PREFACE

Latin America's best-known literature came into being during the 1960s, in a movement known as the ‘Boom’. It marks the period when Latin American or more particularly Spanish American fiction became globally visible for the first time. The Boom is basically the sudden explosion of literary activity which occurred amongst Latin American writers, when there was a marked increase in the production and availability of innovative and experimental novels. But few critics assert that ‘Boom’ was not a sudden development or a sudden flowering of writers in the 1960s as the word would suggest, but a gradual one that began tentatively in the thirties and forties, accelerated in the fifties, and came to full bloom in the sixties. Several controversies arose around the Boom phenomenon. Whatever may be the claims, the Boom novelists are the ones who brought Latin American literature from the backwaters to the center-stage of the literary world.

Before the first shock waves of the Boom were felt, several other writers changed the shape of Latin American literature during 1940s. Though a number of significant novels by established writers, as well as new figures appeared during 1960s, the Boom is primarily concentrated around four central figures, the so-called ‘Big Four’ of the Latin American Boom: Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012), Julio Cortazar (1914-1984), Gabriel
García Márquez (1927- ) and Mario Vargas Llosa (1936- ). But the Big Four are as different as they are similar. Despite the use of fantasy and fragmentation as well as critical claims of existential uncertainty, all offer commentaries on Latin American politics and society. Their novels were somewhat rebellious from the general point of view of Latin American culture. These Boom writers crossed traditional boundaries, experimented with language, and often mixed different styles of writing in their works. But the youngest and the most individually rebellious among the Big Four of Latin American Boom is Mario Vargas Llosa, a Peruvian-Spanish writer, astute critic and literary giant in the Spanish speaking world. Recipient of the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature, he is the author of several books that include novels, short stories, essays, literary criticism, etc.

He made a precocious entrance into the world of literature in his twenties. He belongs to the first generation of Latin American novelists to capture fully the attention of an audience beyond their national borders. Known both for the quality and the quantity of his output, Vargas Llosa has produced some of the new world’s most memorable fiction. His fiction combines an analysis of Latin American history with his own life experiences and those of Peruvians in general. Above all, one thing sets him apart from the other Boom writers – by and large, he has always remained essentially a realist.
Vargas Llosa is indeed very much a realist whose aim is really to offer a more complex and therefore fuller picture of contemporary Peru; a pretty clear one. He demonstrates artistic complexity more clearly, perhaps, than any other Latin American novelist. He adds to his work, a cry for social justice. He is identified as a writer who is best known for novels that often combine technical experimentation with an exploration of the harsh social realities of Latin America. His vision is not of order or stability but of haunting complexity in his systematic exposure of Peru’s corrupt moral social values.

Vargas Llosa’s contribution to contemporary Latin American literature is remarkable. His commitment to social change is evident in his novels, plays, and essays. His voluminous literary production itself is a proof that no living Latin American writer is as versatile or as engaging as Vargas Llosa. His novels have been translated into numerous languages, marking his international critical success. He has probably more awards bestowed upon him than any novelist in Latin America. His vast literary output includes - historical novels, political thrillers, murder mysteries, autobiographical, humorous works and detective stories. His novels can be considered as microcosms of Peruvian society. He uses numerous themes and displays an interest in analyzing points of view. He has used the mythical, popular and heroic elements in his texts to capture the social,
political or cultural reality of this country. Major themes of his texts are corruption, violence, machismo, betrayal, murder, formation of social and political hierarchies; struggle against the authoritative regimes, etc.

During the 1960s, Vargas Llosa wrote long and tremendously complex novels that offered dark and disturbing visions of contemporary Peru. Those early novels were considered innovative and politically engaged. He was more concerned with the theme of corruption and its effects on both individuals and communities, and he found a literary means to express it. During the 1970s and 1980s, he changed course and began to experiment with a variety of new kinds of narratives. Vargas Llosa's prose fiction is a mirror of his times. It is particularly an interpretation of problems inherent in the society of Peru. As a realist writer, he expresses concerns regarding militarism, the power of oligarchy and the adverse situation of the masses. Most of the attendant symptoms of underdevelopment, such as social inequities, injustice, exploitation, and discrimination, are woven into the fabric of his major novels.

As a public figure, he has also taken upon himself an active role as a commentator on the complex world of contemporary Latin American politics. His approach in portraying Peruvian society, especially his realistic depictions of social and political constituencies, allows for an analysis of the conditions of few nations. His diverse characters reflect
Peruvian cultural patterns and also represent worldwide values. With his characters, which represent social groups that often find themselves in open clashes, Vargas Llosa shows the tensions present in any modern society. For Peruvian society in particular, Vargas Llosa portrays characters that historically have had a major role in the development of modern Peru. In his study of Vargas Llosa’s characters, Rafael Ocasio in *Literature of Latin America* (2004) notes:

His characters represent the multiple levels present in the complex Peruvian society, which is sharply divided into social, racial and professional classes. This sociopolitical approach is a strong contribution to the documentation of Peruvian societal cultural patterns. (115-116)

Vargas Llosa is without a doubt, at the forefront of Latin American literature. Constantly redefining the role of the writer in Latin American society, he is very much a man of his time. Although immersed in complex problems of Peru in particular and Latin America in general, his works also have a universal stature as they repeatedly examine social and ideological conflicts and the contradictory nature of human passions. Cesar Ferreira in an article concludes his analysis of Vargas Llosa’s literary production saying, “His own relentless passion for the world of fiction and the multiple manifestations of reality make him a crucial protagonist in
Spanish America’s contemporary literary history”. Through his novels, Vargas Llosa has succeeded in creating a body of work that appeals to a wide audience. Hence, the basic premise of the thesis is to explore and recuperate the evolution of Latin American Boom and locate the literary significance of Vargas Llosa.

