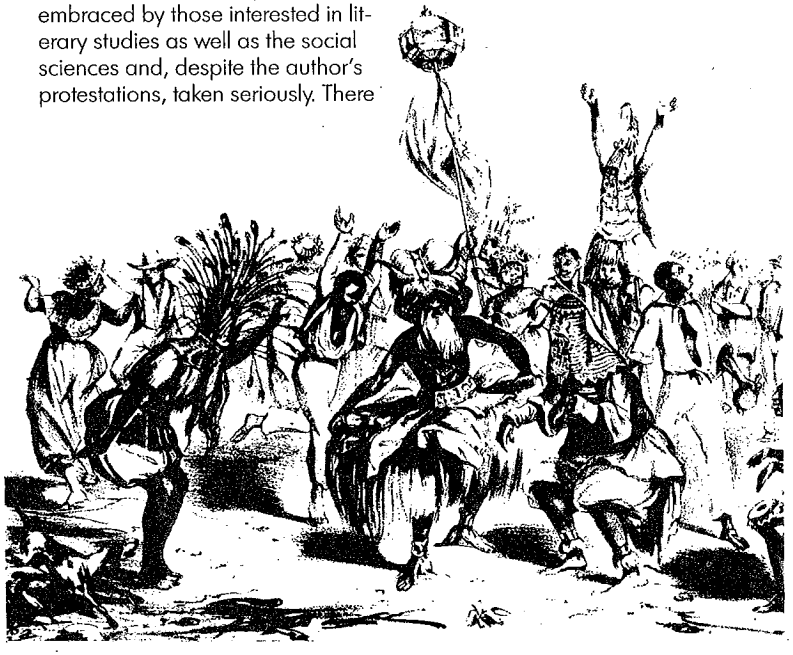

The Storyteller and the Carnival Queen: "Funerales de la Mamá Grande"

Debra A. Castillo

¿Cómo puede estar acabado [mi libro] si aún no está acabada mi vida?
(Ginés de Pasamonte in *Don Quijote*)

The archaeologist or historian of Macondo would find it difficult to date the reign of the Mamá Grande in relation to that of the Buendía dynasty. For although her name is briefly mentioned in *Cien años de soledad*, the Mamá Grande does not fit easily into the pages of Melquiades's text and seems to belong to another level of fictional reality altogether. It is the narrator of the short story, "Funerales de la Mamá Grande," who indicates most clearly that this is indeed so. In the opening paragraphs of the story, the narrator defines himself as the representative of a period of transition, a time in which the life and death of the Mamá Grande is already, in terms of the story, passing from common knowledge into the reconstructions of historical or mythic representations. The narrator, nevertheless, still remains in that period of flux, "antes de que tengan tiempo de llegar los historiadores"[1] to impose a rigid order on the memories and fix them in official narrative. The narrator, thus, situates himself temporally and establishes a site from which he is to construct his tale, a site which is determined physically ("ahora es la hora de recostar un taburete a la puerta de la calle"), temporally (now, in this unsettled period of transition), and philosophically ("ésta es, incrédulos del mundo entero, la verídica historia" [p. 127]).

In a few brief lines, the narrator establishes his authority and the audience's ignorance, his truth and our incredulity, his choice of a specific form of expression: "verídica historia" which does not acknowledge itself, which denies all ties to the (as yet unwritten) official history.[2] What he rejects, then, from this chosen position, is what Bakhtin calls the "conceptualizing discourse that had made a home for itself in all the higher reaches of national ideological thought processes,"[3] that is, the conceptualizing framework of a history within which all acts and events find their proper, officially sanctioned place. The strangeness of this story is due precisely to this election of a place which is no proper place, to this rejection of the conceptualizations of official discourse, a problem in which the readers' angle of vision—our place or displacement in the text—is a crucial element. The inevitable recognition that the place of the narrator will be usurped exac-

erbates rather than relieves this strangeness. The historians will arrive, and this discourse will give way before another, a conceptualization in which the proper place will be decreed by law: the true history, and no longer the "verídica historia," which dissipates the incredulity of a naïve populace.

