

PARADISE OF DISASTER: THE MAGICAL
LANDSCAPES OF UNDER THE VOLCANO AND
CIEN AÑOS DE SOLEDAD

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Abstract

Gabriel García Márquez has said that Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano is the book he has read the most. Its "magic" intrigues him. García Márquez, of course, has written Cien años de soledad, a masterpiece of magic realism. Why is it that Under the Volcano interests García Márquez? This paper, as a kind of explanation, seeks to examine the affinities between these two twentieth-century masterpieces. Both novels are most characterized by their marvelous, "magical," landscapes. Both Lowry and García Márquez use the landscape psychologically, symbolically, poetically, and thematically. The magical events as reflections of the characters **are** a psychological use of the landscapes. The landscapes symbolically represent the world, Eden or Paradise, and Hell. Poetic language heightens the "magic" of both landscapes. And finally, both novels have themes of solitude and the incapacity to love that, when combined with the landscapes, create a powerful message about man and his place in an Earthly Paradise.

"To hell with the place! Just think of all the scorpions and leafcutter ants..."¹

In a twentieth century typified by urbanization and technology, it is interesting that some of the greatest modern novels are not set in the city but in primeval landscapes, jungles, paradises. Beginning with Conrad's Heart of Darkness, these landscapes become more than simple natural settings. They become symbolic settings and psychological maps of modern man--a man divorced from nature yet eternally seeking Eden. Two of the great novels of this century, Under the Volcano by Malcolm Lowry and Cien años de soledad by Gabriel García Márquez, share a paradise-like jungle and tropical setting. Both of these marvelous landscapes also invoke a sense of "magic". García Márquez has written that Under the Volcano is

probably the novel that I have read the most times in my life. I would like not to have to read it any more but that would be impossible, for I shall not rest until I have discovered where its hidden magic lies.²

This is a significant statement from the author of the twentieth century's famous "book of magic". What is it

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about Lowry's "magic" that affects García Márquez? I hope to show that despite their seeming dissimilarities (for example in style and tone), these two novels share many affinities, the most important of which is their use of landscape psychologically, symbolically, poetically, and thematically.

Literally, the novels' events take place in beautiful tropical regions of Latin America. For Under the Volcano, the setting is Quauhnhuac (Cuernavaca), Mexico. It is beautiful and filled with bougainvillea, purple hills, green and orange birds, two majestic mountains, turquoise pools, scorpions and spiders. It is a natural region little disturbed by man's advances (in fact, nature has already reclaimed the ruins of Maximilian's Palace). Cien años de soledad takes place in a primeval interior of Colombia, where the Buendías and their followers build the town of Macondo. Macondo sits almost like an oasis in an "enchanted region" among the swamps and mountains. This region, too, is filled with birds ("turpiales, canarios, azulejos y petirrojos"³), flowers, scorpions, crocodiles and yellow butterflies. These two literal landscapes provide the framework upon which Lowry and García Márquez build landscapes of meaning.

The landscapes have a psychological significance, though more so in Under the Volcano than in Cien años de

soledad. The landscape reflects the minds of the characters in the novel. As William Gass explains of Under the Volcano:

Lowry is constructing a place, not describing one; he is making a Mexico for the mind where, strictly speaking, there are no menacing volcanoes, only menacing phrases...⁴

In Under the Volcano, a journey through the Mexican interior equals a journey through the interior--the mind--of Geoffrey Firmin, the Consul. Firmin's dishevelled and dying garden reveals his mental (as well as physical) state. The fair's "Maquina Infernal" also parallels Firmin's "topsy-turvy" inner world.⁵ Signs and advertisements take on personal significance. "iBox!" signs describe his relationship with Yvonne.⁶ Also, the dark road to Parián in the night mirrors the depths within himself to which the Consul is travelling.

