

## Sovereign Power alongside Foucauldian Power: A Study of Panopticon as a Means of Power in the Autumn of the Patriarch

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### ABSTRACT

This study detects the notion of “power” in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez throughout the idea of Foucauldian Panopticon. This implication is approached through the figure of the “double”. It is believed that Garcia Marquez’s novel is viewed as an original reflection on the use and abuse of power. Garcia Marquez’s work suggests different looking toward power both sovereignty as a tyrant and also the Foucauldian one. The article notes that the idea of Panopticon presented in the novel reinforces the tyrant’s sovereignty.

**KEY TERMS:** power, disciplinary power, Sovereign power, Panopticon, docile body

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### INTRODUCTION

What is power? Power is a universal problematic phenomenon in human society, philosophy and history. Each field defines its own definition of power. What is common about all fields is the fact that power is never totally absent from human life. Yet, its definition and application changed passing the ages. Sovereign power, the one ascribes the dictators' ability alters to the disciplinary one, the power Foucault refers to as productive one. The patriarch in G. G. Marquez's *the Autumn of the Patriarch* mostly deals with the former kind of power yet, the researchers believe that within the sovereign power, there could be some traces of disciplinary one or even vice versa. The present study will focus on an example of sovereign power benefited from disciplinary one in order to reinforce the sovereignty.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Sovereign power vs. Disciplinary power

Sovereign power is what Foucault refers to as juridical power. The examples of such power are mentioned in details in the very beginning of his *Discipline and Punishment*. Sovereign power is a type of power which dominates all individuals in the society. Usually it is in a form of the power of a single person –called a king-over the people in a country. What is allowed to do and say and what is not allowed all are determined by Him. There are just two options for the population either accept the laws and obey them, or reject them and be punished. In his article “What is Sovereignty?”, Alain de Benoist notes that: “usually, sovereignty is defined in one of the two ways. The first definition applies to supreme public power, which has the right and, in theory, the capacity to impose its authority in the last instance. The second definition refers to the holder of legitimate power, who is recognized to have authority.”(1999: pp. 24-35) Usually the second definition is discussed as popular sovereignty. He mentions that sovereignty is not related to any particular form of government or any particular political organization, on the contrary it is inherited in any form of political authority. Passing the ages led the meaning of power change. It no longer is the absolute dominancy of one person over a nation rather it is the relation between the government and people. This is the one Michelle Foucault stresses on.

Foucault’s concept of power is a modern one, since it rejects the negative and repressive nature of the power and defines it in terms of a positive and productive force. He believes that “power is a strategy which is present in all layers of society and all relations”, (Mills, 1948: p.35) and that it produces identities through instruments such as normalization. Those people are normalized under such power are called Docile bodies. In his *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault refers to the body as object and target of power. He says, “It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body – to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces...a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1997, p. 136). These bodies are docile bodies because they require a system of codification and methods which are under meticulous control and surveillance (p.137).

The present article raises the questions of how general dictates his sovereign power on people and normalizes them by benefiting from panopticon.

*The Autumn of the Patriarch* suggests an alternative view of the concept of power. It seems Marquez combines elements of disciplinary power and the classic one: sovereign power. From the very beginning of the

novel the traces of dictator overshadowed everything so that no one in the country even those who witness the death of the General could believe in his death. Since, it was not the first time he died. He had previously died and raised from his death. It is said he is immortal, and lives forever; his eternity reinforces the idea of his absolute power. "He has such power that when he orders the time of the day changed three to eight in the morning to deliver himself from darkness, the roses open two hours before dew time." (William Kennedy: *A Stunning Portrait of a Monstrous Caribbean Tyrant*, 1976). He even exercises his power over nature. His limitless power makes him capable of arranging the weather, and signaling with his finger so that trees give fruit,.... Thus, he seems rather a dictator than holding a disciplinary power. Yet, the following detects the traces of Foucauldian power in the novel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### **Panopticon in *the Autumn of the Patriarch***

The novel begins at its end with the apparent death of the dictator. A collective narrator, in the first person plural, enters the palace like a camera showing the rooms until we find the patriarch on the floor of his bedroom. Then there is a brief description of the body focusing on familiar features: his uniform, high boots, golden spurs. The body cannot be identified because vultures have devoured his face, but other details are described: "his whole body was sprouting tiny lichens and parasitic animals from the depths of the sea, especially in the armpits and the groin, and he had the canvas truss on his herniated testicle, which was the only thing that had escaped the vultures in spite of its being the size of an ox kidney." (Marquez, p. 28)

Each of the five remaining chapters will start by reenacting the same scene. Then one of the narrators notes that "even then we did not dare believe in his death because it was the second time he had been found in that office, alone and dressed and dead seemingly of natural causes during his sleep, as had been announced a long time ago in the prophetic waters of soothsayers' basins" (p. 6).

It is in the very first chapter that the author introduces the General's double -Patricio Aragonés - who has been found "without anyone searching for him, going from Indian village to another, doing a prosperous business of imposing."

Patricio Aragonés is seen and referred to in the first chapter, but in the last there will be another character, Sáenz de la Barra, who does not look like him physically, but acts as if he were his double in as much as he embodies the violent and vengeful side of the dictator: "psychic dualism," as opposed to "physical dualism," according to Kepler both of them will give insight to the reader about the notion of power.

