Marquez is better known as a novelist than as a writer of short stories though some of his short stories have been judged as the best examples of the genre in Spanish America. His first story got published in 1947, which marked the beginning of the publication of his short fiction along with his career in journalism through out the period between 1940 and 1950. Twenty six stories written by Marquez have appeared in three volumes as in *No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Stories*, *Leaf Storm and Other Stories*, *Innocent Erendira and Other Stories* and now they have been reprinted in one volume *Collected Stories* according to the chronological order of their original publication in Spanish.

The stories because they had appeared in newspapers have their origin in journalism and in fact it is as a journalist that Marquez has learnt to create and arouse the interest of the reader from the very first lines of the book. The stories in themselves are so varied and yet so similar. These stories being his early fiction trace the growth of Marquez as a writer and we can see certain leitmotifs gaining predominance as the stories unfold.
The stories are the mingling of magic, imagination, and the world of make belief with the very real world of harsh reality, incredible though it may seem. They tell the tale of simple people in the remote parts of Colombia where reality itself is extraordinary and a little magical. His stories have the theme of death and decay which overshadows others themes. Death of various types is discussed within the stories. We have death-actual death, spiritual death and death in life while being alive. With death comes loneliness and isolation of the individual.

His stories focus on the evolvement of Garcia Marquez's concern with solitude and death, with the irrational forces that control the lives of his protagonists, and with his dubious estimation of science and technology. The society he describes is one beset by the jolting effect of civil strife and exploitation. His characters struggle to comprehend the role in life that fate has decided they must play.¹

The selected stories discussed here are in relation with the leitmotifs of love, power and solitude. 'The Third Resignation' is the story of a boy aged seven who dies but lives beyond death and then dies once more at the age of twenty-five when his body begins to decompose. The boy leads a solitary life from the age
of seven to the age of twenty-five and is unable to communicate with his mother. There is helplessness and powerlessness in him to communicate with those around him and he lies withdrawn "in the solitary company of his own corpse". 'Eva Is Inside Her Cat' is about a woman, who renounces her beauty and lives three thousand years after death, she too leads a solitary life for many years in darkness. Both the stories show how characters live after death and experience isolation and then there is the actual spiritual death in the final end. 'The Other Side of Death' and 'Dialogue with the Mirror' is basically in essence the same story. The second story is a prelude to the first. The stories are about twins, identical twins one is in the world of living while the other is dead. The twin who is alive dreads that his dead brother is calling out to him and he would be forced to join his brother. This dilemma haunts him till nothing matters to him and he resigns himself to death, the only thing that stands between him and his deceased brother. In 'Dialogue with the Mirror' the twin who was ready to die wakes up and begins to shave. The reflection in the mirror is that of his twin brother, "a face just like his contemplated him with large, stupid eyes and the face was crossed by a crimson thread". The face in the mirror begins to bleed, though there is no cut on his face then he realizes that his end is near and nothing matters to him any more. 'Bitterness
for Three SleepWalkers’ is about a girl who falls from a second story window and since then has been a solitary creature living within a private world. Her brothers, the three sleepwalkers believe that one day “spontaneously she would go about ending herself, sense by sense, until one day we would find her leaning against the wall, as if she had fallen asleep for the first time in her life”4. This girl too since her accident lives in an alienated world from the others “dissolved in her solitude”5.

‘Eyes of a Blue Dog’ is the story of a dream. A woman wishes to track down in real life a lover from her dream. The lover has given her the ‘Eyes of a Blue Dog’ as a code between them but he does not remember this code on awakening and the woman is unable to find him. The readers are left pondering over the fate of this protagonist who is condemned to a life of loneliness, as she will never be able to find the man in her dreams. ‘Someone Has Been Disarranging These Roses’ is the story of the young narrator protagonist who has been dead for forty years. He lived a solitary life for the first twenty years of life after death and then a woman who sells flowers came to stay and since then has been staying in the house from the last twenty years unaware of his presence. He recognizes her as his childhood playmate and friend. Now every Sunday he tries to take a bouquet of roses to his grave but is unsuccessful and the
woman thinks that the wind has disarranged the roses. The narrator is saddened by the thought that when the woman dies he will once again live a solitary life as he did twenty years earlier. “Then I’ll be alone forever in the room”6. ‘The Night of the Curlews’ is a story based on the superstition that curlews pick out the eyes of the men who imitate their call and this is exactly what happens as one man imitates the cry and the curlew pick out the eyes of all three sitting on the table now they have “lost the notion of distance, time and direction”7 and are plunged in an abyss of darkness where everything is unknown and they are alone in their misery and alienated from the familiar world they once knew.

