FROM FACT TO FICTION: IMAGES OF THE DICTATOR IN LITERATURE

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Abstract: The cultural products of the communist regime or, of any type of totalitarian society must be observed in a close relation to the political circumstances of the period, since everything was governed by politics during those times. The special and unique link between culture and politics might be hard to understand from the contemporary perspectives even by an inhabitant of the former communist bloc, not to mention people who have never known a totalitarian regime.
In these circumstances, the very image of the dictator suffers a metamorphosis when passing from fact into fiction. On one hand, there are the 'literary' works praising the mighty ruler, emphasising his qualities (more or less real) and encouraging readers to follow this almost unearthly example of perfection. On the other hand, however, there are the allusive writings, created with a high dose of ambiguity, so that the smart reader might guess the real face of the dictator, since the facts were delivered to people in a sugar-coated form. The paper deals with these two aspects and the way they meet in the literary creations from countries that have been under a totalitarian regime for a while. To exemplify the way in which the figure of the dictator is shaped in fictional works, we have chosen two Romanian novels (Barbu's ***Principele*** *and Sadoveanu's* ***Creanga de aur****) and two masterpieces of the South American writer Gabriel Garcia Márquez (****The Fall of the Patriarch*** *and* ***The General in His Labyrinth****), trying to bring to light the connection between reality, myth and literature.*

Keywords: dictator, mystification, totalitarianism, psychological profile, counterfeit

When dealing with the cultural products of a totalitarian society, one must thoroughly observe the correlation between the cultural product in itself and the socio-political context within which it was created and, possibly published or released to the public. The insidious way in which the oppressive regime has been trying to control the cultural life influenced to a high degree the artistic movement during Communism and other oppressive regimes. Making art, and especially literature, synonym to the communist propaganda, The Party lead an assiduous campaign to ideologically alter the culture, thus maintaining a climate of axiological confusion through diversions, false news, mass ideological intoxication and constant panic. All of these were reflected in the fictional writings having a dictator as a main character. A dictatorship causes extreme mutations at all levels of existence, including – to a great extent – the spiritual side of the individual. In order to be strong, a dictatorship needs to annihilate the spirit, as Eugen Barbu's main character states in his novel *Principele*: '[…] I have corrupted them, I have taught them to steal […]. What more could I do than forcing them to forget their mother tongue? […] Out of seven words, three are Greek and two are Turkish. […] Priests preach in my mother tongue. The school is Greek. The country is corrupted to the bone marrow. […] All that was honest in this country now lies in prisons, rotting, or long perished.'[1] The above quote holds a universal truth: when language, culture and moral values are defeated, the dictator has reached his purpose.

Besides language and culture, religion represents another major concern, since it has always been a manipulation device for dictators all over the world. They either posed as martyrs of their country, or displayed a brutal adversity towards the religious teaching. The

[1] Eugen Barbu, *Principele*, 43. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own)

aspect being essential in discussing the image of the dictator, we will further refer to it in the paper.

To investigate the way in which a dictator mirrors in literature, one also needs to investigate the historical reality, focusing on the writer's function in society. Only one of the investigated literary works allows for a paralleling between the tyrant seen in his historical dimension and his fictionalized portrait. As far as the other pieces of literature are concerned, we cannot corroborate the historical discourse with the literary one. Even so, we believe to have sufficient elements to distinguish a profile of the dictator, regardless of the geographical area or the historical period of his existence. For a comparative study, we have chosen two Romanian novels (Mihail Sadoveanu – *The Golden Branch* and Eugen Barbu - *Princepele*) and two Latin-American creations (Gabriel Garcia Márquez – *The Fall of the Patriarch* and *The General in His Labyrinth*). Although the geographical distance and the distinct literary ages seem to indicate little affinity, a more profound observance brings out many similarities, due to the main theme of power. We are facing an emperor of Byzantium, Constantin the Young, the type of the impulsive leader and vengeful warrior (in *The Golden Branch*), the throbbing display of a Spanish general (in *The Fall of the Patriarch*), the excesses of a Greek prince (in *Princepele*), and the final journey of general Simón Bolívar (in *The General in His Labyrinth*). The obvious resemblance is their belonging to the large family of dictators who are rather feared than respected. A slight difference is to be made in the case of Simon Bolivar who has earned the respect of his generals on the battlefield.

