

“A Second Chance on Earth”:
The Postmodern and the
Post-apocalyptic in García Márquez’s
Love in the Time of Cholera

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On a day like today, my master William Faulkner said in this very place, “I refuse to admit the end of mankind.” I should not feel myself worthy of standing where he once stood were I not fully conscious that, for the first time in the history of humanity, the colossal disaster which he refused to recognize thirty-two years ago is now simply a scientific possibility. Face to face with a reality that overwhelms us, one which over man’s perceptions of time must have seemed a utopia, tellers of tales who, like me, are capable of believing anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to undertake the notion of a minor utopia: a new and limitless utopia for life wherein no one can decide for others how they are to die, where love really can be true and happiness possible, where the lineal generations of one hundred years of solitude will have at last and for ever a second chance on earth.

Gabriel García Márquez,
Nobel Address, 1982.
Trans. Richard Cardwell

In John Barth’s seminal 1980 essay on postmodernist fiction, “The Literature of Replenishment,” he singles out Gabriel García Márquez and his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as quintessential examples of the postmodern genre. For Barth, what distinguishes García Márquez’s fiction

is its "synthesis of straightforwardness and artifice, realism and magic and myth, political passion and nonpolitical artistry, characterization and caricature, [and] humor and terror" (71)—all elements that characterize him as "an exemplary postmodernist and a master of the storyteller's art" (71). Yet prior to the publication of *Love in the Time of Cholera*, García Márquez stated in an interview that his forthcoming book would deal with the rather traditional themes of the "consciousness" of "old age, love and death" (qtd. in Simons 18). An obvious aesthetic contradiction seems to present itself here: how can a writer of contemporary fiction be perceived as an innovative postmodernist and a traditional storyteller at the same time? A provisional placement of García Márquez and his fiction into the broad social and cultural contexts of literary postmodernism also opens numerous critical trapdoors because a number of recent commentators, ranging from David Lodge to Gerald Graff,¹ have attempted to define this contemporary "school" in terms of its specific characteristics. However, many of these defined traits—fictional self-reflexiveness, ironic commentary, fragmentation of the individual character, and various manifestations of literary recombination, recycling, and repetition of forms and genres—may seem more typical to that handful of North American postmodernists (Barth, Barthelme, and Pynchon are the usual designates) who have received a plethora of critical attention. In García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, this brand of literary postmodernism exists, but within the context of more traditionally expressed themes.

One such traditional theme that pervades the novel and serves to counter what theorists such as Gerald Graff and Todd Gitlin see as the inevitablist and fatalistic tendencies of much postmodern fiction² is a certain counterstrain of "left-over" humanism that García Márquez employs. That is, in the climate of a postmodern culture encourages a kind of "cultural anesthesia" and the fictional chronicling of contemporary anxieties of "aftermath, privatization, [and] weightlessness" (Gitlin 36), García Márquez's new novel seems vehement in dismissing such options of literary escapism. Instead, he chooses to look beyond the apocalyptic impetuses of a "numb, recombitant" (Gitlin 36) postmodern fiction and to present a novel refreshingly traditional (or, one might say, *post-apocalyptic*) in its assumption that "old age, love and death" as human virtues *can* survive the "blast" (here, the metaphor for apocalypse being the cholera epidemic), that subsurface feeling *can* incubate in and be unearthed from the fallout ashes, that the resources for self-renewal, contrary to the inevitablist theories, *are* possible. To all of these assumptions the fifty-year, nine-month, and four-day love affair of Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza surely attests. *Love in the Time of Cholera* thus becomes García Márquez's answer to the seemingly apocalyptic ending of his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: now, some twenty years later, humanity *is* endowed with the respite of "at last and for ever a

second chance on earth," and what to the postmodern theorists may seem an inevitable despair becomes to the fictional creator of the "world" of the novel a humanistic finality and hope.