The opposition between the two histories is not as simple, however, as the narrator expects the more credulous of us to accept. Luis de Arrigoitia is correct in his recognition that even non-conceptualized history is heavily dependent on the detritus of official histories, on memories of "la 'danza de la muerte' medieval, el teatro jesuita y calderonsiano del siglo XVII, los desfiles de carnaval, la propaganda comercial del siglo XX."[4] Indeed, the narrator of this story draws his material from just such detritus. His story sifts this jumble of half-forgotten festivity, this refuse heap of the conceptual, mediating the interval between the death of the Mamá Grande—which after all signals the passing of a historical epoch—and the official reinstitution of the myth of her life and reign under the approving eye of the historian.

The narrator, we recall, sets his stool against "la puerta de la calle," assuming the traditional pose of the storyteller and indicating by this position his openness to still other elements of historical detritus: the voices from the street, the gossip rejected by the traditional historian who prefers to consult the textual evidence in libraries and archives. In so doing, the storyteller identifies an ideological place for his tale as well as spatial and temporal ones, and he indicates his objections not only to the conceptualizations but also to the univocity of historical discourse. His story is, implicitly, a dialogic one, which establishes a conscious opposition to and a polemical stance against the centralizing, reductionist forces functional as the official historical ideology. An oral tale rather than a written history, it is both more flexible and more ambiguous; it is also, however, as a tale based on the anonymous voices of popular report, subject to the deformations, distortions, and confusions of all gossip.

Clearly, such deformations are the very substance of a dialogic account of the past in Bakhtin's sense of the word. The narrator who organizes the elements of the story into the text we read does so in a manner that is patently incomplete and frequently contradictory. His tale, unlike that of the historians, does not produce or reflect a single predetermined meaning; instead, it emphasizes the decisive moment of the tale's reception. Such a text, in Bakhtin's words, "is not a dialogue in the narrative sense, nor in the abstract sense; rather it is a dialogue between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other."[5] The dialogue, then, takes place between the bits of gossip jostling for priority in the tale and occurs as well between the storyteller on his stool and the audience (of gossipmongers?) at his feet, an audience whose delight in the tale remains unaffected by the proximate infringement of stabilizing convention.

At the same time, while he reveals the bankruptcy of the conceptualizing discourse of historical writing, the narrator, like the historian, shapes the story by his telling of it. The disparate voices he manages, however incomplete their message, never dissolve into cacophony or mere noise. In this shaping impulse, the "positionalities"[6] of historian and storyteller begin to approximate each other. Beneath his rejection of the distortions of history is his own ironic acceptance of the importance of concurrence in the adoption of a single story, "la verídica historia," a concept which he, no less than the other, later historians, arrogates to himself. The narrator rejects history, but also, albeit parodically, mimics its norms, methods, and style and reveals history's rhetorical function as an organizational metaphor. Furthermore, this oral tale reaches us, its current public, in a written form, and in that respect too the story is incorporated into historical discourse. It remains, however, a historical discourse which maintains a constant self-critique of its own presuppositions. Robert Sims, then, errs in his statement that "in 'Los Funerales de la Mamá Grande,' García Márquez succeeds in restoring to myth its primary function of speaking narratively about important subjects."[7] The situation, the site, and the function of this narrator are far more complex; the parodic nature of his stylistic undertaking indicates once again that he places himself to one side of any such facile identifications, whether historical or mythic. Just as temporally he locates himself between the "reality" of Mamá Grande's reign and the arrival of the historians, so ideologically he is placed between the voices of the street (which will eventually evolve into myth) and the voices of the historians, for both history and myth are handicapped by their inability to recognize or accept the transformatory power of language as it distances reality from the public. The narrator's position between or beside both myth and history, both language and the object of analysis, allows him to uncover (or recover) both language and the object and to reveal that the site of analysis conditions all such imaginative reconstructions, whether mythic or historical.

