Modernity and Marginality in *Love in the Time of Cholera*

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The brilliant and complex prose of Gabriel García Márquez has still not been sufficiently analyzed for its ideological implications. His "paper human beings" (to use Roland Barthes's term for literature's men and women) both evokes and surpasses other prototypical literary representations as well as the actual protagonists of Latin American history. His patriarchs and matriarchs, his colonels, the lyricism and solitude of his lonely characters, his legendary and magical families, tenuously evoke known reality. At the same time, it is obvious that they are not susceptible to a literal reading. They victoriously transcend mere referentiality and at times appear to be figments of poetic license.

Criticism has generally identified the Latin American question in his work with certain elements related to basic political and economic problems. In this case, critics frequently limit themselves to demonstrating explicit references to a particular period which then would seem simply to lend authority to the documentary basis that supports the second term of the well-known formula, "magic realism." It is true that the discourse of transnational capitalism, the themes of civil war, of power, the failure of institutions, repression, and popular resistance constantly surface in García Márquez' texts, but they constitute more a background, an inevitable referential framework that is nevertheless mediated by the excesses of fantasy. Even "la violencia," the period of violence in Colombia in the forties and fifties, is absorbed into his stories much in the way that the Mexican Revolution is absorbed into the stories of Juan Rulfo. This is compatible with the statements that García Márquez has made on more than one occasion—that he wishes to focus on the repercussions of violence rather than on its causes or its application.[1] In any case, attempts at ideological analysis have not yet tackled the structures underlying the

narrative as a whole nor the deployment of this ideological structure within contemporary Latin America.[2]

The world of García Márquez is both familiar and remote to the reader. It is influenced on the one hand by the Cuban Revolution and yet at the same time, it is focussed on the turn of the century. On the one hand, García Márquez's narrative obeys the stylistic requirements of "high art," and yet it comes under the diverse influences of popular culture. To literature, it restores its time-honored mission of entertaining by means of the mere act of narrating, suggesting that the texture in which the real and the imaginary, the autobiographical and the collective, are intermingled has no justification beyond the revival of the "forgotten art of telling stories."[3]

No other work illustrates this so completely as *Love in the Time of Cholera*, for what is instantly obvious in this novel is the manner in which the author reworks in an incredibly fresh style the clichés of romanticism or rather, as he himself acutely puts it, "the late romanticism of the Caribbean."[4] In fact the novel can be seen as a kind of frieze on which are displayed all possible stages of love—in youth and old age, Platonic and erotic, lawful and unlawful, ephemeral and eternal, childlike yet sublime.

The story details the "sentimental education" of Florentino Ariza, a prototype of the " mad hero," and his faithfulness to a youthful love which can be consummated only after half a century.[5] The linking of love and old age constitutes a distinct thematic emphasis of the narrative. What distinguishes the novel would thus appear to be the challenge of taking on a seemingly worn-out theme—one that has had such as significant role in Western culture especially in the nineteenth century, and the insertion of this theme into the "third age," which has been so poorly represented in literature. This "mise en abîme" at the thematic level is counterbalanced by the deceptively simple plot and structure. Once again García Márquez's narrative seems to float off in a sumptuous exercise of virtuosity into the freedom of lyrical pleasure.[6] In this essay, I wish to offer a different reading of the Colombian writer's novel. I am, however, less interested in probing beneath the "surface structure" of the work than in exploring the scope of a narrative method that I hope will illuminate elements to be found in the rest of García Márquez's writing.

Symmetry as a Structuring Principle

García Márquez has himself commented intuitively (but with some accuracy) on the symmetrical construction of *Love in the Time of Cholera*:

> The novel tends towards symmetry. It has an axis and as the axis moves towards the left or the right, the structure is reflected in the two parallel parts. [The structure], therefore, tends towards symmetry until it finds its center, though I do not know exactly where this lies—perhaps at the moment when Fermina who is already an old woman comes back from a journey, meets Florentino in a movie theater where he for the first time realizes that she is an old woman.[7]

On the temporal level, there is an obvious symmetry because the novel generally follows the structure of biography, but there are other forms of symmetry with wider implications.[8] The most obvious of these is the thematic symmetry provided by the love triangle of Fermina, her husband and Florentino. At various moments of their lives and in different ways, Fermina answers to the needs of both men and in great measure their lives are shaped by this response. Her "regulating function"[9] rests on her capacity to control the laws that rule the lives of the other two people to such an extent that García Márquez himself was able to summarize her narrative function thus: "she is the strong one, Fermina Daza. She is the novel."[10]

However this central role of the female character is no more than the anecdote that underlies a "deeper" symmetry. In effect, the novel juxtaposes beneath the thematic surface not only two different male characters with different world views, but also the tense coexistence of two social projects.

