

Fundamental needs in love in the time of the cholera



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In Marquez's *Love in the Time of the Cholera*, the relationships of the three main characters are predicated upon the different fundamental emotional needs they have. For example, Florentino needs love from Fermina, while Fermina needs not love but companionship and security from her husband Juvenal. In turn, Juvenal needs understanding and stability from Fermina, so what we have in the end is a rich tapestry of needs that govern each character's actions and interactions. Florentino's basic need is the simplest to gauge, for it remains constant from the moment he sets his eyes on Fermina. His basic motivating need is love; all his actions speak to that inner drive. When he has Fermina's love, " Requited love," he has " a confidence and strength he had never known before" (74). Conversely, without Fermina he is only a shadow of himself, an object of pity. He " hunt[s] the abandoned little birds of the night for several years, still hoping to find a cure for the pain of Fermina Daza" (174). He rides the trolley and stalks the Carnivale looking for love, and other women are drawn to him because they sense his innate need. Even the cleaning woman at the transient hotel realizes that " he was just like her: someone in need of love" (78). This inner famine renders his behavior almost obsessive in his guarding of love. " He was a different person: the lover who never showed his face, the man most avid for love as well as most niggardly with it, the man who gave nothing and wanted everything, the man who did not allow anyone to leave a trace of her passing in his heart, the hunter lying in ambush..." (216). He guards his own love as well as that of others, never giving away too much of his heart but wanting all of his lovers that he can get. Sometimes, he has several loves going on at once in the heart of his that has " more rooms than a warehouse," and over the course of fifty years he has six hundred and twenty-two long term love

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affairs. We are told of many: Ausencia Santander, Sara Noriega, Olimpia Zuleta, the Widow Nazaret, to name a few. Ultimately though, he saves unfaithful but not disloyal heart for Fermina, longing with all his being for her love in return. His purpose in life is to wait for Juvenal to die and Fermina to love him, but in the meantime, various other loves temporarily satisfy his insatiable need for love. For many years, Fermina will not satisfy Florentino's need for love, but she herself has a different fundamental need. She is not as convinced that love is the basis of everything; on her long trip away from Florentino, she is surprised to find out that "one could be happy not only without love, but despite it" (87). Moreover, Juvenal's suit further perplexes her, since it "had never been undertaken in the name of love, and it was curious, to say the least, that a militant Catholic like him would offer her only worldly goods: security, order, happiness, contiguous numbers that, once they were added together, might resemble love, almost be love. But they were not love, and these doubts increased her confusion, because she was also not convinced that love was really what she most needed to live" (205). However, after she marries him, she finds out that she also has deep-seated needs that, although they might not be love, are nonetheless not completely provided for in her marriage. Her deepest need is companionship, and by extension her "most terrible" (249) fear is the loss of her husband, who is her greatest companion. Just after they return from their honeymoon, the marriage enters a period of great unhappiness for Fermina. She feels lost and alone in her new palace, neglected by a husband who cannot alleviate her pains. Later, when in death he leaves her for good, "she wept...for her solitude and rage...she wept for herself because she had rarely slept alone in that bed since the loss of her virginity..." (50). It is as Juvenal himself had

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feared: the greatest worry about his death would be over “ the solitary life Fermina Daza would lead without him” (45). What Fermina needs most is companionship, a person to dispel the loneliness; perhaps this root cause propels her to accept Florentino Ariza after her husband dies. “ Come back whenever you like,” she says to him. “ I am almost always alone” (308). In any case, it is interesting to note that so far, there is a parallel structure of incompletely fulfilled needs in Florentino yearning for Fermina and Fermina needing Juvenal, though the two needs are somewhat different. Lastly, we turn to Juvenal’s basic spiritual motivation. It is quite evident from his life that he also does not need love; after all, one whose primary motivation is love would hardly make a marriage suit not based on it. We can clearly observe through his structured daily schedule and habitual traveling routes that Juvenal is a man in need of stability. Indeed, in a flash of inspiration after his death, Fermina“ understood the yearning of his love, the urgent need he felt to find in her the security that seemed to be the mainstay of his public life and that in reality he never possessed. One day, at the height of desperation, she had shouted at him: “ You don’t understand how unhappy I am.” Unperturbed...in a single phrase he burdened her with the weight of his unbearable wisdom: “ Always remember that the most important thing in a good marriage is not happiness, but stability””(300). As compared to Fermina, he does not need love or companionship or happiness in his marriage, but just stability. Even in his consuming passion for Barbara Lynch, he chooses the stability of his marriage over his love for Barbara; when he confesses his sins to his priest, it may be that “ his heart [was] broken but his soul [was] at peace” (248). Ultimately, it is not his heart that matters, but his peace. In addition, Juvenal seems to have another major motivation, <https://assignbuster.com/fundamental-needs-in-love-in-the-time-of-the-cholera/>

mentioned in passing but nonetheless striking. As the affair of Barbara Lynch is revealed, we discover that “ all he needed in life, even at the age of fifty-eight, was someone who understood him. So he turned to Fermina Daza, the person who loved him best and whom he loved best in the world, and with whom he had just eased his conscience” (247). Perhaps this understanding would have been a source of his peace had he had it in his lifetime. Fermina obviously does not understand his passion for Barbara; his tears are shed behind the door of a locked lavatory. Fermina does not even understand the basis of Juvenal’s “ yearning” until after he is dead. Indeed, even a passing woman notes that “ no one knows what he thinks” (192). His ultimate witness is God alone, and God alone can bear witness to the love and other emotions stored in his heart. His need for earthly understanding cannot be fulfilled by Fermina. In short, we have in this novel three different characters and at least as many different unfulfilled needs. Florentino yearns for love most of all from Fermina, while Fermina yearns for companionship from Juvenal. In return, Juvenal would like nothing more than stability and understanding from Fermina, but ultimately no person’s needs are completely satisfied. Instead, misunderstandings of these deep needs often result in complex and unpredictable relationships. In the end, though, perhaps Marquez’s message about human life is just that: our deepest needs will probably not be perfectly satisfied; we may have to wait a lifetime.