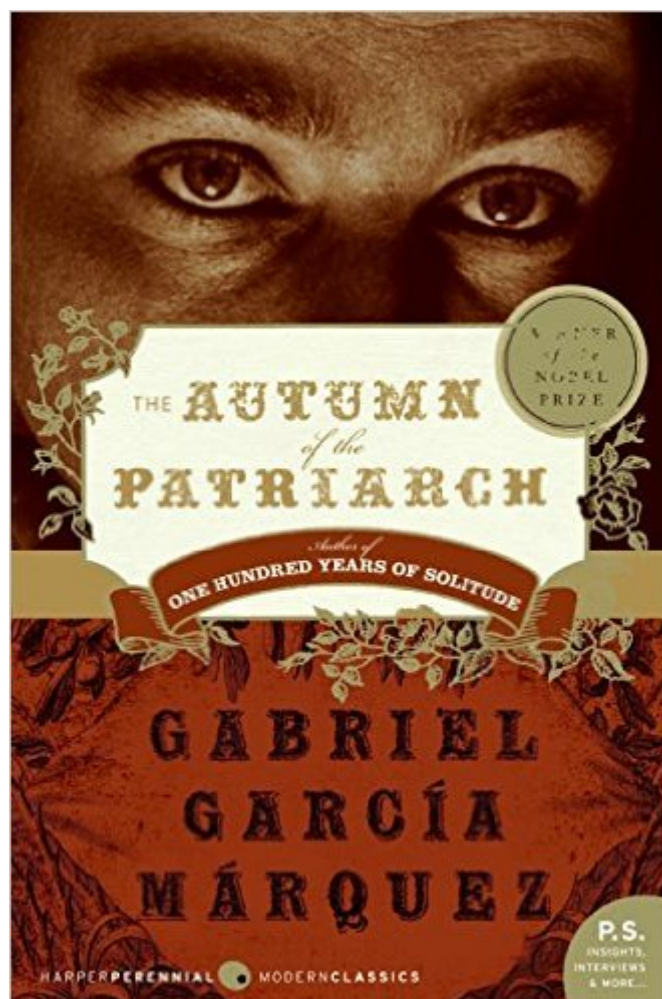


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The Autumn Of The Patriarch



Synopsis

One of Gabriel García Márquez's most intricate and ambitious works, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is a brilliant tale of a Caribbean tyrant and the corruption of power. From charity to deceit, benevolence to violence, fear of God to extreme cruelty, the dictator of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* embodies the best and the worst of human nature. Gabriel García Márquez, the renowned master of magical realism, vividly portrays the dying tyrant caught in the prison of his own dictatorship. Employing an innovative, dreamlike style, and overflowing with symbolic descriptions, the novel transports the reader to a world that is at once fanciful and real.

Book Information

Paperback: 255 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics (March 14, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060882867

ISBN-13: 978-0060882860

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (61 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #172,002 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > Caribbean & Latin American](#) #6962 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary](#) #13495 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary](#)

Customer Reviews

This is not a novel with a story, though it is a monstrous tale. It is a fantastic description of the rotten guts of tyranny. Enormous, steaming sentences, reeking with exotic images and jaguar tracks contain a sorrowful epic of the surreal politics of hot, underdeveloped places that know more corruption than justice. Weaving in and out, from one person's thoughts to another's, from one time to a second, with almost no dialogue, no conversation, no quotation marks, but moving from the mind of a general to dictator to "the people" to the female love interest and back again, Garcia Marquez spins a horrific story that is unlikely to be similar to anything you have read before. Maybe you will be satisfied to read this as a 'one-off' kind of book that demands your total attention, all your powers of imagination and your determination. It is not a simple novel. I realized that Milorad Pavic, the Serbian author of fantastic tales, owes much to Garcia Marquez, sometimes even images (eggs of a certain day, news-spreading parrots). The "Patriarch" is the ur-dictator, the tyrant personified, an

old man who never steps down, who rules behind a double whose death thus gives rise to a legend of immortality. The dictator's underlings invent Potemkin everything; his palace is full of cripples, blind people, lepers, and domestic animals; he is a monster who, like all the tyrants he represents, cannot love, but only cultivate power. There is his mother, who failed to be a saint, the dynamited clergyman, the roasted general, the nun-mistress, the murdered children, the wife eaten by dogs. Was there anything he did not violate or corrupt ? Garcia Marquez gives one of the best-written pictures of the corruption of absolute power. The dictator is unnamed, perhaps a composite of Colombians, perhaps more.

It's inevitable that this book should be somewhat off-putting compared to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *Love in the Time of Cholera*--*Autumn of the Patriarch* isn't really meant to be a 'pleasant' read. It is a grim portrait of the title character, and other characters come and go without having inner lives of their own; they have relevance only insofar as they intersect with his life. It is without a doubt one of the least novelistic novels you will ever read--indeed, in many ways it's more like a prolonged character study than a novel. Some people complain about the style in which the book is written--no paragraph breaks, few chapter breaks, long run-on sentences (the final chapter--fifty pages or so--is one massive sentence), perspective shifts mid-sentence and even mid-clause--but the truth of the matter is that, although this can become a little bit wearing at times, it is by no means 'difficult.' Not in the sense that *Ulysses*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* are difficult. It can occasionally be disorienting, but in general it's always pretty easy to tell what's going on, and the style results in a surreal, dreamlike atmosphere that, I think, is perfect for describing the General's long, nightmarish reign. Sure, it could have been written in a more conventional style, and it could well have still been a good book, but Garcia Marquez's decision to push narrative boundaries provides just the right feel. After all, the General is a composite of many Meso and South American tyrants, and to couch his reign in more concrete, everyday terms would have taken away some of his universality (his selling of the Caribbean is a clear demonstration of this, as well as one of the most striking literary metaphors you'll ever encounter).

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