical and the impossible: "Era un fugitivo de cuantas plagas y catástrofes habían flagelado al género humano. Sobrevivió a la pelagra en Persia, al escorbuto en el archipiélago de Malasia, a la lepra en Alejandría, al beriberi en el Japón, a la peste bubónica en Madagascar, al terremoto de Sicilia y a un naufragio multitudinario en el estrecho de Magallanes. Aquel ser prodigioso que decía poseer las claves de Nostradamus, era un hombre lúgubre, envuelto en un aura triste, con una mirada asiática que parecía conocer el otro lado de las cosas" (pp. 12-13). And José Arcadio Buendía's "desaforada imaginación" encourages us to leave ordinary experience and venture into the unknown: "Cuando se hizo experto en el uso y manejo de sus instrumentos, tuvo una noción del espacio que le permitió navegar por mares incógnitos, visitar territorios deshabitados y trabar relación con seres espléndidos, sin necesidad de abandonar su gabinete" (p. 11). The final and definite emphasis on the novel as fiction is the deciphering of Melquíades' manuscript at the end of the novel. The family's history that Melquíades foresaw and recorded is in a sense the novel itself. This ending puts the characters into their place as fictional

beings, and ironically expresses the precarious life of a work of art. After being magically preserved until it was understood, Melquíades' manuscript is subject to destruction along with all other human things.

Besides making clear the fictional nature of the novel, fantasy opens the narration to forms of expression that cannot be used by the realistic writer who is bound to the probable. García Márquez has discovered, as Cervantes did, the power of expression that surges out of the intermingling of the two principal impulses of narrative, the empirical (historical and mimetic) and the fictional (romantic and didactic).<sup>9</sup> While the romantic and the mimetic-historical are often contrasted in Cervantes, they are fused in Cien años de soledad. In order to create the fusion of reality and fantasy, and the two are not contrasted in the novel, García Márquez employs a language that can encompass extremes. Through various means of intensification, he creates an all-inclusive tone that puts everyday reality on the same level as the fantastic. This manner of flattening out the believable and the unbelievable, the sane and the mad, gives the impression of a totality that omits none of the levels of experience.<sup>10</sup> The leveling of reality and fantasy to the same plane is expressive in itself, suggesting the fantastic nature of all reality.

The all-inclusive tone is perceived through the language and its devices of exaggeration and intensification.<sup>11</sup> The dominant style is purposely baroque and grandiloquent.<sup>12</sup> The irony of using such language accompanies the irony created by employing an omniscient narrator.



These anachronistic forms are used to create the novel's world and to convince us of the story itself. Appropriate to these anachronisms, we find the use of archaic words such as "fierro" and "fijodalga" and ironic symbolism in the naming of characters, Buendía, Arcadio, Babilonia. The inflated style allows the use of numerous rhetorical devices, such as hyperbole, repetition, parallel constructions, detailed enumerations, and poetic images. These devices for heightening effect create the climate of "desorbitación," the fantastic atmosphere of the novel. Hyperbole<sup>13</sup> is the foundation at the level of word and phrase for the fantastic distortion of character and action.

Almost any page of the novel affords numerous examples of these devices. The following, referring to José Arcadio Buendía and his gigantic magnifying glass, shows the characteristic use of hyperbole, parallel constructions, and enumerations:

Pasaba largas horas en su cuarto, haciendo cálculos sobre las posibilidades estratégicas de su arma novedosa, hasta que logró componer un manual de una asombrosa claridad didáctica y un poder de convicción irresistible. Lo envió a las autoridades acompañado de numerosos testimonios sobre sus experiencias y de varios pliegos de dibujos explicativos, al cuidado de un mensajero que atravesó la sierra, se extravió en pantanos desmesurados, remontó ríos tormentosos y estuvo a punto de perecer bajo el azote de las fieras, la desesperación y la peste, antes de conseguir una ruta de enlace con las mulas del correo. (p. 11)

In one instance the hyperbolic modifiers--"de asombrosa claridad didáctica y un poder de convicción irresistible"--refer to a very improbable instruction book, and in the other, to quite probable geographic features, "pantanos desmesurados," "ríos tormentosos."

The fantastic is treated as if it were real, and the real as fantastic, so that both are on the same level. The tripartite construction, "bajo el azote de las fieras, la desesperación y la peste," characteristically associates physical and mental suffering, while the force of the suffering is animated by "azote." The intensity created by these devices is relieved by the final deflating phrase, "con las mulas de correo." The humor of the contrast breaks the description's intensity temporarily so that we can accept the continued exaggeration.

The exaggeration is not always relieved by humor that arises from the startling contrasts. In the following excerpt, describing the army's entrance into Macondo, the contrasting elements are bitterly ironic:

Eran tres regimientos cuya marcha pautada por tambor de galeotes hacía trepidar la tierra. Su resuello de dragón multicéfalo impregnó de un vapor pestilente la claridad del mediodía. Eran pequeños, macizos, brutos. Sudaban con sudor de caballo, y tenían un olor de carnaza macerada por el sol, y la impavidez taciturna e impenetrable de los hombres del páramo. Aunque tardaron más de una hora en pasar, hubiera podido pensarse que eran idénticos, hijos de la misma madre, y todos soportaban con igual estolidez el peso de los morrales y las cantimploras, y la vergüenza de los fusiles con las bayonetas caladas, y el incordio de la obediencia ciega y el sentido del honor. (pp. 256-57)

Here several violent contrasts are created by descriptive exaggeration. The troops' suggested resemblance to galley slaves and to a many-headed dragon contrasts strongly with the naturalistic, detailed description immediately following. Their exaggerated power ("cuya marcha ... hacía trepidar la tierra") contrasts with their appearance,

"pequeños, macizos, brutos." And their similarity--"todos eran idénticos, hijos de la misma madre, y todos soportaban con igual estolidez"--is so exaggerated that it deceives the senses. The tripartite construction, "soportaban ... el peso ... y la vergüenza ... y el incordio," brings into ironic contrast their physical and moral discomfort. And the final parallel construction, ending the rhythmic enumeration, contrasts the paradoxical "values" of the soldier, "la obediencia ciega y el sentido de honor." In this passage the vocabulary is of several levels of usage, the cultivated ("multicéfalo") and the familiar ("incordio," "hijos de la misma madre"), and is typical of the extensive vocabulary employed in the novel.<sup>14</sup>

The tension created by exaggerated contrasts in this passage is maintained to the episode's end, the massacre of the workers. The use of contrast reaches a maximum in the last sentence of the description: "Allí lo puso José Arcadio Segundo, en el instante de derrumbarse con la cara bañada en sangre, antes de que el tropel colosal arrasara con el espacio vacío, con la mujer arrodillada, con la luz del alto cielo de sequía, y con el puto mundo donde Ursula Iguarán había vendido tantos animalitos de caramelo" (p. 260). The event is intensified by the emphasis on the precise moment, "en el instante de derrumbarse," and by the narrator's focusing the narration from the falling man's point of view. The enumeration brings into bitterly ironic contrast the aspects of the world José Arcadio Segundo perceives in that moment.

Poetic images are used throughout the novel to intensify the

narrative, and they include many types, from the trite and popular to the highly original, visionary image. The traditional comparison such as, "piedras pulidas, blancas y enormes como huevos prehistóricos" (p. 9), is often enlivened by the fantastic nature of one of the elements. Transpositions of adjectives often fuse the physical and the mental, "empapado, triste de lluvia" (p. 156). Words pass freely from one form to another: "Aquel proceso de nostalgización progresiva" (p. 338). And the verbs often carry a metaphor, "mientras la telaraña iba nevando los rosales ... acolchonando las paredes" (p. 305). One of the most frequent types of images makes the quality of an abstract feeling into a concrete object: "las cenizas olvidadas de su pasión juvenil" (p. 123), "enredada en el berenjenal de sus recuerdos" (p. 236), "asomados al precipicio de la incertidumbre" (p. 229), "el tremedal del olvido" (p. 48). This transformation of an emotion into a concrete object creates an intense subjectivity: "el coronel Aureliano Buendía rasguñó durante muchas horas, tratando de romperla, la dura cáscara de su soledad" (p. 149). Through these images the characters' inner lives become visual landscapes similar to that of the dream. The images are often startlingly original, but we feel again the all-inclusiveness of the tone when we encounter trite and popular comparisons, "blanca como una paloma," "trabajó como un galeote" (p. 58). Sometimes the images are visionary, communicating the resemblance of the image's two elements through emotion:<sup>15</sup> "através del aire donde terminaba las cuatro de la tarde," "los más altos pájaros de la memoria" (p. 205).