The humanistic question that *Love* addresses, however, seems crucial to the future of contemporary fiction, postmodern or otherwise: if "the end is near" or has already enveloped us, is it possible for a "new and saving *post-fiction*" (Bradbury 17) to emerge, one capable of retaining a "whole" depiction of the individual and of rescuing art from: its presently corrupted status, "hip deep in debris" (Gitlin 35)? With this question in mind, a possibly misguided effort of attempting to pigeonhole García Márquez and *Love in the Time of Cholera* into one or another critical camp—modernism, postmodernism, magical realism, or others—may be valuable only inasmuch as it helps illuminate the novel as the product of a progressively humanistic contemporary sensibility. By the standards of Gitlin's above-cited argument, García Márquez would have to be grounded in something closer to a modern, and *not* postmodern, literary tradition because it would seem to be the modernist belief that art serves as *some* kind of "declaration of faith"—in God, in philosophy, or at least in the defined aesthetic of the work itself. As Raymond Leslie Williams sees it, García Márquez and other Latin American "boom" writers of the past two decades clearly follow a modernist "shaping" aesthetic of employing literary techniques "to seek order and express the ineffable in a world lacking order and waiting to be named" (7). The problem with this analysis, as Williams readily admits, is that García Márquez is not "consistently" modern—that is, in much of his fiction he at times seems to "cross-over" to a postmodern mode of writing that "subverts rather than seeks order, and has language as its primary subject" (Williams 8-9). Certainly the "language-as-subject" definition of postmodernism is valid for *all* of García Márquez's novels; and *Love*, with its lyricism and highly stylized embellishments, is no exception. But we should weigh this definition against more seemingly pessimistic analyses of postmodern fiction: if, as Gerald Graff claims, the postmodern mode represents a corrupt aesthetic based solely on "narcissism and artistic self-contempt" ("The Myth" 398) and has as its only objective the "conscious subversiveness of [the] literary past" ("The Myth" 403), is it possible to find an appropriate niche in such a hard-nosed "school" for the often blatantly humanistic García Márquez?

Love in the Time of Cholera may indeed qualify as and cross-over into postmodernism because of García Márquez's "living off borrowed materials" and his recycling of past cultural debris (Gitlin 36). In fact, Robert Fiddian's analysis of the novel finds García Márquez consciously parodying the nineteenth-century *follétin*,³ hence producing a postmodern novel in which literary stereotypes are repudiated both in character and style and a lachrymose love story "masquerad[es] as a nineteenth-century work" (Fiddian

192). But such a reading assumes quite a bit—that García Márquez did set out systematically to burlesque a specific past literary genre, that Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza were deliberately framed in comic-parodic terms, that García Márquez's language was purposely melodramatized and hence is reducible to a form of obvious farce that comments on a hackneyed former genre. Yet this seems overly reductionistic to the other extreme: the novel not as broad-minded humanism but merely as a postmodern ironic pastiche—a statement of anti-humanism—of such forms of ridiculous emotional high-mindedness. A modified approach between these extremes of literary branding—that is, the novel as modern declaration of faith or as postmodern “trashing” of faith—might be suggested by García Márquez's apparently fatalistic brand of humanism⁴ as it surfaces in the novel, or by a faith in the renewal of human emotions that is partially tainted by the author's foreknowledge of death. Such a compromise positioning of *Love*—neither pure faith in the immutability of man nor outright debunking of his pretentious nature—may better serve its authorial intent and relieve it from an “either/or” status in terms of its “place” in the contemporary literary canon.