In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, García Márquez to some extent reworks the suspense novel. The conflict between the two projects is latent, for the author sacrifices the dramatic possibilities of conflict to a temporal development whose melancholy overtones are a sign of the times. The fin-de-siècle nostalgia sublimates violence and possible antagonisms by suggesting that there is a time and a place for everything and by means of a well-defined individualism which has the effect of a false consciousness. As Dr. Urbino remarks, "the

century changes for everyone except for us," a class vision that is validated by the author himself.[11]

In any case, the text offers the reader two diverse articulations between the individual and the social reality of the historical period in the Caribbean cultural area which is the setting of the novel. Both are symmetrically arranged around the female character whose function as link and catalyst I will explain later on. The first of these articulations corresponds to the project of modernization and is actualized in Dr. Urbino, a professional man of refined tastes educated in Europe who enjoys great social prestige. The second articulation is that represented by Florentino Ariza, the exaggerated *criollo* romantic who is actualized in the novel through progressively more archaic models.[12] Non-productive, a dilettante, self-centered, Florentino incarnates the values of the past, which he perpetuates and projects with moving persistence. His status as a "problematic hero" consists precisely in that persistence of romantic attitudes in an era of change and in his marginality with respect to manners and characters through whom the social order and dominant values are expressed. Both projects coexist in the "time of cholera," an expression that refers to a period of natural violence when progress had not yet managed to control social evils (city sanitation, political turbulence) or natural evils (sickness). Because of this conventional link between love and illness, the novel again conceals its basic problematic.[13]

The theme of love allows the representation and the confrontation of two different cultural orders which are revealed through taste, values, language, and attitudes. Along with the theme of old age, this adds a temporal element that not only carries the representational possibilities to the extreme but also converts conflicts into processes and stages into cycles.

The exploration of love takes place both on a vertical and a horizontal plane. The vertical aspect consists of a detailed demonstration and in-depth exploration. The horizontal aspect unfolds the evolution of the affair. The exploration of both horizontal and vertical axes corresponds to the "problematic hero," Florentino Ariza, who is committed to no project other than himself. At the same time, both masculine heroes are ideological representations. Each one incarnates a social project expressed through different symbols. For Dr. Urbino, cholera demonstrates the vulnerability of a social order that he struggles to ameliorate and that demands progress and

modernization. The cholera epidemic is the objective proof both of his limitations and his need for a Utopian project. For Florentino, navigation symbolizes his marginalization. His constant passage across the boundaries of a social system into which he is never integrated, which he crosses or passes through without ever staying in one place, provides a continuous and intuitive life apprenticeship. Secondly and significantly, there is his writing which is a mode of expression, of persuasion or pretense and which provides the strategies by means of which he seeks access to the system, while displaying romantic faith in the word.[14]

The class origins of both characters, the social and private spaces in which they move, their ways of living over a period of time, their pleasures, their relationship to convention, their place within the workforce, their connections with the community all indicate the varied levels on which separately and symmetrically they are articulated with the social system. Both come together in relation to a woman whose character deliberately represents upward social mobility into a higher class and the consolidation of a social position through marriage. Fermina acts both as nexus between the two male characters and as a stabilizing mechanism because of her ability to operate in both registers and to use time in her favor. The ideological structuring of the novel and its reconstruction of the fin de siècle aesthetic apparatus thus correspond to this two-fold scheme by which the social division that heralded the new century is revealed.

