



# The Unconscious Unveiled: A Psychoanalytic Reading Of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Of Love And Other Demons

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**Abstract:** Psychoanalytic theory helps the readers to understand the author's perspective better and the psyche of the characters according to the construction of the plot. One of the best examples is from D. H. Lawrence's novel Sons and Lovers (1913), in which according to Freud's psycho-sexuality, the character of Paul Morel is proven as Oedipus Complex. Many literary critics have implied psychoanalysis in the field of literature to gain significant psychological insight in literary works. This helps in reading the text and examining the psychological reality behind the conception of literary works as well as the relationship between the social reality and the author and its impact on the works of the author. This paper concludes that Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel Of Love and Other Demons can be perfectly viewed through a psychoanalytic lens and it aligns to a certain degree in the field of psychoanalysis.

**Keywords:** death drives, psychological trauma, collective unconscious, jouissance, love, pleasure, psychoanalysis.

## Introduction

Psychoanalysis is contrary to the conventional psychology and psychiatry. Psychology and psychiatry is a broad science which deals with the human behavior and serious mental disorders. On the other hand, psychoanalysis examines the unconscious side of human mind, and proves to reveal the motion and desires caused by the underlying surface of the human subconscious mind. Freud, while he was dealing with his patients when working as an assistant to the great neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris, he became fascinated with the treatment of neurosis and he found out that psychology is much needed than neurosis. He developed his own styles by his treatment to patients using the technique of hypnosis but later developed another technique called 'free association' which helps to deal with his patients allowing them to respond freely and without being distracted. This helps the patient to understand himself and his problems much better than hypnosis that needs more active response from the patient in doctor's consultant. This was the time when Sigmund Freud developed the most significant theory of psychoanalysis which came to be his own independent discipline. Sigmund Freud's theory includes psychology of human sexuality and interpretation of dreams.

The novel *Of Love and Other Demons* was first published in 1994. It is a tragic story of a twelve years old girl, Sierva Maria, who, in the beginning of the novel, was bitten by a stray dog. Though there was no such sign that she got rabies, she was sent to the care of Santa Clara for exorcism. When she was staying in the cell, the priest, Father Cayetano fell in love with her. They eat, sleep and recite sonnets together, but there was no such evidence of their sexual relationship. She seems to be of no need for exorcism. Later Father Cayetano was sent to the leper hospital where he was expected to catch the disease but was not. At last Maria was summoned for exorcism where she dies their 'of love' missing Father Cayetano. After her death her hair still seems to be growing from her skull.

The novel is a mixture of magic realism, which Garcia Marquez was inspired by the story of his grandmother. The story is also filled with superstitious and the 'love' and 'demons' is used as a metaphor by the author to critique the church and society's beliefs of his time and their lack of medical knowledge. The story is knitted in a subtle way that blends magic with reality and dreamlike moments and settings.

### **Death Drives, Psychological Trauma and Collective Unconscious**

Jacques Lacan, who lived from 1901 – 1981 was a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist. After Sigmund Freud, with Lacan begins the second period of psychoanalysis. His most profound works are from his yearly seminar lectures given from 1953 to 1981, which were first published in his collection *Ecrits* (1966). Jacques Lacan went further from Freud and enlarged the theory by adding his own concept. Freud explains "id" as the pleasure principle, when Lacan, taking the term "jouissance" from the continental philosophy, which is "beyond the pleasure principle" (Childers, 162-163), he advanced his own philosophy and this he calls it as "painful principle". This pleasure is something more than the sexual pleasure and libido. It can be such that is driven by the pleasure of "death drive" and not sexual drive. Jouissance is regarded as sin or something out of pure pleasure which goes beyond the limits of socially and morally accepted norms that cause pain and suffering. He connects this with Freud's concept of castration complex, and most significantly to death drive.

In Freudian term, death drive is something that leads to self-destruction and suicide. It is also considered as "death wish" or Thanatos. In his 1920 work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he explains why an individual is driven by his death wish, which is painful and beyond the sexual instinct. The death drives includes painful trauma, repetition compulsion, envy, fear and problematic behaviors which causes suicide and violence. However, for Lacan "drive" gives him the clue to understand human sexuality. Animal and human sexual instincts are different in a way that when the former is simply drown by its sexual instinct the latter has to formulate with the social norms and civilization and he restore "instinct" with "drive" while progressing the theory of human sexuality. For Lacan, "drive" is not simply allied to sexuality but it is connected to death in terms of "death drive".