The novel is loosely “about” one of those conventions of the nineteenth-century *follétin*: the “love triangle,” here of Dr. Juvenal Urbino, his wife, Fermina Daza, and Florentino Ariza, the love-sick poet who has waited “fifty years, nine months, and four days” to restate a pledge of “eternal fidelity and everlasting love” (50)⁵ to Fermina, the now elderly sweetheart of his youth. Certainly the tone for a melodramatic, lachrymose portrayal of the trials of unrequited love is established (as Fiddian suggests), but perhaps García Márquez wants us to take him, and his seemingly stereotypical characters, more literally than we at first want to or believe we can (late twentieth-century wallowers in the “debris” and disillusionment of postmodern culture that we are). What are the implications, for instance, of a character like Florentino Ariza, a hopeless romantic who takes on the obstacles of both cultural restrictions and the finite nature of time—in this case, a half-century of *his* life—like a “stubborn warrior against age and death, and in the name of [eternal] love” (Pynchon 47) for a fickle teenage girl who long ago jilted him? To turn such a character into an absurd, parodic model of a past literary “type” would be the knee-jerk postmodernist response. After all, most insightful postmodern fiction writers have realized that literary “characters” are little more than “sentimental attachments [which have] decomposed” (see Gitlin 35) like the culture around them, or that such writers with their savage wit are helping to disassemble. Who in our contemporary cultural milieu would take seriously (or with a straight-face) the description of a female “heroine” (even this word betrays a “sentimental” bias that has by now been overwhelmingly abandoned) like *Love*'s Fermina Daza, a “beautiful adolescent with . . . almond shaped

eyes" and with the "natural haughtiness . . . [of] her doe's gait making her seem immune to gravity" (56)? Most characters of postmodern literature are *hardly* so defined, if they are defined at all.⁶ Without any clear bearings within the massiveness of society, the postmodern character is not a quester after any individual definition of the self (as may be true for a modern character like Jay Gatsby) but instead exudes complacency and, like Barthelme's bored Snow White, embodies "the comic impossibility of heroism in a world paralyzed by self-consciousness" (Graff, "Babbitt" 326).

But taken seriously in a traditional sense as well as comically in a post-modern one, *Love's* characters, specifically Florentino and Fermina, stand as ideal projections of the possibility of human emotionality, even within a drab postmodern society that stifles "the real news of subsurface feeling" (Gitlin 36). It is as if García Márquez has endowed his characters with enough traits of traditional humanistic belief to balance whatever postmodern features may be working to disassemble them.⁷ Unlike his contemporary, Robbe-Grillet, who believes that the "death of character" is the necessary end result of a fiction that, like the culture that bore it, is morally defunct and socially fragmented, García Márquez feels that the resources for "self"-renewal *are* possible, that the human character and its fictional counterpart need not be sucked into the vacuum of a cultural entropy, that the "resurrection of the human body" (Pynchon 47) and a corresponding faith in human immutability, though at present fashionably scoffed at, *are* achievable, albeit only in a created "minor utopia." Such a traditional humanistic faith is "revolutionary," as Pynchon puts it (47), because it stands in dogged resistance to the "cultural anesthesia" (Gitlin 36) that a postmodern society is supposed to foster. The audacity of a character's actually believing in a concept as ephemeral as "eternal love" (and surely Florentino does, though his life-long series of sexual liaisons somewhat lessen or make comic his sincerity)—a concept we all assumed long ago dead, or at least ripe presently for parodic debasement—in essence challenges the belief that a postmodern culture necessitates emotional death.

Similarly, the defined "wholeness" of García Márquez's characters, complete with broad-ranging human feelings and desires, suggests that he is not willing to "coast down the [postmodern] currents of least resistance" (Gitlin 36) as far as man's transformative power over himself and his present environment is concerned. Florentino's fifty-year wait for "everlasting love" seems to be the strongest metaphor for this authorial thrust: the depiction of a *post*-"cultural anesthesia" stage in which, after years of having to *refuse* to feel, the character converts his deprivation into an all-the-more acute, cathartic emotional response. Instead of taking us down those currents of least resistance like a good postmodernist should, García Márquez tosses the readers of *Love* upon the rapids of the "reborn" emotional response: we drift from an apocalyptic freeze or cauterization of emotions to

the tropical heat or vitality of a finally consummated, long-incubating love affair. If Florentino and Fermina can be called "postmodern" characters, therefore, it is only in the role they play as embodiments of the "saving post-fiction" that García Márquez, much like Saul Bellow in his character-dominated, humanistic novels (Bradbury 17-19), seems determined to create. "Aftermath, privatization [and] weightlessness" (Gitlin 36) may be the milieu of our postmodern culture, but the *post*-state to the deprivation of feeling seems to be a more intense counter-response to the years of emotional subterfuge, a state tied intrinsically to García Márquez's "minor utopia" of history and setting that is his fictional world of the novel.