The historic figures of the dictators have been fictionalized and enwrapped in an aura of myth and legend. Marquez declared in an interview that 'The theme of power has represented a constant of the Latin-American literature since its beginning, which is understandable, considering that the dictator had been the only mythical character created by the Latin America.'[2] This idea justifies Marquez's tendency to tap into myths, legends and fantasies, providing a sense of cyclical continuity and transforming the general into an archetype.

In *The fall of the Patriarch* we are presented a personality of uncertain origin who is said to have been conceived without manly presence: 'They knew he had no father, like the most noticeable tyrants in history and that his only known relative and perhaps the only one he had ever had was his beloved mother, Bendición Alvarado, to whom school books attributed the miraculous virtue of having conceived him without a man and being revealed in a dream the secret meaning of her son's messianic destiny.'[3] He is the nameless patriarch to whom the people kneel as to a god. In contrast, Sadoveanu's character is given an identity without a correspondent in reality, although the atmosphere and the setting are well defined. Eugen Barbu is also ambiguous concerning the identity of his prince who is generically called '*the Prince*' throughout the whole narration. The absence of a specific identity makes the reader perceive them as universal tyrants who can or could have existed in any part of the world. A dictator's profile is thus shaped, for their psychology and behavior looks stunningly the same, transcending the borders of fiction.

The only certain parallel to the historical reality belongs to Marquez who portrays the great general Simón Bolívar, a character with real existence, certified by historical documents.

[2] Jonathan Yardley, *When a Great Novelist Turned His Pen on Tyranny*
[3] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 46.

However, *The General in His Labyrinth* is not a non-fictional biography of Simón Bolívar, but a fictionalization of a tumultuous life which influenced the history of Latin American nations. The Columbian writer transposes into literature the image of *El Libertador*, choosing for this purpose his last journey of Magdalena River, mainly because this part of the general's life is less known. That allows the novelist's imagination to run wild and fill the gaps of history.

The mythical and the fantastic coordinates are best exploited in the other three investigated novels. The background of these narrations is set upon a world of superstitions, old beliefs and sacred symbols or biblical references. For instance, the general would suddenly interrupt a voyage because he heard the owl singing above him, or change the day of a public appearance because his mother had found an egg with two yolks. The general is constantly worried by the tormenting feeling that something bad would happen.

The belief in old superstitions is also present in Sadoveanu's novel. Professor Stamatin, who holds the narrative function at the beginning, introduces us in an archaic, strange atmosphere: 'I believe that I will end my career here. My bones must surely get together with those of my ancestors. Every time I set foot in this innocent place, I feel emotional and I become lyrical, like a primitive. Don't laugh at me, nor judge me wrong if you hear me enchanting and invoking what for you may long be perished, but for me is still alive.'[4] The same atmosphere is to be seen in Barbu's *Princepele*, due to the presence of two secondary characters, Ioan Valahul and Messer Ottaviano, both counselors of the prince. They read the zodiac and foresee disasters; they can tell which days are auspicious. Although they both have supernatural abilities, they use them differently. Ioan Valahul seems to be not only an initiate, but also a wise, honest man who tries to show the prince the truth about how people perceive him: 'This land is a stranger to you and I do not hide that people don't love you […]. Their mind dreams about other rulers, from their own nation, who know their traditions and do not curse, nor rob them.'[5]

Equally honest and wise proves Kesarion Breb, the initiate character in Sadoveanu's work. His figure is remarkable for the aura of mystery that accompanies him. Kesarion, like Ioan Valahul, sees into people's hearts and is capable of interpreting the signs and foretelling important events. His knowledge derives from the memory of ancient Romanian spirit, reminding of old fairy-tales in which people and animals spoke the same language. In order to complete his initiation, Kesarion must take a symbolic journey to Egypt. This voyage actually constitutes the literary convention through which the reader is introduced in the narrative space of tyrant Constantin and his mother Irina. On returning from Egypt, Kesarion makes a stop at Byzantium where he meets a representative of the new religion, Archbishop Plato. Their dialogues reveal the manner in which two initiates communicate without many words. The end of the novel is, at the same time, the end of Kesarion's initiation when he becomes the Great Priest: 'The new Decheneus came out of the cave […]. He was wearing round his neck, over the white clothes, the golden sign that had been adorning the old man for fifty-three years. Zalmoxis's priests, gathered during the day, kneeled before him, taking a bow. He

