

## On Making Love and Language

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**D**rifting through the rooms in the night palace—a paradise of salaciousness—a cleaning lady quietly picks up used condoms with a special rag. The innumerable things that men have left behind after love include “vomit and tears, which [seem] understandable to her,” but also “many enigmas of intimacy: puddles of blood, patches of excrement, glass eyes, gold watches, false teeth, locket with golden curls, love letters, business letters, condolence letters—all kinds of letters” (García Márquez 77). The abandoned tokens are as countless and varied as love’s many masks—eternal love, fatal love, curious love, loveless love, convenient love. Star-crossed love or hopeless love. Hopeful love or idolized, poetic love. Aged, domestic love. Tender and submissive love. There is a lot of hurried, “emergency love” at the palace, but it is only one of many kinds. The owner of the brothel keeps the items “under lock and key,” thinking that “sooner or later the palace that had seen better days, with its thousands of forgotten belongings, would become a museum of love” (78). Most objects and residues remain unclaimed—but perhaps not altogether forgotten.

A museum of love—a collection of all Love’s artifacts—might include milestone moments, landmarks, or treasures of royal courtship. We might expect to find the first cave paintings of man and woman side-by-side, architectural love stories like the Taj Mahal, the films of Audrey Hepburn—cinema’s perennial darling—or that huge sapphire diamond that supposedly sank with the Titanic. Possibly the most popular exhibit would be a shrine to the grandest gesture, the holiest of holy unions: marriage. The museum’s ongoing wedding exhibition might include a collection of chuppahs, a red oriental newlywed bed, something old, new, borrowed, blue, and the wedding ring—a symbol of eternal fidelity.

Gabriel García Márquez would insist, however, that in these meticulous exhibits—these public displays of affection—we would see not only the items meant to be shown off but also those meant to be kept private, hidden, or destroyed. In the shadows of the airy atriums, we would find evidence of

love's darker side: soiled sheets and bottles of gold cyanide. These traces of romance reveal as much or more about the nature of passion as do the standard artifacts. In his novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*, García Márquez challenges our conception of love, straying from the typical ideal. He forces us deep into the center of an old walled city, into houses that open inward to courtyards with broken fountains, while the balconies of the facades are overgrown with weeds. Like the "great old families [who] sank into their ruined palaces in silence," we, too, recede sheepishly into the suffering and shame of the ruins of love and life (17). It seems García Márquez wants us to know that there might still be something to learn from the rubble of love—and our disgraces—after all.

Florentino Ariza met Fermina Daza at the young age of seventeen, and from that moment she became a "maiden idealized by the alchemy of poetry," the written form that carried their relationship for years before his proposal and her ultimate rejection of it (64). Florentino vows to wait until the death of Fermina's husband, Dr. Juvenal Urbino, to share his everlasting love with her once more, and he distracts himself through the years with street love, hunting "helpless little bird[s]" that feed his earthly passions (180). Through the fifty years, twenty-five notebooks, and six hundred twenty-two lovers of Florentino's wait, García Márquez opens our eyes to countless and varied shades of love. We receive only a small sample of these romances, but we are left with a taste for the fantasticality of his sexual encounters—as well as the variety. In Florentino's affairs we find self-absorbed love, divided love, and the love of gratitude, to name just a few. Yet we wonder what any of these relationships has to do with love itself—and why each deserves to share the same name as that of our ideal passion. Why should we trust Florentino in all of his madness?

García Márquez tells us that Florentino seduced one woman because she "promptly identified him as a solitary man in need of love, a street beggar as humble as a whipped dog, who made [her] yield without conditions, without asking him for anything." Women would simply feel as if they had "done him a favor" (152). Do we sympathize with this hopeless romantic because he is sick and in need of our pity? Do we feel sorry for him, feeling ourselves a bit superior? For some reason, we suspect there must be something deeper, something that Florentino—or García Márquez—knows about the nature of love that we do not yet understand.

Ostentatious displays of affection—public proposals, botanical varieties, rings that brand the "taken"—are all secretions of the surface personalities, announcements of love for all to see. But skulking below in the under-realms

of the mind lies the unconscious, and psychologist Carl Jung tells us that it is this shadow figure, often considered an “inferior function,” that is “practically identical with the dark side of the human personality” (“Concerning” 23). Jung explains that “the unconscious is commonly regarded as a sort of incapsulated fragment of our most personal and intimate life—something like what the Bible calls the ‘heart’ and considers the source of all evil thoughts” (“Archetypes” 20). To protect ourselves from thoughts and urges that are incompatible with society, we create artificial “dams and walls to keep back the dangers of the unconscious, the ‘perils of the soul’” (“Archetypes” 22). Yet to confront one’s shadow, Jung insists, is to begin to know oneself.

