

BOOK REVIEW: THE BAD GIRL STRUCTURES OF POWER AND INDIVIDUAL'S RESISTANCE

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Vargas Llosa, M. and Grossman, E., 2007. *The bad girl*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.

The Bad Girl comprises of seven sections, exploring more of the urbanization of the 1960s and 1980s in Peru. In this fictional autobiography by a single narrator, Llosa uses his most frequent theme, '*the way in which individual lives are played against the backdrop of International politics and irresistible currents of politics*'. However, he artistically designs the protagonist Peruvian émigré Ricardo (Richardito) Somocurcio, with no political interest, completely distant among Latin Americans in the revolutionary passion by young Peruvians. Llosa uses the great mixture of realistic and fanciful index to reveal the politics pervading his characters. Although Ricardo and the Bad Girl maintained individuality, many of the other characters experienced revolutionary politics.

Mario V. Llosa was born in Peru in 1936. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature 2010, for his '*Cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat*.' His writing has been considered as the utmost persuasive and significant contribution from the South American context.

The opening section, *The Chilean girls*, starts among the happenings in the summer 1950s. And the most important event for Ricardo is the arrival of the Chilean girls, especially the one 'Lily'. Ricardo describes her as '*flamboyant*', as she leaves her first and everlasting flesh on Ricardo's heart. He becomes fond of her dance that he thinks, 'no Miraflores girl dared to attempt' (p.5). and at the age of fifteen he falls

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in love with her, confessing it like, 'I fell in love with Lily like a calf' (p.5). The simile 'calf' might induce the most romantic way to fall in love, because in teenage love might be *'heating up to a hundred degree'* but Lily never encourages him. The story proceeds with the many questions raised about Chilean girls like 'why had the parents of Chilean girls left that marvelous country and come to Peru.?' (p.9). Despite all boldness and liberties 'why did neither 'Lily' nor 'Lucy' want a steady boyfriend (p.11). All the interrogation makes the story very deferral from the start.

The appearance of Chilean girls is a mystery that resolves on March 30, 1950, when in a party at Marirosa Alvarezcaderon's house, who Richardo calls *'the fat little pig'*. Marirosa introduces both Chilean girls to her Chilean auntie, and after the meeting *"Lucy turned pale and Lilly left with an embittered expression"* on her face. Immediately after that party, both *'false'* Chilean girls disappeared. Because, their false identity had been revealed, but till then it seems that Lily has grabbed Roberto's heart durably and he was almost lost in her 'mischievous laugh' and 'mocking glance of her eye the color of dark honey' (p.15).

In the next section, *'The Guerrilla Fighters'*, Llosa introduces Ricardo in Paris as a twenty-five-year-old young man. In Paris, he met with Paul surrounded by the *"Cuban Revolution"*, who once asked Ricardo to join the revolution. He offers him Cuba scholarship for (Guerrilla, or) Military training. Ricardo denies and shows his disinterest in Politics, discloses his delicate thought, *"I despise Politics- and all my dreams were focused- excuse my petit bourgeois mediocrity compadre - on getting a nice job that would let me spend in the most ordinary way, the rest of my days in Paris."* (p.18)

Ricardo has been introduced as a seemingly content person, but later reflects another side of his personality- an unambitious nature. He has no desire for power and money. However, he dreams of a modest life in Paris. A lot of things happen around Ricardo- among which was Paul's movement of the revolutionary 'MIR' who repudiated the

center-left American Popular Revolutionary Alliance or ARPA. The Cuban government has given MIR a hundred scholarships for young Peruvians to receive guerrilla training and the recipients have to pass through Paris due to the strict blockade on the Island by the U.S.

During political scenarios, Llosa presents the bad girl with newfangled looks. The Chilean girl becomes 'Comrade Arlette'. However, she cannot hide herself from Ricardo who recognizes her by her "mischievous, bold, spontaneous, and provocative postures". Ricardo makes his fourth declaration of love. Conversely, she puts an end to his effusiveness with an impatient expression. Despite her attitude, she sluggishly demands Ricardo to make a deal to stay with her in Paris. He must convince Paul to get her out of the commitment to the guerrilla's training. 'It is not for love'- she did not fib "but I might end up falling love in with you". (p.27) However, she gives her words.