The characters in Under the Volcano also superimpose meaning upon their surroundings. Hugh sees Spain in the landscape of Quauhnahuac, and thus the problems of the Spanish Civil War haunt him. He thinks of Juan Cerillo, the Mexican fighting the fascists in Spain, as he and Yvonne ride through the countryside accompanied by the muted "booms" of the target practice in the mountains that further suggests the Spanish Civil War:

They came to the headland and stood gazing back the way they had come, over the plains, the scrub, the railway, the Tomalín road. It was blowing here, a dry steady wind. Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. There they lay peacefully enough beyond the valley; the firing had ceased. Hugh felt a pang. On the way down he'd entertained a quite serious notion of finding time to climb Popo, perhaps even with Juan Cerillo... (124)

Every step in Quauhnhuac reminds a guilty Hugh that "they are losing the Battle of the Ebro" (151). The disillusioned Laruelle watches a coming storm and thus remembers his stormy relationship with Yvonne--and the Consul:

He watched the clouds: dark swift horses surging up the sky. A black storm breaking out of its season! That was what love was like, he thought; love which came too late. (10)

And Yvonne, finding the Consul's wrecked garden that had been "'like Paradise'" (98), envisions a new paradise in Canada. She uses the beautiful aspects of Quauhnhuac to dream about a Northern Paradise without vultures and black clouds that mar the landscape.

It is the Consul, though, who most imposes meaning on his surroundings. A snake in his garden becomes Hugh, his betrayer: "'Hi there, Hugh, you old snake in the grass!'" (141) A sign, "¿Le gusta este jardín?/ Que es suyo?/¡Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!", becomes, through his mistranslation, an ominous personal warning:

The Consul stared back at the black words on the sign without moving. You like this garden? Why is it yours? We evict those who destroy! Simple words, simple and terrible words, words which one took to the very bottom of one's being, words which [were] perhaps a final judgment on one... (128)

Also, Laruelle's stone angels become the fierce guardians of Eden for him. By imposing meaning so much, the Consul actually transforms--with a little help from his alcohol as well--the surrounding landscape. The landscape becomes symbolic: a paradise becomes an inferno....

In Cien años de soledad, we see one hundred years punctuated by fabulous, "magical" events. This is the magic realism of García Márquez. Sometimes these marvelous events reflect aspects, feelings, or actions of the characters. This is a psychological side of magic realism. García Márquez touched upon this facet of his style when he said,

Every single line in One Hundred Years of Solitude, in all my books, has a starting point in reality. I provide a magnifying glass so readers can understand reality better.... In the Eréndira story, [for example], I have the character Ulises make glass change color every time he touches it. Now, that can't be true. But so much has already been said about love that I had to find a new way of saying that this boy is in love.... Mine is just another way of saying the same thing that has always been said about love: how it upsets life, how it upsets everything.⁷

The character's emotion, love, is suggested in an accompanying event in the surroundings. So, in Cien años, we have a torrential rain-"llovió cuatro años, once meses y dos días" (351)-that reflects the banana company's unhealthy presence, the success of Aureliano's stock that reflects his passionate affair with Petra Cotes, and a different kind of rain that falls when José Arcadio Buendía dies:

Poco después, cuando el carpintero le tomaba las medidas para el ataúd, vieron a través de la ventana que estaba cayendo una llovizna de minúsculas flores amarillas. Cayeron toda la noche sobre el pueblo en una tormenta silenciosa, y cubieron los techos y atascaron las puertas, y sofocaron a los animales que durmieron a la intemperie. Tantas flores cayeron del cielo, que las calles amanecieron tapizadas de una colcha compacta, y tuvieron que despejarlas con palas y rastrillos para que pudiera pasar el entierro. (190)

In a way, the characters of Macondo transform their landscape as the characters do in Under the Volcano. But, it is a transformation in a magic mirror of their everyday actions and emotions.

We can compare the two novels' use of the landscape psychologically in episodes involving butterflies. In Cien años, there are the yellow butterflies that announce the presence of Mauricio Babilonia to his lover, Meme. When Mauricio goes to the Buendía house, Fernanda

No le permitió siquiera pasar de la puerta que un momento después tuvo que cerrar porque la casa estaba llena de mariposas amarillas. (324)

Mauricio's passion, evidenced by the yellow butterflies, overcomes a closed door and Fernanda's vigilance, and so "había tantas mariposas que apenas se podía respirar" (330). We can compare this episode of love to a similar episode in Under the Volcano. When Yvonne arrives at Acapulco harbor, she sees "a hurricane of immense and gorgeous butterflies swooping seaward to greet the Pennsylvania" (44). This is a special day for Yvonne because she is returning to the Consul. As a result, her feelings and observations of the landscape are imbued with a magical, soaring feeling. This feeling occurs again as she dies and feels herself swept up to heaven:

yet they were not constellations, but, somehow, myriads of beautiful butterflies, she was sailing into Acapulco harbour through a hurricane of beautiful butterflies, zigzagging overhead and endlessly vanishing astern over the sea... (335)

