CHAPTER I

Introduction

This dissertation is an attempt to examine the concept of love, power and solitude in the fiction of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and to explore the devices that he employs to use and explain these leitmotifs. These three motifs are not an important theme for Marquez alone but are a subject of common concern in the writings of other Latin American writer's as well. The other prominent Latin American writers of the period are Jorge Luis Borges, Alejo Carpentier, Juan Rulfo, Julio Cortazar, Lezama Lima, Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa. They are responsible for the extraordinary attention that Latin American literature has been receiving, Gabriel Garcia Marquez is of course the most famous among all Latin American writers.

Born in 1928, in Colombia, in the coastal town of Aracataca, Marquez spent a solitary childhood with his grandparents, who did not favour his parent's marriage. James Higgins records about Marquez that

In his grandparents large, rambling house, shared by three aunts he grew up as a solitary little boy among elderly adults. Later
The death of his grandfather when Marquez was eight brought an end to his childhood. His death was an irreparable loss to Marquez but the stories heard from his grandmother during his early childhood remained forever a part of his psyche and formed the basis of his latter writing. The memory of his grandparent’s home and town was a constant companion to Marquez during his school in Zipaquira, near Bogota and later his law education at the National University in Bogota. Marquez published his first short story titled ‘Tale of a Castaway’ at the age of twenty-seven while working as a journalist. The story was about a shipwrecked sailor who was rescued after certain days at sea. Despite the success of the story his career as a novelist had yet to take shape. He began work on his first novel Leaf Storm during his poverty ridden days as a journalist for El Espectador in Barranquilla. The actual writing of the book Leaf Storm began after Marquez undertook a trip with his mother back to Aracataca to sell his grandfather’s house where he realized that

Nothing had really changed but I felt that I wasn’t really looking at the village but I was experiencing it as if I were reading it. It was
as if everything I saw had already been written and all I had to do was to sit down and copy what was really there and I was just reading. For all practical purposes everything had evolved into literature: the houses, the people and the memories².

Leaf Storm was finally published in 1955 and Marquez rates it as his best work. He says,

Leaf Storm went straight from my guts onto the paper. The others also came from my guts but I had served my apprenticeship….. I worked on them, I cooked them, I added salt and pepper³.

The other books that followed Leaf Storm were In Evil Hour and No one Writes to the Colonel. Recognition came in the form of a national prize sponsored by the Oil Company Esso Colombia but fame still eluded him till One Hundred Years of Solitude was published in 1967 and is acclaimed as one of the most extraordinary novels of our age. His next novel, The Autumn of the Patriarch was also successful followed by Chronicle of a Death Foretold. This novel deserves a special mention because according to Marquez,
For the first time I have managed a perfect integration of journalism and literature ......
Journalism helps maintain contact with reality, which is essential to literature and vice-versa; literature teaches us how to write ......
I learned how to be a journalist by reading good literature⁴.

His next two books, Love in the Time of Cholera and Of Love and Other Demons talk about love. As a prolific writer Marquez has won admiration as well as criticism from critics and readers alike. His writings have been called among others flashy, exhibitionistic, flamboyant, exaggerative, witty, voluptuous, exhilarating, hyperbolic, simple, ambiguous, humorous and satirical. This study is an attempt to analyze how these terms are reflected in the three leitmotifs – love, power and solitude in Marquez’s fiction. Magic realism associated with Marquez received perhaps its most influential endorsement in the Nobel Prize speech. In 1982, he received the Nobel Prize for literature

For his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent’s life and conflicts⁵.
Marquez's commitment is to portray human experience, a commitment he fulfils with a wealth of fictional detail we call magic realism. Magic realism is woven into the narrative style of his writing that consistently blurs the traditional distinction between fantasy and reality. His writings have magic, myth and mystery yet they ring so true, this mingling of fables, fact and fantasy makes us call it magic realism. The originality of his works can be recognized in the vision of magic reality. Magic reality is a fusion of anachronism and contemporaneity. Anachronism is inherent in Latin American cultures and traditions where magic truly is reality and reality is magical. Contemporaneity however means to destroy false myths that are existing. Dr. Ramesh Mohan says,

In the world that he creates, the real and the fantastic merge, the anachronistic and the contemporaneous fuse or co-exist as the narration moves backward and forward in time. It is a poetic transcription of the reality of Latin America, where the winds of modernity and technological advance have not yet swept away the hard and simple ways of living and the beliefs in magic and miracles; where death and destruction, war and
violence, horror and cruelty, the gruesome and
the squalid, and the absolute power of bloody
dictators are still accepted as facts of life6.

Marquez's fiction depicts strange events to make
apocalypse appear not only credible but inevitable. Marquez
claims that all his works are based in reality and the fantastic is
really the reality of the Caribbean that resembles the wildest
imagination. The reality of Latin America does exist though we
may not believe it, for example. The General in His Labyrinth is
a thoroughly researched book; its sources are documents, letters,
histories and biographies. So in a way he depicts both reality and
imagination. Marquez belief, that one doesn't have to invent
magical reality in Latin America, it exists as it is as, is echoed
by Alejo Carpentier, a Cuban writer who says,

There exists marvelous reality that is in the
Latin American world, you don't have to
invent the marvelous, reality itself is
marvelous enough for anybody7.