‘Nabo’ is the story of a young man who tends to the horses and even has a special comb for grooming the horses. His only entertainment is to go on Saturdays to the town square to watch a black man play the saxophone. One day a horse hits Nabo on the head and he loses his mind and is now akin to the little idiot girl in his owners house and whom Nabo entertains by teaching how to crank the gramophone. Nabo is tied in a room for fifteen years where he leads a solitary life. After fifteen years Nabo one day breaks his bonds and escapes, the idiot girl now a young woman calls out to him by name, the only thing she has learnt in all those years. The girl remembers the affection
and tenderness that Nabo had shown towards her. Both have spent their life in their respective isolation but yet a common bond is established when the girl calls out to him. ‘Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo’ is an important story because it is for the first time that ‘Macondo’ is mentioned. From here on Mocando becomes an important part of Marquez’s fiction and we will read about it in Leaf Storm and One Hundred Years of Solitude. The town has its very roots in solitude. This story is about a woman Isabel who sits and watches the rain which is a constant downpour and lasts for five days. As the rain continues to pour incessantly it arouses different feelings in Isabel. Firstly the rain is refreshing and pleasant but with the passage of time boredom settles in and emptiness and desolation prevail. Isabel confronts her solitude and thinks she is dead. All notions of time have disappeared and there is emptiness and silence all around.

All these above mentioned, stories depict solitude and loneliness inherent in life and also in death. Death is a predominant theme in these stories. We have characters living life in a state of amnesia where it is easy to forget. There is no power that is dominant rather there is lack of power or powerlessness to communicate. In fact these stories amply
project Marquez's skill as a master craftsman and the reader agrees with Richard Cardwell when he says —

To suggest that the short stories are apprentice pieces is to detract from their real artistry, their subtlety and their narrative technique.

Marquez's characters are a psychological study. There are no limits of time and space for them and the characters float in spatiality and timelessness. Solitude is irremediable and characters are trapped within their bodies, either in madness or in death and are lost in nostalgia. The motif of the idiot girl that we see in 'Nabo' and in 'Bitterness for Three Sleepwalkers' depicts the girls lost in their own world.