The magical presence of the butterflies in Cien años is actually related to Mauricio's presence. García Márquez, though, offers no explanation of how these butterflies appear. As L. Robert Stevens and G. Roland Vela explain:

The question whether they are real or imaginary butterflies is the wrong question. Márquez makes it evident that he places little value on

such questions and that there is, in a way, no inherent value in real butterflies as opposed to imaginary butterflies in the world which he describes and, by extension, perhaps in our world as well.⁸

The magical butterflies are "simply a fiat of reality in Macondo."⁹ So, whereas Yvonne makes a "hurricane" of butterflies in Acapulco harbor a magical sign of love, the butterflies in Macondo, in their mysterious way, actually are a magical sign of love.

Besides the psychological, there is also the symbolic quality of the two landscapes. In Under the Volcano, the landscape has several symbolic meanings. First, Quauhnhuac is the natural equivalent of Everyman: "Everyplace". Laruelle muses on Quauhnhuac:

another planet, he reflected again, a strange planet where, if you looked a little further, beyond the Tres Mariás, you would find every sort of landscape at once, the Cotswolds, Windermere, New Hampshire, the meadows of the Eure-et-Loire, even the grey dunes of Cheshire, even the Sahara, a planet upon which, in the twinkling of an eye, you could change climates, and, if you cared to think so, in the crossing of a highway, three civilizations... (10)

This image of Quauhnhuac as a kind of crossroads surfaces throughout the novel. The Europeans are present with Maximilian and Carlotta, Laruelle, and the fascists as representatives. Quincey and Weber are American representatives. The Indians appear also, the most memorable

Indian being the one dying by the roadside. And there is Geoffrey Firmin, an Anglo-Indian living in Mexico. The Consul is the Everyman in this Everyplace. Thus, the story of one man in one place becomes a story of all men in all places on a drunkenly spinning world.

Laruelle also muses of Quauhnahuac as an "Earthly Paradise" (10), and "paradise" is an even more important symbolic meaning of the landscape. The region is a "Doré Paradise" (6) and an "Eden" (14). The countryside even seems "to be murmuring of peace, of paradise" (99). "Seems" is the key word here. In his famous letter to Jonathan Cape, Lowry writes that Mexico in Under the Volcano can be the world or the Garden of Eden or both. He says that this Mexico is paradisaical yet "unquestionably infernal."

"Infernal" is exactly what this paradise of Quauhnahuac becomes. Vultures and storm clouds negate the lovely bougainvillea. For the Consul, Yvonne, Hugh, and Laruelle especially, this paradise has become a Dantesque inferno, a last symbolic function of the landscape. Lowry's characters have sought a Mexican paradise as an escape from a drunken world spinning towards World War II and destruction (whose approach the black clouds prophesy). They discover no escape and eventually no paradise. The Consul's once beautiful garden, for example, which "'was

like Paradise'" (98), is overgrown with weeds, tangled, and dying. Maximilian and Carlotta, whose tragic fate in the nineteenth century foreshadows that of the Consul and Yvonne in the chaotic twentieth century, had also hoped for an Eden in Mexico, and had built a palace in Quauhnahuac. By the time Larvelle wanders through the palace ruins in 1939, the ruins are a testament to the infernalizing of Eden:

The broken pink pillars, in the half-light, might have been waiting to fall down on him: the pool, covered with green scum, its steps torn away and hanging by one rotting clamp, to close over his head. The shattered evil-smelling chapel, overgrown with weeds, the crumbling walls, splashed with urine, on which scorpions lurked - wrecked entablature, sad archivolt, slippery stones covered with excreta - this place, where love had once brooded, seemed part of a nightmare. (14)