The patriarch's decision to create another human being like himself represents an extreme case of selfishness. The double mourns that they were "flattening my feet with tamping hands so that they would be those of a sleepwalker like yours [the General], then by piercing my testicles with a shoemaker's awl so I would develop a rupture, then by making me drink turpentine so I would forget how to read and write after all the work it took my mother to teach me, and always forcing me to go through the public ceremonies you didn't dare face" (p. 24). José Anadón in his article titled "Power in Literature and Society", the "Double" in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* states that:

He has eliminated an intrinsic feature of another human being: the elusiveness and unpredictability of character. By muffling his voice and taking away his capacity for self-criticism, the patriarch has destroyed Patricio's ability to grow and develop as a person—he is left merely to echo the tyrant's impervious will. By annulling Patricio's free will, the patriarch commits a moral transgression. The double is used here to portray vividly the extreme abuse of power of one person over another. (p. 218)

Here the double is used to portray the entrance abuse of power. People in the palace got confused "for it always seemed that he was in two places at once." (Marquez: 9). Thus, he created the illusion that the tyrant was everywhere; he enjoys such power that can control everyone everywhere. The people believed that he was ever-present and protected them. Some even considered him superior to God: "dauntless adulators who proclaimed him the corrector of earthquakes..." (p. 47).

Not only his behavior changed but also his physique. The double benefited from the concubines in the palace yet not so as the patriarch rather "makes them laugh with surprise in the shadows." (p. 12). It is amazing that the double's offspring were similar to the General's that after a while "neither of them or any of the women either ever knew whose child was whose or by whom, because Patricio Aragonés's children were seven-monthers just like his" (p. 12).

The General benefited from Patricia Aragonés, his double in order "to relax his concern with self-preservation" (p. 41), to drive out among his people and be loved, to become increasingly more decadent, and to allow "in the great slough of felicity...."

The existence of double provides an opportunity for the General to act as a sort of Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham (1787) clarifies it and Foucault uses it in defining one of the characteristics of Disciplinary power. Foucault describes the implication of Panopticon in his *Discipline & Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1997) as so:

"Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary;... In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zig-zag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian." (pp. 195-228)

In order to his absolute power be glorified, the General needs to be divided into two: the double, at the presence of the people and the General himself, the witness of people's reaction to the self (the double). He keeps close and clings into his double to boost his power, but "his fierce struggle to exist twice was feeding the contrary suspicion that he was existing less and less." (Marquez, p. 48) Thus, Patricio must die. He was fatally wounded by a poisoned dart. His death served as an opportunity to fulfill the General's ever desire of watching the effect of his death on the rest of the world (acting as Panopticon once more). Yet, what remained for the General was a fear, a horrifying sense of the daily and routine life: the world exists without Him. He returned. He died and became alive again. He is an eternal man. This is what he wanted to be and believed by his people.

The kind of Panopticon Foucault refers to is what allows people to be sure that they are always under the control of eyes: they are seen and monitored by an eye! So, they gradually try to be normalized, to follow the prescribed rules in order not to be different or abnormal. But, the General's Panopticon never leads to normalizing people; rather it acts as a camera recording actions in order to punish those who do not play as what they were supposed to. It seems by watching his funeral (double's) he learns a valuable lesson about the fragility of power, and consequently has those who had taken over his government assassinated, while he rewards those who mourned his death.

When he came back to his sovereignty once more, he altered his demeanor. He had learnt that "the trouble with this country is that the people have too much time to think on their hands." (Marquez, p.34) So, he established a free school in each province to teach the people the sweeping. It was a kind of institution for normalizing people; it seems he wanted to sweep his previous manner or actions away and created a new one: more serious and harsh without any merci. He found that there was no order in his sovereignty, thus he employed some in order to bring order through torture and massacre. He started to exercise his absolute power over everything and every subject; and he was gradually changed to be God's replacement on the earth. He destroyed and eradicated everything threatened his power, but there was just one he could do nothing for: death, or let call it time. For decades and centuries, the General revised past and present time in a futile attempt to deny time's succession. Time is his personal enemy. Yet as was mentioned earlier he even exercised his power on it by changing the time. While he got that he could do nothing about time even the changes could not extirpate the intimidation, the General began obliterating and wiping the past. He denied the existence of 2000 children had been deluged in the sea.

In this part, Marquez uses the word "to see"; here, death becomes a reality for the General after he sees it, he confides only in reality as he can observe it, and becomes a victim of circumstances he has created through his power. Thus, the General gains his power out of visibility or seeing. Consequently, he has to show and exercise his power through seeing or visibility. For instance, he orders to hang the different parts of the victim's body all over the city to be "seen" by people as a proof of his absolute power. He does not accept the responsibility of the matters cannot see.

The importance of visibility is so that he insists on observing the milking of the cows each morning to earn the certainty of his power.

Patricia Tobin refers to the idea of invisibility in his article under the title of “the Autumn of the Signifier: the Deconstructionist moment of Garcia Marquez” as follow:

...representation works, only when/because the sovereign signifier is absent. The sovereign-he who is sitting for the painting within a painting, around whom it is all centered- must be invisible, inaccessible, exterior to it, faintly present merely in the mirror and in the directed gazes of the others. Only when the very site of representation, the point of all perspective, is nowhere to be found, can representation inaugurate and sustain itself lawfully. Thus, originates the unequal reciprocity between word and image: he who sees cannot signify, and he who signifies cannot see. To become sovereign, the signifier must disappear; for the symbolic Father to authorize our discourses, the Real father must fade from view. (203)

Thus, to be invisible is to gain more power.

The double confessed on his deathbed that:

“I can tell you now that I never loved you as you think but that ever since the days of the filibusters when I had the evil misfortune to chance into your domains I’ve been praying that you would be killed, in a good way even, so that you would pay me back for this life of an orphan you gave me” (p. 24).

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