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Political Satire in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "Death Constant Beyond Love"

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<p>Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Death Constant Beyond Love"- Gabriel Garcia Marquez- Feminism- magic realism- capitalism- political satire- intertextuality <p>Article Info</p> <hr/> <p>Article history: Received: 11-8-2020 Accepted: 5-1-2021 Available online</p>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>Political satire has been invested in many forms such as cartoon, caricature, allusion, and T.V. shows. However, literature is one of the major domains the writers have invested in to criticize the wrongs and follies of the authority. The paper hypothesizes that Gabriel Garcia Marquez attempts to present a feminist presentation of the theme of political satire and to attain his goal he employs postmodernist techniques in his short story, "Death Constant Beyond Love". It aims at validating the hypothesis by following the postmodernist approach and character-analysis approach. It starts with an introduction to the subject and the writer. A discussion occurs followed by the conclusion that sums up the findings of the analysis.</p>
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الهجاء السياسي في قصة غابريلا غارسيا ماركيز
"ويستمر الموت بعد الحب"

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الخلاصة:	الكلمات الدالة: -
استثمر الهجاء السياسي في العديد من الأشكال مثل الرسوم الكرتونية والكاريكاتير ، والتلميح ، وعروض التلفزيون. ومع ذلك، فإن الأدب هو أحد المجالات الرئيسية التي استثمرها الادباء في هجاء أخطاء وحماقات السلطة. يفترض البحث أن غابريلا جارسيا ماركيز يحاول تقديم عرض نسوي لموضوع السخرية السياسية ولتحقيق هدفه ، فإنه يستخدم تقنيات ما بعد الحداثة في قصته القصيرة "ويستمر الموت بعد الحب". ويهدف البحث الى التحقق من صحة الفرضية باتباع نهج ما بعد الحداثة ونهج تحليل الشخصية. يبدأ البحث بمقدمة عن القصة والكاتب. ثم يناقش الموضوع، يلي ذلك الاستنتاج الذي يلخص نتائج التحليل.	- ويستمر الموت بعد الحب - غابرييل غارسيا ماركيز النسوية - الواقعية السحرية - الرأسمالية - السخرية السياسية - التناس معلومات البحث تاريخ البحث: الاستلام: 2020-8-11 القبول: 2021-1-5 التوفر على النت

Introduction:

The short story "Death Constant Beyond Love" (1970) is one of Marquez's short stories in which he employs postmodernist techniques of writing such as magical realism, allusion and intertextuality. Those narrative techniques are intertwined to condense and heighten the meanings the writer wants to convey in the short story. The story is about Senator Onesimo Sanchez, who knows that he is very sick and going to die within "six months and eleven days" (Marquez 1). He tells no one about his illness not even his wife or his five sons and this is not because of "pride but out of shame" (1). He goes on his campaign to be reelected. In Rosal del Virrey, a village in the desert and by the sea, he meets a fugitive criminal who bargains his daughter Laura Farina to the senator to gain a forged identity card. The author dwells on such themes as political corruption, greed, women as a commodity, love and death. Previous studies have not examined the political implication in "Death Constant Beyond Love", and they concentrate on the use of magic realism along with other literary works of Marquez.

The paper hypothesizes that Gabriel Garcia Marquez attempts a feminist presentation of the theme of political satire in his short story, "Death Constant Beyond Love". It aims at validating the hypothesis by following the postmodernist approach and character-analysis approach.

Discussion:

Historically, magic realism is a term coined by Franz Roh to define a new trend in painting that appears in Germany and Italy in the 1920s. That trend of painting moves to the USA. The paintings are characterized by "the use of still, sharply defined, smoothly painted images of figures and objects depicted in a somewhat surrealistic manner. The themes and objects were often imaginary somewhat outlandish; and fantastic and with a certain dream-like quality" (Cuddon 487). In the forties of the twentieth century the Austrian writer George Saiko (1892-1962) describes his fiction "of a quasi-surrealistic nature and he expressed his view about what he called *Magischer Realismus* " (Cuddon 488) Then the term starts to be applied mostly to the literary works of writers such as the Argentinian Luis Borges, the Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, Johan Fowles, Emma tenant, Angela Carter and Salman Rushdie" (Cuddon 488).

Magic realistic fiction is characterized by the minute description of realistic setting intermingled with fantastical actions, or revelations or characters at the same time; yet these fantastical things are not to be considered bizarre or odd by the characters in the literary work. Thus the plot becomes sometimes very complex:

the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic of bizarre, skillful time shifts, convolute and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories , expressionistic and even surrealistic description arcane erudition, the element of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexpressible" (Cuddon 488).

