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THE CONQUEROR DOMINATED, THE CONQUERED SEDUCED:  
POSTCOLONIAL LOVE IN THREE STORIES BY GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

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BY

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## ABSTRACT

The Conqueror Dominated, the Conquered Seduced:  
Postcolonial Love in Three Stories by Gabriel García Márquez

By Loraine Laguerta

When critics perform postcolonial readings of works by Gabriel García Márquez, most tend to gravitate toward overtly postcolonial novels such as *100 Years of Solitude*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, or *Autumn of the Patriarch*. But what critics fail to adequately address is that the novels of Márquez dismissed as simply “romance” novels—*Love in the Time of Cholera*, *Of Love and Other Demons*, and *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*—reveal just as much evidence of postcolonial elements as in the novels that are overtly postcolonial. Using the term “postcolonial love” as a point of departure, this essay performs close readings that highlight the shared characteristics between postcolonial theory and the romances within these novels, exposing timeless concepts such as perpetual desire, the seduction of cultural imperialism, a desire to return to purity, nostalgia for a glorified past, and the Faulknerian decay of a people and an era.

This essay argues that although the characters struggle to come to terms with their colonial past and move forward to the postcolonial future, the novels as a whole advocate a postcolonial future, where the most ideal kind of love is one that understands other cultures without necessarily agreeing with them. On a grander scale, this essay proposes that these three texts are an answer to Márquez’s call to use literature as a means “to render our lives believable.” The author’s background in journalism adds a verisimilitude to his writing that allows readers to comfortably accept the postcolonial leap that colors these romances.

*First and foremost, thanks to my advisor, Christopher Mott, for giving me a crash course on all things postcolonial, for inspiring me to be daring and write fearlessly, and, for asking all the questions I never knew I wanted to answer.*

*Thanks to Lowell Gallagher and Karen Cunningham for their support, guidance, and relentless cheerleading in the early stages of this project.*

*For my loving friends and family, who unknowingly kept me on track by always asking how the thesis was going.*

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### ***Introduction.***

A twelve-year-old girl learns how to dance before she can speak. She drinks rooster's blood before breakfast. She knows three kinds of African languages and wears sixteen colorful necklaces, each honoring a different Yoruban deity. In the courtyard of the slaves, she is the queen. Because of a bite from a rabid dog, she is taken away from her hometown to a foreign land where she is maltreated and mistaken for a savage. Eventually, she will be confined to a strait jacket and a stretcher while a demonic priest shouts chants to rid her of the devil. The girl is not an inbred offspring from *100 Years of Solitude*, nor a Liberal Party peasant from *No One Writes to the Colonel*, nor a victim of rape by the General in *Autumn of the Patriarch*. She is the lover of a priest, she is white, and she lives in the romance, *Of Love and Other Demons*.

When critics perform postcolonial readings of works by Gabriel García Márquez, most tend to gravitate toward the monumental text, *100 Years of Solitude*. Spanning entire generations, this is the epic novel credited with winning Márquez the Nobel Prize, worldwide fame, and the rights to the supernaturally convincing genre, magical realism. Elevating the history of Colombia to the fantastic, *100 Years* boasts thinly masked replicas of the historical Colombian civil wars, neocolonialism,<sup>1</sup> political violence, and most importantly, the cyclical aftermath that results. Amy Sickles says that *100 Years* is “considered by many critics to be the greatest of all Latin American novels, with the story of the Buendía family functioning as a metaphor for the history of Latin America” (Sickles 24).

It is true that Gabriel García Márquez wrote many novels like *100 Years* that are overtly postcolonial by nature, with all its talk of colonels, banana strikes, a concrete oppressor and a

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<sup>1</sup> Pelayo, Rubén. "One Hundred Years of Solitude." *Gabriel García Márquez: A Critical Companion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001. 103. Print.

concrete oppressed. But what critics fail to adequately address is that the novels of Márquez dismissed as simply “romance” novels— *Love in the Time of Cholera* , *Of Love and Other Demons* , and *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*— exhibit just as much evidence of postcolonialism as do the novels that are overtly postcolonial.

My method for interweaving postcolonialism and love will be a term called postcolonial love. I define postcolonial love as a type of love or romance that shares the same psychology as the topics addressed in postcolonialism— highlighting overlapping concepts such as a desire to forget, a desire to remember, a passion to conquer, and insatiable longing. I consciously use the words “desire” and “passion” because these kinds of words live comfortably in both realms of romance and postcolonialism. Few people have realized this phenomenon, and this is the problem I intend to address. Postcolonial love will serve as the backbone of my close readings.

In view of its fame and popularity, *Love in the Time of Cholera* needs little defense for its worthiness as an object of study. Set in the late nineteenth century and spanning until the early twentieth century, a man named Florentino Ariza waits fifty-one years, nine months, and four days for the husband of Fermina Daza to die so he can swoop in and reclaim his childhood love. It demonstrates one of the most extreme cases of postcolonial love in Márquez’s writing, particularly for its advocacy of perpetual desire as well as its problematic nostalgia in Florentino.

*Of Love and Other Demons* and *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* are lesser-known works that share just as much complexity and nuance on the topic of postcolonial love. Set in the eighteenth century, *Demons* is the story of Sierva María, the twelve-year old daughter of a marquise who contracts rabies; believed to be possessed, she is sent to a convent to be cured. A thirty-five-year old priest named Cayetano Delaura is sent to perform an exorcism on Sierva, but he ends up falling in love with her. In addition to the taboo relationship between grown man and young girl,

exorcised patient and exorcist, the text adds a religious element to postcolonialism, with the Church as the colonizing force and African culture as the indigenous oppressed.

*Memories of My Melancholy Whores* is, fittingly, one of Márquez's later novels. Published in 2005, but set in 1960,<sup>2</sup> it tells the story of a man whose ninetieth-birthday wish is to have sex with a virgin. However, when he tells the owner of his usual brothel, he learns that the only virgin available is fourteen years old. What follows is a year-long infatuation with his prostitute, never actually performing the act of sex, and only lying beside her as she sleeps. This story is relevant for the Narrator's double cultural imperialism, as he passes on his knowledge to her thinking he is the superior race when, in reality, he too, is a victim of cultural imperialism.

Though not all of the time periods of these settings lend themselves to be placed in a directly postcolonial context, in the current postcolonial conversation, such a leap is beginning to be acceptable. In *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, Benita Parry writes:

The abandonment of historical and social explanation was soon apparent in the work of those postcolonial critics who disengaged colonialism from historical capitalism and represented it for study as a cultural event...As Simon During has suggested, 'Postcolonialism came to signify something remote from self-determination and autonomy. By deploying categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence...all of which laced colonized into colonizing cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category.' (Parry 4)

While I agree that the disengagement of postcolonialism from historical context allows us to study the topic as a purely cultural event, unlike Parry, I do believe that the "critical, anti-colonialist category" still survives. I will show that while the characters struggle with their postcolonial

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<sup>2</sup> Updike, John. "Dying For Love." *The New Yorker*. N.p., 7 Nov. 2005. Web. 10 Mar. 2013. <[http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/11/07/051107crbo\\_books1?currentPage=2](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/11/07/051107crbo_books1?currentPage=2)>.



identities, the ultimate goal of these novels is to condemn colonialism and push for a cosmopolitan, postcolonial future.

With newfound freedom from the weight of linear temporality, these novels present a constantly shifting trajectory of postcolonial romance that is not as linear as it initially appears.<sup>3</sup> At times the characters in the novels venerate colonialism; at times, they abhor it. Further complicating the analysis of postcolonial love is parodic love, and how a postmodernist reading of Márquez's works often seeks to subvert the nostalgia for colonialism. Elleke Boehmer writes, "Postcolonial and postmodern critical approaches cross in their concern with marginality, ambiguity, disintegrating binaries, and all things parodied, piebald, dual, mimicked, always already borrowed, and ironically secondhand" (Boehmer 238). Boehmer confirms that postcolonialism and postmodernism have a similar agenda, and so, we confidently bring postmodern elements into our analysis of postcolonial love.

In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, for example, the romantic ideals of longing and waiting are called into dispute as to whether they are the result of Márquez's sincere display of romance at its finest, or a cynical mockery of it. Some critics, like Robin Fiddian, tend towards the latter, arguing that the novel parodies the nineteenth-century *folletín*, creating a postmodern novel where literary stereotypes are challenged in its characters (the lovesick poet and the wealthy, haughty girl) and its oversaturated status as a love story (Fiddian 172). Others, like David Buehrer, concede the suspicious formulaic love story, but celebrate it as sincere human feeling, claiming, "*Love's* characters, specifically Florentino and Fermina, stand as ideal projections of the possibility of human emotionality ... It is as if Garcia Márquez has endowed his characters with enough traits of traditional humanistic belief to balance whatever postmodern features may be working to

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<sup>3</sup> Here, I define romance with the sixth definition from the Oxford English Dictionary: "A love affair; a romantic relationship."

disassemble them” (Buehrer 19). On the other hand, Márquez himself said in an interview about the book, “You have to be careful not to fall into my trap” (Williams 136). The same questions can be asked of *Of Love and Other Demons* and *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*— how can we possibly analyze postcolonial love when the love stories by themselves are twisted into postmodern, comical one-sided delusions and disturbing age gaps?

Zoom out. Past the complicated, webbed world of the characters, the greater issue at stake is not simply that Márquez’s characters struggle to navigate through the postcolonial world, but that the novels as a whole ultimately seek to condemn colonialism. In the first section, Márquez describes perpetual longing—a Western phenomenon— as a dangerous emotion, one that is embraced positively by romance, and hungrily by colonialism. In the second section, I show how Western love is the worst kind of cultural imperialism, because it is the kind that is unrealized by those who have been “culturally imperialized,” and who arrogantly assume that their culture is the only truth. In the third section, I argue that, in the same way that cultural imperialism allows us the illusion of our own identity, the true perversion of old men falling in love with young girls is not the age difference, but rather the old men’s pursuit of purity to redeem themselves of their colonial past. In the fourth section, I show how nostalgia is a dangerous kind of emotion because it pays homage to a glorified past, while the destruction of memory is the true redemptive emotion because it acknowledges that the past is too horrible to be realized. In the last section, I describe the ultimate decay of the colonial aristocracy as a result of their stubbornness to stay in the past as well as the relation to Faulkner’s southern aristocracy. Ultimately, I aim to prove that these characters live in worlds where the novels’ eventual agenda is to push the characters out of the Old World of colonialism and live in a New World of postcolonialism, where cosmopolitan love is the ideal.

### *Love in the Western World*

Understanding Márquez's relationship to the Western<sup>4</sup> tradition of love is important because one of the largest postcolonial messages I intend to demonstrate is the wish to perpetuate longing, a decidedly Western phenomenon. In Denis de Rougemont's book, *Love in the Western World*, Rougemont argues that Western love has a paradoxical condition of achieving satisfaction and happiness through its endless and harrowing pursuit. He writes:

Happy love has no history. Romance only comes into existence where love is fatal, frowned upon and doomed by life itself. What stirs lyrical poets to their finest flights is neither the delight of the senses nor the fruitful contentment of the settled couple; not the satisfaction of love, but its *passion*. And passion means suffering. There we have the fundamental fact.

(Rougemont 15)

To fully understand this paradox, it is necessary to look at the history of Western love, and the terms Eros and Agape. The difference between Eros and Agape is striking, though it must not be oversimplified. For this paper, I will define Eros and Agape using the descriptions from "Book II: The Religious Origins" of *Love in the Western World*.

De Rougemont defines Eros as a boundless desire as, " a desire that never relapses, that nothing can satisfy, that even rejects and flees the temptation to obtain its fulfillment in the world, because its demand is to embrace no less than the All. It is *infinite transcendence*, man's rise into his god. And this rise is *without return*" (Rougemont 62). Eros is an obsession with longing for the unattainable. In the twelfth century, a Christian heresy called Catharism taught deliverance from the

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<sup>4</sup> I will define Western territory with the same parameters as Denis De Rougemont, to include Western Europe and North America.

body so that it can be reunited with the divine (where the soul resides). Thus, Eros is the passionate longing to be reunited with the soul—essentially, a longing for death.<sup>5</sup>

Rougemont defines Agape in terms of Christian love as, “the incarnation of the Word in the world—and of Light in Darkness—is the astounding event whereby we are delivered from the woe of being alive. And this event, in being the centre of the whole of Christianity, is the focus of that Christian love which in Scripture is called *agape*” (Rougemont 67). Agape is reciprocal love between God and humans. Communion, or the ceremony of receiving Christ’s body and blood through bread and wine, is considered a form of Agape.

Once Catharism was persecuted by the Inquisition, Agape disappeared and was resurrected later as courtly love, myths like Tristan and Iseult. It is worth noting that this myth directly contradicts the Christian understanding of love as Agape. Whereas the myth suggested that passionate romantic love is the true human fulfillment which exalts and transforms the lovers through death (following Eros), de Rougemont asserts that Agape is “...no longer the infinite *passion* of a soul in quest of light, but the *marriage* of Christ and the church...Such a love, being understood according to the image of Christ’s love for His Church (Ephesians, v. 25), is able to be truly mutual” (Rougemont 69).

Thus, the myth of Tristan and Iseult is problematic—it is readily labeled as a Western, Christian romance, and yet its message more closely follows Eros than Agape. But even the distinction between Eros and Agape is not neatly dualistic. The popular belief is that Eros is Eastern love and Agape is Western love. But the Eros idea of an urgent desire to return to purity is both Western and Eastern—Western in its purity, and Eastern in its perpetually unsatisfied desire.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas, Owen C. "Beatrice or Iseult? The Debate about Romantic Love." *Anglican Theological Review* 79.4 (1997): 571-81. Web.

### *Cosmopolitanism*

That Eros and Agape give a multicultural element to Western love complicates Western longing, begging questions of both purity and what it means to be seduced. But the tendency of the characters to fall into habits of Western longing speaks to a larger problem of cultural imperialism, or, the “takeover” of one culture by another: the food, clothing, customs, recreation, and values of the economically dominant culture increasingly replace those of the economically vulnerable culture until the latter appears to be a kind of imitation of the former.<sup>6</sup> The novels seek to resolve cultural imperialism using cosmopolitanism as defined by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Born in London, raised in Ghana, currently lecturing in America, and author of *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Appiah defines cosmopolitanism roughly between Mc Donald’s-littered globalization and impractically garbed nationalism, supporting a society where people make an effort to understand one another cross-culturally without necessarily agreeing. He suggests that we view other cultures humbly, as a shattered mirror: “You will find parts of the truth everywhere and the whole truth nowhere. The deepest mistake is to think that your little shard of mirror can reflect the whole” (Appiah 8). But it is not enough to take the relativist ticket home and agree to disagree, and live and let live. If we stopped there, Appiah says, so would our conversations, and we would live in separate, silent worlds. Understanding universalities helps us veer away from this sedentary path. In his chapter on moral disagreement, Appiah distinguishes between thin values and thick values. Thin values, like goodness, are slippery universals that express what is “good” or what you “ought” to do. Thick values, like rudeness or courage, address concepts that are thickly enmeshed in particular societies—for example, what is rude in one culture may not be rude in a different culture.