The death drive is a push towards suffering, destruction and death which characterized every organism (this can be seen via the push to return to an original inanimate state of existence). Lacan also relates death drive to "jouissance" in that "jouissance" involves suffering which offers satisfaction. In a sense, every drive involves "jouissance" and thus is a form of death drive. (Mandal 206)

In *Of Love and Other Demons*, we may relate this "death drives" in the character of Marquis. After the dead of his first wife, Dona Olalla, Marquis was left traumatized and depressed for the rest of his life. Marquis' first wife, Dona Olalla was struck down by lightning (Marquez, 38). The city terrified by this tragedy described it as some sort of divine wrath upon their family's transgression. Here the city folks seemed to be superstitious. When Marquis was returning from Olalla's cemetery, he encountered a bird like piece of paper carried by the storm which he opened it and read: "that lightning bolt was mine" (Marquez, 38). Here, Garcia

Marquez blended the situation with magic realism. The event left Marquis with mental trauma where he would wear the black taffeta forever since the first time he used it on Olalla's funeral.

Marquis lost interest in everything and he is not fascinated by anything in his life. He was always in his hammock taking siesta and for many years he never came out of his mansion. His only wish was death, to turn into an inanimate state forever. The novel presents the theme of social alienation in some way, which is out of social constraints and the trauma that the character endured throughout his lifetime. Marquis was no more interested in any love affairs. After Olalla died, he was once visited by Dulce Olivia, whom he once had love affair with during his youth. Olivia wished to submit herself to Marquis playing the role of a wife. However, Marquis never showed any attraction towards her. He replied to Olivia, "I will never marry again" (Marquez 41). When Marquis was living in his exile before he was married to Dona Olalla, he once said, "I live in fear of being alive" (Marquez 35). He seems to be already so much traumatized by his past experiences in life.

Marquis could not pay any close attention to sexual pleasure with his second wife, Bernarda. Out of her seductive nature, when Bernarda Cabrera was in her early twenties she seduced a widower of fifty-two years old, Marquis, one afternoon when he was in his siesta. Their marriage itself was uncertain which left Marquis in a situation worse than a widower. Bernarda was impregnated with his child and out of compulsion he had to marry her, which later Bernarda gave birth to Sierva Maria premature and puny, umbilical cord swaddled around her neck. Marquis, as he always lays in his hammock pale and death like feature, it was then until he heard of Sierva Maria bitten by a rabies dog and the way society perceived the rabies to be treacherous. Then he started to show concerns for Sierva Maria, which he moved out from his siesta for the first time after years of alienation. Sarcastically his carriage is viewed by people to be a symptom of such calamity as he had never left his house except on great events, and for ages there had been no great occasion as such than calamitous one (Marquez 16). He felt like, he is staying alive all just for the sake of his love for Maria.

Freud argues that fantasy is an unconscious desire. However, Lacan describes it as a veil that covers the truth of castration, which is a "symbolic lack of an imagery object" that subdues a child's desire to incorporate the imaginary phallus (Evans 22-23). For Lacan, fantasy is not only the imaginary image or the screenplay. It is the signifier or the symbolic structure, which is the domain of law, logic and language (Mandal 31). Basing his study of unconscious in linguistic terminology, he asserts that the unconscious is formed like language and like language fails to find a definite meaning, the repressed desire of the unconscious remains unsatisfied. As language interferes with an endeavor in the lookout for definite centre the unconscious too interferes with the consciousness.

Lacan argues on two types of Jouissance – phallic jouissance and feminine jouissance. Phallic jouissance can be articulated like language but feminine jouissance cannot be articulated but can only be experienced. It fixed a boundary to knowledge and use of language is not necessary as it is often phallicised beforehand. He describes masculinity as the pleasure of phallic jouissance and femininity as both the phallic and feminine jouissance and even beyond the phallus. Lacan claims that, two opposite sex are not biological groups but physical figure identified by a particular type of jouissance. He talks about three levels of phallus: the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary phallus. The imaginary phallus is a pre-oedipal stage which a child embodies to be the object of his mother's desire. The symbolic phallus involves discourse or myths of male supremacy. The real phallus is identified as the "real father" that comprises of the real figure and to be the bearer of the law. Thus, this term is used to critique the patriarchy and how the masculinity and feminine is affected by these three levels of phallus.

This novel is one such that deals with the degrading role of masculinity and the contrasting role of matriarchy in the family. The kinship between Marquis and Bernarda, as husband and wife and their relationship with their child and in a way the child reciprocates to them seems to be quite lost and unhealthy because of their lack of love and desire which can be a “symbolic lack of an imagery object” of desire in both the sides of parents and the child.