Llosa declares the whole story about the bad girl, in two sentences. First, "*it is not for love*" and second, "*but I might end up falling love in with you.*" Since the beginning, the bad girl has cheated and betrayed people by keeping different identities and played away with their money and names. Nothing has been progressed for love and feelings. Though it hints something for Ricardo, still, that the bad girl does not seemingly take interest in an unambitious guy, and has a long planning '*to die of old age in Paris.*' However, Llosa folds many indications in her words, she might end up seeing her dipped in love with Ricardo.

In the third part, '*Painter of horses in Swinging London*', Llosa takes us back to the flashback in 1960, where '*London displaced Paris,*' as the city of style and trend. Many Latin Americans, who had once gone to Paris to make revolution, immigrated in London to join the "*partisans of cannabis pop music and the promiscuous life.*" (p.69) Here Ricardo appears, living in the heart of swinging London '*in Earl's Court*' with moderate achievement. He moves from translator to interpreter in UNESCO. In London, he meets Juan Barreto, his childhood friend and

classmate. Like Paul, who stands his unique and distinctive place, it is another typical way of Llosa to introduce readers to a new (side) character in every section, Jaun is a symbolic representation of Hippie culture. 'His silky, graying hair hanging loose down, a rather sparse beard-cherry colored velvet trouser and sandals, a printed silk-oriented tunic, a blaze of color open jacket'(p.69). Hippie culture is a result of familial rebellion, these people directed against the well-regulated lives of their parents and regarding it the 'hypocrisy of puritanical customs' and 'social facades' behind which they hide their 'egotism, insular spirit' and "lack of imagination". However, 'hippies' philosophy' was based on sentiments and feelings rather than intellects and reasons. Among all these entanglements, Ricardo meets the bad girl, since she disappeared from Paris and reappeared in a new incarnation of her mutable identity, 'Mr. Richardson and passing herself off as Mexican in Newmarket only fifty miles from London.

Ricardo, a hopeless imbecile still in love with the bad girl, 'cannot stop himself from imagining seeing the Peruvian girl' (p.83). He encompasses masochistic soliloquies that often haunt joy and hope "has she changed very much? Did she still have that bold manner that attracted me?" (p.83). When they meet, the bad girl looks at her with displeasure that twisted her mouth and calls him 'fucking beast', the first time Ricardo ever heard a swear word from her mouth, 'you'll make trouble for me' (p.87).

Meanwhile, Llosa presents a smart side of Ricardo's personality, he threatens her, "if you don't call me, I'll tell Mr. Richardson, you are married in France and are wanted by Swiss Police for emptying out the secret bank account of Monsieur Anxour." (p.87). Formerly, Llosa introduces both characters in a different way. Neither before does 'the elegant, stylish and well dressed' bad girl uses abusive language, nor does Ricardo the good boy show a mischievous attitude. At each different place, Llosa tries to introduce the whole enchilada fresh and innovative, the bad girl's identity to Ricardo's behavior, all is thrilling and exciting.

In the fourth section, *The Dragoman of Chateau Meguru*, Llosa introduces 'Salomon Taledene' boasted to speak twelve languages, not of sound personality with tortoise-like eyes, thinning hair, with grayish shadow staining the face. (p.107) But having an extraordinary facility in learning languages and a phenomenal aptitude for interpreting. Salman represents reality and simplicity, 'he was the most original' (p.107). Ricardo is fascinated by his personality of a 'childish genius' and feels good about spending much time with him. In 1979, Salmon accepts an offer to travel to Tokyo, work for a year as the exclusive interpreter for Mitsubishi.

In Tokyo, he writes him, beneath his signature he has written a "Laconic Postscript: Regards from the bad girl." (p.117) Many questions appear, which stir curiosity and disbelief about Salomon and the mischievous Peruvian girl meeting in Tokyo. Salomon solves the riddle and informs about the bad girl's relationship with a sinister Japanese Fukuda's. When Ricardo plans to go to Tokyo, he suddenly gets a phone call one day, "are you still in love with me?" (p.122). For the first time, she willingly calls him for a meeting, pretending that she misses all the crazy, poetic things from Ricardo. Her friends give her a new name '*Kuroki*', a Spanish word for the bad girl. She is now Fukuda's mistress, she is inspired and impressed by him because he over dominated her and she depends greatly on him, "he can do whatever he wants with me." (p.127) She surrenders herself to Fukuda, a feeling she calls more a sickness or vice than love. She has arranged a plan for trapping Ricardo, she uses him and his love in order to please her lord, and when she fails, she insults him badly. Once again, Ricardo is left distressed, offended, and morally ruined.