[4] Mihail Sadoveanu, *The Golden Branch*, 8.
[5] Eugen Barbu, *Op.cit.*, 60.

raised his hands upon them, looking at them with frozen eyes, knowing that he would be the last servant of the hidden mountain.'[6]

Another initiation should take place in Barbu's novel but it is not completed because the alleged initiator Ottavian does not hold all the secrets. Even more, Messer Ottaviano is opposed to Ioan Valahul and, extrapolating, he proves completely different from Kesarion: 'He works with the devil. His color is Black. We do not match.'[7] Ottaviano's influence on the Prince is overwhelming and he almost substitutes himself to the Prince by the audacity with which he gives out orders that he attributes to the Prince. From this perspective, he resembles Leticia Nazareno, the marquesian Patriarch's wife, who abuses her position devastating everything. The fabulous atmosphere lasts throughout the entire novel, since the dictator is superstitious and has weird concerns. The uncanny is also present in the epic structure, especially in two distinct episodes: the visit to Meitani's castle and the pagan carnival organized by Ottaviano. The first instance allows the Prince to enter a space filled with occult symbols and tests that the Prince must take in order to get to his boyfriend: 'a strange fascination kept him in front of the emblems for a long while. […] What secrets, what unknown messages came rushing out of these walls!'[8] The second episode, through which the Prince disregards the unwritten laws of the country he rules, is the fiesta at Mogoşoaia, 'a pagan carnival, like in Italy, following the Messer's instructions.'[9] The Prince's mother, aware of the celebration's bad outcomes, warns her son not to spoil the Christian traditions of the country, but in vain. Ottaviano's influence on the Prince is stronger and the carnival goes beyond any imagination; the river is crossed by rafts carrying people dressed as goats, histrionic figures and naked women. Huge phalluses are displayed, everything is impregnated sexuality. The narration reaches its climax with the most unexpected appearance: 'coming now, proud, fluorescent, naked statue-like bodies of gods Teth and Horus […] the Messer with his child-like head and a hair like ripe straw, was holding the Prince's hand. They were beautiful, fabulous, like two archangels; it was the end of the world.'[10]

Resuming the facts, it appears that in both Romanian novels, the dictator's image is made whole by the presence of the initiators, such as Ioan Valahul, Ottaviano or Kesarion, who have no correspondent in Marquez's novels. However, an aura of legend and a fabulous atmosphere is present, giving birth to the notion of magic realism. The uncanny is directly linked by Marquez to his Patriarch, a fabulous character born miraculously without having been conceived with a man. But one must add that it is not just his birth that is supernatural; his death is also surrounded by mystery because nobody knows for sure who is actually found dead in his office. Besides, the narrator mentions that this was the second time he had been found dead: 'it was the second time he had been found dead in that office, alone and dressed, dead by natural causes during sleep, as it had been foretold many years ago by the enchanted water from the fortuneteller's pots.'[11] Though ambiguity reigns the narration, the Patriarch's

[6] Mihail Sadoveanu, *Op.cit.*, 167.
[7] Eugen Barbu, *Op.cit.*, 46.
[8] Idem, 109.
[9] Idem, 115.
[10] Idem, 127.
[11] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 9.

omnipresence is given a more plausible explanation: the nameless Patriarch has a double, Patricio Aragones.