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<sup>6</sup> Tyson, Lois. "Postcolonial Criticism." *Critical Theory Today: A User-friendly Guide*. New York: Garland Pub., 1999. N. pag. Print.

As far as Márquez is concerned, postcolonial love may very well be a hybrid of both thick and thin values. In Mark Millington's *García Márquez's Novels of Love*, Millington points to an us-vs.-them relationship in *Of Love and Other Demons* that is overcome by love. Sierva María is neglected by her parents and essentially adopts an African culture because she is brought up by slaves. Her habits are misunderstood by the church as demonic, and only Cayetano recognizes this mistake: "Except for the enlightened Abrenuncio, not until Cayetano arrives does anyone dealing with her understand that her refusal to communicate with white people derives from their uncaring or brutal treatment of her, and that other aspects of her behavior are conditioned by her socialisation within a black culture" (Millington 123). Thus, Cayetano's love is a love that is learned from Western culture (thick), but also a love that seeks to transcend cultural differences through understanding (thin).

In *Love and Sex in Twelve Cultures*, Robert Endleman studies twelve tribal and tribal-transitional societies from the Mohave Indians of Arizona to the Anyi of the Ivory Coast, concluding that although many of these societies do not recognize or prioritize the concept of love, they continue to lead happy, sexually active, and sometimes openly promiscuous, lives. But his conclusions on the subject of love echo Appiah: "For each of the tribal or transitional societies, we can repeat an anthropological commonplace: 'These people are exactly like ourselves,' and 'They are utterly different from us'—both true at once. This is why we need both a cross-cultural approach (emphasizing differences), and a trans-cultural one, emphasizing universalities" (Endleman 118). Like Appiah, Endleman affirms that universal concepts such as romantic love vary from culture to culture. He adds that the paradoxical truth of coexisting sameness and difference makes it all the more urgent to adopt a cosmopolitan approach to other

cultures, understanding but not necessarily agreeing. This is the kind of postcolonial goal the novels strive for.

Other terms relevant to my study of cultural imperialism and cosmopolitanism include hybridity, unhomeliness, othering, and seduction.<sup>7</sup> Hybridity refers to experiencing one's cultural identity as a hybrid of two or more cultures. Unhomeliness, on the other hand, refers to the feeling that one has no cultural "home" or sense of cultural belonging. Othering entails the colonizers' treatment of members of the indigenous culture as less than fully human. Finally, for the purposes of this paper, I define seduction as the brainwashing of indigenous peoples to enthusiastically accept the culture of their oppressors as a better culture. The oppressors themselves are also seduced by the unattainable and, later, by the purity of youth as a means of healing themselves of their colonial past.

### ***The Role of Memory***

Similar to the perversity of seeking purity, memory serves as yet another tool for the colonizers to rid themselves of the colonial past. Nostalgia pays a morally wrong glorifying homage to a romantic past, as the characters, particularly Florentino, remember an era when love letters were handwritten and women were exciting and exotic—the same era of slavery and cultural imperialism. In an opposite flowing vein, prolepsis—the literary technique of a prefiguring or foreshadowing of a future event in a narrative, or, the narration of an event at a point earlier than its chronological place in a story<sup>8</sup>—is equally dangerous in the sense that it arrogantly assumes a future. In the context of a decaying colonial system, it optimistically predicts a return to colonialism, but almost always, these hopes are confirmed dead by the nature of the literary device. Most

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<sup>7</sup> (For hybridity, unhomeliness, and othering only) Tyson, Lois. "Postcolonial Criticism." *Critical Theory Today: A User-friendly Guide*. New York: Garland Pub., 1999. N. pag. Print.

<sup>8</sup> "Prolepsis, N." : *Oxford English Dictionary*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152316?redirectedFrom=prolepsis>>.

prolepses used by Márquez begin with “Years later...” and end with a sad statement of realization that the colonial past will never be revived.

Parry advocates for a remembrance that fights against forgetfulness: “For Adorno then, the effacement of memory is a sign that the consciousness of historical continuity has been atrophied: ‘Enlightenment about what happened in the past must work, above all, against a forgetfulness that too easily goes along with and justifies what is forgotten’ (p.125)” (Parry 184). But what Adorno and Parry miss in their observations of forgetfulness is that the mere desire to forget in itself confirms ownership of guilt. This, I will argue, is a more powerful form of postcolonial redemption than faulty memory such as nostalgia, or optimistic future, such as prolepsis.

### ***Love as ethics, an obligation to understand other cultures***

From an ethical standpoint, despite the characters’ desires to forget or, even worse, to reminisce about a glorified past, we cannot ignore Appiah’s urgings to help and to understand other cultures. From that point of departure, we may apply the same responsibilities to Márquez’s characters, and how they respond to the aftermath of colonialism. In the article “Magical realism as social protest in Gabriel García Márquez’s *Of Love and Other Demons*,” critics Mustanir Ahmad, Ayaz Afsar, and Sobia Masood argue that Márquez’s trademark usage of magical realism is a vehicle to exposing postcolonial injustices such as the African slave trade. They show how Márquez plays with the book’s fictional genre, weaving it with entirely non-fictional elements, such as concrete statistics, specific dates, and the archaeological discovery that inspired this story, to create a reality that readers would find convincing and horrifying. In other words, Márquez tells lies with a Machiavellian vengeance—he articulates his fictional tale with so much conviction that we must also believe him when he poses his views on real



historical events. And sure enough, it is clear from the first passage of *Demons* that Márquez condemns the oppressive conditions of slaves in the slave trade, as well as the improper placement of blame on the Africans:

For the past week a ship belonging to the Compañía Gaditana de Negros had been awaited with dismay because of an unexplainable series of deaths on board. In an attempt at concealment, the unweighted corpses were thrown into the water. The tide brought them to the surface and washed the bodies, disfigured by swelling and a strange magenta coloring, up on the beach. The vessel lay anchored outside the bay, for everyone feared an outbreak of some African plague, until it was verified that the cause of death was food poisoning. (Márquez 7)

Márquez eerily maintains his story-telling tone even while illustrating the gruesome picture of corpses washing ashore. This, these critics say, is how Márquez employs magical realism to highlight colonial wrongs.

### ***Believable Literature***

“Magical realism as social protest” brings up an important point in Márquez’s style of writing. Before he launched a career in fiction, Márquez spent years honing his reporting skills as a journalist. In “The Ends of the Text: Journalism in the Fiction of Gabriel García Márquez,” Anibal Gonzalez writes, “Garcia Márquez sees journalism’s influence on his work not so much as a matter of style, but as one of the rhetorical stratagems which he uses to give verisimilitude to his stories. By insisting on the “reality” of his stories, he is often simply emphasizing their verisimilitude” (Gonzalez 63). Márquez himself uses this as an explanation for his characteristic precision with numbers, “If you say that there are elephants flying in the sky, people are not

going to believe you. But if you say there are four hundred and twenty-five elephants fighting in the sky, people will probably believe you.”<sup>9</sup>

Márquez’s pursuit of believability in fictional works is a larger pursuit of resolving cultural injustice and uniting communities globally. In his Nobel Prize speech entitled “The Solitude of Latin America,” Márquez demands for “A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune...we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.”<sup>10</sup> I will argue that literature is the means that Márquez believes will “render our lives believable.” To refer back to *Cosmopolitanism*, it is the means that we will use to better understand one another and get used to each other, even if we disagree.

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<sup>9</sup> Roper, Caitlin. "The Paris Review Perspective." *Critical Insights: Gabriel García Márquez*. Ed. Ilan Stavans. Pasadena, Calif: Salem, 2010. 14. Print.

<sup>10</sup> García Márquez, Gabriel. "The Solitude of Latin America: Gabriel García Márquez Nobel Prize Lecture." *The Modern World*. N.p., 2 June 2003. Web. 19 Nov. 2012.

*Part I: A Love that Conquers.*

It began with a telegram. Florentino Ariza—nameless telegraph operator, sentimental ladies' man, violinist extraordinaire—would deliver a message to the wealthy Daza residence, and hear for the first time the voice of thirteen-year-old Fermina, the girl he would long to be with for the rest of his life. He would spend his days sitting at a nearby bench, watching her walk home from school, plotting out his strangled declarations in ink, then spattering the remains on concerned mother, Transito Ariza. Readers groan with sympathy for the character that has fallen victim to the familiar ills of one-sided love. The narrator, on the other hand, is not so concerned. Florentino Ariza—avid reader of Western literature, precocious pupil of romance, acute sadist in all things emotional—enjoys his longing. Furthermore, this enjoyment of longing is learned from Western culture. In Doris Sommer's *The National Romances of Latin America*, Sommer writes, "modernizing lovers were learning how to dream their erotic fantasies by reading the European romances they hoped to realize" (Sommer, section 32). Florentino, Cayetano, and the Narrator in *Whores* are all Sommer's modernizing lovers, enjoying the imported emotions of longing they received from exposure to Western culture.

Important to remember from the introduction is de Rougemont's criticism of passion and endless desire in *Love in the Western World*. Parry closes the gap between Western passion and postcolonialism, citing Michael O'Pray's analysis of Rudyard Kipling: "Because, as O'Pray recognizes, the fantastical is condensed with the colonizing spirit, the effect is to invest domination with libidinal intensities—[Joseph] Conrad's 'insatiable imagination of conquest'" (Parry 126). The passion and insatiable desire to physically conquer that de Rougemont speaks of parallels the same

passion<sup>11</sup> that fuels the logic of colonization.

If we take romantic notions of longing and place them in the postcolonial critical context, an interesting parallel appears between Western love and colonial conquest—lovers who love longing are similar to both sides of colonization: either as one who enjoys being conquered; or, one who enjoys the chase of conquering. Fascinatingly, with their learned appreciation for Western longing, the starring men in Márquez’s novels exhibit qualities of both masochism and pursuit, ultimately raising the question: Is this kind of love a symptom of or a solution to colonial conquest?

In *Cholera*, rather than meet Fermina with all his five senses at the same time, Florentino’s initial contact with her comes slowly and indulgently. First, by ear, “the brightness in the patio was filled with the voice of a woman repeating a reading lesson” (Márquez 55). Then, by sight, “As he passed the sewing room, he saw through the window an older woman and a young girl sitting very close together on two chairs...” (Márquez 55). The rest of the senses Florentino crafts with his own imagination, “Little by little he idealized her, endowing her with improbable virtues and imaginary sentiments, and after two weeks he thought of nothing else but her” (Márquez 56). It is as if Florentino slowly and purposefully injected himself with the disease of love, as it is often referred to throughout this novel. True to the novel’s timestamp title, the symptoms that surface bear a close resemblance to cholera: “When he began to wait for the answer to his first letter, his anguish was complicated by diarrhea and green vomit, he became disoriented and suffered from sudden fainting spells, and his mother was terrified because his condition did not resemble the turmoil of love so much as the devastation of cholera” (Márquez 61). Florentino’s choleric symptoms of love are a comment on the diseased passion for obsession that Parry discusses.

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as de Rougemont and Parry recognize, physical passion and longing often go hand in hand. But I do not seek to conflate the two terms. As I will prove later in this section, there are instances when insatiable longing and passion exist without the physical, “libidinal” aspect.

But Transito need not have worried, for the symptoms were, indeed, that of love. After an examination by his godfather, who “prescribed infusions of linden blossoms to calm the nerves and suggested a change of air so he could find consolation in distance... Florentino Ariza longed for just the opposite: to enjoy his martyrdom” (Márquez 62). Transito Ariza is Florentino’s first teacher of the enjoyment of longing. The narrator writes:

...she took pleasure in her son’s suffering as if it were her own...she encouraged him to enjoy his prostration.

‘Take advantage of it now, while you are young, and suffer all you can,’ she said to him, ‘because these things don’t last your whole life.’ (Márquez 62)

Here, Transito instructs Florentino to “enjoy his prostration”—in other words, to enjoy the suffering of his longing. She believes that it is a fleeting experience only felt during youth. But as we well know, Florentino longs throughout his adult life until he reaches old age. In postcolonial terms, this is problematic for two reasons. First, that Florentino is learning to enjoy his suffering at all means by definition that he will never be satisfied—he is instructed to prolong his longing. In this way, Western love is a symptom of colonial conquest because it perpetuates a desire for more. Similar to love, the desire to acquire new territories is insatiable. Secondly, that Florentino longs until he is well beyond his youthful years shows us that he will not grow out of Western love, even by the end of the novel. As I will show in the next section on cultural imperialism, Florentino’s counterpart, Fermina, fares slightly better in outgrowing Western love and, on a larger scale, colonial illusions.

Florentino is not the only one who is taught by a close relative to take pleasure in the sufferings of love. His daily visits to the nearby bench are immediately noted by Fermina’s Aunt Escolastica, a textbook romantic who enjoys living vicariously through her niece’s courtship. Aunt

Escolastica knows the game of longing well, accurately predicting to Fermina that if Florentino's intentions are serious, then he will give her a letter. Sure enough, Fermina's thirst for longing is awakened: "She [Fermina] longed with all her soul for her aunt's predictions to come true, and in her prayers she begged God to give him the courage to hand her the letter just so she could know what it said" (Márquez 59). Fermina's wish is for a scenario that specifically extends longing—not that Florentino confess his love, but that he hand her a letter. When she finally gets her wish, she takes the cues from her aunt, and, keeping the distance, commands Florentino, " 'Now go, and don't come back until I tell you to'" (Márquez 61). Under Aunt Escolastica's mentorship, Fermina learns to enjoy Florentino's tantalizingly delicate courtship of her as much as he does. In the same way that Fermina uses distance to fuel her love for Florentino, colonialism seeks to conquer lands that are distant. Its fascination with the exotic speaks to its parallel obsession with distance—as long as lands are distant, they are exotic and desirable. Unlike Florentino, Fermina eventually realizes that she mistakenly accepted Western love as the singular truth, when, in reality, it is only one kind of love in a marketplace of different cultures.