In the novel, *Of Love and Other Demons*, the relationship between Bernarda and Sierva Maria can be analyzed in term of “castration complex”, which is a “symbolic lack of an imagery object”. The relationship between the mother and the child is gapped by their lack of imaginary phallus, when during the pre-oedipal complex a child embodies to be the object of her mother’s desire. Bernarda never loved Maria from the moment she nursed her for the first time and she ignored to keep the child with her fearing that she might kill her. This is how Sierva Maria is brought up to be a foundling character. She was brought up by Dominga de Adviento, a slave woman in her house. Sierva Maria as a foundling child can be related to another foundling character, Tom Jones in Henry Fielding’s novel, *Tom Jones* (1749), who was found in the bed of Allworthy and was raised by him. Maria realizes that she cannot be the object of her mother’s desire because she herself, in some respects, lacks to fulfill the object for her mother’s desire and love. When the physician, Abrenuncio, came to see Maria after the rabid dog’s bite, Marquis told Bernarda to show some concern for Maria as her mother. However, Bernarda told him to do anything with the girl and she considered herself to be a dead woman - “As far as I’m concerned, you can all do whatever you want, I’m a dead woman” (Marquez 30).

In the novel we see that both Bernarda and Maria hate each other so much. Bernarda was never concerned about Maria and she was always busy minding her own business, “...for she knew very well she did not love the girl and the girl did not love her, and both things seemed fitting” (Marquez 15). They both could not satisfy and fulfill each other’s desire. This is how Maria develops hatred towards her mother and she is alienated from the desire he longed for.

Brought up to be a foundling child by the slave woman, Maria is directed into the lifestyle of slaves and she could never had any chance to experience what and how a real mother’s love feels like. She unconsciously regards Dominga de Adviento, a slave woman who reared her, to be her mother figure and she felt so lost and lonely when the slave woman died. According to Freud’s concept of Castration Complex, we may observe that Bernarda and Maria falls somewhere in this category of Castration Complex.

With the observation of Castration Complex, we can identify the present of “Electra Complex”. It is a theory argued by Carl Jung in his *The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (1915), where a female child desires to be the object of her father’s desire in competition with her mother. It is an opposition to Sigmund Freud’s concept of “Oedipus Complex”, a male version of sexual attraction where a child developed towards his mother. In the novel, Sierva Maria is drawn more towards her father than her mother. However, she could not fully find satisfaction of love in her father due to their complex relationship and her father’s oblivious character. This could be the reason Sierva Maria shifted her emotions towards Father Cayentano, a Priest, while she was sent for exorcism.

According to Lacanian three registers of life, i.e., the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary (RSI), the symbolic order is the civilized norms that puts a limit to enjoyment out of legal norms; the imagery deals with the ego and imagery image of oneself which an individual develops to discover his own self with the object of his desires. For an infant, mother’s breast is his object of desire that which becomes the source of his wish. The real is such which can be both pre-symbolic and extra-symbolic; it is connected to death, nothingness and trauma (Mandal 12). In this life, eventually one becomes clear that all his imagery and

symbolic self are meaningless as one is going to meet death someday. The imagery and the symbolic conceal a person from identifying the real. This is through “sinthome”, Lacan’s concept of psychoanalytic symptom, that one realizes the reality of life and enjoys the unconscious through his encounter of emptiness. Likewise, Marquez’s Of Love and Others Demons can be viewed through Lacan’s perspective of jouissance and how the main character suffers from trauma, pain and death drives.

Based on the Seminar Book VII by Lacan, titled “The Ethics of Psychoanalysis”, the situation of Maria can be analyzed by taking the example from Lacan’s illustration of Sophocles’s tragedy, Antigone (c. 441 BC), in which the heroine chase after her pure and sheer “death wish” and horribly ended her life. In the seminar, Lacan argues on the paradox of “jouissance” and the notion of death drive, on how people are driven by their death wish out of his/her torment situation and trauma. This situation can be related to Sierva Maria, who had lived a traumatic life and was psychologically tormented.

Since her birth, Sierva Maria was psychologically tormented and had lived a challenging life facing many traumas and confusion that remained traumatized, and which ultimately leads her to the path of death wish. Some real situations and events that make her worse were as such: as a child she was not treated well by her mother, lacking pure desire of motherly affection, her alienation from the society, growing up with the slaves, rabid dog’s bite and her father’s reaction to it. Most significant mental trauma that she encountered was when she was sent to the convent of Santa Clara for exorcism, which was a tortured for her. The way those slaves and novices reacted to her while she was in the apartment of the Bishop makes her even more confused whether she was really crazy or it was just the perception and treatment of people around her.

