

Autumn of the Patriarch: Marquez in his Study of the Loneliness of Power

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Abstract

Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) is a protesting and progressive novelist of Latin America and world literature, and his novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (“El Otono del Patriarca”) written in the genre of anti-authoritarian literature, is a history of a long series of misrules, an autocratic poem. Literally *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (“El Otono del Patriarca”) is a tragic and merciless epic of the loneliness of power, a poetic exuberance in the physical dissection of a prose. A reclusive ruler (General Zacharias) imprisoned for life in a decaying palace, who turns state decrees into official documents with his thumbprint, is a healer of ills, and is the epitome of many dictators. He gives the people of the country poverty and oppression, and gives poetry festivals and beauty contests. According to Lord Acton, a famous philosopher of the 19th century, ‘ultimate power is the sign of man's highest complex efficiency, the index of man's excellence and the journey of degradation of his personality’. He also says, ‘Power corrupts people, ultimate power brings with it immeasurable corruption, and the life of a dictator is made’ (Acton 35). Loneliness in Marquezian literature is a stark symbol of ultimate sadness and despair. A solitude that is rich in earthly consciousness is much more horizontal and that is the embodiment of *natural* philosophy of life, transparent and frank (Kamaruzzaman 358). The paper will discuss as in the novel *The Autumn of Patriarch*, Marquez creates a continental loneliness through the agonizing loneliness of a deranged fascist autocratic Caribbean dictator. The loneliness (solitude) that represents unfathomable daily death or spiritual pain, and the attacks of all the nineties of hierarchy, under the influence of neo-colonialism, Latin America of the twentieth century enjoys the bloodied body.

Keywords: Solitude, Marquez, Latin America, Solitude, Dictatorship, Acton, Autumn of Patriarch.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's (1927-2014) novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* ("El Otoño del Patriarca") is recognized in world literature, as perhaps, the foremost work in the anti-authoritarian literary genre, and is eternally resplendent in its own characteristics. This novel is a popular domestic material written about the death of a corrupt dictator in Latin America, and the pursuit of his character. He is a living legend against capitalism, neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. His rebellion against violence, bloodshed, murder and exploitation, or, one might say, the intense social exploitation and contradictions of Latin America gave rise to the dialectical Marquez. Latin America, which has been oppressed by Spanish imperialism for a long time, has been re-oppressed by US imperialism after its liberation from Spanish imperialism, or can be better said to have been subordinated. On the one hand, the influence of neo-imperialism and the influence of capitalism, and on the other hand, the development of the thinking and consciousness of the Communist Party of Latin America under the leadership of Cuba and the ideal of the *Shining Path*, in this context, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* was published from Barcelona in 1975. It should be noted that one of the main themes of Latin American literature is dictatorship and for that reason, the dictator is a unique popular myth in Latin America, especially in the Caribbean region, the author has created a perfect fictional character by analysing the nature of the dictators and combining their unique characteristics. In an interview, Marquez said, '*The Autumn of the Patriarch* is actually a poem about the loneliness of power'. He further said, 'The usurpation of the greatest power is the manifestation of the highest and most incomprehensible efficiency of man, and for this reason the usurpation (by force) is, simultaneously, a sign of man's excellence and the beginning of the degradation of his individuality'. ("*He gave us back our history: Interview*") According to Lord Acton, a famous historian and politician of the nineteenth century, 'Power corrupts men, and ultimate power carries with it an immeasurable pollution' (Acton 35).

Loneliness emerges in Marquezian literature as a stark symbol of ultimate melancholy and despair. A solitude that is much richer in earthly consciousness, much more horizontal, has no emotional adultery, and is the embodiment of the *natural* philosophy of life, transparent and frank. Marquez said, 'Loneliness is the essence of his entire literature'. As people have been immersed in the deep corner of civilization and culture beyond the community, the society, the human group has gradually become lonely and lonely in the deep corner of that crooked labyrinth. It seems as if the drowning is a non-existent being. Basically, the theme of loneliness in his literature is lovelessness. Without unrequited love, man is basically a victim of loneliness; he feels alone in that lonely maze, he loses himself in its agony, unpredictable. Loneliness is a painful disorder in which the loneliness of being alone without the companionship of others and even of oneself leads to mental agony and ultimately suicide. In an interview published in the *Paris Review* in 1982 by Peter H. Stone, Marquez said about the power of solitude: 'When you reach absolute power, there is no contact with reality, and that's the worst kind of solitude there can be. A very powerful person, a dictator, is surrounded by interests and people whose final aim is to isolate him from reality; everything is in concert to isolate him'. (Wick 5)