The stories that come under the title of 'Big Mama's Funeral' are stories of grit and determination of the characters as they fight the powerful. The powerful is not a person but rather the power here is the emotional state of mind of the characters. It is the inner power, the grit to stand up to the powerful with dignity in the face of oppression. The characters have spiritual strength as in 'Tuesday Siesta'. The entire story is told as if in a flashback, we learn that a widow and a daughter enter town on a hot Tuesday afternoon to visit the grave of a
petty thief. The priest of the village shows no sympathy for the widow and her daughter. But the lady is firm in visiting her son's grave as she maintains it is an emergency and the return train leaves at three thirty. We then learn that the thief was her only son who was shot dead by the solitary widow Rebeca who spent twenty-eight years buried alone in her house. The woman maintains that her son was on the right track as he had promised her that he would never steal anything that someone else might need to survive. The thief's mother is a proud, dignified confident woman who conducts herself boldly in an unfriendly town amidst hostile gaze of an uncooperative priest and the town people. It is between the lines that we read that she must have led a solitary and hard life as she was a widow and her son a thief was a boxer in the past who had to lose the matches in order to earn money. It is the power to present a bold front that does not let her crumble before the priest, a powerful figure, instead in her confrontation with the priest it is she who puts him in his place. "She took the girl by the hand and went into the street". By this simple line the story ends but we don't doubt for a second and also visualize how she must have walked with dignity through the intense heat and the accusing looks to her son's grave and outfaced the entire town. 'One of These Days' is a story where the Mayor of the town is forced to go to a
dentist. The Mayor is all-powerful but because of the pain of an abscessed wisdom tooth he has to go to a dentist. The dentist tries to avoid him but is forced to see him when his son tells him that if he wouldn't see the Mayor, the Mayor would shoot him. The Mayor uses the threat and violence of his power to force the dentist to see him. The dentist on seeing the tooth realizes that it has to be extracted without anesthesia because of the abscess. The dentist has sweet vengeance, as the pain the Mayor would suffer would somehow pay for the disintegration of the social and political condition of the town. The misuse of the power can be seen when the Mayor says that sending the bill to him or to the town means the same thing. Both, this story and the prior one tells us of strength hidden behind frailty. The characters have an inner core of hidden strength, spiritual strength and mental resolve. 'Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon' is a story about the balance of power. Balthazar creates a beautiful cage for the spoilt child of Montiel, who is the town’s richest man. A doctor wishes to buy the cage but Balthazar refuses to sell it as it is made especially for the child and also he thinks Montiel will give him a good price. Montiel however outright refuses to buy it. In the discussion that follows Balthazar leaves the cage in Montiel’s house for the child. He is forced to pawn his watch to give his friends a round of drinks who think he has extracted
sixty pesos from a man of wealth and power. Balthazar gets drunk and exclaims that they have to make more cages and sell them to the rich. The story shows that the rich have the money and power and the poor have only their art and their dreams to sell. 'Montiel's Widow' is the next story and is a continuation of 'Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon' though Montiel is not mentioned directly in this story. As is apparent from the title Montiel is dead and his vast wealth, land and fortune begin to dwindle as all his children are abroad and do not risk coming back as they fear the wrath of the people. Montiel has accumulated wealth by unleashing his terror and power over the poor, which makes the children afraid of returning home to claim his wealth. The widow is already tired of living and her death would be the death of the power symbolized by the tiredness in the arm as predicted by Big Mama who will feature later in 'Big Mama's Funeral' and One Hundred Years of Solitude. The story shows that power when misused leads to suffering for the wife and the children. Montiel's widow is the metaphor of the society that she represents. The children say "It's impossible to live in a country so savage that people are killed for political reasons". The misuse of power and its aftermath is the stories moral.

In a slightly different vein from the others we have the story of 'Big Mama's Funeral' though it depicts the theme of
power yet the narrative is simultaneously ironic, satiric and humorous. Big Mama's Funeral, the title story is an ironic tale full of humour. It tells us of Big Mama who was a very important person and while alive exercised complete authority and power over others. Her forefathers established Macondo as can be seen from the opening line of the story. “This is, for all the world’s unbelievers, the true account of Big Mama, absolute sovereign of the Kingdom of Macondo, who lived for ninety-two years, and died in the odor of sanctity one Tuesday last September, and whose funeral was attended by the Pope”11. Her death is important as it alters the course of the life of others, especially those who have to attend her funeral. The Pope, the Archbishop, the president, the ministers, the beauty queens all come to Macondo to attend the funeral and the story becomes satirical when it depicts how the big powers vie with each other to attend the funeral. The common man is in awe over the show of power and pomp and does not know that the division of the house began to take place as soon as the funeral passed the house.

All these stories center around a town and the town assumes importance. The voice of the people living in the town is dominant and many times force the protagonist to an action as in ‘Balthazar Marvelous Afternoon’ ‘Montiels Widow’,
‘Tuesday Siesta’ and ‘Big Mama’s Funeral’. Also in these stories we are introduced to many characters like Big Mama, Rebeca, Colonel Aureliano etc. who form an important part of the book *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

James Higgins says:

While considerable works in their own right, Garcia Marquez’s early writings are also stages in the maturation of Cien anos. La hojarasca and several of the short stories introduce us to Macondo, the fictional representation of the world in which the author grew up. The former shows the effect of the short-lived ‘banana boom’ and the subsequent depression on that small rural community, while ‘Los funerales de la Mama Grande’ portrays the traditional dominance of the land-owning oligarchy through the mythical story of the legendary matriarch who ruled over the region from time immemorial.

