# *Cien años de soledad:* The Novel as Myth and Archive

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## I

To most readers the Latin American novel must appear to be obsessed with Latin American history and myth.[1] Carlos Fuentes' *Terra Nostra* (1976), for instance, retells much of sixteenth-century Spanish history, including the conquest of Mexico, while also incorporating pre-Columbian myths prophesying that momentous event. Alejo Carpentier's *El siglo de las luces* (1962) narrates Latin America's transition from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, focusing on the impact of the French Revolution in the Caribbean. Carpentier also delves into Afro-Antillean lore to show how Blacks interpreted the changes brought about by these political upheavals. Mario Vargas Llosa's recent *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1980) tells again the history of Canudos, the rebellion of religious fanatics in the backlands of Brazil, which had already been the object of Euclydes da Cunha's classic *Os Sertões* (1902). Vargas Llosa's ambitious work also examines in painstaking detail the recreation of a Christian mythology in the New World. The list of Latin American novels dealing with Latin American history and myth is very long indeed, and it includes the work of many lesser known, younger writers. Abel Posse's *Daimón* (1978) retells

[1] This paper was originally the keynote address in a Symposium on the Works of Gabriel García Márquez held at Wesleyan University, on April 9, 1983. I wish to thank Professors Diana S. Goodrich and Carlos J. Alonso for their invitation and hospitality. I also wish to thank the Guggenheim Foundation for a fellowship that allowed me to do some of the research that led to many of the ideas put forth here.

the story of Aguirre, the sixteenth-century rebel who declared himself free from the Spanish Crown and founded his own independent country in South America.[2] As the title of the book suggests, Posse's fiction centers on the myth of the Devil and his reputed preference of the New World as residence and field of operations, a theme that had been important in two earlier Latin American masterpieces: Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (1949) and João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande sertão, veredas* (1956).[3]

Given that myths are stories whose main concern is with origins, the interest of Latin American fiction in Latin American history and myth is understandable. On the one hand, American history has always held the promise of being not only new but different, of being, as it were, the only *new* history, preserving the force of the oxymoron. On the other hand, the novel, which appears to have emerged in the sixteenth century at the same time as American history, is the only modern genre, the only literary form that is modern not only in the chronological sense, but also because it has persisted for centuries without a poetics, always in defiance of the very notion of genre.[4] Is it possible, then, to make of American history a story as enduring as the old myths? Can Latin American history be as resilient and as useful a hermeneutic tool for probing human nature as the classical myths, and can the novel be the vehicle for the transmission of these new myths? Is it at all con-

[2] Abel Posse (Argentina, 1934), is the author of *Los Bogavantes* (1967), *La boca del tigre* (1971—Premio Nacional de Literatura), *Daimón* (1978) and *Los perros del paraíso* (1983).

[3] The topic of the presence of the Devil in Latin American culture has been the object of many studies. A useful introduction to the topic in relation to literature may be found in Sabino Sola, *El diablo y lo diabólico en las letras americanas* (Madrid: Castalia, 1973).

[4] Ralph Freedman made a useful suggestion about the study of the origins of the novel that is my point of departure here: "Instead of separating genres or subgenres artificially and then accounting for exceptions by stipulating mixtures and compounds, it is simpler to view all of prose fiction as a unity and to trace particular strands to different origins, strands which would include not only the English novel of manners, or the post-medieval romance, or the Gothic novel, but also the medieval allegory, the German *Bildungsroman,* or the picaresque. Some of these strands may be close to folk material or to classical epics, others may have modeled themselves on travelogues and journalistic descriptions of events, and others again suggest drawing-room comedies and even lyrical prose poetry, yet all, to varying degrees, seem to mirror life in aesthetically defined worlds (life as myth, as structure of ideas, as worlds of feeling or quotidian reality). . ." "The Possibility of a Theory of the Novel," in *The Disciplines of Criticism. Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History,* ed. Peter Demetz, Thomas Greene and Lowry Nelson Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 65.

ceivable, in the modern, post-oral period, to create myths? Latin American history is to the Latin American narrative what the epic themes are to Spanish literature: a constant whose mode of appearance may vary, but which rarely is omitted. A book like Ramón Menéndez Pidal's *La epopeya castellana a través de la literatura española* could be written about the presence of Latin American history in the Latin American narrative. The question is, of course, how can myth and history coexist in the novel? How can founding stories be told in this most ironic and self-reflexive of genres? It seems to me that the enormous and deserved success of Gabriel García Márquez's masterpiece *Cien años de soledad* is due to the unrelenting way in which these forms of storytelling are interwoven in the novel.

## II

In order to explain why and how myth and history are present in *Cien años de soledad* I must first give a brief outline of the broad theory within which my arguments are couched, a theory that, I hope, will allow me to bring a new perspective to the study of the origins and evolution of the Latin American narrative. It is my hypothesis that the novel, having no fixed form of its own, assumes that of a given document endowed with truth-bearing power by society at specific moments in history. The novel, or what is called the novel at various points in history, mimics such documents to show their conventionality, their subjection to rules of textual engenderment similar to those governing literature, which in turn reflect those of language itself. The power to endow the text with the capacity to bear the truth is shown to lie outside the text; it is an exogenous agent that bestows authority upon a certain kind of document owing to the ideological structure of the period. In sixteenth-century Spain these documents were legal ones. The form assumed by the Picaresque was that of a *relación* (report, deposition, letter bearing witness to something), because this kind of written report belonged to the huge imperial bureaucracy through which power was administered in Spain and its possessions.[5] The early history of Latin America, as well as the first fictions of and about Latin America, are told in the rhetorical molds furnished by the

[5] For further details on this, see my "The Life and Adventures of Cipión: Cervantes and the Picaresque," *Diacritics*, 10, no. 3 (1980), pp. 15-26.

notarial arts. These *cartas de relación* were not simply letters nor maps, but also *charters* of the newly discovered territories.[6] Both the writer and the territory were enfranchised through the power of this document which, like Lazarillo's text, is addressed to a higher authority. The pervasiveness of legal rhetoric in early American historiography could hardly be exaggerated. Officially appointed historians (*cronista mayor de Indias*) were assigned by the Crown and the Royal Council of the Indies a set of rules which included ways of subsuming these *relaciones* into their works. American history and fiction, the narrative of America, were first created within the language of the law, a secular totality that guaranteed truth and made its circulation possible. It is within this totality that Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, wrote his *Comentarios*