In the novel *The Autumn of Patriarch*, Marquez creates a continental solitude. The theme of this novel is the loneliness of power. A fictitious ruler of a fictional city on the shores of the Caribbean Gulf, in which all the dictators of Latin America are centred. Autocratic heroes in stories and novels are described as fictional, but basically, they are followers of real characters of different times and notorious for arbitrariness as the head of administration, these characters are always considered as very significant elements of literary

culture. There is no end to the creative literature developed with the various characteristics of these dictators, as the dictatorial atmosphere is ideal for lawlessness and tyranny. In this regard, it can be said without a doubt that Latin American literature has been leading for the last two centuries and Borges, Cortazar, Carpentier, Asturias, Carlos Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, Neruda, and of course Gabriel Garcia Marquez are shining examples of the literary theory of 'Art for Society's sake'. Marquez brought back with his unique writing an unknown history of Latin America and folklore, mythology and Hispanic culture, and of course the suffering of the continent's peoples for centuries of innocent isolation revealed in his creations. This is why the famous Chilean novelist Isabel Ayende wrote about Marquez: 'He gave us back our history' (Web). This loneliness of power is our main topic, and to know the loneliness of power it is very essential to know the political history of Latin America.

Marquez's thoughts on solitude were not only philosophical or psychological, but also social, political and economic. Regarding loneliness, Garcia Marquez said – 'If you look carefully, the main character of the novel *La Hojarasca* ("The Storm of Leaves") lives or dies in solitude. And so, it is with the main character of the novel *El Coronel no Tiene Quien Le Escriba* ("No One Writes to the Colonel"). Loneliness also permeates the character of the mayor in the novel *La Mala Hora* ("The Inauspicious Sign"), and without the support of the townspeople, he constantly practices the solitude of power. In this context, Marquez also said, 'Literally, the absence of love is the birth of solitude'. José María Arguedas, contemporary poet and novelist and author of the short story *Deep Rivers*, in his famous poem *A Call to certain Academics*, speaks of the suicidal loneliness of self-absorbed Latin America:

They say that we don't know anything that we are backwards,
That they'll exchange our heads for others, better ones,
They say that our heart also does not match the times that it
it is full of fears, tears, like the calendar lark, like the heart of
a huge, butchered bull...
We know that they want to misshape our face with clay exhibit
us, deformed, before our sons'. (Varese 2)

Since the abolition of colonial rule (*Spanish colonization: 1533-1825; US colonization: 1870-2004*) democracy has not been absent in countries including South America and the Caribbean islands commonly known as Latin America, but only with the slightest flaw in the process of exploitation. Authoritarian or autocratic regimes are established. It should be noted that Latin America is mainly composed of twenty sovereign countries. These countries are: Panama, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, El Salvador, Cuba, Ecuador, Dominican Republic and Haiti. Despite the exemption from colonial rule, the activity of extracting logistics from the former colonies, which are abundant in natural resources, can no longer be suspended! So how will the interests of the former bosses be protected if there is no subservient force under the responsibility of the government. Hence, to supervise the activities of keeping the wealth smuggling process active, the self-interested well-educated or ill-educated *black-headed* army is celebrated and the erstwhile lords organize the governance smoothly by installing a ruthless hero at their head. So, he could be Trujillo (Dominican Republic), Duvalier (Haiti), Batista (Cuba), Martinez (El Salvador), Rafael Carrera (Guatemala), Santa Ana (Mexico), Morazan (Honduras), Ibanez (Chile), Terra (Uruguay),

Francia (Paraguay), Jimenez (Venezuela) or, Pinilla (Colombia). Somewhere established hereditary family autocracy (Nicaragua's Somoza Garcia). As a result, the common people of Latin America continue to be oppressed, persecuted, trampled or crushed under the dictatorship of the imperialist-feudal-capitalist or capitalism.