Outside influences, such as religion, also serve as mentors of the enjoyment of longing. In *Of Love and Other Demons*, Father Cayetano Delaura is already a lover of martyrdom thanks to his faith alone. Even the narrator's first description of him invokes a sense of pain, "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 those of a happy man" (Márquez 55-56). But Cayetano is as malleable as he is devout. In describing his adolescence, the narrator says that Cayetano "knew life through books" (Márquez 78). As a result, Cayetano admires many things: God, Saint Augustine, his mentor, the Bishop de Caceres y Virtudes...and most telling, Garcilaso de la Vega.

Garcilaso de la Vega is a Spanish soldier and poet from the sixteenth century, most famous for his tragic love poetry that brought the Italian Renaissance to Spain.<sup>12</sup> A strange map of degrees of separation begins to form. Garcilaso brought Italy to Spain. Cayetano brought Spain to Colombia. The idea of taking pleasure in longing—the wooing words of Garcilaso’s tragic love poetry—was, in fact, imported twice over before arriving to Cayetano’s hungry literary hands. Before meeting Sierva, Cayetano has neither interest nor experience with women. Márquez writes, “Delaura was aware of his own awkwardness with women. To him they seemed endowed with an untransferable use of reason that allowed them to navigate without difficulty among the hazards of reality. The mere idea of an encounter, even with a defenseless childlike Sierva María, turned the perspiration of his palms to ice” (Márquez 76).

But at their first encounter, he feels at once “the power of her charm” (Márquez 81). Distressed by a dream he had the night before,<sup>13</sup> he contains his fear and examines her with professional composure. The narrator’s tone is equally absent, straightforward, and emotional, “He applied balsams to the girl’s wounds and with gentle breaths relieved the burning on her raw skin, astounded at her tolerance of pain. Sierva María answered none of his questions, showed no interest in his preaching, and complained about nothing” (Márquez 83). Sierva’s apathy is an eerie doppelgänger of Fermina’s apathy toward Florentino in her own story of longing. The resemblance completes itself at the end of the chapter, when Delaura reveals his longing for Sierva: “From the moment he first saw Sierva María, those calm waters of so many years became his inferno... His passion was reduced to understanding the wily deceptions of the demon...” (Márquez 84). Sierva María becomes yet another influence on Delaura, who seemed so unmoveable when we first met

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<sup>12</sup> Kaplan, Gregory B. *Sixteenth-century Spanish Writers*. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. Print.

<sup>13</sup> In his dream, Sierva eats from a never-ending cluster of grapes, a clear symbol of longing (Marquez 75).

him. But she consumes him early on in the novella, leading to a delirious episode of sadistic longing, vocalized through his teacher of such longing, Garcilaso:

He retired to the library earlier than usual, thinking of her, and the more he thought the stronger grew his desire to think. He recited aloud the love sonnets of Garcilaso, torn by the suspicion that every verse contained an enigmatic portent that had something to do with his life... ‘God save you, Maria de Todos los Angeles,’ he said in his sleep...he saw Sierva María discard the old carnation and place a bouquet of newly opened gardenias in the vase on his work table. Delaura, with Garcilaso, told her in an ardent voice: *‘For you was I born, for you do I have life, for you will I die, for you am I now dying.’* Sierva María smiled without looking at him. (Márquez 88)

Cayetano’s lessons of longing are a ghostly nightmare compared to the peaceful sheltered courtship of Fermina and Florentino. Magical realism serves a sinister and fated purpose in this passage. In Delaura’s dream, he speaks to Sierva “with Garcilaso” and “in an ardent voice,” as if he himself were possessed. The interpretation is intentionally ambiguous—we do not know if the italicized text is Delaura quoting Garcilaso directly, or if he is merely inspired by Garcilaso to speak these words himself. Either way, Delaura’s pleasure for longing is a learned appetite, extracted from a poet from Spain (who celebrated the Renaissance from Italy), whetted by a possessed girl, and released into the wild of the story. Cultural exchange will play an even larger role in the very fabric of Cayetano’s relationship with Sierva. As I will argue in a later section, Cayetano’s cosmopolitan acceptance of Sierva’s African upbringing is what allows their relationship to blossom in spite of obstacles of social acceptance and age difference. In this passage, Sierva María stoically rewards Delaura, similar to Fermina, with only a smile, indicating subtly that she too, enjoys his longing.



In a similar situation to the poetry that de la Vega imports, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* mentions a mentor figure of foreign heritage, from Italy. We learn at the start of the book that the Narrator's mother is Italian, venerated by her son, who describes her as: "a noble interpreter of Mozart, a multilingual Garibaldian, and the most beautiful and talented woman who ever lived in the city" (Márquez 5). The fact that the Narrator idealizes his mother on such a pedestal is problematic for several reasons. Does he revere her simply because she is Italian? Simply because her tastes are those of the conquering race? This kind of passive acceptance of Western culture as "the best" is problematic, as I will argue in the section on cultural imperialism. Curiously, it seems that the Narrator's mother, Florina de Dios, is the one influence in Márquez's novels whose request is remotely practical, yet at the same time, tersely racist, "My mother on her deathbed asked me to marry a fair-skinned woman while I was young and have at least three children..." (Márquez 33). The mother's request for a fair-skinned daughter-in-law overtly subjugates all other colored women in Colombia in favor of the "superior" white race, yet another symptom of colonial conquest.

In another example in *Whores*, the Narrator's curiously non-sensual longing for Delgadina echoes the unquenchable dreams of conquest. Though the Narrator admits to an "unforeseen temptation" (Márquez 28) upon seeing Delgadina turn away from him in her sleep, his advances go no farther than a feeble attempt to separate her legs. When she does not budge, he spends the night next to her as she sleeps, declaring his longing, a unique mix of passionate compassion: "That night I discovered the improbable pleasure of contemplating the body of a sleeping woman without the urgencies of desire or the obstacles of modesty" (Márquez 29). This "improbable pleasure" the narrator speaks of harkens back to de Rougemont, with an Eros-like pleasure for an Agape-like contemplation of a sleeping woman. The insatiable desire to conquer her still exists, but interestingly, lacks the physical aspect that is so often linked with passion. But if anything, the

distinction between “pure” longing and physical libido actually further explains Conrad’s term that Parry referred to: “the insatiable imagination of conquest.” The Narrator’s pleasure lies in the very contemplation of the body rather than the actual conquest. In a similar manner, the pleasure of colonization lies not in the physical act of conquering, but rather in the thought of conquering, again, in the seductive unattainability of the exotic. The Narrator’s mother’s racist influence may have also affected the nature of this relationship as the racist paradox of the conqueror: the conquest of the inferior other is at once desirable and forbidden as physical mingling risks the dilution of the conqueror’s superiority.

From then on, he relishes in his longing in a similar manner to Florentino and Cayetano, learning from Western literature and music the meaning of a love that conquers. Though the most concrete influence on the narrator is the Spanish song, “La Delgadina,” that eventually inspires his christening of the whore as “Delgadina,” Márquez makes it clear that the Narrator’s ultimate influence for a love of longing comes from romantic, Western writing: “I tried to reread the classics that had guided me in adolescence, and I could not bear them. I buried myself in the romantic writings I had repudiated when my mother tried to impose them on me with a heavy hand, and in them I became aware that the invincible power that has moved the world is unrequited, not happy love” (Márquez 65). Here, we discover the Italian mother’s influence to impose teachings of unrequited love onto the Narrator after all. Again, the Narrator’s revelation harkens back directly to de Rougemont, where lyrical poets are inspired only by a passionate suffering—unrequited love. Just as the most immortal of colonial conquests were hard-fought and bloody, only stories of tragic love achieve literary immortality. Márquez writes, “I myself, an old man without anyone, was dying of love. But I also realized that the contrary was true as well: I would not have traded the delights of

my suffering for anything in the world” (Márquez 84). The Narrator realizes the worth of his situation, even when the consequences may be fatal.

With their interests peaked by sentimental aunts, courtier poets, and romantic writings, Florentino, Cayetano, and the Narrator are themselves conquered by Western love. The characters are taught to enjoy their un-satisfaction, and in doing so, they prolong a state of desire. A perpetual desire for more is dangerous, both in Western love and in colonial conquest. That Western love and colonial conquest share features in the first place begins the process of the novels: to inextricably and subtly intertwine the two seemingly unrelated topics, skillfully obscuring—but not covering—the danger of an insatiable colonialist appetite by placing it in a Western romantic context where insatiable appetites are viewed positively. The effect of this strategy softens the edge of critique and allows readers to enjoy the rich prose while at the same time, cast a critical eye on the parallel hungers of colonialism. With the trope of love, Márquez seeks to condemn Western traditions of longing as a risky influence to the colonialist mentality, and to continually seek that which is unattainable.

*Part II. Cultural Imperialism, or, the Great Colombian Melting Pot.*

Márquez makes a conscious effort to make his characters outgrow the toxic teachings of Western longing. By giving the characters a host of other cultures to choose from, he hopes that they will understand that Western culture—the culture of the colonizer—is only one of many cultures to choose from. But what Márquez did not realize is that as much as culture (like Western longing) can be taught, it can also be ingrained.

After Fermina's father discovers her love affair with Florentino, he takes her away for a long trip to make Fermina forget about him. On the night of their return, Lorenzo Daza makes her autonomy official: "Her father delegated to her the authority to run the house, and he did so with as much formality as if it I were a sacred rite. 'I turn over to you the keys to your life,' he said." (Márquez 97). As we will see later with the decline of the aristocracy, Lorenzo Daza's figurative language is purposeful, as the aristocracy and their locked houses are inseparable, both flourishing and dying together. Fermina treats the message with just as much seriousness. She is prepared to fall gracefully into married life, thinking of Florentino not as "the impossible sweetheart but as the certain husband to whom she belonged heart and soul" (Márquez 98). It would appear that Fermina has grown out of her cousin's teachings of Western sentimental love, ready to accept her new tangible role as wife. The phrase "impossible sweetheart" mercilessly exposes Western love at its core, and replaces it with the more stable and everyday phrase, "certain husband." We applaud Fermina for her sober maturity, and look forward to an organic love grown from experience rather than dictation. It seems that the dangerous colonial perpetuation of desire, along with the novel's tradition of "teaching" emotions such as romance, is crumbling in the face of adolescent maturity and decision.

But the reunion is just as tangled in the saccharine sentiments of Western love as it was when they were apart. Yes, the written correspondence of Florentino and Fermina "stopped being a

concert of intentions and illusory promises and became methodical and practical and more intense than ever. They set dates, established means, pledged their lives to their mutual determination to marry...as soon as they were together again” (Márquez 88). And yet, in spite of these claims, the lovers make a rather major oversight— forgetting to arrange a method of communication upon Fermina’s arrival, ironically because they were too busy sending love letters planning out the imaginary date and means of the rest of their hypothetical married lives. Instead of falling gracefully into womanhood, Fermina stumbles.

In the marketplace scene, Fermina’s immaturity and subsequent ties to Western romance are exposed. Márquez narrates the marketplace scene much like the vendors sell their products—with false, superficial bravado:

She paid no attention to the urgings of the snake charmers who offered her a syrup for eternal love...or to the false Indian who tried to sell her a trained alligator...she laughed at her own laughter when she saw herself in the full-length mirror in The Golden Wire disguised as a woman from Madrid, with a comb in her hair and a fan painted with flowers...She sampled an Alicante sausage that tasted of licorice, and she bought two for Saturday’s breakfast... In the French cosmetics shop... they put a touch of the perfume from Paris behind her ear and gave her a breath tablet to use after smoking. (Márquez 99)

From false Indians, to costumes from Madrid, to Alicante sausages, to French cosmetics and perfume, the marketplace is an incubated culture of cultures. The false Indian, disguised woman from Madrid, and French cosmetics shop all serve as seductive costumes of culture, selling their product as if it is truth in the same way the colonizer sells his culture as superior. And though at first glance, Fermina appears to navigate expertly through the thoroughfare, her impromptu sampling is, in fact, a display of her susceptibility to be influenced by it. Márquez continues, “She played at

buying, it is true, but what she really needed she bought without hesitation, with an authority that allowed no one to think that she was doing so for the first time, for she was conscious that she was buying not only for herself but for him as well” (Márquez 100). Márquez concedes Fermina’s fake cosmopolitanism, but his next point is problematic because it shows the mindless, immediate consumption of goods, a Western tradition, in a positive light. At first, his tone appears praising to such decisive consumption and to her thoughtfulness of buying for Florentino also. But in the next passage, her shopping spree drops its worldly façade:

She sank into the hot clamor of the shoeshine boys and the bird sellers, the hawkers of cheap books and the witch doctors and the sellers of sweets who shouted over the din of the crowd: pineapple sweets for your sweetie, coconut candy is dandy, brown-sugar loaf for your sugar. But, indifferent to the uproar, she was captivated on the spot by a paper seller who was demonstrating magic inks, red inks with an ambiance of blood, inks of sad aspect for messages of condolence, phosphorescent inks for reading in the dark, invisible inks that revealed themselves in the light. She wanted all of them so she could amuse Florentino Ariza and astound him with her wit, but after several trials she decided on a bottle of gold ink. (Márquez 101)

Fermina successfully evaded the temptations of cheap slogans for Western love, truly saccharine advertisements for a kind of love that is just as sweet and empty. But in choosing the ink color for Florentino, Fermina has picked perhaps the greatest sugar-coated item of Western love—gold ink to write letters with. She may be choosing the perfect sweat-proof sheets for their marriage bed, but she is still caught up in the romance of long-distance communication! Never mind the option that she can astound Florentino with her wit verbally—her first thought is to do so by letter. Clearly, Fermina still functions under the rules she has been taught from other cultures: In this case, the

Western tradition of longing love letters, and from the marketplace, the chosen products themselves. Only now, she goes by these mantras with the full (and erroneous) confidence that she has freed herself from listening to others. Appiah shakes his head, and we remember his warning, “You will find parts of the truth everywhere and the whole truth nowhere. The deepest mistake is to think that your little shard of mirror can reflect the whole” (Appiah 8). Little does she realize, Fermina samples other cultures not as a wisely distant third party, but as a sponge, too agreeable and too malleable to the forms of other cultures. Furthermore, Fermina’s choice of gold ink rather than any other color parallels the colonists’ love of real gold, and their romantic motive for the colonization of the New World.