Modernization

In his important book, *The Poverty of Progress*, E. Bradford Burns calls attention to the importance of modernizing projects as well as to "the ideology of progress" as catalysts in a devastating cultural struggle that took place in Latin America during the second half of the nineteenth century. The elite, spurred by the desire to emulate the developed countries, encouraged projects of urbanization and industrialization which were opposed to national reality, to tradition and to the needs of most of the population. This created a dramatic split between the potential wealth of the continent and the people's daily lives. As Burns indicates, progress and modernization were the words most commonly used in the political vocabulary of the period:

> Both words, used interchangeably hereafter, implied an admiration for the latest ideas, modes, values, inventions, and styles of Europe and the United States and a desire to adopt—rarely to adapt—them. The elites believed that "to progress" meant to recreate their nations as closely as possible to their European and North American models. They felt they would benefit from such a recreation, and by extension they assumed that their nations would benefit as well. They always identified (and confused) class well-being with national welfare.[15]

Nevertheless, as a consequence of the tension produced by the conflict between the modernization project and the alternatives that manifested themselves at the popular level, "violence emerged as a leitmotif of the nineteenth century. . . ."[16]

The period of technological change, political violence and uneven development of different social classes is well represented in *Love in the Time of Cholera* in the role of the elites in putting into effect a European model which was firmly underpinned by the ideology of positivism. Dr. Juvenal Urbino functions within the novel as the flagbearer of ideas and values associated with modernization. Educated in Paris, involved in public works, he is a rational man who at the same time loves the arts; he functions in the novel as the prototype of that sector of the privileged class that accepts the ideology of "order and progress" that it considers to be above sectarian party politics:

> Although he had always been considered a Liberal and had been in the habit of voting for that party's candidates, it was more a question of tradition than conviction, and he was perhaps the last member of the great families who still knelt in the street when the Archbishop's carriage drove by. He defined himself as a natural pacifist, a partisan of definitive reconciliation between Liberals and Conservatives for the good of the nation. But his public conduct was so autonomous that no group claimed him for its own: the Liberals considered him a Gothic troglodyte, the Conservatives said he was almost a Mason, and the Masons repudiated him as a secret cleric in the service of the Holy See. His less savage critics thought he was just an aristocrat enraptured by the delights of the Poetic Festival while the nation bled to death in an endless civil war. (44)

His expeditions to Paris (from which he returns steeped in rationalism and dazzled by the latest technological inventions) reaffirm his Messianic role with respect to the dispossessed classes—a role that corresponds to the enlightened paternalism of the elites of the period.

The cholera epidemic brings him, as a guardian of social health, into contact with his social milieu. His incursions into the marginal are rapid and infrequent, but they serve to corroborate his values and his belief that "the city, his city, stood unchanging on the edge of time: the same burning dry city of his nocturnal terrors and the solitary pleasures of puberty, where flowers rusted and salt corroded, where nothing had happened for four centuries except a slow aging among withered laurels and putrefying swamps" (16).

The promiscuous vitality of the slave quarters, that "death-trap of the poor," which Juvenal Urbino visits at the beginning of the novel, contrasts with the "European coherence" of his mansion furnished with Turkish carpets, Sèvres porcelain, and boasting a music room and a splendid library in which a parrot sings French as a sign of the symbiosis of Europeanization and Caribbean culture.

Around the figure of Juvenal Urbino the author weaves a socio-economic network that is the index of modernity. The inauguration of air mail, balloon rides, the progress of navigation, of ground transport and the media, register the practical effects of fin-de-siècle modernization. The ideas of progress and development were conflated, so that progress was generally measured against external factors or by means of quantitative indices that did not take into account with any precision the privileging of certain social sectors because of development and the relation between these sectors and the potential wealth of the nation.[17]

Modernization presupposes social order, but nevertheless it coexists with violence. Cholera, violence and modernization form a representational triad that is early perceived in the novel. Thus, for example, at the beginning of the fifth section, when Dr. Urbino and his wife make their first trip in a balloon for the celebration of the new century, they observe through a telescope the banana plantations and discover a number of dead bodies which they attribute to the cholera epidemic.

"Well, it must be a very special form of cholera," [Urbino] said, "because every single corpse has received the coup de grace through the back of the neck" (117).

The ideas of reason, progress, social prestige and integration and public duty come together in the character of Juvenal Urbino and the social sector he represents; his social orgin and vital experience, stand in physical and psychological contrast to Florentino Ariza, who serves as a kind of anti-model.

Marginality

Florentino Ariza represents not so much a coherent and conscious alternative to modernization as, on the one hand, a vitality that escapes the control of instrumental reason and, on the other hand, a neo-romanticism that marks the persistence of tradition. As a synthesis of both these aspects, he actualizes the values of national culture as against European-style modernization which imposes its model of progress without respecting national identity.