[6] On the *relaciones* there are the following studies: Vittorio Salvadorini, "Las 'relaciones' de Hernán Cortés," *Thesaurus* (Boletín del Instituto Caro y Cuervo), 18, no. 1 (1963), pp. 77-97; Roberto González Echevarría, "José Arrom, autor de la *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios:* picaresca e historia," *Relecturas: estudios de literatura cubana* (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1976), pp. 17-35; Walter Mignolo, "Cartas, crónicas y relaciones del descubrimiento y la conquista," in Luis Iñigo Madrigal, coordinador, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana,* Tomo I "Epoca Colonial" (Madrid: Cátedra, 1982), pp. 57-110; Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquête de l'Amérique. La question de l'autre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982); Roberto González Echevarría, "Humanismo, retórica y las crónicas de la conquista," *Isla a su vuelo fugitiva: ensayos críticos sobre literatura hispanoamericana* (Madrid: Porrúa, 1983), pp. 9-25. Mignolo's work is particularly useful, for he carefully distinguishes between the various kinds of discourse available to chroniclers in the colonial period, without falling into the trap of considering their work literary or imaginative before taking into account first what each text was (letter, chronicle, history, etc.). Todorov's book rediscovers a good deal of material available in the extant bibliography in Spanish, which he apparently did not consult, and reaches conclusions that are fairly predictable. Todorov was unable to keep clear of the dramatic moral issues raised by the conquest of the New World, which have continued to determine much of the scholarship on the colonial period. His confession of being chiefly a moralist does not absolve him for being banale: "Pour Cortés, la conquête du savoir conduit à celle du pouvoir. Je retiens de lui la conquête du savoir, même si c'est pour résister au pouvoir. Il y a quelque légèreté à se contenter de condamner les méchants conquistadores et à regretter les bons Indiens, comme s'il suffisaint d'identifier le mal pour le combattre. Ce n'est pas faire l'éloge des conquistadores que de reconnaître, ici ou là, leur supériorité; il est nécessaire d'analyser les armes de la conquête si l'on veut pouvoir l'arrêter un jour. Car les conquêtes n'appartiennent pas qu'au passé" (p. 258). In my own work, as sketched briefly in the text of this paper, I intend to study how through notarial rhetoric the newly deployed Spanish State controlled historical discourse. To do so one has to follow the development of legal rhetoric from Bologna to the Renaissance, and then its application in America through the various institutions created or developed in the late XV and early XVI century. For the history of legal rhetoric see Rafael Núñez Lagos, *El documento medieval y Rolandino (notas de historia)* (Madrid: Editorial Góngora, 1951). I draw from Núñez Lagos' extensive discussion of the *carta* my assertion concerning the *cartas de relación.*

*reales de los incas* (1609), for one must not forget that the *mestizo*'s book is an appeal to restore his father's name to an honorable position.[7]

In the nineteenth century Latin America is narrated through the mediation of a new totality: science, and more specifically the scientific consciousness that expresses itself in the language of travelers who journeyed across the Continent, writing about its nature and about themselves. This was the second European discovery of America, and the scientists were the chroniclers of this second discovery. Except for a ground-breaking article by Jean Franco, little attention has been paid to this phenomenom, whose dimensions can be glimpsed by looking at the recent *Travel Accounts and Descriptions of Latin America and the Caribbean 1800–1920: A Selected Bibliography*, compiled by Thomas L. Welch and Myriam Figueras, and published by the Organization of American States (1982).[8] Though selective, this volume contains nearly three hundred pages of tightly packed entries. The names of these scientific travelers are quite impressive, ranging from Charles Darwin to Alexander von Humboldt, and including the likes of the Schomburgk

[7] For details of Garcilaso's legal maneuvers, see John Grier Varner, *El Inca. The Life and Times of Garcilaso de la Vega* (Austin and London: The University of Texas Press, 1968), pp. 213-26. The first century of colonization was characterized by spectacular legal cases that matched the fabulous adventures of the conquistadores: first Columbus and his successors, later Cortés and Pizarro. Even an adventurer and marvellous storyteller like Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca ended his life embroiled in costly legal proceedings that left him as devoid of wordly goods at the end of his life as he had been among the Indians of North America.

[8] Jean Franco, "Un viaje poco romántico: viajeros británicos hacia Sudamérica: 1818-28," *Escritura* (Caracas), Año 4, no. 7 (1979), pp. 129-41. On scientific travelers there is also: Christian C. Chester, Jr., "Hispanic Literature of Exploration," *Exploration* (Journal of the MLA Special Session on the Literature of Exploration and Travel), 1 (1973), pp. 42-46; Evelio A. Echevarría, "La conquista del Chimborazo," *Américas* (Washington), 35, no. 5 (1983), pp. 22-31; Hans Galinsky, "Exploring the 'Exploration Report' and Its Image of the Overseas World: Spanish, French, and English Variants of a Common Form Type in Early American Literature," *Early American Literature*, 12 (1977), pp. 5-24; C. Harvey Gardiner, "Foreign Travelers' Accounts of Mexico, 1810-1910," *The Americas*, 8 (1952), pp. 321-51; C. Harvey Gardiner, ed. *Journeys Accross the Pampas and Among the Andes* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967); Mary Sayre Haverstock, "La fascinación de los Andes," *Américas*, 35, no. 1 (1983), pp. 37-41; Ronald Hilton, "The Significance of Travel Literature With Special Reference to the Spanish- and Portuguese-Speaking World," *Hispania*, 49 (1966), 836-45; S. Samuel Trifilo, "Nineteenth Century English Travel Books on Argentina: A Revival in Spanish Translation," *Hispania*, 41 (1958), 491-96; Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen, *South America Called Them: Explorations of the Great Naturalists La Condamine, Humboldt, Darwin, Spruce* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945).