At least Florentino subscribes to the notions of Western love with steadfast consistency. Formulaic to Western love, Florentino has idealized the object of his affections. So much so, that when he first spots her at the market, he is stunned that no one sees what he sees:

To him she seemed so beautiful, so seductive, so different from ordinary people, that he could not understand why no one was as disturbed as he by the clicking of her heels on the paving stones, why no one else’s heart was wild with the breeze stirred by her veils, why everyone did not go mad with the movements of her braid...but he did not dare approach her for fear of destroying the spell. (Márquez 100)

Again, the seduction of distance, longing, and perpetuation of the spell of the exotic is more powerful than the seduction of Fermina’s actual beauty. Eventually, he does approach her, when the desire to speak to her becomes too much, using a phrase leftover from their letter-writing days, “This is not the place for a crowned goddess” (Márquez 102).

Here, we finally see Fermina mature and articulate her own conception of what love is, “instead of the commotion of love, she felt the abyss of disenchantment. In an instant the magnitude

of her own mistake was revealed to her, and she asked herself, appalled, how she could have nurtured such a chimera in her heart for so long and with so much ferocity” (Márquez 102). The “commotion” of cultures from the marketplace finally dies down, replaced by a quieter, but more sober, “abyss” of disillusionment. She is disgusted by how enthusiastically she worshipped the illusions of Western love, and so her disillusionment takes a positive spin. We applaud Fermina for realizing that her shard did not reflect the whole, as Appiah would say.

What is eerie about this scene is not Fermina’s sudden change of heart, but rather the way she comes out of the trance of Western teaching. The din of cultural imperialism erupting from the marketplace initially causes Fermina to digress to Western longing, but it is the quiet courtship of Western longing (and Florentino’s timely, archaic appearance) that brings her to her senses. Fermina says to Florentino in disgust, “No please. Forget it” (Márquez 102). Western longing undoes itself precisely through its rather clumsy presence amongst other cultures, presenting itself as the best (thus exposing its worseness in the process) when, in reality, it is simply one of many enticing and gimmicky sales pitches in the marketplace.

In *Of Love and Other Demons*, Márquez makes a serious critique of cultural imperialism, ordering fatal consequences when characters dismiss African culture as demonic possession. From the start of the novel, we learn that Sierva María is a cultural contradiction— born white, raised in the African courtyard of the slaves, but brought up by a woman who embraced both cultures:

Dominga de Adviento, a formidable black woman who ruled the house with an iron fist until the night before her death, was the link between these two worlds. Tall and bony, and possessed of an almost clairvoyant intelligence, it was she who had reared Sierva María.

Dominga de Adviento became a Catholic without renouncing her Yoruban beliefs, and she



practiced both religions at the same time, and at random. Her soul was healthy and at peace, she said, because what she did not find in one faith was there in the other. (Márquez 11)

From this passage, we learn that Catholicism is associated with the world of Whites, and Yoruban beliefs with the world of Africans. We learn that the woman who brought up Sierva was strong, kind, and tolerant—the true maternal figure in Sierva’s life. In the same way Fermina shops for what she wants from different cultures, Dominga de Adviento chooses what to believe from each faith. But in spite of Dominga de Adviento’s own religious hybridity, Sierva gravitates toward African traditions, as the narrator confirms, “Transplanted to the courtyard of the slaves, Sierva María learned to dance before she could speak, learned three African languages at the same time, learned to drink rooster’s blood before breakfast and to glide past Christians unseen and unheard, like an incorporeal being” (Márquez 42). Already, Sierva is othered from Christianity even though she is white.

Her parents, the Marquis and Bernarda, remain remarkably unaware of the transformation that takes place during her adolescence, and sooner mistake her habits for evil than for African:

Their relationship [between Bernarda and Sierva] reached a crisis when Bernarda awoke in the small hours of the morning, dying of thirst brought on by excesses of cacao, and found one of Sierva María’s dolls at the bottom of the large water jar. She did not think it was really a simple doll floating in the water, but something horrifying: a murdered doll.

Convinced that Sierva María had cast an evil African spell on her, she decided that the two of them could not live in the same house. The Marquis attempted a timid mediation, and she cut him off. . . . And so Sierva María returned to the slave women’s shack. (Márquez 45)

Similar instances such as this one occur between Bernarda and Sierva, be it Sierva's quiet manner of walking, long unruly hair, or even just her gaze, as Bernarda sees in these characteristics "a certain phantasmal quality" (Márquez 44). In the convent, these paranoid conclusions continue, and several suppositions later, Sierva is diagnosed to be possessed by the demon, all because she was bitten by a rabid dog.

Alternatively, her parents' paranoid reaction to Sierva may also be read as a reflection of Old World paranoia about the New World. Of Bernarda, Márquez writes, "She trembled at the mere memory of the times she would turn around and find herself face to face with the inscrutable eyes of the languid creature in filmy tulle, whose untamed hair now reached to the back of her knees" (Márquez 44). By calling Sierva "the languid creature in filmy tulle," Bernarda is othering Sierva using animalistic imagery, as someone not from the Old World, but rather a dangerous creature of the New World. Sierva becomes a ghostly figure reminding authority figures of their moral failure, someone that those authorities have dehumanized to assuage their sense of responsibility. And yet, the Old World still seems to be seduced by the exotic and the unknown, as Sierva's eyes are described as temptingly "inscrutable."

The Marquis has a single quality of redemption in that he sincerely loves Sierva. When she is bitten by the rabid dog and whispers of the plague are rampant, Bernarda and the Marquis come to terms with their true characters: "For him [the Marquis] the matter was clear. He always believed he loved his daughter, but the fear of rabies obliged the Marquis to admit to himself that this was a lie for the sake of convenience. Bernarda, on the other hand, did not even ask herself the question, for she knew very well she did not love the girl..." (Márquez 16). In this passage, the Marquis takes ownership of Sierva by calling her "his daughter," while Bernarda does not,

calling Sierva “the girl.” In this way, the Marquis displays a type of colonist’s love, seeking to “love” her by improving her quality of life.

And in the only way a colonist knows how, he does just that. “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. He attempted almost everything except asking himself whether this was the way to make her happy” (Márquez 47). Here, the narrator injects his own judgment in the situation with the phrase, “He attempted almost everything except...” condemning the Marquis’ rash antidotes to make his daughter happy. The Marquis’ unwillingness to understand her African culture is a multi-layered issue that I will explore further in Part V., but in summary, we must not judge the Marquis too harshly— the Marquis cannot embrace Sierva’s African culture because he fears Africans, and an uprising of his slaves because of his low status as an American-born noble.

But before any proper form of loving occurs, Sierva María is sent to a convent, where the one person who wins her affection is the sickly, awkward Cayetano Delaura. Against all odds, such a romance flourishes and becomes one of few happy foregrounds amidst the rather austere backdrop of the convent. In only their second meeting, Delaura begins to break the barrier to Sierva’s soul: “...her humor changed. She cooperated when Delaura treated the painful raw spots on her back, and paid attention to him for the first time when she saw his bandaged hand” (Márquez 87). Once he confesses his love to her, their relationship begins to take on a familiar, domesticated routine: “In the still waters of their passion they also began to experience the tedium of everyday love. She kept the cell clean and neat for the moment he arrived with all the naturalness of a husband returning home” (Márquez 128). For an instant, the reader is taken away from the harsh deprivations of the

convent and transported to a scene that may be a modest imitation of the married life of Fermina and Dr. Urbino.

Why does Sierva accept the pasty, nervous priest and not her loving, injured father, the Marquis? The Marquis made a sincere effort, albeit belated, to repair the relationship between father and daughter. But it lacked cultural understanding, and it imposed cultural imperialism. Cayetano Delaura, on the other hand, is fearless when it comes to African culture. Using free indirect discourse, both the narrator and Delaura deny the legitimacy of the so-called demonic events that occur in the convent:

“We have an abundance of proof,” said the Bishop. “or have you not read the acta?”

Yes. Delaura had studied them with great care, and they were more useful for understanding the mentality of the Abbess than the condition of Sierva María. They had exorcised the places where the girl had been on the morning she entered the convent, as well as everything she had touched...They said the girl had enjoyed quartering a goat whose throat she slit with her own hands, and had eaten its testicles for languages that allowed her to talk with Africans from any nation better than they could among themselves, or with any sort of animal. The day after her arrival, the eleven captive macaws that had adorned the garden for twenty years died for no apparent reason. She had charmed the servants with demonic songs sung in voices other than her own...

“I believe, however,” said Delaura, “that what seems demonic to us are the customs of the blacks, learned by the girl as a consequence of the neglected condition in which her parents kept her.” (Márquez 90-91).

With the simple affirmative statement “yes,” Márquez cleverly layers the free indirect discourse between Delaura and the narrator to mock the acta, which is a discourse in and of itself. In same

way that colonialism invents its own discourse to subjugate the behavior of indigenous peoples, free indirect discourse allows Delaura to communicate more directly to the readers, listing the Abbess' unreasonably paranoid reactions to a series of unrelated events that Sierva happened to be present for. The long paragraph of so-called "evidence" is shot down by Delaura's single-sentence and clearheaded conclusion that Sierva's behavior is simply a natural display of her African talents.

Cayetano's love transcends cultural boundaries between Catholicism and African Yoruban culture without claiming one is right or wrong. He is truly cosmopolitan, attempting to understand Sierva's African culture without necessarily agreeing. For example, in their first meeting, Delaura presents Sierva with a sandalwood rosary—not to replace her African necklaces, but to wear over them (Márquez 85). Delaura's cultural tolerance unites him with Sierva, and this is the true reason why she accepts him and not her father.

In the denouement, cultural toleration makes a second appearance in the form of Father Tomás de Aquino de Narvèez, a kind, elderly priest, who vows to cure Sierva of her demons through peaceful means. His first act of benevolence acknowledges and accepts her African upbringing: "Sierva María was still half asleep when the priest said in Yoruban: 'I have brought your necklaces'...As he hung them around Sierva María's neck, he named and defined each one in African languages: the red and white of the love and blood of Changó, the red and black of the life and death of Elegguà, the seven aqua and pale blue beads of Yemayà" (Márquez 131-132). For the second time in the novel, the Church gains a human face through multiculturalism; first with Cayetano, and now, with Father Aquino. Father Aquino is the first character in the novel to identify the meaning of Sierva's necklaces, and though he himself is not Yoruban, the fact that he has knowledge of this other culture is cosmopolitan. The darkness of the Church convent is enlightened through reason, as Father Aquino explains to the Abbess that their analysis of her demons was

inaccurate: "...he took apart the arguments in the acta and proved to the Abbess that none of them was conclusive," thus finishing Delaura's work.

Márquez continues, "He informed her that the demons of America were the same as those of Europe but that summoning them and controlling them were different. He explained the four common rules for recognizing demonic possession, and helped her (Sierva) see how easy it was for the demon to manipulate these so that the opposite would be believed" (Márquez 133). Father Aquino's remark that America and Europe have the same demons with different ways of conquering them speaks to Appiah's thick and thin values, and here again we see Father Aquino making a hybrid of love as both a thick and a thin value. That all cultures share universal problems is a thin value—that we have different ways of conquering them is a thick value. If they work together, these values have the potential to liberate the characters from their colonial tendencies.

But Father Aquino dies. "At eight o'clock, with the sun already hot, the servant girl went to the cistern for water, and there was Father Aquino, floating on his back and wearing the breeches he kept on when he slept. It was a sad, widely mourned death, and a mystery that was never solved, which the Abbess proclaimed as definitive proof of demonic animosity toward her convent" (Márquez 135). His tragic death, along with the fate of the Marquis to rot away on a path leading to nowhere, are the ruthless plot devices Márquez uses to critique cultural imperialism, and the consequences of not making an effort to understand other cultures. We see this most clearly in the aquatic nature of Father Aquino's death, floating on his back like a stagnant ship, as a morbid subversion to the ships of the Old World, drowning in its own pool of exclusionary logic. The fact that the Abbess still has the gall to attribute Father Aquino's death to "demonic animosity" takes on a whole new level of ridiculousness to her close-minded mentality. Furthermore, we might parallel the fact that the cause of death was never identified to the similar oblivious and shortsighted nature

of the characters in the novel who do not embrace other cultures and do not believe that they should. They are stuck in a cultural imperialist thinking, and blame all consequences of this thinking on demons.

The Marquis also dies. Once Sierva leaves, the Marquis deteriorates, in every sense of the word. His desperate momentum to recover from the decay of nobility is halted by the awful stillness of his past and present loves. Horrified by rumors that Cayetano's satanic appetites impregnated Sierva with a two-headed child, the Marquis sought refuge in returning to Bernarda. In one declarative statement, it appears that the Marquis has come to save their marriage, and the hope of the novel: "I have come for you" (Márquez 140). But again, Márquez rips away any sense of hope when Bernarda reveals that she never loved him: "Bernarda opened her heart so that he could see what was there in the light of day. She told him how her father had sent her to him, using the pretext of herrings and pickles...how they had planned the cold, certain move of conceiving Sierva María and trapping him for life" (Márquez 141). The Marquis' illusions of love are shattered, and his death parallels the quiet and solemn manner that the aristocracy faded away with: "He stood without haste, put the chair back in its place, and left the way he had come, not saying good-bye, and not carrying a light. All that remained of him—a skeleton eaten away by turkey buzzards—was found two summers later on a path leading nowhere" (Márquez 142). This was his punishment for rejecting cosmopolitanism and perpetuating colonialism. The Marquis was doomed to a life of unhappiness even before Sierva's birth because of his choice to perpetuate slavery and remain deaf to his daughter's African upbringing. The fact that he was found on a path leading to nowhere marks the point in time when colonialism has reached a dead end.

The Marquis' death was an example of a man who truly loved his daughter, but did not understand her culture; and Father Aquino's death was an example of what happens when a society does not listen to someone who wishes to understand, someone who is a true cosmopolitan.