In a social medium dominated by the ideology of progress, elite supremacy, and technological change, his character develops as an implied challenge to these hegemonic values. Florentino moves in marginal spaces (the lower-class neighborhoods of the city and brothels): he is a bastard and his vulnerable and somber appearance symbolizes his social condition. In describing him, the author invokes a racial aspect that reinforces the marginality that he shares with broad sectors of Latin America which are thrust towards the periphery of the system along with the "poor mulattos" who inhabit the city slums. In contrast to the dashing and worthy image of Dr. Urbino, Florentino Ariza was "bony and erect, his skin dark and clean-shaven, his eyes avid behind round spectacles in silver frames" (44).

The motif of the journey (which implies change and displacement, whether of a positive or negative nature) is constantly associated in the novel with his character and function. Yet, he only makes two journeys, the first after Fermina's wedding, when he is "raped" and thus arrives at the conclusion that "his illusory love for Fermina Daza could be replaced by an earthly passion" (p. 143). The second journey takes place at the end of the novel when he sails with Fermina Daza. However, his job with the shipping company constantly associates him with movement, an association that is also suggested (though more symbolically) by the promiscuity of his love life, which is a process of constant displacement from one woman to

another, a kind of pilgrimage in which he goes through all the variations of sexuality and all of its transgressions. In his case, travel does not signifiy cultural and rational enlightenment as it does for Urbino on his expeditions to Europe, nor does it signify an escape as it does in the case of Fermina Daza's "journey of forgetting." For Florentino, the journey is the affirmation—and towards the end of the novel the perpetuation—of marginality.

Like the succession of casual affairs that make up his life and which coexist with his love for Fermina, transition implies for him the centrifugal move to a space on the periphery which, however, is always governed by its center. Florentino moves in the underworld of clandestine love affairs that provoke social censorship while at the same time he simultaneously conducts a constant courtship of Fermina, who, along with the aura and the values that surround her, is transformed into the permanent object of his desire. Florentino's ambition is to overcome his anonymity, and to gain access (however minimally) into the social system governed by principles and norms that are alien to his class and that systematically exclude him. His very constitutive articulation of love and old age situates him on a vital frontier which is beyond the limits established by a society whose governing principle is productivity (associated with the values of youth and social integration). Love at the age when Florentino and Fermina consummate theirs is "revolting" (323), a comment that speaks eloquently of the rigidity of the dominant conventions. The final journey up and down the river concentrates the motifs of love, old age, boat-travel, plague, marginality, social rejection and political violence, in a *summa* that is prolonged endlessly: "Forever" (348).

But love, in any form, is always somewhat marginal, for it is a rebellion against the conventions and values of a society entering rapidly into modernization. Its secrecy acts as a stimulus; obstacles make it more intense; even promiscuity makes it flower with extraordinary vital energy. It is alternatively "cataclysm," "lightning," "a deathly fall." It implies voracity, excess, and its symptoms are similar to those of "the disaster of cholera." Even Fermina associates "pleasure with secrecy" (128) and devotes herself to "solitary love," which awakens pangs of conscience (153–54). Only the domesticity that comes with marriage sets bounds to all the excesses of instinct and feeling, transforming love into something that might "almost be love" (205)—which is certainly not true of Florentino Ariza. In his case his singularity and his marginality are a way of life

and a style that he cultivates by appropriating all the apparatus of romanticism as a parodic reconstruction which combines the romantic fin-de-siècle novel and women's popular romances. Here he is on the eve of the journey that will separate him temporarily from Fermina:

> At midnight he put on his Sunday suit and went to stand alone under Fermina Daza's balcony to play the love waltz he had composed for her, which was known only to the two of them and which for three years had been the emblem of their frustrated complicity. He played, murmuring the words, his violin bathed in tears, with an inspiration so intense that with the first measures the dogs on the street and then dogs all over the city began to howl, but then, little by little, they were quieted by the spell of the music, and the waltz ended in supernatural silence. (138)

Florentino reveals his eccentricity, by using all the resources of romantic tradition to court the woman who is the center of his interest. Serenade, poems, roses, love letters, perfume, all possible forms of compliment are transformed by a character who "could not avoid lyricism" (171) into an obsessive and singular form of communication.

Writing is one of his main strategies and it ranges from the telegraphic network he controls because of his work to the letters he writes, first as a personal expression and later, when he becomes the secretary of "unlettered lovers," as a clandestine profession allied to pretense and anonymity.