Marquez, however, is considered as an expert in magic realism that in his literary works the real and the fantastic are entwined. The reader may find "in his novels and stories, storms rage for years, flowers drift from the skies, tyrants survive for centuries, priests levitate and corpses fail to decompose. And more plausibly, lovers rekindle their passion after a half century a part" (Kandell). According to Marquez, fantasy is an invaluable mean to portray artistically the grim reality caused by subsequent hegemonic systems that rule Latin America. In the speech he delivers while receiving his Nobel Prize- 1982, he said "Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little imagination. For our crucial problems has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable" (Gabriel García Márquez).

Magic realism thus becomes a flexible artistic tool, Marquez uses to render many thoughts, and one of these thoughts is to satirize the tyrannical regimes. Satire is a device of scrutinizing a person, or a phenomenon to mock their wrongs. The aim is usually to correct these wrongs. That correction is supposed to be created inside the reader or audience (it

depends on the genre of the piece of satire) who would loathe and hate that folly which is being criticized. That folly would be recognized as a trait with which one cannot be identified, and that is the ultimate goal of satire. Ben Jonson, Johnathan Swift and Alexander Pope, are prominent English satirists (Cuddon 632). They define the satirist as a:

kind of self-appointed guardian of standards, and ideals; of moral as well as aesthetic values. He is a man (women satirists have been *very* rare) who takes it upon himself to correct and ridicule the follies and vices of society and thus to bring contempt and derision upon aberrations from a desirable and civilized norm (Cuddon 632).

Marquez is very well known for his ability to depict the lives of Colombian people in his fiction that is used as a “vehicle for his political sentiments” (Nilsen). He shows how his people are being exploited by the imperialistic forces and their alliances of the corrupted politicians and capitalists in his country. In a conversation with a journalist he said: "The United States may be [my] enemy, but it's a formidable adversary" (qtd. in Nilsen "Conversation"). Marquez's speech enlightens his political attitude and sheds light that helps to interpret his works especially *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Neither was he a capitalist nor a communist though he was a friend of the President of Cuba, Fidel Castro:

García Márquez has been known as a political activist ever since he gained fame for this novel. He has even been denied entry into the United States for some of his communist ties (Estorino). His views, however, are not clear, and the real question begs to be answered: is Gabriel García Márquez a true supporter of communism or a crusader against economic imperialism and military dictatorships? Upon exploration, one will understand that García Márquez does not fully embrace extreme leftist politics, but rather he only wishes to eradicate oppression of his Latin American people (Nilsen).

Sanchez, the main character, is a typical imperialistic corrupted politician. Though he is very smart for he is a metallurgical engineer and an "avid reader" (1) but he does not initiate a factory in the village to make use of its abandon minerals such as saltpeter. He has been elected four years ago as a senator and did nothing substantial to help people who elected him. His impending death does not awaken his conscience. His illness seems to harden his heart that he no more feels sorry "as he had at other times for the groups of barefoot Indians who could scarcely bear the hot saltpeter coals of the sterile little square" (1). He comes to the village and reread his speech that is full of false expectations:

"We are here for the purpose of defeating nature," he began, against all his convictions. "We will no longer be foundlings in our own country, orphans of God in the realm of thirst and bad climate, exiles in our own land. We will be different people, ladies and gentleman we will be great and happy people" (1).

Along with his speech there are, in the background, artificial preparations to demonstrate his upcoming promises. This artificiality mocks and satirizes his speech: "paper birds into the air and the artificial creatures took on life, flew about the platform of planks, and went out to sea. At the same time, other men took some prop trees with felt leaves out of the wagons and planted them in the saltpeter soil behind the crowd" (1). The magical movement of the paper birds happens again when at night the senator meets important figures of the village. He makes it crystal clear that if he fulfills his promises then he and those men will lose the money they used to gain from smuggling: "You and I know that the day there are trees and flowers in this heap of goat dung, the day there are shad instead of worms in the water holes, that day neither you nor I will have anything to do here, do I make myself clear?" (3). At that moment he makes a butterfly of paper which flies out of the room. It is only Laura Farina who could see it and try to catch it in vain when it hits the wall. The magical butterfly is a symbol of the politicians' lies and illusions they used to sell for the poor people to gain their interests. Laura Farina could see the butterfly which means that poor people are not naïve for they could recognize the lies of the politicians, but they are helpless:

Laura Farina saw the paper butterfly come out. Only she saw it....After a few turns, the large lithographed¹ butterfly unfolded completely, flattened against the wall, and remained stuck there. Laura Farina tried to pull it off with her nails. One of the guards, who woke up with the applause from the nest room, notices her vain attempt. "It won't come off," he said sleepily. "It's painted on the wall" (4).