At times the lyrical moment is intentionally exaggerated, as in the following example:

La casa se llenó de amor. Aureliano lo expresó en versos que no tenían principio ni fin. Los escribía en los ásperos pergaminos que le regalaban Melquíades, en las paredes del baño, en la piel de sus brazos, y en todos aparecía Remedios transfigurada: Remedios en el aire soporífero de las dos de la tarde, Remedios en la callada respiración de las rosas, Remedios en la clepsidra secreta de las polillas, Remedios en el vapor del pan al amanecer, Remedios en todas partes y Remedios para siempre. (p. 63)

In this passage we see the popular expression, "La casa se llenó de amor," amplified into the novel's reality. The process appears as the transformation of a popular metaphor into the actual happenings in the work. Often an incident or a character seems to be the amplification of a popular expression or feeling. For example, the ascension of Remedios, la bella, appears as a visualization of the statement, "En realidad, Remedios, la bella, no era un ser de este mundo" (p. 172). Thus no definite distinction can be made between image as an element of figurative language and image as the larger structures of character and incident.

The consideration of poetic images blends into that of character and incident, which are profoundly symbolic and lyrical. The giant tree that José Arcadio Buendía is tied to becomes an image of the character himself, suggesting his patriarchal strength. And often the fantastic elements of incident--the yellow butterflies that accompany Mauricio Babilonia, for example--appear as symbolic expressions

that intensify a certain aspect of the character. The repetition of colors and smells intensifies the emotion they suggest over and above the particular character. The evocation of yellow and orange persists from character to character, suggesting the erotic and the marvelous. The yellow flowers that blanket the town when José Arcadio Buendía dies (p. 125) evoke the marvelous, while Mauricio Babilonia's yellow butterflies and the "silbos anaranjados" that Amaranta Ursula perceives (p. 335) are erotic images. The repetition of incidents creates lasting images. For example, the bath with its rotten roof tiles and its scorpions becomes an image of doomed erotic love. The image is built up by incidents involving several characters: Remedios, la bella, and one of her ill-fated admirers, Meme and Mauricio Babilonia, and finally the hedonistic José Arcadio, still dreaming of his aunt Amaranta when he returns from Rome. The distinction between poetic image, character, and incident is thus confused and reveals the profoundly lyrical nature of the novel.

Repetition is one of the basic techniques used to exaggerate and intensify.<sup>16</sup> The repetition of phrases supports that of character and incident. In the episode of the massacre of the workers we see two techniques of intensification, the repetition of words and phrases and the enhancement of the incident by its occurring in a character's memory. By relating events as happening in the characters' memory, the narrator not only intensifies them directly but can also repeat them often. In this example the event recorded, the massacre, is told

objectively, happening in past time, "La huelga grande estalló" (p. 256). And it is also placed in the memory of the child that José Arcadio Segundo was carrying. During the narration of the event, the memory of that child, now seen as an old man, is evoked twice: "Muchos años después, ese niño había de seguir contando, sin que nadie se lo creyera, que había visto ..." (p. 258); "Muchos años después, el niño había de contar todavía, a pesar de que los vecinos seguían creyéndolo un viejo chiflado, que José Arcadio Segundo lo levantó ..." (p. 259). This technique has the effect of intensifying the event by showing its persistence in memory and by condensing the whole event into a memory image. And the repetition of the same phrases creates a hypnotic rhythm underlying the rapid narration. This event is further intensified by José Arcadio Segundo's anticipation of it, for the massacre is the occurrence he had been waiting for since the first time he saw an execution (p. 256).

The critic Ernesto Volkering mentions the technique of contracting a vast panorama of life into a few brief moments of memory. He gives as an example the opening sentences of the novel.<sup>17</sup> The first section of the novel is presented as occurring in historical time and also as passing through the memory of Coronel Aureliano Buendía in the moment he was facing a firing squad. By contracting the events into this intense moment of perception, the narrator enhances them. And events are intensified by the repetition throughout the first part of the novel of the opening phrases, "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" (p. 9). The repetition of these phrases creates a hypnotic rhythm that induces the dreamlike atmosphere of the novel. Throughout the novel certain hyperbolic phrases are repeated that intensify the narrated moment: "Los niños habían de recordar por el resto de su vida la augusta solemnidad ... (p. 12); "Aureliano, que no tenía más de cinco años, había de recordarlo por el resto de su vida como lo vio aquella tarde" (p. 13); "Aquel olor mordiente quedaría para siempre en su memoria" (p. 13). Related as moments captured in memory, the events are freed from any system or any mechanical scheme of cause and effect. The characteristic rhythms of the prose give the impression of the events' surging out of a particular moment or of their contracting suddenly into an instant in time.

Placed in the characters' memory, the events are partially freed from an overall structure. This method of intensification also affects the characters. They are perceived as anticipated or recalled,<sup>18</sup> and therefore seem like the fragile and fleeting figures of a dream. While we read the first lines of the novel, we perceive the characters and events that Aureliano is recalling and we anticipate Aureliano himself, picturing him in front of the firing squad. (The fact that he was not executed helps to destroy any feeling of a dependable, concrete reality.) Thus the placing of characters and events in memory is a narrative technique that partially frees them from the chronological time scheme.



As Angel Rama points out, "Las que originariamente fueron simplemente las 'palabras en libertad' de los poetas surrealistas han devenido ahora 'situaciones y personajes en libertad,'"<sup>19</sup>

The use of memory to free characters and events into a dreamlike atmosphere is a technique that imitates real mental processes rather than artistic methods of juxtaposition such as those used by cubism. In similar fashion the methods of intensification resemble those employed in expressionism but they also draw on the traditional and the popular. It is this fusion of traditional story-telling methods with the still-revolutionary forms such as surrealism<sup>20</sup> and expressionism that gives the novel its peculiar originality. Like other Latin American novels that use fantasy to give dimension to reality,<sup>21</sup> Cien años de soledad also seeks to make reality more real, more alive for the reader. Unlike the surrealists who sought to express inner reality by distorting word and phrase or by "automatic" writing, García Márquez employs coherent language. And his characters are also coherent in that they reflect historical and psychological types. But the characters and action are something more. They are exaggerated and intensified so that they appear at once unknown and familiar. They are the combination of the realistic character and the stylized figure found in romance.

The use of coherent language to create a believable story is typical of expressionism in writers such as Kafka. The forms of intensification in Cien años de soledad also operate to create an "enigmatic magic universe, obeying the laws of the dream but not

spelling them out."<sup>22</sup> The novel's characteristics are similar to those found in expressionism. The characters have the vividness of figures appearing in dreams where the landscape reflects emotion and time becomes a function of expression, slowing up or accelerating at the will of the narrator. The characters and events are symbolic as events in dreams are symbolic, and they follow each other in rapid succession. And these forms seek to express the existence of the characters and not just their personality or character. They seek to express the "feel" of experience beyond conceptual understanding.<sup>23</sup> One critic has mentioned that the novel expresses the "intrahistoria" of Latin America.<sup>24</sup> And another critic points out that the novel reproduces poetically the internal tensions of Colombian society.<sup>25</sup> The novel employs forms similar to those of surrealism and expressionism, but rather than the obsessive and deep study of the individual that we find in writers such as Kafka, the novel reflects the inner life of an entire people as they move through history.

The dreamlike atmosphere of the novel is communicated by the concentration of several generations of characters into the time span of one hundred years. The narration overwhelms us with exaggerated rhythms that pour out character upon character, incident upon incident. Yet when we have finished reading the novel we find it has given us definite configurations, "symbols by which subtle patterns of life can be forever held in our memory."<sup>26</sup> This effect is achieved by methods of intensification that impress upon us the essential nature

of the characters and situations, that is, what they have in common with all men and all life, their existential truth.