The incredulous reader is not likely to forget that, at least since Cervantes, a story's claim to be the "verídica historia" is almost automatically a signal of fictionality, and in relating history and gossip through the mediations of his text the narrator points to the underlying similarity of gossip and history as rhetorical strategies and, further, to the fictionality of both these radically opposed options for discourse about a perceived reality. The storyteller, in revealing the fundamental identity of the historians' and the gossips' desire to recapture and hypostatize past events now fading into inaccessibility, destroys two myths of authority: that of hegemonic history and that of nonreflective myth. In their decomposition he is finally able to resolve the problem of his own parodic stance in relation to the Mamá Grande.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Mamá Grande defies

all attempts at insertion into narrative. Even in life, "se esfumaba en su propia leyenda" (p. 133), and through her death she passes into history, but at the same time escapes reality and the possibility of any reconstruction except any admittedly imaginative one, exceeding her "proper" limitations of time and space. Macondo is the navel of the universe (an undecipherable dream's navel in Freudian terms), and the Mamá Grande, equally undecipherable, "durante el presente siglo . . . había sido el centro de gravedad de Macondo" (p. 129). Because she is so essentially insubstantial, her function as a centering presence is highly problematic. Whereas representational literature has always been premised on a recognizably extraliterary reality, the story of the Mamá Grande denies us this assumed anteriority to representation, displacing the extraliterary origin of the text and leaving the author (comically) compromised by a centerless form.

The Mamá Grande, an unreal and semi-divine figure in her lifetime—the narrator notes that on her birthdays "se vendían estampas y escapularios con [su] imagen" (p. 132)—is even less accessible as a biographical subject as her image fades still further into an absolute otherness created in the tumult surrounding her death. Her very name serves only as a social marker, indicating her standing in the community, and offers no proper, unequivocal reading. Her proper name, María del Rosario Castañeda y Montero, vanishes with her accession to the role and power of the Mamá Grande, and even that name, which signals her place in the social hierarchy, is subject to slippage. The woman herself, "que fue dotada por la naturaleza para amamantar ella sola a toda su especie, agonizaba virgen y sin hijos" (p. 133), and her name "se ignoraba en el resto del país hacía pocas horas, antes de ser consagrada por la palabra impresa" (p. 138). Neither "mamá" nor "grande," except in physical size, the matriarch achieves greatness only in the fickle and ephemeral light of the attention of the press. Yet, at the same time, she is a totalizing presence in the story, annihilating the biographer, depriving him, except for the scrambling for fragments of a parodic vision, of his authoritative place. The *mise en abîme*, frequently pressed into service by scholars to model other decentered fictions in which the originary force is endlessly displaced, seems inappropriate in application to these radically parodic displacements of the Mamá Grande, a woman whose vast, ephemeral bulk obliterates abyssal perception.

Her image, the image recreated through news reports and offical communiqués, is, nevertheless, clearly the focal image of the story, and her death represents a moment of crisis on all levels. "El orden social había sido rozado por la muerte" (p. 138), says the narrator, and the President of the Republic, the representative of social and political power, pays homage to her passing by his presence at her funeral. Joined there by the Pope, the representative of religious power, the spiritual and terrestrial forces converge, inevitably, inexorably, at the hidden source of their authority, at the carnival surrounding the funeral of the Mamá Grande whose moral patrimony includes the seal of their legitimization. Significantly, the narrative proclamation of the death of the Mamá Grande replaces the death itself in importance, and this fictional construct rather than the raw event inspires the narrative. Distance from the actual (absent) event serves as a limiting or destabilizing force on the narrative form, but it is also a critical enabling factor in the production of meaning(s). Ginés de Pasamonte's observation to Don Quijote that death is essential to completing the picaresque biography is well taken in terms of the biographical mode in general. "Funerales" carries out the implication of such an observation, and, in a parodic reversal of the typical biography, the narrator concentrates not on the "life and works" but on the crucial period of the "death and funeral" as his subject. The ultimate narrative fantasy, it seems, would be for readers to pretend that there was once a moment prior to this death, or, indeed, that there will be a moment that we could reach posterior to the funeral celebration.

