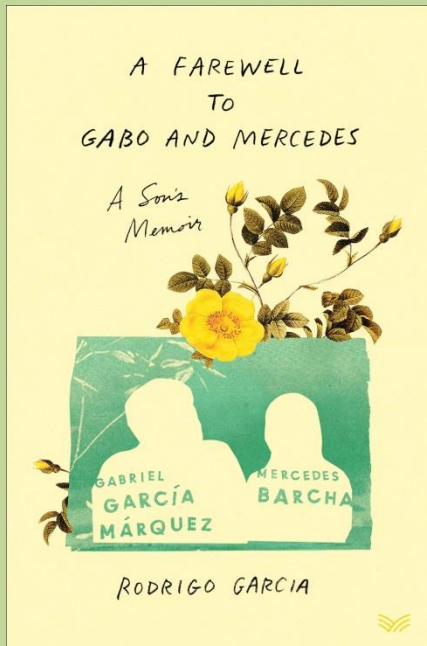


Allison's Book Corner September 2021

A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir

By Rodrigo Garcia
(HarperVia 2021)

Sometimes you come across a beautifully written little book. A book that you might consider carrying in your pocket so you may refer to it at times or perhaps keep handy in case you get stuck somewhere and want to be able to read. (I should add: or you might want to have downloaded on your phone for future reference.)



This is how you will feel about this memoir after you have read it. The world lost Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez in April 2014. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. And even if you have not read any of his works, you certainly have heard of them. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera* are two of his internationally best-known novels.

How does it feel to be the child of the literary icon as he battles his final illness and prepares to pass away? The elder son Rodrigo writes lovingly and beautifully of this time. Rodrigo is a screenwriter and film director and has obviously inherited his father's gift of writing. The small book is divided into five parts, each section opening with a quote from one of his father's famous literary works.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez lived in Mexico beginning in the 1960s, so you can imagine that a long hospital stay garnered a lot of attention. Rodrigo is a bit taken aback by a few members of the hospital staff being star-struck. He also coaches his younger brother not to answer all of the questions put to him by the press.

The final family decision is to bring Marquez home to die in peace. He has 'round the clock care. Rodrigo talks about one of the nurses who cares for his

father, "The beauty of witnessing someone who is outstanding at what she does, in conjunction with the comfort brought about by the support of an empathetic health worker, makes her a compelling presence."

There is a hushed tone to this little memoir as it tries to grasp the passing of a larger-than-life figure. It will come as no surprise to readers that there is a strong, beautiful woman behind this man, supporting him for more than fifty years. Rodrigo speaks reverently of his mother Mercedes and is quick to alert us that this book would not have been published while she was alive; she would not have wanted any attention drawn to herself. Mercedes died in 2020.

As with most things in life, there are little silver linings and humorous moments along the way to losing Gabriel Garcia Marquez. After the hospital bed is delivered to his home, the company learns it is for the famous author and insists on donating the bed to the family. When Marquez is discharged from the hospital, his younger son accidentally drops the release form in the hospital hallway. A hospital visitor picks it up and passes it to a family member, a Marquez fan. Somehow the road led to the form being published in the local newspaper. You have to laugh.

Rich or poor, famous or not, we all face losing our parents or a treasured love one. This memoir reminds all of us of our shared humanity. And there is a beauty in that reminder.

You can read *A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes* in English or in Spanish. Both versions are available at Albert Wisner Library.