The forms of intensification of character, like the method of placing events and characters in memory, are forms found in life and in popular custom and legend. These forms add to the dreamlike atmosphere, since they are at once strange and familiar. The repetition of names from generation to generation is a popular custom and it functions in the novel to intensify and abstract. The profusion of Aurelianos and José Arcadios distracts our attention from the characters as personalities and helps us to disregard the incidental, changeable surface of their lives. Imitating the popular belief that personality is inherited, the author repeats the characters' traits from generation to generation. This repetition operates as variation on a theme, and emphasizes the essential condition of the characters. As we see character after character struggle with his basic limitations--time, death, and solitude--we find them all coalescing into a profound symbol of alienation. The repetitions are purposely exaggerated to achieve this effect. The incestuous relationship between son and mother, aunt and nephew, repeats itself obsessively until the final couple has the mythological child with a pig's tail. The Aurelianos are progressively more withdrawn and solitary, ending with the last one, Aureliano Babilonia, a young man who does not even know his own name but who has the education of a medieval scholar.

Even the less important actions are repetitions of other characters'

actions, as when Aureliano Buendía buries his guns with the same feeling of penitence that his father felt burying the lance with which he killed Prudencio Aguilar (p. 152). What matters here is not the personality of Aureliano, his personal feeling or reaction, but the common feeling of futility and remorse. The repetitions of traits and actions are sometimes enigmatic and purposely confusing. The desire to decipher them is mocked by the presentation of the twins, José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo, whose names and traits are reversed.

The repetitions of names and traits and actions create a feeling of the loss of identity and individuality typical of alienation. Each character seems invaded by traits and even by memories that are not distinctly his own. The confusion of alienation is also partially communicated by the difficulty we as readers have in separating one character from another. Our desire to make sense of these strange repetitions is often mocked by their absurdity or ambiguity.

Another type of intensification seen in various characters is the exaggeration of one particular aspect. By distorting the character in time or by giving him a supernatural ability, the author exaggerates one of his basic traits. Ursula's matriarchal striving to preserve life is symbolized in her own longevity. The exaggeration makes the symbolization appear grotesquely humorous when she becomes the plaything of her great-grandchildren. The futility of Aureliano Buendía's lost battles is symbolized by his fabrication and

refabrication of tiny gold fish. This presentation of essentially tragic inner states through a grotesque amplification that makes them humorous is characteristic of the novel. The emotional sterility of Amaranta is underscored absurdly when she calls for Ursula's testimony to her virginity on the day of her death. The abnegating, self-sacrificing Santa Sofía de la Piedad actually is invisible at times and finally disappears from Macondo altogether.

Many events become memorable symbols through their lyrical power of suggestion. A striking example is José Arcadio's death. Not only is the body imbued with the eternally persistent smell of gunpowder, but his blood travels mysteriously through the streets and into his mother's house (p. 118). This type of symbolization, like the rain of flowers at José Arcadio Buendía's death (p. 125), embodies an ineffable feeling and is similar to the poetic visionary image. Like incidents in dreams, they are pictorial expressions that distort the landscape and natural events to express emotion.

In these exaggerated distortions of nature the symbolization has that peculiar appropriateness that marks a true work of art. The rain that lasts four years, eleven months, and two days, magically called down by the plantation manager to stall the settlement of the workers' strike, symbolizes the state of the town and the spirit of the people. This symbolization of an inexpressible mental state by rain is used throughout the novel and culminates in this incident.

During the civil wars Colonel Gerineldo Márquez tries to communicate his feelings of loneliness and abandonment by telling Aureliano that it is raining in Macondo (p. 144). Much of the coherence of the novel is found at the level of this kind of symbolization. The final symbolization by a distortion of nature is the biblical hurricane that destroys Macondo. Like the rains, the wind not only corresponds to an empirical feature of the region, but is symbolically appropriate. Destruction by fire or water would suggest a rebirth. Destruction by wind is total and final since it suggests spiritual annihilation. This symbolization seems appropriate because it arouses archetypal symbols, strikes unconscious resonances, and leads "to the 'earthing' of emotion by relating particular experiences to a universal frame."<sup>27</sup>

The characters are also intensified into dreamlike figures by their identification with the archetypes of myth, romance, and popular legend. The examples are numerous and obvious. José Arcadio Buendía has in him something of Adam and of Faust, and even of the contemporary savior of his people, "José Arcadio Buendía ... había dispuesto de tal modo la posición de las casas, que desde todas podía llegarse al río y abastecerse de agua con igual esfuerzo, y trazó las calles con tan buen sentido que ninguna casa recibía más sol que otra a la hora del calor" (p. 15). Aureliano Segundo is the prince of the fairy tales that travels far and wide seeking his princess, Fernanda. And Colonel Aureliano Buendía, the popular hero, is properly born with

his eyes open and is honored by women who want to "improve the race." This archetypal nature of the characters is often almost a parody of the original myth and is the grotesque distortion, the humorous outer appearance, of the tragic inner reality. By transforming the characters to the fictional plane, the identification helps to create the novel's dreamlike atmosphere, and it also abstracts the ordinary surface reality of the characters' lives from their essential experience.

The consideration of the novel's larger structures shows how this magic universe that is created by all manner of exaggeration and intensification is deeply ironic. The visionary world of the novel is given two joined structures--chronological time and circular time--that express the characters' subjective experience of the flow of time and life. The irony arises when we recognize that these structures are not analytical and that they do not explain why the characters' world is as it is. Only as we see the enigmatic nature of the novel's universe do we realize the profound irony of the all-inclusive tone. The omniscient narrator's authority is there to tell us a story that, like a dream, calls out for interpretation; but that same authority is not used to interpret the story for us.

### Design, Time, and Tragedy

Freedom from the probable, from the necessity to make his story plausible, allows a writer to structure his work as his imagination

orders. Yet imagination, understood as the designing principle in literature, has the curious effect of producing conventionalized art. "Random fantasy is exceedingly rare in the arts, and most of what we do have is clever simulation of it. From primitive cultures to the tachiste and action paintings of today, it has been a regular rule that the uninhibited imagination, in the structural sense, produces highly conventionalized art."<sup>28</sup> The dream, the myth, and the folk tale show their relation to each other in their tendency toward conventional structures. And when we encounter these structures in contemporary fiction we find interest in design: "Writers are interested in folk tales for the same reason that painters are interested in still-life arrangements: because they illustrate the essential principles of storytelling."<sup>29</sup>

The creative activity that artistic imagination signifies is seemingly paradoxical. When imagination in art is freed from reproducing a plausible realism it produces age-old patterns, renewed and restated in the artist's contemporary idiom. The differences between discoveries in art and in science point out the paradox inherent in artistic activity. The evolution of science is a collective progress, while evolution in art is relative to its partially timeless nature. The discoveries made by the creative act in science tend to merge into new syntheses and to progress toward universal laws. The discoveries of art have the tendency to restate basic patterns of experience and



to go back to beginnings. "If the explanations of science are like streams joining rivers, rivers moving towards the unifying ocean, the explanations of art may be compared to the tracing back of a ripple in the stream to its source in a distant mountain-spring."<sup>30</sup> The source of narrative art is myth, the traditional stories of gods and legendary beings. When the imagination is freed from the representation of plausible reality, it returns to the archetypal configurations that first expressed man's condition. This dependence of imagination on archetype does not imply a mechanical identification or a conscious effort to revive outworn forms. Rather, it implies the creativity suggested by vision. It is the artist who sees the reflections of the original archetype in his observation of reality and it is his craft that shapes those configurations into communicable language. The quasi-timeless nature of art does not deny the artist's originality or the historical development of his craft. His creative act is a discovery, but often it is also a rediscovery.

I stress the relation of artistic imagination to myth because of the nature of Cien años de soledad. The novel shows archetypal configurations not only on the level of image and incident but also in its basic time structure. When we look at the novel's overall design, we see two interwoven structures. One is the chronological ordering of events as they move through historical time. The other is a mythical-biblical time that extends from a beginning--"El mundo

era tan reciente, que muchas cosas carecían de nombre" (p. 9)--to an apparently apocalyptic end, the destruction of Macondo. The mythical structure is both circular and historical. It is an organic part of the novel and does not exist apart from the chronological structure or in contrast to it. The mythical is an integrated part of the novel's structure.<sup>31</sup> And this time structure is the interior form of the novel,<sup>32</sup> and one of its basic themes.