Maria’s encounter with Father Cayetano’s love and care towards her was absurd and she later felt like it was all fantasy that she lives in. She could not understand the torment and the psychological trauma that she faced through all these process of her life. Her only wish was death. She just simply could not wait to die though she misses Father Cayetano during her stays in the cell. All these tropes and trauma forces her to accept death as a wish fulfillment, that would probably gives her peaceful rest from this tormented life. Thus, from the view point of psychoanalysis we may say that human beings are merely prone to “death drive” once in their lifetime driven by excessive trauma, torments and dissatisfied fulfillment of life. This goes beyond the pleasure principle that leads to destruction and violence. Therefore, adhering to Lacan’s concept of “real”, through the psychoanalytic symptom, i.e., “sinthome” an individual realizes of his emptiness and meaningless in life which is linked to nothingness, death and trauma.

In the novel we see that almost all the characters are living a life just wishing for their dead to come and no one really seems to care about their lives and family, and has no concern for the wealth fare of the society. Bernarda as an adulterer, besides her sexual affairs with Judas Iscariot, who was a thief and a pimp, she also had affairs with many young slaves’ men that she finds them handsome. With the psychological aspects of Marquez’s contemporary we can also identify Bernarda as a psychopath, who is cruel and rude to everyone around her, including her own husband and child.

Sierva Maria can be considered as the victim of the society’s imperfect practices. The way the people in the novel perceived things and their superstitious behavior can be regarded as “collective unconscious” of the community. Maria is believed to be demon posses from the rabid dog’s bite and they argued that she needs to be exorcised. Their beliefs on exorcism also show the practices of necromancy prevalent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The absurdity and foolishness of the people in the novel is seen when several physicians, pharmacists, magical healers and barber-surgeons did their trials and operations in Maria. “A barber-surgeon bathed the wound in her own urine, and another had her drink it” (Marquez 52). This situation is quite comic and

absurd. The Bishop and the nuns also contributes to the absurdity and foolishness of this community as they work together to exorcise Maria without any logical reasoning.

She (Maria) had suffered everything: vertigo, convulsions, spasms, deliriums, looseness of the bowels and bladder; and she rolled on the floor howling in pain and fury. Even the boldest healers left her to her fate, convinced she was mad or possessed by demons. (Marquez 52)

Maria happened to be the victim of all these kinds of society's imperfect practices and beliefs. Abrenuncio, known to be as the most controversial physician in the novel said, "was that she, like so many others, would die of the cruelty of the exorcism" (Marquez 125). In his interaction with Marquis, Abrenuncio argued, "I think that killing her would have been more Christian than burying her alive." (Marquez 76) From this we could clearly see how exorcism had become a means of torture for the victim and not a healing process.

Delaura replied to Abbess, "Even if she were not possessed by any demon, this poor creature is in the most propitious environment for becoming so" (Marquez 86). In some situation Father Cayetano Delaura served as a reasoning character in the novel. He once mentioned to the Bishop and asserts that the girl (Maria) is not possessed by any demons. His reasoning authority is seen when he challenged the reasoning of Abbess during their argument. "Just because the water was red, that did not mean it had to be blood, and even if it were, that did not mean it had to be diabolical" (Marquez 87). Referring to the condition of Sierva Maria he wants to reason out that not all dogs bite are rabies or that anything that makes people crazy cannot be regarded as demon possessed. Delaura, in some sense he is guided by his "ego" and he is aware of the "collective unconscious" where people tend to believe and follow their traditional lifestyle and practices without thinking of their moral values and ethics.

Garcia Marquez critiques the Catholic church of his contemporary. "...the marriage of a priest or nun would be so common it would shock no one" (Marquez 147). The church holds their own authority and legalized materials which are not permissible in the sight of religious setup.

### Conclusion

Besides slavery and race as the concurrent themes throughout the novel, contrasting psychology of men and women, love relationship and psychological trauma are presented in the novel. The psychological difference between the two opposite genders and their imagination and superstition affects their thinking and illusion the real world unconsciously. When an individual is bothered by the collective problems like political, religious and social concerns, one is carried away by the collective unconscious of the society. In *Of Love and Other Demons*, the beliefs of the community in the rabies bite, exorcism, superstitions and necromancy serves as "collective unconscious" of the community where Maria became the victim of their unconscious drives. As we look through the lens of psychoanalysis, the "collective unconscious" of the people is one that drives the novel further. In the text, the collective unconscious blending with magic realism serves as the backbone of the story. In addition, Gabriel Garcia Marquez also mastered in his subtle use of humor.

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