The problem for the narrator, clearly, is how to force this fragmentary, ambiguous, yet totalizing presence to disclose itself and assume a form and a meaning. Since legend and the passage of time already obscure the reality of the Mamá Grande's existence and her reign, and since the very existence of any raw event anterior to the symbolizing impetus is at question, the narrator resorts to hyperbole, the rhetorical trope that functions on the boundary of objective reality, to force that "reality" which is beyond the limits of the objective to reveal its secrets. The Mamá Grande, a presence which can be glimpsed just beyond or outside the reach of the narrator, is unavailable in any absolute sense to historical reconstruction. Thus, the narrator of this tale elects the medium of exaggeration and irony, operating always on the borders of a semiotic collapse. Weeks are "interminable," Nicanor is "titánico" (p. 128), the Mamá Grande is "infinitamente rica y poderosa" (p. 130); instances are multiplied throughout the text. Such expressions, by virtue of their very magnitude coupled with semantic vagueness, have a disconcerting effect, as the magnificence of the subject is both declared and subverted in the same phrase. Interminable time, titanic size, and infinite riches are dismissed with the same gesture that eventually discounts the Mamá Grande's claim to universal moral hegemony.

In representing the figure of the matriarch from a hyperbolic and ironic perspective, the narrator sacrifices positive and positivistic attempts to represent what once was; instead, irony and exaggeration are recuperated for a negative dialectic—the story's "way of covering over the instability of its form, a way of acknowledging and denying in the same gesture the presence/absence of the organic totality it strives to achieve."[8] The opening of "Funerales," with its juxtaposition of "incrédulos" and "verídica historia," makes just such a gesture of affirmation and negation. The narrator clearly demonstrates his ironic totalizing aspirations in the closing lines of the story by repeating, from a point just prior in time to the opening of the

story, the motivations expressed in the opening sentence: "Sólo faltaba entonces que alguien recostara un taburete en la puerta para contar esta historia . . . y que ninguno de los incrédulos del mundo se quedara sin noticia de la Mamá Grande" (p. 147). With the repetition of the key words "taburete," "historia," and "incrédulos," the storyteller reaffirms his position just before releasing the tale, appropriately, not to the conceptualizations of history, but to the rubbish heap from which he garnered his detritus. And this tale, like the detritus which composes it, is as transitory as the transitional place from which it is told: "mañana miércoles vendrán los barrenderos" (p.147).

Since the Mamá Grande, however distorted or traduced by the storyteller's hyperbolic text, is the titular focus of the story, the question that remains to be explored is that of the relation between her and the storyteller. What can be discovered between the lines of the parodic or ironic text of the position, place, situation of this ambiguous woman? The storyteller, like the traditional historian, *does* provide an accounting of the important events in the life of the matriarch, describing these events in the form of biographical references. Thus, "a los 22 años" she assumed power, "hasta los cincuenta años" she was still rejecting passionate suitors (p. 133), "hasta cuando cumplió los 70," her birthday was celebrated by "las ferias más prolongadas y tumultosas de que se tenga memoria" (p.131), and she "vivió en función de dominio durante 92 años," her death breaking a dynastic chain that extended in direct line for descent for two centuries (p. 129). These few temporal references, imprecise, linked on the whole to the body's biological clock rather than the historian's extrinsic calendar, provide the standard of temporality in the story. Only rarely is calendar time evoked: the Mamá Grande dies "un martes del setiembre pasado" (p. 127), and her grandmother confronted a patrol of the Coronel Aureliano Buendía during "la guerra del 1875" (p. 130).

Yet even these scant references to biological or historical time are rendered ambiguous. The date of the Mamá Grande's death fades away during the "horas interminables" of the "blablablá histórico" of the Congress (p. 141) and the "semanas interminables y meses alargados" in which the holy Father waits out the "insomnio sudoroso" (p. 143) prior to the funeral itself. Even the reference to the direct line of descent in the rulers of the kingdom of Macondo is confused by the practice of incest, which "convirtió la procreación en un círculo vicioso" (129). In a story where "interminable" is the preferred adjective of time, it is not surprising that the few numbers we are given become rarified by the atmosphere of eternal waiting.