Furthermore, in his lecture “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” Jung tells us that there is a collective unconscious where we store “inborn possibilities of ideas,” heirlooms of our ancestors’ experiences that are common to all mankind. These eternal, non-pictorial images, which Jung calls “psychic residua” or “archetypes,” are the forces that transport us to “the deepest springs of life” (81). One such primordial image might be archetypal love, but not in the way we typically conceive of it. We are always grasping for a primitive language with which to conceptualize these *a priori* ideas. Navigating the primal waters, García Márquez, too, is searching for a language that might guide him through—and make sense of—the deep ravines carved by ancestral experience.

In her essay “The Dogma of Gender,” Patricia Berry warns us of becoming fixed on any particular archetypal constellation, on any one representation of a complex, indwelling power. When we attach language and structure to archetypal images, Berry tells us, we limit them, rejecting their complex nature. By limiting them, we also limit ourselves. “Dogmas bar us from perceptive and particularized feeling as they truncate original, interesting thought,” Berry says (45). They enforce straightness and unambiguousness. For example, our dogmatic conception of gender demands that we identify ourselves as masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual. Gender becomes a matter of “straightness”—“the epitome of unity and identity”—rather than something fluid, polymorphous (48, 46). Even the androgyne, she reminds us, can be dogmatically conceived—masculine and feminine qualities balanced, the concept “clinically clean,” free from psychological confusion (49). We must wonder, then, how our words and language, in our attempts to express the richness of archetypal experience, are structured for singleness, and have thus created dogmas.

Jung explains that we encounter archetypal images when a mythological situation appears to us, and these images, in turn, are revered because of their

mysterious, sublime beauty. But as we refine and codify our sense of them, they become further removed from their roots. The images are “stiffened into mere objects of belief,” used to ascribe order to the world and keep the unconscious at bay (“Archetypes” 8). Sexuality, a topic of interest to García Márquez, Jung, and Berry alike, has suffered from the unforgiving hand of dogma; its straightening-out can be seen in the progression from the formless sexuality of our beginning years to the formed and conforming sexuality of adulthood. Infantile sexuality, according to Jung, “is characterized by numerous possibilities of application . . . [and an] original undifferentiated polyvalency” (“Transformation” 159). Berry echoes this belief, writing that as children, we are “many-sexed and . . . there are many forms in which our sexuality is expressed” (38). Moreover, these instincts need not be limited to sex; as Jung says, “Libido is appetite in its natural state,” and can also include “bodily needs like hunger, thirst, sleep” (“Concept” 135). It is concerned with the pleasure of the body and all its parts. Yet childhood sexuality is inevitably attended by a sense of inferiority, Berry notes, and when the libido reverts back to its primal state, a state supposedly eradicated in the mature individual, it is quickly scolded and forced back into straightness. Society rules that multifarious indulgence is an inferior, narcissistic, “bad” kind of pleasure (43). We are asked to clean out the dirty bottoms of our psyches and to reject our primal sexualities, because our lower levels are dark, chaotic, and inferior (49). Experience must be sterilized. Peering through dogma’s blinders, we find Florentino’s promiscuity, his revelry in pleasure’s many forms—not to mention García Márquez’s seeming acceptance—disturbing.

The peculiar museum of love in García Márquez’s novel exposes love’s gritty underside—the part of it that is sometimes messy, sometimes disappointing, and on occasion disturbing. This conception of love *entire* embraces the “soiled” bottoms of our psyches and challenges the limitations of age, marriage, and class (Berry 49). It rejects the notion that “old age [is] an indecent state” for which the only consolation is “the slow, merciful extinction of [one’s] venereal appetite” (García Márquez 40). It dismisses the attitude that unbridled passion in the bedroom is perverse, because “nothing one does in bed is immoral if it helps to perpetuate love” (151). One of Florentino’s lovers, Sara Noriega, keeps a string of baby pacifiers at her bedpost to stifle the throes of climax; love *entire* encourages fetish. Another romance frees the Widow Nazaret from the “virginity of a conventional marriage, more pernicious than congenital virginity or the abstinence of widowhood” (151). Love *entire* gives second and third chances; it sees no reason for limiting experi-

ence to “the one.” Our reaction to García Márquez’s treatment—or abuse—of the word “love” makes us realize that we are, as Berry might suggest, balanced high up in a tree, looking down upon an inherently polymorphous realm in an attempt to differentiate ourselves from it.