The last set of stories to be included in *Collected Stories* are ‘The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Erendira and her Heartless Grandmother’. These stories show the maturity
in Marquez’s works and are some of the finest stories in fiction. ‘A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings’ is about a man’s arrival in town. His wings attract attention. Some think him to be an angel; while others think he is a circus freak. Pelayo and Elisenda, his hosts begin to charge money from people to see him. He is kept in a huge birdcage and all flock to see him but none can offer any solution as to who is he. The hosts profits greatly from this man but the people’s attention is soon distracted by the arrival of a carnival and in it by a lady who has been turned into a spider for disobedience. The old man is disillusioned and slowly begins to fly till he succeeds and becomes “an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea”13. The old man can reach out to no one as he speaks in a strange dialect and none can understand him. He is a solitary figure on his arrival in the town and when he leaves, he is as solitary as ever. Solitude in this story is both a physical solitude as well as an emotional solitude. There is no emotional bond between the old man and his hosts, rather they are relieved to see him gone. On the contrary is the story ‘The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World’. A corpse floats to the village, and the women find a very beautiful man, tall and virile and dead. They fall in love with him, take him under their care and even name him Esteban. Initially the men of the village cannot understand all the fuss
made over a dead man but slowly they too join the women. The dead man becomes for them a God and looking at him they see the pettiness of their lives. Here a solitary corpse is embraced by the whole village and given a warm and loving welcome. The village people dress the body in new clothes, give him a funeral and make plans to make his memory eternal in their minds and souls. In 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings' people flock from far and wide to see him but none like the people in 'The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World' embrace or accept him as their own.

In some stories by Marquez we have the intermingling of all the three leitmotifs of love, power and solitude. Two such stories are 'Death Constant Beyond Love' and 'Innocent Erendira'. 'Death Constant Beyond Love' is the tale of Senator Onesimo Sanchez, a politician and how he hopelessly falls in love with Laura Farina, the daughter of a murderer. He is a serio-comic figure who is powerful because he is in the midst of a re-election campaign but he is solitary and alone because his doctor has told him that he would die by Christmas. So when he meets Laura he has to make a choice, a choice between power and love, that is between his career and Laura. He chooses Laura because he knows death will end both and thus Laura illuminates the senator's life and reduces his solitude for six months and
eleven days after which death overpowers love. Senator Onesimo Sanchez is dead and now it is Laura’s turn to be condemned to solitude as she will now live the life of a widow.

‘The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Erendira and Her Heartless Grandmother’ tells the tale of a grandmother who treats Erendira like in the fairy tale of Cinderella. The grandmother is the wicked stepmother and Cinderella is the granddaughter who has to perform all the slavish chores of the house at the behest of her grandmother. Fatigued from her endless chores, Erendira forgets to extinguish the candelabra and a fire breaks out that destroys the house and all its belongings. Erendira is forced to work as a prostitute by her grandmother and repay her debts. Ulises falls in love with Erendira and together they are happy. They try to runaway and set up a new life but the grandmother with the help of military authority catches the pair. The pair then makes plans to kill the grandmother, she survives two times but finally she is stabbed by Ulises and Erendira who then runs into the sunset. The story tells of love, love that may not be everlasting but definitely shows the way to happiness. Happiness itself proves elusive, as the lovers are unable to fulfil their desire of being together forever. Solitude is also present in the story; solitude is in Erendira’s life both physical and spiritual. The arid loneliness of
her life evokes tragic pity from us. The story codes the issue of debt and the struggle for power within the familial setup and its supremacy. At another level, the story is also about exploitation and power which is reflected through a complex political fable of exploitation, inherent greed and freedom symbolized by Erendira’s struggle for freedom from the clutches of her tyrannical and powerful grandmother. In Innocent Erendira.