The Latin American reality is full of strange incidents and
occurrences. Marquez feels that the rest of the world has failed
to understand this singularity of Latin America, this uniqueness
that enhances the isolation of Latin America. Marquez has used
his prodigious skills as a novelist to explore the narrative possibilities of historical realities, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is based on a murder case and *The General in His Labyrinth* on a historical figure Simon Bolivar. Focus is on solitude and power in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. *Love in the Time of Cholera* however is an exploration of the working of the human heart and its longing to love and belong to someone. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a metaphor for Latin America, where Marquez has explored one glorifying aspect of Latin American that is solitude. Yet another reality of the continent is dictatorship. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is a direct representation of a strong political point of view. Politics gives the novel its impetus and finally its chief subject. Along with magic realism there is political realism.

Marquez says that living in Latin America he cannot ignore politics and it somehow creeps into all his works. According to him Latin America suffers from a form of political bankruptcy and he thinks there is a need for change in society and outlook. His works are no doubt enjoyable but they also carry a message, the message of Latin America. Thus all literary creation by Marquez can also be viewed as a revolutionary process. He is a social critic in his fiction. Marquez novels though written in Latin America are universally enjoyed and he
is able to capture the tone and meaning of Hispanic culture and tradition while at the same time communicating to it universal characteristics. In fact Marquez roots are deeply imbedded in the tradition of storytelling and he was raised on many such tales told to him by his grandmother. This art of storytelling is richly reflected in the fictional world of Marquez and he treats the common place as if it were exceptional and the exceptional as if it were common place. He frequently presents to us the extravagance of the common place.

I detest solemnity and I am capable of saying the most atrocious things, the most fantastic things, with a completely straight face. This is a talent I inherited from my grandmother --- usually; I tended to believe her because of her serious dead pan facial expression. Now, as a writer, I do the same thing: I say extraordinary things in a serious tone. It's possible to get away with anything as long as you make it believable. That is something my grandmother taught me 8.

The deadpan depiction of extraordinary people and extraordinary events is indeed one of the principal stratagems he employs to achieve its comic effects. Marquez uses hyperbole,
allusions and paradox and though these make his fiction ambiguous at times they also convey his style. For Garcia Marquez, the meaning of the text is a mystery and a revelation, which once received, illumines reality to the point of transforming the reader. Marquez’s says,

The language I use in *No One Writes to the Colonel*, *In Evil Hour* and several of the stories in *Big Mama’s Funeral* is concise, sober, dominated by a concern for efficacy that comes from journalism.

Marquez said that he depicts the reality of everyday event in Latin American life, events so surreal that he does not have to invent the hyperbole. Hyperbole is the keynote and even when not actually used we know that it is present in the background. The fantastic often originates in hyperbole and metaphor. His use of hyperbole is even more so in characterization. Marquez excels at deft succinct characterization and evocative description. His style is playful and carries heavy symbolic messages and the presence of questions of universal relevance that issue out of everyday situations in remote Latin American towns.
The most outstanding features of the art of Marquez are his structural skill, his descriptive power, the creative imagination manifested in his characterization, his verbal virtuosity and stylistic tour de force, his use of myth, the subtle and poignant irony, humour and pathos, the juxtaposition of the macabre and the funny, which pervade his works.

Marquez’s greatness as an artist lies in his multilayered storytelling that explores his experience along with the life of the Latin American culture. Marquez in his fiction explores an imaginary town called Macondo, a backwater in Colombia, and a region where Marquez was brought up. This original imaginary world which he has invented for his fiction has been influenced by the real Macondo that is Colombia which was a similarly tiny and remote place near the boyhood home of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

A town in the middle of nowhere that Garcia Marquez used to explore when he was a child.
Marquez gift to us is that in making reality larger that life, he makes it big enough for the reader to see. His fictional world is suffused with emotions and memories of early years, the myths and superstitions of the town; the stories told to him by his grandmother. Marquez generally uses an anonymous narrative voice. A style that he himself says has been inspired by William Faulkner who is his literary mentor especially in his early works. Marquez feels that Faulkner’s description of his town is similar to Macondo that he describes. Both Faulkner and Marquez are dedicated to their roots and show the struggle of human beings against social and material decadence. Faulkner’s description of Yocknapatawpha country is similar to Marquez’s description of Macondo. Faulkner’s realm is the unfinished traumatized rural environment of the American south an accursed land like the lands of Marquez. Both the authors deal with the past and its generations. Incest and its problems is also a feature in the artistic world of both the writers. Marquez’s style has also been compared with that of Salman Rushdie because both are master storytellers of exotic lands and people. Marquez is compared to Norman Mailer as both the writers are stimulated by the objective world, their works are rooted in reality. Marquez in comparison with the other writers of the period like Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa shares with them certain common traits like reflecting the local conditions of
Mexcio, Colombia, Peru, Cuba etc while the themes of his fictional world transcend these concerns and appeal to a broader audience. These authors established in their works, relations beyond time and space, between analogous realities, which defined their modern cultural vision. Garcia Marquez identifies with the Latin American horizon and reveals a deep perception of the direct and deliberate confrontation with the extra-literary reality of the countries of the continent.