Love in García Márquez’s world isn’t the unambiguous, straight type that Berry warns us about, but is instead polyvalent, multi-faceted, and immeasurably complex. Its evolution takes place over an epoch, a century, a lifetime, a relationship, and even a day. And in the glass cases of our museum, we might see how “provocative” has changed from an exposed ankle and coquettish smile to full nudity and a suggestive glare. Or, as Berry notes, we might observe the refinement of pleasure over time in “silk, damask, muslin, satin, velvet” (50). Each expression of love is, as Jung might say, a translation of the thing that we feel but cannot name into “the language of the present” (“Relation” 82). We must remember that once we have chosen just one facet to represent, we have failed to show the whole.

But without moonlight, we cannot know the moon. We see an illuminated crescent, but forget that the rest of the moon lurks in the shadow. It is through the phases—and repeated lunar cycles—that each sliver of a waxing moon accumulates to a whole. With each cycle of infatuation, sex, and severance, Florentino is reminded that he has not yet forgotten Fermina, and his love grows more insistent. Jung explains that we come to recognize an inborn idea by interpreting the symbols contained in a work of art: “only by inferences drawn from the finished work can we reconstruct the age-old original of the primordial image” (“Relation” 81). We possess only the beginnings of a language to express that image, but it becomes clearer with many translations, many readings, many limited and incomplete attempts to understand.

Without the darkness of night, we cannot know moonlight. The moon itself is a dark body onto which the light of the sun is projected. In Jung’s interpretation, the full circle of the moon, like that of a *mandala*, represents a complete image of the self in which conscious and unconscious are united—a “self [that] was always present, but sleeping” (“Study” 304). The dark side of the moon never loses its form, never disappears. We only forget it. Berry tells us that the “lower, instinctual, many-formed level of our biological existence has light and is highly organized,” that “the polymorphous underrealm has form and *logos* within it” (51, 50). In the same vein, Jung asserts that “in all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order, in all caprice a fixed law, for everything that works is grounded on its opposite” (“Archetypes” 32). We only fail to realize this order because we are already looking through dogma’s myopic lens. We have forgotten this dark realm, but we might begin to

remember, begin to regain touch, if we understand that our language, categorizations, and identifications limit and exclude.

Freud believed that we grow out of our polymorphous perversity, leaving few vestiges. Berry paraphrases Alfred Adler, another depth psychologist, who maintained that we do not outgrow our primordial impulses but instead “construct opposites to delude ourselves away from them” (41). A dichotomized world, Berry continues, whether masculine-feminine, young-old, depraved-holy, or right-wrong, “protects us from feeling our inferiority” (42). These contrived poles become collectibles—the more we gather, the safer we feel from the encroaching shadows. They guide us away from the dark side of ourselves and toward a “higher” state. Equipped with these infallible moral compasses, we follow the needle North, for should we stray a moment, we might find ourselves like Florentino—a lost, nocturnal hunter.

“Exclusion,” Jung says, “means that very many psychic elements that could play their part in life are denied the right to exist because they are incompatible with the general attitude” (83). We’ve removed fetishes, kinky sex, perversity, and pain from the discourse of love, even though, as Berry insists, “psychological work requires dirty words” (49). She reminds us that losing the “dirt in the language of the psyche leaves the soil of the psyche barren” (49). When we make words and sexual forms taboo, we allow their negative connotations to overpower us. We sanitize society by eliminating the words themselves and the people who use them. We hope that their banishment *out there* will suppress the urges *within*.

The widening, dirtying, corrupting of the word “love” is García Márquez’s work in *Love in the Time of Cholera*. He wants us to know that beyond the horizon there can be “mad voyages, free of trunks, free of social commitments: voyages of love” (345). García Márquez calls into question the dogmas that entrap us. He realizes that if we can open ourselves to a way of seeing that does not constrict, or a language that does not narrow, we might again experience the pleasure that accompanies our unconscious urges. Like Berry, he embraces the “words rank, tangled, conflicted, and smelling of history [that] are humus for the soul in its struggles” (Berry 49). He unearths the perversities, humiliations, and secrets—violating our privacy and threatening our comfort zones. He liberates us from a language that confines.