If the Mamá Grande assumed power at age twenty-two and reigned ninety-two years, if her grandmother, who lived to over one hundred, recalls (at what age?) the war of 1875, what year is it now, in the present of the story? And how can we correlate the amount of time that, logically, must have passed, as suggested by the amazing longevity of these women,

with the presence of the veterans of Coronel Aureliano Buendía who have come to the funeral "para solicitar del presidente de la república el pago de las pensiones de guerra que esperaban desde hacía *sesenta años*" [my emphasis] (p. 144)? The reader's struggle to create a historical narrative against the grain of García Márquez's text responds to the appeal of the rhetorical mode of history as a meaningful ordering system in modern life. The narrator tantalizes this desire for order in the readers by providing just a few of the dates and references that Peckham calls "indicators of pastness"[9] in historical narrative. At the same time, the undermining of such indicators, which becomes a covert structural imperative in the text, responds to the narrator's recognition that, in Peckham's words, "such indicators—historically authentic details—are not only symptoms of the rhetorical overdetermination of history. They can also become ends in themselves. . . . "[10] García Márquez's indicators are *underdetermined*; no matter how our rage for order compels us to rearrange the scattered facts, the result is inevitably a recognition of discontinuity. Clearly, time itself is deformed by irony; the sequence which can be derived from the story reveals no law, no access to meaning, no culmination of a teleological historical endeavor.

At the age of twenty-two, María del Rosario Castañeda y Montero becomes the Mamá Grande, a recognized anachronism from the moment of her accession to power. From the day of her father's funeral, she becomes "aquella visión medieval" that "pertenecía entonces no sólo al pasado de la familia, sino al pasado de la nación" (p. 133). The Mamá Grande's reign is indeed a medieval one; fairs mark her birthdays, yet another fair accompanies her long death struggle, her funeral is nothing if not a carnival celebration, and even her picture, as reproduced in the newspapers of the capital, is mistaken for that of one more "nueva reina de belleza" (137). These celebrations follow what Bakhtin has described as the traditional medieval pattern: "the feast is always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to biological or historic timeliness. . . . [F]easts were linked to moments of crisis. . . . "[11] The storyteller's ambiguity about specific dates and places, his reluctance to impose a fixed form on the hyperbolic material, is highly appropriate to the carnival mood that pervades the story. For, as Bakhtin finds, "carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed."[12] We incredulous readers are distanced in both time and space from these medieval celebrations, but the storyteller's allusive-elusive text makes at least one point clear: the Mamá Grande is the archetypal "reina de belleza," the carnival queen.

The last carnival, that of her funeral, marks the final vanishing of the medieval vision. The moment of crisis signalled by her death and funeral intimates the appearance of a new order; the queen is dead, long live the

queen! The Mamá Grande, beauty queen at age twenty-two, virginal still in her final appearance, must yield her place to the new "reinas nacionales de todas las cosas habidas y por haber." The queen who exercised moral hegemony over her subjects is replaced by many queens, queens who, in this new epoch, can now "casarse y ser felices y engendrar y parir muchos hijos" (147).

The narrator's description of the final carnival scene, a description exuberantly rehearsed in the briefer references to the fairs surrounding other key events in the life of the Mamá Grande, culminates in another negative vision, related to but distinct from the now customary negative dialect of ironic hyperbole. Here, the question of representation resurfaces in another form. The narrator (or is this a different, more omniscient persona?) carefully enumerates the list of what the people "no determinó," what "nadie vio," and "nadie advirtió" (p. 146), subverting his words in a carnivalesque or parodic statement, negating his perceptions at the moment of their expression. Yet, this unseen reality becomes, by the author-narrator's acknowledgement of it, part of the readers' reconstruction of the scene. What is real, or what becomes for us the reality of the story, is not so much what is seen as what is told or left untold, a series of events, unseen and unforeseen, swept away with the detritus of history or with the inattention of the excited crowds.[13]

Like the funeral procession, the other great enumerative list of the story, the Mamá Grande's last testament, fills a similar subversive function. In both, orderly progression and a form sanctioned by custom, tradition, and an awareness of dynastic obligations is evoked and then, smoothly, deprived of significance and emptied of substance. Significantly, in the funeral procession, the people ignore all that which does not fit the decorum of the occasion, the list of forgotten sights reaffirmed in the storyeller's negative recounting of them. In an exactly contrary manner, the decorum of the testament invites speculation on the origin of such spectacular riches, and the same eyes which, blinded by the decorum of the funeral, refuse to see the vultures hovering nearby, when encouraged by the decorum surrounding the Mamá Grande's place in society, see all too clearly the reaches of her vast patrimony: "Nadie conocía el origen, ni los límites, ni el valor real del patrimonio, pero todo el mundo se había acostumbrado a creer que la Mamá Grande era dueña de las aguas corrientes y estancadas, llovidas y por llover, y de los caminos vecinales, los postes de teléfono, los años bisiestos y el calor . . . " (pp. 129-30). The narrator, significantly, again uses a negative structure to introduce the hyperbolic list, cuing the reader once more to a subversive reading of the text of the *vox populi*; "todo el mundo" is blinded by magnificence.