brothers, Robertson, Koch-Grünbergh, and many others. Their fictional counterpart is Professor Challenger in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World,* whose voyage to the origins of nature takes him to South America. A scientific consciousness that expresses itself in the language of the travelogue mediates the writing of Latin American fiction in the nineteenth century. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845), Anselmo Suárez y Romero's *Francisco* (1880), and da Cunha's *Os Sertões* (1902) describe Latin American nature and society through the conceptual grid of nineteenth-century science. Like the chronicles, which were often legal documents, these are books that have a functional value and begin outside of literature. *Francisco* was originally part of a report sent to the British authorities documenting the horrors of slavery in Cuba.[9] Latin America's history and the stories of adventurers, who seek to discover the innermost secrets of the New World, that is to say its newness and difference, are narrated through the mind of a writer qualified by science to search for the truth. Both the self and science are, as Franco suggests, products of the power of the new European commercial empires. Their capacity to find the truth is due not to the cogency of the scientific method, but to the ideological construct that supports them, a construct whose source of strength lies outside the text. The "mind" that analyzes and classifies is made present through the rhetorical conventions of the travelogue. Sarmiento ranges over the Argentine landscape in a process of self-discovery and self-affirmation. In his book he dons the mask of the traveling savant, distanced from the reality that he interprets and classifies according to the intervening tenets of scientific inquiry. This particular mediation prevails until the crisis of the nineteen-twenties and the so-called *novela de la tierra.*[10]

The modern novel, of which *Cien años de soledad* is perhaps the best known example, avails itself of a different kind of mediation: anthropology. Now the promise of knowledge is to be found in a

[9] The book was not included in the report, which did contain the autobiography of the Cuban slave poet Juan Francisco Manzano: *Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba, Recently Liberated; translated from the Spanish by R. R. Madden, M.D., with the History of the Early Life of the Negro Poet, Written by Himself; To Which are prefixed Two Pieces Descriptive of Cuban Slavery and the Slave-Traffic* (London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1840). There is a modern edition by Edward J. Mullen (Hamden: Archon Books, 1981).

[10] On the *novela de la tierra* the most advanced work is by Carlos J. Alonso in his, "The *novela de la tierra:* The Discourse of the Autochthonous," Doctoral Dissertation, Yale University, 1983.

scientific discourse whose object is not nature, but language and myth. The truth-bearing document the novel imitates now is the anthropological treatise. The object of such studies is to discover the origin and source of a culture's own version of its values, beliefs, and history through a culling and re-telling of its myths. Readers of Mauss, Van Gennep, Lévi-Bruhl, Frazer, Lévi-Strauss and other anthropologists will no doubt recognize the inherent complexity of such works. In order to understand another culture, the anthropologist has to know his own to the point where he can distance himself from it. But this distancing involves a kind of self-effacement, too. This dramatic process has been beautifully expounded by Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes tropiques,* a book in which he devotes a good deal of time to his stay in Brazil. John Freccero and Eduardo González have studied how much this book has in common with Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos,* a text to which we shall have to return shortly.[11]

Anthropology is the mediating element in the modern Latin American novel because of the place this discipline occupies in Western thought, and also because of the place Latin America occupies within that discipline. Anthropology is a way through which Western culture indirectly affixes its own cultural identity. This identity, which the anthropologist struggles to shed, is one that masters non-historical cultures through knowledge, by making them the object of its study. Anthropology translates into the language of the West the cultures of the others, and in the process establishes its own form of self-knowledge through a kind of annihilation of the self. Existential philosophy, as in Heidegger, Ortega and Sartre, is akin to this process, because it is only through an awareness of the other that Western thought can pretend to wind back to the origin of being. The native, that is to say Latin Americans or in general those who could be delicately called the inhabitants of the post-colonial world, provide the model for this reduction and beginning. The native has timeless stories to explain his changeless society. These stories, these myths, are like those of the West in the distant past, before they became a mythology. Freud, Frazer, Jung, and Heidegger sketch a return to or a retention of those origins. Anthropology finds their analogon in the

[11] John Freccero, "Reader's Report," Cornell University. *John M. Olin Library Bookmark Series,* no. 36 (April 1968); Eduardo González, *Alejo Carpentier: el tiempo del hombre* (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1978).

contemporary world of the native. The modern Latin American novel is written through the model of such anthopological studies. In the same way that the nineteenth-century novel turned Latin America into the object of scientific study, the modern Latin American novel transforms Latin American history into originary myth in order to see itself as other. The theogonic Buendía family in *Cien años de soledad* owes its organization to this phenomenon.

The historical data behind my hypothesis concerning the modern novel and its relation to an anthropological model are vast. Miguel Angel Asturias, as is known, went to Paris to study ethnology under Georges Raynaud, an experience that produced in 1930 his influential *Leyendas de Guatemala.* One of Asturias' classmates at La Sorbonne was none other than Alejo Carpentier, who was then writing *¡Ecué-Yamba-O!* (1933), a novel that is, in many ways, an ethnological study of Cuban Blacks. Another Cuban writer was also preparing herself in Paris in those years: Lydia Cabrera, whose pioneering studies of Afro-Cuban lore would culminate in her classic *El monte* (1954). In more recent times Severo Sarduy has been a student of Roger Bastide, and his *De donde son los cantantes* is, among many other things, a sort of anthropological study of Cuban culture, seen as the synthesis of the three main groups inhabiting the island: the Spanish, the Africans, and the Chinese. Borges' 1933 essay "El arte narrativo y la magia," where the art of storytelling is compared to two kinds of primitive cures outlined in *The Golden Bough,* is but one indication of the wide-ranging impact of Frazer on Latin America. Traces of this influence are visible in Octavio Paz, Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, as well as in many others. Lydia Cabrera is perhaps the most significant author here, for she stands for a very important kind of Latin American writer who sits astride both literature and anthropology. Cabrera is a first-rate short-story writer, just as she is a first-rate anthropologist. Her teacher, Fernando Ortiz, was also claimed by literature and his influence upon modern Cuban letters is vast. Examples of writers straddling literature and anthropology are plentiful. The most notorious in recent years is Miguel Barnet, whose *Biografía de un cimarrón* not only contains all the perplexing dualities and contradictions of that relationship, but is also the perfect example of a book whose form is given by anthropology, but which winds up in the field of the novel. But the Peruvian José María Arguedas is without a doubt the most poignant figure among these anthropologist-writers: a novelist, anthropologist, and

raised by Indians, Arguedas whose first language was Quechua, not Spanish, carried within him the contradictions and the tragedy inherent in the relationship between anthropology and literature with such intensity that he chose suicide in 1969.