The fifth section, *Child without a Voice*, introduces another unique character 'Yilal' a nine-year adopted son of Simon and Elena, who lost his voice due to some trauma in his infancy. He is symbolizing a victim of war bombing or some other terrible events in Vietnam. Yilal plays a vital role in the reconciliation of Ricardo and the bad girl. He stays in Ricardo's apartment in his absence to watch some children's

programs. One day, he shows a massage on his slate, 'when you were on the trip, the bad girl called him.' Since then, many times she calls and keeps insisting every few months or years for pardon. The fourth time, Yilal speaks of her. He never speaks to anyone, but it was the miracle done by the bad girl. Ricardo meets her as a broken lady because Fukuda dropped her to live in prison, where she was being torched and treated immorally, and she came to Paris, in a miserable and helpless condition. Despite it all, she is the reason Yilal spoke.

In the sixth section, *Arquimedes, Builder of breakwaters*, Ricardo returned to Lima after twenty years, meets with Arquimedes, a famous builder of breakwater in Lima, acquired a reputation as a 'wizard,' a 'magician' a 'breakwater conjurer'. He and the sea 'understood each other like a team of oxen' (p.230). He indulges the sea like a friend. Ricardo asks about his daughter in Paris, he growled and showed great anger for her, calling her 'heartless,' and an 'unfeeling girl'. As the action advances, it is revealed that he is the father of 'Otilita' the bad girl. He shares her childhood memories and behavior. She wanted to be like whites, the rich people (p.235). She dreamed about what she did not have. Ever since she was little, her mother worked for the Chilean family as a 'cook'. She won a prize on radio America, imitating Mexican Argentines. Later, Arenas's family treated her like a family member and spoiled her. She was ashamed of being a member of a poor family. Ricardo feels more sympathy and love for her.

In the last section, *Marcella in Lavapies*, Ricardo is in Lavapies living with Marcella, an Italian girl. Llosa describes Marcella as, 'working for a love of the art' (p.248). Ricardo recalls his unexpected and brutal separation with the bad girl, resulting in the subtle change in his behavior; 'often distracted and lost in thoughts' (p.251). She has left Ricardo with the reason that 'these two little rooms are a prison, and I can't bear it more' (p.252). This merciless split causes a worse effect on Ricardo, the attacks of neuralgia and dizziness keep him from doing work, then in lavapies, he feels relaxed with Marcella, explains

his relationship like "I could not have said I loved her, in any case not the way I had loved the bad girl, but I felt so good with her" (p.257). Surprisingly, the bad girl encounters Ricardo, in the "Café Barbieri" trying to make a jealousy scene on me, but this time her postures were not humorous, absolutely the final straw, blaming him to keep a relationship with a kid (Marcella) half his age. 'Do you love her more than you love me?' (p.267). She behaves like nothing went wrong and she wants to spend her last years with her husband, Ricardo. A lot of arguments have passed between them, Ricardo finds her slim, thin, and sick. 'I felt an indescribable horror because I was absolutely certain, she had not been gravely ill but was gravely ill now and would die soon.' She had had an operation a second time, the tumor in her vagina detected too late and doctors removed it, metastasis had already begun, nothing could have been done, she was extremely weak and could not survive chemotherapy. The operation on her breast took place and her breasts had been removed. The gentleman, for whom she left him, bought her a house in Sete and now she wanted to transfer to Ricardo. They go to her little house, at the top of the hill, with a small garden. She asks him to write their love story 'you always wanted to be a writer and did not have the courage' (p.278). She believes, "I have given you the subject for a novel, haven't I, good boy?"

Although the novel is too burned with subplots, it still cannot lose the original story. Llosa joins multiple *powerful subplots*, featuring different viewpoint, each section introduces a new side character with different time place; the revolutionary Paul in Paris, the Hippie Juan in London, the interpreter Salmon in Tokyo, Yilil (a voiceless child) in Vietnam. However, Llosa maintains the tone that is suspenseful with a great amount of sexual tension, but the mood switches each time. It's not difficult for the reader to adopt a new mood at the turn of the page; from light to alarming, melancholy to hopeful, erotic to ease, but the love story is not affected. The events of the story just are not randomly jumping out of bushes, but going to a certain extent. The characters' actions and reactions push the plot forward; as the story

progresses, the cause-effect relationship establishes with the characters' motivation, actions, and inactions. From the exposition, Llosa provokes the submissive nature of Ricardo and the assertive nature of Lily-the bad girl. Ricardo deliberately wants to consider Lily truer and more fabulous than all. Alike modern practices, there is a great use of personal consciousness. Furthermore, Ricardo creates a personal reality about the bad girl and becomes excessively obsessive about her. Apparently, Ricardo is a realist; but he is rather a non-conformist, who does not follow the normal ways of thinking and behaving which is definitely the cause of his obsessive love for Lily. Whereas "Lily" with her stylish and fascinating looks maintains her Chilean false identity for a long time with a lot of confidence and assurance.