The biblical myth is a narrative structure that suggests the totality we perceive in the all-inclusive tone. The use of identification with biblical myth gives the novel a "total structure," which allows the aggregation of all the types of legendary stories and popular tales found in the novel. This mythical identification is seen throughout the novel: in the suggestion of a prehistoric beginning, the genealogical account of the Buendía family, the fratricidal conflict between José Arcadio Buendía and Prudencio Aguilar, the founding of Macondo, the plagues, the flood, and the final destruction. The fate that the characters feel threatening Macondo is represented in their own incest myth which suggests the stain of original sin. And Melquíades' manuscript suggests the sacred history of biblical myth. This "total structure" created by the use of biblical myth has the same irony seen in the all-inclusive tone and the omniscient narrator. While giving narrative coherence, the mythical design does not present an analytic structure of meaning.<sup>33</sup> The biblical-mythical time structure does not

interpret the family's history but rather is the imaginative design that communicates the characters' subjective experience.

The ease with which the events and characters reflect this archetypal structure should not confuse us as to the nature of the novel. It is not allegorical in the sense that its symbolic design refers to an unstated but generally accepted body of beliefs existing outside the work. Since the omniscient narrator does not use his authority to impose an interpretation of events, the reader might feel impelled to seek such an ordering in the mythical design. The novel could easily be distorted into an allegorical illustration of a hundred years in Latin American history, with Macondo representing geographical and political isolation and with the characters' incest myth standing for some spiritual or moral failing. However, such an interpretation of the novel would direct attention to those very aspects which García Márquez leaves to tacit understanding by abstracting them from the novel. The symbolic configuration does not point to a specific general truth lying outside the work. Rather, the mythical structure is similar to the images of dreams that disguise and veil as much as they reveal. In this sense the novel's symbolic design is similar to that found in Kafka's Metamorphosis. In this work "the function of the metamorphosis is to express utter ambivalence, an empirically impossible task which only an empirically impossible event can perform."<sup>34</sup> The fantastic events of Cien años de soledad are symbolic in a similar way, embodying

an ineffable feeling of the characters' existence. Although we can approach the novel in a rational manner, we should be careful not to destroy this ambiguous and complex emotional meaning by seeing the novel as allegorical.

An allegorical analysis of Cien años de soledad might seek realistic historical and psychological reasons for the family's being the way it is. This rational and analytical approach is precisely what the novel avoids. The biblical-mythical structure is symbolic of the characters' existential experience which by its very nature is not completely rational. For example, if we interpret the threatening fate expressed in the family's myth about incest as representing a spiritual falling, we make it appear rational. The characters experience this feeling of fate not as an understandable fault or incapacity but as an irrational force.

The biblical myth is an effective means of conveying the inward and yet historical experience of the characters. The events and characters have the familiarity of realistic historical presentation and at the same time they have the strangeness of the unknown. Being identified with biblical myth, the well-known historical events are placed on a fictional rather than on an empirical plane. We see the commonplaces of the realistic-naturalistic Latin American novel again in Cien años de soledad. Civil wars, fruitless rebellions, exploitation of oppressed workers, army brutality, Yankee imperialism, all appear in

the novel. But the identification with biblical myth removes from them the analytical and objective reasoning of realism. These commonplaces of history then become subjective, charged with the aura of legend and romance.<sup>35</sup> The characters are no longer just a particular family of individuals. They are transformed into legendary beings who struggle with historical destiny and the fate of man. In their identification with myth, they stand for the whole nation and for all men. The biblical myth affords a design that powerfully suggests the inward experience of history. This grandiose identification supplies the totality necessary for tragedy as well as for the deep irony of the novel.

The novel's time structure--the biblical-mythical time interwoven with historical time--is created by the repetitions of characters' names and traits and by repetitions in memory. By disordering our ordinary, chronological perception of time, the repetitions suggest a circular, ritualistic time typical of myth. On the first reading especially, the novel seems a maze of characters and events that repeat themselves senselessly. This disordering is also achieved by the long paragraphs that pass from event to event and from character to character without any apparent scheme. The concentration and rapidity of the narration leaves us little time to assimilate the events into a logical sequence. This manner of narration creates the illusion of the chaos of subjective experience. The seemingly senseless repetitions partially

break the linear time and we are forced to see events as the characters live them--not neatly worked out into an evenly moving time scheme, but chaotically disordered and strangely repetitious. As we read the novel we seldom have the feeling of a concrete historical present. The events move forward in time, but we do not experience each event as happening in a specific moment in time. The repetitions create a circularity that turns the episodic presentation, the adventure of incident following incident, into a design. The characters' own perception of time resembles a spiral that moves linearly, repeating its own pattern.

The characters experience time as circular, repeating past events and suggesting future events. Ursula remarks that she knows it all by memory and, "Es como si el tiempo diera vueltas en redondo y hubiéramos vuelto al principio" (p. 169). For Ursula and Aureliano Buendía time passes and does not pass (pp. 111, 285). Although Ursula confirms the circularity of time (pp. 192, 253), time also wastes away and things change (pp. 161, 211, 215). When time is experienced subjectively, it stops and starts according to emotion. During the four-year rain all Macondo feels time exists as if solidified, according to Aureliano Segundo: "Los había visto al pasar, sentados en las salas con la mirada absorta y los brazos cruzados, sintiendo transcurrir un tiempo entero, un tiempo sin desbravar, porque era inútil dividirlo en meses y años, y los días en horas, cuando no podía hacerse nada más que contemplar la lluvia" (p. 273). The pattern of time the family experiences is the

pattern that Pilar Ternera, the ancient and amiable village whore, sees in the family's history. "No había ningún misterio en el corazón de un Buendía, que fuera impenetrable para ella, porque un siglo de naipes y de experiencia 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" (p. 334).

This spiral of time is strikingly similar to mythic time, that is, a time continuous and discontinuous with a present, on-going time. Mythic beings may operate in the present, but always conforming to a destiny and nature established in the mythic past.<sup>36</sup> And this time pattern is also similar to the experience of time by the non-enlightened according to karmic doctrine and by the neurotic according to psychoanalysis.<sup>37</sup> The repetitious reliving of the past in the present is the condition of alienation from being. Concerning this condition Heidegger has stated: "For man, as he journeys everywhere, is not without issue in the external sense that he comes up against outward barriers and cannot go on. In one way or another he can always go farther into the etcetera. He is without issue because he is always thrown back on the paths he himself has laid out: he becomes mired in his paths, caught in the beaten track, and thus caught he compasses the circle of his world, entangles himself in appearance, and so excludes himself from being. He turns round and round in his own circle."<sup>38</sup>

The core of the characters' experience is solitude and alienation. This is the condition of their existence, and the mythical-historical time structure communicates those feelings of helplessness, meaninglessness, and frustration that accompany this circular life pattern. The symbolic incest taboo is an appropriate configuration of this solitude, since it suggests circularity and the implacability and irrationality of the family's feeling of being caught prisoner in its own pattern.

This description may seem a solemn picture of a novel that is full of humor and of the vitality inherent in fantasy. But it is a short step that separates the ridiculous and the sublime, the humorous and the tragic. And humor has a violence of its own when it explodes comfortable conceptions of reality. Much of the novel's humor is the black humor of the absurd and the grotesque. The structure exaggerates the characters' traits and pursuits to the extreme point so that we see the meaninglessness and incoherence of the pattern of their lives. As one critic remarks, the novel reduces the history of Latin America almost to the proportions of a stupid and macabre game.<sup>39</sup> The humor is similar to that which borders on the tragic, and it reminds us of the cartoon elements in a painting such as Picasso's Guernica. The aggressiveness of humor in the novel is directed against the human condition rather than against the foibles of a specific society. The grotesque exaggeration spares few of man's cherished beliefs and values. Utopia, the Promised Land ("la tierra que nadie les había



prometido"), war, fame and glory ("la exquisita mierda de la gloria"), chastity, marriage, all are seen as absurd and grotesque. Yet the humor does not minimize the characters' importance or their suffering. The characters are not comic types but grotesque exaggerations of typical life patterns. For example, the figure of Colonel Aureliano Buendía is a grotesquely humorous portrayal of the popular hero whose power breeds fear and isolation. The circle of Aureliano's own fear and isolation is the concrete circle his men draw around him with chalk so that no one can approach him. The inward experience is transferred directly to pictorial presentation and the result is at once humorous and tragic.