Arguedas' radical gesture is a literal version of the reduction of the self inherent in the process of re-writing Latin American history in the context of the anthropological mediation. It is a gesture that has its literary counterpart, as we shall see, in *Cien años de soledad.* Arguedas' radical effacement of self, like the one practiced by Barnet as he turns or pretends to turn himself into Esteban Montejo, is part of the "unwriting" involved in the modern Latin American narrative. For the modern Latin American narrative is an "unwriting," as much as it is a rewriting, of Latin American history from the anthropological perspective mentioned. The previous writings of history are undone as the new one is attempted; this is why the chronicles and the nineteenth-century scientific travelogues are present in what I will call the Archive in modern fiction. The new narrative unwinds the history told in the old chronicles by showing that that history was made up of a series of conventional topics, whose coherence and authority depended on the codified beliefs of a period whose ideological structure is no longer current. Those codified beliefs were the law. Like the Spanish galleon crumbling in the jungle in *Cien años de soledad,* the history in the chronicles is a voided presence. Likewise, modern novels disassemble the powerful scientific construct through which nineteenth-century Latin America was narrated by demonstrating the relativity of its most cherished concepts, or by rendering literal the metaphors on which such knowledge is based. The power of genealogy is literalized in *Cien años de soledad* by, among other devices, the stream of blood that flows from José Arcadio's wound to Ursula. The presence of the European travelers Robertson and Bonplant in Roa Bastos' *Yo el Supremo* attests to this second voided presence. But the paradigmatic text among these unwritings is Alejo Carpentier's 1953 *Los pasos perdidos.* In this first-person narrative, a modern man travels up the Orinoco river in search of native musical instruments that will unveil the origins of music. As he travels upriver—clearly the river in which Melquíades dies many years later—the narrator-protagonist writes about his voyage as if it were a journey back not only through time, but through recorded history. Hence he passes through various epochs, the most significant of which are the nineteenth century of

the traveling European scientists, who provide him with a way of interpreting nature and time, and the colonial period of Latin American history, characterized by activities such as the founding of cities, the indoctrination of Indians, the beginning, in short, of history in the New World as set down by the charters of those institutions—the *cartas de relación*. There are other epochs, reaching all the way back to pre-historic times, but the above are the most important ones, because they are present not only thematically, but through the mediating texts themselves: the era of the petroglyphs is narrated in the language of the scientific travelogue, and the founding of cities in that of the legalistic chronicles. The narrator-protagonist's text is organized according to a set of rhetorical conventions that reveal themselves as such in the process of reading. In the fiction of the novel, the narrator-protagonist cannot remain in what he has termed the Valley-of-Time-Detained, the origin of time and history, for he needs to secure enough paper to set down the music he has begun to compose. In the fiction the quest for that degree zero of time and history whence to inscribe a rewriting of Latin America history has not been found. But in the writing of the novel a clearing has been reached, a razing that becomes a starting-point for the new Latin American narrative. That razing involves the various mediations through which Latin America was narrated, the systems from which fiction borrowed truth-bearing forms, erased to assume the new mediation, which requires this level-ground of self and history. This is the point at which *Cien años de soledad* begins, and the reason why the world is so recent "that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" (p. 1).[12] It is also the point that the last Aureliano seeks at the very end when he discovers how to translate Melquíades' manuscripts. He reads in a frenzy "discovering the first indications of his own being in a lascivious grandfather who let himself be frivolously dragged across a hallucinated plateau in search of a beautiful woman who would not make him happy" (p. 421). What is left for fiction after *Los pasos perdidos?* Clearly, only fiction; but novels are never content with fiction, they must pretend to deal with the truth. So, paradoxically enough, the truth with which they deal in the modern

[12] All references are to Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* tr. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), and *Cien años de soledad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1967).

period is fiction itself. That is to say, the fictions Latin American culture has created to understand itself, the myths about the origin of its history.

## III

The importance of myth in *Cien años de soledad* was noticed by the first commentators of the novel and later studies have again taken up the topic.[13] It seems clear that myth appears in the novel in the following guises: 1) there are stories that resemble classical or biblical myths, most notably the Flood, but also Paradise, the Seven Plagues, Apocalypse, and the proliferation of the family, with its complicated genealogy, has an Old Testament ring to it; 2) there are characters who are reminiscent of mythical heroes: José Arcadio Buendía, who is a sort of Moses, Rebeca, who is like a female Perseus, Remedios, who ascends in a flutter of white sheets in a scene that is suggestive not just of the Ascension of the Virgin, but more specifically of the popular renditions of the event in religious prints; 3) certain stories have a general mythic character in that they contain supernatural elements, as in the case just mentioned, and also when José Arcadio's blood returns to Ursula;

[13] See, for example, Ricardo Gullón, *García Márquez o el olvidado arte de contar* (Madrid: Taurus, 1970) and Carmen Arnau, *El mundo mítico de Gabriel García Márquez* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1971). There have been many studies since along these lines. The most convincing is by Michael Palencia-Roth, "Los pergaminos de Aureliano Babilonia," *Revista Iberoamericana*, nos. 123-124 (1983), pp. 403-17. Palencia-Roth's splendid piece argues in favor of the Biblical myth of Apocalypse as the principal one in the organization of the novel and insists on the influence of Borges on García Márquez. There is much to be learned from his interpretation. However, it seems to me that Palencia-Roth allows himself to be intoxicated by the mythic quality of the novel when he writes that the meeting of times at the end elevates time to eternity, and jumps to the conclusion that Melquíades' manuscripts are the novel. As I will argue further below, no myth controls the novel, and no transcendence is allowed by the constantly undermined and undermining world of writing. To believe in the possibility of eternal time, or to think that there is a text to which the title of the novel gives a name, requires that we accept that visions such as Colonel Aureliano Buendía and Aureliano Babilonia have in the fiction of the novel exist outside of the verbal realm. If we could escape the verbal, then the sort of simultaneity and atemporality of which Palencia-Roth speaks so persuasively, and which are characteristic of myth, would be possible. On the influence of Borges on García Márquez, see: Roberto González Echevarría, "With Borges in Macondo," *Diacritics*, 2, No. 1 (1972), pp. 57-60 and Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *"One Hundred Years of Solitude:* The Last Three Pages," *Books Abroad*, 47 (1973), 485-89. I have learned a good deal from this article, in which the author singles out Melquíades' room as an important feature of the novel, and insists on the notion of the Book as a key to an understanding of the text.