Arguedas said in a sharp sarcastic speech to those who have become rich by taking away everything in Latin America: 'Take out your binoculars, your best lenses. Look, if you can'. (Varese 2) In this context, Marquez said: 'My story is based on the cruel and bloody reality of military regimes, dictatorships one after the other throughout Latin America'. He also says: 'Latin America, especially the Caribbean region, is the essence of history arising from a long succession of misrules, and the vibrant unity of so many skeletal lands torn apart by colonialism and neo-colonialism, the country's lonely sinking and gradual destitution' (Interview 8). Marquez's Nobel speech becomes particularly significant in this context. Marquez said: 'Capitalism Western Europe and its friend the United States want to see Latin America in their own expectations, in their thinking and culture and above all in their own image without any rational or reasonable explanation. They (capitalism) want to judge everything by the same standard, the same standard by which they are judged, and they want to measure Latin America by the same standard. They cannot accept this theory that life is not the same everywhere. Marquez further said, 'It is really impossible to express our own reality by applying the European interpretation, our reality is so different that it is really impossible to reach it by applying the capitalist interpretation. On the contrary, in such an arrogant attempt, our Latin America has become more unfamiliar, more unknown, more blocked, or it can be said that it is more lonely' ('Nobel Lecture', *The Solitude of Latin America*).

Latin America, where cultural, geographic, economic, political, population and life-centred multiplicity gathers. A collection of colourful tales, myths and legends, resulting in a multi-dimensional reality. The era of colonialism, its pre-history, post-colonialism and neo-colonialism, dictator-tyranny (*El Otono del Patriarca*), mass movements, mass resistance, conspiracies, assassinations, sex, drug addiction, drugs, treasure, piracy, goods and smuggling, a really nice world family, indeed. For natural reasons, the most flamboyant character among so many variations are definitely the dictatorial administrator, and if we look at the history of Latin America for the last one and a half hundred years, we can see that the creative struggle of Latin American writers against dictatorship has returned again and again in their works. Therefore, Marquez said about them, 'The whole of South America has only presented the dictator as a specific character in the world building. Some countries may have given adventurous action-loving autocrats (dictators), some countries may have given mystical autocrats or sex-loving autocrats, some countries may have gifted theosophist autocrats' (Roy 295). According to Marquez— 'All the dictators of Latin America are primarily one – a landlord'. Apparently, this is a very fortunate and happy life, but in reality, many dethroned or deposed oppressors are exiled from the country or escaped from the hands of the countrymen, but in the final judgment they are regarded as hated people by the countrymen. Many others wander around penniless in exile or, if not killed by a despotic hero assassin, unable to bear the mental anguish of loneliness, they commit suicide. Some died in epidemic diseases and many autocrats were forced to live an unbearable and painful life in an atmosphere of fear, leaving the identity of the fatherland undisclosed regardless of caste, religion and caste.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's six-chapter anti-authoritarian novel, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, is one of many autocrats, focusing on the personal life of one such corrupt,

dishonest dictator, his immorality, brutality, arrogance, disorder and brutality, as well as depravity and debauchery. Garcia Marquez himself said about this novel –‘*The autumn of the Patriarch* is a long poem of solitude of power’ (Wick 38). The main character of this novel is an elderly ruler, completely lonely. His favourite companion is the palace cow. The nameless autocrat of a nameless country (there is a mysterious resonance in this namelessness, which is universal) who lives alone in the throes of his corrupt power in the presidential palace with a herd of screen-eating cows, or with caged chickens, because he has no love in his life. He is trapped alone in this miserable loveless circle of concentration camps of his own making. At the beginning of the novel, a large death occurs inside the nearly ruined palace, but no one mourns, and seems to stand by as a silent witness. In Spanish it is called *casa de poder* (the death of power). It may be said that the people rejoice at the news of the death of the master of power, but no one wants to believe it, because before the hero's death is announced with pomp, then the general appears in person and becomes more powerful and more terrifying and violent than before. Eventually, the incredible news becomes credible and the first act begins with the general's actual death, but this real death and the previous fake death reveal the general's endless outrage and cruel image. Also, the ultimate power iteration is explored and the power equation is derived. So even though the hero's death occurs in each chapter, he does not die, the succession of power is re-established cyclically.