Humor and irony both function to balance the tragic proportions of the novel's events. Often humor momentarily breaks the tension and allows an intensity to build up underneath the narrative surface. For example, the narration of the murder of Aureliano José (the son of Colonel Aureliano Buendía and Pilar Ternera) is tempered by references to his destiny according to Pilar's playing-card predictions: "Aureliano José estaba destinado a conocer con ella la felicidad que le negó Amaranta, a tener siete hijos y a morirse de viejo en sus brazos, pero la bala de fusil que le entró por la espalda y le despedazó el pecho, estaba dirigida por una mala interpretación de las barajas" (p. 136). Throughout the novel the intensity of the many executions, massacres, murders, and suicides is maintained by the balance that humor and irony afford. The use of humor keeps a distance between the characters and

us as readers so that we do not immediately perceive the impact of the violent events.

A continuous irony is created by the contrast between the serenity of the narrator and the absurdity and grotesqueness of much of the story. But there is a deeper irony that tends toward the mystery of tragedy. This irony arises in the contrast between the all-inclusiveness of the tone and of the mythical-historical structure and the lack of a coherent analytic structure that would explain the characters' world. The spiraling structure communicates the characters' inner experience and we recognize that experience as a universal feeling of how life is. But that same structure does not use the authority traditionally present in the omniscient narrator and traditionally applied to biblical myth to explain why this world is as it is. This deeper irony gives us the freedom to interpret events for ourselves while maintaining the mysteriousness of the inexplicable.

The forward movement of the characters' circling lives is toward the final limit of death, and the family's drift toward annihilation is the downward slope of tragedy. The fantasy, humor, and vitality of the novel do not distract us from the hard realities, but, by distracting us from ordinary perception, show us those realities. Ideally tragedy is expected to reveal "man's total possibilities and his most grievous limitations--all that he should and can do as creator of good, all that he does or fails to do or cannot do as creature of fate, chance, or his own evil nature."<sup>40</sup> The values of

tragedy we see in the novel are not arranged in the classical form of a hero who struggles against an outward limitation and fails, revealing his tragic flaw. In the novel the tragic values are scattered and appear in a different form. The vitality of the rapid narration and the liveliness of the humor and fantasy suggest the surge of life, the possibilities open before man. Fantasy itself suggests unlimited possibility and the creative urge of imagination. The limitations of time and death are forcefully portrayed. The biblical myth in the novel obviously does not extend to a resurrection. The destruction of Macondo at the very end of the novel is final and complete. And the characters themselves have a strange fragility. The Buendía family is quite literally marked by a tragic sign. The tragic hero is the whole community, and by identification with myth, the whole of humanity, reflected in the Buendía family. The family's struggle is with the past and the past's reappearing in the present. There is no well defined opponent in this struggle. Their struggle is with a condition, the illusory but all-pervasive condition of solitude and alienation.

The nature of the characters' struggle may make them appear victims rather than heroes. They may seem to be the pathetic objects of events that shape them. But they are more than pathetic victims in that they sense their dilemma, fight against their condition, and gain some insight into their being.<sup>41</sup> Many of the characters recognize their own solitude, the circularity of their experience of time, and the family's drift toward destruction.

The impulse to self-knowledge appears throughout the novel in the characters' fascination with Melquíades' manuscript. Ironically, the three characters who are closest to Melquíades and to his papers are those whom the family considers mad. José Arcadio Buendía's search for answers is exaggerated and humorous, and he goes mad when he discovers that time has stopped. His final insight is the ironically tragic discovery that he is mad (p. 78). José Arcadio Segundo, who witnessed the massacre of the workers, ends his days trying to decipher Melquíades' manuscript. The family definitely considers him mad. He and the last Aureliano discover that José Arcadio Buendía was not so crazy as everyone believed, since they also find that time can stop, and suffer accidents, and leave a fraction of eternalized time in a room. The search for insight is thus associated with time, memory, and forgetfulness.<sup>42</sup> When Aureliano is finally able to decipher Melquíades' manuscript, he discovers that it is the family's history and that the events are ordered not in chronological time but concentrated so that a century exists in an instant. And then he discovers his own origin and his name. Ironically, these discoveries come at the moment of death.

The characters' existence in time is a limitation they cannot overcome. Aureliano discovers that the twins, José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo, were unable to decipher the manuscript, "no sólo por incapacidad e inconstancia, sino porque sus tentativas eran prematuras" (p. 350). The themes of forgetfulness and memory are presented

at the novel's beginning in the plague of insomnia. The effect of the plague is forgetfulness. "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" (p. 44). The last Aureliano is weighed down with memories of the past, but, paradoxically, he lives in a "forgetfulness" of his own identity. When he rediscovers the family's history in Melquíades' manuscript, he is freed from the past and can discover his name. The suggestion is that insight is difficult, unlikely, and tardy. The tragic condition of the characters has a circular nature. They are alienated and alone for lack of understanding, and they cannot gain insight because of their alienation.

Their condition has that mysterious inexplicability necessary to tragedy. Tragedy forces us to reflect and to find that our reflections fail. The tragic vision deals with unsolved questions and with the many-faceted, ambiguous, and irreconcilable appearances of truth.<sup>43</sup> The condition of the characters, their solitude and alienation, is the limitation against which they struggle. And it cannot be lightly explained away. The themes of memory and the invasion of the past into the present give us glimpses into this condition. But in the end the mystery remains.

The intensity of the downward movement of tragedy is felt on the level of images and changes of tone. In the first sections we feel

the possibilities open before the family. The freshness of a new world is communicated by the founding of the town, the great physical and sexual power of the men, and the exploring spirit of José Arcadio Buendía. As the novel progresses, the execution that appears in the opening lines becomes more and more a daily reality. The series of plagues, floods, and wars builds up a tension of suffering and violence that culminates in the overwhelming brutality of the massacre of the workers. The violence then recedes, leaving a paralyzed world of decay and death. The last sections of the novel are filled with demonic imagery of perversion and decadence. And as the family dwindles suddenly to an incestuous pair of lovers in the abandoned family house, we feel the closing of the spiral pattern. Aureliano's translation of Melquíades' papers has the impact of sudden insight, and the deliberate and final destruction that he accepts calmly suggests the relief of tragedy's end.

The tragic vision does not appear in the novel in clearly defined conflicts and tensions. The very haziness of the characters' confrontation with their condition is part of its tragic nature. The blurred and confusing aspects suggest the illusiveness and inwardness of the dream.

All the forms encountered in the novel show its movement away from analytical, empirical objectivity and toward the subjective vision typical of lyric. The fictional elements of fantasy, the characters' identification with archetypes, and the biblical-mythical

time design create a novelistic universe that, rather than analyzing reality, presents a vision of reality. This vision reflects life in the manner of lyric, that is, metaphorically and subjectively. We are always conscious of the narrator's voice, shaping and directing the flow of images. This lyrical quality is appropriate to the novel's focus on the inward and the existential. The novel's originality is that it turns narrative forms which traditionally tend to the analytical and objective toward the visionary and the subjective.

The harmony of the novel's forms attests to its excellence. The all-inclusive tone and the totality of the biblical-mythical time structure support each other. The ironic anachronism of the narrator's authority depends on the inflated, somewhat archaic style. The irony created by the contrast between the serene narrator's voice and the absurdities of action rests on the deeper irony of a "total structure" that does not, in its totality, explain the fantastic dream world of the novel. The vivid, fleeting characters, the rhythmic flow of incident, and the intensity of the visual imagery give the novel the expressiveness and impact of a brilliant dream. The symbolic distortion and exaggeration create the grotesque humor and the expression of vitality and liveliness that waste away in the downward slope of tragedy. The depth of the tragic vision and the breadth of the themes make the novel a major work of art. The fusion of realism and fantasy that creates the dreamlike atmosphere expresses more of the totality

of experience than we often find in the realistic novel or the stream-of-consciousness novel, since this fusion does not artificially separate the inward and the outward. The novel's forms are deeply rooted in the Latin American experience. And the themes that emerge from these forms are the universal themes of solitude and estrangement, the mystery and tragedy of the human condition.



NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- 1 Gabriel García Márquez, Cien años de soledad, 11th ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1969). Further references to the novel appear in parentheses in the text.
- 2 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 97-98.
- 3 Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 36.
- 4 Armando Durán, "Conversaciones con Gabriel García Márquez," Revista Nacional de Cultura, 185 (1968), p. 29.
- 5 Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in Against Interpretation and Other Essays (1964; rpt. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1969), p. 23. "The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art--and, by analogy, our own experience--more, rather than less, real to us. The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means."
- 6 Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Novedad y anacronismo de Cien años de soledad," Revista Nacional de Cultura, 185 (1968), pp. 3-21. Rodríguez Monegal mentions several anachronistic aspects of the novel in this article.
- 7 For a lucid discussion of the omniscient narrator see Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 272-79.
- 8 Ernesto Volkening, "Anotado al margen de Cien años de soledad," in Nueva novela latinoamericana I, ed. Jorge Lafforgue (Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 1969), p. 159.
- 9 Scholes and Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, pp. 13-15.
- 10 Mario Vargas Llosa, "García Márquez: de Aracataca a Macondo," in Mario Benedetti and others, Nueve asedios a García Márquez (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1969), p. 143. "La novela no omite ninguno de los niveles de realidad en que la historia de Macondo se inscribe: el individual y el colectivo, el legendario y el histórico, el cotidiano y el mítico."

11 The following article deals with some aspects of style and the techniques of intensification: Isaiás Lerner, "A propósito de Cien años de soledad," Cuadernos Americanos, 162 (1969), pp. 186-200.

12 Oscar Collazos, "Collazos: América Latina; una lucha a muerte con el pasado," La Gaceta de Cuba, No. 7 (1969), rpt. in Recopilación de textos sobre Gabriel García Márquez, ed. Pedro Simón Martínez (Havana: Casa de Las Américas, 1969), p. 227. "Yo creo que cualquier acercamiento que pretenda hacerse a la obra de García Márquez corre el riesgo del mimetismo: en Cien años de soledad ese lenguaje aparentemente grandilocuente y académico obedece a un propósito muy concreto: desmitificar la solemnidad de un país en el que su historia literaria se sustenta en múltiples falsificaciones."

13 José Miguel Oviedo, "Macondo: Un territorio mágico y americano," in Mario Benedetti and others, Nueve asedios a García Márquez, pp. 96-97. "Es un arte hiperbólico y distorsionado ...." p. 97. This article is an amplified version of the articles in Amaru, No. 1 (Jan. 1967), pp. 87-89; and in Víspera, Año 1, No. 4 (Jan. 1968), pp. 64-68.

14 See Lerner, Cuadernos Americanos, 162 (1969), p. 199, for remarks on vocabulary.

15 I am using Bousoño's definition of the visionary image: Carlos Bousoño, Teoría de la expresión poética, 4th ed. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1966), pp. 106-33.

16 Several aspects of intensification are discussed in the following article: Raúl Silva-Cáceres, "La intensificación narrativa en Cien años de soledad," Revista de Bellas Artes, No. 22 (Jul.-Aug. 1968), rpt. in Recopilación de textos sobre Gabriel García Márquez, pp. 128-33.

17 Volkening, "Anotado al margen de Cien años de soledad," pp. 161-62.

18 Jack Richardson, "Master Builder," New York Review of Books, March 26, 1970, p. 3.

19 Angel Rama, "Un novelista de la violencia americana," rpt. in Recopilación de textos sobre Gabriel García Márquez, p. 71. This article is revised from the two following: "García Márquez: la

violencia americana," Marcha, No. 1201 (April 17, 1964), pp. 22-23; and "Introducción a Cien años de soledad," Marcha, No. 1368 (Sept. 2, 1967), p. 31.

20 Jorge Campos, "García Márquez: fábula y realidad," Insula, Año 23, No. 258 (May 23, 1968), p. 11. "Lo que nos parece hallar más fuerte en cuanto a ligazón con la literatura europea es la presencia de modos de ver y distorsionar la realidad más propios de procedimientos típicos del surrealismo."

21 The term "realismo-mágico" is often used to refer to a number of Latin American novels that employ marvelous or fantastic events. Although the term is useful in dealing with tendencies and in grouping novels, I avoid it simply to emphasize the unique blend of fantasy and realism in Cien años de soledad.

22 Walter H. Sokel, The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth Century German Literature (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 45. I use Sokel's description of expressionism given in the chapter "Music and Existence," pp. 24-54.

23 Sokel, The Writer in Extremis, p. 53.

24 Jean Franco, "El mundo grotesco de García Márquez," Índice, Año 24, No. 237 (Nov. 1968), p. 37.

25 Silva-Cáceres, "La intensificación narrativa en Cien años de soledad," p. 129. "En efecto, Macondo reproduce poéticamente las tensiones internas de la sociedad colombiana."

26 Richardson, "Master Builder," p. 3.

27 Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964), p. 243-44.

28 Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 27.

29 Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 27.

30 Koestler, The Act of Creation, p. 352.

31 René Jara Cuadra, Modos de estructuración mítica de la realidad en la novela hispanoamericana contemporánea, Serie monografías, Instituto de Lenguas y Literatura, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, No. 8 (May 1970), pp. 16-17.

32 Rodríguez Monegal, "Novedad y anacronismo de Cien años de soledad," p. 16.

33 David William Foster, "García Márquez and Solitude," Américas, 21 (Nov.-Dec. 1968), pp. 38-40. "Our inability to provide a coherent interpretation, a logical meaning, to the events that so disturb the characters concerned stresses the impenetrable mystery of life and his mockery of the traditional novel so confident in its resolution of all cause and effect relationships." p. 40.

34 Sokel, The Writer in Extremis, p. 48.

35 Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 304-06. Frye discusses the subjective intensity of romance and notes that it is a more revolutionary form than the novel.

36 Herbert Fingarette, The Self in Transformation: Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, and the Life of the Spirit (New York: Basic Books, 1963, and New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 209.

37 Fingarette, The Self in Transformation, pp. 204-12.

38 Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959, and New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1961), p. 132. The comments cited are from Heidegger's analysis of the Greek conception of being and the poet's role in Sophocles' Antigone.

39 Emmanuel Carballo, "Gabriel García Márquez, un gran novelista latinoamericano," Revista de la Universidad de México, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Nov. 1967), pp. 10-16, rpt. in Mario Benedetti and others, Nueve asedios a García Márquez, p. 35.

40 Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), p. 106.

41 Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy, p. 110. Sewall discusses the modern hero whose struggle is with a condition. The hero although he may seem pathetic is still tragic and a hero to the extent that he is aware of his dilemma, takes action, and gains some insight into his own being and the human condition.

42 Memory and the ability to remember are closely associated with enlightenment in karmic doctrine and with cure in psychoanalysis. The

way out of the stultifying, alienating repetition of the past in the present is the "correct" remembering and reliving of the past that frees the person from his past. See Fingarette, The Self in Transformation, pp. 210-12.

<sup>43</sup> Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy, pp. 4-13.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ARTISTIC VISION OF GARCIA MARQUEZ

García Márquez' first four novels seem to form a completed phase in his novelistic work. Cien años de soledad appears to leave the fictional world of Macondo completed and closed to further elaboration. This feeling remains, of course, speculation since García Márquez is still writing. The four novels are, in any case, intimately related to one another. Two of them, La hojarasca and Cien años de soledad, take place in the fictional Macondo, and the other two have the same setting, an unnamed village that is only slightly different from Macondo. Various characters and situations reappear from novel to novel and also in the short stories, Los funerales de la Mamá Grande and Isabel viendo llover en Macondo.<sup>1</sup> These interrelations among the novels make them a fictional whole, rich in resonances that broaden each individual work.