What is particular about the setting and history of *Love*, unlike its predecessor *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, is the sense in which "magical realism"⁸ is no longer a necessary prerequisite to the making of the Garciamárquezine novelistic environment. As Pynchon sees it in his review of the novel, the "reality" of love and the possibility of its ultimate extinction become *Love*'s "indispensable driving forces," whereas magic in all its guises and forms becomes peripheralized or "at least more thoughtfully deployed in the service of an expanded vision, matured, darker than before but no less clement" (49). This is not to say that *all* trace of "magic"—i.e., the plague of insomnia, the ascension of Remedios the Beauty in *One Hundred Years*—is missing in *Love*: there is something ultimately "unreal" and comic in the narrator's casual calculation of Florentino's 622 "long-term liaisons, apart from . . . countless fleeting adventures" (152) during the romantic's life in seclusion from his "real" love, Fermina, for example. But this novel of "aftermath" presents more definably a sequel or follow-up stage to what Gerald Martin sees as García Márquez's switch to *social* (and, hence, traditional) reality as opposed to magical reality, a switch that occurs with the so-called "apocalyptic" ending of *One Hundred Years* (111). Certainly in *Love* García Márquez is "creating" his own fictional world in that ontological sense that Brian McHale sees as requisite to any postmodern novel (10),⁹ yet in terms of the post-apocalyptic thesis suggested earlier, *Love* can be viewed as symbolic of a particular period of historical *de*-evolution in Latin America. In the setting of a small Colombian coastal town, a rough composite of Cartagena, the home of the author's parents, and Baranquilla, during the half-century of Florentino Ariza's incubating love, significant social and historical changes transpire in Latin America's perception of itself as a dream-land at last awakening to form a new reality from the fragments of cultural debris that remain. Here, then, the postmodern and the traditional are colliding on the same fictional plane: although the characters must employ so-called postmodern methods of recycling and recombination to revitalize their environment, they must do so in a less than magical world and through the power of their own human potentialities. In this sense, as Aureliano Babilinia's "deciphering" of the manuscripts of

history at the close of *One Hundred Years* signals the end of historical era of neo-colonialism and the apocalyptic starting point for a people's new definition of themselves (Martin 112), so the finally consummated love of Florentino and Fermina in old age as the climax of *Love* signals the beginning of a "new era," a post-apocalyptic one that sees the return to traditional humanistic values as its wellspring of hope.

In this far-reaching cultural sense, therefore, it is possible to see why García Márquez chose the period 1880–1930 in which to shape his allegory of "aftermath and privatization" and the possibilities for cultural continuation that proceed it. The "environment" of *Love* concerns the antitheses of this volatile and changing history and the characters that embody it. There is Dr. Juvenal Urbino, figurehead for the "last" nineteenth-century hero, well-born, arrogant, but along with his venerable family showing signs of the decay of an old order—possibly the era of neo-colonialism itself—and its progressive deterioration into shabby genteelism. There is Florentino, who is born in poverty but rises to social prominence as a self-made man and president of the River Company at the precise period that one century turns over and collides with the nouveau riche next one. Finally, there is Fermina, another last of a dying breed, this time of youthful debutantes with shady family histories, who eventually throws personal pretension and social prominence to the wind by accepting the sexual but "everlasting" love of Florentino *even* in old age. Within this historical conflux looms that central symbol for one age threatening the obliteration of a former one: the "cholera" epidemic, the apocalyptic proliferation of death over a half-century, which, by the ambiguity of García Márquez's native Spanish, can be perceived as either the fatal disease itself—*el colera*—or as the general condition of cholera, anger, and finally warfare—*la colera*—that in its more sweeping sense signifies "a devastating force, a plague, whose only meaning is death on a massive scale" (Pynchon 47). For those who survive it as well as those who fight it (Urbino through medicine, Florentino through faith in erotic love), it is the world-ending plague of the era, out of which either the culture will persevere amidst increasing increments of decay or will succumb to eventual, unalterable disintegration. Such a period of microcosmic apocalypse thus becomes the atemporal setting of García Márquez's "historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon 285)—a fiction that comments not only upon the social conditions that can or cannot make self-renewal possible, but that also accepts the integral role the creation of the fictional world plays in "surviving" (albeit in an only "minor utopia") the effects of the apocalyptic "fallout." The symbol of the phoenix, though grossly overused to the point of cliché, nevertheless seems most applicable to the general tenor of the question inherent in García Márquez's narrative: after decimation—environmental, cultural, social, even personal—what can possibly remain to revive a world spent by abuse and its own historical exhaustion?