The infernal landscape of Under the Volcano frequently suggests Dante's Inferno. There is the dark wood on the way to Parián. There is the Hotel Casino de la Selva. The Malebolge, as Hugh notes, "was the barranca, the ravine which wound through the country" (100). It is to this barranca, abyss, inferno that the Consul and mankind are hurtling. The Farolito is also an inferno (as Dr. Vigil, or Virgil, notes). Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl become Mount Purgatory:¹⁰

Popocatepetl towered through the window, its immense flanks partly hidden by rolling thunderheads; its peak blocking the sky, it appeared almost right overhead, the barranca, the Farolito, directly beneath it. Under the Volcano! (339)

Hell is under the volcano, and as Carole Slade explains, "in order to reach the volcanoes beyond, one must inevitably pass through it."¹¹ But, as we find out later, the Consul never reaches the volcanoes, he falls and remains in Hell at the novel's end. On the way to Paríán he cries:

I love hell. I can't wait to get back there. In fact I'm running, I'm almost back there already. (314)

Macondo, in Cien años, shares Quauhnahuac's symbolic functions. It is a microcosm, a "novela que es de Aracataca, de Colombia, de América latina y del Mundo."¹² (Aracataca, Colombia is the town where García Márquez grew up.) The history of Macondo, from its beginning to its end, suggests a broader history. The people of Macondo, from their everyday chores to their involvement in thirty-two civil wars, suffer like people all over the world at all times.

Macondo also shares a sense of paradise, Eden. The founding of Macondo is a kind of "búsqueda del paraíso perdido" that

anuncia sobre todo el impulso de un reencuentro con el mundo, la necesidad de conquistar ese mundo en una identidad primordial, el sueño de restablecer una realidad original...¹³

Macondo is the Promised Land for a group of people also attempting to escape the problems of the world. Here, it is an escape from a killing by José Arcadio Buendía, Macondo's Adam. The Buendías seem to have succeeded in reaching an Edenic paradise full of singing birds: "Era en verdad una aldea feliz, donde nadie era mayor de treinta años y donde nadie había muerto" (67). They try to send away Father Nicanor because

durante muchos años habían estado sin cura, arreglando los negocios del alma directamente con Dios, y habían perdido la malicia del pecado mortal. (135)

Their success is not permanent, however. As in Under the Volcano, their Eden is gradually despoiled during one hundred years of politics, prosperity, civil war, foreign exploitation, and decadence. In fact, whenever "paradise" appears in Cien años, words like "solitude" or "disasters" negate it. So we have "paraíso decadente" (405) or José Arcadio Buendía's "paraíso de animales destripados" (128). As Macondo declines, nature retakes it (as nature retook Maximilian's palace) and the paradise turns infernal, hellish. The Buendía house symbolizes

this decline. The house had been a beautiful showcase painted white like a dove and full of ferns and begonias. It becomes an ugly wreck smothered in cobwebs and moss. The final inhabitants of the house, Aureliano and Amaranta Úrsula, totally absorbed in their love and passion, are in a "paraíso de desastres" (437). Amaranta Úrsula finally notices the frightening disaster of the house:

En el aturdimiento de la pasión, vio las hormigas devastando el jardín, saciando su hambre prehistórica en las maderas de la casa, y vio el torrente de lava viva apoderándose otra vez del corredor, pero solamente se preocupó de combatirlo cuando lo encontró en su dormitorio. (436-7)

Finally, nature reclaims and destroys the former paradise of Macondo in "un pavoroso remolino de polvo y escombros centrifugado por la cólera del huracán bíblico" (447).

The poetic language in Under the Volcano and Cien años de soledad also invokes a magical aura in the landscape. Lowry has a lush, embellished style that capitalizes on allusions, "local color", and language to create a magically charged landscape for his readers. He creates a luxuriant paradise:

The jungle closed over them and the volcanoes were blotted out. Yet it was still not dark. From the stream racing along beside them a radiance was cast. Big yellow flowers, resembling chrysanthemums, shining like stars through the gloom, grew on either side of the

water. Wild bougainvillea, brick red in the half-light, occasionally a bush with white handbells, tongue-downwards, started out at them...(317)

or creates creatures from an inferno:

Birds came swarming out of the southeast: small, black, ugly birds, yet too long, something like monstrous insects, something like crows, with awkward long tails, and an undulating, bounding, labored flight. Shatterers of the twilight hour, they were flapping their way feverishly home, as they did every evening, to roost within the fresno trees in the zócalo, which until nightfall would ring with their incessant drilling mechanic speech. Stragglers, the obscene concourse hushed and pedalled by. (14)

The Consul, too, contributes to this poetic magic when he drinks, because alcohol releases his mystic powers.¹⁴

The Consul,

Felt the fire of the tequila run down his spine like lightning striking a tree which thereupon, miraculously, blossoms. (215)

At the beginning of the fifth chapter we see the fruits of his alcoholic blossoming: a magical landscape of his mind.

