



Dominating Themes in the Works of Gabriel García Márquez

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Abstract

The great Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez belongs to the Latin America. He has undergone the times of great revolutions and upheavals that shook the whole Latin American world. The massacres, shoot-outs, corruption, oligarchy, rapes and social evils witnessed by him play a very significant role in the shaping of the artist in him. He writes as a reaction and a re-creation of the bygone days. His ideas and themes are full of revolution and appeal so that the past should not get repeated. The mercilessness of the past is evident in his short stories and his writings are greatly appreciable.

Introduction

The background of the Latin American world before the emergence of the authors of any kind was full of anarchy, dictatorship and corruption. The author has witnessed the Columbian and Cuban revolutions for freedom from the despotic rule of the iron fists. We find a very rich literary history of Spain directly influencing the Latin American writers before their freedom from the colonialism.

Gabriel García Márquez

An omnipresent story-teller haunts the reader throughout the stories of Gabriel García Márquez. Mystery, wonder, oblivion, obsession, social evils, solitude, nostalgia, death in life, transformation, sex, regeneration, Christianity, exile, superstition, dream, irony and time. But as it is not possible to deal with these themes separately, they have been taken together as they occur. Since there is a plethora of

ideas and themes in the works of Gabriel García Márquez, some other ideas which are not clearly mentioned above are also taken for study.

In the Penguin publication of the *Collected Stories*, "The Third Resignation" describes the reflections of a dead man who has twice found himself alive in his own coffin and finally dies as his third resignation. The idea of death is very intensely described in this story. The author has discussed all possibilities and even the impossibilities during a prolonged period of almost eighteen years in the coffin. "The Other Side of Death" creates an atmosphere of oblivion and obsession with death; we are not prepared for that. The whole story is a dream. The author further informs us that it "was his brother, dressed as a woman, in front of a mirror, trying to extract his left eye with a pair of scissors."¹ The fictional world of Gabriel García Márquez is so wonderful



that his description of the twin brothers or that of the trio also takes an unbelievable turn in his stories. In “Bitterness for Three Sleepwalkers” the author presents three persons ‘sitting in a triangle’ and who ‘thought in a chorus’ is something makes us think as to whether it is possible to think in a chorus.

“Dialogue with the Mirror” presents an imitation of the reflection of the person in the mirror while he is shaving. The dead twin brother is also remembered here. “Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo” presents a pregnant woman as the narrator who watches the corpses to come out of their graves and floating in the rain water. She is uncertain of time and becomes nostalgic. The title “Eva Is Inside Her Cat” is itself mysterious, but the author develops the theme by adding her desire to eat the orange. The solitude of Eva is related with her insomnia, a diseased state caused by the ancestral blood that transferred both beauty and all the troubles related with beauty to her. The theme of Christianity is suggested by the limbo image. A suggestion of her having illicit relation with a boy who was killed and buried in her courtyard is in the form of social evil and so is her body aroma. There is a double regeneration – the regeneration of the dead boy in the form of orange and Eva’s who wants to enter her cat. But when she is a cat, she has a desire to eat a mouse and this mouse indicates toward sexuality.

Similarly the intermingling of various themes that of mystery, wonder, dream and

sexuality is present in “Eyes of a Blue Dog.” Everything in the story takes place in dreams and when the characters awake one of them forgets the dream and the other remembers it. “Eyes of a Blue Dog” dominates in the words generally associated with sex like ‘squeeze’, ‘undress’, ‘brassier’, ‘suck’, ‘warming up’, ‘pillow’, ‘meet’ etc. The scene of sex directly emphasizes the theme of sensuality in the form of nocturnal emission. “The Woman Who Came at Six O’Clock” describes a woman whose sole business to earn a livelihood was prostitution. She was so fed up and disgusted with her job that she wanted to renounce it but circumstances do not allow her. She finally proposes a self-imposed exile to herself.

“Nabo” describes the death in life in the form of Nabo’s having being imprisoned for almost fifteen years and being reminded of his past. The themes of oblivion, solitude and mystery are remarkable feature of the story “Nabo” of which the title is after its protagonist. “The Night of the Curlews” brings the element of mystery when the three men got their eyes pecked out by the curlews and they are roaming about the city only by guessing through their senses. In “Someone Has Been Disarranging These Roses” the narrator is the dead owner of the house who can move to any direction in time and is sometimes nostalgic depicting his own story and sometimes the present and sometimes the future when the ‘Rose woman’ would come to know the fact when she is also dead. The prostrating of the



woman before her saints suggests both the themes of Christianity along with that of superstition.