The thesis titled “Elucidating the Socio-literary Matrix of Latin American Reality: A Study of Mario Vargas Llosa’s Fiction”, seeks to reveal Vargas Llosa’s overall view of human condition in Latin America in general and Peruvian society in particular. The research is carried out in the light of the author’s attention to Peru’s social condition and historical backgrounds. My particular confinement is towards the analysis of his four novels: *The Time of the Hero* (1962), *The Conversation in the Cathedral* (1969), *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1977) and *The Bad Girl* (2007), which aims at providing a gateway to understand Vargas Llosa’s vision of haunting complexity, and his systematic exposure of Peru’s corrupt moral and social values. The primary concern of the research is to elucidate and simplify the incomprehensibility of the works of Vargas Llosa, which are followed by serious reading communities and scholars. While elucidating the novels to the complete extent, the manner in which Vargas Llosa employs the latest technical innovations such as flashbacks, fragmented
time sequences and breaks in the narrative structures are also closely examined.

The first chapter titled "Latin American Boom", traces the very genesis of the Boom era and establishes Vargas Llosa as the one who had a larger international impact and worldwide audience than any other Boom writer. The study begins with providing the backdrop of the Boom and goes on to examine the contribution of major Pre-Boom writers: Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), Miguel Angel Asturias (1899-1974), Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), Jose Maria Arguedas (1911-1969), Juan Rulfo (1917-1986), Jose Donoso (1924-1996), and Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1929-2005), who placed Latin America on the world map.

The chapter presents few stereotypes of the Boom phenomenon and examines the three main impulses responsible for the Boom. The chapter offers a critical insight into the narrative strategies employed by Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortazar, and Garcia Marquez in their works, at length. The chapter then establishes Vargas Llosa as the youngest, rebellious and consistently the best among of the Boom writers, offering an overview of his literary themes in the context of his personal and intellectual biography. The chapter ends with brief synoptic view of the thematic designs of Vargas Llosa's novels and the entire strategy of his art. The following chapters will specifically elucidate four of his major novels: The Time of
the Hero (1962), Conversation in the Cathedral (1969), Aunt Julia and the Script Writer (1982), and The Bad Girl (2007) with critical analysis and thematic illustrations supported by textual references. All these novels have received universal critical reception that elucidated the fusion of social issues.

The second chapter "Postmodern Reality" provides a critical and analytical elucidation of Vargas Llosa’s sensational Boom novel, The Time of the Hero. The thematic understanding of the novel is provided with textual illustrations. The chapter provides critical insights into the narrative strategies built on essentially Faulknerian techniques employed by Vargas Llosa. The chapter examines the novel in the light of Postmodern reality, as the structure of the novel is recognizable through the fragmented presentation of multiple points of view. The chapter further examines Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical theory, as the underlying psychological basis of the novel is Freudian. The major themes like Machismo, corruption, violence, animalization, etc are dealt in great detail. The basic opinion of the novel, ‘Peruvian society is a jungle of animals fighting for existence’, is explored under the light of various ethnic distinctions.

The third chapter "Peruvian Epic" examines Vargas Llosa’s major novel, Conversation in the Cathedral which is arguably the greatest novel about Peru ever written. The theme of the novel is best illustrated with
textual illustrations. The chapter begins with the major argument of Peru as a ‘fucked-up country’ in the backdrop of General Major Odria’s regime. The novel is interpreted in the light of Marxist literary criticism. The chapter exposes Peruvian reality through caste and class relationships in San Marcos University and in the Zavala family. The chapter provides critical insight into Santiago’s vision of reality of Peru as a brothel. It ends with examining the complex structure of the novel as whirlwind and shows Vargas Llosa’s use of Chinese box set up.

The fourth chapter “Diffusing Popular Culture” elucidates Vargas Llosa’s semi-autobiographic comic novel, *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*. The thematic understanding of the novel is provided with textual illustrations particularly focusing on the twin themes: Love and writing. The chapter examines the novel in the light of Postmodern literature. The merging of reality and the fiction is illustrated in great detail. The chapter offers an exhaustive view of the issue of popular culture in Latin American context and soap opera in particular. It also examines the crucial elements that define soap operas. The chapter ends with justifying Vargas Llosa’s juxtaposition of comic and serious to render a critical evaluation of Peruvian reality.

The fifth chapter “Utopic Reconciliation” explicates the novel *The Bad Girl*, in which Vargas Llosa’s shifts his gear to introduce love and
eroticism, to convey his new theme: human reconciliation. The theme of the novel is best illustrated with textual illustrations. The chapter analytically probes the theme of the novel against the backdrop of Peru's political and social realities. The chapter examines the issue of female sexuality at length. It makes a survey on the question of women's liberation in great detail and provides critical appreciation and reception of the novel. The chapter also presents a series of dichotomies and provides an understanding of the structure of contrasts. This is followed by the "Conclusion" which offers a summation of Vargas Llosa's relentless passion for the world of fiction and his multiple manifestations of reality. All these chapters provide a complete critical evaluation of the novels taken up for study, in the light of the existing criticism and thereby evolve a fresh insight and critical approach. The thesis explores and expedites all these aspects to the best possible extent as Vargas Llosa succeeds in interpreting Peruvian reality in multifaceted ways.

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