To imagine a language as limitless as the number of sexual positions in the *Kama Sutra*, as varied as the pleasures they offer and the erogenous zones they serve, and as open-minded as the person who agrees to try them, we turn to John Fowles’s *Mantissa*. The novel is a manifestation of the creative

process, which Fowles represents as the kinky, often role-played lovemaking between the writer Miles Green and his muse Erato. In the search for “‘some absolutely impossible’ . . . ‘Unwritable . . .’ ‘Unfinishable . . .’ ‘Unimaginable . . .’ ‘Endlessly revisable . . .’ ‘Text without words,’” they continually revise their work, creating ever more unwritable variations (161). Each new position they try is just a little more difficult to represent than the last, suggesting that they exist in a state—a mental state—of endless sexual polyvalency that cannot be fully encapsulated by language. “How physical, how passionate, how free of dialogue they were; how experimental, how sublimely irreproducible in text,” Fowles writes (188). In this swift-moving, fluid world of the mind, no position is off-limits, except perhaps the Brazilian Fork.

Jung would call Erato a representation of the archetypal anima—the complementary female force, projected by the psyche of a man, that breathes life into him and rouses him from his inertia. “Were it not for the leaping and twinkling of the soul,” Jung says, “man would rot away in his greatest passion, idleness” (“Archetypes” 27). Anima, Jung tells us, “sums up all the statements of the unconscious, of the primitive mind, of the history of language and religion” (“Archetypes” 27). Erato, a shape-shifter, appears to Miles as Dr. Delfie, Nurse Cory, a goddess, a punk, and a geisha, but really, she is a part of him, summoned from the depths.

If we return to an examination of Florentino’s love affairs, we might interpret each of his little romances as encounters with anima, the “mischievous being who crosses our path in numerous transformations and disguises, playing all kinds of tricks on us, causing happy and unhappy delusions, depressions and ecstasies, outbursts of affect, etc.” (“Archetypes” 26). It would be easy to simply ascribe Florentino’s promiscuity to a lack of principles; however, keeping Jung in mind, we might find that while anima “may be the chaotic urge to life, something strangely meaningful clings to her, a secret knowledge or hidden wisdom, which contrasts most curiously with her irrational elfin nature” (“Archetypes” 30). Anima’s interventions, which may seem random and menacing, are actually ordered by a greater plan and secret purpose, just as Erato’s schemes seem to fail on Miles but are indeed the novel’s genius.

Consider Florentino’s first sexual encounter. After careful planning, an unidentified female hijacks him, pulling him into one of the boat’s dark cabins. Descending upon him like a predatory bird under cover of a new moon, she “impale[s] herself on him as if she were riding horseback, and strip[s] him, without glory, of his virginity” (García Márquez 142). Sweat-drenched, they lie in the musty cabin with the lingering smell of sex—the stench of a salt

marsh full of prawns (142). Our first instinct might contest the designation of this succubus as a form of anima; we assume that she should be magical and wonderful. But Jung reminds us that this idealized concept of anima is not always the case, and urges us “not [to] forget that this kind of [idyllic] soul is a dogmatic conception whose purpose it is to pin down and capture something uncannily alive and active” (“Archetypes” 26). In fact, Jung wants us to know that “the anima no longer crosses our paths as a goddess, but, it may be, as an intimately personal misadventure, or perhaps our best venture” (“Archetypes” 30). Wisdom and folly are dangerously flirtatious.

We do know that the unknown mistress, whom Florentino imagines as Rosalba, a woman he saw before, does succeed in shaking life into Florentino, shattering his patience and idleness on the boat journey. She seizes him, initiating him into the pleasures of the body, and then hoists him onto a teetering seesaw of emotions. First he is so fixated on discovering her true identity that he begins “to think about her with more intensity than he thought about Fermina Daza,” but after her departure, he feels “alone in the world, and the memory of Fermina Daza, lying in ambush in recent days, [deals] him a mortal blow” (García Márquez 144-45). This anima encounter creates the frenzy of depression and ecstasy that Jung suggests, awakening Florentino from the doldrums of both his containment on the boat and the preservation of his body for Fermina.

Florentino has another visit from anima when he is struck by the fearlessness of an unnamed girl, wearing a plain linen tunic, making her way through the local Carnival. On that riotous night, the narrator tells us, “she danced like a professional, she was imaginative and daring in her revelry, and she had devastating charm.” She warned him she was trouble, shouting, “I’m a crazy woman from the insane asylum.” But her uninhibited, manic personality brings Florentino back to the “innocent unruliness of adolescence,” the days before he knew the agony of love (181). While her escape from the Divine Shepherdess Asylum is short-lived, Florentino is nevertheless enthralled by her. “Everything the anima touches becomes numinous—unconditional, dangerous, taboo, magical,” Jung reminds us (“Archetypes” 28). In her presence, “life is crazy and meaningful at once” (“Archetypes” 31).