Then, with souls well disciplined they reached the northern region, and beheld, with heaven aspiring hearts, the mighty mountain Himavat... Whereupon the lake was lapping, the lilacs were blowing, the chenars were budding, the mountains were glistening, the waterfalls were playing, the spring was green, the snow was white, the sky

was blue, the fruit blossoms were clouds: and he was still thirsty. Then the snow was not glistening, the fruit blossoms were not clouds, they were mosquitoes, the Himalayas were hidden by dust, and he was thirstier than ever. Then the lake was blowing, the snow was blowing, the waterfalls were blowing, the fruit blossoms were blowing, the seasons were blowing - blowing away - he was blowing away himself, whirled by a storm of blossoms into the mountains, where now the rain was falling. But this rain, that fell only on the mountains, did not assuage his thirst.... (125)

García Márquez invokes a magical landscape with a spare and simple style very different from Lowry's involved style. He uses little figurative language, but when he does, it is a language of unexpected connections, as when he describes the polished stones in Macondo's river that are "blancas y enormes como huevos prehistóricos" (59). García Márquez "transforms the common experience of our world into something magical by his telling of it in the novel."¹⁵ And, García Márquez creates unreal landscapes in his fantastic Macondo. A marvelous example (similar to the Consul's northerly "journey" above, but much darker) occurs when José Arcadio Buendía sets out on an expedition in the enchanted region in order to discover the world's wonders:

Luego, durante más de diez días, no volvieron a ver el sol. El suelo se volvió blando y húmedo, como ceniza volcánica, y la vegetación fue cada vez más insidiosa y se hicieron cada vez más

lejanos los gritos de los pájaros y la bullaranga de los monos, y el mundo se volvió triste para siempre. Los hombres de la expedición se sintieron abrumados por sus recuerdos más antiguos en aquel paraíso de humedad y silencio, anterior al pecado original, donde las botas se hundían en pozos de aceites humeantes y los machetes destrozaban lirios sangrientos y salamandras doradas. Durante una semana, casi sin hablar, avanzaron como sonámbulos por un universo de pesadumbre, alumbrados apenas por una tenue reverberación de insectos luminosos y con los pulmones agobiados por un sofocante olor de sangre. No podían regresar, porque la trocha que iban abriendo a su paso se volvía a cerrar en poco tiempo, con una vegetación nueva que casi veían crecer ante sus ojos. (68-9)

They then find the marvelous Spanish galleon that like the Buendía house will parallel Macondo's decline when it gradually disappears:

Frente a ellos, rodeado de helechos y palmeras, blanco y polvoriento en la silenciosa luz de la mañana, estaba un enorme galeón español. Ligera-mente volteado a estribor, de su arboladura intacta colgaban las piltrafas escuálidas del velamen, entre jarcias adornadas de orquídeas. El casco, cubierto con una tersa coraza de rémora petrificada y musgo tierno, estaba firmemente enclavado en un suelo de piedras. Toda la estructura parecía ocupar un ámbito propio, un espacio de soledad y de olvido, vedado a los vicios del tiempo y a las costumbres de los pájaros. En el interior, que los expedicionarios exploraron con un fervor sigiloso, no había nada más que un apretado bosque de flores. (69)

There is also poetic description in the episodes of the gypsies and ice, Remedios the Beauty's rise to heaven, and the apocalyptic ending similar to the endings of Yvonne

and the Consul in Under the Volcano. With two very different styles, the two authors conjure striking landscapes of colorful, fantastic paradises for the reader.

