

Novel analysis: love in the time of cholera

[Life](#), [Love](#)



Gabriel Garcia Marquez is one of the greatest authors in world literature. This Nobel Laureate came from Latin America, but his novels have been acclaimed all over the world. One of those novels is *Love in the Time of Cholera*. *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is a remarkable novel that renders love as an illness. In addition, the story reaffirms the presence of love through romanticism, and declares its absence through a rational point of view.

Love in the Time of Cholera is about the enduring love story between Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza. Florentino first encountered Fermina when he delivered a telegram to Lorenzo Daza, Fermina's father (Trainor). Florentino fell in love with her and soon the young lovers were exchanging love letters (Trainor). However, the discovery of their relationship brought the couple apart. Fermina was expelled from school because she was found writing love letters, and her father also saw love letters in her room that prompted him to take Fermina on a long trip to forget about Florentino (Trainor).

After a long absence, Fermina returns as a beautiful, full-grown woman. She has forgotten about Florentino, and at their encounter upon her arrival, she asks him to "forget it" (qtd. in Couteau). In turn, he tries to win her back, but his efforts were futile (Trainor). In time, Fermina marries renowned Dr. Juvenal Urbino. This deeply affected Florentino, and he vowed to win Fermina back no matter how long it takes.

Indeed, after fifty-one years, nine months and four days, Florentino got his opportunity (Couteau). Dr. Urbino died when he fell from a ladder in an

attempt to save his parrot (Trainor). At the doctor's funeral, Florentino wasted no time in telling Fermina his feelings toward her (Trainor). This angered Fermina, and she tells him to leave (Trainor). The funeral incident was soon followed by the exchange of letters, and the two lovers resume their romantic relationship (Trainor). In the end, Florentino and Fermina go on a river voyage (Trainor).

Cholera may be the implied disease in the title, but the story presents love as the real illness. The manifestation of love as a sickness is best embodied by the character of Florentino. He is so engrossed with his love for Fermina that it eventually proves detrimental to his health. In the second chapter of the novel, Florentino's homeopath godfather mistakenly assessed his sickness as cholera, when he was merely exhibiting symptoms of love sickness (Trainor).

In the same chapter, Florentino also consumed flowers and cologne which made him vomit (Trainor). The emotional anguish he feels over his unrequited love for Fermina is translated into physical suffering (Trainor). Therefore, love is an illness because its effects prove to be harmful to one's physical and emotional state, as exemplified by Florentino.

The story also shows the presence and absence of love, as personified by the two men in Fermina's life: Florentino and Dr. Urbino. Florentino is the romantic, as he is possessed with so much love for Fermina that he spends his entire life in winning her affection. On the other hand, Dr. Urbino, is the rational. He may be Fermina's husband, but their relationship was founded on respect, instead of love.

Florentino fell in love with Fermina at a young age, and remained preoccupied with that love throughout his life. The extremity of his love for her even left him unable to write a decent business letter; this is because all he could write were letters for her (Trainor). Moreover, when he is sent to jail because of his violin serenade, he feels a sense of martyrdom (Trainor). Lastly, when Lorenzo attempts to kill him, Florentino declares that it is a noble thing to die for love.

Despite his claim that he had saved his virginity for her, Florentino had 622 sexual relations with numerous women (Couteau). However, sex was only a means to deal with his longing for Fermina (Trainor). He may have been physically disloyal, but he was emotionally faithful to her.

In contrast, Dr. Juvenal Urbino is the rational. He is not overcome with emotions like Florentino, and everything he does follows logic. He marries Fermina, even though he acknowledges the absurdity of such union (Penguin Group). His notion of love is logical, and rejects love as “ unruly passion” (qtd. in Penguin Group). For him, love is a mere “ invention,” a feeling that one can evoke on purpose (Penguin Group). It is therefore no surprise that theirs was not happy marriage, which Dr. Urbino did not mind at all. This is because instead of happiness, he values stability in marriage (Penguin Group).

As opposed to the affectionate and emotional character of Florentino, Dr. Urbino is rigid and passionless. The two men may be extremely different in terms of characteristics, but both were disloyal to Fermina. Dr. Urbino had

an affair with a woman named Barbara Lynch during his marriage to Fermina (Trainor).

Fermina strikes the balance between the two men. As a young lady, she reciprocates Florentino's affections with equal enthusiasm. However, after the trip, she assumed a more mature stance in life which made her reject him. Her marriage to Dr. Urbino is a logical step, since she married for convenience instead of love (Couteau). After her husband dies, she again honors her emotions and embarks on a river cruise with Florentino.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez artfully depicted love as an illness in his novel. He described how love's intensity can affect one's own physical and mental state. Moreover, he renders love through romanticism, and shows how rationality is devoid of it. Indeed, *Love in the Time of Cholera* is a great novel, as it reveals love and its many aspects.

Works Cited

1. Couteau, Rob. " Love in the Time of Cholera by Gabriel Garcia Marquez." *Arete* December 1988.
2. Penguin Group USA. 19 February 2008 .
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