In *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, cultural imperialism reveals itself in the figure of the scholar. Just as the characters learned to love longing, scholarship and the educational institution play an important role in cultural imperialism, as the colonist educates the conquered about his culture. Márquez's nameless Narrator is instead labeled with the elite title, "the scholar." From the start of the book, we know him as "my sad scholar" (Márquez 4), as Rosa Cabarcas refers to him. Even the taxi cab driver refers to him as "Don Scholar" (Márquez 20). At one point, Rosa Cabarcas also refers to him as "Maestro" (Márquez 23). The use of these pedantic titles may be an attempt to offset the Narrator's sliminess as a ninety-year-old man who is Client of the Year in the Red Light district. But we learn very quickly that the Narrator earns these titles well. He is a writer. He quotes Cicero. He is a professor of Spanish and Latin. A true fan of Bach, Chopin, Franck, Schumann, and Bruckner. Once, the narrator expresses a hyperbolic, almost laughable, amount of shame as he reprimands himself for mixing up two sonatas at a concert:

I was so dazzled I congratulated them for a sonata by Schumann they hadn't played, and someone corrected me in public in an unpleasant fashion. The impression that I had confused the two sonatas out of simple ignorance was sown on the local musical scene and made worse by the muddled explanation with which I tried to correct it the following Sunday in my review of the concert. (Márquez 45-46)

All of the Narrator's interests in books and literature come straight from the heart of European culture (Western culture, as I define it in this paper).



Raymond Leslie Williams believes that the Narrator's hyper-association with upper-class Western culture is a method of critique, "By characterizing this often pathetic old man as an effete and obsessed disciple of classical music and literatures as well as a speaker of Latin, he creates a light satire on one of the venerable institutions dear to the upper crust of Colombian society, as well as those in the middle and upper-middle classes who wish to emulate them" (Williams 130).

Williams suggests that Márquez is gently critiquing elitism of the upper class of Colombian society, and their cult-like following of "venerable institutions". More importantly, Williams suggests that Márquez critiques those in the middle and upper-middle classes—like the Narrator—who wish to emulate them. I would go further to say that Márquez is critiquing a specific aspect of what they want to emulate—upper-class Western culture. For Márquez, it's silly that the upper-middle classes do not develop their own tastes. It's even sillier that the upper class calls itself cultured just because its taste is foreign. This is true cultural imperialism, when indigenous people are not forced to digest the culture of their oppressors, but when they *want* to, because they feel it is more cultured to do so. Using the Narrator's name-dropping habits to his advantage, Márquez lays out his true agenda to criticize this psychological strain of cultural imperialism.

Why is this important? Because it spreads, from upper-middle classes to the lower classes. The Narrator believes himself cultured—though he himself has been culturally imperialized—and he feels he does Delgadina a favor by playing Mozart while she sleeps:

I had replaced the old radio with a shortwave model that I kept tuned to a classical music program so that Delgadina would learn to sleep to Mozart's quartets, but one night I found it turned to a station that specialized in popular boleros. It was her preference, no doubt, and I accepted this without sorrow, for I had cultivated the same preference in my better days.

(Márquez 70-71)

Remember; the Narrator has not had any verbal communication with Delgadina in all of their meetings—he still does not know her real name. And yet, through education (cultural imperialism) the Narrator communicates to her. In this scene, they “discuss” music, and how the Narrator prefers Mozart while Delgadina prefers boleros. He tolerates her taste, as Appiah would applaud, and adds that he had the same taste in his better days. But what he really means to say is, his worse days, when he was not as cultured.

Could it be possible that cultural imperialism crosses time as well? That “uncultured” youth like Delgadina have more authentically Colombian tastes than the older snobs whose selective hearing only allows them to listen to Mozart? It is difficult to say. The Narrator may feel that he is more educated and cultured, but I will argue in a later section that he is outdated and archaic in every way. In spite of the generations that separate the Narrator and Delgadina, the cultural imperialism that flows through the novel is deep. So deep, that it is the only way the Narrator maintains communication with Delgadina.

In all three novels, cultural imperialism weaves itself into the very fabric of romance—for better or for worse. At times, cultural imperialism is so deeply entrenched in the minds of the characters, that some, like Fermina and the Narrator, do not even realize that they have been culturally imperialized, even worse, believing that they are the ones who can impose culture on others. In other cases, characters like Cayetano and Father Aquino rise above close-mindedness in favor of a more cosmopolitan point of view, though Márquez rewards no one in an effort to teach his characters a lesson. While the characters fight their own individual battles with the topic, the novels as a whole condemn cultural imperialism.

***Part III. Age Differences and the “Restorative Perversion”.***

Indeed, the moral implications of cultural imperialism are hardly debatable. Far more morally gray is the argument of age. Just as Fermina’s coming-of-age indicated a shift in her knowledge of other cultures, the old and the young in Márquez’s novels play a symbolic role as the Old World and the New World. In Márquez’s world, striking age differences between lovers (and subsequent friction between Old World and New World) are the norm. In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Florentino’s affair with twelve-year old América Vicuña is his last before reuniting with Fermina. In *Demons*, Cayetano is thirty-five and Sierva María is only twelve. And of course, in *Whores*, the Narrator is a whopping ninety years old in contrast to his freshly turned fourteen-year-old whore. On this subject of age differences, the novels do a suspiciously skillful job of gliding lightly over the subject. I could not help thinking of *Lolita*, and this passage when Humbert Humbert desperately declares that his love for Lolita was more than a physical infatuation:

...there she was with her ruined looks and her adult, rope-veined narrow hands ...  
 hopelessly worn at seventeen, with that baby, dreaming already in her of becoming a big shot and retiring around A.D. 2020—and I looked and looked at her, and knew as clearly as I know I am to die, that I loved her more than anything I had ever seen or imagined on earth, or hoped for anywhere else... (Nabokov 277)

Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* is an experiment in Dostoyevskian defense gone right: a felon of unspeakable crimes, slightly manic yet completely logical, testifies to the audience, swearing here that he truly loved Lolita, and would continue to love her far beyond her nymphetic existence. He is genuine. He is human. And he is disturbingly convincing. Humbert is a colonizer of the Old World masquerading (through good prose) as a cosmopolitan of the New World. He knows well lots of different cultures, but not to appreciate and understand them and respect them, but to exploit them.

In “The Dangers of Gullible Reading: Narrative as Seduction in *Love in the Time of Cholera*,” Keith Booker writes:

The link to Nabokov helps to clarify this ongoing attack on gullibility. Humbert Humbert is a pervert, a rapist, and a murderer, and we are reminded repeatedly in *Lolita* of his mental and physical cruelty. Yet he is also a master of language who constructs a narrative so charming and brilliant that many readers are seduced into sympathy with his position and are able to accept his claims that his relationship with Lolita was purely aesthetic. (Booker, *Critical Insights*, 313)

Florentino Ariza, Cayetano Delaura, and the Narrator may not have as whetted an appetite for all young girls as Humbert Humbert, but their romances with young girls raise the same questions of morality. Are these old men taking advantage of these young girls? Is it truly love? Or a cleverly spun narrative? In postcolonial jargon, is it a form of exploitation?

We begin with Florentino and twelve-year-old América Vicuña, his last romantic relationship before resuming his quest for Fermina. Mark Millington suggests that Florentino is not genuine in his motives. His façade of innocence, Millington says, echoes *Lolita* at its core, “It is worth reminding ourselves that Florentino is an old man in his seventies and América a girl of twelve. The novel simply bypasses the import of what is at stake here and aims to cover over the moral (even criminal) quagmire with deft phrases and witty invention” (Millington 120). To respond to Millington, Florentino’s defense is, ironically, one of purification. In choosing to have an affair with a schoolgirl, he seeks to rid himself of the impurities of his past, as Márquez writes, “After so many years of calculated loves, the mild pleasure of innocence had the charm of a restorative perversion” (Márquez 272). The phrase “restorative perversion” does not cover up the moral quagmire with humorous euphemisms as Millington says, but turns it on its side, as if to say

Florentino has a perverted fetish in seeking youth—and yet, he is moral in seeking purity and redemption. The true moral gray area on the topic of age difference is not the age difference itself, but rather the “perverted” desire of the old men—the Old World—to seek redemptive purity in young girls—the New World.

In the same way that cultural imperialism crept into his romance with Fermina as I argued in the last section, I argue that postcolonial guilt is creeping—rather subliminally—into Florentino’s romance with América. In the first place, her name is “America,” a country founded upon the driving out of indigenous peoples and the filling of land with British. It is a name given by the Old World to the New World. By romancing a young America, the novel seeks to heal the guilt of colonizing this country through the same restorative perversion Florentino experiences on a personal level. The real perversion at stake here is not the age gap, but a desire to become pure again. It is an opportunity to redeem the Old World and to establish a new covenant with God. In this way, the young girls featured in these three novels serve as colonial motives for embracing the New World, new cultures, and, since they are old men, new times. In *The Empire Writes Back: Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, authors Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin agree, “Post-colonial theory...has begun to deal with the problems of transmuting time into space, with the present struggling out of the past, and, like much recent post-colonial literature, it attempts to construct a future” (Ashcroft 36). Using age difference, Márquez reconciles the space between colonialism and postcolonialism, adding a bridge that old men (the relics of corrupt colonization) can walk across to achieve a state of redemption in young girls (the youth of the New World).

Before Florentino hears of Urbino’s death and his romance with América is still alive, Márquez writes, “Florentino Ariza loved her [América] as he had loved so many other casual women in his long life, but he loved her with more anguish than any other, because he was certain

he would be dead by the time she finished secondary school” (Márquez 274). In addition to purifying himself, Florentino adds another defense to his case: the age gap adds legitimacy to their romance simply because there is an added element of urgency—a ticking clock. He must love her more than the others, because if he does not, he will pass away and she will live the rest of her life with the same mediocre love he gave to the other older, faceless women who passed through his life. Florentino’s perverse desire to be pure again is given urgency because Florentino is old and decaying, just as colonization is old and decaying in the novel.

Unlike *Love*, in *Demons*, age difference is more of an afterthought between Cayetano and Sierva. The kind of distance that is highlighted more is that Cayetano is a priest and Sierva is his patient to be exorcised. Nevertheless, Márquez acknowledges the gap:

On the fourth night, a Saturday, he spent several hours helping her kill the lice that were proliferating again in the cell. When her hair was clean and combed, he felt the icy sweat of temptation once more. He lay down next to Sierva María, his breathing harsh and uneven, and he found her limpid eyes a hand’s breadth from his own. They both became confused. He, praying in fear, did not look away. She dared to speak:

“How old are you?”

“I turned thirty-six in March,” he said.

She scrutinized him.

“You’re an old man,” she said with a touch of derision. She stared at the lines on his forehead and added with the pitilessness of her years: “A wrinkled old man.” He took it with good humor. (Márquez 124)

By including the day of the week Cayetano came to help kill the lice in her cell, Márquez highlights the unlikely domesticity these couples fall under when they begin to reciprocate their affections.

Later, Márquez would refer to this as “the tedium of everyday love” (Márquez 128). But though their rituals have normalcy, similar to the Narrator in *Memories*, the realization of the age gap creates momentary confusion. With the phrase, “She dared to speak” followed by the question of his age, Sierva has broken the novel’s silence—until now, their age gap has not been brought to the fore. After we learn that Cayetano is thirty-six, Sierva’s insensitive remarks are childish enough to make us feel the age gap widen even more. But unlike the other two novels, purity and corruption are assigned to the wrong ages—the young girl is viewed as corrupt and unclean, one who needs to be exorcised, while the old man, Cayetano, is viewed as pure and devout, one who will save her. How then, does restorative perversion function?

In a double negation of evil, Cayetano’s desire for Sierva cancels out the corruption of the Church. By succumbing to his temptation for Sierva, a twofold sin by count of 1) her demonic possession and 2) her young age, Cayetano is, counter intuitively, returning to a state of purity... a purity away from the corruption of the Church. Sierva’s demonic “possession” also lends her character to become a representation of indigeneity in the eyes of the Old World, so that part of Cayetano’s sin (in the eyes of the colonists) is seeking a true and equal relationship with indigenous people. When Abrenuncio, a doctor, tries to convince Cayetano of the evil of his passion, Cayetano recoils: “Abrenuncio tried to dissuade him. He said that love was an emotion *contra natura* that condemned two strangers to a base and unhealthy dependence, and the more intense it was, the more ephemeral. But Cayetano did not hear him. He was obsessed with fleeing as far as possible from the oppression of the Christian world” (Márquez 145). Father Cayetano Delaura flees from his own world in a postcolonial twist of unhomeliness, when an individual no longer feels like he has a home or sense of cultural belonging. He even calls it an “oppressive” world, as he begins to identify more and more with the African, subjugated class of Sierva.

In *Memories*, the Narrator has done away with euphemisms and hesitations, and in the first sentence, tells the reader exactly what he wants: “a night of wild love with an adolescent virgin” (Márquez 3). From the beginning, the deal is already corrupt. Rosa Carbarcas has many prominent businessmen and politicians as clients, so she is able to use underage girls in her business without getting in trouble, and for a higher profit than legal whores. The deal is dirty, but on the night of his first meeting with her, the Narrator’s affections are pure:

There was no escape. I went into the room, my heart in confusion, and saw the girl sleeping in the enormous bed for hire, as naked and helpless as the day she was born . . . Her newborn breasts still seemed like a boy’s, but they appeared full to bursting with a secret energy that was ready to explode. The best part of her body were her large, silent-stepping feet with toes as long and sensitive as fingers . . . It was impossible to imagine what her face was like under the paint applied with a heavy hand, the thick layer of rice powder with two daubs of rouge on her cheeks, the false lashes, her eyebrows and lids smoky with kohl, her lips augmented by a chocolate glaze. But the adornments and cosmetics could not hide her character: the haughty nose, heavy eyebrows, intense lips. I thought: A tender young fighting bull.

(Márquez 25-26)

The juxtaposition of a small girl in a large whore’s bed magnifies the girl’s innocence. The Narrator’s disdain for makeup and other unnatural beauty enhancements continues throughout the entire novel. It may speak also to the Narrator’s embracement of a beauty other than Western beauty—his attraction to a girl’s face just as it is, pure and primal, and without makeup—a restorative perversion in that he desires a girl, but a girl without makeup. Here, we see another instance where an appreciation of a different culture helps to close the obscenity of the age gap. The



reader is more understanding of the Narrator's attraction to the girl when the narrator articulates his disdain for the corrupt—Western makeup.