The general's legend takes shape gradually with every action, with every rumor about him. In time, it becomes so vast and contradictory that nobody knows what he looks like or if he is still alive. Ironically, people believe that the mere fact that life continued on Earth is the undoubted evidence that the Patriarch was alive: 'we knew he was there and we knew it because the world continued to exist, life went on, the post came in time […]'[12] We may thus conclude that the Patriarch was an axis mundi around which the whole nation revolved. The character gradually turns into an indestructible mythical hero that no conspiracy can take down, nor can any bullet kill. The age of the dictator is another enigma of the novel, for the general is said to be somewhere between 107 and 232 years old and he cyclically goes through the natural growing periods: 'he continued to grow until he was 100 and, when he turned 150 he grew a third set of teeth.'[13]

Analyzing the four literary works we notice the subtle manner in which history is interwoven with legends and myth, giving birth to memorable portraits of dictators with so many resemblances that they form an archetype of the universal tyrant. The common note is the enwrapping of the characters in mystery and fabulous, along with a specific behavior pattern which we will later refer to. The fantastic dimension results in a particular organization of the temporal levels. If Sadoveanu provides a rather classical chronology, Marquez suggests a unique vision of time, the narration flowing back and forth in the historical time, with frequent evasions into myth. The legend of the general becomes a-temporal because the Patriarch is 'older than all men and all living creatures on earth and in waters.'[14] Time ceases to flow – 'it was Sunday, now and forever'- and transforms in a cyclic eternity, as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

The same 'holy Sunday' marks the beginning of Barbu's novel, where the flash-back technique is frequently used. In Sadoveanu's work the mythic time of narration is closely related to the lack of temporality specific to fairy tales, being associated to a spatial symbol of the center: 'That is the world's heaven and the Earth's center.'[15] On the other hand, *The General in His Labyrinth* displays a rigorous chronology, due to the fact that the work portrays a character with real existence, General Simón Bolívar. Stating or eluding the temporal aspect is intricately related to the issue of power seen as duration. From this perspective, power appears to be ephemeral and uncertain. Probably the attempt to compensate this aspect is the reason why dictators make the full out of it, considering themselves almighty. In fact, we all owe a death and glory or powers are vain: 'I would have never believed that so much glory could fit in a bag'[16], says Bolívar after resigning.

The Patriarch, on the other hand, lacks the strength or the will to lucidly perceive reality because in his opinion a dictator cannot resign or be dethroned and the only identity document of an ex-president should be his death certificate. The idea justifies his contempt for the former dictators of bordering countries who are still alive. For the Patriarch, time is relative

[12] Idem, 8.
[13] Idem, 45.
[14] Idem, 7.
[15] Mihail Sadoveanu, *Op.cit.*, 74.
[16] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, The General in His Labyrinth, 31.

and a century seems almost like a minute: 'there's already been a hundred years, damn, a hundred years, how time flies!', but a strong hurricane makes him realize for a brief moment that he is not immortal: 'he had never been and he would never be forever almighty, and the blaze of that sour certainty endlessly tormented him.'[17]

In contrast, the prince in Barbu's novel is well aware of the fact that power does not last forever and, moreover, that it must be preserved bribing the right persons: 'You just imagine that you have power. I have told you, if someone comes up with a hundred penny more than you, your power will vanish.'[18] The aspect of ephemerality is also present in Sadoveanu's novel, concentrated in the words of Kesarion: 'All human things are vain and beneath the light rotten things wiggle.'[19] Despite this truth, the fight for power is so strong that even blood relations are thrashed. This is the case of young emperor Constantin and his mother Irina who does not hesitate to use her son as a puppet, so that she fulfills her ambition to take back the power. The same declared goal fills the heart of Barbu's Prince: 'I only have one purpose, to reign. The rest is vain. What do I care that there is no justice? I force myself into believing that I serve it sometimes; my subjects mean nothing to me; they are numbers, nothing else.'[20] The quote lays perspective on how dictators understand power; for them it is the glory that is everlasting while everything else is in vain. Refusing the reality and switching the proportion between values is a sign of mental alienation of the dictators. The tyrant creates a world of his own in which he is self-sufficient and eternal: 'I alone am sufficient to rule […] as far as I am concerned I don't intend to die anymore, the hell, let the rest die.'[21] Leaving the parallel world and returning to reality is always difficult for the dictator, causing his madness or even his violent death. Both history and fiction confirm this, by the way in which they present the end of a dictatorship and that of a tyrant.