The Autumn of the Patriarch is such a poem of oppression and persecution, where you have to get up every moment because the general turns the state decree into an official document with his finger print, or one day in the morning, you think it's nine o'clock in the morning and it is announced everywhere in the country that a new day has begun. The general corrects even the errors of God with miraculous powers, the crippled or leper of the country is healed when he receives the 'salt' touched by him. The body of this cruel patriarch is huge, it shelters the exiled statesmen of different countries and its existence is the only truth. He not only presents the people of the country with poverty and oppression, but also with poetry festivals and beauty contests. Perhaps sometimes a *harshkam* chill rises from the throne of power, the general exclaims –‘He who, like his own, has slain, will not sell the sea for anything, not in ten million years’ (Marquez, *Autumn* 119-121). And evil thought walks without a word, alone with the form of a swan. The lamp is hung in a lonely corner of the house, or counting the number of cows day and night, and doubtfully extinguishes the lamp of the palace of power with his own hands. The father of the nation closes three massive bolts and three latches before going to sleep (Marquez, *Autumn* 226). The misery of loveless loneliness haunts him in such a way that he never feels like a normal person, while he manages to claim everything as his own as he pleases. Almost universally addicted to sex with the sex-slaves of his own *harem*. 2,000 children were bombed to death on suspicion of a lottery rigging, and the mercenary butcher Ignacio Singe de La Barra beheaded suspects and packed them in sacks like coconuts, or he ordered the confiscation of church property and forced expulsion of Christians from the country. His such arrogance makes his loneliness even more lonely, makes him incapacitated and inactive, and finally he dies in lonely loneliness behind the curtain.

Although no one has seen the head of state since the tragic death of his wife Leticia, he has always been confined to his presidential palace, hidden from the public eye. A rapacious hero like the king of play *Raktakarbi* has never responded to the call of a Nandini. Marquez describes the loneliness of the hero of this unspeakable novel in poetic prose, ‘...Death imprisons himself in the decaying faded palace, through the highest window of that

room, we saw with an aching heart the dim sunset which he too must have seen sitting on his enchanted throne for ages...' (Marquez, *Autumn* 227-228).

It is to be noted that he is a cruel despot, and because he is a cruel despot, he is essentially alone (i.e., lonely), utterly helpless, oppressed and condemned in his ultimate loneliness. Thus ended the chapter of his loneliness with his helpless death. Thus, the disturbing arrogance and tyranny of totalitarian power and the loneliness of the powerful are recognized as space-time neutral universal truths, and thus the autumn of patriarchy has been treated in world literature as anti-authoritarian creative literature on the one hand, and as the loneliness of power on the other. When Marquez began writing *Autumn of the Patriarch* in 1968, he said in an interview: 'For a long time the image he had of the dictator was that of an incredulous old man walking in a very picturesque palace full of animals, always surrounded by a herd of cows, suggesting that he is very lonely in his palace of power, power is the only companion of his loneliness' ("He gave us back our history: *Interview*"). In his famous Nobel speech in 1982, Marquez rightly spoke of the isolation of Latin America. He said: "Even after the end of Spanish rule, dictatorships continued in various Latin American countries. The social institutions of every country have been shattered by the cruel oppression and strange behaviour of the autocratic rulers. On top of that, the democratic process has repeatedly been nipped in the bud in a continent scarred by countless wars. After five civil wars and seventeen *coup d'états* (military coups), a luciferian dictator has awakened in the Latin America of our time, committing indiscriminate genocide in the name of God. And twenty million Latin American children die before the age of two. Arguably more than all the babies born in Europe since 1970 combined. As a result of government repression, one hundred and twenty thousand people have disappeared, thousands of women have been arrested while pregnant and their children have been born in prison, but the mothers do not know where their children are or they are forever incarcerated in military-run orphanages' ("Nobel Lecture" *The Solitude of Latin America*). Finally, Marques gives some more statistics of the men-women's speechless suffering and pain, saying, 'We have not had a moment's peace. Marquez also said, 'Latin America does not want to be a plaything in the hands of anyone other than their own will, European politicians and critics thought something like this, it is as if it is an impossible attempt to find something other than living at the mercy of the two great masters of the world. With such Euro-centrism, our Latin America has become more unfamiliar, more unknown, more isolated and, above all, more insulated. Finally, Marques said: 'O my guests, this is the centre or source of our solitude ("Nobel Lecture", *The Solitude of Latin America*).

Although Marquez looks forward with positive attitude with optimistic in happiness, where the hereditary generation of a hundred years of solitude will have a second chance to live on this earth for the last time, just as at the end of the week the flying vultures swooped into the presidential palace, tore the curtains from the balcony windows and with their flapping wings they broke the still time inside the palace. Wakes up and the city wakes up from centuries of inertia (solitude) on Monday morning to the soft warm breeze of royal splendour and tradition (Marquez, *Autumn* 1).

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