Neither the *external obstacles* nor the *internal obstacles*- his own mindset, choice, and behavior-are in Ricardo's control. He has no ambition of becoming powerful and rich in life, he dreamed of a modest life in Paris. Since beginning to onwards, the bad girl has cheated and betrayed people by keeping different identities and playing away with their money and names, nothing has been progressed for love and feelings, but somewhere it clues sometimes for Ricardo, that the bad girl does not seem much interested in an unambitious guy, who has a long planning "to die of old age in Paris." but allegorically, Llosa folds many indications in her words, so it might end up to see her dipped in love with Ricardo. His love and concern make her the center of attention, or else she is not worthy of any other character of the story. Meanwhile, Ricardo has never been of great magnitude for the bad girl, focal for many other characters in the story.

From Chilean girls in Peru to the hippie culture in London-Llosa gives Ricardo an unusual quality to perceive, to admire, and to praise. Like in the third time, when she meets him as French '*Madame Robert Anoux*', where he finds her utterly different and explains her distinct looks in this way, "*meticulously made-up face, those red lips, tweezed eyebrows, silky curved lashes shed mischievous eyes*".

One most striking thing is Llosa's extensive use of conversation, where readers would enjoy the way the bad girl calls Ricardo the "good boy" and he likewise the "bad girl" ironically. Because their actions are entirely different from this. Ricardo always expresses great appreciation by calling her "beautiful and extremely elegant women ". On the other hand, she sneers '*a little pissant*' and '*a dreamer*' though, she knows somewhere inside that Ricardo is a good boy but never accepts him as a lover. Whereas Ricardo knows that she is a bad girl, but he never rejects her, always showing a burning desire to make love with her, never wants to leave her. Nevertheless, the bad girl never minds keeping a physical relation with the good boy as she keeps with many others, but she never answers her love with love. Her character shows great control.

Though, Llosa sets *love*, as the *main theme*, but with all its setbacks, the fear of loss and defeat. Need for love and belongings make people emotionally and mentally weak, even while making love with Ricardo, the bad girl behaves like a 'doctor formulating a technical description, detected from pleasure' with all her passivity and coldness she has proved that she is not driven by emotions. She is a well-planned and strong woman who can do anything to be herself and what she wants to be! And the third time when she is about to leave him, she tells in a cold expression, 'You're nice, but you have a terrible defect: lack of ambition, and "*you are satisfied with what you have*" "*I'll never be satisfied with what I have. I'll always want more.*" To her happiness is not the romance and love that he shows, for her money is the only security, protection, and enjoyment.

The bad girl badly sticks to her safety needs to which she considers can only be satisfied with money or only the most powerful and dangerous men can offer, someone who Ricardo can never be. Ricardo, she makes clear, is unworthy of what little attention she gives him. Treating him as a plaything, she ignores the depth of his feelings and teases him sexually even as she leaves him, for a month, a year, and three years- he never knows how long his loneliness last.

Ricardo seems the victim of blind passion, because he is driven by instinct rather than intellect, and the bad girl rules through the mind; she knows well how to monitor the others, especially Ricardo. She wants to play and win the game without emotional blend; definitely, she does not want to be feeble.

The novel *The Bad Girl* particularly celebrates Llosa's cartography of 'structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat'. Moreover, the novel unveils many aspects of Peruvian political history, precipitous movement of insurgents, and peculiar progression of many Peruvian characters, breathing in the 1950s, up to the 80s. The Bad Girl ideally characterizes with the paramount diversities. Llosa successfully creates a world of vibrant characters. Meanwhile, the compulsive attachment between major characters, Ricardo and the Bad girl, exquisitely upholds the shifting aspects of human nature i.e., innocence and corruption, reality and imagination, self-dedication and self-interest.