

Anna karenina and love in a time of cholera: common themes

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Tainted Love

Love is depicted as a fairy-tale. There is always a prince who saves the girl from a life of misery and the two live happily-ever-after. Fortunately, there are authors out there who give the readers more of a plot-twist on the traditional love story and make it interesting. Leo Tolstoy and Gabriel Garcia Marquez have written stories about traditional love with the not-so-average characters and plot lines. Tolstoy and Marquez have very different backgrounds, their stories of Anna Karenina and Love in the time of Cholera have the same universal constant of what love is. Anna Karenina and Love in the time of Cholera depict a constant, sickening, love.

Anna Karenina is a modern woman in Russia that is at first accepted in her society as a high-class married woman. She has a child and seems content in the place in life where she is currently at. She is a high society woman and has all her eggs in one basket. Then her world is flipped upside down when she meets Vronksy and starts an affair with him. Anna gets so deeply involved in the affair with Vronksy that she is more than willing to leave her content life behind and even her child to live with a man who had not seemed to love her as much.

Anna Karenina's random love affair is not what is based on the usual and traditional love story. Her stagnant marriage with Karenin and life with him is what the traditional love story comes to play in this role. Joshua Rothman of the New Yorker had analyzed that " Tolstoy...was thinking about love in a different way: as a kind of fate, or curse, or judgment, and as a vector by

which the universe distributes happiness and unhappiness, unfairly and apparently at random” (2012). The story of Anna Karenina and her fate is not so random, though her madness and jealousy had led her to commit suicide.

Anna gave up everything she had ever known for a real chance at love. She wanted love and be loved in return. Anna is naive and “[she] does bad things, but often only because she underestimates just how bad the consequences of those things will be” (Rothman). Her relationship with Vronsky is highly toxic not only because it broke whatever commitment she made to Karenin, her husband, but because “that nothing good came out of the romance” (Rothman). Anna’s affair with Vronsky is a sickening love because of how poisonous their relationship was. The affair had caused lives to be ruined, heartbreaks, and eventually the suicide of Anna Karenina herself.

Love in the Time of Cholera depicts love as sickening in a different way than Anna Karenina did. Florentino and Fermina fall in love at a young age. The story starts out of what seems like a sappy love story. They planned on being together forever and marrying, then Fermina grows up and is suddenly not interested in Florentino anymore. The process of her falling out of love is quick and abrupt and the real reason is never clarified. The part where the story turns to a tainted version is when Florentino just stalks Fermina for about fifty years until she is widowed and lonely and settles so she doesn’t have to be.

In those years, Florentino would be at every public event he knew that Fermina would be at so he could catch even the slightest glimpse of her presence. He wanted to save himself for when he finally is with the love of his life but precisely fails when he has affairs with many, many women while stalking Fermina. The title of cholera plays a role in this story because love is symbolized a lot with disease. When “ Florentino falls madly in love, his symptoms match those of cholera however, Florentino resigns himself to ride out the symptoms and refuses to seek relief” (Smith, 4).

Florentino’s life-long obsession with Fermina is unhealthy, especially when compared to the symptoms of a fatal disease. He does not wish nor try to be cured of his overwhelming love for Fermina, but merely treats the empty voids in his life with countless women. Florentino and Fermina end up together and then their stories are cut off to the readers of them being both quarantined on a boat that is infected with cholera.

Conclusively, the two very different love stories still have the same concept about love. The love portrayed in Anna Karenina is tainted in the reasons that her sacrifices for love were very consequential. She had lost everything she was accustomed too. She had even lost herself because of the very man she left everything for did not love her in return. The love that was depicted in Love in the Time of Cholera was one that was sickening both physically and psychologically. Florentino’s love for Fermina had the same symptoms of cholera but refused to receive any help because he did not want to be helped. Based on these two stories, love is not something that is shaped by time and culture. Even in the 1800s of Russia, when people wanted to marry

for love it was something that was not socially acceptable if the person is someone of lower standards. Love is not the fairy-tale story that every little girl dreams to have one day. Love is something that is understood under all languages, making it a constant symbol universally. In the case of these two stories, based on two different backgrounds, love is a sickening disease that nobody is saved from.