

# Of Love And Other Demons By Gabriel Marquez

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## Love, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in the Novel

*Of Love and Other Demons*, by Gabriel Marquez, tells of a love story between a priest who is 36 years old and a young girl of only twelve years. It is not the kind of relationship that is common in the society. The author uses literary devices to relate the text to his culture. He uses these devices to serve as symbolic meditations to relate the text to the culture. Marquez makes a bridge between the literary text and the world. The novel takes into account the cultural aspects of society. Latin America has unique cultural aspects where beliefs dominate the daily lives of individuals. The author uses figural devices to give a symbolic structure to his literary discourse, where cultural values, social conventions, myths and religious beliefs are presented in a provocative manner.

The novel is a symbolic representation of the colonial period. The novel presents a world created by mythical, biblical and figural elements. The elements create a fictional discourse which can be interpreted depending on the reader's cultural background, literary competence, and creative imagination. The literary discourse is a representation of the realities in Latin America. The author applies figurative elements in all his novels, and this is no exception. Marquez uses these elements to interpret the cultural aspects that take place in the world.

In *Of Love and Other Demons*, the author shows a critique of cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism is present in the minds of the characters. One of the characters who show cultural imperialism is Cayetano. Cayetano overcomes close-mindedness and goes for a cosmopolitan view. He refuses to believe that Maria is possessed but rather thinks that she is scared. Delaura had studied the acta but was of the opinion that they were not of help in solving Maria's condition (Marquez 90). Cayetano was of the view that the only thing that seemed demonic was the fact that Maria had the customs of the black people (Marquez 91). The characters have to face consequences when they dismiss the African culture. Maria is born white and has been raised by the African slaves.

## Dominga, Yoruba Belief, and Religious Syncretism

Dominga was the woman who raised Maria. She was one of the few slaves who became a Catholic without giving up her Yoruba beliefs. She practised both religions at the same time and at random (Marquez 11). Practising the two religions gave her peace of mind. If there was something lacking in one religion, she would get it in the other. It is evident that Catholicism is mostly associated with whites. The Yoruba beliefs, on the other hand, are associated with the Africans. Maria was brought up

by a very strong woman and served as a maternal figure in her life. Despite being raised by a woman who had religious hybridity, Maria chooses to go with the African traditions. Maria spent most of her time in the courtyard of the slaves, and she learned to dance even before she could speak. Maria learned the African languages three at the same time. She also learned to drink rooster's blood before breakfast and to glide past Christians unseen and unheard, like an incorporeal being (Marquez 42). Her parents are not aware of the transformations that Maria goes through in her adolescence. Thus, they mistake her transformations for being evil habits since she follows the Yoruba culture.

Cayetano's love crosses the boundaries of African Yoruba and Catholicism without claiming that either one of them is wrong. He does not agree with Maria's African culture but tries to understand it. Cayetano tolerates Maria's African culture, and that is why she falls in love with him. Maria is neglected by her family and gets adopted into the African culture. The church misunderstands her and thinks that she is demonic. The Marquis, Maria's father, is told that her daughter is possessed, and he decides to take her to the convent to be exorcised (Marquez 57). Only Cayetano recognizes that Maria is not possessed.

Maria was raised by African slaves even though she was a white girl who had roots in high-status society. It gives her the opportunity to experience both cultures. She is maltreated because people believe that she is possessed. Maria was introduced to African gods and even spoke the African languages. She also practised catholic beliefs after being taken to the convent. Maria is sent to a convent, and their father, Cayetano, is assigned to help her with the problem she has. She is possessed, and Father Cayetano is the one chosen to be her exorcist.

## Sierva Maria, Family Rejection, and Social Fear

Her parents, Marquis and Bernarda, were not aware of the transformation that took place during her adolescence. Maria's mother was convinced that Maria had cast an evil spell on her. She decided that the two of them could not live in the same house. Maria was chased from her home and had to go and live with the slaves despite her being of a high social status.

In the novel *The Love and Other Demons*, Maria's disease of the soul and body is used as a metaphor to symbolize Spanish culture. The love she shares with Cayetano symbolizes the blending of cultures and breaking barriers. Her name symbolizes the mixed background to which she belongs. "He was intense and pale and had spirited eyes and deep black hair with a streak of white at his forehead. His rapid breathing and feverish hands did not seem like those of a happy man (Marquez 55). In as much as Cayetano may have given everything to be a priest, it seems that it does not make him happy. The two end up falling deeply in love. It is the first time that Maria experiences love. The priest has also not been with any woman. Their love is pure. The two have a love that is so great, and they cannot live without each other. Cayetano had never had a close encounter with women before meeting with Maria. "Delaura was aware of his own awkwardness with women" (Marquez 76). However, things are very different with Maria. At their first encounter, he feels at once the power of her charm (Marquez

81). He fell in love with Maria the first time that he saw her. Those calm waters of so many years became his inferno. His passion was reduced to understanding the wily deceptions of the demon (Marquez 84).

Maria is believed to be possessed after a dog with rabies bites her. For this reason, she is sent to the convent to get cured. The thirty-six-year-old priest falls in love with the girl. The relationship between a young girl and a grown-up is taboo. However, their love is cut short. Maria is locked up once the bishop finds out about what is going on between them. Father Cayetano is stripped of his position and is sent away to become a nurse at the Amore Dios hospital for those with leprosy. There is a religious element, and the church is the colonizing force. Even though she is white, Maria rarely talks to white people.

## Social Hierarchy, Race, and Colonial Culture

Social hierarchy is yet another element that the author has used to interweave the literary text into his culture. Maria comes from a family of high status. However, she prefers to embrace Yoruba culture. Most of the people in the high-class society are whites. The Yoruba, on the other hand, are slaves. Maria's parents did not like the fact that she was associating with the slaves. "He tried to teach her to be a real white, to revive for her his failed dreams of an American-born noble, to suppress her fondness for pickled iguana and armadillo stew (Márquez 47). (Maria's parents tried everything to make her really white, but they did not succeed. Cayetano, however, does not try to change Maria. Cayetano does not agree that there are demonic events that take place in the convent.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the author has managed to incorporate elements such as religion, social hierarchy, and culture into the literary text. He has managed to integrate the two cultures in the novel. Maria's family, the Marquis, represents Western culture. The slaves represent the Yoruba culture. It is evident that there is a clear line between the two. Maria's parents do not like her because of her love for the African culture. However, she is not ashamed of being associated with black people. Maria embraces everything about the African culture. She learns their language and even their dances. When Maria becomes possessed, her parents are of the opinion that it is because of her African beliefs. The Yoruba culture and the Western culture are represented in the novel, and one can clearly see the difference between these two cultures. The way they do things and even their religion is different. In as much as the Yoruba and Western cultures differ, the two societies live together in harmony.

## Works Cited

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *Of love and other demons*. Penguin Books India, 1996.