The world of Florentino is tinged by his exaltation of passion which parodies the self-centeredness of the romantic hero ("Florentino Ariza wrote everything with so much passion that even official documents seemed to be about love" [167]). He eventually becomes "involved in a feverish correspondence with himself" (172), sublimating his own sentimental energy by becoming an adviser to those in love: "he had so much love left over inside that he did not know what to do with it, and he offered it to unlettered lovers free of charge in the Arcade of Scribes" (171). But he is once again marginal and he practises a vicarious activity.

Along with commercial and amorous writing, he participates as a creative writer in the poetry competition and he also compiles a record in a coded book which is given the title "Women" and which

recounts the story of his amorous adventures. There were "some twenty-five notebooks, with six hundred twenty-two entries of long-term liaisons, apart from the countless fleeting adventures that did not even deserve a charitable note" (152).

Florentino carries to the extreme attributes that are also present in other characters of the novel who are still marked by traces of romanticism. And it is he who actualizes the model that is developed in contrast to the dominant ideology of modernization. It is precisely this expansion of individualism and passion almost *ad infinitum*—the rebellion against social conventions and the impositions of age, the marginality assumed and transformed into a trump card by Florentino Ariza—that constitutes a counterpart to positivistic quantification and the exclusionary "progressiveness" of the elites.

In this disjunction, Fermina Daza represents a link that permits the confluence of those two visions of the world which, though in many ways incompatible, still never explode into open conflict. Daughter of a *nouveau riche* mule trader, a coarse man who is concerned with transforming her into a great lady, Fermina Daza consolidates her social situation by means of her marriage to Dr. Urbino. She thus enters a social circle that, however, never completely accepts her and that imposes its conventions on her. Because of her origin, her "untamed character," her tastes, her language, Fermina is always presented to the reader as a character who is identified with the popular sectors. Her social rank after her marriage with Urbino does not prevent her rejection by the upper-class families and her feeling of "always being in someone else's house" (207), nor her awareness of the fact that "[s]he had been caught up more quickly than she had believed in the tangle of conventions and prejudices of her new world" (208). The conflict with the manners and customs of the upper class is obvious:

> She was ashamed of their custom of setting the banquet table every day with embroidered table cloths, silver service, and funereal candelaba so that five phantoms could dine on *café con leche* and crullers. She detested the rosary at dusk, the affected table etiquette, the constant criticism of the way she held her silverware, the way she walked in mystical strides like a woman in the streets, the ways she dressed as if she were in the circus, and even the rustic way she treated her husband and nursed her child without covering her breast with a mantilla. (207)

Although she shares her husband's way of life and throughout their marriage is a loyal companion, Fermina is "an irrational idolater of tropical flowers and domestic animals" (21), and up to the end rejects the oppressiveness of city life. Her ability to function—despite reservations—within the local elite and at the same time to understand the code of anachronistic popular romanticism that is closely linked to national tradition makes her not only an intermediary between two social projects and two clearly differentiated lifestyles but also the privileged witness to the conflict between tradition and modernity that was part of that period of transition. Her upward social mobility also illustrates an inter-class dynamic that attenuates latent antagonisms, revealing the possibilities of order and coexistence that appeared at the beginning of the century as an indispensable requirement for the realization of the projects of the dominant class. Thus, the ritual manner in which she approaches Florentino during the commemorative mass for Juvenal Urbino in the cathedral signifies a transgression not only of convention but of the social boundaries:

> Throughout almost the whole ceremony, Fermina Daza stood in the family pew in front of the main altar, as elegant as when she attended the opera. But when it was over she broke with convention and did not stay in her seat, according to the custom of the day, to receive the spiritual award of condolences, but made her way instead through the crowd to thank each one of the guests: an innovative gesture that was very much in harmony with her style and character. Greeting one guest after another, she at last reached the pews of the poor relations, and then she looked around to make certain she had not missed anyone she knew. At that moment Florentino Ariza felt a supernatural wind lifting him out of himself: she had seen him. Fermina Daza moved away from her companions with the same assurance she brought to everything in society, held out her hand, and with a sweet smile, said to him:
>
> "Thank you for coming." (298)

