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Reading (for) Magical Gaps:
The Novice Reader's Aesthetic Response to Magical Realism

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

in

World Cultures

by

Carl Joseph Ponzio

Committee in charge:

Professor Manuel M. Martín-Rodríguez, Chair
Professor Virginia Adan-Lifante
Professor Ignacio López-Calvo
Professor Teenie Matlock

2013

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Dedication

This work would not be possible without the students that I have had the pleasure of training while at UC Merced. Each group taught me something about myself as an instructor, and I must continue to enhance my pedagogical skills in order to prepare my students for their next step – whatever that step may be.

To the two people I could not prosper without – Robyn McCreight and Anthony Paramo. My travels and study have kept me away for far too long, but, as we continue to become improved, talented individuals, we will each undergo periods when we must sacrifice our most valued possession, time. Hours of strenuous training lie ahead; nevertheless, I know I can always depend on each of you to alleviate the stress I feel when I cannot fulfill my responsibilities as a partner to you, Robyn, or a brother to you, Anthony. Forgiving is not forgetting: it is remembering with the promise for a better tomorrow. Better days await us as we remain dedicated to improving ourselves and others. Now, let us step outside of our respective caves and get some sunlight!

To the rest of my family and friends, my analyses fail without you. You each lend me your eyes while I traverse literary and tangible worlds. Joseph Conrad once asserted that it was his duty to help the world see: I cannot help but wonder how his closest friends and family first provided him with the very talent he wanted to gift to his readers.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Introduction: Introduction: The Novice Reader, Magical Realism, and the Potential of Ambiguity.....	1
Chapter One: “Who Wants to Share?”: Relations Between the Novice Reader and the Intent of the Perceived Author(ity).....	17
Chapter Two: The Mechanics of Magic in <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i>	43
Chapter Three: Occidental Fit: Merging Zones as Paradoxical Centers in <i>The House of the Spirits</i>	69
Chapter Four: “Everything is Known”: Synthesizing Macondo’s Vacant Memories.....	93
Conclusion: Maturing as a Community.....	119
Works Cited.....	125

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

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Master of Arts, Emphasis in World Cultures

University of California, Merced, 2013

Professor Manuel M. Martín-Rodríguez, Chair

The purpose of the following work is to propose a theoretically supported understanding of a methodology used by actual readers who exhibit apprehension when asked to respond to a text with an imaginative interpretation. I argue that once an author's vision is considered to be absolute, those people I deem novice readers will primarily search a text for fundamental textual clues – or important moments in the plot – that appear indicative of the author's intentions. Basing the detective-like method used by novice readers in reader response theory, the same reading models of Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish are later considered in order to explore how the ambiguity of works written in the magical realist mode can benefit readers who formerly sought to uncover a single reading. In particular, selected works from Laura Esquivel, Isabel Allende, and Gabriel García Márquez are each analyzed for their potential to enhance aesthetic reading strategies.

Introduction: The Novice Reader, Magical Realism, and the Potential of Ambiguity

The purpose of the following work is to propose a theoretically supported understanding of a methodology used by actual readers who, based on my observations, exhibit apprehension when asked to respond to a text with an imaginative interpretation. I propose that these individuals – who I deem novice readers – primarily search for authorial intent rather than formulate their own textual analysis, such behavior spawning from standardized interpretive strategies implemented predominantly in high school. Feeling a need to obtain a “correct” reading, students making the transition from secondary institutions to college with little confidence in their analytical skills most often exemplify the characteristics of the novice reader. To scour a text for the plotline or “close reading” moments – major textual events that the novice may deem indicative of the author’s intent – signifies the novice reader’s methodology. Thus, anyone can be a novice reader if they withhold their own imaginative response in favor of extracting an objective meaning.¹ After further highlighting the novice reader, I will argue that magical realism can provide novice readers with a frame that can enhance their interpretative skills through the mode’s ability to subtly and explicitly blend the real and the fantastic.² The frame acts as a catalyst for the novice reader’s initiation into an imagined space where subtle nuances do not need the absolute or rational explanations expected of them from other genres rooted predominantly in realism. Specifically, the ambivalence found in magical realist works exemplifies multiple possibilities for explanations regarding fantastic occurrences. With magic originating from multiple sources and from various perceptions, the novice can arrive at the realization that his partisanship or view enables new takes on magic’s surreptitious manifestations and functionality. Though data collected from focus groups is pending, I would nevertheless like to suggest that a consistent use of aesthetic reading practices will best suit the novice reader’s maturity—their will to engage with the text.³

Uttered with a sense of taboo, magical realist texts, almost inexplicably, became one of the most highly recognized modes in literature after Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was translated into English in 1970. Prior to international success, the mode endured a lengthy tenure of amalgamation and transformation before featuring recognizable figures such as Father Nicanor, the floating priest who enjoys an enchanting cup of chocolate or Clara, the clairvoyant mute who

¹ It should be noted that the term is not intended to signify gender. Though I predominantly use a masculine pronoun, I do not link the novice reader’s skills to a particular gender. Most magical realist and Latin American literature scholars are familiar with the resistance to Julio Cortázar’s gendered reading strategies. See Simpkins, 61.

² The term “mode” is used to suggest that magical realism is not its own genre, but a technique that traverses the boundaries of proper genres. See Schroeder, 13.

³ Though an outline of how the suggested focus groups will function does not exist anywhere in this work, I would like to stress that factor’s shaping novice readers’ identity will undoubtedly influence their readings. I do not intend to skirt the issue. However, as my focus in this work centers on highlighting the general methods exercised by novice readers and developing a schematic for improving their analytical skills, I leave considerations for focus groups and their procedures for observing and aiding various types of novice readers for a later work.

envisions her own fettered marriage outfitted with an abusive spouse. Scholars and readers can point to such characters and deem them exemplary figures of magical realism. Considering the mode's disputed history, this is precarious given magical realism's various definitions. The earliest definition, formulated by Franz Roh in his description of Germanic art of the early twentieth century, was either bypassed or faced resistance from scholars beginning with Angel Flores and Luis Leal, but notions now spanning nearly one hundred years continue to undergo reconsideration. However, one constant is the necessity to willingly suspend disbelief while reading those works that fluctuate between the real, the fantastic, and the subsequent world formed as an intermediary plane of existence. It is the eventual acceptance of the magical for the sake of the narrative that allows the imagination to thrive. To specify, the imagination is not hampered by the absolute requirements of practical reason otherwise mandated by a relationship with literary realism; on the other hand, imagination cannot run wild in the magical realist tradition. Reality bends, but does not break. It is guided by the messages pertaining to the story's realist ties; a co-dependence forms between the worlds that spawn ambiguous possibilities through reader participation – as it is the reader who manages the limitations of his or her own imagination.

The desirable mimetic experience perpetuated by realist literature and the totally foreign environments constructed through pure fantasy can encourage the lackadaisical habits exhibited by novice readers. Such readers can best grow comfortable with a text when they begin to re-evaluate the circumstance of the prescribed environments. To clarify, the novice reader does not cultivate his skills by depending on the guidance of sources outside of the text itself, mirroring the passive reader who reads for entertainment or to make an attempt at storing textual details without a need or desire to produce analysis. Works of magical realism illuminate a path towards a community of engaged readers; the mode being a potential pedagogical tool to help novice readers cultivate their analytical skills. However, the metaphorical path towards a community of readers will remain unrefined unless new reading strategies can be implemented by instructors or mentors and adopted by novice readers.

Reading García Márquez's canonical *One Hundred Years of Solitude* sparked my interest in the alchemic-like reading process I associate with the novice reader. Students who do not commit to reading in an aesthetic manner seek worth from their often times leaden or stodgy analyses, generally comprised of textual summary and the instructor's analysis. In a discussion about its use as a repository of imaginative capabilities, Ana María Manzanás explains that magical realism showcases the "dehierarchization" of the text's social makeup (58). In other words, the paradoxical essence of the mode has the ability to bring the people and thoughts on the socially constructed fringes to the center. Emphasizing the reader's role in the creation of the text's omitted details incites new conversations in a similar discourse. Karin Littau suggests that some scholars are simply interested in the literary or textual consumption of the flesh and blood reader with the intention to understand how they make sense of a story (60). Rather, a goal of this work is to suggest how readers make sense of the nonsensical. Anyone who has ever read a work of magical realism possesses undoubted acumen, an ability to identify that what occurs within such a text does not make sense in the way that people engaged solely in empirical or practical reality would expect. Rational sense-making would discredit the

use of the “nonsensical” magic within the text. Discrediting the “magical” in a text stifles the capacity to engage with the analytical potential that the paradoxical mode in question offers its readers. All readers want to *feel* a connection with a text, and it is such a connection that sparks the potential for interpretation.

The use of the word “feel” is deliberate. Reading makes everyone engaged in the physical process regardless of their status or lack of status as a reader: one feels a sense of accomplishment by completing a text or one feels entertained, or maybe bored, by a text. However, as numerous scholars have suggested, pathos should not dominate reading. Reading is not an end in itself. A sense of success or entertainment leads to simple consumption, not active reading; the submissive bibliomaniac, a focus of Littau’s research, represents the detrimental repercussions of unabated textual consumption. I maintain that it is beneficial to read with imaginative freedom because personally explaining the motivation behind an interpretation places the reader at the forefront of the analysis rather than asking the reader to identify literary expectations beyond their familiarity.

The examination of magical realism and suggestion for its previously unforeseen use in expanding the novice reader’s imagination buds from an interest in W.K. Wimsatt’s and Monroe C. Beardsley’s work in “The Affective Fallacy” and Littau’s formation of the “cognitive fallacy.” According to the affective fallacy described by Wimsatt and Beardsely, the evaluation of art should be left to those who can keep their feelings intact, bottled within as they navigate a work (33). Though the affective fallacy and its exploration has been thoroughly debated and is clearly dated, its mention does seem useful when considering how its influence continues to resonate within secondary schools and the academy. The stone-faced evaluation process fails to be applicable until one possesses the skills of a professional reader. Students realize that their professors do not simply want to know if they liked the text or not because it pleased their taste, but their emotional and pleasurable evaluations inevitably come into play. If a story acts as a tool for evaluating what sparks the apprehensive student’s interest then these readers elude Wimsatt’s and Beardsely’s proposed shortcoming vis-à-vis the “good story,” which displaces its potential for critical evaluation to the confines of the individual’s imagination (46). Textual frame potentially spurs students’ willingness to engage and discuss the text – engagement with the text proving more beneficial than overall analysis of what is “good” and why. Students can evaluate works based on the potential facets for their own scholarly cultivation. Thus, they will grow to consider factors that coincide with those of Hans Robert Jauss’s horizon of experience, discussed further in the first chapter.⁴ The question remains as to where this horizon begins for the novice reader. As students cultivate their interpretative skills based on a burgeoning relationship with literature, they must begin their evaluation through the ways in which the text affected them. Relating the text to the most local ideas – either personal or public – posits a

⁴ Jauss describes his “horizon-of-experience” as the changing, historical life of the literary work that accentuates a “continuity in which the perpetual inversion occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production that surpasses them” (19). I later contend that once the novice reader’s ceases to search the text for authorial intention, he can interpret the text without inhibition and will feel more comfortable in doing so when the inclusion of magic bolsters interpretive potential.

constructive basis from which the novice can build. The text engages the reader through unfamiliar notions and prompts a return on magical suggestions: evaluation prompts the sharpening of skills while altering the course of the text in the reader's image. Analysis will connect his reactions with textual suggestions, synchronizing personal taste and textual evaluation. The reader's ability to relate to literature and gauge its aptitude to enthuse similar audiences increases the potential for a given work to provide a similar opportunity for other developing readers. Students do not want to hide their feelings about a work. They simply need to learn how their reactions can motivate their appraisals. Listening to any class discussion reveals how a book was received – first on an empathic or sentimental basis and second on a formal or scholarly basis.

Educators know they cannot overlook the necessity of *both* receptive faculties. Keeping a discussion fixated on either faculty almost assures that little progress will be made. Dead silence or the sound of the lecturer's voice giving a learned interpretation of a text does not give apprehensive students the tools to offer their own interpretation, it simply perpetuates silent approval. Conversely, when students only emphasize what they liked or disliked, they often neglect to include why a text made them feel a certain way. It should go without saying that an emotional response is rarely rendered incorrect; thus, even the most indifferent reader can contribute to a conversation. Emotionally centered discussions are excellent "team building" or comfort reinforcing exercises, but they do not give students the tools that they need to form their own textual exploration. The overarching problem persists: students – particularly novice readers – are unwilling to offer an interpretation because they are not comfortable doing so, feeling that their thoughts are invalid.

When readers feel enabled to make sense of a text, interpretations will come forth. Littau highlights Stanley Fish's response regarding the affective fallacy, which is based on his incorrect quoting of Wimsatt and Beardsely, as the motivational factor for her exploration of the cognitive fallacy. She explains that Fish's unsound rebuttal of "The Affective Fallacy," which he associated with the psychological reaction of the reader and not the correct translation of the physiological reaction, further cements his concerns for understanding how readers make sense of a text, not how they feel about a text (10). Littau does not deny the necessity of sense-making altogether. Neither does she intend to completely disregard cognition during reading. Cognition must remain a necessity if scholars are to adapt the literary tools in order to slowly shift from the absolute denial of reader affect to a sensible acceptance of its practical worth. Her proposal to implement feminist criticism to consider the prominence of bodily value implies that the feminist lens offers a holistic type of "sense-making," without the cold, absolute analysis sought by Wimsatt and Beardsely. Littau's approach is logical; however, it does not provide a practical stepping stone for implementation, especially for those readers learning to develop their analytical skills. Valuing bodily reaction offers an answer in terms of a foundation in feminist theory, yet cordially extends a solution that is beyond the capacity for those readers most in need of straightforward interpretive strategies: with her intended audience as professionals and members of academia, Littau advocates for her solution to be implemented into that community, a community well beyond the reach of the high school student or the undergraduate: typical novice readers who want to know – definitively – what a text means.

Throughout my tenure as a student, a tutor, a discussion leader, and a teacher's assistant, it has come to my attention that most students seek finite answers to their readings. They want to know what is important and the reason for its importance. According to Wimsatt and Beardsely, "[t]he critic is not a contributor to statistically countable reports about the poem, but a teacher or explicator of meaning," (48) but this simply is not the case within the classroom where students *do* take explication as meaning and will, contrary to their suggestion, "be content to take what he [the instructor] says as testimony" (48). Unfortunately, fewer students exercise their capabilities to consider what they have read and how their understanding can shape the text. In speedy efforts, students often try to rephrase what has been discussed in the communal class setting – as if each individual essay was the result of an extensive group assignment. These issues are, by no stretch of the imagination, new. Students who only read to pass a literature class, to get a degree, to find employment often protest that reading for a course in the modern novel does not help to satisfy long term goals. While most readers would disagree with such a claim, a novel solution to the tendencies of the novice reader remains to be uncovered. Novice readers exhibit a reluctant commitment level to building a new habit, understandably so. Becoming a reader is arduous. It takes time to appreciate the discipline of reading, and it is a skill that no one ever perfects.

Professional readers – given the title "critic," "professor," or "theorist" – are the people who help curious readers understand what it means to form reading strategies; moreover, professional readers guide others with suggestions towards helpful critical methods in order to form an opinion. When instructors ask students to write an essay regarding a particular text that includes scholarly research, anxiety can spike because they are being asked to read the language of professional readers. Littau's solution to the cognitive problem would escalate at this point if it were intended for students without the necessary experience to wield such a tool in her suggestive use of feminist criticism. On the other hand, students should not be underestimated: they ought to be taught the vocabulary and the techniques that will enable them to feel confident about their own literary analysis. The most beneficial means to building their experience and preparing them for the life of a reader is to provide them the means to begin their communication with texts and erudite peers. A clear distinction persists between students and published authors; however, a student who must use another person's words to support their ideas begins to rely on readings other than their own. This may provide a short-term solution, but the job of an instructor is, ultimately, to enhance students' abilities. Therefore, finding a better means of teaching students how to maintain a balance between a fitting analytical response and an empathetic response can illuminate an avenue to better even the most apprehensive student.

Unlike a reader who discovers an overlooked phrase or something entirely new in a second or a third reading, readers without sharpened skills are more likely to alter their perception of a story with the addition of outside resources. Their partially formed opinions of a text shift because they lack details to support their reading – a consequence of text skimming or scouring. All teachers accept the fact that there is no way to make a student read; however, placing analytical tools before an indifferent student will make them more likely to exercise an often neglected ability to engage with a text. For popular texts, even the process of textual hunting may seem unnecessary when online databases

provide answers and seemingly definitive answers about the most canonical works, a concern discussed further in chapter one. The timely, unresolved challenge lies in finding an ideal means to challenge and excite apprehensive readers while making failure more difficult than plagiarism or “proficient” skimming. As students’ scouring skills may falter more than usual with nonsensical magic and reality altering suggestions of magical realism, it is here that such texts can provide a suggested frame in order to push students to use their imaginations during analysis.

Before conducting an exploration of magical realism’s potential to alleviate the apprehension of the novice reader, it is necessary to offer a brief summation of the magical realist mode and address the potential issues that accompany it as seen through its history. This work does not carry the false hope of resolving any of the ongoing disputes over magical realism’s past; it does, however, intend to offer a new type of pedagogical use for magical realism that takes into account some of the points of conflict within the field. No attempt will be made to offer a teleological solution to any of the historical debates over the term’s first usage or absolute definition. Rather, this work focuses on three of the most popular works of magical realism, specifically works that young readers in the United States are likely to encounter in a classroom setting. Thus, the primary concern regarding magical realism’s reception remains fixated in the United States. It should be noted that the majority of the magical realist and related works discussed find their authorial origins in the Americas; there are certainly problems that complicate the reception of works in translation into a different market, yet these disconnections provide opportunities for scaffolding cultural education that will give insight into the artistic backlash against magical realism. In terms of this work, the main concern with the mode generates from its paradoxical nature – real and fantastic dichotomy – that creates uncertainty.

As mentioned above, magical realism carries an ambiguous or fleeting definition itself, and, again, no attempt will be made to solidify a definition that has largely eluded critics and scholars for more than ninety years. Rather, in order to provide a working definition and understanding of the mode for the purposes of this study, I will employ one of the most recent offerings. Wendy B. Farris proposes a thorough definition in her 2004 book *Ordinary Enchantments*. She refines her take from earlier studies to define magical realism as:

[C]ombin[ing] realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them. Furthermore, that combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusions of different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society. (1)

Magical realism often unexpectedly interrupts daily life to transpose the possibilities of existence where people can become empowered through what would be deemed the supernatural or the fantastic if they were strictly confined to the ordinary world. Ironically, ordinary is the most problematic term used in Farris’s definition: consulting studies conducted on literary realism and the fantastic can satisfy a need to understand

how the two concepts work in their own literary tradition. How they function when intermingling, effectively violating empirical reality, is much different. As each the real and the fantastic meet in a type of merging zone, the real resides at the point where actions come to be expected with only explicable – verifiable – changes. Magical realism alters the possibilities of ordinary reality at the aforementioned merging point. Still, the notion of ordinary is exceedingly problematic, ordinary life varying greatly even within a single cultural perception.

Issues raised by postcolonial critics, amongst others, should not be disregarded or be turned aside because they neglect the long standing debate regarding a definition for magical realism, yet it is most certainly problematic to spark new debates concerning a mode that lacks what Jausss deems a generic “*dominant*” (81, original emphasis). The generic dominant resides “within the relational system of the text,” according to Jausss, but inevitably exists beyond individual narratives when generic patterns signal the existence of particular ideas and occurrences with a genre or mode (81). Practicality would dictate that a generic dominant should surface before other debates continue. History demonstrates otherwise: lacking a conceptual understanding of the essences of magical realism – beyond the hackneyed clairvoyant and expected references to alchemy – does not preclude critics from raising issues that pertain to the fashion in which magical realism is perceived by judicious audiences. Fredric Jameson advocates that the problem in lacking a viable definition for any genre or mode complicates “how the words in a text should function” (135). Furthermore, the genre, or in the case of the magical realism, the mode, without substantial characterization violates the proposed contract between a writer and a reader. If the ordinary, as Faris implies, entertains a sense of relativity, the writer and reader settle upon an evolving, symbiotic contract that favors neither party, but encourages the reader to add stipulations to the nature of the contract as well.

Generalizing perception of the cultures being merged within a given work helps to explain the “organic” spawning point that Faris mentions. An all-inclusive sense of normal characterizes early descriptions of magical realism: to explain, Angel Flores describes an amalgamation between “the awesome and the unreal” that results in a “*universal sense of reality*,” (114, added emphasis). Such a characterization encouraged postcolonial and postmodern scholars to signify that magical realism stood in opposition to hegemony by suggesting that it “resists the basic assumptions of post-enlightenment rationalism and literary realism” (Zamora and Faris 6). It stands in staunch opposition to the general understanding of reality found in the dominant Western culture, allowing the supernatural or mythological implications tied to “Othered” people in order to counteract subjugation. As a mode first linked to Europe and then linked to Western-educated Latin American authors, universal reality became equated with Western reality. Authoritative roots of Latin American magical realism – traced to Alejo Carpentier’s notion of *lo real maravilloso* – demonstrate how cultural tradition can prosper through colonization, the two often reflecting upon one another. For example, in an excerpt from Carpentier’s *Kingdom of this World*, French colonialists undertake numerous strategies as they attempt to capture voodoo priest Mackandal, and neutralize his powers to control deadly poisons: “Nor could prayers, doctors, vows to saints, or the worthless incantation of a Brenton sailor, a necromancer and healer, check the secret advance of death” (29). The Englishman’s capability of raising the dead is a fabrication in comparison to Mackandal’s

power, and his efforts simultaneously mirror the phony apothecary described by protagonist Ti Noël in the novel's opening chapter. The implied authority typically associated with a British character falters in the novel's magical, exotic context; the sailor fails to reinforce the hierarchical positioning associated with being a colonialist or slave master. Colonialists dabble in magic, but their rationale prevents it from flourishing. Moreover, on the following page, the "Other Gods" instill Mackandal with the power to mark Haiti as an extension of their realm. In other works, periphery gods supplant the established Christian doctrine in Haiti, falsifying the established norm that the European-educated Carpentier establishes in the text.

Though Carpentier's work originates in a surrealist tradition, his opposition to European hierarchy in a Latin American setting demonstrates his refusal to pen works engaged with what will develop as magical realism for the sake of narrative effect (Bowers 90). Roberto González Echevarría argues that Carpentier appropriates magical realism into a narrative tradition in order to flex the potential literary merit of Latin America. In doing so, González Echevarría notes that Carpentier lays the foundation for two arguably competing takes on magical realism: the ontological and the epistemological (Bowers 90). Critics would later challenge the notion that magical realism must be rooted in either one or the other; González Echevarría's earlier type of magical realism has its source material rooted in the beliefs or practices from the cultural context in which the text is set while the latter is said to take its inspiration for its magical realist elements from sources not necessarily found in either the cultural context of the work nor the author's background, but rather through eclectic "scholarly" knowledge (Bowers 91). Ontological magical realism uncovers what textual characters may perceive as ordinary based upon their existence and cultural ties, the more common of the two traditions.

Idiosyncratic takes on reality continue to shape the "ordinary" when intertwined with magical realism. Textual backdrops depicted by magical realist texts function as simulacra for readers. Characters function differently with various magical suggestions, where encompassing implications of "normal" become increasingly complicated. For William Spindler, ontological "magic" realism – which he does not differentiate from magical realism – carries a personal take on the factors that constitute the ordinary that stems from an author's perspective and is portrayed without resistance by the narrator:

There is no reference to the mythical imagination of pre-industrial communities. Instead, the total freedom and creative possibilities of writing are exercised by the author, who is not worried about convincing the reader. The word 'magic' here refers to inexplicable, prodigious or fantastic occurrences which contradict the laws of the natural world, and have no convincing explanation. The narrator in Ontological Magic Realism is not puzzled, disturbed, or skeptical of the supernatural, as in Fantastic Literature; he or she describes it as if it was a part of ordinary everyday life. (82)

Magical realist texts – those without the influence of mythological or anthropological suggestions – root their cultural backdrop in a state that demarcates itself from Western

normativity, bound to a periphery state where audiences reading works in translation can come to hasty conclusions. In defense of the climate he created through the writing of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, García Márquez seemingly offered a pre-emptive strike on later critics who challenge the ineffable perception of Latin America crafted in his work, saying “I am a realist writer... because I believe that in Latin America everything is possible, everything is real” (qtd. in Bowers 92). As García Márquez’s magical aspects supplant notions of a verifiable reality in Latin America, a new type of “ordinary” roots Latin America in a nascent existence where U.S. readers begin to perceive all Latin Americans as people living in lush tropical settings, fighting endless revolutions, and using magic carpets as practical means of transportation. An interview with García Márquez featured in the *New York Times* just before he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, some fifteen years after the Spanish publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1967, reaffirms his vision: “People here [in the Caribbean] sense the pressure of phenomena or other beings, even if they are not there. These must be influences of ancient religions, of Indians or blacks [sic]. This world’s full of spirits that you find all over, in Puerto Rico, in Cuba, in Brazil. In Santo Domingo and Vera Cruz” (Simons). Magical realism’s enthusiasts in the United States, sparked by *One Hundred Years* with its countless printings under multiple presses following the first English edition in 1970 by Harper & Row, commonly claim García Márquez as the mode’s founder while limiting impressions continue to pigeonhole other Latin American texts.⁵

Marketing efforts producing magical realism’s undeniable popularity has and continues to encourage bibliomaniacal consumption of texts, which impedes the opportunity to read and interpret. Consumption often depends on the book market and other outlets to dictate textual reception: Delia Poey notes in her 2002 book *Latino American Literature in the Classroom* that “magical realism became mistakenly established as the paradigmatic of Latin America” (29). The mode now typified with García Márquez and Isabel Allende drove U.S. author Toni Morrison to deny associations with magical realism, as the label grew sales while garnering stigma (Bowers 93). Still, Oprah Winfrey’s book club has refused to let magical realism’s popularity subside. As part of her 2004 book club, Winfrey featured the uncontested most popular work of magical realism, telling her audience, “Brace yourselves—*One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez is as steamy, dense and sensual as the jungle that surrounds the surreal town of Macondo!” (Winfrey). Winfrey’s words signify a shared reception of magical realist texts by American audiences: these works exist in a former void where the only context imaginable is the pre-Columbian jungle, sparking rash criticism.