The mythical dimensions lead to the interpretation of the tale at many levels as a story of economic exploitation and class war, of the elusive nature of freedom and happiness, of the struggle between the conscious and the unconscious, between the individual and the ego, of the growing up of individuals from adolescence to maturity, of the animal in us which betrays us, of the self’s need to come to terms with reality; and these interpretations subvert the fairy tale ending.¹⁴

All the stories of Marquez have enigmatic titles like ‘Eva Is Inside Her Cat’ ‘Someone Has Been Disarranging These Roses’, ‘The Night of the Curlews’ etc. and though Marquez has admitted that he was often faced with the problem of themes
and had to seek out a story before writing it. The stories are complete in themselves and apart from the use of leitmotifs of love, power and solitude they also reveal the struggle of human beings against social and moral decadence.

The various short stories was Marquez’s first attempt to write and is a prelude to his novels especially to One Hundred Years of Solitude. The book unifies in itself the principal theme of solitude that he has been talking about in all these stories and the culmination of all these stories is seen in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Many of the characters of these early narratives are also the forefathers of the Buendias of One Hundred Years of Solitude in that they are lonely isolated individuals leading a solitary existence.

Apart from these stories we have Leaf Storm and Other Stories which is about the attempt of a few honorable men to bury the corpse of a doctor who has defied the codes of the town and in an interview to Rita Guibert, Marquez says:

Leaf Storm, the first book I ever wrote. I think a lot of what I’ve done since then springs from it ------. I knew fewer writers’ tricks, fewer nasty tricks at that time. It seems to me a rather awkward, vulnerable book, but
completely spontaneous and it has a raw sincerity not to be found in the others. It is a powerful book that conveys the desolation and nostalgia of Macondo and introduces us to Macondo’s microcosmic world. The stories published in Leaf Storm have isolation and loneliness as a central metaphor but the characters determination and will to survive with dignity is another important theme in the book. The stories are not moralistic in tone and Garcia Marquez himself says:

The moral of a story is like the iceberg it must be held afloat on the part that is not seen: in study reflection the material included but not directly employed in the story.

Perhaps that is why we read these stories and try and see his later fiction in relation with his earlier one which, is none other than these stories.

Love which is an important leitmotif in his later fiction is seldom seen in Marquez’s stories and when ever written about it is mostly the negation of love as in ‘Death Constant Beyond Love’ or unrequited love as in ‘Artificial Roses’. ‘Artificial Roses’ is a tale of unrequited love. Mina is angry with her grandmother for making her miss mass in Church. Her
grandmother had washed the sleeves of her dress and Father Angel did not give communion to any girl with a bare shouldered dress. This anger against her grandmother is only a pretext whereas in reality she is really angry because her boy friend has left her and she has in anger burnt the letters he had written to her. The relationship between the granddaughter and the grandmother is shown and though the grandmother is blind and calls herself crazy, she seems to see and know all and is saner than the rest of the characters in the story.

Two more stories by Marquez dealing with love are included in the book Strange Pilgrims. These stories are 'The Trail of Blood In The Snow' which is the tale of Billy Sanchezele Avila and his beautiful bride Nena Daconte on their honeymoon but their love is doomed as Nena dies during her honeymoon due to a rose thorn pricking her finger which results in fatal blood loss while Billy is all the time across the road in a hotel and does not know that Nena has died and that everybody is on the look out for him. ‘The Summer of Miss Forbes’ does not exclusively deal with love. It is the story of two children and their governess Miss Forbes. The children think that they have succeeded in poisoning Miss Forbes when she doesn’t get up in the morning according to routine but she is found killed by twenty seven stab wounds in her body, most probably the result.
of an unsuccessful love affair. The character's inability to love and the negation of love can later be seen in the character of Col. Aureliano Buendia in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the Patriarch in *The Autumn of The Patriarch*. Also, the love does not see a happy ending in the last story 'The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Erendira and Her Heartless Grandmother'.

Thus, the short stories of Marquez though not exclusively dealing with the leitmotifs chosen for this study do give us a glimpse of his depiction of these which is given full treatment by him in his later fiction.
Works Cited


3. Ibid., p. 42.

4. Ibid., p. 35.

5. Ibid., p. 35.

6. Ibid., p. 75.

7. Ibid., p. 80


10. Ibid., p. 140.

11. Ibid., p. 170