4) the beginning of the whole story, which is found, as in myth in a tale of violence and incest. All four, of course, commingle, and because *Cien años de soledad* tells a story of foundations or origins, the whole novel has a mythic air about it. No single myth or mythology prevails. Instead the various ways in which myth appears give the whole novel a mythical character without it being a distinct version of one given myth.

At the same time, there is lurking in the background of the story the overall pattern of Latin American history, both as a general design made up of various key events and eras, and in the presence of specific characters and incidents that seem to refer to real people and happenings. Thus we have a period of discovery and conquest, when José Arcadio Buendía and the original families settle Macondo. There is in this part of the book little sense that Macondo belongs to a larger political unit, but such isolation was in fact typical of Latin America's towns in the colonial period. Even the viceroyalties lived in virtual isolation from the metropolitan government.[14] The appearance of Apolinar Moscoso and his barefoot soldiers is the beginning of the republican era, which is immediately followed by the outbreak of the civil wars in which Colonel Aureliano Buendía distinguishes himself. Though Colombia is the most obvious model for this period, nearly the entire continent suffered from civil strife during the nineteenth century, a process that led to the emergence of dictators and *caudillos*. This period is followed by the era of neocolonial domination by the United States and the struggles against it in most Latin American countries. These culminate in the novel with the general strike and the massacre of the workers. There are, unfortunately, countless models for this last, clearly defined period in the novel. After the flood, there is a time of decay before the apocalyptic wind that razes the town at the end. The liberal priest and the various military types who surround Colonel Aureliano Buendía, are among the characters with counterparts in Latin American history. Lucila I. Mena has already demonstrated that some of the historical incidents in the novel can be documented, and a sedulous critic with time and

[14] C. H. Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963 [1947]). Such isolation did not mean that the colonial towns were independent, nor that they could develop according to the whims of their inhabitants.

the proper library can probably document many others.[15] But to carry this sort of research much further than Mena has would be a rather gratuitous critical exercise. Set against the global, totalizing thrust of the novel are these historical details which, without being specific, are nonetheless true in a general sense. Each of the above mentioned epochs is evoked not only through major historical events, but also through allusion to specific minor incidents and characters. For instance, early Macondo is inhabited by a *de jure* aristocracy made up of the founding families, which is analogous to that of colonial Latin America, where conquistadores and their descendants enjoyed certain privileges and exemptions.[16]

The blend of mythic elements and Latin American history in *Cien años de soledad* reveals a desire to found an American myth. Latin American history is set on the same level as mythic stories, therefore it too becomes a sort of myth. The lack of specificity of the various incidents, which appear to represent several related or similar events, points in this direction. The Latin American myth is this story of foundation, articulated through independence, civil war, struggle against U.S. colonialism, all cast within a genealogical line that weaves in and out, repeating names and characters. There is a Whitmanian thrust to the brash declaration of the existence of a literary language that underlies this mixture of historical fact with mythic story in *Cien años de soledad.* The novel is in fact intimately related to similar efforts in poetry, such as the ones by Neruda in his *Canto General* and Octavio Paz in his *Piedra de Sol. Canto General* in particular is one of the most important sources of García Márquez's novel. Framed by Genesis and Apocalypse, fraught with incest and violence, the story of the Buendía family thus stands as Latin American history cast in the language of myth, an unresolved mixture that both beckons and bewilders the reader.

This duality is present throughout *Cien años de soledad* separating the world of writing from the atemporal world of myth. But the play of contradictions issuing from this duality reaches a synthesis that is perhaps the most important feature of the novel. As we have seen, myth represents the origin. Latin America's history is narrated in the language of myth because it is the other, represented by incest, taboo, and the primitive act of naming. The nov-

[15] Lucila I. Mena, "La huelga bananera como expresión de lo 'real maravilloso' americano en *Cien años de soledad,*" *Bulletin Hispanique,* 74 (1972), 379-405.

[16] For details on this see Haring and Varner, op. cit. Much of the legal jousting mentioned before had to do with the claims of this spurious aristocracy.

el's persistent preoccupation with genealogy and with supernatural acts performed by various characters belongs to this realm.[17] History, on the other hand, is critical, temporal, and dwells in a special place: Melquíades' room in the Buendía house, which I have chosen to call the Archive. The room is full of books and manuscripts, and has a time of its own. It is here that a succession of characters attempt to decipher Melquíades' parchments, and the last Aureliano, in an epiphanic inspiration, orally translates the whole (or nearly the whole) manuscript and dies. What occurs here, the text of the novel suggests, is unrepeatable. In the fiction of the novel, on the other hand, there are many repetitions. Ursula, for instance, twice feels that time is going around in circles and that members of the family follow one or two patterns of behavior indicated by their names. Time is circular in the fiction, but not in Melquíades' room. The Archive appears to be linear and teleological, while the plot of the novel itself is repetitive and mythical. *Cien años de soledad* is made up of two main stories: one has to do with the family and culminates in the birth of the child with the pig's tail, while the other is concerned with the interpretation of Melquíades' manuscript, a linear suspense story that culminates in Aureliano's final discovery of the key to the translation of the parchments.

That there should be a special abode for documents and books in *Cien años de soledad* should come as no suprise to readers of modern Latin American fiction. In spite of its apparent novelty, there are such enclosures in *Aura, Yo el Supremo, El arpa y la sombra, Crónica de una muerte anunciada* and *Oppiano Licario,* to mention a few of the novels where it plays a prominent role. What is characteristic of the Archive is: 1) the presence not only of history, but of previous mediating elements through which it was narrated, be it the legal documents of colonial times or the scientific ones of the nineteenth century; 2) the existence of an inner historian who reads the texts, interprets and writes them; 3) and finally the presence of an unfinished manuscript that the inner historian is trying to complete. In *Cien años de soledad* the most tenuous presence is

[17] Patricia Tobin has written an illuminating chapter on genealogy in *Cien años de soledad* in her *Time and the Novel. The Genealogical Imperative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Another excellent study, carried out incidentally by someone trained in anthropology, is Mercedes López-Baralt's "*Cien años de soledad:* cultura e historia latinoamericanas replanteadas en el idioma del parentesco," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* (San Juan de Puerto Rico), año 6 (1979), pp. 153-75.

the legal texts, but one can infer it from the allusions to the chronicles that were in fact *relaciones,* and particularly in the founding of Macondo, for the founding of cities, primordial activity of conquistadores, was closely connected to the writing of history. The vagueness of this presence is only so in relation to the others, for at least two critics have convincingly argued in favor of the overwhelming influence of the chronicles in *Cien años de soledad.*[18] The

