

RETURN OF MAGICAL THINKING

“A Seed in a Legendary Land.” It was a suggestive title, written by an author who spent two years researching the slow decline of a family whose noble origins dated back to the Renaissance. When my grandfather, a reader interested in novels of more than five hundred pages because he liked to feel immersed in the plots as if he were one of the secondary characters or even one of the protagonists, bought a copy of the book, it was already a brand-new bestseller. And as such, it was displayed in the most prominent spot in the window.

However, almost no one noticed a small book titled: “A Seed in a Troubled Land,” because it was mixed in with many others on a table in the same bookstore. Inside it, silently dwelled: poems, short stories, simple suggestions for caring for animals and plants, and many witty jokes that provoked uncontrollable laughter among the children of a school who were lucky enough to have a caring teacher who was very committed to nature. One of the texts read as follows:

“—A seed in this desolate Earth—said the Prince of the Wind to the children who inhabited the Desert of Evil. Out of nowhere, a group of fairies appeared, whispering kind words and attracting the clouds that came to gossip from beyond the sea. The clouds sat impatiently on the sand, listening to those soothing, beautiful, and peaceful sounds, which enveloped all the dunes of that grotesque place with their presence. Then they spread across the waters of the malodorous rivers and finally reached all the factories that spewed black smoke upon the gray planet. The spectacle was magnificent, nothing like the repetitive images shown on television. The excited clouds gathered together and formed nimbus clouds that gave rise to prolonged rainfall.”

It rained for so long that when the clouds parted and disappeared, many suns smiled upon great, leafy forests that had grown on the clean banks of rivers so crystal clear that, at first, they hurt the eyes to look at. Blue and green flags waved in this new, prosperous, and self-satisfied land. The Prince of the Wind and the fairies of kind words retired to their chambers, but, just in case, they never let their guard down and remained ever vigilant.

The little girl, whose mother had bought her that wonderful book from the classroom library and which she talked about constantly, knew the previous story by heart. Her

grandfather read it to her every night just before she went to sleep. When he used a strange word, she noticed quickly and demanded that he read what was written. If you recall, the old man enjoyed experiencing the stories he read as his own, but what he liked most was changing the adjectives and verbs because in this way he appropriated the meaning of the events and the course of other people's lives, modifying situations, descriptions, dialogues, and moods to suit his whims.

“The magical thinking of early childhood is based on the belief that the stories they hear must remain unchanged because, otherwise, the security of the world they live in would crumble.” While in old age, this same thinking requires variations in circumstances and value judgments so that it can be integrated into the diverse models, whether correct or not, that each individual has developed throughout life, thus maintaining their self-esteem at adequate levels. This, in turn, influences the level of positive acceptance in the final stage of life,” the psychologist concluded, ending his talk at the Senior Center. Some attendees applauded enthusiastically, others simply stared at him with blank eyes, and the rest, the fewest, carefully rose so as not to make noise in their chairs and achieve their most valuable goal: to go unnoticed.

“Stories without a Mufflers” (2006)