Finally, these two novels share themes of alienation, solitude, and the denial of love or the incapacity to love. Solitary figures people Under the Volcano: the Consul, Laruelle, the dying Indian, Señora Gregorio, and the "poor lonely fellow" Señor Cervantes. In fact, when the Consul prays for Yvonne's return, he goes to the "'Virgen for those who have nobody with'" -- as aptly described by Dr. Vigil (289). Solitary figures also fill Cien años. One of the most important of these characters is el coronel Aureliano Buendía, who is similar to the Consul. (The whole Buendía family has a solitary air, but "los Aurelianos eran retraídos, pero de mentalidad lúcida, los José Arcadio eran impulsivos y emprendedores, pero estaban marcados por un signo trágico" (228).) The ugliness of civil war affects el coronel as World War I affected the Consul. El coronel even places himself in a physical solitude that mirrors his spiritual solitude:

Fue entonces cuando decidió que ningún ser humano, ni siquiera Úrsula, se le aproximara a menos de tres metros. En el centro del círculo de tiza que sus edecanes trazaban dondequiera que él llegara, y en el cual sólo él podía entrar, decidía con órdenes breves e inapelables el destino del mundo. (212)

The solitary characters in Cien años take refuge in various obsessions. El coronel has his little gold fishes which are to him as mescal is to the Consul--a refuge against ugly reality. And, most importantly, there is a failure of love in Cien años and Under the Volcano. El coronel Aureliano believes that the war has destroyed his feelings and he searches in vain for any affection in his heart. Úrsula, though, makes a shocking discovery:

Se dio cuenta de que el coronel Aureliano Buendía no le había perdido el cariño a la familia a causa del endurecimiento de la guerra, como ella creía antes, sino que nunca había querido a nadie....Llegó a la conclusión de que aquel hijo por quien ella habría dado la vida, era simplemente un hombre incapacitado para el amor. Una noche, cuando lo tenía en el vientre, lo oyó llorar....[Se dio cuenta de que] el llanto de los niños en el vientre de la madre no es un anuncio de ventriloquía ni de facultad adivinatoria, sino una señal inequívoca de incapacidad para el amor. (290-1)

Similarly, the Consul cannot love. He prays to the "'Virgen for those who have nobody with'" for Yvonne's return, yet he rejects her and her love when she answers his prayers and returns. When he prays to Señor Cervantes' small Virgen he asks, "'Teach me to love again, to love life'" (289). But, like el coronel Aureliano, he cannot find love in his heart: his next words to the Virgen are, "'Where is love?'" (289). It is too late for the Consul. Significantly, out of all the signs in Quauhnahuac, the

one sign the Consul ignores is an important one for him (195): the verse on Laruelle's house, "No se puede vivir sin amar" or "One cannot live without loving."¹⁶

When these themes of solitude and the incapacity to love combine with the landscape of paradise, a greater message forms that is applicable to modern man. We have already seen how both landscapes are or become hellish Edens. In these two novels we discover that these characters live in solitude in an infernalized Eden because they abused their privilege of living in a paradisaal Eden. The Consul realizes his place in Eden in a tragic-comic speech:

I've often wondered whether there isn't more in the old legend of the Garden of Eden, and so on, than meets the eye. What if Adam wasn't really banished from the place at all? That is, in the sense we used to understand it... What if his punishment really consisted...in his having to go on living there, alone, of course - suffering, unseen, cut off from God.... And of course the real reason for that punishment - his being forced to go on living in the garden, I mean, might well have been that the poor fellow, who knows, secretly loathed the place! Simply hated it, and had done so all along. And that the Old Man found this out... (133-4)

The owners of Eden (and "'the original sin was to be an owner of property'" according to the Consul), the Consul, the Buendías, all of us, have invited this punishment of living in solitude in an infernalized paradise through

civil war, world wars, and the incapacity to love our fellow man. In Under the Volcano, the Consul cannot love Yvonne, the Indian is left to die by the side of the road, the Fascists in Mexico (harbingers of World War II) kill the Consul, the Consul unknowingly kills Yvonne, and "they are losing the Battle of the Ebro" (151). In Cien años, Amaranta rejects her suitors (one of whom commits suicide), the army kills thousands of striking workers and their families, Fernanda rejects her illegitimate grandson, the last José Arcadio is murdered by greedy children, etc. Two people who escape these paradises of disaster are Yvonne and Remedios the Beauty. Remedios the Beauty is a truly innocent inhabitant of Macondo's Eden who flies up to heaven with the sheets. Yvonne, as she dies, feels "herself suddenly gathered upwards and borne towards the stars" (336), towards heaven. Though she is a very flawed Beatrice, Yvonne avoids the Consul's fate of falling into the inferno because of her love for him.¹⁷ Those who cannot escape are faced with an inferno. Lowry, in his letter to Jonathon Cape, sums up this message for modern man when he says modern man increasingly faces being ejected from Eden, the world; and that the fate of the drunken Consul can be the "ultimate fate of mankind."

