

Mercedes Benz 220 SL By Rosario Ferré

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Memory, Family, and the Symbolism of the Mercedes Benz

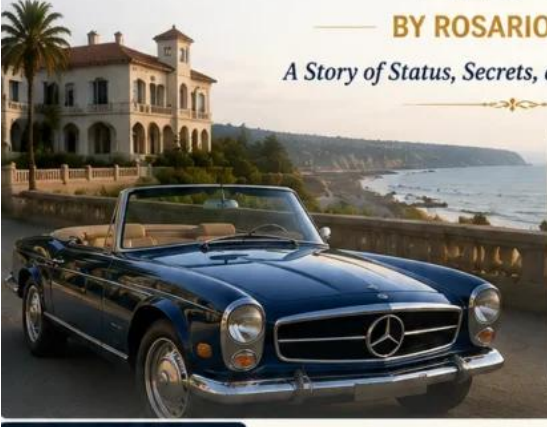
The story is told retrospectively and jumps from past to present according to the memories of the mother, for what she does alludes to the process of remembering, since she is narrating as she remembers what has happened. In the story, for the father, the Mercedes was his portal to a divinity that took him towards a kind of ecstasy that made him transcend the human, transporting him to the beyond. Many people see consumption as a way to escape from reality and make this a ritual to be able to escape from everyday life. Others, like the characters in the story, have adopted consumption as something habitual, and this has become a kind of “god” for them.



MERCEDES-BENZ 220 SL

— BY ROSARIO FERRE —

A Story of Status, Secrets, and Silenced Dreams



“The Mercedes was more than a car; it was a reflection of their carefully constructed world.”

STORY AT A GLANCE

SETTING	MAIN CHARACTERS	CENTRAL SYMBOL	CONFLICT	RESOLUTION
1950s Puerto Rico among the elite social class.	The young narrator, her parents, and her aunt Mercedes.	The Mercedes-Benz 220 SL – a symbol of status and aspiration.	The conflict between appearances and reality within the family.	The narrator gains a deeper understanding of her family and herself.

LITERARY SIGNIFICANCE

Ferré masterfully uses a child narrator to contrast the allure of wealth with the emotional poverty that often accompanies it. The story critiques a society that values possessions over relationships and authenticity.

“The Mercedes was the center of their world, yet love and understanding were always parked somewhere else.”
— Rosario Ferré



OVERVIEW

Rosario Ferré's "Mercedes-Benz 220 SL" is a compelling short story set in 1950s Puerto Rico. Through the narrator's childhood eyes, Ferré explores themes of materialism, class divisions, and the emotional distance within a wealthy family. The coveted Mercedes becomes a symbol of the façade they maintain and the desires they suppress.

MAJOR THEMES

- MATERIALISM & STATUS**
The Mercedes-Benz 220 SL represents wealth, prestige, and the obsession with appearances in high society.
- FAMILY & EMOTIONAL DISTANCE**
Behind the polished exterior of their lives lies a lack of love, communication, and personal connection.
- INNOCENCE & AWARENESS**
The young narrator gradually recognizes the emptiness behind the glamour of her family's lifestyle.
- PRETENSE & SECRETS**
The family's carefully maintained image hides personal secrets, disappointments, and unfulfilled dreams.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

POINT OF VIEW	TOPE	IMAGERY	STYLE
First-person, allowing readers to experience the narrator's gradual awakening.	Reflective and understated, with a hint of melancholy and irony.	Rich descriptions of the car and surroundings highlight beauty and emptiness.	Simple yet evocative prose that emphasizes symbolism and subtext.

KEY TAKEAWAY

"Mercedes-Benz 220 SL" goes beyond a story about a car—it is a powerful commentary on the emptiness of privilege and the quiet longing for genuine connection.

The rain represents the filth and the cochambreira of the society (—. 1991). It acts as the dividing line between the high and low cultures, but also serves as the space in which both societies converge. We could say that, yes, the family reflects the current Puerto Rican political class since they carry out negative actions without considering the consequences, like many of the current politicians of the island. Many politicians on the island abuse their power to undertake acts of corruption, such as money laundering and embezzlement; the majority of these politicians are never caught. The point is not whether the protagonists were corrupt but rather that they managed to get away with this after committing a crime (Ferré 1980). She realized that today, the woman would sit tight again throughout the day for her child without much of any result. She could nearly observe her inclining out the front entryway for the hundredth time, looking down the vacant road at the short row of houses as the sun rose in the sky, making the walls seem more solid and heavily shadowed. (She put her hand in the water and carefully rinsed out the cup and saucer). She could almost hear her say: I must not stress; this Sunday resembles some other Sunday, and he is only later than usual. (For a while, the girl went on looking through the window at the lush garden). The woman left the doorway and sat on the edge of her bed. It is motivated to get agitated; he will come one week from now if he does not come today, she said to herself aloud, as her eyes wandered to the bedspread (—. 1991).