Laura Farina's father recognizes that the senator is attracted to his daughter. He makes use of that attraction and sends his daughter as a commodity in exchange for his freedom. She wears a chastity belt and the key is kept by her father so that the senator cannot make sex with her until he does what the father wants. In the discourse of sexual politics women are presented as sexual objects. The chastity belt presents a dramatic irony which evokes dramatic tension for it gives the reader an elusive moment of laughter and victory on the corrupted politician. That sense of fun vanishes soon with the description of Laura Farina's state. She is breathless, cold, and helpless, "her heart was frightened and her skin disturbed by a glacial sweat ...Laura Farina tried to say something, but there was only enough air for her to breath...She abandoned herself to mercies of her fate" (5). Then the story moves abruptly to the end showing how the senator dies after six months and eleven days alone, disgraced, and sad because Laura Farina "The woman of his life" (1) will not die with him: "Six months and eleven days later he would die in that same position, debased and repudiated because of the public scandal with Laura Farina and weeping with rage at dying without her"(6).

Thus the senator is constant to be selfish and greedy to the last moment of his life. Marquez alludes to the heartlessness of the senator when he describes him as a man who

thinks that he has a heart while the only heart he has is a painted one on his chest: "The senator sat down on an army cot, talking about roses as he unbuttoned his shirt. On the side where he imagined his heart to be inside his chest he had a corsair's tattoo of a heart pierced by an arrow" (4). The biggest gift the senator offers to the people of the village is a donkey to an abandoned woman who has six children.

All over the story, Marquez satirizes the senator by associating him with artificiality. The painted roses on his shirt, the painted heart on his chest, the painted slogan of his campaign on the rumor of the donkey and the magically flying paper butterfly are artificial. None of these things are natural or lively.

The title of the story also satirizes the senator. It is a pun on words because it reverses the title and meaning of a Spanish love sonnet, 'Love Constant Beyond Death', written by Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645). While Quevedo's sonnet talks about the immortality of the love of two lovers who are turned into ashes, Marquez's story emphasizes the mortality of a relationship that is based on materiality (Bell-Villada 138).

No doubt, Senator Onesimo Sanchez is cynical and corrupt to the core, and illusory props of his electoral campaign neatly symbolize the empty ritualism of his speeches and slogans. And yet one cannot but feel touched by his desire for simple companionship with the young, ...Afro-French beauty Laura Farina during his last few months alive....To add to the ironies, he gains "the woman of his life" only by finally giving in to a long-standing request from Laura's criminal father for a phony residence card. Love thus flowers thanks to a secret and sordid deal (Bell-Villada 139).

The intertextuality of the paradoxical texts intensifies the sense of bitterness and cynicism. The reader may pity the senator but like him not. The reader may think that the senator has got what he deserves that the only thing that has been constant after his death is his scandals which signify his corruption and selfishness. In other words, his image as a loving father, husband, and brilliant politician is absolutely dead.

Moreover, the story probably intertextualizes thematically with Marquez's novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* 1975 in which the invalid tyrant has a relationship with an extremely beautiful woman, Manuela. Like Laura Farina, Manuela belongs to the working class. While Manuela runs away from the tyrant, Laura stays until the death of Sanchez, and while Sanchez dies the tyrant in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* regains another life in each chapter of the novel. He continues to persecute his people though (Bloom 149). The two women symbolize the homeland of Marquez. Although they are treated as commodities yet the tyrants could not colonize them because they were impotent. Both of women gained their freedom at the end.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the author employs magic realism, and intertextuality to satirize and dismantle the political corruption that has prevailed in his country. The senator is part of a corrupted patriarchal system that thrives at the expense of the poor. The politicians understand that

liberty and prosperity of the working class cause the end of their corrupted system. Women are the weakest ring in the whole community. They are treated as commodities. The father sells Laura Farina to gain his freedom. The husband abandons his wife and children because of poverty. Thus, the objectification of women weakens community and participates in the perpetuation of the corrupted system.

Notes

¹ Definitions of lithography:

1:the process of printing from a plane surface (such as a smooth stone or metal plate) on which the image to be printed is ink-receptive and the blank area ink-repellent

2:the process of producing patterns on semiconductor crystals for use as integrated circuits

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