It is possible that the Narrator's non-sexual attraction to the girl is, in part, an attempt to relive his failed wedding and, furthermore, the Old World once again seeking redemption in the New World. Following suit with *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *Of Love and Other Demons*, the Narrator also has a traumatic experience with love in his past—he leaves at the altar Ximena Ortiz, the daughter of the wealthy Palomar de Castro family, on his wedding day:

In the middle of the night I began to count the passage of the hours on the cathedral clock, until the seven dreadful bells when I was supposed to be at the church. The telephone began to ring at eight, long, tenacious, unpredictable rings for more than an hour. Not only did I not answer: I did not breathe... by eleven the house was left in the bristling silence that follows great catastrophes. Then I wept for her and for me, and I prayed with all my heart never to see her again in all my days. (Márquez 37)

Without fully acknowledging it, we learn that the Narrator was not in love with Ximena, as he confesses (rather tactlessly) to his love-struck servant, Damiana, one day, “I felt a weight in my chest. I've never fallen in love, I told her” (Márquez 39).

And so, once he finally does fall in love with Delgadina at the twilight of his life, the Narrator's mission is to conquer that love. Mad with desire to see her, when the Narrator tries to find Delgadina during the daytime, he realizes, “I would not be able to recognize Delgadina awake and dressed, nor could she know me if she had never seen me. In an act of madness, I crocheted twelve pairs of blue and pink infant's booties in three days, trying to give myself the courage not to hear or sing or think about the songs that reminded me of her” (Márquez 86). The Narrator's coping mechanism is one that dates back to his engagement with Ximena, as he and Ximena knitted more

than fifty pairs of booties for their future children (Márquez 36). The “her” that the Narrator refers to is intentionally ambiguous— on a first level, it implies Delgadina. But on a deeper level, it could also mean Ximena. In this way, the Narrator’s restorative perversion lies in the projection of his trauma unto Delgadina, hoping to redeem his failed wedding in the same way the Old World tries to fit itself into the New World.

Unlike Florentino and Cayetano, the Narrator’s Father-figure role to Delgadina is made even more morally ambiguous due to the unequal social relations between himself and Delgadina, between the wealthy and working class. During their first night together, the Narrator sings into her ear, without explanation, “*Angels surround the bed of Delgadina.*” (Márquez 28). On their second night together, in an act of performative utterance, he officially christens the nameless girl himself as he wipes off her sweat:

...I began to dry her with a towel while I sang in a whisper the song about Delgadina, the king’s youngest daughter, wooed by her father. As I dried her she was showing me her sweaty flanks to the rhythm of my song: *Delgadina, Delgadina, you will be my darling love.* It was a limitless pleasure, for she began to perspire again on one side as I finished drying the other, which meant the song might never end. *Arise, arise, Delgadina, and put on your skirt of silk,* I sang into her ear. At the end, when the king’s servants find her dead of thirst in her bed, it seemed to me that my girl had been about to wake when she heard the name.

Then that’s who she was: Delgadina. (Márquez 56)

It is the first moment in the novel when the Delgadina name is explained. But the narrator leaves out major details of the story. Delgadina comes from the Mexican folk song, “La Delgadina.” It tells the story of a girl named Delgadina, who goes to mass with her father, a king. The king tells her of his longing to marry her, but she responds saying, “God in Heaven and the sovereign queen forbid, this

offense to God and treason to my mother.”<sup>14</sup> Delgadina then locks her up with the help of his eleven servants. Delgadina spends days locked in a tower and pleads to her father for water. By the time her father sends the eleven servants to give Delgadina water in a gold cup, they find her dead with her arms crossed and her mouth open. Delgadina ascends into heaven, and her father goes crazy.

It is a morbid song to follow when you're ninety-years-old and looking for inspiration to tame and win the body of a fourteen-year-old. The most obvious reason the narrator selected this song is to parallel forbidden longing—the king for his daughter, and the old writer for a young whore. But perhaps the more nuanced reason has to do with Delgadina's parallel dependency. Just as the girl in the story needs her father for water, and subsequently, survival, Delgadina needs the Narrator's money to continue living—her day job sewing buttons is not enough to pay the bills. The Narrator senses this reliance and enjoys it, using the possessive “my” for the first time in the phrase “my girl had been about to wake,” and assuming a Father-figure role each night they are together, beautifying her room and buying her jewelry. This christening is problematic. The Narrator does not actually know her name, nor does he want to know (68). He gives her a new identity of his own liking, completely ignoring what her identity and name actually are. Thus, the Narrator's relationship with Delgadina becomes more than a necessary dependence, but also a sort of conquering and renaming.

In Márquez's works, romance is filled with old men falling for much younger women. Through these romances, Florentino, Cayetano, and the Narrator all find a certain restorative perversion that, at least to them, absolves their sins and gives them an inner peace. Florentino, with América, allows him to forget Fermina and the other hundreds of women he slept with; Cayetano, with Sierva, helps him escape the oppression of the Christian world; and the Narrator, with

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<sup>14</sup> Mendoza, Vicente T. *El Romance Español Y El Corrido Mexicano ; Estudio Comparativo*. México: Ediciones De La Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1939. Print.

Delgadina, helps him heal the trauma of a previous marriage. Cayetano's relationship with Sierva is different from the other two relationships in the sense that Delgadina is not considered pure by the Church's standards—but since the Church is corrupt, the novel's solution is for Cayetano to combat that corruption using double negation, by falling in love with the Church's demonically possessed prisoner. As relics of the Old World, habits of colonialism sneak back into even the sincerest of romances with these “New World girls,” as all three of these romances involve some form of conquering and exploitation of their youth. Thus, the perversity lies not in the age gap, but rather, in old men's desires to become pure again, a symbol of colonization wishing to redeem itself by seeking purity in young girls, but also a realization of colonization's short-comings as it sometimes regresses.

*Part IV. The Nostalgia of Colonialism and the Destruction of Memory.*

Adorno said it best: “‘Coming to terms with the past’ does not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through an act of clear consciousness. It suggests, rather, wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory” (Adorno 115). Though Adorno meant this statement in the negative way, I wish to spin forgetfulness in the positive direction. In *Cholera*, after hearing of the details of America’s suicide—how she failed her final examinations, drunk a flask of laudanum, and left no explanatory note—the narrator writes of Florentino, “The only thing he could do to stay alive was not to allow himself the anguish of that memory. He erased it from his mind, although from time to time in the years that were left to him he would feel it revive, with no warning and for no reason, like the sudden pang of an old scar” (Márquez 336). Márquez’s use of prolepsis with “in the years that were left to him he would feel it revive...” assures the reader that Florentino would not forget about America even when Fermina finally accepted him. Thus, with his desire to forget, Florentino will remember forever—he feels an authentic guilt for breaking the heart of a young girl and for this young girl’s subsequent death.

It is difficult to remember something just as it was, and not as you imagine it was. That Florentino wanted to forget his relationship with America takes more ownership of the situation than any sort of nostalgia for a false past would have, simply because he knew he had done something wrong, and *wanted* to forget it. Nostalgia, on the other hand, does not even acknowledge that any wrong was done in the first place—it pays homage to the past as it is remembered, accurate or not. We might relate this thought to Michael Palencia-Roth’s musings on modern hermeneutic theory as “the common-sense notion that what we see depends on what we are prepared to see and that what we understand depends on what we already understand” (Roth 146). In postcolonial terms, the collapse of empire did not magically change the mindset of the colonizers to feel guilt for the past. While the sincere nostalgia for the Old World pervades these novels, this nostalgia is for a

false past, tampered with and glorified by guilty memories. Parodic nostalgia then comes to correct this mistake, subverting nostalgia into something laughable. In the end, it is the desire to forget—“the destruction of memory”—that takes the most ownership of the crimes of colonialism, simply because a desire to forget proves that the wrongdoing has been realized.

The reason why the old men in Márquez’s novels are vulnerable to regressing to colonial logic is one of sincere, yet dangerous, nostalgia. An admiration for and romanticization of the past clouds their judgments of their former corruption, stunting any chance of redemption to move forward to the postcolonial world. Particularly in matters of writing, there is no doubt that Márquez’s novels hold a certain kind of admiration for the customs of the past. In *Whores*, the Narrator confesses, “I still write in the romantic hand that Florina de Dios [the Narrator’s mother] taught me so I would not adopt the functionary’s handwriting of her husband...the newspaper ordered everyone to type in order to improve estimates of the text in the linotype’s lead and achieve greater accuracy in typesetting, but I never adopted that bad habit” (Márquez 32-33). The Narrator holds a blatant disdain for modern handwriting and typewriting, and this resistance is fueled by his nostalgia for the “romantic hand” taught to him by his mother. For the Narrator, his past is colored by pretty handwriting— in his memory, he conveniently pushes aside for the number of women he slept with to achieve Client of the Year, and the number of hearts he broke, including that of his servant, Damania.

The Narrator is an ancient colonial relic of the past, chasing the rest of his years to conquer both true love, and, in a larger sense, the modern postcolonial world:

The adolescents of my generation, greedy for life, forgot in body and soul about their hopes for the future until reality taught them that tomorrow was not what they had dreamed, and they discovered nostalgia. My Sunday columns were there, like an archeological relic

among the ruins of the past, and they realized they were not only for the old but also for the young who were not afraid of aging. (Márquez 39)

By rationalizing his columns as an “archeological relic among ruins of the past,” the Narrator is both the logic of colonialism and deterioration of it. We may say that the old he speaks of are the Spanish colonizers and their failed hopes, while the young are the select youth who wish to learn the strict ideals of colonialism. We notice that the nostalgia the Narrator mentions prevails through this text and the others, always haunting and always looking back. In this way, Márquez uses old age to curve linear time into an infinite loop. We see the old regime of colonialism struggling to fit in a neocolonialist world. Similar to the temporal restorative perversion, we see, again, the present struggling to come out of the past and attempting to construct a future.

Márquez also gives us serious retrospective contemplation in the form of prolepsis. As the complement to nostalgia, prolepsis and nostalgia work together to sidestep the horrors of the presently decaying colonial system. While nostalgia misapprehends the past, prolepsis arrogantly assumes the future. Prolepsis is the confident anticipation of a future event already accomplished, a sign of overconfidence, and perhaps fear (the bravado of the coward). It is the same arrogance as the deluded lover, Florentino. After his first successful matchmaking project, Florentino attempts to publish a *Lovers Companion* that details all the possible situations he and Fermina might be in and their projected solutions. “Years later, when Florentino Ariza had the resources to publish the book himself, it was difficult for him to accept the reality that love letters had gone out of fashion” (Márquez 172). In the same way the deluded lovers believed they were communicating with each other when neither was actually doing the writing, Márquez uses prolepsis to illustrate a delusional confidence for the future. Even in the future, the narrator tells us that Florentino will continue to hold on to a timeless, unhurried kind of courtship that required graceful words and cursive

handwriting. Graceful words are part of a delusional aesthetics that mask exploitation and the pursuit of the ownership of another.

In *Whores*, prolepsis illustrates a true nostalgia for the Narrator's first infatuation and final engagement with a woman named Ximena Ortiz. The daughter of a prominent noble family in Pradomar, the Narrator opens her door by mistake and accidentally intrudes on her afternoon nap:

Oh, excuse me, I managed to say, my heart in my mouth. She smiled, turned toward me with the grace of a gazelle, and showed me her entire body. The whole room felt saturated with her intimacy. Her nakedness was not absolute, for like Manet's Olympia, behind her ear she had a poisonous flower with orange petals, and she also wore a gold bangle on her right wrist and a necklace of tiny pearls. I imagined I would never see anything more exciting for as long as I lived, and today I can confirm that I was right. (Márquez 34)

Comparing her to a famous French painting from the nineteenth century, the Narrator glorifies Ximena in his memory. The tone is sincerely reverent, with sensuous words that communicate the Narrator's temptation—not to sully, but rather, to admire. The prolepsis in the final sentence implies that not even Delgadina can rival the excitement of seeing this woman for the first time. Unlike the Governor's Abyssinian slave, Ximena's nakedness is not absolute, and therefore, not painfully perfect—she wears a gold bangle on her right wrist, another reminder of colonial conquest and bondage. This detail, along with the necklace, flower, and her name, Olympia, taint Ximena as a common prostitute,<sup>15</sup> making her sensuality bearable (and imperfect) enough for the Narrator to revere her guilt-free, even in the present. What the Narrator fails to remember is Ximena's subsequent heartbreak and greater trauma after he broke off their wedding. The glorification of the

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<sup>15</sup> Gersh-Nesic, Beth. "Édouard Manet's Olympia." Smarthistory at Khan Academy, n.d. Web. 1 Mar. 2013. <<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/manet-olympia.html>>.



past makes for a false nostalgia that does nothing to redeem the Narrator of his sins, and on a greater level, colonialism of its sins.

In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, it is the setting that presents a genuine wistfulness for Spanish colonialism. Williams makes the argument that Márquez's decision to use Cartagena for the setting was a conscious effort to present the graceful decay of a city that once had colonial splendor:

The physical space of *El Amor* provides an ongoing reference to the Spanish colonial period, for much of the novel takes place within the city of Cartagena, surrounded by the protective defensive walls...originally erected to guard the wealth and inhabitants of the Spanish empire...The colonial city...seems to be a metaphor for the colonial and neocolonial mentalities that determine the characters' actions...In this retrograde and decadent setting, all the human relationships focusing on the body and the heart—not only the one between Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza—are doomed. (Williams 111-112)

With a backdrop that is sincerely nostalgic, Márquez creates even more temporal tension, as the present characters struggle to move forward while living in a city that wishes to hold onto the past.

In the midst of all this sincere nostalgia, Márquez's voice chimes in, even on this second satiric level: "you have to be careful not to fall into my trap." To understand the parodic turn nostalgia makes in *Cholera*, it is important to first understand its literary form. The novel's structure is based on a nineteenth-century form of writing called the *folletín*. Introduced as a method of publication in 1836, the *folletín* refers to both the fragmentation of a novel for publication in a newspaper or journal, as well as a style of writing. Elisa Martí-López's article, "The *Folletín*: Spain Looks to Europe," provides some typical characteristics of the *folletín*:

The writing, dictated by the fragmentation in the publishing process of the work, is regarded as episodic; the story, as punctuated by multiple intrigues, constant surprises, and

interruptions...action predominates over description...imagination over reality, and stock characters over psychologically differentiated ones. In these novels good and evil are clearly differentiated, moral certainties conveyed, and happy endings secured. (Martí-López 20)

Using this definition as a starting point, it appears that Márquez clearly follows several of these ingredients to create *Love in the Time of Cholera*, exaggerating them to create subversion. In *García Márquez*, Robin Fiddian studies *Love in the Time of Cholera*:

*Love in the Times of Cholera* imitates the *folletín* and produces a pastiche that is detailed, sustained, and, above all, knowing. As it proceeds along its eventful course, the narrative subverts or exaggerates one romantic formula after another, and creates effects of humour, bathos, irony and some disbelief. Yet, for all its parodic touches, *Love in the Times of Cholera* addresses serious themes of contemporary relevance including sexual emancipation, social conformity, moral and ideological short-sightedness, and the fragility of human happiness. (Fiddian 20)

The following hyperbolic examples make it clear that Márquez intends to shoot down the message of the *folletín* through satire.