[18] Iris M. Zavala, "*Cien años de soledad,* crónica *de Indias,*" *Insula,* no. 286 (1970), pp. 3, 11; Selma Calasans Rodrigues, "*Cien años de soledad* y las crónicas de la conquista," *Revista de la Universidad de Mexico,* 38, no. 23 (1983), pp. 13-16. García Márquez's interest in the *crónicas de Indias,* established beyond doubt in Zavala's article, was made evident again in his speech accepting the Nobel Prize: "Los cronistas de Indias nos legaron otros incontables [testimonies of astonishing events and things in the New World]. El Dorado, nuestro país ilusorio tan codiciado, figuró en mapas numerosos durante largos años, cambiando de lugar y de forma según la fantasía de los cartógrafos. En busca de la fuente de la eterna juventud, el mítico Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca exploró durante ocho años el norte de Mexico [sic], en una expedición venática cuyos miembros se comieron unos a otros, y sólo llegaron cinco de los 600 que la emprendieron. Uno de los tantos misterios que nunca fueron descifrados, es el de las once mil mulas cargadas con cien libras de oro cada una, que un día salieron del Cuzco para pagar el rescate de Atahualpa y nunca llegaron a su destino. Más tarde, durante la colonia, se vendían en Cartagena de Indias unas gallinas criadas en tierras de Aluvión, en cuyas mollejas se encontraban piedrecitas de oro." *El Mundo* (San Juan de Puerto Rico), Sunday, December 12, 1982, p. 21-C. In a long interview published as a book in that same year, he said: "Yo había leído con mucho interés a Cristóbal Colón, a Pigafetta y a los cronistas de Indias, que tenían una visión original [del Caribe], y había leído a Salgari y a Conrad. . ." *El olor de la guayaba. Conversaciones con Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza* (Bogota: Editorial La Oveja Negra, 1982), p. 32. The early history of Macondo furnished in "Los funerales de la Mama Grande" links the origins of the town to colonial Latin America through legal documents setting down the proprietary rights of the Matriarch: "Reducido a sus proporciones reales, el patrimonio físico [de la Mamá Grande] se reducía a tres encomiendas adjudicadas por Cédula Real durante la Colonia, y que con el transcurso del tiempo, en virtud de intrincados matrimonios de conveniencia, se habían acumulado bajo el dominio de la Mamá Grande. En ese territorio ocioso, sin límites definidos, que abarcaba cinco municipios y en el cual no se sembró nunca un solo grano por cuenta de los propietarios, vivían a título de arrendatarias 352 familias." *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1967), pp. 134-35. In *Crónica de una muerte anunciada,* the Archive is full of colonial documents: "Todo lo que sabemos de su carácter [the lawyer whose version of the crime would have been the first of the story being told] es aprendido en el sumario, que numerosas personas me ayudaron a buscar veinte años después del crimen en el Palacio de Justicia de Riohacha. No existía clasificación alguna en los archivos, y más de un siglo de expedientes estaban amontonados en el suelo del decrépito edificio colonial que fuera por dos días el cuartel general de Francis Drake. La planta baja se inundaba con el mar de leva, y los volúmenes descosidos flotaban en las oficinas desiertas. Yo mismo exploré muchas veces con las aguas hasta los tobillos aquel estanque de causas perdidas, y sólo una casualidad me permitió recatar al cabo de cinco años de búsqueda unos 322 pliegos salteados de los más de 500 que debió tener el sumario." *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (Bogotá: Editorial La Oveja Negra, 1981), pp. 128-29. The interplay of this floating history in legal cases, the absent first author (a lawyer) and the "pliegos salteados" as a version of the origin of the fiction being narrated deserves a commentary for which I have no space here.

nineteenth-century travel-books are evident in the descriptions of the jungle and at a crucial moment when José Arcadio Segundo hears Melquíades mumble something in his room. José Arcadio leans over and hears the gypsy mention the name of none other than Alexander von Humboldt and the word *equinoccio,* which comes from the title of the latter's book, which in Spanish is *Viaje a las regiones equinocciales del Nuevo Mundo.* In Macondo's Archive, there are in addition two key words: the so-called English *Encyclopedia* and *The Thousand and One Nights.* These two books play an important role in Melquíades' writing, and the *Encyclopedia* is instrumental in the decoding of his manuscripts. The existence in Melquíades' fiction of precisely these two books adds a peculiar twist to the Archive, one that points to its own literary filiation.

I do not think that it would be too farfetched to say that *The Thousand and One Nights* and the so-called English *Encyclopedia* together are allusions to that master of fictions called Borges. In fact, Melquíades is a figure of the Argentine writer. Old beyond age, enigmatic, blind, entirely devoted to fiction, Melquíades stands for Borges, the librarian and keeper of the Archive. There is something whimsical in García Márquez's inclusion of such a figure in the novel, but there is a good deal more. It is not too difficult to fathom what this Borgesian figure means. Planted in the middle of the special abode of books and manuscripts, a reader of one of the oldest and most influencial collections of stories in the history of literature, Melquíades and his Archive stand for literature; more specifically, for Borges' kind of literature: ironic, critical, a demolisher of all delusions, the sort of thing we encounter at the end of the novel, when Aureliano finishes translating Melquíades' manuscript. There are in that ending further allusions to several stories by Borges: to "Tlön, Ucqbar, Orbis Tertius," in that Macondo is a verbal construct; to "The Secret Miracle," in that Aureliano, like the condemned poet, perishes the moment he finishes his work; to "The Aleph," in that Aureliano Babilonia's glimpse of the history of Macondo is instantaneous and all-encompassing; and particularly to "Death and the Compass," for the moment of anagnorisis is linked to death. Like Lönnrot, Aureliano only understands the workings of his fate at the moment of his death.