García Márquez’s take on Latin American reality and its consequences met resounding backlash in the 1990s and early 2000s. While the stories told to him as a child helped him become one of the most recognized authors of the twentieth century, his work has drawn notable indignation from authors and critics who wish to diminish and neutralize the stereotype created by critical marketing appropriation of magical realism. The McOndo group fronted by Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez lead the charge against

⁵ For a discussion of the mainstream market’s use of the term to codify and to increase sales of Chicano/a texts, see Martín-Rodríguez 125

the global commodity that turned Latin American literature into a stock genre in the eyes of the world market. In a reflective article written roughly five years after the *McOndo* anthology declared that the authors writing in the shadow of magical realism would not appease those in search of the next hot commodity, Fuguet finds the avant-garde Latin American art community flourishing with contributions from authors and directors including Rodrigo García, García Márquez's son: "Latin America is quite literary, yes, almost a work of fiction, but it is not a folk tale. It is a volatile place where the 19th century mingles with the 21st. More than magical, this place is weird. Magical realism reduces a much too complex situation and makes it cute. Latin America is not cute" (69). An interesting coincidence, in a 1975 lecture, Carpentier described Latin America in a similar vein while explaining the difference between *lo real maravilloso* and magical realism; however, he favored the word "strange" to exemplify the beauty isolated to the backdrops of his texts ("The Baroque and Marvelous Real" 101). Latin America maintains its distinction, but for artists living in the shadow of the "Pre-Boom" and "Boom" authors, its perception could not stay the same for their work to break old norms. In order to do so, *McOndo* and the zeitgeist surrounding its conception had to be a "defensive and somewhat adolescent response to the user-friendly magical-realism software that politically correct writers were using to spin tales that would give world audiences exactly what they wanted: an exotic land where anything goes and eventually nothing matters because anything goes, for it is no more than a fable" (Fuguet 69). The resistance demonstrated an Oedipal-like defiance of the father that bastardized a sense of homeland while over-stepping Carpentier's dualistic vision – a vision where a Latin American could exist in an equal or slightly favored standing in relation to Eurocentric ideology – to an extreme where literary conceptions of self could be colonized and commoditized. However, like fables, magical realism will only be forgotten once its presence completely fades.

The *McOndo* generations must stride towards new "software" claims Fuguet, and he encourages his peers to craft their visions through a technologically savvy lens, one which can explore unknown worlds and concepts through advances in postmodern technology rather than a reliance on magic (69). His words carry an in-the-know sentiment that seeks to defy Eurocentric ideology: subjectivity must shape itself through a means that negates racial notions through "a new idea of the future, since it is the only territory of time where the changes can occur. The future is an open temporal territory. Time can be new, and so not merely the extension of the past" (Quíjano 187). Creating a self-sufficient standard of ordinary or everyday becomes the goal; however, history often unravels progress as it has been shaped through colonial discourse where the colonized can only see themselves and their ordinary lifestyle as an "other" existence, comprised through the absent features of the colonizer. Accordingly, literary, mimetic reflection cannot produce subjectivity, and creating an ethno-cultural ontological reality with broad brushstrokes will inevitably garner resistance – regardless of intent.

Inflections of authorial intent may exist, but interpretation can guide readers towards more constructive conclusions that buck those perceptions of ordinary. When stories inherently exist in a reality distant from the instilled universal standard erected through the coloniality of power, the hegemonic standards tied to racial perceptions and archived through the European colonization of the Americas, the magical realist

characterization of ordinary stymies cultural dialectics because it carries fantastic overtones – essentially unmaking reality in order to emphasize the unfulfilled merging point between the standard of the real and the fantastic (Quíjano 183). García Márquez’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech, “The Solitude of Latin America,” attests to his artistic vision captured through his literature, a vision ironically reshaped from those of the earliest colonizers; texts written within historically accurate discourse are, by no means, truth. Adhering to such means keeps Latin American, “Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, ask[ing] but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude” (García Márquez). Reality rooted in a subjugated past does not allow artists to (re)imagine life because the locality of the past has always existed on the fringes of the so-called ordinary. Magical realist novels, including *One Hundred Years* and Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*, do not equate their literary setting with the author’s country of origin; however, indicative implications leave little doubt as to the inspiration for each work’s setting. As Amaryll Chanady asserts, the author’s connection to the concept of reality must come into play when creating supernatural worlds rooted in historic norms:

If the supernatural is not recognized as such, there can be no magical realism.... Both real and logically impossible events were considered to be on the same level of reality, and therefore the concept of the supernatural did not even exist. The author of a magico-realist narrative, on the other hand, implicitly presents the irrational world view as different from his own. (22)

An empowered narrator continues to shape notions of reality within the magical realist text. Chanady also notes that “realistic detail is essential to magical realism, but it is impossible to determine the borderline between sufficient and insufficient realism” (47). The search for a merging zone highlights the reader’s exploration of the various experiences and perceptions felt by the characters in relation to their environment. For example, Úrsula Buendía fears that her children may be born with a pig’s tail as a consequence of her incestuous relationship with her cousin, José Arcadio Buendía. People with pig tails, gypsies with flying carpets, ghosts with insidious history, and the myriad of other supernatural occurrences distinguish life in Macondo as an exception, not the rule. None of the events are ordinary: Úrsula’s chastity belt and her concern over the semi-clairvoyant powers her son Aureliano demonstrates as a boy clearly suggests that she seeks to prevent an unwanted repercussion, such as those that would mark her family as different. While characters do not question Father Nicanor’s levitation or Remedios the Beauty’s ascension to heaven, their reactions suggest a tangential, suspicious acceptance of ineffable circumstances. It is an acceptance of epistemological limitation rather than troublesome apprehension over empirically defiant phenomenon.

As it is often understood to be the archetypal setting for magical realism, Macondo certainly cannot represent an absolute standard; it is only a model which potentially shapes other environments. Distance between what could be conceived as reality, in the Eurocentric sense of the term, and an ontological state where reality does

not have to adhere to imposed impressions results in a conflicted environment where readers stumble over their perception of the reality built by the text. Richard Mathews suggests that magical realism has become a contemporary sub-genre of fantasy, where works “consciously breaks free from mundane reality” (2). Of course, works where the blurry merging zone does not exist break the idea of magical realism. Therefore, magical realism cannot represent a state where the extraordinary is ordinary, or as Chanady suggests “naturalizes the supernatural,” because doing so undermines the mode’s effort to create its own ontological state (149). An environment where hegemonic reality is no longer recognized, a place where everyone has to alter their clothes to accommodate a tail, truly signifies the marvelous ordinary. Macondo can only represent a temporary state of being created by its author’s perception of Latin America. Each magical realist environment, as it is created, will temporarily adhere to the perception of reality created through authorial vision. García Márquez certainly constructs a textual reality where the marvelous often provides a counterexample to empirical reality; however, the visions he embraces induce visions similar to Antonio Pigafetta’s, a Florentine navigator on Magellan’s trip circumnavigating the globe: they effectively reacquaint the modern world with the Latin America of antiquated colonial conception: “He wrote of having seen a misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel's body, the legs of a deer and the whinny of a horse. He described how the first native encountered in Patagonia was confronted with a mirror, whereupon that impassioned giant lost his senses to the terror of his own image” (García Márquez). Despite the touches of Eurocentric pragmatism injected into the landscape through colonial take over, García Márquez’s gypsy Melquíades rekindles a curiosity in magic.

Pre-Columbian-like visions ignite with José Arcadio Buendía’s Bunsen burner as he embraces alchemic pseudo-science in his attempt to turn lead into gold. Merging trail-and-error scientific methodology with hopes of manipulating lead’s properties to match the physical characteristics of gold suggests that there is a meeting point between empirical reality and inexplicable wonders. However, hopes fostered through universally comprehensive procedures, science, cannot remain in historical solitude, waiting for elemental powers to erase the past when neither tangential acceptance of inexplicable occurrences nor empirical reality can reign supreme. For the reader, starting the text anew does not explain the inexplicable. It leaves the Buendías and Macondo, as well as the other numerous characters and settings of other works of magical realism, in a state of suspended animation, in a state of perpetual solitude. Nevertheless, communication between the text and the reader gives these characters a new breath of life: readers will recreate points where the real and the fantastic bleed into one another – a new story born through analysis of the two worldly perceptions.

As mentioned above, the contrast between worldly perceptions enables the reader to consider the composition of a world only he or she can describe. Readers in need of encouragement seek a space in which they feel comfortable with their interpretations. Worlds where reified space is possible can prevent novice readers from feeling apprehensive. According to Rawdon Wilson, magical realist texts create a fictional space where world boundaries “fold and refold” until they superimpose themselves on one another and, consequently, create an imagined, fictional space; once created, the manifestations exist through the course of the work (210). Essentially, Wilson describes

this reified space as an intertextual environment where the ambiguity of language shapes the magical and the real (226). Wilson asserts that even young children are capable of reading one text in relation to another, and he locates this fictional space within magical realist works through Jacques Derrida's evaluation of Roland Barthes's stereographic space.⁶ Continuing his discussion, Wilson further describes the reified space as a relational *habitation* of all sign systems: "[i]t is the possibility of inscriptions being reinscribed upon others, or upon each other (of multiplex inscriptibility) that, in Derrida's view, generates the human notion of space. There seems to be no single, free-standing, uncontaminated pure text, but only the threads, the weaves, the nets, and the labyrinths of textuality" (226-227). In other words, texts provide space to formulate and refine understanding, as opposed to a limited field upon which the author can build. The work concludes with paradigmatic example using a fabricated story to demonstrate the space that magical realism creates. Asking the actual reader to imagine how the story suggests the existence of the space provided by Derrida's run-in with Barthes, Wilson exemplifies the intertextual routes he foresees readers taking based upon relationships with the sign systems of other texts.

Wilson does not address how his story or any other work of magical realism will undoubtedly modify a young reader's perception of the work's sign system while undergoing the process of reading. Disregarding his *a priori* take on how children relate one text to another and strictly focusing on intertextuality as a dialogue between sign systems, the reader must make an attempt to cross-reference their conception of magic and real with the text's. Intertextual labyrinths cannot treat the reader as a passive entity. To clarify, while the traditional labyrinth comes with pre-existing dead ends and a constructed form, the labyrinths in question only form endless passages shaped by the dialogue between text and reader, until the pages run out or until the reader extends the conversation beyond the tangible inscriptions and places the labyrinth in a modified environment based only upon the originally outlined system. The space initially created through the hesitation prompted by merging the real and the fantastic becomes the very place that allows the text to be (re)imagined. In this sense, the novice reader can gain an opportunity to exercise a growing skillset when he takes the initiative to offer his personal impression. Still, the potential for hasty generalizations – a catalyst for Fuguet's work – signals a necessary sense of precaution.

The metaphorical space magical realism creates permits the novice reader to continue the tradition of U.S. readers who first encounter the Latin American text through magical realism. The English translations partially break the connections to its predecessor's cultural and historical contexts, which cannot be incessantly clarified throughout the reading process, and presents the novice reader with an open textual environment suitable to foster analytical skills. Resolve for the hesitation prompted by the magical realist merging zones comes through personally evaluating the boundaries of real and fantastic. Consequently, a culturally conditioned sense of ordinary repeatedly comes into question, as Bowers suggests: "The reader becomes aware that if the category of the real is not definite then all assumptions of truth are also at stake" (68). The

⁶ Roland Barthes describes stereographic space as "[t]he space of an intertextual *enchainment* in which one text, or sliver of a text, associates itself with, pulls into its own textual space, some other text, or textual shard" (qtd. in Wilson 226).

novice's reading of the text will persist as they draw upon lived experiences in order to create a unique work, where notions of normalcy award an opportunity to surpass simple textual engagement and re-evaluate cultural implications. Hence, featuring magical realist works in a classroom setting provides the opportunity for students to gain historical and literary contextualization after they potentially bend or break those ties.⁷ As the degree and frequency of their encounters with magical realism's merging zones expands, they can begin to differentiate when a text embraces the mode and when a text merely toys with the supernatural. I would like to reiterate that magical realism does not offer a means for novice readers to engage in thorough academic textual analysis because it does not inherently augment a reader's abilities; rather, it provides a textual medium to initiate communication by asking students how textual suggestions effect their perception of the ordinary. Magical realism mounts textual speed bumps during an otherwise speedy, circuitous scouring process by spotlighting moments where a text can be read in various ways – thus enervating the novice reader's perceived notion of one meaning per text.

In order to illustrate magical realism's pedagogical potential, this work is divided into four chapters. Outlining the apprehension of the novice reader takes precedence in the first chapter. Students transitioning from high school to college possess foundational skills and a handful of terms used to describe the process they undergo to extract textual meaning. High schools across the U.S. cultivate literature students by employing strategies touted by New Critics – where importance lies cocooned within an author's personal intent and subsumed within the type. Therefore, the author's authority presides over a text, and students bend their close reading strategies to accommodate the perceptions of an authorial entity more than an actual person. Consequently, students don a detective role to search for enlightening clues rather than textual cues that would otherwise spark individual interpretation, which builds analytical skills and thus affects both reader and text. Chapter 1 examines the possibility of undermining the text's author(ity) through an exploration of linguistic and power dynamics. The chapter continues by exploring the role of the imagination and the use of the supernatural in literary traditions leading up to magical realism. Concluding with a discussion on the theoretical discourse used to understand the novice reader can solidify his analysis through absent authorial utterances – considering the possible with the probable where such analytical synthesis symbolizes the imaginative capabilities of the developing reader.

The second chapter employs Wolfgang Iser's reading theory described in the *The Act of Reading* in order to accentuate the ambiguous space generated when the novice reader begins to juxtapose textual clues and textual cues. Focused on Laura Esquivel's culinary love story *Like Water for Chocolate*, the chapter further attests to the ability of magical realism to introduce its own interpretive frame. When considering how magic alters the state of the novel, the novice reader demurs metaphorical incidents that need not garner a like-minded reaction within an empirical context. Analyzing turns of phrase theoretically enhances the novice reader's tendency to explore what only appears to be

⁷ On the other hand, a potential exists for novice readers to feel frustrated by a mode that differs from others that are more familiar, effectively alienating them from the strategies posed in this work. Pending data from focus groups will illustrate under what conditions novice readers exhibit reluctance to adopt new interpretive strategies.

ordinary. Once expectations undergo alterations, it would follow that understanding the source of such alterations would drive the novice reader to reconsider supposedly fixed origins. Imprecise explanations and the ambiguity of the text introduce the possibility for the novice reader to fashion possible explanation for what has been left unsaid: desired explanations of magical origins and the properties of the ineffable reside in the reader's participation and (re)consideration of Esquivel's narrative. To clarify, a satisfying answer as to how magic can advance the text surfaces only with the reader's ability to actively engage with the text – to fill the Iserian blanks. Developing answers based on the text begins to clarify why magic works and becomes increasingly dependent on the ebbs and flow of textual ambivalence.

Chapter three removes the novice reader from the looming shadow of popular opinions on magical realist discourse. Various definitions of magical realism all reach a consensus: real and magical perceptions will casually mix, in such a way that neither detracts from the reading experience nor calls attention to the process itself. Amalgamation is often fluid. However, Allende's brand of magical realism in *The House of the Spirits* ironically problematizes the tradition. Clara, the clairvoyant protagonist, is one of the few textual entities tied to magical possibilities relegated by the narrator's subsequent interjections – many of which undercut previous instances linked to magic. Ostensible juxtaposition induces a shift in the reader's moments of hesitation: no longer are considerations of worldly limitation necessary because the text divulges when only false perceptions permit magic to thrive. To expose gullible perceptions and to sever magical roots from the textual setting spurs a search for a new source of magic. *House* accentuates the triumphs and failures of magical merging zones in order to shift the origins of magic away from Latin America, exemplifying an affinity for foreign wonders and carving similarities between the Trueba family and their influences from both the occident and orient. Moments of hesitation surpass the typical questions of world codification to the point that the novice no longer considers what perceptions inherently hold value. Instead, the novice can consider how hegemonic perceptions prosper in distant locales where magical realism indexes an encompassing global basis.

The final chapter further explores García Márquez's multifaceted world of Macondo. Reliant on personal perception and empathy to understand the author's intent, the novice reader exemplifies maturity once readings strategies enable him to formulate imaginative notion rooted in the sentiments of the textual community. Communal memories and traditions developed from emigrated notions sculpt the contours of the Buendía's version of Macondo, specifically the version of Macondo depicted in Melquíades's scrolls. Thus, Macondo's treasure trove of men and women who shape the former utopian-like village disappear in various historical depictions, but not before inviting the maturing novice reader to participate in the unraveling of the various timelines in which Macondo exists. Previous implications of Macondo's makeup depicted in *Leaf Storm* – as well as characterizations in "Big Mama's Funeral" – advocate the ability to tweak the course of a community's history without violating that which makes it unique to its original outline. Macondo's ability to evolve through various narratives despite its imminent demise illustrates a novel potential for (re)imagining or interpreting memories linked to a community with an otherwise compromised past; a Macondo-like community serves as a model for novice readers no longer in search of an

encyclopedic depiction of the village's history – those who demonstrate the mindset to drop their unrefined “novice” title. The chapter concludes by highlighting Aureliano Babilonia's learned, yet unimaginative reading method that seals his fate as a novice reader.

Transitioning from the imaginative community of Macondo, the work concludes by recapitulating the crux of each chapter in a fashion that further incorporates the literary theory woven into each chapter. In particular, it is suggested that the apprehensive novice readers belong to what Benedict Anderson describes as an imagined community, based upon their detective-like reading strategies – which I argue hinders the novice reader's resolve to adopt interpretive strategies; I support the proposal by highlighting Stanley Fish's notion of interpretive communities. As the entire work is based on a search for a method to cultivate the novice reader's analytical skills, I maintain that the novice reader can relocate into an interpretive community after the search to acquire a solitary meaning instilled by the author ceases. Considering different perspective on how and why magic works in a given text, the novice demonstrates his maturity when engaged with peers who offer insights that illustrate new ways of seeing the same text. Classrooms, book clubs, and discussion boards host gatherings for literary discussions, each placing the reader of magical realism in a public setting where discussions center on culturally influenced texts. In this regard, the interpretive communities of magical realism readers also exist within an imagined community where each reader has a sense of autonomy and gains a further perspective on how readings are held accountable. Ideally, everyone has something to offer. Whether it is an anecdote or a thoughtful analysis, contributions from a community of readers both build and overturn a text. Sharing analyses will contribute to the maturity of the novice reader – maturity being most evident when those students who were novice readers disregard textual clues and permit themselves and their peers to see magic through different sets of eyes.

Chapter One

“Who Wants to Share?”: Relations Between the Novice Reader and the Intent of the Perceived Author(ity)

*Notebooks open. Pens uncapped. Books out. Waiting. An inquisitive group of twenty-three undergraduates enrolled in American Literature: 1850 to Present watch as I shuffle between their chairs to relocate my ergonomic desk on wheels to the perimeter of their formed circle. The design of our gatherings differs from that of the typical meeting carried out in a college-level setting. Originally puzzled as to why I was sitting amongst them, the group of predominantly freshmen from various majors exhibits a clear understanding of what it means to develop a classroom routine – even when it deviates from the perceived norm. Once the sign-in sheet returns to my desk, things inexplicably change. Chatter dissolves and the designated circular discussion group melds into something like Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon: my presence ostensible, a number of students sink in their chairs and try to avoid eye contact as I enquire about the previous week’s reading. Efficient classroom management permitted time within the first two weeks of discussion group to establish a welcoming environment, many students showing an increased level of comfort within the weekly meetings in contrast to the biweekly lectures. Completion of the assigned readings plays a partial factor, but the group’s reluctance rarely correlates with individual work ethic. By the end of each discussion section, a close majority of students contribute by either explaining what characters they, more often than not, disliked, particularly in Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, or how the travel scenes in Kerouac’s novel reminded them of a trip to San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf. Perplexed, I could not help but wonder why I always had to start the discussion to an anxiety-filled room only to find the more loquacious students vacating the room while asserting that they could not stand Dean Moriarty. Being an inquisitive scholar myself, I had to find out: while walking out the door with an erudite student who had lingered to ask a question about the imminent midterm, I asked why him and his peers preferred that I share my impressions of Kerouac’s classic before anyone else would divulge their own. He concisely explained that, for him, it was an issue of making sure our readings coincided at some level. He wanted assurance. They all wanted to be on the right track.*

A sense of irony radiates from every student who feels apprehensive in a literature class: none of them know whether their reading is abnormal or not. Uncertainty provokes some students to stay quiet, perhaps hoping that the instructor’s opening questions will be rhetorical. Within comfortable environments, where most of the students feel safe talking to one another about television shows or the latest box-office triumph, qualms to engage with a professor of record (or in my case, a teacher’s assistant) manifest when students inquire about due dates, excused absences or book editions. Reluctance only follows students into the classroom when the occasion arrives to discuss and build upon their thoughts or ask questions of an assigned reading. That is until the context of the class discussion permits the student to understand what constitutes insightful commentary and what would be considered a response unrelated to the text; however, when students are taught that *a* meaning resides hidden underneath the surface, the notion itself abates students’ potential and asks them to oblige in mimicry and champion authoritative opinions. In a discussion on demonstrative and persuasive interpretations, Stanley Fish

notes that anyone can “entertain beliefs and options other than one’s own; but that is precisely how they will be seen, as beliefs and opinions *other than one’s own*, and therefore as beliefs and opinions that are false, or mistaken, or partial, or immature, or absurd” (361, original emphasis). This is an insightful notion in terms of a reader confident in his or her interpretive skills. On the other hand, assertions made through narrative carry a sense of authority: the author’s vision or intent resides in definitive clues. These are overt textual inclusion, such as a character’s death or a symbol, which students consider to have been left by the author to mean something specific.

Students across the United States advance to college with skills to read a work of literature and identify important scenes – clues to help them extract meaning. However, the fanfare bestowed upon author-oriented methodology breeds apprehension in students thereby hampering unique insight. A suitable contrasting analogy originates in Umberto Eco’s *The Open Work* where he likens reading to musical performance.⁸ A composer establishes essential features of a piece of music, which contain various movements, and a skilled performer adds a fill, a solo, a touch of creativity to make the song his: “In short, we can say that every performance offers us a complete and satisfying version of the work, but at the same time makes it incomplete for us, because it cannot simultaneously give all the other artistic solutions which the work may admit” (Eco 15). As with improvisation, no reading is ever the same. In this chapter, I consider how removing the text’s author(ity) can grant the opportunity for the novice reader to offer a unique textual interpretation. Searching for information to coincide with the intent of the author, the novice reader exemplifies self-induced apprehension when performing a detective-like reading—wrought by fixed textual clues; thus, the first half of the chapter focuses on exploring how the author’s role is diminished by the text. Later, the focus will shift to exploring how the imagination can be triggered by supernatural and textual elements in order to coax the novice reader into engaging with the text. It is here I proceed to trace the role of the imagination in romantic traditions to its presence in the fantastic in order to make a connection between U.S. readers and magical realism – the mode that I argue most suitably serves the novice reader.

Without a doubt there are students who demonstrate an undeniable alacrity for reading. They are the brave few who will dominate a discussion once initiated. Nevertheless, outliers do not account for the uncertain majority who would rather appear unengaged, hoping the instructor does not call out to him or her by name. Students may find it most fit to read for information – or clues – in order to help illuminate hidden kernels of truth within a work. Text scouring exemplifies an unproductive performative act that acknowledges a perceived sense of authority held by the author, the provider of clues, and the holder of answers. Students committed to such a methodology arguably demonstrate a resistance to read in an aesthetic manner. I refer to readers who adhere to detective-like reading strategies as apprehensive novice readers.⁹ To be clear, anyone who uses such techniques is a novice reader. These readers do not demonstrate linguistic or intellectual shortcomings; as a matter of fact, they know basic literary terms (e.g., symbol, metaphor, simile, etc.), but believe these literary elements to be artistic means

⁸ See Eco, 3.

⁹ Later, I will suggest that interaction with magical realist texts can help the apprehensive novice mature into reader who can offer analysis.

used to prevent meaning from being obvious. Rather than offer an interpretation, novice readers consider what the author meant when, for example, a reoccurring symbol appears moments before a character's untimely death. Meaning consequently resides with the author and those perceived as having the skills to extract it from the text. Considering the methods high school readers develop will give some insight into the development of scouring for clues.

According to Lisa Bosley, approximately half of all "potential college students" who partook in the college entry ACT (American College Testing) examination in 2004 were unprepared for "college-level reading" (285). Statistics cannot attest as to exactly why apprehension is exhibited by an unfixed majority of the students enrolled in entry level literature and composition courses, although the information Bosley attributes to the Educational Testing Service (ETS) does suggest that, for various reasons, students show a deficiency in their skills. It should go without saying that unaddressed, imprecise practices will further enervate students in the college setting. While students can exemplify the most fundamental reading skills, identifying the reading skills those apprehensive students carry from high school to college will help resolve ineffective practices.

It is beneficial to consider what students are looking for in a text and what students wish to gain from a text in order to recognize the skills readers exercise while making the transition from high school to college. Beginning with the latter, for the senior on the verge of graduation, college preparation corroborates an emergent need to supplement and build upon the skills gained at the high school level. In 2004, the same year ETS reported that roughly half of students taking the ACT examination were said to be prepared for college-level reading, the national High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) reported that a high of 94 percent of all senior respondents, as well as 90 percent of total respondents, engaged in activities geared towards bolstering their skills for the college setting. However, these respondents only claimed to be engaged with their course-related reading for six hours or fewer per week (Jolliffe and Harl 601). Students attested to their preparedness for completing forthcoming assignments, no apprehension in mind in regards to their otherwise lax study habits (Jolliffe and Harl 601). Practice reflects skill, and while these students perceive that their efforts should result in and represent their predilections to succeed in higher education, overconfidence may be one of the various factors used to explain subsequent underperformance on aptitude tests. On the other hand, an evaluation of the literary tradition from which students emerge could certainly offer insight. According to Don Bialostosky, college freshmen enter university after public education ensconces them in a culture of "close reading" rooted in the strategies of New Criticism, which is also perpetuated by composition instructors: "The New Critics were really teaching students to unread a first reading and to reread to a deeper, initially *hidden* one that might be epitomized in a symbol or formulated, albeit inadequately, in a theme" (112, added emphasis). If high schools propagate an ethos of hidden meanings within a text, it would follow that the text's author instills such a meaning.

Educational hierarchy places the teacher closer to the hidden messages as compared to the students. In essence, teachers become a liaison to the author's intent. With theories developed and celebrated for their abilities to help both students and

professional readers surpass authority – reception theory, deconstruction, semiotics – P. Harkin and J.J. Sosnoski find that many freshman composition books offer a “more obvious dose of hypocrisy” when they exchange their championed reception theory roots for a method described as a “neutral process of decoding authorial intent” (qtd. in Bosley 287). If students approach texts as puzzles, then texts appear as prescribed images in themselves; the text itself offers a window into a singular universe where deciphered symbols, metaphors, or characters exist in a specifically constructed environment. However, plot, symbols, metaphors, and characters – basic literary terminology and concepts students understand by the last year of high school – stay entrenched in the author’s teleological intent, the picture he or she constructs. The textual scouring students perform to find the clues to illuminate the author’s intent, exclude input or novel imaginings: Bialostosky claims that in doing so, students learn to distrust the “everyday discursive exchange” that comprises their repertoires of everyday knowledge, essentially “check[ing] those resources at the classroom door, trained to believe them irrelevant to the special hermeneutic task that literature teaches” (113). Literature appears as an impractical tool to convey messages through more learned sources. Only by uncovering clues left by the author can students hope to align their efforts with the instructor’s and, consequently, the author’s.