Nonetheless, the need to create this parallel reality is justified by the dictator's need to manipulate his subjects. History has proven that the most appropriate way to reach that goal is indoctrination. Thus, the regime ensures the unconditional support of the brainwashed citizens who take everything for granted, without thinking. The target group being so large, dictators often resorted to mass-media control. In addition, another important institution manipulated by the dictators was school. The school curricula were thus elaborated to include political studies or the ideology of the ruling party while, at the same time, they ruled out school objects which develop critical thinking. What is worse, the content taught in school was modified to the dictator's taste, knowing that some lies are far more comfortable than the truth, as Marquez's Patriarch states: 'he had known from the beginning that they deceived him to humor him, that he paid to be praised […] that lie is more comfortable than doubt, more useful than love, more enduring than the truth.'[22] Paralleling the pattern of Orwell's Ministry of Truth, *The Fall of the Patriarch* refers to official school books that depict a legendary ruler of gigantic proportions and extraordinary abilities. The tyrant's ego and his need of appreciation leads to the building of a complex propaganda machinery, together with

[17] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 19.
[18] Eugen Barbu, *Op.cit.*, 135.
[19] Mihail Sadoveanu, *Op.cit.*, 28.
[20] Eugen Barbu, *Op.cit.*, 89.
[21] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 33.
[22] *Idem*, 150-151.

a series of 'spontaneous' public manifestations. Such imposed gatherings of people are depicted in all the novels and, sadly, they took place in real life, too. All these lies were recorded in the official history books, contributing to its counterfeit.

Literature is also part of this mystification process, being subordinated to the political life due to the mediocre writers who consented to write rhymed poems to glorify the almighty ruler. This aspect alone deserves an independent research, literature providing plenty of material to analyze. The whole mystification process can easily get out of control in a world in which hypocrisy substitutes the truth, and the abnormality takes the place of norm. It is not just the people being lied to by the regime's institutions, but the dictator himself is also being lied to, out of fear or hypocrisy. Therefore, the roles gradually mingle and it is difficult to discern who lies and who is being lied to, who carries false news knowing it is lies and who transmits it convinced of its truth. This ambiguity is part of the more elaborate process of mystifying the image of the dictator, enwrapping him in a legendary shell which so much differs from the historical reality.

We have previously mentioned the dictator's connection to religion, which is an extremely important aspect, since tyrants take over the indoctrination practice of the old church. Since priests have always been role-models for the faithful people, the dictator's relation with his subjects relies upon the way in which the leader relates to the church. The problem is that the egocentric personality of a dictator cannot accept a higher power, be it that of God. Therefore, if he does not manage to make church an instrument of manipulation, the tyrant resorts to persecutions. From this perspective, all four analyzed rulers prove to be hypocrites, insidious and disregardful.

The Latin-American *Libertador*'s dream being the unification of the Latin- American states, religion represented for Bolívar a cross-cultural instrument. His attitude was rarely restrictive and only in 1928 he did close a few monasteries. Alternatively, the nameless general from *The Fall of the Patriarch* displays a much more intricate relationship with religious issues. Wearing the mask of Christianity, the general adopts an attitude of superiority, instructing the priest on how to do his mission. After the Patriarch's mother dies, he imperatively demands for her canonization, claiming that her dead body performs miracles. Moreover, he compares his mother's shroud to that of Jesus. Consequently, he declares a hundred days of national mourning and the dead body is carried in a solemn procession throughout the whole realm. When the Pope and his priests refuse to canonize Bendición Alvarado, the Patriarch dismisses the church altogether and declares war to the Holy Chair.

The same rebellion against church is seen in Sadoveanu's work, where Constantin's father is portrayed as a bitter enemy of icons. After his death, Irina reestablishes the Orthodox religion, at least theoretically, because in fact she uses force and turns priests against each other. Her only wish is to rule, so when her son is put on the throne she acts the religious mother while manipulating her immature son who proves less strong-headed than his father. For Irina it is just a matter of time before the humble attitude is tossed aside and she punishes her son, blinding him. Ironically, the punishment is carried out while Irina prays to the holy icons.