Florentino Ariza's ability to write passionately is imprisoned in the art form of love letters. Márquez writes, "Florentino Ariza wrote everything with so much passion that even official documents seemed to be about love. His bills of lading were rhymed no matter how he tried to avoid it, and routine business letters had a lyrical spirit that diminished their authority" (Márquez 167). In this way, we see that Florentino is, literally, trapped in a romantic way of thinking—he rhymes without meaning to, and his writing has a "lyrical spirit" that cannot be taken seriously by his boss.

Nor by the reader. Once Florentino puts his love letter-writing skills to good use by match-making a girl and a boy (each using his services without knowing the other one was also), Márquez's criticism of old-fashioned romance and colonialism is brought to the fore. The narrator documents the fantastic coincidence of the two lovers, initially with a playful tone:

He wrote, imagining to himself what Fermina Daza would have said to him if she had loved him as much as that helpless child loved her suitor. Two days later, of course, he had to write the boy's reply with the same hand, style, and kind of love that he had attributed to him in the first letter, and so it was that he became involved in feverish correspondence with himself. (Márquez 171-172)

The phrase "feverish correspondence with himself" is ludicrous and laughable. It critiques the overconfident colonist who believes he has seduced the indigenous population, that his relationship with the "natives" is wonderful, when, in reality, he lives in a world of his own construction. Again, we recall Palencia-Roth's thoughts on modern hermeneutic theory that what we see depends on what we are prepared to see and that what we understand depends on what we already understand" (Roth 146). The lovers see what they want to see, while Florentino enjoys playing the contented puppet master, deaf to any instructions other than his own.

Far more laughable are Florentino's plans to make his home ready for Fermina even after seeing her six months pregnant with Dr. Urbino's child, "Winning back Fermina Daza was the sole purpose of his life, and he was so certain of achieving it sooner or later that he convinced Tránsito Ariza to continue with the restoration of the house so that it would be ready to receive her whenever the miracle took place" (Márquez 173). Even the narrator realizes the impossibility of the situation—he calls it a "miracle." Sincere nostalgia does nothing to redeem the colonizer of the past, simply because the colonizer remembers a different past, a past he reinvents. And parodic nostalgia

seeks to critique this. We may conclude, then, that Márquez is using the complex parody of Linda Hutcheon—“it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies” (Hutcheon 101). The nostalgia for the past is legitimate and sincere, but at the same time, that past is corrupt. This corruption is made translucent through parody.

In the most enlightened stage, we have a colonizer figure so cognizant and ashamed of his past that he removes it altogether, thereby correctly executing Adorno’s “destruction of memory”. In *Demons*, the narrator describes an Abyssinian slave at the beginning of the story as a female “whose beauty was so unsettling it seemed untrue . . . she was put on sale for the simple fact of her beauty” (Márquez 8). Márquez plays with his fictional genre, drawing attention to it with ‘untrue’ beauty, while preserving imagination through intentional vagueness—not providing a description of this girl. The impossibility and fictionalization of such perfect beauty is only matched by the currency the Governor pays for her— “without bargaining and in cash . . . her weight in gold” (Márquez 8). This second appearance of gold recalls the gold ink that Fermina chooses in the marketplace—a selection that is now clearly tainted with the devaluation of a human being. With magical realism, we are lifted into the story-telling realm, but we are acutely aware of the moral implications of weighing a human girl to determine her sale price.

Furthermore, the unusual act of placing a girl on sale for her beauty is both poetic and objectifying. The emphasis on the slave’s beauty is part of the European aesthetic tradition of covering over the horrible conditions of colonialism by emphasizing only pretty things. By objectifying her with beauty, she becomes art— all the more untouchable, only something to admire from a distance. The girl’s beauty is still abstract and theoretical— no one has touched her yet, the transaction has just been made, and there are only possibilities. Just like the Narrator’s curiously

non-sensual longing for Delgadina, the Abyssinian slave becomes another parallel to Parry's "insatiable imagination of conquest."

But the moment possibilities become realities, and longing turns into readily available satisfaction, the spell is broken. The Governor realizes this later on in the story when he hosts a luncheon and the Abyssinian slave reappears:

She wore an almost transparent tunic that heightened the peril of her nakedness. After showing herself to the ordinary guests she stopped in front of the Viceroy, and the tunic slipped down her body to the floor.

Her perfection was alarming. Her shoulder had not been profaned by the slaver's brand, the initial of her first owner had not been burned on her back, and her entire person breathed an air of intimacy. The Viceroy turned pale, inhaled deeply, and with a movement of his hand erased the unbearable vision from his memory.

'Take her away, for God's sake,' he ordered. 'I do not want to see her again for the rest of my days.' (Márquez 98)

The phrase "peril of her nakedness" suggests that a lust that is capable of being satisfied—in the form of a perfect, nude body, presented on stage to the Governor—is dangerous. To have exactly what you want—pure, perfect, and untouched—is unbearable. If there had been an obstacle, such as bodily imperfections or a matter of affordability (or letters, or social barriers, as we saw perpetuated in Part I), there would have been a buffer that feeds the flames of longing. But the Governor received exactly what he wanted and it horrified him. This reluctance to achieve satisfaction represents the guilt of the colonizers. The governor is haunted by her skin, untouched by a slave owner's brand, and yet he calls it alarmingly perfect. His description, a troubling paradox, is the Governor's simultaneous acceptance and denial of the wrongs of slavery—he understands that

slaves are made imperfect with the brand, yet he cannot bear to see a slave without it. Similarly, for the colonizers to have exactly what they want is unbearable, simply because they still have some concept of morality that will never fully materialize. His elision of the Abyssinian slave parallels Fiddian's fragmentation of the *folletín*, where "the narrative subverts or exaggerates one romantic formula after another". As the governor erases the "unbearable vision from his memory," he does the exact opposite of what Cholera's glorifying, nostalgic, colonialist setting does—condemns slavery, the foundation of colonialism.

***Part V. Gestures to Faulkner: Postcolonialism and the deteriorating house.***

As much as sincere nostalgia, parodic nostalgia and conscious forgetfulness try to reconcile the past with the present, it is impossible. Time moves mercilessly on, forcing the Old World to either change or be left behind to rot. In the endings of these novels, the aristocracy in decays in a similar manner to the way the aristocracy decays in works by William Faulkner, a writer Márquez very publicly idolized. Lois Parkinson Zamora offers a compelling explanation for this admiration by citing Carlos Fuentes: “Latin American writers have found in the literature of the U.S. South, and especially in Faulkner’s work, elements kindred to their own national experience: the guilt of the colonist who had profaned his pristine land, the decadence of an irreverent aristocracy, the injustice and racial cruelty of the white-skinned usurper” (Zamora 192). In this section, I will address the decline of the aristocracy through the deteriorating house, a motif that flows just as easily in Márquez’s novels as it does Faulkner’s.

Like the death of the Marquis, all three of Márquez’s novels have houses in similar states of decay, and, also like the Marquis, all three house are, in some sense, consumed by some sort of animal. In fact, in *Love in the Time of Cholera*, the decay of the house (and Urbino’s death) is brought about by the presence of an animal—the Urbinos’ pet parrot staging a sit-in at the top of their mango tree. After Urbino’s comical demise, Márquez introduces the Urbino household using death as an authority figure:

The house was under the rule of death. Every object of value had been locked away with care for safekeeping, and on the bare walls there were only the outlines of the pictures that had been taken down... the empty spaces seemed immense and the voices had a ghostly resonance because the large pieces of furniture had been moved to one side... (Márquez 46)

The house itself is a conquered entity, with death as its ruler. With the death of Dr. Urbino, the description of the house is not just empty, but vacant—a place where items clearly inhabited its

space in the past, but no longer. All objects of value are locked away not for safekeeping, but as a way of dealing with colonial guilt, of sweeping the past under the rug. The “ghostly resonance” of voices is a verbal echo of things already said within the house, as if verbal orders of colonial cruelty still haunt the house. Fascinatingly, we learn that when Urbino was younger, he chose to abandon the family mansion of over a century and move into this “new house in the neighborhood of *nouveaux richés*” (Márquez 45). Thus, even in its better days, the *nouveaux richée* house has always been, by definition, a shell of what the true, *vielle richée* colonial mansions used to be, only now that it is decaying, it is a shell of a shell.

Interestingly, the deteriorating house is also what brings Florentino and Fermina to their senses in those many years later: “They were both intimidated, they could not understand what they were doing so far from their youth on a terrace with checkerboard tiles in a house that belonged to no one and that was still redolent of cemetery flowers” (Márquez 305). With the phrase “far from their youth,” Fermina and Florentino are both temporally and spatially distant from their past, just as colonialism is equally intimidated by the postcolonial mysteries of the New World. So much so that narrator does not bother to give ownership to Fermina, but instead, “to no one.” The cemetery flowers, probably for the late Dr. Urbino, evoke a sad nostalgia that seems to have finally accepted its defeat at the funeral of colonialism. They may also represent the freshness of the death of colonialism—in the sense that it is very recent, but also in the sense that its death brings a promising cleanliness and restoration to the house. The arrogant tool, prolepsis, makes way for the actual future, when Florentino and Fermina are very tangibly old, intimidated by living in the postcolonial world, and navigating a new form of love not nearly as falsely saccharine as when they were younger.



In *Of Love and Other Demons*, on the other hand, the decaying mansion described is not *nouveaux richeés*, but authentically colonial:

The house had been the pride of the city until the beginning of the century. Now it was a melancholy ruin, and the large empty spaces and the many objects out of place made it seem as if the occupants were in the process of moving. The drawing rooms had kept their checkerboard marble floors and teardrop chandeliers draped in cobwebs...Everything was saturated with the oppressive damp of neglect and gloom. All that remained of the seigniorial dignities of the first Marquis were the five hunting mastiffs that guarded the nights. (Márquez 10)

Similar to the Urbino house, the Marquis' house has a sense of vacancy with its large empty spaces. The checkerboard marble floors make another appearance, and we begin to wonder if this detail is simply Márquez staying true to the colonial interior trends of the times, or, if he intended to make the floor a colonial chessboard on which the game was lost and gone, but the board (and its players) remained. After all, the goal of the game of chess—to conquer—parallels the logic of colonialism.

The five hunting mastiffs that now guard the house serve as a reminder of the Marquis' paranoia, as we learn in Chapter Two that these dogs were actually the result of a guilty exchange to avoid a possible rebellion (real or imagined) of his slaves:

Alone for the first time in the gloomy mansion of his forebears, he did not sleep well in the darkness because of the congenital fear of American-born nobles that their slaves would murder them in their beds...He would tiptoe to the door, open it with a sudden movement, and surprise a slave spying on him through the keyhole. He heard the blacks naked and smeared with coconut oil to elude capture, slip away with tiger steps along the corridors. Overwhelmed by so many simultaneous fears, he ordered that the lamps be kept burning

until dawn, ejected the slaves who, little by little, had been taking over empty spaces, and brought into the house the first mastiffs trained in the arts of war. (Márquez 38-39)

The narrator brings up the concept of an “American-born noble” several times throughout the novel in contexts like this, where it seems that the status of an American-born noble is not as high as the status of, say, a European-born noble. This may be attributed to the American-born status as a hybrid noble and the European-born status as a pure noble. In a similar way to the logic of parody (both homage and mockery), hybridity is both indigenous as well as colonizer. He is not only lower in social status, but also an outcast to both worlds, a victim of unhomeliness, like Sierva.

And the novel uses every kind of character to attack this fact. Even the narrator uses this subordination to justify his approval of the Marquis’ first love, an insane singer from an asylum: “it would have been an excellent match for an American-born marquis of limited intelligence” (Márquez 34). The Abbess at the convent calls American-born aristocrats, “gutter nobility” (Márquez 66). Finally, the slaves gain a power of their own from the Marquis’ low status of nobility, and perhaps gain even more power to seek revenge against his father’s reign as “a pitiless slave trader and a heartless slave driver” (Márquez 34). The description of the slaves taking over empty spaces makes them seem as invasive and treacherously inconspicuous as dust. Their animalistic qualities also remind the reader of Sierva’s untamable traits, the same traits that the convent attributed to demonic possession. We may better understand the Marquis’ intolerance of African culture from this ordeal, and subsequently, why he will never truly understand his daughter, who is culturally African. But overall, the Marquis is a parodic representation of what an aristocrat should be. Whereas Sutpen from Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*<sup>16</sup> conquered his fear of subordination by having wrestling matches with his slaves to show his superiority, the Marquis was scared enough to get rid of his slaves altogether and replace them with dogs.

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<sup>16</sup> Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* New York: Modern Library, 1951. Print.

So with colonial guilt of slaves swept away, just as the parrot takes over the Urbino household, the hunting mastiffs come to rule the darkness of the Marquis' house. Again, there is something humorous about hunting mastiffs trained in the arts of war...guarding nothing. In a way, the emptiness is something that was always there, just as the ruin that the colonizers now behold is what they brought with them, having destroyed civilizations they did not recognize as human. Part of the haunting of the house is the dawning awareness of the humanity that the colonizers have erased. It recalls the terrifying moment of the Governor and the slave when he comes to a similar realization that enslavement has tainted the beautiful slave, even though she is physically unmarked.

We do not return to the house again until Cayetano Delaura pays a visit to update the Marquis on Sierva's progress. When Cayetano sees the Marquis, the narrator remarks, "Delaura observed him without waking him, and it was as if he were seeing Sierva María grown old, and broken by solitude" (Márquez 109). In the same way the fates of Faulkner's characters are already predetermined by their bloodlines, Sierva is doomed to deteriorate like her father. When Cayetano asks how he is, the Marquis replies, "'Here. Rotting away'" (Márquez 109). Here, we see that the Marquis is decaying just as his house is. The corpse-like image solidifies when Márquez writes, "With a languid hand he brushed aside the cobwebs of his siesta and sat up in the hammock" (Márquez 109). The reader feels an immense amount of sympathy for the man who fits in with neither the present nor the past, a temporal anomaly. In the past, his string of failed loves was contaminated by the guilt of colonization; in the present, his fear of Africans prevents him from knowing his daughter, even though he loves her very much:

"I feel as if the more I know her the less I know her"

He was tormented by guilt for having abandoned her to her fate in the courtyard of slaves...