Ostracized from a world that directly impacts their lives, those readers making the transition to college exhibit a clear resistance towards literature. Research published in 2004 by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) demonstrates a steady decline in college age students who read literature. Between 1982 and 2002, adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who read literature dropped by 17 percentage points (“Reading at Risk” xi). Moreover, the noticeable decline in that age group’s reading rate dipped four percent below the literary reading rate national average of 46.7 percent (“Reading at Risk” 10). The findings of the NEA provide ample information that highlights reading disparities between socio-economic, gender, and race demographics, but fails to find a single factor that attributes to the national downtrend of reading literature; television and the internet are both exonerated in the survey. While reading has wholly been in decline since the 1980s, literary reading has suffered at a quicker pace – dropping 14 percent as compared to the seven percent of “other” books read, comprised of source material other than novels, short stories, poetry, or plays (“Reading at Risk” ix). The NEA’s information in no way directly attests to the drop in literary reading or ties the decline to the literary methods readers acquire in high school and college; nevertheless, it does suggest that enthusiasm for literature is at a steady decline with negligible pertinent evidence leading to a resolution.

State standards from across the country corroborate a growing need for students to place the results of their readings in a higher authority. Texas, New York, and Florida state reading standards for literature each consider the role of the author as a textual architect, a person who structures the work in a certain fashion to signify genre. A sign of a culture shift, New York has recently included a new standard to its common core, approved in 2011. It suggests that students should be able to “[i]nterpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and philosophically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations” (New York State 51). Recent implementation assures upcoming evaluation

used to test the validity and execution of these reader-oriented standards. Guidelines for the state of California contain certain similarities, but eleventh and twelfth grade requirements ask students to supplant aesthetic reading techniques taught in the first two years of their secondary education. Final lessons or exhibitions of understanding a text are achieved through precise inquiries where students will “[a]nalyze the philosophical arguments presented in literary works to determine whether the authors’ positions have contributed to the quality of each work and the credibility of the characters” (Ong 71). Adopted in 2009, California standards deem the study of literature at its zenith in students’ ability to locate the intentions and philosophical qualities of the person behind the pages. In essence, the content of the text poses as a gauzy layer for specific discourse the students must uncover. Close reading techniques function as strategies or tools to detect the trap doors and hidden switches that reveal the contents of the author’s psyche. A ubiquitous desire to decode literature continues to flourish, and Bialostosky sees this as a detriment to his students at the University of Pittsburgh who practice exhaustive reading techniques, which he attributes to predominant procedures where interrogation of particular features results in a narrow analysis because students have grown accustomed to “reading without knowing how to respond to the collective work” (112). Reading as an investment dictates that the student must feel satisfied with the return on time spent. Therefore, students demonstrate more enthusiasm for reading materials with a direct impact on their lives outside of academia.

Written as a case study to evaluate the data accumulated in 2004 by the NEA, Jolliffe and Harl evaluated their first-year students at the University of Arkansas to assuage the perceived endangerment of reading. Findings from their research include an increase in time spent on reading after the transition to university – approximately a five-and-a-half hour increase dedicated to academic reading (605). Moreover, accompanying reading journals tracking how and why their students read presented invaluable insight as to what readers hope to gain from time allocated to reading. Participants read fantasy fiction and non-fiction on their own time, while others opted for magazines and newspapers; in answering questions about their reading choices, students alluded to reading material that drew “solid connections between the texts that they were reading and their emerging sense of themselves as adults in the world” (Jolliffe and Harl 605). Popular magazines, *Seventeen* and *Cosmopolitan* for female participants as compared to various exercise and hunting publications for male students, differed accordingly – each read under a perceived condition that contained information would affect the readers’ lives through fashion or sport. Still, affect in this sense is unilateral: these readers only read to acquire new information. Interpretation, in an aesthetic sense, is not considered. A further in-depth case study of a student issued the pseudonym Angela Ivy showed that she spent more time within a two-week span reading religious literature, in addition to emails, Facebook posts, webpages, and news articles, than she spent on her assigned readings (Jolliffe and Harl 608). Her atypical time dedicated to reading in fact highlights a variety of the materials, both tangible and intangible, that students read now – and why they read. Specifically, as mentioned above, students read to find information to modify their lifestyles, to change a portrayed perception of the self. Text-to-self reading strategies were apparent in the individualized case studies; however, academic reading more often than not evoked both ambivalent and obstinate feelings towards the reading

“they had to do for school” (Jolliffe and Harl 611). Assigning class texts with an ostensible ability to inspire every student equally proposes a seemingly impossible task for any instructor. The study conducted by Jolliffe and Harl still does not include how students interpret texts, but it does attest to the fact that young people do consider how reading can change their lives. Educational standards can better benefit the students when they do not tout the view that only one perception in the text exists for the student to “get.” Reader affect has its share of advocates, yet many of such supporters demonstrate a paradoxical impatience for students transitioning with underdeveloped skills.

Frustration to amend reading skills has rendered some college professors ambivalent; obstinacy towards what they feel as remedial techniques thus increases the likelihood of continual textual combing. At the collegiate level, instructors endeavor to obviate expectations. Eclectic groups of students promise that reading, writing, and interpretation abilities drastically vary; nevertheless, Bosley’s research proposes that composition teachers do expect their students to have sufficient reading skills when they first walk into the classroom. Appropriately enveloping her research subjects in anonymity, Bosley conducts an inductive, comparative analysis of a group of seven professors working for an undisclosed university in the southeastern United States. Interviews – reviewed by each professor before publication – reveal a collective sentiment that, at the collegiate level, students should know how to read; the pejorative sentiment of the cohort captured in the title of the study “I Don’t Teach Reading” (Bosley 290). Underdeveloped skills prompt a general ambivalence where the culture surrounding readers who demonstrate the techniques of the novice go unaddressed. In search of more cogent readers, the majority of the professors could neither define nor relate what they meant by critical reading skills beyond uncovering authorial intent. Only the professor of thirty plus years exemplified a concise model for teaching her students while contesting to a patient and precise methodology: Elizabeth Austen (a pseudonym) sees reading “as a developmental process, a process of discovering what texts mean and what we think about them... clearly teaching reading and writing (annotation, answering questions, personal response, essay prompts, that respond to the readings) as a reciprocal process” (Bosley 295). Definitive textual information absconds under methods that differentiate from the give-and-take process Austen advocates, and more importantly, teaches to her incoming students: active participation with the text subsumes the disseminated information throughout the narrative in a fashion that downplays the notion that individual parts can rectify a meaning coinciding with the author’s.

Authorial intent remains the predominant source of authority and, at times, the novice reader may need assistance in uncovering the most fundamental episodes or facts for discernment. Students trained to depend on finding key pieces of information to demonstrate that they have in fact completed a reading need utmost familiarity with the main characters, the work’s conflict, and the major shifts in the text that lead to resolution. When faced with finding the information used to complete an assignment, the facts the author meant for readers to decode *the* work, the internet proffers a tempting source of knowledge. Specifically, websites hosting character analyses, chapter summaries, and motif clarifications give students exactly what they seek while reinforcing the idea that texts are closed to negotiation; the most popular of these sites being the SparkNotes’ and CliffsNotes’ archives. By providing the novice reader with

germane textual clues – a chapter by chapter analysis of major events, motifs, symbols, etc. – these sites creates the perception of a correct answer, one tied to the author’s contextual information featured as the first link for every literary work. SparkNotes’ collection features a top-down format that can provide the novice reader, amongst others, with a source for checking or acquiring what they have not found in the primary source. In December 2002, the SparkNotes’ webpage received nearly two-and-a-half million hits (“History of SparkNotes”).

Recently, the site – a conglomerate of Barnes and Noble Booksellers – redesigned its layout to include videos, blogs, newsfeeds, and other social networking features to replicate the blueprint of popular magazines with young, female target audience, such as those referenced in the study conducted by Jolliffe and Harl. Most disturbing is the a slogan featured at the bottom of each page used to reassure all visitors that the answers to the mysteries of each canonical text lie within the site’s allotted (cyber)space: “When your books and teachers don’t make sense, we do” (SparkNotes). Touting a sleek and familiar frame predicated on social relations rather than academic success, the site fosters a sentiment built upon reading standards that maintain ultimate textual resolution: authorial context being the first featured element of each text followed later by analyses of characters, themes, symbols, motifs, and a discussion of important quotes. Codified boundaries preserve a top-down model where professional editors give answers – which can be reinforced and checked for comprehension using the site’s quiz feature. Hence, students have the opportunity to get through their reading assignments and papers in a straight-forward manner. No analysis is required.

The culture surrounding textual interpretation detrimentally misleads students into believing that interpretations represent trodden paths to authorial intentions, but burgeoning readers demonstrate an affinity for textual interactions under circumstances when they feel empowered. Class sizes, which continue to increase, place certain limitations on the ability to create a comfortable environment for students to engage with their peers.¹⁰ Complications with sharing responses can begin at the personal level where some students lack the confidence to share their thoughts, possibly due to individual levels of proficiency. To maintain an environment where students feel confident and know they have the opportunity to have their voices heard relegates the possibility of a class-wide literature circle facilitated by the instructor. Still, the communal culture that validates participants’ responses to various works can offer guidance as to when students feel most comfortable responding creatively to literature and when they show the most progress in their interpretive abilities.

Before exploring the authority authors’ hold, I would like to highlight a case study where aesthetic reading strategies employed by even young students overlooked the thought of a single intention. Conducting research on students at the middle and secondary school levels, Jie Park’s perspicacious observation of a small group of girls taught predominantly under a reader-response tradition demonstrated skills that college professors want to see in their new freshman. Though the gender-homogenous group of students in Park’s study showed a previously established joy for reading, voluntarily gathering to participate after school and without incentive, it is the success of their

¹⁰ See Monks and Schmidt, page 9.

methodology that should be taken into account in this instance. An interview conducted with one seventh-grade participant in the northeastern middle school conveyed exactly what her literature teacher taught her and her classmates to do while reading: “Anyone can write a summary. Are you inferring, are you reading between the lines, are you synthesizing, and um, are you visualizing the characters in your mind, are you questioning the characters, and are you questioning the author, are you making connections like text to text, text to society, text to nature – all those connections” (Park 198-99). Unlike the lip service Jolliffe and Harl find in their research on composition texts and instructors that espouse reader response methods only to place ultimate value upon authorial intent, teachers at the public, K-8 Harmony School institute a culture of literary advancement by complementing theoretical rationale with personal content. The group’s response to a date-rape scene in Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak* exemplifies an emergent ability to act hypothetically through the text for one participant: “If, for some reason, I was ever in that situation, as soon as he would ask that question, no matter if I knew what he was talking about or not, I would have kned him right in that area” (Park 202). Altering the static arch of the text through an imaginatively constructed narrative, the student lacks an otherwise stifling resolve to uncover what the author is trying to say and is instead concerned with the text as recourse, presented in a way that will affect her future actions. A second girl comments: “But I think, it’s, we try to say what we would do in that position.... I don’t know. I’ve never, but it’s got to be so hard. She stops speaking, so it obviously is saying that she’s, it’s not as easy as we can make it sound like” (Park 202). The latter participant dovetails the earlier girl’s response in order to build the reading she sees, while acknowledging the importance of the imaginary contribution to the subsequent understanding. The field study models benefits of incorporating strategic reading terminology. Feasibly the incorporation of advanced math and science at an earlier age opens a place for rudimentary ideas to aid in the cultivation of more insightful readers; Park’s research is indicative of such a fact. Though the girls’ perception of how a “good girl” behaves stems at a predominant social schema, they do not feel confined by the author(ity) within the text.

The young students in Park’s study exemplify a potential for all readers when they demonstrate the will to interact and to build upon a reading, specifically contemplating the character’s consideration within the empirical world while disregarding the author’s intent. Even the most thoughtful search through a text does not suitably fulfill the process of engagement. In committing to detective-like method of scouring each scene left by the author, words will inevitably ring hollow with intentions incapable of being recovered; novice readers hoping to identify the text’s worth or hidden answers hope for merely the disappearance of the author as opposed to Roland Barthes more drastic insight: “The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author” (1470). Barthes implies that once the text has been solidified, the author no longer imposes a strict sense of authority over what he or she has written. Poststructuralist thought prospers through the ambiguities of language and the potential to turn the text against itself. It exemplifies the tenacity of the critic to undermine and to exploit the author’s lack of clarity through language’s performative, transformational potential. Instead, the novice reader is cultivated and consequently undercut in order to preserve the author’s alleged intention within a time capsule. Doing so suggests that it is

either easier for students to believe in a constructed figure who presides over their reading, or there is a general lack of faith in students' ability to establish connections and have similar discussions as those found in Park's study. Commitment to theological-like endings for a text insists that works of another age and place cannot relate to students.

Asking students to satisfy the intention of both author and instructor stymies a growing potential to understand further reading strategies. Fear that reader response practices will only garner text-to-self relations continues to provide the same foundation upon which Barthes denies the capability of authorial perception: "The Author, *when believed in*, is always conceived of as the past and present of his own book" (1468, added emphasis). Forced belief in an extraneous entity promises opposition in the form of apathy or passive reading techniques, and while instructors can choose to jettison the demarcated boundaries between author and writer or writer and reader, students will continue to merely assuage curricula requirements; literature, used as a window into another universe or an author's mind, removes the functionality of the reader. The novice reader who is taught to search and procure rather than construct pursues and strengthens a skillset that omits critical thinking. In a time where "reading is at risk" according to the title of the NEA's study mentioned above, the most frequently exercised methods devalue the adolescents turning pages. Essentially, the understanding of the reader should not grow to betray his personal perception – relegating him as a monolithic agent. Barthes in no way oversteps practical reading practices when he suggests that readers want what they deem objective answers about a text: "The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end... the voice of a single person" (1466, author's emphasis). Human curiosity yearns to uncover objective truth; people want a sense of mastery, a sense of pride. Instilling the belief that the ultimate answers lies within the depths of a text does little more than limit the potential to fashion new voices. It perpetuates silence.

The implication holds for those novice readers who search for a single voice with the potential to clarify the mystery hidden within. This further complicates the notion of the author's death because he or she is alive in historical sense. To explain, lost utterances once possessed by authors engross the efforts of the novice, although the methodology of the novice would suggest that what was lost can be found. Barthes notes that the death of the author suits criticism well – asserting the reader who deciphers a text rather than actively "disentangling" erases his personal history (1469). Context allows professional readers insight, but to the novice reader, the history surrounding the author envelops the self. Answers comprised of the work's context offer appealing notions: they place the author in a specific time and place where social and historical factors influence his or her choices. Thus, the novice reader employs history to offer an interpretation with substance in professionally reconstructed past – codifying the difference between authority and apprehension, author and novice. The author is resurrected when the novice reader considers the original intent to be the only intent. Historical analysis and authorial intent exist in order to offer a fixed purpose, and it is the perceived, societal differential that sets the novice apart from the author(ity) of the text.

Michel Foucault offers a resounding follow up to Barthes in "What Is an Author?" by presenting the author as a fixed construct, though less so than the novice reader grows to understand. In doing so, Foucault highlights how the author can be a

useful agent when outside of the text instead of an overbearing influence on the reader. This allows for the possibility of reader awareness without allowing the first contact with a reading to be utterly shaped by an author. For example, in his suggestion that literature unfolds like a game, Foucault admits that the concern of writing is to create “an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears” (1623). Disappearing, as opposed to dying, explicitly suggests that the author does still serve a purpose after the text has been written. If the author is not visible, then speech acts function primarily as questions rather than answers. However, when the tendency has been to see the author as an authority figure, one who provides clues to fulfill a reading, little room for ambivalence exists. According to Foucault, the author exists in “the safeguard of the a priori” (1625). Safeguarding acts as an invisibility cloak for the author: he or she survives, but the vacancy or the voids left can be fulfilled by those readers who can assume an authoritative role. Without cues to exemplify the arbitrariness of the story, the pliable limitations of texts, these voids are artifacts only to be examined from behind a pane of glass: for the apprehensive novice, those blank spaces contribute to the author’s purpose.

Preservation denies alteration, and the author’s persona reigns supreme when permitted. Names attached to texts both describe and demarcate. For example, if a reader has familiarity with Gabriel García Márquez, they will have premeditated expectations of the works they have not read through stature alone. García Márquez has become a figure whose reputation precedes his oeuvre. He personifies magical realism. Hence, the author’s name may contour a novice reader’s first encounter through hearsay. Michel Foucault offers a convincing assertion that while the “author function” operates through different avenues, ranging from the legal/institutions systems to a person creating through stylistic/historical means, one of those functions does, “not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy” (1631). In other words, the author cannot function in every use of his or her text, yet will always exist as the person who instills the rudimentary components of textual communication. According to Foucault, capitalism ensures that the author will always maintain a position of authority – exemplified by his or her name placed above the text’s title (1632). The author’s name signals a sense of prestige. This is particularly true for those authors Foucault has in mind when he mentions robust capitalism. Hearsay associated with an author may factor into an experienced reader’s initial consideration of a text, but does not necessarily mean that a reading will remain confined to the author’s intentions. Still, author’s absence encourages novice readers to piece together a story only to align themselves with him or her because they exhibit apprehension in offering a fresh interpretation. Summarizing the difference between author and writer, Foucault emphasizes the split that allows for critical analysis while understanding the author as a figurehead or construct associated with growing authority: “It would seem false to seek the author in relation to the actual writer as to the fictional narrator; the ‘author-function’ arises out of their scission—the division and distance of the two” (1631). When focus remains on the author-function, reader apprehension finds affirmation; such is the case made by Foucault, implying that an author will outlive an oeuvre.

Artistic influence and introduction of new literary movements, such as the Gothic Romance, function as guidelines for other authors – discourse tethered to a figure whose

work will undergo imitation or parody in order to further literary advance (Foucault 1632). Emerging guidelines will bring forth a return to the original text, distorting prior readings through new readings and shaping how the romance will be supplanted by realist texts. As a reader becomes more familiar with how an author shapes texts, he or she will likely be influenced to re-evaluate an earlier reading. Re-evaluating requires a second reading. However, a second reading seems unnecessary to the novice once contact with the author has been deemed credible or once the “right track” has been verified, corroboration coming from those who can audibly communicate with the novice where the text cannot. An attempt to evoke the author’s will stands only the slightest of possibilities: according to Wolfgang Iser, a “subject-object division” occurs in the reader when “thinking the thoughts” of the author or another, where a chance semblance occurs perhaps “if they are in some way related to the virtual background of our own understanding (for otherwise they would be totally incomprehensible” (155). Still, even with noticeable similarities, esteem differentiates the author from the novice. Foucault’s concern with the author as a construct of power provides insight into the apprehension of the novice. In other words, the persona behind a text maintains a larger-than-life appeal with renowned antiquity. Double checking his collected clues against an instructor’s reading, the novice reader instills further authority into the instructor. Such a notion in itself is a bit perturbing because, here, the socially constructed author comes to instill reified power into the instructor.

In a discussion concerning authorship and authority, Nickolas Pappas responds to “What Is an Author?” by saying that “Foucault has not, after all, distinguished historically between the author and the writer merely in order to call the former unknowable; rather, he wants to expose the various powers that the author’s person wields..... But what matters more is that we have been, all along, deferring to this construct as to a human authority” (327). Authority needs a physical manifestation, thus the instructor as liaison fulfills such a duty while being asked to perpetuate metaphysical virtues of the author. In gaining what the novice reader sees as a more robust insight into the text’s meaning, the instructor loses personal agency to an apparition. The embodiment of the resurrected spirit places an authoritative resource within the physical world; displacing or relocating authority does not amend the potential to invest in new reading strategies. Furthermore, doing so roots entire traditions into various authorial constructs that cannot offer definitive answers even if the writer were to emerge from a shallow grave. Interpretation itself cannot avoid a run-in with the author – as a construct or writer. Unabated submission to both intention and legacy proves to exist in limited, interpretive skillset: according to Pappas, “[a]t most it is true that everything we now call an interpretation presupposes some real or fictitious person as the source of the interpreted work. But that is just to name the problem, not to answer it: the problem is that this is how we have been reading” (327). Pappas implies that Foucault would prefer the work to speak for itself and he offers corrective suggestion in placing value on a reader’s subversive response; however, he relies on Foucault’s ambivalent – or more specifically hopeful – dismantling of the author-function as an indirect means of incorporating such an ethos. Rather than relying on the implication that the absent or resurrected author can be bypassed, it is more beneficial to cultivate the insights of the novice reader by exemplifying that a perspicacious reader need not exemplify outright audacity or a

reading rooted in verisimilitude but understand how analysis works through multiple reading strategies – which evolve over time. Commitment to such an understanding finds the instructor as an insightful leader, asking constructive questions instead of a SparkNotes-like resource for rigid answers; the novice reader demonstrates a sense of maturity when they can answer those questions with their own analysis. Apprehension concurrently dissipates. Those readers formerly fixated on the author's intentions can engage otherwise. However, for maturity to take place, cues to the author's never-ending development of a text or an idea must surface – demonstrating that there is always room for reader input.

For the novice to disregard the author(ity) of a text, a will to answer the questions left by the text must take precedence. As mentioned above, the gaps in the text most often appear antiquated and in need of preservation to the novice reader. They, like the text itself, appear to necessitate extensive observation in order to relate why an author would leave an opportunity, and therein lies the problem. The ambiguity of authority becomes increasingly difficult to untangle when the author appears as subject. Foucault's discourse undercuts the author's functionality through a telling exposure by highlighting how social institutions create an almost theological figure. The next step is to explicitly emphasize how the questions posed by the text empower the novice reader via the absence of definitive answers. Pappas finds the conclusion to Frederick Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* particularly indicative of a text's further potential when the German philosopher ends his treatise with the very question he spends the essay answering (329). An explicit opportunity to expand on the dialogue, Nietzsche emphasizes how discourse predicated on social interaction between humans has changed and continues to change. He relinquishes any perceived, ultimate authority he may have over the subject matter as human lifespan prevents final resolve. Novels, short stories, poems, and dramas may not offer such explicit invitations to supplement the voids, but the notion of life-long learners sophisticated through the influence of the expanding world accentuates the role of the reader. The outside world is the catalytic entity that demonstrates a text's staying power through its own malleability, and if it shares a place in the developing world, it presents a place for the novice reader to grow.

Texts' built-in opportunity to offer insights opens the door to the developmental stages of agency for the novice reader. For instance, as mentioned in the introduction, Karen Littau's advocacy for the power of feminist criticism necessitates an abridged solution when extended to readers without a background in theoretical endeavors. The most accessible source material for the novice reader to exemplify growth resides in the personal experience: a text-to-self relationship precedes a text-to-world assessment, even if minimal grounds for a creating a personal relationship are present. Establishment of textual communication – no longer routed through authorial intention – depends on the ability of the reader to make conclusions about the text. Once engaged with the text, the most fundamental maxim of feminist criticism comes into play: the personal becomes the political. Still, some critics would argue that a text's ambiguity still resides in the author as "compromised unconscious elements" not meant for appropriation (Kahane 121). Kahane roots her position in both a feminist and psychoanalytical tradition where the personal is political and the text represents a medium of transference – specifically a place for memories to be conveyed and readers to empathize with the author. Moreover,

she uses her celebration of confessional writing to defend the notion that the author invests memories into a text with certain intentions that should only be taken as they were originally given, but ironically defends opponents of such a genre by touting that memory is often unreliable:

[A] Memoire writer can be violently attacked if she or he reconstructs dialogue or condenses a number of scenes into one. As if the author's "real" experienced cannot be authentically represented by a reconfigured event! As if one could literally replicate the past in language! In spite of all the evidence to the contrary about how memory works, historical truth is often demanded when narrative truth—the writer's commitment to understanding and representing her experience—is the most we can get. That is the truth that upholds the authority of the author. (Kahane 130)

Trying to preserve her memories and sentiments, almost keeping them incarcerated with the hope that the implied reader exists, Kahane at times seems so vexing, so jovial that it becomes difficult to overlook her essay's title – "The Smile of the Cheshire Cat." Perhaps she meant for the cat to offer a wink instead of a grin. Attempts to be all encompassing in no way should preserve authorial intent or prevent voids from being filled with proper acknowledgement because once the personal becomes political, the tenets for defamation differ. Dependency on transference ensures inevitable disconnections and thus places stifling limitations upon the reader. Kahane's admitted dedication to psychoanalytical doctrine seems curious when her hopes of investing the meaning for her readers to withdraw oppose Freudian insight – where she "will only be repeating a mistake of the parents who crushed their child's independence by their influence" (qtd. in Pappas 331). Dependence will shift as long as authority resides in either a physical or metaphysical entity. The text scouring methodology is predicated on this precise notion. Hence, the novice reader needs to cultivate an understanding through which the text conveys and cues him to execute his own evaluations.

Departing from the foreseen methodology and conjectures of the novice reader, consideration of the imagination's role in contributing to analysis will follow in order to understand how texts that test the novice reader's suspension of disbelief aid in the novice's maturity process. Tracing the concept back to Samuel Taylor Coleridge highlights an overt use of the supernatural that not even the author himself can control despite his own insight. If, as I have suggested, the novice reader seeks to understand the author's intent, understanding itself must precede the passing of judgment. An examination of Coleridge's roots in philosophical discourse and contemporary thought, rooted in a similar tradition, will buffer the leap between understanding the rational and imaging the supernatural. Relating the fantastic to magical realism exemplifies how moments in the text prompt a reader's action and later showcase when authors, perhaps inadvertently, surrender authority.