Parental Authority and Personal Experience

I remember the time when I was still a teenager; I felt that everything that I did was under the guidelines of my parents' strict rules. I always felt helpless in every decision that I made. It seemed that I had to obey the rules because I had to repay the hard work that my parents had to endure to put me through school and provide the essentials of growing up. Like "mother" in the short story "Mercedes Benz 220 SL" by Rosario Ferre, I felt that my young experience resembled a detainment that I endured for as long as I can recall (Ferré 1980). In the short story "Mercedes Benz 220 SL" by Rosario Ferre, the character of "Mother" is hitched to a materialistic and possessive spouse known as "Father." She had nothing to anticipate before she was hitched, and one might say she did not have anything. She had little influence in the community. One Sunday evening, while the couple was out for a cruise in their German car, they drove the car close to home. They encountered an accident that would leave wounds and guilt that were deep enough to replay the wounds that were left by her son. Mother was the type of wife who would put her husband on a pallet and support him like the rigid structure of the Mercedes 220 SL in the story. She is imprisoned by her own will. It seemed incoherent at first, but knowing where she came from and what she has right now, it is well worth the imprisonment and mental constraints that came with marriage. Mother knew what kind of relationship she was in all along (Ferré 1980).

Materialism, Desire, and Human Immaturity

While Marina takes us over the best of a romance book, Ferré successfully utilizes a plain, obvious reality tone in "Mercedes Benz 220SL" to expose the consequences of human childishness, numbness, and voracity. "Mercedes Benz 220SL" starts as a discussion between an upper white-collar class man and his spouse, who feel they have finally made it as they gladly share a ride in their new Mercedes-Benz. Then they murder somebody with the vehicle; however, they are much shielded now from the reality they drive through to try to associate with the frightfulness and agony that they have left behind. Huge, bombastic autos also have an extreme American esteem. They stand for the slight feeling of energy that individuals endeavour to buy when they feel a sense of insignificance in their life and work. Individuals who have a genuine feeling of dissatisfaction with life attempt to cover it with steel and head out with speed and power so they do not need to feel any of the certain circumstances they find disagreeable or confusing (—, 1991). American women ought to make the most of Ferré's horrible feeling of retaliation, uncovering man-controlled society, avarice, ineptitude, and sexual abuse in numerous forms in an underhanded and dishy way. These stories cross societies while regarding their own particular captivating and one-of-a-kind place. I am much obliged to you, Rosario Ferré, for bringing your clever and well-versed Puerto Rican stories to this Midwestern peruser. Maybe, as women have been compared to dolls everywhere throughout the world, we want to pay a visit to the "brilliantly genuine" to meet the dolls of these pages. His behaviour can easily be considered brutal and ruthless: the doctor is not minimally concerned about the financial situation of the woman and steals money from the aunt to improve his finances and ensure a favourable future

for his son (Ferré 1980). This is an important point that Ferré has described in this story, Mercedes Benz 220 SL, in which she states her worry and critique toward a society completely divided: on one side, there is a wealthy society that keeps upgrading its status, but on the other, we face a poor class, which is only exploited by the aristocracy.

Repression, Cultural Meaning, and Literary Interpretation

It is very interesting to observe how the mentioned character has already been described in the past by another author. This character often appears in literature and psychoanalysis as a representation of what is repressed. Using Marcel Mauss and Levi-Strauss' theories, Clement states that what is repressed is usually set aside in an "imaginary zone." It exists in the cultural unconscious, but it has to be repressed and excluded. Thus, the sorcery and the hysteria become symbols of a repressed past, whose expression is channelled through the woman. She changes into an extraordinary subversive potential: the "bruja" (witch) knows how to treat, she favours illicit love, and she is also very independent. For this reason, she has often been excluded by society because she is considered different and mysterious and has incomprehensible knowledge that scares people in her community. The hysterical woman embodies the reminiscence of the past; she breaks the rules and incites chaos. Both of them represent the anti-rational, anti-hierarchical, and repressed impetus. The reason Ferré decides to focus on this specific topic is that her prose fiction moves between two main factors. The first element reflects the affirmation of the powers of the marginalized women (a positive aspect related to sorcery) that we can see in the story. The second is a concept that describes the "island destiny" as a product of a permanent lethargy and frustration (negative aspect), as in *When Women Love Men*. The woman becomes a paradox: she is a victim and enemy of herself, as René Marques considers her in his book *Los Soles Truncos*. What is shown in both texts corresponds to a subtext of postponed rage and bitterness. How should it be interpreted? Is it a vision that looks back to the past or points to the future? It can be considered an ambivalence between a past with strong values and an unknown future. These ambiguities demonstrate how Ferré faced the problem of women in her country. The "avatars" in her novel turn into global archetypes and are used as symbols of power and change. The reason I decided to analyze this novel by Rosario Ferré is that I want to provide a different interpretation that, so far, has not been deeply investigated. My goal is to show the importance of these two characters, the witch and the hysteric, and how Ferré assigns them a specific role that readers can clearly see as they perform in their society. Ferré wants to create a connection with the reader by utilizing specific people and assigning explicit roles to each one of them. She does not avoid delicate subjects such as cruelty, vulgarity, and violence, but she offers new ways to interpret the reality she lived, and she invites her readers to follow her during this torturous trip.

References

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