“I would give my soul to see her.” (Márquez 110)

The deteriorating house is a sort of blood brother for the Marquis, as both eventually decay under the stress of abandonment, and eventually fade into nothingness, along with the well-intentioned Father Aquino.

In the midst of this tragic line of lackluster deaths, Márquez ends his novel with a spectacular one:

On the twenty-ninth of May, having lost her will to endure any more, she dreamed again of the window looking out on a snow-covered field from which Cayetano Delaura was absent and which he would never return. In her lap she held a cluster of golden grapes that grew back as soon as she ate them. But this time she pulled them off not one by one but two by two, hardly breathing in her longing to strip the cluster of its last grape. The warder who came in to prepare her for her sixth session of exorcism found her dead of love in her bed, her eyes radiant and her skin like that of a newborn baby. Strands of hair gushed like bubbles as they grew back on her shaved head. (Márquez 147)

Emily’s death in Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily”<sup>17</sup> shares many of the same traits and drawn conclusions as Sierva’s death. Both women are trapped in the confines of a system of thought that sees them only as vehicles for perpetuating domination and rule of subordinates—Emily, caught in the linear path of finding a husband worthy to carry on the bloodline; and Sierva, caught in the torturous “remedies” of the Catholic Church. In both situations, love is warped into an autonomous justification for their submission. But the logic of purity (blood purity of racism) and austerity is ultimately self-defeating as the unsustainable logic of colonialism crumbles on its own immorality. The magical realist aspect of Sierva’s perpetually growing hair parallels the single strand of Miss

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<sup>17</sup> Faulkner, William. “A Rose for Emily.” *Selected Short Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Modern Library, 1993. N. pag. Print.

Emily's iron grey hair found on her pillow after her death—both serving as a final stand (or strand) against the injustices of colonialism. As Sierva never strips the cluster of its last grape, Western longing makes a final, spectacular appearance in this novel, highlighting the impossibility and hopelessness of Sierva's situation.

The Narrator's house in *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* is initially described as pleasant: "The house is spacious and bright, with stucco arches and floor tiled in Florentine mosaics, and four glass doors leading to a wraparound balcony where my mother would sit on March nights to sing love arias with other girls, her cousins" (Márquez 5-6). Already we see that the house holds a nostalgia for the Narrator's mother, an Italian and a cosmopolitan who embraced other cultures, or as the Narrator says, "a notable interpreter of Mozart, a multilingual Garibaldian, and the most beautiful and talented woman who ever lived in the city" (Márquez 5). But the house's comfortable feel has little room to grow, as it is trapped in the stifling schedule of the Narrator's routines: he wakes up at five in the morning every day (7), wears the same linen coverall while inside the house (Márquez 7), and meticulously arranges his writing table even on the days he does not write (Márquez 32). Related to colonial domination, we may compare these habits to the strict logic of pure bloodlines from the Southern aristocracy. There is some indictment of the Narrator's insistence on stasis that recalls the insistence on the purity of bloodlines with no genetic changes to the family. But ironically, it is change, not stasis, that is life.

Unlike the other decrepit houses of Márquez's novels, this particular house does not have a physical decay, but a mental one that at once contains and is contained by the daily routines of an old man who fears change. The house is frozen in time because the Narrator makes it that way. Proudly, the narrator states, "I live in a colonial house, on the sunny side of San Nicolás

Park, where I have spent all the days of my life without wife or fortune, where my parents lived and died, and where I have proposed to die alone, in the same bed in which I was born and on a day that I hope will be distant and painless” (Márquez 5). The house stands still and the same, a passive witness the rapid passage of time, and the narrator takes pleasure in this consistency, wishing to die alone in the same bed he was born in.

But when the Narrator decides to give himself the gift of wild love at ninety, he unknowingly seals a future where time and change are unavoidable. The constant tolling of the bells in this novel reminds us of the looming passage of Time, and that the Narrator’s long life is soon coming to an end. The bells are “clear and ineluctable” (Márquez 28), “dreadful” (Márquez 37), but soon fall silent, as they are replaced by the agonizing rings of Rosa Cabarcas’ phone as the Narrator becomes more dependent on Delgadina: “I kept interrupting whatever I was doing to call her [Rosa Cabarcas] and I repeated this for days on end until I realized it was a phone without a heart” (Márquez 83).

Change comes to shake the deafening silence of order within the house. When the Narrator receives a cat for a birthday gift, it goes on a rampage:

I followed his tracks to familiarize myself with his original habits, but I could not find his secret hiding places, his resting places, the causes of his erratic moods. I tried to teach him to eat on schedule, to use the litter box on the terrace, not to climb into my bed while I was sleeping or sniff at food on the table, and I could not make him understand that the house was his by his own right and not as the spoils of war. So I let him do whatever he wanted. (Márquez 58)

Similar to parodic nostalgia in the previous section, the cat seems to be a leftover satire of colonialism, one who operates by “the spoils of war” even though the house is “his by his own

right.” But interestingly, once the Narrator lets the satire of colonialism roam throughout the house, the house becomes healed of his suffocating routines. In this way, the satire becomes salutary, a way to reconcile the postmodern parody with the problematic sincere nostalgia for the Old World. A fortuitous storm of ten minutes destroys the house even more, flooding the library and breaking a pipe, the locks, and the balcony window. During his repairs of the house, he has delusions of Delgadina helping him (Márquez 59). And with these delusions, he comes to terms with the true reason for his meticulous nature:

The house rose from its ashes and I sailed on my love of Delgadina with an intensity and happiness I had never known in my former life...I discovered that my obsession for having each thing in the right place, each subject at the right time, each word in the right style, was not the well-deserved reward for an ordered mind but just the opposite: a complete system of pretense invented by me to hide the disorder of my nature. I discovered that I am not disciplined out of virtue but as a reaction to my negligence, that I appear generous in order to conceal my meanness, that I pass myself off as prudent because I am evil-minded, that I am conciliatory in order not to succumb to my repressed rage, that I am punctual only to hide how little I care about other people's time. (Márquez 65)

Once he accepts that he is mad with love for Delgadina, that he is not as orderly as he thought he was, the Narrator discovers that he suffers from a kind of guilt similar to the guilt of colonizers—an animosity of the most orderly kind, where the horror of conquest lies not in brute force or mindless anarchy, but in the systematic obliteration of indigenous culture. Just as the Narrator imposes meticulous habits on his house to deny his own dark qualities, colonialism hides behind structured euphemisms such as “education” and “cleansing” to deny its own brutality. Once the Narrator

admits his flaws, he frees the house and the novel of its self-denial spell, as the ruined house becomes a sort of sacrifice to acknowledge the guilt of colonization.

The guilt of colonization has finally been acknowledged, but there is still one stone left unturned. When the Narrator runs out of money to pay for his nights with Delgadina, he resorts to pawning the family jewels and makes a sobering discovery:

Lying open on the glass top of the desk was one of the hefty tomes from the archive that contained the memory of my mother's jewelry. A precise account, with dates and details of how she was in person had changed the stones of two generations of beautiful and worthy Cargamantos, and had sold the legitimate ones to this same store... But he reassured me: these little tricks were common practice among great families in difficult times to resolve financial emergencies without sacrificing honor. Faced with crude reality, I preferred to keep them as a momento of another Florina de Dios whom I never had known. (Márquez 105-106)

The Narrator's family jewels had already been pawned years ago, and to retain their dignity, replaced with fake jewels. The last defenses of nostalgia have at last crumbled, as those who linger in the past, like the Narrator, become worshippers of something that no longer exists. The fact that the Narrator keeps the fake jewels as "a momento of another Florina de Dios whom I never had known" applauds the Narrator's desire to move forward from his expired belief that the jewels were real, and yet another acknowledgement that his family, too, had dark times they never wanted to admit to.

The pawning of the family jewels parallels the end of the line for the family, and furthermore, the end of the line for colonialist reproductive logic. With the discovery of fake jewels, colonialism is put on trial for its propaganda in cultural imperialism and pure races. It was not the



jewels that were passed down to the Narrator, but the deeds to continue with the purist logic of colonialism. It is a sobering moment for the Narrator, who, until this point in the story, saw himself in the colonizer role. In the same way the real jewels were pawned, the Narrator pays back the moral debt of colonization simply by acknowledging the futility of carrying on this kind of close-minded, already pawned logic—“crude reality,” as he calls it—nothing more than a momento.

Márquez makes one last description of the house at the end of the novel. After he celebrates both his ninety-first birthday and his rekindled romance with Delgadina, in the last paragraph, the Narrator’s tone is peaceful yet exuberant:

I went out to the street, radiant, and for the first time I could recognize myself on the remote horizon of my first century. My house, silent and in order at six-fifteen, began to enjoy the colors of a joyous dawn. Daminia was singing at the top of her voice in the kitchen, and the resuscitated cat twined his tail around my ankles and continued walking with me to my writing table. I was arranging my languishing papers, the inkwell, the goose quill, when the sun broke through the almond trees in the park and the river mail packet, a week late because of the drought, bellowed as it entered the canal to the port. It was, at last, real life, with my heart safe and condemned to die of happy love in the joyful agony of any day after my hundredth birthday.

Though this ending is hardly as spectacular or magical as a girl dead of love with hair gushing out of her shaved head like bubbles, it is magnificently quotidian in a quiet sort of way. The satiric colonial cat that had given him so much trouble when he first received it seems to finally behave like a proper pet, tamed and house broken. And the Narrator’s meticulous habit of arranging his languishing papers, the inkwell, and the goose quill is made glorious when the sun breaks through the almond trees in the park—it is no longer a habit to deny his disorder (a very

similar passage occurs earlier in the novel (Márquez 10)), but a mission to genuinely organize his life. The bellow of the river mail packet is a cry of relief to the narrator, as his heart is contently conflicted in phrases with phrases such as “safe and condemned” and “joyful agony.” It is no longer the immature perpetual desire of Western longing, but rather the mature and cosmopolitan acceptance of natural contradiction.

Similar to their counterparts from the South, the deteriorating Colombian aristocracy lives in houses found in identical states of decay, overrun by animals, outrun by a changing world. They must decide how to live their lives in this new, postcolonial, contradicting, and non-nostalgic world, or otherwise be destroyed by it as Sierva was.

### *Conclusion.*

We can no longer deny the presence of postcolonialism in romance. Through themes such as longing, seduction, purity, nostalgia and decay, postcolonialism trickles into the love stories of Márquez's three novels, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *Of Love and Other Demons*, and *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, allowing for a critique of colonialism that is as enjoyable to read as it is convincing enough to agree with. The characters are at once worlds apart and residents of the same neighborhood, because although they may be separated by novels and time periods, themes of postcolonial love bind them together into one grand struggle to embrace the New World, as the texts want them to. Whether they fail, like the Marquis; succeed, like the Narrator; or timidly accept, like Florentino and Fermina, the final goal of these novels is to push for a more cosmopolitan form of love in the postcolonial world.

The beauty of these themes, and of the current conversations of postcolonialism, is that both are weightless, impervious to time. Though some of these novels were set hundreds of years ago, their popularity still abounds simply because such postcolonial struggles—alienation, hybridity, unhomeliness—still exist in the world today. Márquez realized this and articulated beautifully in his Nobel Prize speech that reality is not confined to any specific time period of writing: “A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity.”<sup>18</sup> Here, insatiability is at last positive, in that we are blessed with the ability to creatively pursue multiculturalism. I return to Márquez's call to action for literature “to render our lives believable.” Through these novels, he has accomplished just that. After all, what better way to render the postcolonial world of Colombia believable than through the universal value of love?

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<sup>18</sup> García Márquez, Gabriel. "The Solitude of Latin America: Gabriel García Márquez Nobel Prize Lecture." *The Modern World*. N.p., 2 June 2003. Web. 19 Nov. 2012.

Much of the successful execution of these ageless messages also comes from Márquez's unique abilities to enchant and to educate at the same time. The fact that he was a journalist before he wrote fiction allowed him to give his writing a factual depth that other fiction writers lack. Yes, we are transported to different worlds. But the worlds are not an escape. They are a serious commentary on oppression and the dangers of perpetual longing. The real demons of these stories are cultural intolerance, slavery, a glorification of the exotic and of the past, and a perverse desire to become pure again through young girls. Márquez himself confirms, "There is not a single line in my novels which is not based on reality" (Gonzalez 63). Comfortable with Márquez's verisimilitude, readers are able to comfortably accept the postcolonial leap that colors these romances.

Parody began as a problem for postcolonial analysis, as we were unsure how to navigate sincerity and subversion of the nostalgia of colonialism. We know now that parodic nostalgia is the answer to misplaced sincere nostalgia, exposing the ridiculousness of a glorified past. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin write, "A characteristic of dominated literatures is an inevitable tendency towards subversion, and a study of the subversive strategies employed by post-colonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to this condition" (Ashcroft 33). Again, creative license allows Márquez to play with themes of nostalgia and guilt, complicating his characters while still remaining critical about revering a remembered past.

Beyond this project, Palencia-Roth invites us to go further than just expose the colonialist mentality, but also to investigate the past from the native perspective: "What is most important in the fight against psychological colonialism is the reversal of the colonial perspective. In other words, the same reality must be reinterpreted—seen, heard—through the 'native' prism of

consciousness: in this way the native mentally ejects the colonizer and wins back his land” (Roth 146). If we listen to the reality of the native, Roth says, this is how colonialism can find its true redemption and freedom from guilt.

Holding myself to the same standards I gave Márquez’s characters, I end with a disclaimer.

Elleke Boehmer writes:

It is crucial to perceive... that despite the common experience of empire, cultures in a relationship will in some measure always experience difficulty in completely understanding one another... My claim, I must therefore clarify, is *not* that a society is necessarily enclosed within the scaffolding of its own values and preconceptions. Rather what interests is the *partial* opacity to one another of different conceptual worlds and the importance of trying to clear up that opacity to some degree with diligent research and applied understanding.

(Boehmer 239)

To reference Appiah’s metaphor one last time, in the same way none of the characters held a whole mirror of truth, my intention is not to draw everlasting conclusions about the status of postcolonial ideals in Colombia using literature, though I stand by Márquez in his efforts to give literature a larger purpose. My analysis comes from, and remains, a very fractional moment of opacity, extracted from my own love affair with Márquez’s works, but more importantly, from my desire to understand.

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