The Archive, then, is Borges' study. It stands for writing, for literature, for an accumulation of texts that is no mere heap, but an *arché,* a relentless memory that disassembles the fictions of myth, literature and even history. The masterbooks in the Archive are, as we have seen, the *Encyclopedia* and *The Thousand and One Nights.* The *Encyclopedia,* which Aureliano has read according to the nar-

rator from A to Z as if it were a novel, is in itself a figure of the totality of knowledge as conceived by the West. But how is it knowledge, and how has Aureliano read it? The moment we consider the order of knowledge in the *Encyclopedia* and the way in which Aureliano reads it, we realize the paradoxes inherent in the Archive as repository of history. The *Encyclopedia* is organized, of course, in alphabetical order, without the order of the entries being affected by any sort of chronological or evaluative consideration: Napoleon appears before Zeus and Charles V before God. The beginning is provided arbitrarily by the alphabet as well as by the sequence: apocalypse must appear in the first volume. *The Thousand and One Nights,* on the other hand, stands for a beginning in fiction, or beginning as fiction, as well as for a series of individual, disconnected stories, linked only by the narrator's fear of death. Aureliano is like Scheherazade, who tells her stories on the verge of death. Neither book seems to have priority over the other. Both have a prominent place within the Archive, providing their own forms of pastness, of documentary, textual material. The order that prevails in the Archive, then, is not that of mere chronology, but that of writing; the rigorous process of inscribing and decoding to which Melquíades and the last Aureliano give themselves over, a linear process of cancellations and substitutions, of gaps.

Writing and reading have an order of their own which is preserved within the Archive. It might be remembered that in Melquíades' room, it is always Monday and March for some characters, while for others his study is the room of the chamberpots, where decay and temporality have their own end embodied in the very essence of eschatology. The combination of feces and writing in the Archive is significant enough. Writing appears as an eschatological activity in that it deals with the end. Yet writing is also the beginning, insofar as nothing is in the text until it is written. Hence the prevalence of Monday and March in the secret abode of Melquíades, the beginning of the week and of spring respectively (March, not April, is the "cruellest month" in García Márquez). Melquíades is both young and old, depending, of course, on whether or not he wears his dentures; he presides over the beginning and the end. The Archive, then, is not so much an accumulation of texts as the process whereby texts are written; a process of repeated combinations, of shufflings and re-shufflings ruled by heterogeneity and difference. It is not strictly linear as both continuity and discontinuity, held together in uneasy alle-

giance. This is the reason why the previous mediations through which Latin America was narrated are contained in the Archive as voided presences; they are both erased and a memory of their own demise, keys to filing systems now abandoned, but they retain their archival quality, their power to differentiate, to space. They are not archetypes, but an *arché* of types.

This process is evident in the way in which Melquíades' manuscript is written and translated. Throughout the novel we are told that Melquíades writes undecipherable manuscripts, that his handwriting produces something that looks more like musical notation than script, that his writing resembles clothes on a line. Eventually José Arcadio Segundo discovers, with the aid of the *Encyclopedia,* that the writing is in Sanskrit. When Aureliano begins to translate from the Sanskrit, he comes up with coded Spanish verses. These verses have different codes, depending on whether they are even or odd numbered. Aureliano is finally illuminated when he sees the dead newborn being carried away by the ants and remembers the epigraph of the manuscript, which is supposed to read: *"The first of the line is tied to a tree and the last is being eaten by the ants"* (p. 420, emphasis in the original). He realizes then that the manuscript contains the story of his family, and hurries on to translate it to discover his own fate and the date and circumstances of his death. We shall return to the significance of all this, but first let us complete our description of the manuscript and its translation, for it is very easy to leap to conclusions concerning Melquíades' writing. Aureliano begins to translate the text out loud, jumping ahead twice to get to the present faster. Once he reaches the present he has a second illumination: that he would die in the room where the manuscript is kept once he finished translating the last line of poetry ("el último verso"). Critics have been quick to say that what we have read is Melquíades's version of the history of Macondo, that is to say, *Cien años de soledad.* Even if in fact it is Aureliano's translation that we read, then some changes have been made. To begin with, the epigraph has been omitted, as we have seen. In addition, Aureliano's leaps to get to the present have either not been accounted for in this version, or the holes they left have been restored. But by whom? The only solution to this enigma is to say that our reading—that each reading—of the text is the text, that is to say, yet another version added or appended to the Archive. Each of these readings corrects the others and each is unrepeatable insofar as it is a distinct act caught in the reader's own temporality.

In this sense, we, like Aureliano, read the instant we live, cognizant that it may very well be our last. This is the eschatological sense announced in various ways by the Archive.

The radical historicity to which the Archive condemns us belies its apparent atemporality and the bizarre order that the masterbooks within it have. It is a historicity that is very much like the one to which the narrator-protagonist of *Los pasos perdidos* is condemned at the end of that novel. In fact, Aureliano's reading of the manuscript in search of his origins and of an understanding of his being in the present is analogous to the reading performed by Carpentier's character in search of the origins of history and of his own beginnings. Such dearly achieved historicity in the face of the circularity and repetition of the family's history is somewhat ironic, given the sense of ahistoricalness with which many readers, intoxicated by the similarity of names and by Ursula's notion that time is going round and round, leave the novel. Such historicity, however, is needed to represent, within the anthropological mediation posited, the lucid consciousness of the West, able to understand itself by posturing as the other, but unable to abandon the sense of history to which writing sentences it. This is a sentence from which we can gain acquittal by means of a wilfull act of delusion, but one that *Cien años de soledad,* for all its fictive force does not allow the reader.

There is a curious fact that few readers of *Cien años de soledad* remark upon: even though the novel begins with Colonel Aureliano Buendía facing the firing squad, the one who dies at the end is not Aureliano the soldier, but Aureliano the reader. It seems to me that this displacement, plus the fact that Aureliano's moments of vision are flashes of insight parallel to those of the rebel, seem to suggest a most significant connection between the realms of history and myth, one that constitutes a common denominator between the repetitions of the family history and the disassembling mechanisms of the Archive. In the Archive, the presence of Melquíades and Aureliano (and in *Aura,* Felipe Montero, in *Yo el Supremo,* Patiño, etc.) is an insurance that the individual consciousness of a historian/writer will filter the ahistorical pretense of myth by subjecting events to the temporality of writing. But in *Cien años de soledad* the death of these figures is indicative of a mythic power that lurks within the realm of writing, a story that makes possible the Archive. In *Yo el Supremo* this is clearly indicated by Patiño's being a "swollen foot," that is, an Oedipus who pays a high price

for his knowledge. In *Cien años de soledad* Aureliano suffers a similar fate. He commits incest with his aunt, engenders a monster with her and dies the moment he has a glimpse of his fate. Aureliano is the necessary victim for us to be able to read the text, for us to acquire the knowledge we need to decode it. He (we) is no Oedipus, but more likely a Minotaur, which would bring us back to Borges (and also Cortázar). The ritualistic death—which prefigures that of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*—is necessary because of the incest committed both at the genealogical and the textual level. In both cases, what has been gained is a forbidden knowledge of the other as oneself, or vice-versa.

