

Book Review/Reseña

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Gustavo Arango. *Perspectives on the Life and Works of Gabriel García Márquez: Caribbean Troubadour*. Lexington Books, 2023.

Countless publications about Gabriel García Márquez and his work are available. In them, a frequent focus is how his childhood in Aracataca, a river town in the Caribbean region of Colombia, influenced and shaped the fictional world of Macondo. This volume addresses the topic of youthful influences by concentrating on García Márquez's life in the Caribbean. Not only is his childhood in Aracataca examined, but Colombian writer Gustavo Arango goes into depth by exploring the future Nobel laureate's experiences as a journalist in Cartagena and Barranquilla.

Based on information about his early work for Colombian newspapers, Arango explores the impact of this experience on his later works such as the non-fiction *News of a Kidnapping* (1996). Arango furthers the hypothesis that living in the Caribbean profoundly shaped García Márquez's writing and worldview. In addition to "Caribbean Troubadour," another apt subtitle would be "The Artist as a Young Man," since the emphasis is on the early years and their long-term effects on García Márquez's literary production and projects related to Latin American journalism.

The book is divided into two major sections. Part I: On the Life and Works of the Caribbean Troubadour, consists of twelve chapters, several of which are based on Arango's lectures or publications in Spanish. In chronological order, Arango begins with García Márquez's childhood and takes us on a selective tour of his work, including an impassioned justification of the publication of an unfinished novel, *En agosto nos vemos* (*See You in August*, Penguin Random House, forthcoming in Spanish in 2024). Part II: The Troubadour's Files, consists of four chapters that include unpublished letters and early works. These two sections are prefaced by a chronology of García Márquez's life and work.

As Arango states in his preface, the book reflects multiple perspectives as well as different tones ranging from the academic to the personal, including direct testimony. The opening chapter, "The Telegrapher's Son," begins by reviewing the Caribbean landscape that shaped the author's early years before he embarked on a life in Europe and Mexico. An insightful point in this opening chapter is the conscious efforts by García Márquez to market and promote his books, a detail which clarifies that the "sudden" appearance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* on the literary scene in 1967 was carefully planned and engineered by García Márquez himself.

Chapter Two explores the real-life experiences that appear in novels from *Leaf Storm* (1955) to *Of Love and Other Demons* (1994). Chapter Three focuses on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, examining the writing process as well as the monumental change this novel had on the life of its author. Chapter Four is more scholarly in nature and explores acts of reading and writing that appear in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Chapter Five shifts to novels written after the 1967 blockbuster by focusing on how *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981) reveals García Márquez's views on journalism and writing. Chapter Six shifts the attention to the impact of Cartagena on novels published roughly a decade apart: *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), and *Of Love and Other Demons*. Chapters Seven and Eight return to the topic of the writer as a journalist. Chapter Seven examines how *News of a Kidnapping* reveals the writer's particular approach to journalism in Latin America, addressing issues of accuracy and fictionalization of real events. Chapter Eight is a summary of Arango's experience in a workshop on narrative journalism led by García Márquez in 1997. It contains details of how the acclaimed author learned his craft in the early days as a journalist in Cartagena and Barranquilla.

Chapter Nine is centered on a short story, "El avión de la bella durmiente" in *Strange Pilgrims* (1992), and goes into considerable depth to demonstrate that a chance encounter with the Brazilian model and actress Silvana de Faria in an airport was the inspiration for this short story. Chapter Ten contains the impassioned support for the publication of García Márquez's posthumous novel, *See You in August*. A short Chapter Eleven consists of two parts: an exploration of the theme of friendship as a form of love in *Love in the Time of Cholera* and a discussion of García Márquez's favorite short story by W. Somerset Maugham, "P. & O.," and its influence on the unfinished posthumous novel. Chapter Twelve closes with Arango's perspective on how García Márquez's writing reflects the Caribbean, specifically the Caribbean language and popular culture, making him a modern variant of the troubadours, itinerant musicians who populated the Colombia of his childhood.

Among the four publications featured in Part II is a school publication from 1941 by thirteen-year-old García Márquez while in boarding school in Barranquilla, chapter

13. Chapter 14 includes a selection of unsigned articles from *El Universal* in Cartagena that Arango was able to attribute to García Márquez. These examples were not included in Jacques Gilard's *Textos costeños* (1981) which compiled García Márquez's early works from 1948 to 1949 at *El Universal*. Chapters 15 and 16 include letters by García Márquez to Colombian intellectual Carlos Alemán Zabaleta and Mexican author Carlos Fuentes.

Given that Arango frequently goes into his personal connection to García Márquez, this exploration of the impact of life experiences will interest readers and researchers familiar with García Márquez's life and work. Some interesting tidbits and observations enrich our reading of his novels and short stories, but their relevancy would be more valuable to a reader who has previous knowledge. Given that the first twelve chapters are based on a variety of original material (lectures, scholarly writings, and personal testimony), there is no unifying tone or style and at moments, as a result, Arango reiterates certain points of personal interest several times throughout the volume. For readers and researchers in search of unexplored corners of Gabriel García Márquez's life and works, this volume is a perfect addition to their libraries.

Frances Jaeger is an Associate Professor in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Northern Illinois University. She has published extensively on Central American writers: Gioconda Belli, Daisy Zamora, Michèle Najlis, Vidaluz Meneses, Rosario Murillo, Ernesto Cardenal, Roque Dalton, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Humberto Ak'abal, Rosa María Britton, and Gloria Guardia. She is completing a book on comparative reading, interpretation, and writing processes in works by Dalton, Cardenal, and Nicolás Guillén. Her compilation of the complete poetry of Guatemalan author Ana María Rodas and critical analyses of her works is forthcoming: *Ana María Rodas (Guatemala). Corazón y cerebro: poesía completa, 1973-2015, y acercamientos críticos* (2023). Dr. Jaeger is the author of "Rewriting the Biracial Love Story in Rosa María Britton's *Esa esquina del paraíso*" published in 2020 in *MARLAS* 4 (1), 124-141.