Fiddian reduces the answer to such a question to “heterosexual love” (197), but in a broader sense what survives is a more general “love among the ruins”—that is, the indomitable quality of human emotion in the face of historical and cultural forces bent on forcing its demise. It thus becomes a question of whether the extinction of a “world”—by a physical as well as what might be termed a modern socio-economic “plague”—necessitates the extinction of that world’s underlying “dominant,” which, in García Márquez’s humanistic ideology, is *human* love, in *all* its manifestations. This then is how and where the trans-generational milieu of *Love* takes on its postmodern “maker’s” formation and “recombination of hand-me-down scraps” (Gitlin 35)—those remains or ashes of historical apocalypse, no matter its specific form—into a “new” world, or the resurrection of a “new Eden.” The “blast” may have devastated the environment, but paradoxically, it has served only to purify the emotions that have endured. This ontological perspective of a “new world” salvaged from the chards of an old one is beautifully displayed in the description of the turn-of-the-century balloon trip taken by Fermina and her husband:

From the sky they could see, just as God saw them, the ruins of the very old and heroic city of Cartagena de Indias, the most beautiful in the world, abandoned by its inhabitants because of the sieges of the English and the atrocities of the buccaneers. They saw the walls, still intact, the brambles in the streets, the fortifications devoured by heartsease, the marble palaces and the golden altars and the viceroys rotting with plague inside their armour. (226)

Fermina and Florentino later are to become the unchosen proprietors of this new world of *post* or *after*-history, therefore—*after* neo-colonialism, *after* the “progress” of industrialization (that is supposed to bring with it “order” and “moral clarity,” yet such virtues, in a postmodern culture, have progressively disintegrated [Gitlin] 36)), but before what?

García Márquez firmly embeds his new “heroes” in the “aftermath” of history that *is* the twentieth-century, but he is not so idealistic as to confess that “love conquers all” and in *all* situations, because his humanism is one tempered by the realities of human existence in a corrupt, decrepit age. For instance, while professing his state of “virginity” to the aged Fermina (339), Florentino’s idealization of love is blemished by our knowledge not only of his lifetime of countless sexual trysts, but especially of that one that concludes with the suicide of his 14-year-old charge, América Vicuña (336). This, then, seems to be García Márquez’s mature brand of humanism at work: the “new Eden” that his old lovers resurrect from the ashes (or the dry riverbed) will not be a purely Pollyannaic one—Florentino’s profession to Fermina of his spotless nature is farcical—but one tempered by the cold reality of imminent human death (América Vicuña’s is a mere foreknowledge of the lovers’ own). It is as if García Márquez’s faith in and hope for a

“minor utopia” and “second chance on earth,” however liberating, must always remain clouded by the ominous threat of self-destruction: after all, if the earth itself (evidenced at the novel’s close by the setting of deforestation on the Magdalena River) can be permanently destroyed, what is to stop human emotionality, with the death of the body, from succumbing possibly to a similar fate?