Before the twentieth century advanced in cognitive science, the imagination stood as a construct understood to be different but within a similar vein as reason. In fact, Nigel J.T. Thomas claimed that "the distinction between imagination and discursive reason, *phantasia* and *dianoia*, is as old as Aristotle and, perhaps because satisfying positive

characterizations of imagination have always been hard to come by the contrast between them has long been a key constituent of ordinary understandings of the concept of imagination” (231, original emphasis). Imaginative processes necessitate a figurative distance from where hypothetical suggestions can relate information taken from the text. This distance resides in reader empathy. A distinct difference posed during the Enlightenment continues to set understanding and imagination apart; although, the ability to juxtapose the worldly from the creative, preconditioned schema from textual details poses a striking similarity between understanding and the imaginative process. According to Immanuel Kant, people do not find beauty based upon cognitive understanding of an object’s representation, but through imagination by referring the representation to the subject and its feelings of pleasure or displeasure. The imagination acts as a vehicle for personally depicted characteristics represented through narrated reflection (Kant 35). Thus, the act of understanding becomes associated with the thought of producing what has been presented as the stimuli of synthesis, of reason. Imagination reproduces what is not present. It only offers emphatic influence to formerly prescribed concepts. Jane Kneller explains that Kant’s imagination “simply has no independent status” because it cannot actively produce an object, and production – the results of synthesis – exists via categories of *understanding*, unaffected by sensibilities that do influence imaginative reproductions (100, added emphasis). According to Kant, the “[i]magination brings together the manifolds of intuition in a representation of an object and understanding for the unity of the concept uniting the representations” (49). The reasoning behind Kant’s notion of understanding concludes that it, as a productive of reason and not empathy, enables readers to gain the intended insight. On the other hand, it is the interplay between the imagination and understanding that encourages readers to interpret a text – enabling the process of exploring textual cues and relating them both to the self and the world. Clearly dated, the classical perception of the relationship between the imagination and understanding nevertheless serves as a rudimentary plateau, for suggesting how the novice reader’s methodology can evolve. If the very act of gathering textual clues as a private detective cannot uncover a hidden meaning without first *understanding* them as clues, then – just as Barthes suggests in his poststructuralist analysis – the essence of the text can never be recovered. Thus, (re)presenting what may have been proves inevitable.

Kant’s thoughts, in regards to pre-meditated “finality” and its link to aesthetic representation, should follow that prior subjective concepts of a text can be rendered final, at least for a single reading, if the object or text elicits pleasure *or* displeasure. The imagination does not play a role until joined with a text because readers do not reach a final feeling until the text elicits (dis)pleasure. Furthermore, his perception of aesthetic interpretation suggests that art should be viewed while consciously seeking a work’s beauty, as it cannot provide rationale understanding (Littau 93). This is not the intent of the novice reader. If these readers search for objective truth or meaning, they, like Kant, reject “a conception of art which valorizes artworks for their affects and effects” (Littau 93). With such an approach, a text poses a single challenge – to be understood. If this is so, the function of the imagination according to Kant’s perception of cognition is subservient. Yet, as implied above, an absolute understanding of a work’s content is ephemeral, if not nonexistent. Texts are meant to be reconceived rather than uncovered. They breed creativity. Nevertheless, it is Kant’s perception that inspires the British

romantic authors and poets who deny socially constructed authority by embracing that which exists in the imagination.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge offers a thought-provoking complement to Kantian perception – defying the positivist notion of understanding that otherwise relegates the imagination. Coleridge credits the imagination as “the primary agent of all human perception,” and claims that it “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create” (313). In other words, stories are broken apart by the reader and then reconstructed through the imagination to evoke what Kant would deem as a final – empathic – feeling or a cognitive conclusion about the text. This is textual engagement for Coleridge, and he exemplifies the frailty of his verse in “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner” as the poem’s gloss more closely resembles concise marginalia rather than authorial clarification. As both author and reader, Coleridge muddies the diegetic levels of the text: his interpretation of the poem condenses the mariner’s didactic verse that recapitulates the consequences for slaying the infamous water fowl – capable of similar territorial transitions as revealed by Coleridge’s marginal interjections. Furthermore, the relationship between narrator and the ancient mariner – one working through an oratory means while the other perceivably through the written word – further complicates how Coleridge’s instilled marginalia clarifies who has actual authority over the poem. Coleridge captures how imaginative reconstruction inherently builds new understanding through textual reaction. Consequently, Coleridge, the author, has compromised his “godlike” position – demonstrating the possibility of infinite regress. Brian McHale’s discussion of similar tendencies in post-modernist fiction deems the relinquishment of power a pulling back of the curtain, the exposure of “the puppet-master behind [the] puppet-master *ad infinitum*. The romantic godlike poet is, to revert to theological discourse, both immanent and transcendent, both *inside* and *outside* his heterocosm and *above* it, simultaneously present and absent” (30, original emphasis). The gloss is the physical marker that signifies a cue for the reader to offer an interpretation; furthermore, it signals that the author does not exercise complete authority over a work.

Assertion of a reader’s perspective within “Rhyme” exemplifies Coleridge’s exact take on the imagination. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge furthers Kantian discourse in differentiating the imagination from understanding by adding an associative construct, where imagination is the “shaping and modifying power, which is preceded by experience. Fancy stands as the aggregative and associating power and understanding is the regulative, substantiating and realizing power” (306). Fancy organizes the empirical phenomenon and helps differentiate memory rooted in specific temporal and spatial moments. Coleridge’s suggestion represents more than a classic extension of Kant’s discourse on the imagination: it sets a foundation for what he considers the reader needs in making schematic associations when undergoing the interjection of the supernatural within his work.

To chase the sublime, for Coleridge, meant incorporating evanescent notions tied to the supernatural that emulates the remarkable power of nature, while simultaneously necessitating the reader’s active participation. Contributing to William Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads* leads Coleridge to conclude that “my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these

shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith” (314). A willing suspension of disbelief exists in both author and reader: first, as Coleridge suggests, the individual arrives at a consensus of truth often inspired by bucolic stimuli in the case of the romantics. The process continues once the experiences of the individual solidifies in a text, and, as suggested, this process attempts to relate the essence of the experience through a transfer of notions between two separate entities – moving from text to reader. Use of the supernatural acknowledges the impossibility of conveyance: the unempirical, indefinable qualities of the supernatural imitate language’s insufficiency. Coleridge here acknowledges that the truth he once hoped to capture and share will falter and only a “semblance” of its power, a kernel implanted into the reader can take shape. As noted earlier, the function of the imagination reconstructs the stimuli – understood to be non-existent in the case of the supernatural – that empowers the reader to shape and modify accordingly. Therefore, the willing suspension of disbelief serves the reader to delay a judgment when faced with the improbable and it empowers the reader to complement the text’s missing details, those which the author either could not or did not convey. Poetic faith involves more than an understanding of the verse; it necessitates construction based on the reaction garnered, a performance beyond passive text scouring. Thus, reading amounts to a communicatory process where those actively committed to filling the voids and recognizing textual cues demonstrate the cognitive acts Coleridge associates with the imagination.

Classic paradigms and considerations of the imagination have endured and burgeoned into erudite, sophisticated cognitive theories; still growth in disciplines such as cognitive science and literary theory often tend to glance backwards in order to push forwards. Nigel J.T. Thomas grounds a discussion on imagery formation and the imagination in the philosophy of Coleridge and his fellow romantics. He deliberates on how the aforementioned processes, imagination and understanding, relate to cognitive creativity. Precautions taken to avoid the equivocal use of “imagination” will distinguish supposition from creative activity (Thomas 233). Distinctions between uses of the term signify the grounds upon which Thomas differentiates perception activity theory from mere hypothetical offerings. Furthermore, he proposes the existence of imaginative creativity, most apparent when an artist ruminates upon personal work: “[A]rtists must be able to appreciate whether what they are producing, or thinking of producing, is any good, whether it conveys what is wanted. That is properly said to be a function of their imaginations” (236). Much like Coleridge, Thomas acknowledges author or artist intent, but he uses appreciation as a synonym for evaluation and thus suggests a secondary reading of the original work where the creator recognizes that specific notions are impossible to extract or replicate from person to person. In other words, the author considers how the work will be received, therefore recognizing creativity of the reader or admirer. Perceptual activity theory (PA theory) guides creativity in Thomas’s view. Explained further in chapter two, perceptual activity theory resembles the ability to perceive self-generated “attention-based imagery,” cloud gazing for example. However, PA theory surpasses this notion by eliminating strict outside stimulus, literal seeing, in favor of becoming dependent on the imagination’s ability to see things with a fresh perspective or, “[t]o put things crudely, ‘imagination’, in one important sense at least, just *is* our name for the faculty of *seeing as*, and its metaphorical extensions [of meaning]

cover a similar range” (235-36 Thomas, original emphasis). Creators derive narratives and images for the reader and admirer to build upon in a way relating to their own persona. The reader’s ability to represent the way he sees the text builds a reading based on perceptions shaping him. His reading is a manifestation of himself – ready to rely (self)analysis.

Particular ways of seeing reside within different avenues of experience or perception of the artistic stimuli that permits the reader to exercise the imagination. Denial of the author’s strict authority should not obviate his or her work. In other words, critics cannot destroy the author nor discard the author’s integral role as a writer. Coleridge in particular ensures such is the case: he most perceptively exists in the gloss of “Rhyme.” His relation to the text comes in the form of textual cues for the reader. Ambiguity – particularly associated with the supernatural – manifests itself as these cues and projects the metaphorical light onto paradoxically adumbrated phenomenon. Imagination takes over. The reader participates in the work. Though the supernatural presents an ostensible concept with which to take notice of textual cues, Pappas highlights an analogous construct in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and explains how Bloom dissects a joke to illustrate the various circumstances of interpretation that should extend to the actual reader as well: “The novel’s readers are being told to pay attention to all its other plays on words. Now naturally such an instruction cannot guarantee that all plays on words have been likewise authored; the point is that no longer matters. I am shown how to take apart. . . . now that I’ve learned what to do, I don’t need Joyce any more [sic]” (329). Heterogeneous routes await the reader who demonstrates interpretive alacrity. A similar pitfall potentially awaits the novice if he were to sift for clues instead of cues; however, like a set of static driving directions, once an unspecified turn is taken, the reader circumnavigates the text based on the choices he makes. Maintaining the same metaphor, opportunity arises where crisis once existed – particularly when the ambiguity of cues causes hesitation.

The supernatural sparks hesitation – which induces reader involvement. In this context, hesitation is a mental act that demonstrates uncertainty where a confrontation with nature’s laws of physics designates the possibility of the supernatural. Uncertainty performs an integral part of placing a work within the spectrum Tzvetan Todorov introduces in his exploration of the fantastic. Dynamics between competing (un)worldly suggestions directly challenges readers to arrive at a consensus regarding the text’s (meta)physical environment. Ambiguity and evaluation manifest as textual cues, the reader being instructed to make self-regulated decisions because, as Coleridge’s willing suspension of disbelief suggests, the unrecognizable flickers of the supernatural flourish when mentored by the reader’s imagination. Todorov’s exegesis on the fantastic as genre reveals what he describes as an essence which extrapolates from the consciousness of the reader: “The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (25). Hesitation accentuates ambiguity. It exemplifies the inability to codify the text in a single environment, in a single meaning, unguarded by author(ity) or sign system. Todorov’s work propels itself from this point in order to re-establish the structural rendering of the genre: he highlights how texts can be classified as marvelous or uncanny – and therefore fantastic by varying degrees – by using empirical and abstract evidence from textual examples that showcase

the constituents of each genre. For example, gothic tales such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* offer no explicit explanation for the appearance of the supernatural – an example of the marvelous – whereas Edgar Allan Poe's shorts featuring the erudite detective C. Auguste Dupin reveal the origins of circumstances earlier considered to be supernatural, thus exemplifying the uncanny.¹¹ Robert R. Hume's evaluation of the gothic novel and romance offers insight into the joint use of the supernatural: "its purpose was to arouse and sensitize the reader's imagination, giving it further play than it ordinarily enjoyed, and the use of the supernatural was clearly meant to contribute to this imaginative stimulus" (284). Hume juxtaposes the two traditions in order to accentuate how each can exist without the presence of the supernatural, though to renege after its initial usage problematizes the trajectory of imaginative purpose. Heights created through the potential of the supernatural breed expectations to stay within the vicinity upon initial exposure.

Todorov's work introduces a lucid framework for stipulating how to identify fantastic works without limitations bound to cliché trapdoors and rampant specters. Accordingly, he anticipates his definition of the fantastic being problematic if, as Northrop Frye suggests in *Anatomy of Criticism*, literary genres dictate what a text entails, leaving Todorov to posit "that literary structures, hence genres themselves, be located on an abstract level, separate from that of concrete works" (21). Genres such as the fantastic, traditions such as the gothic, and literary modes such as magical realism prime themselves for inspiring parodies when notorious constructs saturate the respective formats. When oversaturation occurs, it undermines the relationship between the real and the imaginary. For experienced or professional readers, genre, tradition, and mode obviate the content of the work; thus, degrees of hesitation subside as such readers' expectations come to fruition. Inexperience and a yearning to uncover an objective reading, unique to the intentions of the author, can clearly serve the novice reader in situations benign for the experienced reader. Gauging moments of hesitation, moments that cue the reader to evaluate rather than passively consume, have the potential to relieve the novice's apprehension when it is no longer clear when to suspend disbelief. To clarify, when the text blurs the limitation of reality and negates the finality of textual clues, the death of a character for example, the logical next step is to *interpret* textual cues – to decide upon what has just happened and why. The fantastic lends itself to such a strategy. Todorov explains that it works in two circumstances: "In the first case, we were uncertain not that these events occurred, but that our *understanding* of them was correct. In the second case, we wonder if what we believe we perceive is not in fact a product of the imagination" (36, added emphasis). Doubting the finality of clues, the novice grows to favor imaginative capabilities to assist in the construction of a text.

Hesitation grows perception by bringing awareness to the moments when disbelief suspends, which provides a pertinent ability in the process of relegating authority. Imagination prospers under circumstances where hesitation produces a belief in what is newly perceived. In making the reader such an integral part of founding the fantastic, it follows that the reader must find a sense of agency within the text; such agency manifests in moments of signification and decision making in regards to a

¹¹ For a thorough explanation of the fantastic, the marvelous, and the uncanny, see Todorov.

revelatory moment. Todorov explains this moment as “the spirit of the fantastic” that prevents a must for blind faith or incredulity with a hypothetical reader’s epiphany, “*I nearly reached the point of believing*” (31, original emphasis). This type of suggested hesitation speaks to the circumstances of the event once pragmatic context reaffirms itself. It influences the reader to undergo a similar jolting statement. Fish too considers hesitation, or “semantic or syntactic slide” while considering the transient meaning of a single word in line breaks found in Milton’s work (154). In accordance with his overall methodology, Fish would argue that such suggestive form acts as a cue to the reader to reconsider the text’s context. This constitutes a reflective tool for the novice reader, which, upon a first consideration, allows him to almost reach the point of believing, but subsequent reconsideration highlights the necessary empirical circumstances surrounding the fantastic. A fine line between polemical belief and disbelief spotlight a paradoxical danger of the fantastic, where the world outside the text becomes defamiliarized. Brian Attebery draws upon Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky and his notion of defamiliarization to claim that the fantastic text’s most indispensable trait originates from its ability to distance and reacquaint readers with a reality thought to be lost (16). Familiarity with faulty textual scouring methodology, a removal from known traditions of insight is the best means for cultivating the novice reader. Emphasis on the reader’s ability to differentiate the ambiguous moments where a work can neither be classified as uncanny nor marvelous leaves room to speculate how such a methodology could be applied to a tradition in a similar vein as the fantastic – specifically magical realism.

Magical realism’s position at the edge of the fantastic and the real highlights moments of hesitation coupled with a tradition of exposing the author’s place relative to the text. While magical realism certainly finds its historical roots in Franz Roh, Alejo Carpentier, and Miguel Ángel Asturias, to exclude a mention of Jorge Luis Borges would be a failure to acknowledge a connection between magical realism and a more familiar author to U.S. students in Poe and his brand of fantasy and dark romanticism – inspired by a mixing of horrific refrains with the gothic romance. Though his work retains closer relations to epistemological musings founded in the fantastic, Borges is commonly known as an unquestionable influence on the writers of Latin American “Boom” literature. Still, critics and scholars tend to downplay a viable connection that links the fantastic and magical realism via Poe’s influence. John Sturrock writes on Poe’s inspiration of Borges – most obvious in the latter’s detective stories. More pertinent, Borges exhibited a particular interest in the “The Philosophy of Composition,” which Sturrock asserts as a cogent example of Poe’s tendency to disassemble and showcase an “intuition which enables the mind to pass from the ordinary, everyday world of particulars to the linguistic, fictional world of universals. Intuition, that is, is the power by which we pass beyond existence of essences” (49-50). Showing no particular dedication to the tradition of nineteenth-century romanticism, Borges does exemplify a strong philosophical condition to reach beyond linguistics and to assess the possibility of attaining metaphysical knowledge – consider “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” or “The Aleph.” It is his role in developing a tradition that introduced the fantastic by explicitly questioning the limitations of knowledge itself that helps place him, both literally and figuratively, in the precursory tradition of magical realism. For example, Roberto González Echevarría names Borges as the archetype for the omniscient, enigmatic gypsy

Melquíades in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (25). Borges ushers in a paradigm that occurs during the shift to post-modern literature, which McHale describes as transference from epistemological to ontological traditions, is apparent in the relationship established between the magical realist work and the author.

Perspicacious insight vis-à-vis authorial authority remains imperative if the excessive, hyperbolic nature of magical realism can indeed offer a frame to novice readers, which can embolden these readers to build upon cues and admonish clues. The discussion so far has evaluated the traditions leading up to the magical realist mode; it has taken notice of the novice reader's method for finding textual clues necessitating a close reading to understand the author's intent – and the theoretical and literary traditions that exhibit authors' own subjectivity. Therefore, a brief evaluation of the place of the magical realist author should be made before continuing on an exploration of the authors and their works in the following three chapters. Yet, a final, momentary glance back will be taken beforehand. Literary theory contributes modified lenses to view texts, tools with which critics dichotomize, dissect, and dismember works in hopes of demonstrating how pieces of verse and prose support fresh visions and agonistic expositions. Moments of distorted clarity bloom bright when masters of fiction articulate how the methods of the academy contribute to a split in perception. Of course, this short glance stops at the closest of proximities to magical realism. Borges's three-quarter page essay "Borges and I" attests to a doubling of persona that captures the polyphonic discourse of both author and man – a classical endeavor where he juxtaposes the public and the private perception of the author, Borges. Inability to know when and how the public will relinquish a grip on a canonical persona, the fragmented subject behind the text searches for a sense of being rather than the knowledge which could only be revealed with a glimpse into the aleph, writing "I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me. It is no effort for me to confess that he has achieved some valid pages, but those pages cannot save me, perhaps because what is good belongs to no one, not even to him, but rather to the language and to tradition" (246). "Is the text a clue or a cue" ponders the novice reader with limited background in Borgesian discourse. At this moment a clue cannot suffice the novice who anticipates guidance from a fragmented author, a breaker of frame. Both obvious and deceptive, language and tradition mask their diachronic nature – deceiving novice readers and showcasing a perceivable static nature familiar. Assaulting universal constructs, history and language, destabilizes the limitation of reality itself; no longer sufficient to answer questions about the limitations of reality, these authorial constructs will contribute to the assembly and unraveling of the magical realist author.

If the fantastic balances empirical reality and its direct opposite, magical realism captures the moments when unempirical reality seeps into the text without drawing additional attention from characters or narrator; however, the superfluous violations of reality alert the reader. Setting signifies the context within which texts exist. An understood lack of contextual information or first-hand experience assuages readers when a work's setting is unknown. Information could always be referenced, but once the magical realist text opts to neither follow suit with realism nor commit to a tradition of fantasy, the novice reader takes notice of the shift from the potential to gain knowledge to the potential to distort existence. Specifically, notice is taken when beauty is excessive,

when amnesia erases memories, or when food incites spontaneous combustion. Seeming to make up the limitation of their respective worlds as they write, the author lacks accountability. Those who lack presence and accountability lack authority. As Louis Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris mention in their discussion of the evolution of magical realism, magic exposes an encompassing ontological disturbance and adheres to no strict sense of authority: “magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers [sic] to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, and motivation” (3). Authors harbor no theological supremacy. Their inability to speak for a collective from which they gather, and not from which they create, negates their ability to single-handedly speak for a community. Zamora and Faris continue to relegate the single handedness of magical realism’s authors when explaining how the works themselves “remind us that the novel began as a popular form, with communal imperatives that continue to operate in many parts of the world. Or, where these practices (and communities) have been occulted or supplanted, magical realist writers may revitalize them in their fictions” (3-4). The text provides a place to congregate; the bending of the limitations of reality through excess or hyperbole and magic accentuate a romanticized notion of community – necessitating a collective reconstruction once it has been abandoned or rendered ridiculous by the unbeliever.

No excavation of the text can offer collective synthesis of the circumstances, people, or environment on which an author draws. Overt generosity could perhaps describe the role of the novice reader once clues fail to produce any coherent reading. Therefore, the novice can begin to shape the work through an interpretation of its cues because the shifting of worldly context guarantees the displacement of clues. This is not to suggest that the novice reader’s interpretation must represent the people and places who inspired the text. The maturing novice’s involvement simply makes him part of the conversation, an actor who contribute. Eco does well to address the problem of cultural distance in regards to a literary work: a lack of contextual reference that presents the reader with an obvious complication – which explains how “[t]he less precise the receiver’s culture and the more fervent his imagination, the more undefined and fluid his reaction will be, and the more frayed and smudged its contours” (31). Context accustoms the reader to the author’s work, where the author shared a sense of established community – acquired either through immersion or heritage – that permits a shaping of said community. Equating the magical with the real to make statements about life outside of the text worries authors and critics, particularly Alberto Fuguet and post-colonial critics. Herein lies the place of the instructor: not as an authority figure who stands in for the author or offers scholarly secrets, but as the person who helps clarify the context and the overlooked details solidified in the printed work.

Though a close reading carries an implication for action, asking readers to *find* the meaning, the edict of aesthetic strategies dictates that both reader and text are affected in the process. Undergoing a process ensures a sense of satisfaction upon completion. As educators corroborate and specify close reading as an outstanding problem, considerations regarding the environment the texts perpetuates when it poses as a fixed entity should be taken. Teaching methods rarely entertain a consensus: learning strategies differ with student population, as well as their respective skills level. Even so, the omnipresent goal of any educator manifests itself in the student who annihilates the

cliché of "thinking outside the box" by performing outside the text. Such is Fish's understanding when he proposes textual doing or textual creation rather than textual consumption, for the text that "makes sense" or has an answer does nothing more than act as a container fit for emptying (29). Thus, a simultaneous shift occurs when authors' relinquish authority and a text reveals a myriad of forking paths – all leading back to the reader: the novice can consider "what does the text do?" (which assumes that something is *always* happening)" (Fish 29). Maintaining that the text does – that is to say it prompts a consideration for how the processing of information produces sensible notions – the novice reader can begin to engage with linguistic and contextual ambiguity. To clarify, when magical realism sparks subtle altercations with the mimetic context upon which they are based, they offer the novice a textual cue. He, the maturing novice reader, must decide how magic will shape the context of his interpretation. For example, before José Arcadio Buendía ostensibly drifts into folly, he believes each passing day to be Monday. An interesting clue indeed, the insomnia plague – which erases the memories of everyone in town – begins on Monday. As none of the other Macondo residents share in José Arcadio Buendía's mental breakdown, Melquíades's cure provided earlier proves to sustain active. Nevertheless, the seeming lapse in the treatment and the negation of the reader's anticipation, Monday being followed by Tuesday, demonstrates a potential slip in context where clues serve no purpose because the context in which they are found can have the rug pulled from under them – only to see it magically fly away. Therefore, realizing the potential for the text to undermine him, the novice can begin to exhibit an active vigilance.

Before a final note on the use of literary history to negate the notion of an objective reading, I would like to provide two examples (the earlier coming from a magical realist text and the latter from a work of fantasy) that highlight how metafiction exposes and questions authorial figures. The author's knack for reincarnation in the post-modern text benefits the novice reader more so than his or her death or ghostly whispers. Faris's individual work in the collection that she edits with Zamora examines the thirteen essential traits for magical realism, five being primary and eight as secondary. As those most fundamental traits are mentioned in the introduction as the crux for her definition of magical realism, it is beneficial to examine the closest runner up – the first of those eight secondary attributes that, for the purpose of discussing the place and existence of the author, exemplifies the author's textual in/out dichotomy. First on the list of "accessory specifications," describes metafictional dimensions as maintaining a strong footing in the magical realist text that witness authors grounding the texts by "provid[ing] commentaries on themselves, often complete with occasional mises-en-abyme—those miniature emblematic textual self-portraits. Thus the magical power of fiction itself, the capacities of mind that make it possible, and the elements out of which it is made – signs, images, metaphors, narrators, narrates – may be foregrounded" (Faris 175). Examination of the text's and, and later the author's, possibilities and the consequence appears within and permits a type of holistic reflection, according to Faris. To clarify, the text, empowered to speak to its own potential acceptance, tries to get in a last word about its tradition. Such is the case in *One Hundred Years* when magic subsides and Aureliano Babilonia discontinues ties to familial magic, opting for the life of an intellectual. Explained at length in chapter four, the transition is emblematic of fiction's attempt to

recover and to translate moments present only in the confines of lost utterances. In particular, it is the source of those lost utterances most in demand for the novice reader who values the author(ity) of textual construction. Not coincidentally, Gabriel – a character commonly thought to hold the place of García Márquez – makes an appearance in *One Hundred Years* as a bookstore intellectual who shares insights with Aureliano Babilonia as he considers the translation of Melquíades’s manuscripts, the pages that will be his undoing. Moments such as these attest to the author’s desire to be both inside and outside of the text – a part of a magical and a realistic community.

It should be noted that in the process of Aureliano Babilonia’s final moments he, as a reader and translator, along with the textual manifestation of García Márquez are swallowed up in the infinite abyss – induced through the very process of reading. In a sense, the reader also exists both inside and outside the text. However, as the reader functions as one who interprets with consecutive readings, without the necessity of penning a static interpretation, he or she lacks the authority of the author, but preserves the ability to traverse textual and real worlds. In this sense, García Márquez fragments the self in such a way that differs from Borges’s reflection in “Borges and I,” which attempts to explore the possibility of preserving both personas. McHale notes that in a post-modernist work, frame breaking contributes to a further rupture or destabilization of ontology (197). Destabilizing the fictional world speaks to the author’s willingness “to sacrifice novelistic illusion for the sake of asserting their ‘authority’ in the most basic sense, their mastery over the fictional world, their ontological superiority as authors. In short, romantic irony has returned” (McHale 210). An implicit irony has indeed returned: McHale exemplifies the god-like complex of the author to instill corresponding personas into the text before explaining the insufficiency of doing so. If characters thrive through the reader, the mirror-like persona of the author does so too; the irony McHale speaks of is the author’s inability to rule his own narrative (215). Trans-world authorial characters highlight the impossibility of an omnipotent author(ity) because the reader, even the novice reader who values such authority, attempts to fit them into the shifting narrative where the author’s persona – a symbol of the author’s authority – cannot be stabilized as it does when placed in the context of reality.