Our dependence on the whims of the narrator is nowhere so clear as in this interplay of significance and irrelevant observation, this negative recording of the seen and unseen. While the Mamá Grande's own enumeration of her holdings is, apparently, no less extensive and hyperbolic than that of her townspeole (she requires three hours to detail her vast material holdings), the storyteller dispenses with the general outline of the testament in a single paragraph. He attaches far more importance, however, to the "enumeracíon minuciosa de los bienes morales" to which the Mamá Grande dedicates the last of her fading strength. Her heterogenous list of her moral privileges includes: "los colores de la bandera, . . . las cartas de recomendación, . . . las reinas de belleza, . . . la pureza del lenguaje, . . . el peligro comunista" (pp. 136-37). This spoken list of her invisible patrimony would seem to ratify her family's claim to hereditary custodianship over the signs and symbols that form the heart of official discourse, but the unfinished list, through the subversive agency of the hyperbolic narrator and his incredulous readers, dissolves itself in the moment of its utterance. The nephews, supposed heirs of both material and moral goods, suffer, like the inhabitants of Macondo in *Cien años de soledad* or the lonely old dictator eking out his waning years in *El otoño del patriarca*, from the plague of forgetfulness which descends upon them at the moment of the matriarch's death.

The contagious plague of forgetfulness spreads thoughout the village of Macondo, throughout the entire country, throughout the world, and even reaches past the pages of the text to affect us, its readers. We tend to forget that it is not the power of the Mamá Grande which is absolute but, despite hints as to the constitutive powers of the written word, that of the narrator. This storyteller, who filters the whole of the story through his perception and controls it with his imaginative recreation, is at the same time a curiously reticent figure. Despite his eagerness to define his position in traditional storytelling terms, the narrator remains anonymous, "remains unidentifiable."[14] His position is one of effacement. This ruse, for we must see it as such, of choosing a site and then refusing efforts at situation, defines the storyteller's art which, as suggested earlier, ostensibly chooses one site while mediating (or occupying simultaneously) two places: that of history and that of myth. It is a position he cannot maintain easily; in fact, he could not maintain it at all without the readers' forgetfulness, our unconscious complicity in his ostensibly overt placement of the story's center and in his devious usurpation of that place.

It is impossible to forget, though the reader forgets much, that this story, at once official history and oral tale, also parodically re-enacts both these possibilities and more. As González Echevarría very rightly points out, "If anything, the story is a reflection upon language, told in the clichés of journalese and government prose, written almost exactly as it would have been reported in the newpapers and the mass media."[15] Is there, then, in this adoption of journalistic prose, evidence of a secret alliance of the narrator with history, an alliance which would forward the process of disintegration of the presumed reality of the Mamá Grande? Yes and no. The two speakers

(oral storyteller and journalist), the two languages (gossip and journalese), the two places of storytelling (small town stool and capital-city news office) are incompatible ones. Yet, the "almost"—"almost as it would have been reported"—provides the clue for their coexistence, the forgetting and the forgetting about forgetting that eases over both internal and external contradiction. Yes, the journalist as historian subverts reality and converts it into official history. Yes, the storyteller's imaginative reconstruction of the life and death of the Mamá Grande traduces that life and death. At the same time, the narrator engages in an active dialogue with both these possibilities; almost a journalist, not quite a mythic oral storyteller, his dialogic, carnivalesque retelling both reaffirms and subverts the tale and the various points of view for telling it.