In contrast with Constantin, the Prince in Barbu's novel is less moderate when it comes to religion, for he ignores the beliefs of the country, proudly displaying his homosexuality. The Prince's abuses and eccentricities reach climax when a church is built to honor his lover

Ottaviano. The inauguration of the great church is done at Easter, a special day in which the Prince acts humble, washing the feet of his people, as Jesus had washed those of his disciples. The Christian gesture is counterbalanced by the ironic defiance of the traditions. All the faces painted in the church, those of saints, of Virgin Mary, of Jesus and even of the devil are the spitting image of Ottaviano. The message is not only a tremendous defiance towards the Orthodox church, but also a warning for the local high society, showing that he fears not the wrath of God, let alone their plots. The conclusion we can draw is that the tyrant defies any power superior to his, especially a divine power whose main advantage is the certainty of eternity. Opposed to God, the dictator's power is limited and restricted to a historical time. Hence, an open adversity towards church and its representatives appears.

Psychologically speaking, specialists appreciate that the great desire for power can be triggered by various frustrations and deprivations suffered in childhood. At least in the Patriarch's and the Prince's cases there are information to confirm this theory. The Patriarch had a miserable childhood as a bastard son of a poor saleswoman. He was not educated and, even more, he was illiterate as his mother reveals in an uninspired moment of honesty: 'Had I known my son would become the president of the republic, I would have taken him to school.'[23] The Prince hasn't had a happier childhood, since his father had been killed by political opponents. In exchange, he was given a solid education under his mother's close supervision.

Having a tough childhood does not, however, make one a dictator. We consider that the psychology of the tyrant is more complex, encompassing a series of negative traits such as a hyper developed ego which often causes megalomania, inflicting a regime of fear, melancholic and depressive moods that alternate with violence and sadism, a questionable morality, frustration and sexual deviations, schizophrenia and paranoia, to mention just a few.

The oversized ego creates a hyperbolic self-image for the leader, who cannot conceive that the world would continue without him. He thinks of himself as the center of the universe, substituting God, in a typical outburst of schizophrenia. For instance, convinced that he *is* God, the Patriarch establishes that he will have a son, whose name shall be Emanuel. He orders a different measurement of time and rules that 'nobody move, nobody breath without my approval.' Those who dare contradict him are severely punished: 'the rebellion's leaders were shot from behind, their bodies, hung by the legs, were exposed in broad day light so that nobody is left unaware of how those who scorn God end, you miserable!'[24]

Such warnings are present in Barbu's novel, too, when the Prince 'accidentally' shoots one of the men who betrayed him. A more terrifying scene is that of punishing the young men that had accompanied Ottaviano in a sexual orgy. Filled with jealousy, the Prince impales them and sticks them into the frozen waters of Dâmbovița. It is for the first time that Ottaviano feels scared and, unfortunately for him, it is not the last. The Princes stages a dramatic death for Ottaviano, who is tortured – ironically – in the torture chambers that he himself had set up and, in the end, the physical trauma is topped by humiliation: ' The Prince still held the living fish who was wiggling strongly. This shall be your last lover, he told

[23] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 47.
[24] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 109.

Ottaviano and, the next instance the Messer felt it in his loins. He struggled, trying to escape the meat snare. Ottaviano began to scream, feeling his sphincters torn apart.'[25]

Extreme cruelty is present in the Marquez's works as well. The Patriarch plans a reconciliation dinner with his generals, and proves sheer sadism in picking up the menu: on an enormous silver plate, he serves his guests a stunning course – Rodrigo de Aguilar, one of his division generals and Minister of Defense. The guests are forced to watch the ceremony of cutting their companion into pieces, as if it were normal food. Another act of sadism is the adjustment of his double, whose leg bones were crushed, so that he could better imitate the Patriarch's walk. Psychical frailty is yet another characteristic of the dictator and episodes of extreme violence alternate with times of decent behavior. The spiritual degradation of the tyrant is accompanied most often by physical changes and illness. Especially during the autumn, both the Patriarch and the Prince suffer from depression and long periods of fever.