Astute and insightful, Scheherazade and her legacy outlined in *One Thousand and One Nights* guides both authors and readers of magical realism. She stands as the archetypal storyteller who fascinates and extends her own lifetime through narration. Her stories surmount. They grow from their predecessors. Though her use of genies and magic carpets excite and offer the most obvious ties to the magical realist mode, the necessity of her physically exhausting, excessive tales champions her craft. Not only do her stories save her life, they attest to her role as a preserver of life, a creator of stories, and a conserver of lives. Faris asserts that she should be thought of as the mother figure of magical realism. Stories penned by Carpentier, García Márquez, and Allende are Scheherazade’s legacy. She offers a finite explanation as to how this is so: “on a structural plane, with stories that grow out of other stories; on the mimetic front with characters who duplicate themselves in miraculous feats of doubling; in the metaphorical register with images that take on the lives of their own and engender others beyond themselves, independent of their referential worlds” (164). Melquíades’s stories pass from one member of the Buendía family to the next in *One Hundred Years*. Allende’s

relentless wordsmith Eva Luna is explicitly equated to Scheherazade. Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* captures how magically enhanced food affects its consumers. Further similarities remain but to continue would digress too far from the place of the novice reader. In an attempt to provide a frame for the novice reader, it is fitting to consider Scheherazade's place as an encapsulating character and a storyteller who adheres to no specified author. Interpreting the cues within a story and reimagining the story's content is how Scheherazade continues to live, and as she has become an icon for the magical realist work, her presence attests to the fact that the intent of the storyteller fades. Thus, the dialectic originated by the author or storyteller ceases to dominate once it becomes a public fixture in time, bending to the shape of those who interpret it.

No quick cure exists for the novice reader. Like building a skillset, conditioning and experience grows the ability to create a reading. With the author relegated, the novice reader's anxiety dissipates. Empowering the novice reader to create texts encourages him or her to no longer isolate texts; rather, as suggested above, stories spawn other stories and propagate developing perceptions of literary traditions. In Hans Robert Jauss's discussion of literary history and its challenges, he explains literature's prosperity as existing in a triangular relationship connecting author, text, and the public, which demonstrates a dynamic tendency to shape and reshape its image. He continues by saying "it is only through the process of its mediation that the work enters into the changing horizon-of-experience of a continuity in which the perceptual inversion occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production that surpasses them" (19). For Jauss, the reader must act upon a text for its history to flourish. In the course of doing so, and through the course of daily life, the reader adds to their own experiences that will shape his analysis. Jauss's more prevalent construct, the horizon of expectation, indicates growth through present perception as it suggests an absolute recovery of the text's intent – based on a variety of circumstances beyond the author or text – could never occur. Therefore, the novice reader should not feel confined to chasing authorial intent.

Efforts applied to reading will grow the reader without offering stagnant or diminishing returns on his efforts as he progresses from a text-to-self strategy to a text-to-text. To exemplify how "openness" can exist in a work through the interpretation of poetic language, Eco dovetails John Dewey to suggest how the "significance of a work comes from our own individual experience when we interpret the work [where] meaning and values are extracted from prior experiences and founded in such a way that they fuse with the qualities directly presented in the work of art" (27). A ubiquitous opening of texts marks the reading experience eclectic or analogous to any other. Experience, as a scaffold, reflects the developing traditions of interpretation, and it is through these traditions that classic texts receive a jolt of new life: "Only as the horizon changes and expands with each historical materialization [sic], do responses to the work legitimize particular possibilities of understanding, imitation, transformation, and *continuation*" (Jauss 64, added emphasis). Jauss places emphasis in the notion of building a horizon, and it is most often professional reader who does so. Still, this is the point where the subjugation of the author's authority substantially serves the novice reader: textual expectations will be supplemented by external sources – the instructor or the internet – but no external sources can foster the novice reader unless he feels uninhibited. Jauss

borrowed from Wolfgang Iser's methodology as featured in *The Act of Reading*, examined in detail in the next chapter, to relate how horizons change based on subsequent readings only to conclude that a response should speak "to expectations of the formal kind, such as the literary tradition prescribed before its appearance" (146). Advanced for a reader who transitions from relying on detective skills and text-to-reader connections, the novice can, nevertheless, be held accountable for speaking to the effect of expectations within a single mode or genre; magical realism again lends itself to the conversation as saturation creates a field of expectation that begins to border on trope: consider the almost required use of or reference to alchemy after *One Hundred Years*. Evaluating cross-textual or text-to-text relationships and their relations to literary prosperity poses the novice reader with an attainable goal.

A discovery of options prompts the decisive transition for the novice reader. Fish argues that an informed reader – based on himself – exemplifies the prime agent for producing meaning. Although he cannot deny that he shares the same left-to-right processing of the sentence string as the novice reader, it is the same general process necessary for "the developing response," which must undergo misfires to *do* a reading or to produce a reading that evaluates the role of changing contexts (49, original emphasis). It behooves the central analysis to demur the term 'misfire,' in the sense that even it means and contributes to subsequent meanings. Thus, the infamous but fair treatise Fish advances exists as the reader assembles and reassembles the multifaceted textual goads the critic – making the (con)text disappear with each consideration. Capricious magical realist worlds demand such reconsiderations of context in order to discover the often thin demarcations of the real and the fantastic, their amalgamation demonstrated in magical consequence. In other words, it is the necessity of having to evaluate language in a magical realist context that aids in the maturity of the novice reader – to the point where he can recall similar uses of magic and use it as a "hypothetical stand-in... to include that context so that should he some day [sic] be in an analogous situation, he would be able to call it to mind" (Fish 316). Regular attentive evaluation of context, making text-to-text and text-to-world(ly) connections where the author's intent no longer takes precedence, exemplifies the transition from novice reader to mature reader.

In conclusion, I have suggested that torpor ensues when meaning constitutes surreptitious information rather than aesthetic analysis. Students coached to pick apart texts in hopes of finding the author's hidden secrets have little need for personal analysis. While they can undeniably make empathetic connections based on their own experience, such noticing cannot ameliorate their skills if they mind the author. Obvious differences in personal experiences, which are placed within different temporal and spatial frames, may render their empathy simply as supplementary commentary. Self-induced apprehension inhibits the novice reader. Private detective mode permits the collecting of clues with the potential to divert a reading away from the finite answers either catalogued on popular webpages or given by classroom authorities. How a text arrives at such a meaning or why such a meaning matters constitutes someone else's imagination; nevertheless, results and meaning stand as the essential information for the novice – an objective answer or the intent of the author being the most valuable prize. When the pathway from clue to clue is a bullet ride, little regard can be given to the process by which clues come to light. Yet removing the text's author(ity) extends an imaginative

capability to the reader. It is an opportunity to highlight how understanding itself necessitates a conceptual methodology nonexistent without the reader's imaginative participation. This method can prosper in backgrounds where the supernatural and the mixing of contexts prompt the novice reader to consider and reconsider limitations on reality and the consequences of various readings. Magical realist novels and stories, with their proposed ties to a romantic tradition, retain a growing potential to relegate or completely negate those clues once sought after by the novice reader. Dialectic processes triggered by cues within books do not control a reader but rather present a potential opportunity to enrich his or her skillset. Jie Park's case study mentioned above exemplifies the abilities of youngsters who understood the opportunity of reader affect. I would like to clarify that magical realism is not an outright "correction" to the methods of the novice reader. Instead, it is a mode with the potential to remove the novice from stagnant reading strategies. Furthermore, I would argue that magical realism is well-suited to answer Park's concluding call to action and earn beneficial results: "Reader-response theorists have focused more on reader-text interactions than on reader-reader interactions.... researchers studying reader-reader interactions need to examine how certain factors—such as... degree of familiarity among readers; types of texts read and discussed" (208). As methods harkening back to the New Critics continue to be taught in primary, secondary, and university classrooms, a community of novice readers continues to grow. Again, as empirical research is pending, it would seem the best course of action is to further consider how magical realism helps motivate novice readers and what questions may encourage these self-imposed exiles to join a constructive interpretive community – one not overseen by those wordsmiths residing atop their respective bibliographies.

Chapter Two

The Mechanics of Magic in *Like Water for Chocolate*

With conventional regard for the excellence of magical realist literature coming from outside of the United States, indirect implications understood by readers familiar with cultural context will fail to register for those who can only read in translation, from outside the text's cultural backdrop.¹² John Searle's literature on indirect speech acts attests to the importance of understanding unspoken implications, where the unsaid signifies contextual understanding based on internalized factors such as culture. Magical realism's popularity in United States underscores just how willing the monolingual, English reader is to enjoy a text where something may be missing. Dependent on a culturally constructed glimpse of reality, reading in translation comes at a certain disadvantage in comparison to magical realism's predecessor in fantasy. Works of utter fantasy develop around new worlds and lore springing from the author's imagination; explicit explanations clarify what only exists in places such as George R.R. Martin's continents of Westeros and Essos featured in his *A Song of Fire and Ice* series. Of course, this is an uncommon tactic for works of magical realism. However, cultural distortion carries heavy prominence vis-à-vis magical realist works: distortion reveals the arbitrariness of established cultural norms by convoluting what is real and what is fantasy. Discussing the performative structure of texts and formed discourse, Homi K. Bhabha sees the temporality of discourse as "significant [because] it open[s] up a narrative strategy for the emergence and negotiation of those agencies of the marginal, minority, subaltern, or diasporic" (260). Negating the author's ultimate authority and encouraging the novice reader to adopt aesthetic reading methods almost assures hasty conclusion will be made because the maturing novice reader lacks an understanding of (non)spoken premises associated with a work's cultural circumstance. To follow Bhabha's implication, readers who lack cultural authority should not be excluded from interpretive conversations. Rather, analyzing the moments that cause novice readers to hesitate and believe something to be magical demonstrates a constructive purpose where harnessed results can serve them as readers, especially of magical realist texts.

Attempting to understand the process of reading imaginatively suggests an exploration of intentionality.¹³ Imagery created through magical realist language sparks an awareness that would likely be understood or interpreted as abstract concepts, co-dependent on reader involvement. As this only constitutes a single aspect of the overall project, this particular exploration will be limited to Laura Esquivel's novel *Like Water for Chocolate*. Its focus on a universal, though culturally specific, love story thrives within a tell-all form modeled after a clear and concise cookbook – where nothing except

¹² Fixating magical realism within a given culture's history of subjugation sparks a similar approach in interpreting works. In turn, peoples not typically characterized as "Other" supposedly lack the vicarious experience to write within the mode. This is most apparent when critics carry "codes for recognition" – indicators attesting to the authenticity of marginalization – used to confirm a work's categorization. Essentially, classification cannot be based on indirect communication because, in a mode based on paradox, neither the real nor magical perceptions associated with a given work hold absolute authority. See Selmon, 411.

¹³ Intentionality is best described as the "power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs." For a further discussion see Jacob.

unsavory morsels go cold. Focusing interactions around a culturally distinct dinner table highlights a cross-cultural tradition with increasingly popular culinary exposés.¹⁴ *Like Water* typifies the magical realist mode through its gastronomic focus that asks the novice to heighten his senses to question empirical validity. If magical realism does not attempt to objectify its implications regarding its portrayal of reality, then it acknowledges its own illogical shortcomings demonstrated through the food's supernatural properties. This is most aptly exemplified in the erratic, though fluid, blending of the real and the fantastic in order to produce marvelous occurrences or magical events under various contextual conditions. Use of hyperbolic consequence after the food's consumption encourages the reader to deliberate on how and why magic works in Esquivel's novel – a process which underlines the helpful magical realist frame. Considering the essence of magic denotes an invaluable tool for prompting analytical readings.

As noted in the previous chapter, the analysis undertaken borrows from the theory Wolfgang Iser proposes in *The Act of Reading*. Intricate and often overbearing, Iser's compartmentalized model emphasizes a contingency not just on personal experience, but on the reader's ability to view the text as a living document, printed upon ordinary paper that waits to be challenged. The most fundamental construct – the repertoire – encompasses two crucial components: social norms and literary allusions each provide the reader with the source material that he will draw from in order to create a unique analysis (89). The inexperience often coinciding with youth understandably limits the connections the novice forms with the text; therefore, asking the novice to consider what besides his unique memories shapes a reading is often met with apprehensive resistance. Doubt can deter exploratory steps. As the intention of this work is to explore how magic unveils its interworking through the novice's potential interaction, it is crucial to consider how the novice reader with limited exposure to literary traditions must approach the text. Clearly, a limited repertoire may result in a simplistic analysis. However, it is the engaged novice reader's uninhibited curiosity that essentially differentiates his analysis from a professional reader's. Eugene Subbotsky finds that children under the age of ten exhibit a distinct tendency to believe in the effects of "real" magic; more pertinent in regards to the typical age group of the novice reader, a subsequent experiment reveals 12 out of 18 undergraduates from England, Asia, and the U.S. – who previously denied the possibility of magic – exemplified noticeable curiosity when researchers demonstrated what appeared to be "real" magic ("Curiosity and Exploratory Behavior" 497). In contrast, a group of undergraduates and graduates coming from the same ethnic backgrounds, but participants aged 18 to 33, showed no interest in continuing an experiment designed to spark a curiosity in real magic ("Curiosity and Exploratory Behavior" 497). Therefore, the most common group of text-scouring novice readers – high students and college freshmen – fit the age bracket when a belief in magic only begins to dissolve and the search for perceived objectivity begins. A mechanism for procuring truth from a text often obliterates curiosity where the text becomes a puzzle with a single solution. Still, for some of those participating in Subbotsky's second trial, curiosity remained – which demonstrates a tendency to accept the unempirical.

¹⁴ See Martín-Rodríguez "The Raw and the Cooked," 37

Esquivel's accord with indefinite magic helps to annihilate the novice's previously determined search for an objective answer to the text. Without a rigid source that imbues Tita's food, an investigation without participation will not uncover any type of answer. Rather, the novice can engage in a dialogue with the text where he will draw upon his own moments and conception of magic to evaluate the cause and effect of the ineffable – consequently allowing him to synthesize how and why magic intervenes in empirical reality. Reading ceases to be a search for clues. Instead, textual cues signal that it is permissible to believe in magic's suggestions.

Food presents an ideal medium for an exploration regarding its ability to prompt (ir)rational thought. Readers expecting to open the cookbook-like novel to find recipes for tacos and enchiladas will be disappointed. Some may find Tita's ingredients peculiar (i.e. ox tail or pheasant). Nevertheless, an influx of foods found in mainstream American culture, such as chorizo and cream fritters, highlights certain dishes that do not ostracize inexperienced palates. Though the text may not necessarily provoke food cravings, the illustrative kitchen exploits tempt a similar phenomenological exercise. In a 2005 study, M. Tiggeman and E. Kemps conclude that vivid "mental imagery" produces an enhanced craving for food where the most effective triggers were thoughts or images (310). Combining ingredients to produce a tantalizing dish evokes analogous thoughts that emphasize the relativity of taste. Thus, when foods both recognizable and unrecognizable incite magical repercussions, the novice has grown accustomed to reading the cookbook's instructions. Cues incite mental imagery where the dishes carry the potential to induce cravings that result in increasingly imagined visualization. The will to visualize the highlighted food and the experience of enjoying it lead Tiggeman and Kemps to conclude "triggers for the retrospective food craving experience were primarily thoughts or images as opposed to actual instances of the craved object...the content analyses of the craving experience yielded a number of imagery descriptors" (310-11). Though phenomenological description and experimentation on food craving does not necessary produce more vivid pictures of the magical effects of Tita's food, it does demonstrate a potential tendency of the reader to imaginatively construct sources most often associated with magic. Disrupted visual stimuli provoke evaluation, likely leading to the conclusion that magic does not present an inherent threat to reality; instead, the fantastic implications are byproducts of a missed ingredient or an excluded procedure. The novice's constructed imagery must first consider how outside stimuli affect how he perceives the food and who is making it.

Cultural expectations first sparked by the novel's original cover in the U.S. establish a frame, albeit temporary, that builds upon a stereotypical scene of an olive-skinned woman making tortillas.¹⁵ A rudimentary kitchen table atop a tile floor only supports a plate of three onions, an empty ceramic container, and a single red chili pepper, while the woman who will undoubtedly fit Tita's description flattens what

¹⁵ Though it is uncertain what edition a reader may have, the widely circulated original edition has set a standard for the faceless, fragmented, or objectified female bodies gracing later covers. Female imagery and gender roles continue to fuel much of the novel's criticism. For a discussion on the physical power of Tita's body see Escaja, 15.

appears to be an atypical flour tortilla.¹⁶ A second, apron-clad woman sits at the table clutching a ceramic bucket. The latter's expressionless look deems her physically disengaged. She appears apprehensive, waiting to be sent for water. The scene almost begs the novice to judge the book by its cover. Fill in stereotypes where applicable. The work's subtitle, "A Novel in Monthly Installments with Recipes, Romances and Home Remedies," falls into a mold not easily altered: it belongs next to a cookbook or it could be substituted for a *telenovela*. The novice may feel confident in his assumption, but he would be hard-pressed not to notice a glaring oddity. Tita's elegant white dress and a rose neatly tucked behind her hoop-accentuated ears constitute curious kitchen attire. Blinded by the kitchen that signals a familiar context, the novice may not consider the length of Tita's dress. The "boiling over" significance of the novel's title may also escape the reader who simply relies on a familiar kitchen schema. Any notion of paradox is lost to a greater transculturally constructed assumption that women – specifically Mexican women – solely manage the kitchen. Victoria Martínez follows a familiar argument centered on Tita's paradoxical nature as both a trope and uncharacteristic liberator that annihilates traditional stereotypes. She argues that while Tita's iconoclastic nature bucks a domestic label; the neoliberal politics brought into perspective by the truncated timeframe shifting from Mexico in the midst of revolution and later to a global market following NAFTA exemplifies that no revolution truly exists within the text – putting forth an accusation against the "narrative process that deconstructs [a] false feminist message" (Martínez 28). Martínez sees a step in the right direction towards breaking stereotypes; however, in a roundabout way, the image on the cover stands. Like anyone in search of genuine cultural cuisine, simple beans and tortillas with a handful of peppers and onion will not suffice. Still, for the novice, the familiar nurtures a false sense of security. He foresees the cooking and romance that lies ahead. The repertoire stands unwavering – until magic encourages the methods of an already rebellious cook.

Esquivel's text, rooted in a prohibited love, thrives through a cookbook motif that offers twelve magically enhanced recipes, which Tita uses to lift a familial restriction on her affection for Pedro. Nourishment and maturity offset the familiar teen-angst atmosphere, a world built strictly around unsubstantiated young love. Rather, the work accentuates withheld romance by highlighting the supernatural force within Tita's ethnic cuisine. The novice's contextual differences aside, proposed violations of empirical reality effectually alter the perceived norms of a given environment. Unfamiliar worlds prompt phenomenological assertions that lack dutiful representations, but the concrete, universal notion of dining or eating may in fact satisfy the text's abstract suggestions. While some of the foreign ingredients can complicate the above suggestion made by Tiggeman and Kemps in regards to visualization and craving, appeal to tastes for dishes of a similar nature suggests that – as readers fill the blanks of the text through their most perceptible experiences – they substitute a familiar wedding cake for the Chabela

¹⁶ The De la Garza family's social standing and food preferences do suggest that they may in fact have a taste for wheat, an adopted taste by many higher class families after being introduced by the Spanish. Still, as Tita learns from the indigenous cook Nacha, it would seem more likely that the young woman would work more frequently with *maize*. For a thorough discussion of culinary norms in nineteenth-century Mexico see Pilcher, 45.

wedding cake.¹⁷ Most readers can imagine the repercussions associated with Tita's magically enhanced food if considering them to be hyperbolic description associated with certain types of familiar eating experiences. However, anxious curiosity follows descriptions of turkey mole that induces euphoria. How is this food enhanced with magic? Why does magic push the story forward? In arriving at conclusions that frame the magical realist work, new perceptions meld into a pedagogical playground where bits of understood truth coexist with the strictly imaginative to establish signifiers. Imagined empirical sensibilities intensify and conduct culinary alchemy where magical consequence will guide both the novice through Tita's menu-like exposé, which begins with the birth of the protagonist.

Effortlessly flowing from her mother's womb in the midst of meal preparation, Tita sets a defining tone and sensibility for her place in the kitchen that ushers the reader into a state of ambiguity. Newborn going from the womb to the kitchen table on a "great tide of tears" – the text proffers a birthing description devoid of labor pains, after birth, and pediatric nurturing (Esquivel 6). Tita becomes a physical entity that signifies a now disrupted awareness, an awareness refashioned and accustomed to the possibility of people defying the laws of empirical reality. Furthermore, the awareness of magic as an infiltrating concept constitutes a subsequent awareness of the idea that unexpected alterations to reality work mysteriously within the empirical world. In other words, Tita's birth and later culinary skills signify the potential for magic, but her reliance upon her senses to craft her tasty delights as a teen and adult demonstrates that she lives in the same world as her friends and family. Thus, an awareness of magic must remain with the maturing reader even when the person most often associated with the fantastic remains reliant on an environment closer related to conventional realism. Explored in chapter three, an explicit juxtaposition between the allegedly opposing forces of the fantastic and real within the textual world acquaints the reader with magical realism's potential; however, such explicit juxtaposition does not persist in Esquivel's text. Magic intertwines with the empirically real world where juxtaposition is no longer necessary because the reader comes to understand the tolerated, unimpressed reactions expressed by the characters in an environment that refuses to strictly align itself with the (un)empirical. Ambivalent character reactions to magic, coupled with a narrator who simply adds supplemental narration to her Great-Aunt Tita's cookbook, leaves the reader as the primary agent for conceptualizing how to perceive palpable details as the text tries to convince him that imagining empirical transgression provides the best means for evaluating the limitations of reality. The encompassing story contextualizes the clues the novice formerly sought in order to complete a reading. Sets of instructions and narrative suggestions empower the reader to interact rather than simply react. Ingredients listed in the beginning of each chapter offer the most explicit cues. Implying engagement, the basic cooking instructions are embedded within Tita's story to accent the novice's role in reconstructing the meals that define her life. A lack of complete, explicit instructions

¹⁷ While palate growth is in no way guaranteed without subsequent action in the kitchen, the novel's use of the cookbook format does invite readers to cook the exact recipes – creating a sense of community with the reader. For a further discussion of cooking and identity formation in Latino/a texts see Martín-Rodríguez "The Raw and the Cooked," 48.

requires experimentation – a filling of the recipe’s blank spaces where only trial and error will lead to improved results.

An evaluation of the work’s contextual frame allows initial and subsequent actions to provide information necessary to narrow the situational use of magic; such an evaluation only ensues after supplementing the text with personal conclusions used to further the story. To deny the validity of magical influence in the text based on its violation of empirical reality not only stymies any progress towards considering its usefulness, but it also denies the validity of fictional utterances. In discussing fictional language, Iser claims that the language used in literature does not inherently differ from language used to describe reality: “The fictional utterance seems to be made without reference to any real situation, whereas the speech act presupposes a situation whose precise definition is essential to the success of the act. This lack of context does not, of course, mean that the fictional utterance must therefore fail” (63). The descriptive, textual utterance only partially denotes the implication of the text. The reader’s response or lack thereof to illocutionary utterances exemplifies the polyphonic discourse of the textual cooperative, the magical realist communication network where believed implications retain more value than explicit explanations. Fictitious utterance exemplify their own (non)existence when readers consider the multiple layers represented – coinciding with Iser’s generic disclaimer about language affect: “[T]he very term *fiction* implies that the words on the printed page are not meant to denote any given reality in the empirical world, but are to represent something which is not given. For this reason ‘fiction’ and ‘reality’ have always been classified as opposites” (53, original emphasis). Thus, realistic fiction can never represent reality. It is an acquainted simulacrum touting false mimetic reflection. Reality lends itself to narrative, but narratives do not make reality. Neither do they prove reality.

In considering the lack of context offered before Tita’s birth, it is the ineffable, physical process that forms the foundation upon which life for the De la Garza family proceeds thereafter. Describing the birth as a declarative act, the narrator – only identified as Tita’s great niece – attempts to aid the novice in constructing the situational parameters of the birth, and consequently, the possibilities of the textual world. Yet, the narrator’s attempt to bridge both the temporal and cultural gap between the De la Garzas of the early twentieth-century Mexico and the Brown family (Tita’s great-niece’s family) of the late twentieth-century United States can only offer an illocutionary suggestion as to how “Tita made her entrance into this world” (Esquivel 5). In other words, the narrator only had a similar indefinite reading. Situational construction occurs through the lack of details offered by the otherwise, seemingly complete, instructions. The novice has the ingredients and the instructions scattered within the narrative. As the cookbook’s formal cues convince the novice that Tita’s birth happens in recognizable worlds, curiosity becomes the catalyst for implementing the imagined details that allow Tita to flow so effortlessly from Mama Elena. For the time being, the novice can conclude that the “magic” of childbirth has manifested itself in both the baby girl’s prenatal cries and the effortless birthing ordeal undergone by her mother. Intertwining the instructions and repertoire with the form and the content provides the novice his own set of “instructions for the production of the signified” (Iser 63). A new understanding of birth is formed when what seems more like an act of magic occurs in a world supposedly shared by both

the reader and narrator. In understanding the birth as a manifested occurrence more commonly associated with a figure of speech, the novice exemplifies an attempt to “reduce the indeterminacies...to build a *situational* frame to encompass himself and the text” (Iser 66, original emphasis). However, the shapeless form of magic prompts reconsideration.

Competing textual cues comprised of the characters, plot, narrator, and reader scaffold a reading between separate realms. Referred to by Iser as the basic apparatuses of the strategies, the aforementioned components represent the key constituents used in text-reader communication. Demarcated realms fashion competing possibilities – accentuated and juxtaposed with newly introduced suggestions. Fluid magic injects a degree of stress in bordering perspectives, but not before establishing assessable paradigms because the surreptitious magic dwells in the textual background. To clarify, textual communication serves as the cue for the novice to re-consider the discursive performance of the characters and the plot progression harnesses the ability to blatantly juxtapose the text. The novice must ask why magic exists in order to disrupt reality, but more importantly, why magic inconsistently infiltrates the text. For example, Tita’s tear-soaked birth drastically differs from strenuous circumstances surrounding Rosaura’s labor experience. Where Tita washed upon the kitchen counter, the hitherto unmentioned birth canal now resembles a “dark tunnel [that] transform[s] into a red river, an erupting volcano” (Esquivel 72). Without a magical flood of tears gently washing the child into the world, the physiological human body mandates that Rosaura’s “flesh open to make way life” (Esquivel 72). Contrasting takes on characters and situations push one another to the background of the text, where, at times, the textual foreground flips the script on the undefined forces that drive the novel. The components of the strategies build the circumstances that modify the strategies’ constituent that modify the theme – a perspective offered on the unstable notion of birth in this instance.