The first three novels are in a sense a preparation for Cien años de soledad which expands and gives the seemingly final definition to the world of Macondo. The tendency in critical articles about García Márquez' novelistic work has been to give less consideration to his first three novels than to Cien años de soledad. Several

critics do give attention to these novels in discussing García Márquez' novelistic development.<sup>2</sup> Rodríguez Monegal does so by comparing scenes that closely resemble each other and that appear in the short stories and in the novels. His commentary points out the differences in treatment and presentation of the scenes with particular reference to the author's use of fantastic distortion which is important in Cien años de soledad.<sup>3</sup> Rather than to trace the author's development from novel to novel, I propose to consider those aspects which are similar in all the novels. The preceding chapters of this study indicate that I believe each novel is well worth our attention and that the first three novels should not be considered only as preparatory to the larger work. Cien años de soledad is a definite departure from the realistically-oriented earlier works, but all the novels resemble each other in their thematic preoccupations and artistic techniques. An examination of these similarities can give us a more concise idea of the author's artistic vision than do the individual studies of the novels. The similarities among the novels can also help us to see the close relationship between García Márquez' use of craft and his view of reality--that is, between those two aspects of his art which are together termed "artistic vision."

In all of García Márquez' works we see his deep concern for man and for man's condition in society. The fictional world of Macondo reveals the historical and social circumstances particular to Colombia

and at the same time discovers universal themes of man in his world. García Márquez' novelistic techniques present the intimate feeling of man's existence. They do not separate the political and social being from the subjective and psychological. Each novel has a definite historical setting, and the characters are always shown as living parts of the society, beings molded by it and shaping its course. Perhaps the most striking quality of his novels is their ability to give us this intimate, inward feeling of the individual living in society and being influenced by time and history. The constant themes of the novels are existential: time, memory, solitude, alienation. Each novel has its own particular organization and tone. But the author employs similar techniques in all the novels to communicate this subjective experience of the individual life as part of society.

None of García Márquez' novels could be classified as experimental in the sense that they contain impressive innovations in novelistic technique. The techniques of symbolism, concentration, and grotesque distortion, however, place the first three novels on the outer limits of realism. Cien años de soledad is also a unique organization of traditional narrative techniques and fantastic distortion. In turning our attention to the narrative methods common to all the novels, we see a definite trend toward the presentation of a lyrical vision of reality that is most fully achieved in Cien años de soledad. This unique blend of objectivity and subjectivity in the novels creates the



dominant vision of ironic tragedy characteristic of García Márquez' works.

Common to all the novels is the use of a central symbol or symbolic configuration. In El coronel no tiene quién le escriba the fighting cock is symbolic of the character's intimate struggle to endure and also of the political conditions under which he lives. The pasquinades in La mala hora act as a symbol to convey the terror and irrationality that grip the community. This symbol communicates the atmosphere of the town, the feeling of the characters' existence. By concealing the "realistic" truth about the pasquinades, the author heightens the symbol's effectiveness to communicate this subjective experience. La hojarasca also has a central symbolic figure, the doctor whose life and death symbolize the town's spiritual and economic ruin. All of these central symbols tend to unify the various aspects of the characters' lives since they point at once to intimate psychological experience and to political and social circumstances. The central symbolic configuration of Cien años de soledad is the family's incestual relationships. This configuration suggests the solitude the community experiences at all levels--in their private lives and in their geographical and political circumstances. At the same time this symbolic configuration conveys a basic and universal theme: man's solitude and his condition of being a part of nature and being cut off from nature. The family struggles against falling back into incest, back into nature. The

episode of the plague of insomnia points to the central role of language and culture in this struggle to maintain the society. These central symbolic configurations tend to accumulate significance as each novel progresses, and much of their effectiveness lies in their ability to suggest the characters' subjective experience that is closely bound to their political and social being. García Márquez sees the lives of his characters as a unified whole--they are not just psychological portraits nor are they solely political and social figures.

This use of a central symbol or figure in all four novels is indicative of García Márquez' tendency away from analytical realism. None of the novels shows the objective and direct presentation that we expect to find in more realistic novels. La mala hora and El coronel may be situated on the very limits of realistic fiction, while La hojarasca and Cien años de soledad are more definitely lyrical visions of reality. Some techniques typical of more traditional realism are found in the two novels that take place in "el pueblo." In both El coronel and La mala hora we find third person narration, realistic characters, and recognizable settings and action. However, the characters and action tend to become lyrical configurations even in these realistically-oriented novels. When we recall a particularly memorable scene from either of these works, we find that the significance of the scene is not just a direct, analytical

meaning. The scenes--such as the mayor's forcing the dentist to pull his tooth, or the colonel's trying to sell the old clock--convey the feeling of existence in the town, the inner tensions of society, the weight of the past, the accumulated frustration of years of political corruption. The scenes may appear to be straightforward, direct presentations, but they achieve the power of the lyric in their ability to suggest implicit meanings. Although different in each novel, the techniques are similar in their tendency to turn "realistic" action and characters into lyrical images. While figurative language and patterns of poetic images serve this purpose in La hojarasca, the author's constraint in description and his choice of detail concentrate implied meanings in El coronel and La mala hora. Through various types of concentration--significant details, silences, repetitions--the scenes in these two novels are charged with suggestion of implicit meanings that carry the scenes beyond traditional realism. The lyrical vision of Macondo is conveyed by more truly narrative, that is, "story-telling" techniques in Cien años de soledad. By condensing a great wealth of narrative material into this novel, García Márquez achieves a baroque type of concentration. His method is to overpower us with incidents and characters while incessantly repeating the basic themes of alienation and solitude. This concentration by repetition disorients our perception of chronological time and our possible tendency to see cause-and-effect relationships. The result of this

disorientation is that the action and characters have the strangeness and immediacy typical of a dream state.

The novels' larger structures also indicate the author's tendency away from mimesis. We can say that La hojarasca and Cien años de soledad present "lyrical visions" of Macondo because their inner structures depend upon designs of images. The resolution of narrative elements in La hojarasca is achieved through the grouping of poetic images that communicate on a more sensorial and emotional level than would a more rational resolution of themes through action. This grouping of images is presented by juxtaposing the stylized monologues of the three characters. To convey the lyrical vision in Cien años de soledad, the author uses the all-inclusive design of identification of characters and action with biblical myth. This identification with myth helps create the circular, spiraling inner structure of the novel and effectively communicates the subjective lives of the characters, their solitude and alienation from being. The themes are discovered through fictional rather than through realistic-empirical presentation. The inner structure of La mala hora also depends upon the accumulation of series of images that communicate the repression, violence, and irrationality in the town's inner life. The novel's scenes are juxtaposed so as to work these themes out by groupings of images and by accumulation of tension rather than through cause-and-effect resolution. The result is not a clear and precise picture of the

political and social conditions in a rational sense. What the novel communicates is a subjective feeling of these conditions, quite as clear through emotional impact as that a more realistic and exhaustive presentation might give, but perhaps more forceful and suggestive. In both La mala hora and El coronel, the recognizable characters and action, the "realistic" material, is used to convey an ineffable feeling of existence. This narrative manner is close to the lyric in its dependence on communicating through sensorial and visual images and emotional force rather than through a logical plot. The action in El coronel, although presented through realistically-derived techniques, is not the outward, empirical course of events. Rather, the action is the inward struggle of the character against his own desperation. This struggle is closely related to political and social conditions and communicates the subjective essence of the character's life while suggesting many intimate qualities of existence in such a community.

Each of the novels has a carefully designed structure. The methods of condensation and the structural designs indicate that the author is a controlled writer, conscious of his craft and precise in the use of it. Each of his novels has one dominant tone and one unified structure. Even Cien años de soledad, in spite of its great amount of narrative material, has a single, dominating tone and structure. This characteristic shows the author's preoccupation with creating a special "language" in each novel. In La hojarasca the characters' monologues

are stylized to form a unified language that dominates the whole work. The characters are used as masks for the lyrical voice the narrator assumes. Although they do have some individuality, they do not exist apart from or in contrast to the novel's special tone and language. In this novel the absorption of the characters into this controlling voice is done quite obviously through the stylization of their monologues. The two novels which seem to be more realistic, however, show a similar characteristic. The characters' dialogues, the descriptions of nature, and the action are so selected and presented that the whole work has one basic language. In El coronel the colonel, for example, speaks with the same laconic and humorously ironic tone as does the author's narrative voice. The characters are realistic in the sense that they act and speak as we would expect their empirical counterparts to do, and yet they are so selected and molded into the work's own language that we perceive no disunity or contrast between narrator and characters. In keeping with the more bitter and intense tone of La mala hora, we find the characters using more vulgarities and gross expressions than do the characters of El coronel. The action is brutal and the descriptions of nature are correspondingly forceful and harsh. These elements are not less realistic for being molded into the unified language and tone of the novel. The point is that through this unity we see a definite artistic intention on the author's part that is different from the traditional realistic writer's aims. García Márquez' novels

show little preoccupation with giving us a mimetic and exhaustive portrayal of characters, customs, and nature. Rather, they show a predominating artistic intention. Although drawing on traditional realistic forms to some extent, the author uses his materials to create a special language into which the characters and other elements blend. The very rhythms of this artfully created language communicate qualities of the inward life of society. The sparse expressions and the short, sometimes abrupt rhythms of El coronel aid in the expression of the meagre, restrictive life of the town.