The sexual orientations and preferences also describe abnormal behavior. All our dictators are eccentric; they take part in sexual orgies or practice homosexuality or pedophilia. In terms of Freudian psychology, everything can be explained through sexuality. For example, the lack of love is compensated by sexual excess and it is said that Bolívar had lost at least three battles because instead of being on the battlefield, he was in a woman's bed. The same inclination for sexuality is to be observed in Constantin's case but we must notice that he was pushed in this direction by his manipulating mother. The shallowness of feelings that the four tyrants display proves that they are not capable of nurturing healthy social and emotional attachments. The whole psychological profile outlined in their cases explains their pathological behavior.

Such a restless life as our characters have had can only be ended in an equally dramatic manner. It is only natural, considering that a dictator will never willingly give up the power and his adversaries need the certainty that once they are removed from power, they are gone for good. Young Constantin has the shortest reign, being dethroned by his mother. This is the only reason why he is not killed but, nonetheless, he receives the seal of the traitors as his mother decides that his eyes should be burned. The novelist chooses to end the book with Kesarion's final initiation, leaving aside the destiny of Irina. Simón Bolívar does not die of enemy hand either, although his resignation was not a voluntary act. The final part of his life is spent in the voyage on river Magdalena and, as he approaches his final destination, his health gets worse and worse, until in the end he only weighs thirty-six kilograms. The physical condition metaphorically suggests the loss of political power and of the general's significance. The general's exit from the labyrinth is his humble death, for he leaves this world alone, poor and naked, without having the people's gratitude.

The cruelest death is that of the Greek ruler, the Prince who, like the ones before him, was removed because somebody else had paid more for that position. His slaughtered body is presented to his family and then is sent to the Turkish sultan as proof. In the end, the body is abandoned and eaten by dogs. The novel ends with an epilogue in which the narrator emphasizes the ephemeral nature of power and the repeatability of history.

We left the Patriarch's case towards the end because the death of this character is singular, but not unique. Its singularity consists in the ambiguity surrounding the event,

[25] Eugen Barbu, *Op.cit.*, 271.

because we never know for sure that the dictator had died. Moreover, the death announced in the first pages of the novel is not also the first one. In fact, nobody knows how things have happened for the first time, because nobody is old enough to have lived at the time. The narrator depicts a body dressed in the general's clothes, wearing his silk glove and the golden spur, yet nobody seems to know how the Patriarch looked like and therefore nobody can identify him. What seems to be his real death is governed by a fabulous atmosphere; the Patriarch sees his death as a physical presence to whom he talks, saying that it had come too soon: 'it was death, General, your death […] holding a scythe and having sepulchral algae and flowers in the cracks of her bones, the ancient eyes staring from the empty skull […], but he said no, death, it is not my time yet.' Death's answer seems to underline the mortality of the dictator, the equality between people as they die: 'but she replied oh, no, general, it will be here, bare foot and wearing your poor clothes.'[26] The end of the novel marks the return to the natural historical reality: 'finally, the infinite time of eternity had ceased.'[27]

As for the narrative style, with the exception of *The Fall of the Patriarch* where we notice the polyphony of narrative voices, the investigated works follow the relatively classical style – with an omniscient narrator. That allows for a more complex portrayal of the characters, seen both inwardly and externally. The narration lays accent on the character's thoughts rather than on facts. The heroes are pensive and live in a world governed by memories, hence the chronology is abolished and the stream of consciousness takes over the narrative style. The cyclical time and the repeatability of history are suggested both by Márquez and Barbu by repeating certain passages. For example, the ceremony of installing the new prince is similar to that of the Prince himself and the fragment is literally copied. The same is done in *The Fall of the Patriarch*, where the bed time ritual suggests the monotony of the dictator's life, for which time seems to have frozen. Slightly different is the style of Mihail Sadoveanu, due to the philosophical core of the novel, which imposes an encrypted language resembling that of Márquez's prose. But, beyond the natural differences between the three novelists, their works share a common vision upon the idea of power and the image of a dictator who becomes a literary archetype.

Reiterating the major coordinates of a dictatorship and the main traits of a dictator, we consider that our thesis holds true in that no matter what the geographical or historical background is, the image of the dictator plunges into literature within the same parameters. Although the fictionalizations wipe out the links with reality, the literary psychological portrait of a tyrant is recognizable for all those who had witnessed such a regime.

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[26] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Fall of the Patriarch*, 250.
[27] *Idem*, 252.

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