The ultimate fate of mankind lies in destruction, chaos, apocalypse in these two novels, and they both have

apocalyptic endings. In Under the Volcano, the "drunken madly revolving world" (194) hurtles towards World War II as the dying Consul is tossed into the barranca where he

was falling, falling into the volcano, he must have climbed it after all, though now there was this noise of foisting lava in his ears, horribly, it was in eruption, yet no, it wasn't the volcano, the world itself was bursting, bursting into black spouts of villages catapulted into space, with himself falling through it all, through the inconceivable pandemonium of a million tanks, through the blazing of ten million burning bodies, falling, into a forest, falling -
(375)

The Consul falls into Hell. At the end of Cien años, when "Macondo era ya un pavoroso remolino de polvo y escombros centrifugado por la cólera del huracán bíblico," Aureliano (the last one alive) discovers that "las estirpes condenadas a cien años de soledad no tenían una segunda oportunidad sobre la tierra" (448). The inhabitants of both these paradises, and all mankind, should have heeded the signs posted in the gardens of Quauhnahuac:

¿LE GUSTA ESTE JARDÍN

QUE ES SUYO?

¡EVITE QUE SUS HIJOS LO DESTRUYAN!

(Do you like this garden that is yours? See to it that your children do not destroy it!)

Clearly, García Márquez and Lowry are concerned with man and what he does on this Earth that could be an Eden. The psychological and symbolical aspects of these paradisaical landscapes reinforce this theme. And above all, these are magical landscapes, where sunflowers are the eyes of God and horses are apocalyptic forces of terror in Under the Volcano, and where scorpions and yellow butterflies accompany one in the bathtub, birds sing so loud as to threaten one's sense of reality, and diamond-like ice is "el gran invento de nuestro tiempo" (75) in Cien años. The magic of the landscapes signals to us that these are more than mere settings of "local color." These are paradises of disaster.

Notes

¹ Malcolm Lowry, Under the Volcano (New York: New American Library, 1971) 134. All subsequent page references to this text will be given in parentheses.

² Ronald Binns, Malcolm Lowry (New York: Methuen, 1984) 9.

³ Gabriel García Márquez, Cien años de soledad (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1983) 67. All subsequent page references to this text will be given in parentheses.

⁴ William H. Gass, "In Terms of the Toenail: Fiction and the Figures of Life," Fiction and the Figures of Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970) 57.

⁵ Richard Hauer Costa, "The Grisly Graphics of Malcolm Lowry," College Literature 11.3 (1984) 256.

⁶ Costa 252.

⁷ Claudia Dreifus, "Playboy Interview: Gabriel García Márquez," Playboy Feb. 1983:74.

⁸ L. Robert Stevens and G. Roland Vela, "Jungle Gothic: Science, Myth, and Reality in One Hundred Years of Solitude," Modern Fiction Studies 26 (1980) 262.

⁹ Stevens and Vela 263.

¹⁰ Carole Slade, "Under the Volcano and Dante's Inferno I," University of Windsor Review 10 (1975) 46.

¹¹ Slade 46.

¹² Emmanuel Carballo, "Gabriel García Márquez, un gran novelista latinoamericano," Nueve asedios a García Márquez (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, S.A., 1971) 37.

¹³ Julio Ortega, "Gabriel García Márquez/Cien años de soledad," Nueve asedios a García Márquez (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, S.A., 1971) 75.

¹⁴ Dale Edmonds, "Under the Volcano: A Reading of the 'Immediate Level,'" Tulane Studies in English XVI (1968) 99.

¹⁵ Stevens and Vela 265.

¹⁶ Costa 253.

¹⁷ Slade 51.

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