As no reader possesses the capability to engage continually with any one theme, the novice must factor the newly built perspective and the components to which it relates into the previous instances. A new perspective on birth that seems to oppose the previous perspective would likely solidify the notion that indescribable magic – able to shift how it manifests itself – is attached to Tita. Iser deems this abstract, all-encompassing perspective “the horizon” (97). Solutions and perspectives on the text slip back and forth between the foreground and background in order to encourage the novice to question magic, rather than passively accepting its use. Curiosity may drive the novice to continue reading; such curiosity is fueled by a desire to understand magic, which entails evaluating how and why it exists. Therefore, a solution demands reader synthesis – leading Iser to suggest that “[t]he gap cannot be bridged just by a ‘willing suspension of disbelief,’ because...the reader’s task is not simply to accept, but to assemble for himself that which is to be accepted” (97). Discussed in further detail below, the novice actively constructs disbelief while reading. The result allows for the social norms outside of the text to be taken to task: as the awareness of magic flourishes, the novice evaluates how (dis)similar his own environment is, mentally illustrating how magic sparks evaluation. Esquivel’s text calls forth such a contrast immediately following Tita’s magical birth.

Mother and child healthy, the text mentions a waned uproar following the afternoon birth. The “unusual” birth establishes the bond between the child and the

kitchen (Esquivel 6). Her tears are left to crystalize into salt, where they are subsequently gathered for the pantry by live-in-chef Nacha. Not incidentally, a conclusion must be made as to the cause for the uproar surrounding the child's birth (Esquivel 6). This is the point of synthesis. Forced to view the novel in film-like cells that comprise a single aesthetic object, the reader executes on what Iser describes as the "wandering viewpoint," a construct representing the "dialectic of pretension and retention" between the text and reader (112). What formerly appears odd will undergo conditioning and reconditioning throughout the narrative's course. Recalling the excitement associated with the birth of a new family member, the novice could easily arrive at the conclusion that new life causes the uproar in question. In such a scenario, Nacha sees no harm in packaging the dried tears and deeming the salt fit for food preparation because the birth and the dried tears are common, perhaps similar to the tacit births of Mama Elena's other daughters. It may seem precarious that the unusual birth remnants would be saved and consumed without question if the birth is in fact unusual. Newly established context attempts to placate uneasiness. It is no issue for the unadulterated tears to be packaged and subsequently consumed because the text implies that there is a sense of normalcy to Mama Elena's birth, although Rosaura's intense labor scene will later contradict such a conclusion. Nevertheless, if the reader perceives the birth according to the narrative suggestion then the uproar takes on further discursive meaning.

In contrast with the text's formal outline as a cookbook, the stentorian cries Tita emits *in utero* and her subsequently ambiguous birth instill an awareness of disruptive magic into a typically perceived form used for the most obvious purpose of sharing recipes. Frame of reference shifts sporadically. Unspecified limitation on the boundaries of the real and the fantastic highlight worldly suggestions that constitute a developing mental landscape where shifting awareness for empirical signals encourages reader participation because empirical stimuli can falter at a moment's notice. Therefore, when fantastic occurrences disorient the novice, the instructions that interrupt the narrative flow push the pendulum back in the other direction. This is the case when taking into consideration the ambiguous uses of food.

Sustenance connects the novice to Tita's cookbook. Baking with a loved one or combining leftovers, the novice understands what it means to join ingredients or ready-to-eat goods in order to produce a more intricate dish. The text's time frame and setting will likely prompt curiosities: the method for preserving eggs in "a cask filled with sheep fodder" makes little sense to the city dweller with a carton in the refrigerator or a supermarket down the street (Esquivel 26). Nevertheless, Tita's tendency to play with her food as a child perceivably calls forth readers' memories. Crafting unreal sausage animals featuring "the neck of a swan, the legs of a dog, the tail of a horse," the young girl exemplifies her own imaginative and creative skills in the name of contributing to the Christmas rolls recipe (Esquivel 8). Years mature Tita. Onset adolescence signifies that she is unlikely to employ magical thinking in her characterization of the happenings in the kitchen. She comes to resemble the reader who crafts meals, but she finds the fantastic effects of those dishes acceptably inexplicable. They allow her to realize emotions that she could not express otherwise – just as imagining affords readers a vehicle to conceptualize or (re)create the ordeal being narrated.

The February recipe for Chabela wedding cake offers a short paragraph describing how to emulate Tita in her most fundamental form, arriving at a conclusion about how her food adopts magical characteristics requires more than opening to a single page. Though the metrically measured ingredients pose an issue, the explicit instructions make baking a similar cake a possibility. Doubleday Publishers, however, cannot attest to the practicality of the work as a cookbook: “The recipes in this book are based on traditional Mexican recipes and have not been tested by the publishers” (Esquivel iv). Nevertheless, the guidelines for preparation only provide the fundamental steps for cake building. Accompanying Tita through her melodramatic tears for the morally questionable Pedro – who marries Rosaura to share a home with his true love posing as a mistress – the novice reads Tita’s cookbook buried implications with the help of the cues that illuminate the instructions for her magical meals.

Equating narrative with cooking secrets, the novice forms a gestalt, an idea or shape connecting the text with the repertoire, rooted in an ironic twist that suggests he can replicate Tita’s magic by reading her story (Iser 129). Tears adulterating the cake’s frosting once again appear to be the source of magic: the understood salty flow streaming from the youth’s eyes acts as magic’s intrinsic referent. After the cake provokes physical illness, it would appear that magic only resides within the protagonist. Preternatural manifestations in March’s recipe negate the novice’s gestalt when blood seemingly infuses the food – signifying that various constituents may in fact be responsible. Therefore, curiosity and the search for resolve prompt the most basic questions of why is magic used in a particular episode or how resolutions are to be made when episodes appear to be isolated incidents, especially those later instances not involving cooked meals. Negated theories the novice establishes between the difference in his own cooking experience and that of Tita’s encourages the establishment of a connection between processes. The reader may subsequently maintain awareness of personal occurrences, yet resist the urge to make a decision regarding an episode when an occurrence defies clear-cut implications. Eugene Subbotsky associates apprehensive curiosity with people who exhibit intrigue for the magic under low-risk behaviors. He notes that when magic poses a threat, approximately fifty percent of undergraduates and graduates from developed nations feared repercussions, allowing him to conclude:

Exploring phenomena that people think they do not believe in does not overtly challenge their dominant beliefs in science, but instead allows them to play with ‘forbidden reality.’ If magical beliefs are present, consciously or subconsciously, then, all other conditions being equal, a novel and unusual event will elicit stronger curiosity and exploratory behavior if its suggested explanation involves an element of magic (the magical over counterintuitive physical effect). (“The Ghost in the Machine” 135)

Though Subbotsky arrives at conclusions through experimentation, the same desire to understand a culturally constructed unattainable abstraction drives the novice to persevere. Uninhibited, magical infringement upon a world closely resembling the one outside the text warrants exploration. As no single clue will suffice the former detective-

like readers, the engaged novice begins to seek analogous representations that empower him to formulate satisfactory conclusions.

Stringent confines paradoxically embolden the novice and Tita through even the earliest episodes. Drawing upon the repertoire, the novice undoubtedly considers the plight of the protagonist and the cause of her troubles. Mama Elena, the head of the household, stands as the resolute parent who upholds a rigid family tradition that prohibits the youngest daughter's romantic satisfaction; the matriarch makes matters clear about the sanctity of tradition whether or not it comes at the cost of her Tita's happiness: "You don't have an opinion, and that's all I want to hear about it. For generations, not a single person in my family has ever questioned this tradition, and no daughter of mine is going to be the one to start" (Esquivel 11). Choosing to ignore the protest that provokes her firm response, Mama Elena stymies any possibilities perpetuated by unfamiliar, supernatural forces. Interestingly, the text notes that Tita – influenced by the Christmas rolls her mother ingests while pregnant – exhibits a hyper-sensitivity to the taste of sardines and sausages "that had called to her and made her decide to trade the peace of ethereal existence in Mama Elena's belly for life as her daughter" (Esquivel 9). The conscious decision of the unborn child imposes a considerable suggestion that Mama Elena neither retains nor tolerates possibilities other than the colorless, overly harsh sentiments she inflicts upon her children. The matriarch slides to the textual background. Thus, one function of magic serves to bypass the stereotypical blocking agent. It may serve the novice as wishful thoughts necessary to combat life's hardships; moreover, it fuels suggestions for more optimistic circumstances. In a 2007 study, Subbotsky arrives at two pertinent conclusions regarding magical and real suggestion: despite an *a priori* disbelief in magical properties, both children and adults revealed that "with regard to affecting other person's imagined objects, ordinary suggestion is as effective as magical suggestion [and] both types of suggestive causation rely on the same psychological mechanism – participation" ("Suggestibility and Magical Thinking" 570). The soothing powers of suggestion and optimism rely upon irrational channels. Literary cues affect the reader on a subconscious level, which register irrational results; Tita and the novice rely on such avenues when the unimaginative world forces them to achieve their goals by any means necessary.

Growing accustomed to the unlimited possibilities the text offers appears daunting to the novice when it entails that the world predicated on tangibility offers abstract solutions to concrete problems. Subbotsky's claim mentioned just above coincides with Iser's own take on literature and its shape established by experience. To clarify, textual context burgeons at the cost of the reader's fluctuating perspective. In regards to magical repercussions as a means for prosperity, there is no active consideration for how this process would work. Iser makes a claim regarding the reader's involvement with the text as a condition of experience where he states that "in the course of the reading, these [familiar] experiences will also change, for the acquisition of experience is not a matter of adding on—it is a restructuring of what we already possess" (132). Correspondence with the text mandates that the novice, or any reader for that matter, consider how it persuasively relates to him or her. Personal narrative becomes a stipulating factor in how apt a reader feels towards textual participating. In the case of *Like Water*, the novice does not have to be a believer in magic, but he will consider how his most apparent blocking

figure, the alleged authority of the text, can be overcome through the existent, fantastic suggestions. The novice's repertoire offers preliminary source material while the strategies and wandering viewpoint filter the most becoming cues that prompt the imagination to visualize magic's mechanism.

Imagining as passive synthesis represents the most rudimentary visions before a well-rounded conclusion is later used to understand abstract concepts implicitly dwelling within the text. While the image of Tita pounding tortillas on the cover offers an artist's rendition, her description will offer a more concise and imaginatively pleasing image of the young woman within the text's context, especially as the narrator's unspoken details regarding the temporal ellipses help the novice construct various images of the aging character. Imagery based on an understanding of the aging process perpetuates the construction of a melding character that adheres to the reader's desires, thus the formerly shapeless version of Tita sobbing into cake frosting is unique to the novice because, while "imagining and producing" a textually induced construct, "we are actually in its presence and it is in ours" (Iser 139). Instantiation of character development spawning from an expanding repertoire exemplifies a symbiotic connection with the text by breeding new, evolving planes of individually constructed narrative existence.

Within a magical paradigm, the novice exemplifies a vigilant awareness for his constructs vis-à-vis physical unlikelihood. The reader's conception of magic, in its rudimentary form, and the reason behind its use triggers outward evaluation – complicated by an understanding that the established imagery can crumble without notice. Specifically, reading provokes a critical analysis of the world outside of the text. Iser explains that constructed images based on textual cues drive the appraisal process: "The fact that we have been temporarily isolated from our real world does not mean that we now must return to it with new directives. What it does mean is that, for a brief period at least, the real world appears observable" (140). As mentioned above, it is not necessary to believe in the unempirical, but neither is it necessary to believe the world beyond the page is static. Therefore, the novice exists between two worlds: one where he shapes the text through the magic that elicits a tangential acceptance from the characters, and the other where his reality emphasizes that belief in magic is permissible under low risk circumstances. Thus, his reading exists in a hybrid space that he elucidates.¹⁸ The text's blurred lines offer perspectives that he cannot fully understand as an outsider to its cultural scheme. Therefore, he can only build around what he knows and what the texts offers.

In these imagined spaces, the reader can gain new perspective on former notions surrounding culture. Her food looking nothing like Taco Bell's, the rebellious Tita unravels perceivable stereotypes found on the cover: a rigorous reading effort on the novice's part allows for a more well-rounded perception of Mexican cuisine. Self-regulated images will affect how the reader sees the outside world. If, as Iser indicates, "[t]he literary image represents an extension of our existing knowledge, whereas the image of an existing object only utilizes given knowledge to create the presence of what

¹⁸ For a further discussion on magical realism's denial of mimesis and subsequent cultivation of a transworld environment likened to Gloria Anzaldúa's "borderlands" theory, see Manzanás 56.

is absent,” (141) then magic perpetuates an uninhibited reading because it promises resolve without subsequent censure. Action to solve problems consistently, such as the refining of stereotypes, implies advanced understanding where the novice is still in the process of forming ideas. As opposed to conditions of empirical reality outside the text, magically infused food underlines a need to dismiss a circuitous sense of security. What has been provided by his cultural context falls under scrutiny. Thus, the imagination receives further encouragement to construct the imagery that will advance the act of reading and the reader.

Cognitive image building and the imaginative processing discourse complement the theory adopted from Iser. Mental pictures spawn from textual cues that offer implicit and explicit instructions regarding the usefulness of various perceptual constructs. A difference in time, space, and place between the reader and text necessitates an abstract, therefore adumbrated, canvas within the mind be formed. Hans Robert Jauss’s horizon of expectation speaks to the inability for a single historical paradigm to encapsulate a work – evolution in literary traditions and readers’ expectations being inevitable. The Contextual frame offered by the narrator also fails to preserve the intentions or denotative happenings of the De la Garza family living along the border amidst the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution. The narrator’s reading of Tita’s cookbook and the recount offers encouragement to ensure that the memories “will go on living as long as there is someone who cooks her recipes” (Esquivel 246). Thus, as the recipes change hands, they will undergo modifications – just as Tita had to modify Nacha’s recipes to form her own. When time and resources require change, it is senseless to envision the events as they were. Both the explicit preparation procedures and the secretive guidelines for the use of magic encourage the novice to see what is not present. Nigel J.T. Thomas expands on a developing perceptual activity theory attesting to the ability to imagine unspecified stimuli by “the continual updating and refining of procedures (or ‘schemata’) that specify how to direct our attention most effectively in particular situations” (218). He suggests that the imagination generates imagery through a process of “seeing as,” where the perceptual process fueling the theory’s means for generating imagery involves the same processes “that enable us, in perception, to *see things as* whatever they are, or might be taken to be...by discovering (and perhaps selectively attending to) defining features” (Thomas 233, original emphasis). Processing details about what he or she does know, the novice supplements those details he does not or cannot know. Unable to dissect magic and unaware of cultural significance, temporary constructs must form in order to traverse the text. Consequently, “seeing as” signifies room for correction, but offers a flexible concept on which to grow. “Seeing as” arms the reader with turpentine – allowing entire images with which he fills Iser’s blanks to be recreated without, according to Thomas, “assimilating imagery to discursive thought” (237).

While the conceptual system built in *The Act of Reading* explicitly expresses that the strategies and the wandering viewpoint exemplify the continual becoming of the reading, the temporarily solidified gestalts proceed to affect subsequent formations. In the presence of an abstract concept that works without process or identifiable mechanism – in this case magic – there is a need to erase unworthy considerations completely. Herbal remedies, the vengeful defiance of Mama Elena’s ghost, and various other incidents also produce unempirical consequence, effectively diffusing the possibly origins of magic to

other sources. Like the Rearden Metal of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, magic is comprised of entities independent of past discoveries and hoard the secrets of their interworking while severing ties to those processes that may otherwise enlighten the novice. Therefore, specific claims regarding magical discourse will often have to be reformulated entirely, not simply modified when the text offers additional details. The novice can understand the results magic has offered, but must continually form separate hypotheses regarding how it comes to fruition. Is it tied to the composition of Tita's body? Has Nacha's love for her seemingly adopted daughter imbued Tita? Does it come from a genuine love for Pedro? As the apprehension to distinguish how magic functions stems with a growing concern for establishing discourse, a shapeless discourse at that, it prevents expansion on postulating how magic can only be appeased through the same shifting acumen that it exhibits; this shapeless paradox is perpetuated by textual equivocation of "magical" situations, which manifest through linguistic constructs.

It is crucial to clarify any corollary notions associated with semiotic inferences. If following the models of Iser, and to an implied extent Stanley Fish's take on the benefits of *doing* a reading, a compromise must be made between the dissimilar understandings of language in order to understand why certain communication falters between the text and the reader. Tita's birth is followed by a narrative ellipsis explaining the girl's "sixth sense" for the kitchen and her education primarily coming from life on the ranch. The next magical incident spawns from a seemingly innocent, empirically credible sprinkling of water droplets on a sizzling griddle – causing the droplets to dance (Esquivel 7). Context and classification present a critical issue. How does the novice who has witnessed water drops evaporating on a hot surface interpret this scene based on the potential for the water drops to execute sophisticated movements made possible by the provisionally clarified birth? The narrator's choice in language does not signify the droplets are doing a specific dance – thankfully avoiding any flavorless allusions. As the witnesses to the phenomenon are children, the "dazzling display" produces a cue that magic may not be at work in this particular instance (Esquivel 8). Offsetting the second reference to the dance with quotation marks indicates a childlike discovery and characterization of water evaporation. Conversely, Rosaura fears the kitchen because it harbors an inherent danger, deeming her just as inexperienced as her younger sisters; thus, she exhibits a decisive contrast to Tita's culinary curiosity and an explicit fear of the dancing water. Where the narrator indecisively characterizes the opening birthing scene, no cue exists to encourage the reader to create a fantastic-realistic binary where one view is favored over the other. Worldly differences flow into one another through linguistic connotations. The proposed problem created by contrasting Iser and Fish heightens with a novice's inability to decide upon the linguistic context. If fiction is not meant to represent reality, according to Iser's assertion above, the novice is presented with a conflict as to how they should understand magic. Is it literary language with no referent within the empirical world? Is it simply to be excused – preserving a willing suspension of disbelief for the sake of reading fiction because magic does not exist? Or, is all language equally based on its context, as Fish suggests?

For the novice reader, the flowing language found in a literary work may exist to fashion themes, to reiterate motifs, and to determine symbols. He feels somewhat confident in his internalization of literature as a universal recipe, but he does not feel

confident in his ability to recognize how those elements are employed in a text. Realistic fiction does not necessarily negate the literary perception. It only presents the novice with assessable constructs. For instance, Iser cites the blocking figure, Mr. Allworthy, of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and the character's notable and ironic hypocrisy (65). The novice may not have the vocabulary to deem Mama Elena a "blocking character" as Iser does with Mr. Allworthy; he can only make an assertion that the language used in the text reflects the language used in his everyday life. Yet, a stark difference exists between the language's intended meaning and the perlocutionary effect: the language used does not necessarily dictate that it must be understood with its (un)known intention. Therefore, Iser's intent for fictional language remains functional regarding his assertion that it "provides instructions for the building of a situation and so for the production of an imaginary object" (64). To clarify, language ensconced in a fictional background causes the novice to interpret it as if it were language that they would encounter outside of the text. Iser concurs that literary language represents ordinary speech, yet because it lacks "any of the empirical references," literary language becomes increasingly dense (64). Tita forcefully alters her March recipe when quail must be substituted for pheasant based on the ranch's available resources – signifying the instability of recipe instructions and the futility of solidified references which lack an available referent. The ill-equipped novice feeling obligated to interpret the language in its most familiar context must still use the text as instructions, only to find himself lost – especially when the text offers paradoxical parameters for constructing context. Fish makes a similar case in terms of context clarification, saying "it is nearly impossible to think of a sentence independently of a context, and when we are asked to consider a sentence for which no context has been specified, we will automatically hear it in the context in which it has been most often observed" (310). Fish denies a difference between literary language and ordinary language, asserting that context determines how language is to be interpreted. As language and consequently literature is based on context, the reader must determine in which way he or she is to understand episodes predicated on the fantastic. A decision becomes critical if conceptualizing episodes assist in the advancement of the novice reader's skillset where "[i]nterpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing" (Fish 327). The reader must determine the context in which language is used, asking himself if he should imagine the empirically impossible or consider the use of a figure of speech. Though potentially difficult to determine in a magical realist text, contextual clarification through implied linguistic connotation signals the potential for an episode's imagining.

A further exploration of literary terminology, specifically metaphor, helps exemplify the ambiguity that potentially drives a reading. To return to the example of the water drops and the red-hot skillet, the developing context encourages the novice to read the dance as either a metaphor where water is personified or something truly fantastic. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors inherently allow for analogous understanding: "*The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*" (5, original emphasis). Particularly, the drop evaporates in a fashion that resembles the gracefully uninhibited movements of an unconstrained dancer. The conceptual image of two in-motion objects results in a noticed

similarity. Lakoff and Johnson claim that ontological metaphors¹⁹ exhibiting personification have “an explanatory power of the only sort that makes sense to most people” (34). Equating the movement of the water with human dance offers a cue to the novice: the metaphor, though hyperbolic, comes as the more likely of the two options suggested above. For the reader, the episode becomes a question of relying on the implied wonders surrounding Tita or the children’s encounter with a first-time discovery made possible through Gertrudis’s and Rosaura’s efforts to achieve the effects Tita earns, neither successfully doing so. Penelope G. Vinden characterizes such uninformed portrayals as “magical thinking,” where children are surprised by violations to their “fledging beliefs about the laws of nature” making it necessary that they “explain evidence that contradicts their beliefs in terms of magic” (76). In this particular case, the girls’ age and a lack of exaggerated descriptive detail surrounding the dance permit the novice to make a satisfactory conclusion. He will likely remember similar childhood descriptions where the term magic effortlessly explains the inexplicable, for example the appearance of a rainbow after an afternoon drizzle. Yet, doubt remains. Tita’s birth remains in the textual background. For the unengaged novice reader, awareness of disguised magic and literary constructs force him to doubt whether his reading is the “correct” reading. In Iser’s relation of the repertoire to the strategies, he suggests that the “ultimate function of the strategies is to *defamiliarize* the familiar” (87, original emphasis). In opposition to the novice who still dons the role of the detective, the engaged reader’s personal context and the girls’ action make the choice between readings more simplistic. In what could be a supernatural occurrence – not just a metaphor – textual cues influence the engaged novice to conclude that magic has yet to present a convincing influence at the end of the first chapter.

Overlapping metaphors support the text’s related overarching love theme. Maggie Ann Bowers emphasizes that the magic in *Like Water* is “heavily reliant on extended metaphors” (46). Lakoff and Johnson provide several classic metaphors that align with various textual episodes: love is a physical force; love is a patient; love is madness; love is war, and, most appropriate, love is magic (49). Metaphors such as these encapsulate the linguistic sentiments related by the narrator and the imagery built by the novice, where “literal expressions... and imaginative expressions... can be instances in the same general metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson 53). In other words, the literal and the imaginative can each produce physical effect as well as mental imagery. The cooked quail in rose petal sauce featured in March is a prime example. Gertrudis’s body acting as a medium, the dish becomes an aphrodisiac, evoking the suppressed physical desire that Tita and Pedro have for one another: “Gertrudis was really stricken; her whole body was dripping sweat” (Esquivel 53). Nothing physically strikes Gertrudis; yet, eating sister’s dish does make her sweat profusely. When the fantastic manifests itself physically, its hyperbolic description emphasizes pertinent alterations to the characters within its proximity. Metaphors exist even in the most subtle phrases. Used most often as descriptors and not intended to have their analogous, intertextual presence alter the textual environment, the subtle constructs pose little threat after context is established. In

¹⁹ These are metaphors offering novel “ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances” (Lakoff and Johnson 25).

the ontological metaphor involving the dancing water, differentiating between the narrator's or the character's account becomes increasingly difficult. On the other hand, in the magical realist paradigm, what could be read as a metaphor cannot help but be considered a possible manifestation within the textual world; the flashback and equation of the water with any able-bodied person's dance number instills enough context for the novice to arrive at some conclusion as to the scene he constructs through his reading. The difference between magical realism and an ontological metaphor is that magical realism achieves what a metaphor only forms to provide as an analogous understanding. Magical realism makes happenings tangible whereas the metaphor does not manifest its extraordinary suggestions in the perceived physical world. Metaphors employing abstract concepts cannot make those concepts a reality: Pedro cannot physically eat a horse. Of course, in a magical realist work, such an event is a possibility. After all, Tita's food does cause Gertrudis's body to ignite.

Further apprehending how magic manifests itself within the text's reality differentiates it from the metaphorical. The possibility of a magic ingredient as a supplement to food and herbal remedies potentially explains the transmutation of the tangible into the supernatural. While the supernatural force behind the magic also manifests itself as harmful beam of energy that injures Pedro, it remains a gestalt with no interworking parts; thus, "the concept *making* is partly, but not totally, metaphorical. That is, *making* is an instance of a directly emergent concept, namely, *direct manipulation*" (Lakoff and Johnson 73, original emphasis). Manipulation without understood processes leaves magic simply as an abstract concept – known to possess a manipulative power – whereas metaphorical manipulation features mechanically understood transition processes. Formal features signal that the text neither belongs to the *bildungsroman* nor cookbook tradition – but something in-between. Though the text abbreviates Tita's transition from childhood to adolescence, succeeding Nacha as the ranch's chef signifies a transition into adulthood via her acquired skills; furthermore, the oral traditions that she captures in print – as she or future cooks cannot depend upon a Nacha's ghostly voice "dictating a recipe" – exemplifies a maturity, a process through which physical and mental change is made (Esquivel 49). Therefore, the text itself stands as a relic of Tita's maturity, where her love for Pedro manifests itself in tangible forms with highlighted developments. In accordance with Bowers, love metaphors act as a vehicle. Maintaining the same analogy, magic is the gasoline, where, as Lakoff and Johnson put it, "[m]erely viewing a nonphysical thing as an entity or substance does not allow us to comprehend very much about it" (27). Little can be attributed to magic's structure. Still, unconfirmed assumptions provide interpretive substance.

The necessity of completely reformulating hypotheses on the origins and processes of the fantastic clarifies that in its different uses the wandering viewpoint contributes to the strategies' themes – with the exception of the most pertinent construct fueling the plot. Cues have been noted to guide the novice, but according to the reading process Iser describes, the interpreter must take the liberty of creating this process for himself. Like Tita, who modifies familiar methods and creates new recipes, the engaged novice reader may comb his repertoire instead of the text to produce what is not there. Empowering the novice to create what is not present coincides with a telling claim made by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris: "It [magic] is a simple matter of the most

complicated sort” (3). Its formlessness attests to the paradoxical nature of magical realism. As mentioned above, ontological metaphors – used as a window into a clarified, comparable instance – potentially negate their own helpfulness. Viewed under a distorted contextual light, the window becomes a mirror. Blurred context is reflected back upon the reader. Without clarity, the engaged reader is theoretically empowered to create his own world based on what he does see, but seeing his reflection reinvents the paradox. However, figuratively placed between two worlds where he can see himself, he finds encouragement to simply use, not rely, on the literature that “can be an effective medium for deconstructing ideologically charged dichotomies, including that of ‘magic’ and ‘real’” (Zamora and Faris 4). Placing the novice in unfamiliar territory with the encouragement to make mistakes empowers him to evaluate the textual and the tangible world – leading him to make critical decisions as to how he can selectively pull from both to create a better understood environment of his own.