It is the river, finally, the Great Magdalena (in Spanish, the “river of life”) on which Florentino Ariza had made his livelihood but left one day on a journey of forgetting only to return, regardless of the cost, to wait for the day that the widowed Fermina Daza would be his, that García Márquez uses at the close of *Love* to consolidate his vision of humanistic hope amidst the fallout of historical apocalypse. As they board the *New Fidelity* (a name loaded with the weight of the lovers’ re-established vow to each other) for what will be a journey without end, Florentino and Fermina at once evidence the signs that a half-century of apocalyptic waste has wrecked on a formerly Edenic setting:

. . . the Magdalena, father of waters, one of the great rivers of the world, was only an illusion of memory. . . . Fifty years of uncontrolled deforestation had destroyed the river: the boilers of the riverboats had consumed the thick forest of colossal trees. . . . The hunters for skins . . . 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 the 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. (331)

Confronted by this ecological wasteland, partly of their own making (after all, Florentino’s ships have “consumed” much of the lumber), by “the nauseating stench of corpses floating down to the sea” and the “vast silence of the ravaged land” (336), the lovers and their at-last-sanctioned desire seem to have arrived too late. They now find themselves the sole inheritors of a world raped beyond recognition, where vague emotional longings like “love” and “fidelity” have little right or place to exist. This is the world-stage of *post-apocalypse* that García Márquez last left us with at the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as Aureliano Babilonia, deciphering the cryptic manuscripts, discovers at the same moment the cold realization that his “history” is over, the Buendía house ravaged by the cyclone of dogged time, his own and his family’s lineal heritage of “one hundred years of solitude” left in the devastated state of never being endowed “a second opportunity on earth” (383). Hence, the time (or reality) after such apocalypse can no longer be conceived of as “magical.” In *Love*, it is the time and setting of the “other” America, scarred by its own complacency and the exploitation of others, but it is also a time beyond time, beyond apocalypse,

and therefore a mythical past that García Márquez must conceive (as his Nobel address surely suggests) as a projected, possible future. But if physically drained and exhausted by the forces of its own history, a postmodern "heart of darkness" from which there seems no return, the river of *Love* is also, paradoxically, the depthless reservoir that symbolizes the rebirth of human emotions. "By the time he [Florentino] realized the truth, there was nothing anyone could do except bring in a new river" (337). If this environmental option seems practicably impossible, García Márquez *does* seem to be admitting that a "new river" or source of emotional renewal is possible—one that is conceived or created by immutable *human* potentialities. Just as modern man's reckless "progress" is capable of ecological destruction, his postmodern successor—blindly, naively, but yet necessarily—must remain (or *survive*) to reconstruct from the debris a vestige of human faith and hope. Here, then, is postmodern man serving a decidedly *positive* function: instead of drifting ignorantly down those "currents of least resistance" that Gitlin perceives as our self-evident fate both in art *and* life, Florentino and Fermina confront, at a time when they should know better (as Fermina's daughter smugly implies), the turbulent waters of life head on, overwhelmed finally, like the captain of the *New Fidelity*, "by the belated suspicion that it is life, more than death, that has no limits" (348).

The force of ontological, world-creating "suspicion" alone, however, does not make them the postmodern characters of a postmodern author. In the vague but significant sense that both characters and García Márquez himself recognize that they are left with only the cultural debris or fragments of a world (real or fictional) to reconstruct, they are postmodern. But García Márquez is hardly content to wallow and eventually drown in such suffocating debris: face-to-face with the "reality" that is nothing less than the "scientific possibility" of the end of the world, a human writer admits (and prays for) "at last and forever" the second chance for man on earth that Florentino and Fermina are granted in their old age. Such traditional faith in human immutability could quite easily be perceived, especially in our postmodern culture, as naive utopianism that human reality every day persistently contradicts. But if a passive hopelessness in feeling historically stranded is the typical postmodernist's response, García Márquez and the fictional characters who speak eloquently for him cannot accept such trendy resignation: whether it is specifically that "other" America, his Latin America that has just awakened from its nightmare of twentieth-century history, or whether through this sleepy, tropical setting he is evoking a universal condition, García Márquez in *Love in the Time of Cholera* is willing to take the daring "leap of faith" on the side of *man himself* over the inevitable theories or possibilities man can create for himself. In taking such a seemingly unpopular but obviously essential stand, García Márquez is responsible in the process for creating that brand of "new and saving post-fic-

tion" that has as its subject "not . . . the death of the self or the collapse of the referential" (Bradbury 18), but a character of broad humanistic vision who is capable still of "love," the most elusive of all emotional abstractions, in a world of past and ever-impending "cholera"—plague, war, apocalypse. Although "forever" (348) is a long time to believe man can survive, especially in an atomic age, García Márquez would have nothing less for Florentino and Fermina, for nothing but that love he bestows to them is capable of that rejuvenating power of hope that he sees as paramount to our survival as a race.