The creation of a special tone and language is even more readily apparent in Cien años de soledad. The voice of the narrator is felt controlling and dominating throughout the novel. The slightly archaic, baroque manner of this voice is in keeping with the ironic assumption of omniscience and with the epic proportions of the novel. In this novel the author is more obviously creating an entirely fictional world--a metaphor--rather than following the principles of realism. Through the use of fantastic distortion, the author makes plain his break with realism. By discarding any pretensions to mimesis, the author is free to use elements of the epic and of the lyric modes. Many traditional novelists also used a narrative voice, poetic images, and rhythmic patterns, and many created a special language for each novel that partially absorbed the dialogues of characters. But their dedication to analytical thinking and to recreating an observable

reality often restricted their use of lyrical language. García Márquez' works all show that his first dedication is to the creation of a verbal art object rather than to any preconceived ideas of what a novel should treat. This predominance of artistic intention over mimesis is typical of the contemporary novel. The ambiguity of the novel, its constant movement between prose and poetry,<sup>4</sup> make it a malleable form that has shown its ability to outlive any former dependence on mimesis. In García Márquez' works we can see a definite tendency toward the lyrical mode in his creation of a dominating narrator's voice that is similar to the lyrical, subjective "I" that presents a vision of reality and freely uses whatever resources necessary to create a language to communicate that vision. In accordance with this tendency away from mimesis and toward the presentation of a subjective, lyrical view of reality, we see the use of myth to give structure to the novelistic world of Cien años de soledad. The more traditional structures of chronological time and of life span are thus modified by a more flexible and suggestive mythical structure that can be shaped to communicate the more subjective vision of reality.

García Márquez' ability to fuse fictional and empirical modes creates the unique blend of objectivity and subjectivity in his novels. The method is particularly suited to express an ironically tragic vision. The characters are always subject to time and to the historical conditions of society. While maintaining these more



objective aspects of their lives, the author draws on the lyrical and fictional modes to convey their subjective experience of the inward tensions of society and of existence in time.

The author's presentation of the characters' lives reveals the irony that is part of his vision. The action and characters in all his works are seen as if from above and beyond the individual character. The narrator's voice presents their reality so that we see and understand more of their lives than any one of the characters does. This distance creates an irony that is more humorous or bitter according to the tone of each work. Yet the technical point of view is often close enough to the individual so as to encourage a basic sympathy for him. This double view of the characters' reality creates the type of irony that sees man's faults and struggles without becoming satiric. It is in this ironic presentation that we are made aware of García Márquez' solidarity with the human condition.

Throughout García Márquez' novels we see his use of grotesque or absurd elements. As part of the predominating ironically tragic vision, these expressionistic elements convey the disturbing and mysterious side of reality. They are effective in fusing the inward and outward experience of the characters. The many grotesque and repulsive elements in La mala hora point at once to the suffering of the characters and to the repression and irrationality present in the society. In harmony with the less intense tone of El coronel,

the grotesqueness of the fighting cock conveys the paradoxical nature of the colonel's struggle to endure his condition, which in turn is seen as directly created by political and social circumstances. The oddity and grotesqueness of the doctor in La hojarasca express his terrible solitude while suggesting the moral decay of the society that implacably rejects him. This tendency to present a grotesque and absurd side of reality bursts into a full picture in Cien años de soledad. While the characters' ties to social types and historical counterparts maintain some objectivity, the use of fantasy allows for expressionistic distortion that conveys their subjective experience. This strain of grotesque elements creates the kind of humor that slides imperceptibly into the tragic.

In García Márquez' first three novels we see some elements of his ironically tragic view that is more fully expressed in Cien años de soledad. All four novels show the characters bound to their condition in time and subject to death. This emphasis on their objective state is imperative in a tragic vision of reality. The expressionistic distortions point to those absurd and inexplicable facets of reality that are so much a part of the author's outlook. The mystery communicated by the strangeness of these distorted elements is also an important part of the tragic. The almost pathetically grotesque doctor of La hojarasca is as a character similar to the victimized outsider common in contemporary fiction. The same

could be said of the poverty-stricken old colonel in El coronel. These two characters embody some of the values of tragedy and at the same time reflect the inward and the objective conditions of their societies. They are, like the collective character of the town in La mala hora, in a "boundary" situation typical of the tragic hero's condition. It is Cien años de soledad, however, that embodies most completely the author's ironically tragic vision.

Cien años de soledad shows the largeness of scope and the treatment in depth that we expect from a full presentation of the tragic vision. By dealing with an entire family and its course in history and by identifying the characters and events with biblical myth, the author suggests their symbolization of the whole nation and of humanity. The vitality of the language helps to express the surge of life, the possibilities open before the characters. The family proliferates and struggles against its own alienation and solitude, and is finally overcome by these intangible enemies. As in the other novels, the characters' lives are consumed in a conflict with spiritual, subjective conditions as much as with the outward circumstances of an economic, historical, or social nature. The circularity of the novel's structure expresses the characters' sense of being caught in time and circumstances. And their final defeat brings an ironical lucidity, as the last Buendía, by deciphering Melquíades' manuscript, discovers only his family's past and his own death.

After reading Cien años de soledad we may become aware of the limitations of the earlier, shorter works. García Márquez' themes in this latest novel are similar to those of his first--the weight of the past, time and memory, solitude, the tragedy and violence of Latin American reality. Yet it is in Cien años de soledad that we find these themes expressed with all the force and depth that is only suggested in La hojarasca. It would be idle to praise García Márquez' latest novel more, since it has been received with high acclaim throughout the Spanish-speaking countries and beyond them. More important, perhaps, is to emphasize the quality and value of El coronel no tiene quién le escriba and of La mala hora. These two novels, though less ambitious works than Cien años de soledad, are quite as excellent in their own way. And to compare them unfavorably to Cien años de soledad would distract unnecessarily from their qualities that are based on reticence and control.

With the reading of each of García Márquez' novels, we enter a strange and yet suggestively familiar world that speaks to us of problems and preoccupations that are as modern and pressing as those treated by the most "urban" novelist. García Márquez' vision sees reality ironically in all its complexity. His humor and irony do not minimize man's suffering, and it is in this attitude that we perceive his solidarity with the human condition. His careful, controlled art presents his fictional worlds so that we as readers can participate

in them in an effort to imaginatively recreate with each reading that unique vision García Márquez offers us.

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, Los funerales de la Mamá Grande (Xalapa: Editorial Universidad Veracruzana, 1962), and Isabel viendo llover en Macondo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Estuario, 1967). The latter story appeared first in Mito, Año 1, No. 4 (Oct.-Nov. 1955), pp. 221-25.

<sup>2</sup> Three of the several critical articles which consider the author's development are the following: José Miguel Oviedo, "Macondo: Un territorio mágico y americano," in Mario Benedetti and others, Nueve asedios a García Márquez (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1969), pp. 89-105; Angel Rama, "Un novelista de la violencia americana," in Nueve asedios, pp. 106-25; Mario Vargas Llosa, "García Márquez: de Aracataca a Macondo," in Nueve asedios, pp. 126-46.

<sup>3</sup> Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Novedad y anacronismo de Cien años de soledad," Revista Nacional de Cultura, 185 (1968), pp. 3-11.

<sup>4</sup> Octavio Paz, "Ambigüedad de la novela," El arco y la lira, 2nd ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1967), pp. 219-31.

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