This subversive, parodic tale of a carnival queen that "se esfumaba en su propia leyenda" (p. 133) seventy years before the insistently anonymous narrator arrives to set up his stool and tell his story, alerts the reader once again—as in so much of recent Latin American narrative—to a recognition of the representational duplicity of art. It offers, moreover, food for reflection on the theme of the mediation between text and reality, between text and text, and, ultimately, between the reader of the story—audience to gossip, reader of newspapers—and this mediated realm: a reader or a critic equally interpreted by the text as interpreter of it. Yet precisely because of its parodic character, a subliminal recognition of the reality from which the carnival provides only a brief interregnum accompanies this inward-turning movement from text to narrator to reader. The reader must, finally, turn outward again from the dream of carnival to the gritty social reality that is repressed by the dream: "mañana miércoles vendrán los barrenderos y barrerán la basura de sus funerales, por todos los siglos de los siglos" (p. 147). The historians have already arrived in Macondo, and while García Márquez's history is not official history, his historical sodality with the reality of his country is clear.

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1. Gabriel García Márquez, "Los funerales de la Mamá Grande," in *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1973), p. 127. Further references will be contained within the text.

2. The conflict of oral and written (official) history is a continuing concern in the works of García Márquez. In the retelling of the episode of the massacre of the banana workers, for example, *Cien años de soledad* develops the theme in a similar, though somewhat less complex, manner. The omniscient narrator's tacit support for the unofficial versions of the massacre represented in the stories told by José Arcadio Segundo and the unnamed child makes the question of oral history unproblematic in outline, though often unreliable in specific detail—e.g., in the discrepancy about the number of dead carried by the hallucinatory train. Curiously, García Márquez's fictional account has historically served as an impetus to permit the unwritten episode to be recognized and reinserted into the offical history of Colombia. In *El otoño del patriarca*, the roles of history and oral recounting are somewhat more radically polarized than in either *Cien años* or "Funerales." "History" tells of the immaculate conception of the patriarch, of his incommensurable size, of his heroic accomplishments. Oral legend once more, as in *Cien años*, unearths the reality behind this official mythologizing. In "Funerales," the oral narrator is a less reliable figure than his counterparts in the novels. However, it is precisely the highly qualified mediation between the speaker and his listening (reading) audience that renders this oral (written) version of history so ambiguous.

3. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), p. 77.

4. Luis de Arrigoitia, "Tres cuentos de Gabriel García Márquez," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* (Puerto Rico) 6 (1979), 152.

5. Bakhtin, p. 76.

6. "Positionality" is defined by Susan Stewart ("Shouts on the Street: Bakhtin's Anti-Linguistics," *Critical Inquiry* 10 [1983]) as "the place of the subject within the social structure, a place where subject and structure are mutually articulated" (277). This approximation is not meant to suggest a nostalgia on the part of the narrator for the certainties of history; rather, the parodic adoption of history's forms is another aspect of the essentially dialogic nature of the tale.

7. Robert Sims, "The Creation of Myth in García Márquez' 'Los funerales de la Mamá Grande,' " *Hispania* 61 (1978), 21.

8. David Carroll, "Representation of the End(s) of History: Dialectics and Fiction," *YFS* 59 (1980), 213.

9. Morse Peckham, *Romanticism and Behavior* (Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1976), p. 61.

10. Peckham, p. 62.

11. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1968), p. 9.

12. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 10.

13. García Márquez uses this device elsewhere in his fiction. In *Ontoño*, for example, the dictator's mother tries to reveal the "true" story of his conception and birth to her inattentive son, a story which diverges radically from the accepted historical version of his immaculate conception and miraculous birth. Once again, it is the essential that is ignored in this episode of another dying matriarch: Bendición Alvarado "trataba de revelarle al hijo los secretos de familia que no quería llevarse a la tumba, le contaba cómo le echaron su placenta a los cochinos, señor, como fue que nunca pude establecer cúal de tantos fugitivos de vereda había sido tu padre, trataba de decirle para la historia que lo había engendrado de pie . . . , pero él no le ponía atención . . . " (Barcelona: Plaza & Janes, 1975 [135-36]).

14. Sims, p. 15.

15. Roberto González Echevarría, "Big Mama's Wake," *Diacritics* 4.2 (1974), 56.