

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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GARCIA MARQUEZ

(1927-2014)

Works

Leafstorm and other stories, 1955
No One writes to the Colonel, 1961
Big Mama's Funeral, 1962
An Evil Hour, 1962
One Hundred Years of Solitude, 1967
The Autumn of the Patriarch, 1975
Chronicle of a Death Foretold, 1981
Collected Stories, 1984
Love in the Time of Cholera, 1988
The General in his Labyrinth, 1990
Collected Novellas, 1990

Biography

Garcia Marquez was born on March 6, 1927 in Aracataca, Colombia. Soon after Garcia was born, his father completed his professional studies, to become a pharmacist. He moved, with his wife, to the city of Barranquilla, leaving Garcia behind in Aracataca. Garcia was raised in his home town by his maternal grandparents. In December 1936 Garcia's dad took him and his brother to Since, and in March the youngster's grandfather died. Subsequently Garcia and his brother ended up in Sucre, where his dad started up his own pharmacy.

When Gabriel Garcia's parents fell in love, his mother's father, the Colonel so called, expressed a strong opposition to Garcia as a prospective son in law. The young man, the objection went, was both a womanizer and a conservative, and did what he could to woo Luisa romantically—with love songs, violin compositions, long letters, and, after she had been sent away, lengthy telephone calls. Everything possible was done to separate the young couple, but in the end nothing worked. The couple were inseparably devoted to one another.

Since Garcia Marquez had from the outset little contact with his biological parents, and since it was in the cards for him to remain with his sweetheart, Luisa, it followed that sooner or later Marquez would be living under one roof with his daunting father-in-law, the Colonel. It thus turned out that the nemesis of his romantic aspirations, the menacing Colonel, was just the right creative and fascinating relative for the fast learning Garcia Marquez. The contact with this father-in-law, whom Garcia Marquez called his 'umbilical cord with history and reality,' became a priceless source of story telling and mythological imagination, for the soon developing young novelist, Garcia Marquez. It was relevant, to this grandparental influence, that the Colonel was famed for his participation in the Thousand Years War, from which he emerged a liberal hero, who courageously repeated unpopular narratives concerning the rotten behavior of the government during the war.

Garcia Marquez's fictional turns to 'magical realism,' which was destined to be the trademark of his greatest novels, were profoundly stimulated by his grandmother. His novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a rich colloquy of tales, fantasies, superstitions, ghost narratives derived, many of them, from Garcia Marquez' conversations with that lady.

Once he was settled in Sucre, with his brother, Garcia Marquez was sent off for a formal education in Barranquilla, where he soon became known as a mild and humorous lad, 'el viejo' to his schoolmates.

In the following years, Garcia Marquez attended a Jesuit high school in San Jose, then was sent on to the capital, Bogota, where he attended a demanding high school, at a Liceo located an hour outside the city. By this time he was showing himself adept at sports, and by 1947, upon graduation from the Liceo, he commenced the study of law—the desire of his father. By 1950 he had terminally tired of studying law, and turned to journalism—clearly a step in the direction of the writing which kept bubbling up in him. Though resident in Colombia, and always close to the memories of his town of origin, Garcia Marquez slipped into what he himself called 'a bohemian life,' frequenting the company of international writers, immigrating to Europe during the 1950's. and fleeing the wrath of Colombia's military leader, Rojas Pinilla. In 1958 the writer wed Mercedes Barcha Pardo.

In 1967 appeared Garcia Marquez's. most admired book and the world introduction to the movement of what was to be called 'magic realism': *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, with all its memories and involvements with the childhood home of the author. In 1985 his reputation was to be further enhanced by the great fiction, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, followed by *The General in his Labyrinth* (1989) and *Of Love and other Demons* (1994). With these works the author had established himself as a leading figure of the Latin American Boom, and one of the world's preeminent fiction writers.

In 1982 Garcia Marquez was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the late 1990's he was diagnosed with cancer, and ultimately began to suffer from dementia. He died in Mexico City at the age of 87.

Achievements

Transformative. Garcia Marquez had a powerful transformative mind, which enabled him to build on his earliest personal experiences, in order to create adult and magical fictions, which spoke to the sixties and seventies, with their psychedelic music, their political and social free spiritedness, their growing respect for marginalized peoples.