Towards a Critique of Modernity

The final message of the novel is not however one of universal harmony. Rather it depicts "an unstable equilibrium" and a

precarious correlation between the almost definitive breakdown of the romantic novel and its conjunction with modernity. Florentino is victorious in his quest as a survivor of a cultural system in open retreat, thanks to the fact that he had accepted his own marginality within a system that consistently relegated him to that position. Despite his outward appearance towards the end of the novel (bald, toothless, "a lame old man whose back burned with a burro's saddle sores" (327), he is nevertheless an example of defiant vitality and ready to affirm his rights to the end and even from the limits of the system and under the plague flag. He and Fermina are witnesses to the definitive collapse of the romantic framework on their final journey along a devastated river that was "only an illusion of memory":

> Captain Samaritano explained to them how fifty years of uncontrolled deforestation had destroyed the river: the boilers of the riverboats had consumed the thick forest of colossal trees that had oppressed Florentino Ariza on his first voyage. Fermina Daza would not see the animals of her dreams: the hunters for skins from the tanneries in New Orleans had exterminated the alligators that, with yawning mouths, had played dead for hours on end in the gullies along the shore as they lay in wait for butterflies, the parrots with their shrieking and the monkeys with their lunatic screams had died out as the foliage was destroyed, the manatees with their great breasts that had nursed their young and wept on the banks in a forlorn woman's voice were an extinct species, annihilated by the armored bullets of hunters for sport. (331)

The nostalgic and emotional tone of this evocative description reaffirms the value of a culture in which nature and the human are identified. The practical, the aesthetic and the moral appear increasingly as diverging paths determined by what—from a critical perspective on modernity—could be considered the supremacy of "instrumental reason." Everyday life is definitely colonized by new patterns of behaviour and values that mark a break with tradition. The practices of exploitation and economic penetration conveyed through images of violence are a sign of the new times: "In a few years, we'll ride the dry river bed in luxury automobiles" (337). The advent of modernity also includes political violence: "the larval wars that governments were bent on hiding with distracting decrees" (337) or

the swollen bodies floating down the river that the captain is ordered to explain as victims of drowning accidents (336).

This progressive yet decadent vision of the end of the century is thus not homogeneous. Rather it is constituted thanks to the coexistence of social projects (one emergent and dominant, the other in retreat, linked to tradition and national values) which are intertwined like life and death at the beginning of the new century. The narrative achievement of *Love in the Time of Cholera* thus consists very largely in the representation of diverse forms of individual and collective consciousness articulated to the social imaginary by means of diverse cultural links and aesthetically dependent on the parody of the romantic code. Vitalism and rationalism, modernization and tradition, Europeanization and popular culture, integration and marginality thus constitute poles in an ideological complex basically composed of Utopian projects that raise the question of the imposition of or resistance to foreign models, a question that is still basic to contemporary nations.

With the affirmation, towards the end of the novel, that "it is life, more than death, than has no limits" (348), the novel seems also to raise the question of what life-forms Latin America has received from modernity. Clearly the text ultimately reveals cultural and ideological heterogeneity to be the characteristic of social development in the nations of Latin America, revealing the diversity of projects not only as ideological and political programs but also as differentiated forms of knowledge and deconstructions of reality. It is also evident that this heterogeneity does not imply pastiche (eclectic and uncritical coexistence), but rather the simultaneous existence of alternative projects, each one of which represents diverse sectorial interests and follows its own operative and representational logic.

In this sense, the novel is, like other texts in the narrative saga of García Márquez, a reflection on power. Except that here, more than in his other works, underlying the pleasurable anecdotes that compose the novel, the ideological field is clearly marked. The dominant project alone enjoys the privilege of legality and it alone becomes institutionalized. Florentino achieves a late, private and clandestine happiness thanks to the persistence of an invincible subjectivity which achieves a relative victory on the margins of the system and at the very threshold of death. This treatment of a "limit situation" represented by the character who confronts change, the passage of time and conventions is significant. On the one hand, it is obvious that the work constitutes a reflection on the *social order* and, specifically, on the