Marquez uses certain techniques elaborately in his writing these are magic realism, dreams, myth, hyperbole, disruption of time and space, supernatural characters and descriptive passages are some of these techniques. His use of time and space-how he does not use linear time but cyclic or spatial time renders his books and characters a timeless which permits the characters and events to achieve universal meaning on a mythical level. The past, the present and the future are recorded as if existing in an instant. The other motif sustaining the time structure in his novels is the role that memory plays in our consciousness of time functioning as a link between the past and the present. Memories and experiences are woven deeply into his novels. The element of prophesy, premonitions, omens and superstition also reflected in Marquez’s frequent use of the future perfect tense in his novels, makes a mockery of human freedom or choice and
underlines the futility of human effort in the face of man's pre-ordained fate. The technique of foreshadowing is recurrently used by Marquez to bring about the supremacy of fate in man's life. The constant use of foreshadowing stands out as the basic structural element in his books. Marquez does not dismiss description in fiction as a mere device for verisimilitude in fact it is through description and through reference to physical objects that a sense of space is created in the narrative. Marquez writes in such a manner that he makes us question the boundaries between the canny and the uncanny, the real and the magical, reality and dreams, the natural and the supernatural, the given and the imagined, fact and fiction. It is to Marquez credit as a writer that we question and yet read him voraciously.

In Marquez's fiction the theme of death is most extensively used. Each novel starts with the image of death, which pre-ordains the fate of events in the story and eventually ends with the actual or impending death of a protagonist, a civilization or an ideology. Marquez has laid great emphasis on the theme of death because it is the final evidence of temporality and recurrence. In his books the interplay of the fantastic and the real have its base. He relies on naturalness even in expressing the supernatural and the fantastic. His language too varies from novel to novel, moving from being heterogeneous,
hyperbolic and full of humor to being filled with phrases, sentences, characters and contexts borrowed from other contemporary Latin American writers.

Among various leitmotifs used by Marquez in his fiction only love, power and solitude have been selected for detailed study, as they are the most relevant and important in the context of his work and larger Latin American fiction. The three motifs are inextricably linked in one way or the other and we cannot read one without realizing the other.

Solitude is inherent in the Latin American continent and the course of their history, replete with intrigues and labyrinths have enabled the people of Latin America to experience solitude. A colonial past and an imperial hangover constantly haunt them even today. Every new ruler is a dictator and every regime is a photocopy of a previous regime. The repetitions and reoccurrence of historical events defeat their endeavor to overcome this dismal system. It is difficult for the people of Latin America to overcome their past. The quest for identity therefore, has been the central problem of Latin American culture and the central theme of Latin American literature, the material framework for its cultural horizon and historical perspective.
Marquez when asked why the theme of solitude was predominant in his works said,

It is the only subject I've written about, from my first book until the one I'm working on now.¹²

For him solitude is also a political concept one that he specially explored in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza in his book The Fragrance of Guava asked him, if he ever wrote only one book what would it be. Marquez answer was.

The book of solitude. If you recall, the main character in Leaf Storm lives and dies in the most absolute solitude. Solitude haunts the central figure in Nobody Writes to the Colonel - the Colonel waits, Friday after Friday, with his wife and cockerel, for a war pension which never comes. The Mayor who fails to win the town's confidence in In Evil Hour is a solitary figure too. In his own way, he knows the solitude of power.¹³

Solitude is the theme in The Autumn of the Patriarch and of course in One Hundred Years of Solitude.
Solitude is the pivotal theme and the crux of all Marquez's novels around which the story and the people are centered. The themes of solitude, solitude in power, love of solitude, lack of love resulting in solitude dominates his books but motifs of power and love are not insignificant either. In fact power and its implications interest Marquez greatly and he talks of power as an incapacity to love and of power that brings solitude and links power to fame because power and fame alienate individuals from others. In fact The Autumn of the Patriarch is based on the belief that power brings solitude and that powerlessness brings collective support and security.

Love is considered to be the saving grace of individuals and those who do not love or cannot love are supposed to be doomed. All his characters, experience love but few can sustain it. Marquez has written about his parents love affair in the book, Love in the Time of Cholera while Of Love and Other Demons is a satirical love story of the young. Among the unifying devices utilized by Marquez, the reiteration of certain motifs is important. Thus love, power and solitude are recurrent motifs in his novels in one aspect or the other. These motifs contribute to the freshness in theme and form of Marquez's fiction and through reading we come to realize that Latin America is a
culture that emerges from a colonial past and its environment reflects the inner stress.

The introduction thus is just the preface and basis of what is to follow. We would see the intermingling and interplay of love, power and solitude in the works of Marquez as he tries to bring out the dominant concerns of his work and how these motifs in turn become his themes.
Works Cited


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