The Boom. The Latin American boom, an explosion of new fiction which went internationally viral, spread rapidly outside South America in the sixties and seventies of the past century ; Garcia Marquez was a leading exponent of this movement, and one of the four most prominent figures in the new fiction—along with Vargas Llosa of Peru, Carlos Fuentes of Mexico, and Julio Cortazar of Argentina.

Marginals. Like other Boom writers, Garcia Marquez was drawn to simple people, rural cultures and customs, and old traditional country tales. Garcia Marquez himself was nourished, for a lifetime, by the fantastic stories his grandmother used to tell him, and which intermix ghosts, revenants, and simple patient folks, like the Colonel, in 'No One writes to the Colonel,' who will return till the end of time for the pension check that never arrives.

Latino. Like Carlos Fuentes, in his epic of Latin America, *Terra Nostra*, Garcia Marquez gladly thought of himself as a voice for Latin America. He was not a declared friend of Europe—unlike many Latin intellectuals, Garcia Marquez was on the side of the 'primitive and natural' of the Latins, rather than the 'formal and stiff' of the Roman-like Europe. It was in fact his small village birthplace that provided the staunchest launching pad for Garcia Marquez' imagination.

Themes

Magic. More than any other writer of the Boom, Garcia Marquez established the 'magic' quality of the Latin American fictional boom. He traced his sensitivity, to this free spirited theme, to the stories his grandmother told him, from a yet older time, when dreams and reality interwove in the jungle. Even in a mature period novel, like *Love in the Time of Cholera*, 1988, Garcia Marquez remains a reckless romantic, reaching as far as he can into the wellsprings of love.

Politics. Garcia Marquez' *No One Writes to the Colonel*, 1961, is a sharp if quiet indictment of the kind of government that has no interest in keeping its (pension or other) commitments to its citizens—in this case veterans. We know fully that the Colonel will never receive what is due to him, nor will he ever receive any explanation of why he is not receiving any money.

Latino. The dignity and uniqueness of the Latin experience is written all over Garcia Marquez's work. The author remained entangled with his own childhood roots. He puts this tangle with great power by saying, of one of his returns to his home town: 'I have never renounced the nostalgia of my homeland: Aracataca, to which I returned one day and discovered that between reality and nostalgia was the raw material for my work.'

Fidelity. The author's loyalty to his home village generates a key emotion through Garcia Marquez' fiction. *Love in the Time of Cholera* is a long and subtle tribute to the endurance of loyalty between two childhood sweethearts. *No One Writes to the Colonel* is a similiar paean to patience, endurance, and hope—the three pillars of loyalty.

Characters

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was one of the masters of that 'magic realism' which became the trademark of the new Latin American novel of the 60's and 70's. In his great novel about many generations of a Colombian family, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), Marquez brought us fresh appreciation of the mystery of time and the magic of human relations.

That interpersonal sensitivity plays out at its finest in the character developments of **Fermina** and **Florentino**, in *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Those two lovers eventually to be, have known one another since school days, when Florentino waited daily, across the street from Fermina's ritzy house, to wave good afternoon to her. Florentino's much more humble origins, than those of Fermina, guaranteed that when it came time for marriage she would be destined for a doctor—she was—while he would continue on with what would turn out to be a chronic sequence of passing love affairs. In the end, after the death of her husband, it turned out that Florentino and Fermina were able to marry and find each other fresh and lively.

A wry character, as universal *and* idiosyncratic as Fermina and Florentino, the **Colonel** sits out his life in a small backwater village in Colombia, awaiting the arrival of a (never to arrive) veteran's benefit check. (He goes faithfully to the harbor dock, to ask whether the missive has arrived.) What keeps the Colonel going? His lovely pet cock, which he puts up every year for the village cock fight, and bets on—to his profit. His wife who is by this time only himself turned inside out, his very voice. The only thing sure to happen, in his sleepy village, is the change in the seasons.

This handful of characters is vivid with Marquez' trademark insights: his senses for the touching (the rooster), the goofy (Florentino's undying ingenuity, in ways to express his romantic feeling for Fermina), the ritual (as in Fermina's undying fidelity to her habit of regular correspondence with Florentino).