“One of These Days” brings in the theme of social evil in the form of corruption by the powerful officials and the hidden sense of vengeance in the mind of the dentist who pecks out his tooth without anesthesia. In “One Of These Days” the dentist makes the mayor feel the pain of death by pulling his infected tooth without anesthesia.

“Montiel’s Widow” describes that her life is nothing but a living death and she has nothing to do with the world. She feels utter solitude as her children refused to come back for the fear that they would be shot dead as revenge against the brutalities of their dead father. “One Day After Saturday” is full of mystery and wonder as it presents the whole town troubled by the birds falling from the sky. The situation is generally referred to as the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez. The priest’s referring to the appearance of the devil three times has a magic and superstitious effect. The wandering Jew that he claimed to have seen add to mystery and wonder. The author introduces the idea of sexuality very intensely.

The magic of habit and becoming mechanical finds a wonderful expression in “Artificial Roses” and the blind grandmother of Mina could able to explain all her activities through day and the nights chronologically. Mina’s having a girl friend with ‘masculine’ shoes also suggest lesbian relationship between the two. “Big Mama’s Funeral”

describes the social evil of corruption, greed and the exercise of the *jus primae noctis* (the custom of having sex with servant girls and procreate by the male members of a royal house irrespective of the identity of the both women and men). The extreme unction by the priest is a part of Christian theme.

We further encounter the theme of magic and mystery in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings: A TALE FOR CHILDREN” and feel awestruck as to the reality of the tale. The same kind of mystery and wonder are introduced in “The Sea of Lost Time” which presents a whole village on Sunday at eleven o’clock drowned under the sea and the men were riding horses. The dead wife of Old Jacob is shown to float with a current of flowers following her. She is shown as the most beautiful woman in the world. Mr Herbert who is supposed to be the richest man in the world has been found fallen in an ironical situation when awoke from a long sleep. He seems to be as poor as others when they are hungry. Mystery and wonder dominate the story “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World: A TALE FOR CHILDREN” in which a stranger dead body is presented to teach the emotions of love and human solidarity to the villagers living by the sea. “Death Constant Beyond Love” again brings in the theme of corruption through power and social evils in of compelled sex to satisfy a senator as bribe for the undeserving favour.

“The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother” has social evil in the form of prostitution and



the little girl is compelled by her grandmother to earn through prostitution to the extremity of her strength. The central idea of “The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship” is that of mystery followed by wonder. The huge ship that appeared and vanished but was visible to only a boy is finally made to appear and reach the beach as a proof but taking many years and the boy turns into a man.

The collection of stories *Strange Pilgrims* presents a wonderful blend of magic and exile. “Bon Voyage, Mr. President” is the story of a president who is overthrown and is on exile and remembers of corruption, rape, abduction and misuse of the power are in his country. “The Saint”, “I Sell My Dreams”, “The Ghosts of Augusts” and “Light is Like Water” present the theme of mystery, nostalgia, and magical realism or mystery to the core. In his *Imagining Homelands*, Salman Rushdie opines about the magical realism in terms of India and England in the following words:

Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have excess to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the cultural and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement and life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history of immigrant Britain.²

“I Only Came to Use the Phone” suggests the theme of sensuality in the form of lesbianism. One of the matrons was so

fascinated with the beauty and youth of María in the sanatorium that she agreed to do everything for her in return. Immense irony and nostalgia dominate the story. “The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow” begins with sensuality and ends with irony. The author introduces human themes: feeling of love and togetherness; nostalgia and oblivion; decay and regeneration; death and quest for immortality; poverty and richness; social order and social evils; consciousness and subconscious; religion and sensuality; time and timelessness; dream and fact etc.

The Alchemy of style and transformational power of the author’s creativity make all his thematic aspects so credible and convincing that there is no doubt about what is written. Actually the author very easily draws the attention and active participation of the reader himself because of being difficult in the first reading. The reader begins to add his own imagination to support the author and makes a believable tale. His language bears medications, anatomy, nautical and cookery details. The fictional world of Gabriel García Márquez is not entirely fictional but there is a background of reality that embellishes his tales. According to Bell-Villada, “By creating a narrative of ordinary Latin folk that is without a hint of insincerity or condescension, and by articulating a kind of history from below...Gabriel Garcia Marquez has given poetry, magic and dignity to Latin American daily life and can thus be thought of as a people’s writer.”³

Márquez presents all his themes through his characters and situations as though they



were already there and he only picked them up to show them to us. The history of Columbia gives force to his writings and the historical part is often the backbone of his short stories. His love for his birthplace and his country is evident in his stories that he introduces to us from all dimensions.

References

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