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NOTES

1. Lodge, in his essay "Postmodernist Fiction" (in *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977: 220-245), for instance, includes as his "list" of postmodern categories "Contradiction," "Permutation," "Discontinuity," "Randomness," "Excess," and the "Short-Circuit," with corresponding examples (mainly from American fiction) of each. See Graff's seminal essays "The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough" and "Babbitt at the Abyss" (both listed in Works Cited) for his varying "lists" of postmodern characteristics.

2. In "The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough" Graff, for instance, defines the postmodern as serving the essentially "apocalyptic" function of revealing the destructiveness and uselessness of contemporary art and reality (392). Gitlin's dark analysis of postmodern culture and its productions, in "Hip-Deep in Post-modernism," continues Graff's apocalyptic thesis: postmodernism (and especially its literary representations) is merely a form of "anticipatory shell-shock" (36), as if "the bomb" has already fallen. Hence, although postmodern fiction must necessarily invoke the recycling of past cultural debris, it tends to leave its reader feeling "historically stranded—after the 1960s, but before what?" (Gitlin 36). In fact, at the close of his article Gitlin seems to be pleading for a kind of contemporary fiction that does not merely "coast down the currents of least resistance" (36), as a postmodern culture might heartily encourage. Perhaps the return to traditionalism in what might be termed a *post-apocalyptic* fiction—García Márquez's *Love*—is what Gitlin is desiring.

3. The *folletín* was that brand of sentimental romance novel best characterized in Latin America by Jorge Isaac's *María*.

4. Fiddian as well cites Fermina's obsession with a newspaper report, as she travels with Florentino on the *New Fidelity*, concerning the brutal murder of an elderly couple on a similar riverboat as they depart on a second honeymoon (*Love* 460-61) as evidence of García Márquez's own "intimation of mortality" (199-200) and thus nuance-ridden "humanism."

5. All page references are to Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, trans. Edith Grossman, New York: Knopf, 1988 (except where otherwise indicated).

6. In "Babbitt at the Abyss," for instance, Graff sees the only distinguishable trait of a postmodern character to be his "amiable passivity" and apathy in the face of a constantly changing contemporary society, leading to a "diffuse, unfocused, protean self which cannot define issues in any determinate way" (309).

7. García Márquez, in fact, seems to be answering with his characters Malcolm Bradbury's complaint that the contemporary novel's depiction of "the complexity of the individual was never more necessary, since in our time so many processes and so many theories are arrayed against it" (see his Introduction to *Saul Bellow* 18).

8. John Brushwood in a recent article succinctly defined this term as the "boom" fictional category in which the marvelous "exists naturally; one does not have to *invent* strange juxtapositions/associations" (see his "Two Views of the Boom: North and South," *Latin American*

Literary Review 15.29 [January-June 1987]: 19-20). For further definitions of "magical realism" and a brief summary of its history as a movement, see Angel Flores's "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction" (*Hispania* 38 [May 1955]: 187-192).

9. McGrath, in the opening chapter of his study *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), uses the Russian formalist concept of the "dominant" to distinguish modernist from postmodernist novels. By his analysis, the essential difference (i.e., common denominator, or "dominant") between the modern and the postmodern text involves the latter's shifting of the underlying dominant from problems of knowing to problems of "*modes of being*—from an epistemological dominant to an ontological one" (10). For the postmodern novelist (and McGrath includes García Márquez under this rank), therefore, ontology, or "a theoretical description of a universe" (27)—not *the* universe, but *any* universe, real or created—becomes his overriding concern, and his text thus emphasizes questions such as "Which world is this? What is to be done with it? . . . What is a world? What kinds of worlds are there . . . [and] what happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation? . . . How is a projected world structured?" (10).

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