As Tita invests her feelings into her food through her blood and tears, a viable explanation for how magic works must surpass the idea of mixing food with Tita’s palpitating, emotionally charged, organic additives. For the novice, comfort foods allow him to feel a certain way through his own emotional ties to a dish. Hot beverages and soups tend to ease the common cold or influenza; moreover, certain types or brands perceivably work better than others. Taste depends on ingredients and methods, but the comfort perceived to be lying dormant in a spoonful of Campbell’s strictly depends on intentionality. Emotional ties to soup made by one’s mother or packaged by a particular company may indeed lead to perceptions of feeling better. Instilled properties of the meal establish no empirically significant role aside from satiation. Nevertheless, familiar conduct signifies a sentimental tie that constitutes believed-in imagining. A term much like magical realism, believed-in imagining lacks a firm denotative definition. Psychologists who study the concept closely prefer to generalize the term as the study of the cases in which people may realize the unempirical implications of a claim, yet insist that idiosyncratic imaginings hold weight under the scrutiny of scientific or psychological inquiry; therefore, reality may be “dismissed” in particular personal narratives (de Rivera and Sarbin 4-5). Believed-in imagining does not account for the fantastically uncontrollable and/or the “intense heat pulsating through her [Gertrudis’s] body,” which prompts her “to begin to sweat, imagining herself on horseback with her arms clasped around one of Pancho Villa’s men” (Esquivel 51). Familiar effects of food and drink, drowsiness following a turkey dinner or a jolt after a cup of coffee, encourage the novice reader to conceptualize the type of magic Esquivel’s text has to offer. Not every dish produces magic, and, at times, not every person dining garners a fantastic reaction. Then again, not every person shares the same comfort food. Taste being relative and personal memories providing the crux of the repertoire, the burgeoning novice reader may consider how his taste buds and former apprehension affects his reading experience.

In order to evaluate what must be made through imagining, the ambiguity of the text prompts the maturing novice reader to consider both the limitations of the empirical world and the possibilities made feasible. Therefore, the objective is to (re)imagine what would be deemed the nonsensical were it to take place in a world outside the one initially created. The novice must look past belief as an indicator of inherent falsehood; it is now a sign of plausibility for arriving at a self-made conclusion. Iser finds that to move beyond

the illocutionary schemata places a demand on the reader where he will “conceive the inconceivable” and prepare “for a change of levels, in which the scene ceases to be just an element of the plot and becomes instead the vehicle for a much broader theme: we are to conceive what can emerge from this ‘inconceivability’” (144). Imagining how a meal could be tasty enough to evoke the effect the text describes temporarily subverts the discussion of magic. Ideation manifests through the construction of the imagination that has been influenced by the text – regulated by the strategies which shape the repertoire. Ideation, Iser explains, prompts an explanation so that the image “also makes conceivable innovations arising from a rejection of given knowledge or from unusual combinations of signs” (137). The implications surrounding Gertrudis’s otherwise inexplicable response to the dish concealing Tita’s and Pedro’s feelings builds a foundation for the novice’s own relegated belief to bypass the magical thinking and re-acknowledge the suspended disbelief that allows for imagining. Insecurity in regards to his believed skillset and the willingness to engage with the text at a general level exemplifies a “degree of involvement” where he can believe in the occurrences within the text on an ‘as if’ basis (Sarbin 26). The novice potentially agrees to believe that *if* food had the ability to heighten the senses and produce hypersexual feelings, it may look *as* the text describes – not inherently believing in the actual narrated capabilities. The novice differs from individuals who vehemently claim to have encountered the spiritual world, as his task is simply to perceive the possibility of a hypothetical world comprised of both real and the fantastic constructs. Furthermore, believed-in imagining provides an avenue for creating the how-it-works guide to understanding magic. He accepts a constructed imagining tentatively because – much like the characters within magical realist texts – he grows accustomed to its fundamental presence in the work, but can hardly deem it normal.

Theodore R. Sarbin provides insight as to how believed-in imaging depends on the reader’s will to identify with a particular narrative and its relation with his own self-narrative. In the process of constructing and reconstructing a scene based on its textual signals, the reader may either show a genuine like-mindedness with the text or simply read with little interest. Reaction generally depends upon the degree to which someone sees a connection to their self-narrative (Sarbin 23). Therefore, self-narrative offers steadfast guidance for those who read for entertainment or to satisfy an assignment. It has been suggested thus far that the novice depends on his repertoire; while Sarbin’s assertion begins to support the notion, it drops off for the novice who believes only for the sake of fulfilling a reading assignment. Dependency on first-hand experience can only provide an adumbrated image of the circumstantial details that would allow them to construct a likely inexperienced scenario depicting Gertrudis’s use of a “primitive shower,” where buckets of water must first fill a thirty gallon tank before she could enter the “small room made of planks nailed together” (Esquivel 53). The description includes sufficient details to relate to stored memories. If the novice takes the descriptors as an illocutionary directive – a signal for him to construct the shower *as if* he were building it himself – then it mandates a level of involvement. Under Sarbin’s take on believed-in imagining, abstract notions encourage constructing parallel scenarios where, in accordance with an earlier suggestion made by Iser, the world belongs to the reader. Under these circumstances, identifying with the abstract is not the concern; making a parallel environment where interworking concepts, namely “real” and “fantastic,” can be

formulated by the novice – emancipating an otherwise arrested analytical development.²⁰ Again, it does not excite an enhanced level of susceptibility to believing in the imagined world, but the repeated process encourages the will to participate in the text.

Two contrasting interpretative routes present themselves to the novice. One easily suited to follow his anecdotal path, which coincides with his self-narrative, and the more arduous road rife with implications suggesting that an unempirical reality will tap into lingering anxiety about choosing the “right” reading, paradoxically limiting what he could offer. Overcoming such anxiety originates from the text, reassuring the novice that he can indeed take certain liberties. For the unengaged novice, the social implications of the matter-of-fact tone used by the narrator when describing the reactions to Tita’s food expose inadequate communication. In discussing the problematic features of magical realism, Scott Simpkins attributes the linguistic breakdown to “a condition which prevents the merger of the signifier and the signified” (148). Simpkins finds magical realism as the carrier of a malignant, unrealizable supplementation to the reader’s understanding of reality that “is really nothing more than that of a rigorous, but overwhelmingly frustrated, endeavor to increase the likelihood of *complete* signification through magical means, to make the text – a decidedly unreal construct – become real through a deceptive seeming” (148, original emphasis). Simpkins’s assertion carries a disparaging implication directed towards the novice: it points to the metaphorical road less taken while deeming the willing suspension of disbelief as a dependency solely on disbelief. To sever the connection between signifier and the signified undoubtedly sparks the ever present hesitation fundamental to all works of magical realism. Moreover, it demands that the reader consider how the text has defamiliarized his perception of reality. Simpkins implies that the reader’s evaluation cannot produce a more well-rounded understanding of the tangible through evaluation. Furthermore, he does not consider how any text read outside of its original context causes the effect in its contemporary, distanced audience. Magic used to subvert reality presents an answer for queries otherwise thought impossible to resolve.

The worldly, incomprehensible ability to transfer emotions from chef to consumer via food builds on believed-in imaginings. Still, the proposition does not hold as it lacks consistently similar magical and empirical results. The text’s ability to alter the familiar inevitably reawakens the anxiety resolved by the novice who constructs his imagining first through an empirical frame. Therefore, the novice may supplement his conceptualization of the fantastic with an “as if” frame to satisfy the anxiety of what his first-hand experience cannot provide. The anxiety to choose a path resembles the “lingering doubt” Wendy B. Faris uses to re-define hesitation as a reader-produced question asking “whether the events the novel narrates are possible and therefore could be true” (19). Hesitation or a lingering doubt obligates the novice to evaluate what he knows as opposed to what he believes. Abstract thoughts rest on the ability of the novice to recall concrete evidence in order to conceptualize what does not exist or that which has

²⁰ Though similar, Sarbin’s notion differs from Thomas’s ‘seeing as’ contribution to perceptual activity theory. Thomas explains that it allows people to discover and see stimuli by noticing details. While he does admit that some of those details may be preferably selected, his implication is that the one in the act of perceiving relies upon what is presented. The “as if” construct Sarbin formulates suggests that perception involves active construction and implementing details. It notably resembles Iser’s methodology.

not yet been experienced. Sarbin concisely defines such methodology as instantiation or the will “to represent an abstraction by a concrete instance... in which people sort inputs as instances of epistemic classes” (20). Thinking abstractly – imagining through the “as if” frame – the novice can locate defamiliarized notions, separating them from the boundaries and limitations of the empirical world. Suggestions offered by the text need not coincide with what he brings to the text. Resistance or disengagement in favor of concrete instances intentionally breaks the willing suspension of disbelief. If this is the case, repudiation follows. The environment spawned through initial engagement begins to collapse because the building process begins with recalled visual stimulation. Sarbin proposes that the development of the willingness to suspend disbelief can only involve absent objects and events “when the person has achieved skill in using fictions, a skill that follows from the acquisition of *sign* and *symbol* competences” (20, original emphasis). In the case of *Like Water*, the novice may consider himself or people he knows who have been emotionally struck by food in some way – distressing illness or dietary longing being two common notions around which to build. For example, he may opt to relate the salty aftermath of Tita’s birth, essentially a preservative for family relegated unfulfilled marital bliss, to the narrator’s suggested link that all those who cry when chopping onions share those same tears (Esquivel 246). As the choice to stifle the mental awareness of magic would consequently deem the text moot, the novice is left to evaluate the plausibility and likelihood of believed-in imagining.

As the conversation has mostly considered how the magical occurrence serves the story in terms of narrative construction follows, I would here like to begin a transition and proceed by asking why magic is used under the textually construed circumstances. However, before doing so, it is important to first examine how suspension of disbelief permits readers to accept the usefulness of magic. The earlier proposition regarding how magic, and similarly believed-in imaginings, depends on hope and anxiety where actual results are likely impossible. For example, people often grow nervous with secured documentation, double-checking a briefcase or backpack when visible security would suggest no possible way for said documents to be lost. Because they foresee what losing important documents entails, they believe in possibilities that do not exist (Gerrig and Pillow 116). Similarly, because approval is not absolutely impossible, Tita grows nervous with excitement when Pedro asks Mama Elena for the girl’s hand despite her mother’s steadfast opposition to breaking family tradition. The matriarch gives no signs of resolve, but Tita believes in the possibility and thus grows anxious when she announces Pedro’s impending visit in a “trembling voice” (Esquivel 10). To silence wishful imaginings or even suspending disbelief presents a problem not easily resolved. Turning off belief comes more as an evaluation of viability. According to Richard K. Gerrig and Bradford H. Pillow, the process literary scholars have adopted from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s construct – the willing construction of disbelief – has been “hypothesized [as] some type of *toggle* that bears a family resemblance to the willing suspension of disbelief” but has ultimately been a flawed “a priori assumption in a taxonomic distinction – with respect to the mental process – between fiction and nonfiction” (103, original emphasis). To clarify, no switch is flipped to tell the novice reader that he must start or stop believing in the text’s suggestion. From the first lines read, he is in control of framing and evaluating how magic works, based on his willingness to engage with the text. Gerrig and Pillow trace

their notion to Baruch Spinoza, where objects and concepts are products of comprehension that mandate an initial “*acceptance of belief*” before being critically evaluated for their worth, consequently leading to the conclusion that “comprehension is comprehension” (103, original emphasis). As mentioned above, textual engagement compels the novice to first understand or comprehend the proposed world before he evaluates the validity of the text’s communication. Comprehension may ensue, but if the former notion of a “correct” way to read were to resurface, the novice would need to qualify comprehension. Fish suggests that supposed fact “makes an exact concept out of the idea of inexactness” (33). In other words, the novice would likely ponder a referent that may have a sense of cultural ubiquity, but with personal substance. An infiltrating idea that blends the generally inexplicable mechanics of magic with a recognized methodology for explaining phenomenon: science. Although science cannot help in the explanation of the unempirical, the comingling of magic and science does ground the cultivation of the frame that he constructs analogously with solidified notions. For example, the novice may consider the popular PBS animated series *The Magic School Bus*. The unprecedented bus regularly circumvents the globe and shrinks itself down to size in order to guide students and their instructor Ms. Frizzle through the human body – supplementing a unit on human physiology. Some students may argue that the show, and the books from which the show is based, was predicated on science, neglecting the fact that the most obvious construct in need of exploration was the bus itself. Nevertheless, acceptance of the show’s premise demonstrates a belief in the inexplicable for the sake of enhancing a currently developing skillset or familiarity within a field.

Belief – whether shared or simply understood as a concept – is the crux of magical realism. Internationally marketed, magical realism cannot escape being (re)familiarized based on the beliefs of its audiences. Furthermore, the severing of signified and signifier Simpkins deems detrimental only proves to be so if the text is to be understood as having an objective reading because to deny the maturing novice the possibility of making the text his own is unprecedented when he reads as he dreams – alone. Thus, unacceptability melds under the guise of the reader who wants to believe-in the possibility of magic, but has little evidence to deem it plausible. It stands as a belief, which Sarbin traces to its etymological roots to be defined as “highly valued” or more cogently understood as “*highly valued imaginings*” (23, original emphasis). Though a belief in the power of the fantastic as found in *Like Water*, belief itself does manifest in the novice’s everyday world. Gerrig and Pillow echo the importance of self-narrative in accepting or believing-in imaginings. Almost undoubtedly familiar to any reader and not unlikely affecting him or her, the culturally constructed image of beauty in the U.S. exemplifies the want to believe-in imagined miracle products: excessive further distorts scientific boundaries when considering the search for a miracle weight-loss drug or muscle-building tablets. Desire coupled with a seemingly authoritative moniker – drug – presents a similar type of believed-in imagining that breeds acceptance where such approval spawns from authoritative figures. Persons that fulfill a held expectation can appear to offer textual cues leading to a refined or better-rounded concept pertaining as to how abstract concepts operate. Esquivel’s Dr. John Brown breaks such an expectation.

Before departing from the notion of how magical suggestions function in terms of the narrative progression, I would argue that the novice receives a paradoxical nudge with

the doctor's introduction. Dr. Brown's role evolves in the June installment – the only recipe that does not feature goods traditionally fit for consumption. His instructions for making matches exemplify how modern science maintains its out-of-sight ties to an alchemic and a magical-laden history. Unlike *One Hundred Years*, where the Anglo businessman Mr. Brown stymies Macondo's magic, Dr. Brown insists that the spiritual healing powers of his "Kikapu" grandmother, Morning Light, can be replicated in a laboratory setting. Complexity shrouds Dr. Brown. He is an Anglo who effortlessly crosses the U.S.-Mexico border and has roots in indigenous culture. His common, Anglo surname reflects a transcultural makeup – allowing him to effortlessly cross while concealing his open ties to people with a brown complexion. Yet, when the university-educated man insists that only by pursuing Morning Light's "miraculous healing" is he able to find "the most advanced medicine," the novice is potentially jarred (Esquivel 113-14). To explain, ethnic makeup and/or occupation – elements that stereotypically signify authority – do not hold an intrinsic tie to empirical truth. The expectation for who believes in magic is broke. Magic formerly tied to dancing water drops and the effects of Tita's food are now linked to household science and twist the novice reader's considerations. Paradoxically, this comes as a benefit as previous encounters with the unstable boundary between magic and science offer a familiar schema in which the novice can subsequently consider.

The novice recognizes the need to question the title of "doctor" bestowed upon John Brown while undergoing his study of medical science, since his ethos does not coincide with the one typically associated with his profession. The two anecdotes he tells Tita as she recovers from her quarrel with Mama Elena offer some resolve and a new perspective on the advancement of science and narrative. Divulging the story of Morning Light's earned acceptance into the Brown family, Dr. Brown describes how the archaic use of leeches to bleed a patient stood as a common medical practice. Effectual medicine originates from Morning Light's mixture of spiritually enhanced herbs when she cures Dr. Brown's great-grandfather. The doctor's intent to shine a light on the gray area between science and magic further exemplifies that the codified yet theoretical pursuit of scientific results derives from magic. He relates his goal to Hennig Brandt's pursuit of the philosopher's stone – where the doctor's efforts will surpass Brandt's serendipitous discovery of phosphorous. Metaphorically, magic works *as if* it were an undiscovered science. Instantiation fuels Dr. Brown's search for cache syntheses between the two disciplines. In doing so, he exhibits the necessary tenacity of the novice who dares to construct a reading rather than relying on the text at hand or the introduction of a person who may clarify magic's inner workings. Though Dr. Brown witnesses magical displays as a child, he enjoys relatively few advantages over the novice as each attempt to uncover the same process. Experience, education, and cultural familiarity, all account for distinct boons the doctor exemplifies. Nevertheless, his task, to materialize the sought-after process stimulating Morning Light's cures, necessitates such advantages. In comparison, the novice need only rely upon imaginative skill and competence. According to Sarbin, in the context of an envisioned narrative, skill and competence "are used intentionally to connote that *as if* behavior is subject to variation among individuals, and that it is acquired through commerce with people, things, and events" (21, original emphasis). In other words, those lacking in the attributes Dr. Brown offers must make the best out of

what he brings to the text, a will to make a parallel reading that he or she controls. Direct contact with Morning Light and her powers provides Dr. Brown with an idea as to how he can envision the results of his endeavors, but he must demonstrate scientific competence – entailing that he perform the task that his acquired skills afford him (Sarbin 21). The skill originating in Morning Light sets an example for the doctor, while he symbolizes the potential for unification of science and magic. Dr. Brown relocates the iron stove that his grandmother formerly used to concentrate her remedies. A chemistry set displaces Morning Light’s memory, the hollow iron left to reside in the corner of the room. Upon realizing that science has only been adulterated by a potentially more compelling yet incredible force – not rendered obsolete – the novice can no longer doubt the doctor’s role as dedicated practitioner of medicine.

As the pursuit of recreating magic has the potential to uncover valuable contributions to the scientific field, Dr. Brown’s endeavors cannot help but emulate a Promethean-like effort to bottle the next medical miracle. The dislodging of Morning Light’s stove violates a “sacred space,” explained below, that only makes itself available to female characters. Altering the relationship between the two disciplines creates tension between the novice and the narrator who synonymously labels Morning Light’s room as a “laboratory” (Esquivel 113). Experimentation induces the signifier, laboratory, to potentially disrupt the accord Dr. Brown forms between the medical practices associated with both of his ethnic roots. Failure to reproduce magic leaves him reliant on his skills as a medical practitioner and a local herbalist. To clarify, Dr. Brown undeniably exhibits an understanding that magic and science can co-exist; they can each contribute to the creation of medical wonders. As the grandson of an Anglo and a Native American, his ethnic roots place him in an in-between cultural position – analogous to the place occupied by the novice who lives in-between the magical realist work and the world outside the text. Nevertheless, his American education gives him what he considers the means to dissect magic. Failure does not curb the doctor’s tenacity. Failure producing constructive results in his on-going research softens unfulfilled success in his ultimate pursuit of what he hopes to be empirically objective results – not completely dissimilar to the maturing novice reader’s pursuit of how and why magic works to further the text. Unconsciously exemplifying yet another similarity between himself and Prometheus, Dr. Brown shares the makings of fire: he offers Tita a heart-felt and seemingly magical explanation by cross-referencing his phosphorus anecdote and with his grandmother’s wisdom:

As you see, within our bodies each of us has the elements needed to produce phosphorus. . . . My grandmother had a very interesting theory; she said that each of us is born with a box of matches inside us but we can’t strike them all by ourselves. . . . we need oxygen and a candle to help. In this case, the oxygen, for example, would come from the breath of the person you love; the candle could be any kind of food, music, caress, word, or sound that engenders the explosion that lights one of the matches. (Esquivel 115)

Accommodating his emotional guest, he maintains that this is another of his grandmother's theories that he has been pursuing scientifically since Morning Light's death. Still, he suggests that the most fundamental component comes from *within* the human body and is complemented by a basic element that coincides with personal, subjective likes through a process that can only be described as magical. Subjective pleasures making up the infinite variables ultimately suggests that his dissecting of magic is impossible because its working parts, the variables that attribute to its mechanism, correlate with the individual. Like the soul, which Dr. Brown asserts is the life of the body, magic changes with the identity of the person it touches (Esquivel 117). Therefore, the novice becomes the deciding force as to how magic works. Magic advances the text through the reader's contributions. Consequently, the text undergoes a momentary change in its identity.

Once establishing that the text encourages fulfillment of the narrative in-between, the space that neither answers solely to science or magic, the novice cannot help but notice an abandoning of explicit direction. Prior to blatantly relating the two entities, the text has offered instructions on how to cook the recipes and who predominantly provides the link to magic. The explicitly unexplored territory of the text where the novice illuminates how magic produces its effects does not exist. Following the revelation brought on by Dr. Brown's last anecdote, the text reveals July's recipe as prepared by the De la Garzas's maid Chenchu. A manifestation of Nacha's spirit strokes Tita's hair after her first savory spoonful, but Dr. Brown's indispensable contribution stands as a transgression. The doctor's experiments essentially aim at uncovering the secrets of what Rosa Fernández-Levin has deemed the "sacred space" of the kitchen where she suggests that Esquivel's use of kitchen metaphors and allusions "establish[es] a total absence of chronology that endows this physical space and its inhabitants with quasi-sacred properties and attributes. The kitchen becomes a mystical abode in which the protagonist is empowered and permitted to re-create reality in order to avoid spiritual and social annihilation" (106). Fernández-Levin's ardent claim makes use of Tita's and Morning Light's ostensible demonstrations and affinity for the kitchen. It emblazons each woman's skills with acumen that transpires nowhere else. Women do not need instructions in sacred spaces. They are in sole possession of the ability to collapse time.

Fernández-Levin seems a bit overzealous. Her take on chronology clearly needs refining when taking into account Dr. Brown's similar ability to collapse time. To clarify, Tita's ability to escape the repetitive drudgery of her chores stems from her sense of smell and her ability to remember days long past (Fernández-Levin 108). Memories spun into narrative stand for Fernández-Levin as a means to unravel chronology: exemplifying the capricious qualities of taste in addition to the other senses, Tita's cookbook turned narrative manipulates time in its "twelve monthly installments" that highlight an entire lifetime. Dr. Brown's remembering and telling of his familial past while smelling the phosphorous used to make the June recipe for matches serves the same purpose. More germane is his ability to rear Tita in a truncated timespan once he discovers Tita has undergone a symbolic rebirth: "He found Tita naked, her nose broken, her whole body covered with pigeon droppings...As soon as she saw the doctor, she ran to the corner and curled up in the fetal position" (Esquivel 100). The subsequent parental-like bathing and encouragement showered upon Tita to speak resembles the cliché of the Anglo problem

solver. However, it is the bland food Dr. Brown's cook Katy gives Tita that emphasizes the necessity of her crafted instructions. The food sparks her self-induced, silent reflection where she realizes that her hands "could do anything or become anything" (Esquivel 109). Nevertheless, as she has always gained satisfaction in feeding others, Tita realizes that her journey across the border into southern Texas ostracizes her from a family legacy that she resolved to alter. She must offer instruction to those who cook without passion. It is her self-felt responsibility. Of course, her potential marriage to John Brown would satisfactorily defy the family tradition, but she would be an anomaly. Her return emphasizes the necessity of her iconoclastic will and gastronomic abilities that will aid her present and future nieces. Truncating time through her cookbook, she demonstrates a willingness to accept assistance while highlighting the hybrid medium, in which her story is crafted, and attests to the necessity of improvisation in an uncharted, in-between state.

Twelve monthly installments beginning in January alludes to ultimate resolve in December; *Like Water* adheres to the calendric *modus operandi*, but offers a revelation in November. After returning to her mother's ranch, Tita reclaims her role as chef only to capitulate to the bed-ridden Mama Elena before the matriarch dies and leaves the ranch to her daughters' care. The text follows the same recipe-and-ingredient introductory format and embedded instruction format made through Tita's narrative until she wavers in her promise to wed Dr. Brown. Her indecisiveness to permanently relocate manifests itself in her November recipe when she neglects gathering or cultivating the necessary ingredients to prepare the exquisite meal she wants to prepare for her then fiancé John and his Aunt Mary. Therefore, the ingredients listed for Beans with Chile Tezcucana-style include no measurements, eliminating the imprecise notion for the novice, or general estimation of each ingredient is needed to replicate Tita's impromptu meal. Skills developed over the course of the novel highlight her comfort and expertise to the point that neglects to offer explicit guidance. The lack of instructions accentuates the hybridity or in-between nature of the novel; as explained previously, the reader can replicate the recipes by following the introductory lists and interwoven instruction of each chapter. However, now, lacking explicit textual cues that pertain to the most easily recognized aspect of the text – the recipes – the novel essentially asks the novice to reciprocate Tita's feats, to recognize the futility and benefits of magic in a chapter devoted to the notion of in-between.

A seemingly contrived memory sparked by a longing for Nacha's tenderness encourages Tita to recall a fundamental culinary emotion: food refuses to cook if it is witness to a family quarrel. As Tita begins preparing the pot of beans, she no longer finds her soul being immersed or amalgamated with the dish. True to form, magic must supplement the dish, fulfilling a developed expectation on the part of the novice who knows that cooking will coincide with an "alchemic process" (Esquivel 52). Prior recipes and their accompanied narration have never suggested a life force within the food itself. The novice likely to heed the thematic alteration prompted by the wandering viewpoint would likely feel more apt to do so if the scene prior to Tita's crooning to placate her pot of beans had not just followed an equally contrived, gratuitous use of the same magic that drives the text. A riled brood of hens spawns a whirlwind just outside the kitchen, flinging Tita "onto the opposite end of the patio, where she landed like a sack of potatoes" (Esquivel 217). The cyclone's tangible alteration of the physical world clearly

differentiates it from a metaphorical description of the altercation between the sisters. It does not compare to the blurred, potential metaphor used in regards to the wafting smoke that had perhaps “affected” Pedro’s mind after he is struck by Mama Elena’s malicious spirit in the previous chapter (Esquivel 212). Where former instances of magic have contributed to the evolution of Tita’s skills or have allowed her to exhibit otherwise suppressed emotions, this instance only coincides with the novel’s magical ethos. Though the text has done little to explain explicitly how these occurrences happen, they have all been apropos until this point. Here, Thomas’s “seeing as” serves little purpose, and the novice’s attempt to construct an “as if” type scenario is a lost effort because the entire incident is of no consequence. The vortex of beaks drills a hole in the earth only to disappear forever. Like the three bald chickens remaining, magic is exposed. Taking advantage of its nudity and noticing its superfluous use, the novice once again feels empowered to meld its use and its mechanism to coincide to whatever way he seems fit. Doing so further exhibits his involvement in a construct tailored to the individual whims of the reader. Thus, the novel underscores how the unexplored, emergent space that magical realism fosters enables the characters and the reader to reach their utmost capabilities.