As we have seen, the most salient characteristic of the text we read is its heterogeneity. However, this heterogeneity is made up of differences within similarity. The various versions of the story are all related, yet differ in each instance. Their difference as well as their relation is akin—*valga la palabra*— to the relationship between the incestuous characters and to the broader confrontation between writer and a primitive other who produces myth. Put differently, the self-reflexiveness of the novel is implicitly compared to incest, a self-knowledge that somehow lies beyond knowledge. A plausible argument can be made that the end results of both are similar, in the most tangible sense, or at least related. When the ants carry away the carcass of the monstrous child engendered by Amaranta Ursula and Aureliano, its skin is described in terms that are very reminiscent of Melquíades' parchments. The English translation blurs that similarity. It reads: "And then he saw the child. It was a dry and bloated bag of skin that all the ants in the world were dragging. . ." (p. 420). The Spanish reads: "Era un pellejo [it was a skin] hinchado y reseco, que todas las hormigas del mundo iban arrastrando. . ." (p. 349). I need not go into the etymological and historical kinship uniting skin and parchment because the novel itself provides that link. The parchments are once described as "parecían fabricados en una materia árida que se resquebrajaba como hojaldres" (p. 68), and the books in the Archive are bound "en una materia acartonada y pálida como la piel humana curtida" (p. 160). The English reads, "the parchments that he had brought with him and that seemed to have been made out of some dry material that crumpled like puff paste" (p. 73), and "the books were bound in a cardboard-like material, pale, like tanned human skin" (p. 188).

The monster and the manuscript, the monster and the text, are

the product of the turning onto onself implicit in incest and self-reflexivity. Both are heterogeneous within a given set of characteristics, the most conspicuous of which is their supplementarity: the pig's tail, which exceeds the normal contours of the human body, and the text, whose mode of being is each added reading. The novel is a monster, engendered by a self-knowledge of which we too are guilty, to which we add our own pig's tail of reading and interpretation. The plot line that narrates the decipherment of the manuscripts underscores our own falling into this trap. Like Aureliano, we follow along in search of the meaning of the manuscripts, constantly teased by scenes where Melquíades appears scratching his incomprehensible handwriting onto rough parchment, by scenes where José Arcadio Segundo or Aureliano make preliminary discoveries that eventually lead them to unravel the mystery. But like Lönnrot in "Death and the Compass," and like Aureliano himself, we do not discover, until the very end, what the manuscripts contain. Our own anagnorisis as readers is saved for the last page, when the novel concludes and we close the book to cease being as readers, to be, as it were, slain in that role. We are placed back at the beginning, a beginning that is also already the end, a discontinuous, independent instant where everything commingles without any possibility for extending the insight, an intimation of death. This independent instant is not the novel; it is the point to which the novel has led us. By means of an unreading, the text has reduced us, like Aureliano, to a ground zero, where death and birth are joined togehter as correlative moments of incommunicable plenitude. The text is that which is added to this moment. Archive and myth are conjoined as instances of discontinuity rather than continuity; knowledge and death are given equivalent value.

It is a commonplace, almost an uncritical fetish, to say that the novel always includes the story of how it is written, that it is a self-reflexive genre. The question is why and how it is so at specific moments. Clearly, *Cien años de soledad* is self-reflexive not merely to provoke laughter, or to declare itself literary and thus disconnected from reality or from history. In García Márquez, and I daresay in all major Latin American novelists, self-reflexivity is a way of disassembling the mediation through which Latin America is narrated, a mediation that constitutes the pre-text of the novel itself. It is also a way of showing that the act of writing is caught up in a deeply rooted, mythic struggle that constantly denies it the

authority to generate and contain knowledge about the other without at the same time generating a perilous sort of knowledge about one's mortality and capacity to know oneself.

What do we learn about Latin American history in *Cien años de soledad*? We learn that while its writing may be mired in myth, it cannot be turned to myth, that its newness makes it impervious to timelessness, circularity, or any such delusion. New and therefore historical, what occurs in America is marked by change, it is change. García Márquez has expressed this by tantalizing the reader with various forms of myth, while at the same time subjecting him to the rigors of history as writing, of history as Archive. He has also achieved it by making Borges the keeper of the Archive, for the figure of the Argentine ensures that no delusions about literature be entertained. In a sense, what García Márquez has done is to punch through the anthropological mediation and substitute the anthropologist for an historian, and to turn the object of attention away from myth as an expression of so-called primitive societies to the myths of modern society: the book, writing, reading, instruments of a quest for self-knowledge that lie beyond the solace mythic interpretations of the world usually afford. We can always use *Cien años de soledad* to escape temporality, but only if we wilfully misread it to blind ourselves of its warnings against it. American history can only become myth enmeshed in this very modern problematic that so enriches its most enduring fictions.

For it is not toward a high-pitched rationality that *Cien años de soledad* moves, but toward a vision of its own creation dominated by the forces that generate myth. This is perhaps most evident if we consider that the Archive may very well be the most powerful of cultural retentions. The Archive is, first of all, a repository for the legal documents wherein the origins of Latin American history are contained, as well as a specifically Hispanic institution created at the same time as the New World was being settled. As is known, the great Archive at Simancas, begun by Charles V, but finished by the King Bureaucrat Philip II, is the first and possibly most voluminous such storehouse in Europe. The same Herrera who designed the Escorial had a hand in planning the Archive, that is to say, in turning a castle that was originally a prison into the Archive. America was discovered by Columbus, but really became a historical entity as a result of the development of the printing press. Latin America was created in the Archive. It may very well

have been Carlos Fuentes in his *Terra Nostra* who most clearly saw the connection, making Cervantes the inner historian in that novel. In terms of the novel's ability to retain and pass on cultural values, the message contained in books such as Fuentes' and *Cien años de soledad* is indeed disturbing, for they tell us that it is impossible to create new myths, yet bring us back once and again to that moment where our desire for meaning can only be satisfied by myth.

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