neopositivist and liberal rationalism that guided the organization of national states during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It is also evident that this reflection does not lead to a focalization of concrete and well-known aspects of the society represented, nor does it lead to an investigation of the basic causes that gave rise to the transition to modernity. Rather on various levels, it reveals the conflict between diverse articulations of the individual within the cultural horizon of the time. García Márquez projects this problem through the representation of a world fragmented not only by class stratification, but also by showing a process of cultural dismemberment that gradually transforms the social totality into a plurality of spheres (economic, political, moral, administrative, aesthetic, scientific, emotional [21]). The break that for García Márquez marks a new stage is not only between past and present but between the different areas that constitute social totality and which are in a process of disintegration. Each sphere functions according to its own logic in a world of increasing specialization and professionalization exemplified in the practices of both male characters. Through Urbino, medicine reveals its Messianic public task, its integration into the logical of modernization and progress; it is a universalizing practice that applies the formulae of a European model to a different reality, thus furthering to a great extent the breakup of national identity. In Florentino, "professionalism" takes the form of the extreme exploration and extension of his skills as an epistolary writer, lover and romantic hero who is integrated into the labor system under the principal rubric of the modernizing project—transport and communications. It is true that these sectors take on a parodic aspect that reinforces in him the idea of marginality and not of integration, and are more of a celebration of his eccentric and anachronic characteristics. The critique of modernity thus takes the form of loyalty to the past, to individualism, the questioning of the effects of modernizing praxis, and a defense of national identity.

By romanticizing the force of the tradition and the vitality of the popular sectors, by showing the delayed effect of an anachronistic individual heroism, by glorifying voluntarism and by relativizing the effects of marginalization, García Márquez depicts in a personal way the drama of modernity. The challenge of interpreting the real ideological implications of an America that has gradually taken shape in text after text of the continent's best known writer is left to the reader.

NOTES

1. On the theme of violence in the work of García Márquez, see, for example, Ernesto González Bermejo, "García Márquez: ahora doscientos años de soledad," in Peter Earle ed. *Gabriel García Márquez* (Madrid:Taurus, 1982); Angel Rama, "Un novelista de la violencia latinoamericana," in Mario Benedetti et. al. *Nueve asedios a García Márquez* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1972); Lucila Inés Mena, "*Cien años de soledad*: Novela de 'La Violencia' " *Hispamérica* 13 (April 1976):3–23.
2. Page references are to Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, tr. Edith Grossman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). Despite the vast bibliography on Gabriel García Márquez, there is as yet no global study of the Latin American question, that is, no exploration of what image of America is projected in his narratives, what are the ideological consequences of this "tropical" vision of history and the social reality of the continent. However, new perspectives are opened by Víctor Farías in *Los manuscritos de Melquíades. Cien años de soledad, burguesía latinoamericana y dialéctica de la reproducción ampliada de negación.* (Frankfurt: Iberoamericana, 1981).
3. The phrase comes from Ricardo Gullón, "García Márquez o el olvidado arte de contar," in Peter Earle, *Gabriel García Márquez*.
4. Francisco Arroyo, "El amor, la vejez, la muerte" in *El País. Libros* 321 (Dec. 12, 1985):2.
5. Arroyo, *El País* mentions the links with Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale.* The idea of the "mad hero" is developed by José Miguel Oviedo, who in several novels identifies as a prototype the individual who throws himself into a cause that enslaves and sometimes destroys him. See "*El amor en los tiempos de cólera* de Gabriel García Márquez", *Vuelta* 114 (Mayo, 1986):33.
6. Oviedo, *Vuelta*, 37.
7. Arroyo, *El País*, 3.
8. In his *Teoría de la novela* (Barcelona:Edhasa, 1971), 80, Georg Lukács privileges biography because of its organic structure. The relation between this organic and vital development of the "problematic hero" of the novel and the search for an ideal that exposes the system of concepts and values that motivates him may be applied to Florentino Ariza. García Márquez, however, takes to the extreme of parody the possibilities of this genre.
9. Oviedo, *Vuelta*, 37.
10. Arroyo, *El País*, 2.
11. Arroyo, *El País*, 1.
12. Arroyo, *El País*, 2.
13. The association of love and plague is a tradition in literature, *Death in Venice*

being one example. In Arroyo, *El País* (3), García Márquez also points out that plague was still common in the area described by the novel until the end of the last century.

14. René Girard's notion of triangulated desire is relevant here. See *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, tr. Yvonne Freccero, (Baltimore:The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), although it would have to be historicized in the case of the novel under discussion.

15. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress. Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980):8–9.

16. Bradford Burns, *Poverty of Progress*, 17.

17. Bradford Burns, *Latin America. A Concise Interpretive History* (New York:Prentice Hall, 1982):87.

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