We begin to find that just as anima has some hidden purpose, which stems from a superior knowledge of life’s laws, García Márquez, who is informed by a superior understanding of love’s laws, also has a higher plan for Florentino. The seeming chaos of six hundred and twenty-two affairs is indeed ordered, crystallized by some mythical power, designed to lead Florentino to his everlasting love in the end. García Márquez, having recog-

nized the polymorphousness of archetypal love, has created his own “unwritable” text. But rather than a text without words, it is a violation—a corruption, an infinite, sacrilegious fragmentation—of one of our most treasured words. And by sullyng love with insanity, sickness, jealousy, and perhaps even prostitution, we’ve come closer to its essence—love has become more purely itself. Over the years, tongues of sandpaper have labored to smooth and polish the tablets of dogma, ridding our language of impurities and roughness. Love has become ideal, and anima goddess-like. But we have forgotten the abundant pleasures our tongues once gave us.

Florentino’s anima returns to him again as Sara Noriega, an older woman whose lovemaking is made even more savage by the furious, clawing cat that accompanies them to bed. Raw with cuts, Florentino plugs her mouth with a pacifier to sooth her weeping and “declamatory passion” (199). It is *love*, García Márquez insists, and their five-year relationship is one of Florentino’s longest and most stable affairs. For a time, Sara Noriega’s love cures Florentino’s sickness. But the cat remains her only lifetime companion as she continues to defy society’s rules by engaging only in occasional love affairs, never marrying. She is an anomaly according to the equation by which those in love must marry. And while her overwhelming sexuality might impel some to call her a whore, her own moral rigidity leads her to conclude the opposite: that Fermina Daza is a whore for marrying for money. Suddenly, Fermina’s respectability is turned on its head by a woman ostensibly less noble. Nevertheless, Florentino Ariza is not deterred by either woman’s circumstances, and we suspect that he doesn’t believe in “used goods.” After all, he himself is damaged goods, ruined by the tumultuous pain and pleasure of love.

Florentino’s experience with widows, who might be considered both used by marriage and damaged by grief, makes him realize that they carry within them “the seed of happiness” (203). He hopes that Fermina Daza, too, will enjoy the “happiness of being happy twice, with one love for everyday use which would become, more and more, a miracle of being alive, and the other love that belonged to her alone, the love immunized by death against all contagion” (203). The first love is selfless, often marked by compromise and sacrifice, while the second love indulges the body and makes the self complete. According to García Márquez, widows do not carry a stigma, cloaked in the color of mourning. Instead, they are liberated, free to know love in all its multiplicity. This freedom is what anima imparts to Florentino. It is, perhaps, the higher purpose García Márquez has laid out for his readers.

After her husband's death, Fermina Daza is reunited with Florentino Ariza. She has not made love in over twenty years, and after waiting over fifty years for this moment, their love is "hurried and sad," clumsy and intoxicated (340). But the disappointment does not ruin the simple joy of companionship for the pair. Later, they finally make "the tranquil, wholesome love of experienced grandparents," and García Márquez describes it as a new awakening: they had "leapt over the arduous calvary of conjugal life and gone straight to the heart of love . . . like an old married couple wary of life, beyond the pitfalls of passion, beyond the brutal mockery of hope and the phantoms of disillusion: beyond love" (345). We realize that aged love is far from an inferior act, debilitated by the aching of bones and a body worn down by the years. The dogmas of conduct and stigmas against elderly sex do not apply here. All of love is embraced as the dichotomies of our language, which pit the young against the old, are shattered. Berry urges us to acknowledge that in the psyche, the "basis is base and the bottom soiled" (49). "If those experiences of dirtiness and inadequacy were as important in the formation of my particular personality as depth psychology claims they were, then if I value myself and my uniqueness, that basis is sacred," she insists (49).

In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, García Márquez neither narrows nor sterilizes our sexual experience; it is limited only by the small sample of affairs and the novel's pages. Leaving our dogmas behind, given a vocabulary caked with the dirt of our psychic depths, we feel no need to quarantine the lovesick—the souls plagued by choleric passions. Like Florentino and Fermina, we are released from society's strictures by the yellow flag of cholera, free to sail "the waters that could be navigated forever" (348). Perhaps at sea we discover that we are really exploring our primal waters, the uncharted depths that contain pleasure in its infinite variety. We cannot see everything from the boat's tiny window, but we can feel the swell of totality beneath. Finally reunited, Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza "had lived together long enough to know that love was always love, anytime and anyplace" (345). Hurried love and emergency love, official love and selfless love, aged love, eternal love—and even loveless love—are all just a part of the voyage.

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