Similar to the text, I conclude with Tita’s final moments. Her last-ditch effort to live in solitude with Pedro after completing her cookbook and annihilating her family’s oppressive tradition comes as she chews a box of candles – the blank, metaphorical substitute used as the final, subjective element that constitutes magic’s mechanics. Bland and flavorless, the symbolic candles supplement her internal candles lit by her passion for food, her yearning for Pedro’s touch, and her desire to share her recipes. They take a spark and present the graying protagonist with the gateway to eternity. Curiosity and subjective passions attribute to the willingness to follow the cues to construct “as if” scenarios, emphasizing the abstract, indescribable process that links the empirical phenomenon to inexplicable wonder. Therefore, reading the magical realist text through a frame predicated on exposing how magic works brings no resolution without the novice’s personal participation. On the other hand, answering why magic furthers the text seems to be somewhat less subjective; in *Like Water*, magic advances the text by providing an additional avenue for the characters once the imposed restrictions of the “real” world confine them to an unfulfilling existence. Thus, advancing the text coincides with the novice’s ability to openly engage – thereby analyzing the validity of “real” world from which departs. Leaving him responsible to construct a separate space – his reading experience – where neither the real nor the inexplicable reign supreme.

Chapter Three

Occidental Fit: Merging Zones as Paradoxical Centers in *The House of the Spirits*

Ostensible confrontations await magical realist enthusiasts and cynics, and while reactions may vary, members of either faction cannot deny that their willingness to continue reading texts that inherently contain episodes engaged in the marvelous – episodes that naturalize or normalize telekinesis, clairvoyance, otherworldliness – rarely, if ever, elicits an outright refusal to continue the book. Thus, a willing suspension of disbelief keeps readers engaged with the work because texts signified as fiction entail explicit violations of empirical reality. Even novice readers understand the restrictive qualifications for a non-fiction cataloging. Unfortunately, binary classification creates a paradigm where novice readers will compartmentalize their perception into one category or the other. Gray areas rarely exist. For example, autobiographies are meant to capture the stories of actual people, and a figure's life is most often equated with verity. Historical fiction and Memoire push the limitations of fact and fiction; prevaricating narratives taint reality and urge the novice into classifying them as fictitious. If a work carries a dominant empirical inference, the novice reader in search of clues would prefer the work to uphold a realistic frame without overt exaggerations or loose portrayals – maintaining “factual” foundations where clues cannot be unmade by sudden fictional circumstances. Otherwise, the author, who the novice reader grows to depend upon for “what actually happened,” violates the reader's trust. Under the author's influence, the task of the novice reader remains the same: to find the most pertinent information in the narrative. Switch into detective mode.

This chapter further explores a feasible means for confronting the novice reader's uncultivated methodology by focusing on the use of magical realism in Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*. Magical realist fiction has come to depend on the moments where the unempirical unleashes a wondrous vision that could only foreseeably be reciprocated by countless snapshots were the same exhibitions to take place in reality. Yet, the characters within the novel fail to fulfill the expectations of the real world curiosity – creating a space, a merging zone, for the fantastic and the real to fuse into a single entity tentatively accepted, but accepted nonetheless, by those who inhabit the textual world. However, this is not always the case in Allende's text; the real and the fantastic often become juxtaposed where one temporarily subverts the other. After intermingling, the detachment of the real from the fantastic consequently produces new questions for the novice reader. Things cannot simply go back to the way they were before the suggested merger. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris suggest that readers “know that magical realism is not a Latin American monopoly,” though numerous articles in their edited collection *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* contest to a lack of contextual wonder included in magical realist works set in the United States (2). This implies that U.S. readers desire locales and circumstances unknown because magic's appeal or its possibility does not exist when in the proximity of a milieu ruled by empirical reality. Offering a glimpse of a world bursting with fulfilled wishes, where problems find resolve through misfiring magic broadens a reader's imagination while comparing worlds. Thus, an opportunity presents itself for

readers to consider notions related to spirituality and post-colonialism, both of which so vehemently pertinent to much of magical realism's success.

Before offering an analysis of the public and private networks that elucidate subsequent contrast between the real and the magical, I would like to begin with a very brief discussion of the background and reception of Allende's novel upon its initial publication while highlighting some of the similarities between it and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Highlighting an upper-middle-class family in an implicitly-depicted Chilean landscape, Allende left her career as a journalist far behind when she published her then acclaimed 1982 novel *The House of the Spirits*. Engaged in a similar magical realist mode that earned García Márquez a Nobel Prize in Literature, Allende crafts a work that follows female characters, a group often ignored and/or objectified in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. A revelation amongst its reviewers in the United States once translated by Magda Bogin in 1985, the novel, championed for its empowered women and inclusive dialectical form, pushes the boundaries of magical realism set by predecessors, leaving another Chilean writer, Marjorie Agosín, to proclaim the novel's protagonist Clara as the new Latina who successfully "escapes the tyranny of domestic order and behavior for women in Latin America normal at the turn of the [twentieth] century and continuing even now" (15). Feminist and post-colonial critics later became skeptical of the text, in particular to the magical realist mode employed by Allende, measuring how a notoriously silent woman engaged with spirits and other supernatural powers can withstand the pressure of being the type of character that Agosín and others have deemed her.²¹ Skepticism ought to come with little resistance from a practical perspective, and while the answer to the questions regarding the most auspicious contribution comes in female characters' dedication to writing and crafting, the reader will note the text's form and often overlooked unmaking or negation of the magical suggestions, which permits it to function favorably as a narrative. Still, the favorable supernaturalism Clara channels in the first half of the text disappears as it is no longer a viable combatant in the immanent political coup that attempts to officially make ties between the fictitious Latin American country and the occidental hegemony of the "developed" world. Thus, the text uses its unconventional merging zones between the real and the marvelous to trigger moments of reader hesitation highlighting how magic may not in fact be a viable option, as critics have previously suggested, but such moments of hesitation do carry inquisitive cues that provide a foil for religious and chauvinistic ideals familiar to U.S. audiences.

Audience identification perceivably shifts as works in translation garner international recognition. Allende pens her text for an audience other than the implicit Chilean people who would easily recognize the most defining implications the texts offers – such as the notoriety of the double-coded figures of The Poet, an ambiguous reference to the world-renowned Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, and the 1972 coup d'état executed against The Candidate who becomes The President, an insinuation to Salvador Allende. Chilean publication being an understood impossibility during the military junta, the most viable option for Chilean (self-imposed) exiles was across the Atlantic in Spain,

²¹ See Nelson, 202.

where Allende's novel was indeed originally published.²² The inclusion of the coded language and the unspecified setting suggests that the text sought readership in Chile, but an international readership remained inevitable as *House* had to be published, printed, and distributed in a world market. Though the ambiguity of the generically-labeled characters would surely puzzle U.S. readers unfamiliar with the most internationally recognized moment in Chilean history, the text succeeds in drawing explicit parallels to the most ruthless and unhinging historical implications. Social memory, as discussed in Chapter 4, depends upon the sociopolitical moments of recall that conflict with diegetic suggestion. Works written for an imagined general audience undergo a shift when the reader without context must be subsumed into the suggested general characterization.

Published just prior to the Nobel Prize being awarded to García Márquez, *House* touts magical realism and ostensible allusions to *One Hundred Years*. Doing so preemptively aligns it with a similar success within the international market place that necessitates a re-imagining of the textual paradigms that previously ostracized international audiences. After finding her deceased grandmother's notebooks, Alba reconstructs the unsystematic stories while injecting her own experiences and supplementing the overarching work with her grandfather's narrative, where his story can provide an encompassing sense of understanding and momentary glimmers of redemption for his character. The narrative's double-coded allusions create an intriguing link to García Márquez's text. The first and last passage, "Barrabás came to us by sea" (Allende 1) calls forth the circular, inescapable existence captured in Melquíades's scriptures of Buendía family history in *One Hundred Years*. In addition to the parallel between Melquíades's scripture and the narrative written and compiled by Alba, Clara's notebooks include a world-traveling uncle who brings alchemy to her household – a blatant reference to García Márquez's enigmatic gypsy. While these parallels have not gone unexplored, a remark made by Clara opens the text to English readers to evaluate who the understood audience is: in the midst of her second pregnancy, Clara rejects Esteban's attempt to name the twin boys after him or any of his family, explaining "that repeating the same name just caused confusion in her notebooks that bore witness to life" (Allende 115). Clara's decision reaffirms her iconoclastic position within the text. Furthermore, her decision "instills individuality" within each of her children (Fagan 46). Refraining from repetitious names demonstrates Clara's enlightened persona and her will to break unnecessary family traditions. From a literary standpoint, Allende evolves the tradition of familial-center magical realist works started with García Márquez; the continual use of fresh names offers an olive branch to U.S. readers, specifically for those of whom *One Hundred Years* publisher Harper & Row considered would be in need of a family tree. Nevertheless, various points of disconnection remain in the text, especially for the novice reader: the people of Tres Marías are unfamiliar with automobiles. They also believe that drinking a pregnant woman's urine bolsters the immune system, unsettling the reader and perpetuating exotic stereotypes of a "backwards" people. Yet, having readers – especially the notorious magical realism enthusiasts in the U.S. – maintain a largely unbroken sense of engagement with the narrative suggests that it is

²² Allende's fellow Chilean José Donoso's brilliant metanarrative *The Garden Next Door* explores the issue of publishing as an expatriate.

meant for an international audience; one where U.S. readers can feel that *House* is a “beautiful tale of women who are intuitive, imaginative and capable of courageous action through their faith in spirits and their own words. Their story becomes our own, their tragedy is ours, but their triumphs will also be ours” (Agosín 15). Discussed in detail below, content creates ethnographic and marvelous disconnections for the U.S. reading audience, but Allende’s efforts to maintain a readership despite contextual shortcomings exemplifies a determination to craft a story that most readers will find engaging through its dichotomous narration that depicts the private stories foregrounded against a foreign public backdrop.

Interestingly, the appeal of crafting a story interdependent on the private and public realms favors personal experience or perception when characters are battered and physically tested by the political upheaval, but such appeal subsequently wavers with the choice to stress personal insight following public devastation. Returning once again to genealogy, Lois Parkinson Zamora makes a keen observation that clarifies the sentiments attached to individual characters for U.S. audiences. In reference to the family chart included in *One Hundred Years*, Zamora suggests that U.S. readers are guided to concentrate on individuals rather than the reoccurring patterns of the Buendías (502). Magic, grief, and horrors instead emphasizes their effects on the female lead characters, prompting readers similar to Agosín come to favor the individual strength while overlooking the public, particularly class, implications surrounding the various male-female relationships. Alba’s description of her rape and torture at the hands of her grandfather’s bastard son, Esteban García, highlights her resiliency. Yet, the circumstances stand in stark contrast to the domestic violence Esteban inflicts upon Clara, knocking out her front teeth and ushering in a silence directed solely at her temperamental husband. Signifiers solidify each woman’s individualism and violence unifies them via their sex through public and private networks. Clara’s decision to disrupt the repetition of names links the women through a means that does not dictate their behaviors, as Esteban’s proclivity for rape of his indigenous laborers of Tres Marías persists through his son in a carnivalesque fashion: Esteban García’s impregnation of Alba reaffirms his tainted place in the Trueba family tree, concurrently re-establishing Esteban Trueba’s low-class roots and position in public policy once his political career wanes after the coup. Forcing his way into the Trueba family tree, Esteban García renders Clara’s stance against repeated names irrelevant as the hurtful proclivities of his father will infect the future generation. Repetitious names are double coded in the socioeconomic origins and ancestral tendencies; for instance, Pedro Segundo’s develops a favorable connection to his fellow working-class residents of Tres Marías, the family reputation later bolsters the support for Pedro Tercero’s ideology and rebellious folk songs.

Focusing on the political strife through the eyes of a single family, *House* continues to resemble *One Hundred Years*; however, framing the story as a work made of various contributory sources complements the communal understanding of publically acknowledged atrocities and thereby differentiates Allende’s efforts. Episodes divulging in forbidden romance marks the work as a preeminent “Post-Boom” text that depends on an evolution of love stories to push forward in the midst of a various developing public crises. Allende uses the downtrodden public as a background of Tres Marías and food

shortages of the coup as a backdrop for cycles of love, where the men surrounding Clara and her daughters each becomes a lynchpin in the public eye. The undeniably progressive women establish themselves as active participants in the cultivation of Trueba family story, but it remains just that, a family story focused on the individuals who strive to preserve frayed bonds in the midst of a political unrest. Allende opts not to capture the “literary manifold in which the perception of the individual social reality is generalized beyond the merely personal” as other Chilean authors have attempted with their stories of arrest and torture during the coup (Vidal 106). Instead, she crafts a work that permits individuals to overemphasize personal strength. The novice reader’s dependency on the anecdotal feels satiated as love is put at the forefront of the text. Direct ties to a national narrative rescind to the background until magic no longer exists; therefore, the very device that prompts the novice to question his initial conception is, at times, discarded. Focus on the personal and the magical influences the novice to reflect upon character perception within the scope of the novel. Inevitably tied to the public, the text negates the significance of public action when offering such an appealing window into private space: Ellen McCracken notes that “the texts that are the most successful... integrate the personal and the political, the individual and the community, and link personal empowerment to social empowerment rather than exaggerating subjectivity” (65). Integration becomes paramount for the novice. Reflection upon why magic goes missing in the latter half of the text encourages expansion of a budding skillset. Hence, overshadowing communal significance, despite only adumbrated Chilean signifiers, stymies interpretive growth. Personal recounts undoubtedly provide others with tenacity and strength. However, the work is not framed as a semi-autobiographic narrative, a potentially more riveting story as Allende’s own lineage marks her as a target and a potentially exploitable commodity; rather, she pens a story of women who rely on personal strength and love once magic recedes. With this in mind, the novice must reconsider the absence of magic just as significant as its presence.

Though the Trueba women exhibit their own talents that can occlude them from dependence upon men, specifically Alba’s talents as a wordsmith and Blanca’s aptitude for ceramics, they lose a valuable asset in their mother’s marvelous abilities that highlight respective vulnerabilities. Tacit familial obligations keep both Blanca and her daughter in Esteban’s home. Following Clara’s death, Blanca ungrudgingly attempts to preserve the house in the same fashion as her mother, “but it was clear it was a losing proposition. She alone attempted to give the house the appearance of a home” (Allende 301-02). Her resignation to keep her family intact takes precedence once her relationship with Pedro Tercero recommences. Instructing Alba to never “depend on a man for support,” Blanca wishes to exemplify the same outlook, yet forces such a predilection upon her daughter. Blanca’s love for Pedro and her pottery sales prompts her to leave the country and entrust the safety of Alba to her father’s reputation as a steadfast conservative – despite Alba’s known harboring of rebels (Allende 301). Similarly, duty to her lonely grandfather and her love for the insurgent Miguel inspire Alba to stay within her grandfather’s home despite her talents and the known dangers. While she feels obligated to the political cause embodied by other young rebels, Alba casts aside her scholarly abilities to adopt a position of passivity when the rebels question her loyalty based on her socioeconomic class. Clara’s death suspends many of the magical possibilities presented in the early

chapters. Magic no longer provides anticipatory relief against the unabated harsh reality of the military junta that takes a strangle hold on the unidentified country. Therefore, the role magical realism plays within the entire work exposes itself as ripe for (re)evaluation. If magic provides textual foundation, how does the novice take responsibility for establishing a new underpinning that accredits the early episode while finding suitable relevance in the latter? Evocation of personal memories helps establish cause and effect, and it demonstrates an aptitude for willingly suspending disbelief: remembering a time when what seemed impossible became merely improbable – an unprecedented medical recovery or something as arbitrary as a “miraculous” winning streak in sports – can change the way the novice looks at the effect of Clara’s lost magic. Fiction suggests that the next step in recognizing the magical can and should be taken. Though mimesis is compromised, engaging in imaginative analysis suggests that the novice can draw on prior notions rather than haphazardly searching for textual clues to find what they perceive to be an absolute answer.

The text’s unique brand of magical realism provides a wonderful opportunity for exploring the points or merging zones where the magical and the real try to coalesce. Robert Antoni favors Allende’s coalescing of the fantastic and the real because it ultimately favors realism over the marvelous: “*The House of the Spirits* begins in the tradition of magical realism, but as it continues it becomes less and less Clara’s (García Márquez’s) book, and more and more Alba’s (Allende’s) book, until finally there is no longer magic but only realism” (qtd. in Hart 271). Antoni would be hard pressed to find an opponent regarding the suggested transition. However, his suggestion neglects the inconsistency of magic realist tendencies in the early half of the work. For the novice reader, Clara’s wavering powers provides an opportunity to explore the juxtaposed worlds and how the inability to establish a fixated, consistent sense of magic exposes a fundamental feature of magical realism: the intermingling of worlds.

According to the reconstructed notebooks, the childhood talents possessed by Clara had little consequence and could only be attributed to a sense of normalcy equivalent to any person’s birthright. Normalcy falters as it implies a consistence or reliability that should rarely wane, if ever, yet unrefined powers do persist to cause problems for Clara, “there had been many times...when the saltcellar would suddenly begin to shake and move among the plates and goblets without any visible source of energy or sign of an illusionist’s tricks” (Allende 7-8). Explained as inherent from birth, her untamed abilities prevent a clear sense of consistency or “normalcy” from taking precedence in the del Valle household. In a household with a supernatural dog, Barrabás, a young woman of ineffable beauty, Rosa, and an unnamed disabled family member, any implication of “normalcy” – physical or mental – goes unattained, unless inconsistency is to be redefined as normal. The text immediately establishes that Clara does not live a life equivalent to those who do not share her supernatural sensibilities; however, her powers do not inherently signal a type of insurmountable force, as she cannot reap their benefits with a regular consistency or potency. Ergo, she cannot unabatedly violate empirical reality. She has a noticeable advantage over others, but the advantages granted by her powers falter as any type of undeveloped skillset. Growth correlates her with the novice reader. Her development corresponds with the novice’s perception of magical realism. Though her skills are seemingly exclusive, they evolve and develop through narrative –

signaling that others have similar but less potent capabilities to affect reality. As she develops and refines her skills, the novice continues to evaluate why a young girl in possession of such skills needs practice. Development through uninhibited practice drives her tenacity and nurtures her identity, prompting the novice to consider the circumstances or the explanations that do not exist in the notebooks that could begin to explain how she is able to pass the salt.

An exploration of the influence of narrative in *House* presents a fitting next step, particularly when storytelling and books alleviate suppressed powers. Magical narratives convince Uncle Marcos that anyone can develop clairvoyance similar to his niece's. Exquisite adventures of global travel and exotic stories develop a resilient bond between Marcos and Clara that leads her to favor him "because he shows an interest in her prophesying powers" (Allende 15). A bamboozling business venture in which Marcos exploits the girl's clairvoyance draws him closer to her, and their ability to convince others of their alleged supernatural powers reinforces his belief that "all humans beings possessed this ability [clairvoyance], particularly his own family, and that if it did not function well it was simply due to a lack of training" (Allende 15). Working as psychic mediums further exposes that Clara's skills should not be considered categorical: the advice given for the five cents fee is described in Clara's journals as "unerring *guesses*," where absolute validity could not be taken into account, consequently halting the business because such guesses "*could* alter the fate of their clients" (Allende 16, emphasis added). Accuracy and persistence of her powers also prove questionable when Clara uses her telepathy to summon Esteban after his engagement to her sister Rosa ends in tragedy; while she is able to foresee her loveless marriage, her visions lack detail, forcing her to guess or glimpses of what could be. Such is the case when she is unable to foresee Esteban's date of arrival, where, supposedly, "[j]ust this once her clairvoyant faculties would fail her" (Allende 89). Ambiguity circling the guesses asserts that reading customers' future contributes potentially valid episode to their lifelines. The matriarch Níva del Valle "in vain" discourages Clara from thinking that she can write the future, leaving the reader to appropriate the limitations of her powers (Allende 37). Specific details of the future are rarely accurately predicted, signifying Clara more accurately as a guesser. Moreover, the created paradoxes created by her inconsistent skills provide threads for the developing novice to offer analysis regarding those empty or unfulfilled visions.

Paradoxes stand as textual cues for the novice reader to analyze the text. One particular moment comes when Marcos survives his failed flight with no explanation as to how. Still classified as a "corpse," the magic within the "surreptitious prayers" the narrator mentions are said to resurrect a man who never died (Allende 15). Contradiction itself often indicates where the reader must fill in circumstances of a fantastic event – specifically when prominence rests in reality's uncertainty rather than actuality. However, Allende's brand of magical realism includes moments where the narrator reneges on the characters' fantastic perceptive. Marcos may indeed believe in the possibilities of the supernatural, but the constant build towards the end of the novel, where magic cannot resolve the flotsam and jetsam of political upheaval, prevents such beliefs from dominating the narrative's landscape. In other words, first-impressions highlight an alleged use of the fantastic while later details often undermine an absolute

existence of the supernatural, and such is the case of entrepreneurial ventures of Clara and Marcos. Nevertheless, negating magical feats does signify a potential for imagining how the real and the fantastic could potentially exist in this particular context.

The empirically affirmed but conniving business venture signals a limited validity to clairvoyant powers. Consequential hesitation disrupts the novice reader's text-scouring methodology (as discussed in the first chapter) and forces a decision to be made regarding the validity of the suggestion made through the merging of the real and the fantastic: are the guesses indeed validated through a narrative that excludes follow-ups to said guesses or does Clara possess a supernatural gift? As her powers proceed to be questioned, the novice gains an ostensible nudge to make an interpretive decision based on the text and his perception. However, in making a decision, favoring either the fantastic or real claims made by the text, the novice set himself up for further embedded paradoxes – leading him to perpetually question his decisions. *House* exemplifies how marvelous powers intervene on the dominant realism. While not unusual for works of magical realism, distinct shifts in worldly perception interrupt the codependent merging of the fantastic and the real, which normally makes for smooth transitions, that disrupts the almost natural symbiosis breeding various magical possibilities. Signified characters, Clara in particular, contextualize moments of magic, and for professional readers, the process grows monotonous. For the evolving novice reader who formerly hunted for clues, these disruptions signify mnemonic and interpretive checkpoints where he re-evaluates the narrative and his beliefs in order to continue reading. Beliefs rely upon both worldly perceptions, as the novice and the text both have contact with empirical reality where consideration of magic essentially spawns imaginative suggestions. In other words, beliefs cultivated in worldly experiences and recorded in journal entries, story books, and fairy tales shape how Clara perceives her own powers and how the novice considers those powers. Marcos's texts are the foundation for her imagination, and she is said to have memorized all his works. When Marcos does die and his corpse is recovered, he embodies her memories of the works he introduced to her: his skin yellowing and "wrinkled as a piece of parchment," Clara recognizes that human experience and supernatural powers are conserved by the written word. Yet, the undeniable harsh realities of existence remain: Marcos can no longer exist in contrasting existential realms after he is equated with fixed print (Allende 17). Worldly paradigms continue to shift in accordance with the established expectation, signifying that Clara's powers cannot suffice when she or her family is slighted by immanent reality.

Magical inconsistencies dictate the establishment of merging zones between the fantastic and the real. Lacking moments of absolute dominance over the understood, overarching notions of reality that inevitably rule the narrative, especially following the coup, *House* comes to favor an epistemological magic rather than an ontological magic evident only to practitioners and believers.²³ For example, Férula's ghost, recognized

²³ In the novel, transmission of knowledge, particularly the know-how to harness magic, overshadows magic as an inherent quality or consequence associated with a state of being. Magic can be sought and cultivated by studious believers who seek its assistance in influencing reality. Therefore, epistemological magic pushes the limits of knowledge. Ontological manifestations of magic, simply referred to as ontological magic, create a geographical referent with the being that leaves the reader questioning the

only by Clara as a spirit, must appear before her two English-educated nephews and her skeptical brother Esteban as an identical image of her humanly self because the men's sense of reason excludes them from the spirit world (Allende 148). Incidentally, as Nicolás later aspires to identify with the spirit world, he gains acceptance from the Mora sisters where they unsuccessfully attempt to enhance him with their supernatural gifts. Only subsequent study and experience overseas opens Nicolás to spirituality. Distance from the obligation to view the world through the eyes of his objective-oriented English education grants Nicolás the opportunity to discover the inner workings of both his own culture and those he grows willing to explore. Much like the novice reader who engages with the transcontinental, magical realist text, he suppresses his judgment while he learns to interpret reality that he discovers is not objective: his Yogi masters live, learn, and prosper without the need to pass-off their knowledge as absolute while adhering to uncompromising limitations of reality. For Clara, her inherent powers later nurtured through the use of Uncle Marcos's encouragement and life of stories reifies a space where the laws of her existence go unspecified. Wendy B. Faris emphasizes that magical realism often draws from recognizably supernatural realms, Rappaccini's garden or the underworld for example, to establish an "ineffable in-between" where the text's suggested reality blends with another realm of existence in order to produce magical effects; however, the consequential violation of reality produces an ongoing problem within the previously constructed sense of realism:

The fact that they [magical events] are present within an otherwise realistic narrative makes that narrative the space of the ineffable in-between, a space in which the realistic and magical coexist. We might say that defocalization creates a narrative space of the ineffable in-between because its perspective cannot be explained, only experienced. Within it, one does not know quite where one is, what one is seeing, or what kind of voice one is hearing. It is therefore a space that figures a sense of the mysterious within the ordinary. (45-46)

Smooth integration of the two realms, where each works to complement the other, produces the effect that Faris suggests. For example, consider the casual integration of the retched, live rabbits that overtake the apartment that the protagonist oversees in Julio Cortázar's "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris." Conversely, the domestic sphere does not represent a pure supernatural realm where Clara's powers hold precedence: spiritual activity instills general mystery that recedes in order to co-exist with the political propaganda and Esteban's Conservative Party advocates. While the narration attributes the imaginative architectural expansion to Clara, the narrator undermines the suggestive wonders by explaining that "bricklayers would arrive and build another addition to the house," further re-emphasizing how imagination alone cannot produce the labyrinthine additions (Allende 224). Undermining magic and the resident spirits within their hand-crafted domain further highlights the inequitable relationship.

limitations of the world in which such a being can be introduced. Clara and Barrabás induce such questions that convincingly lead the reader to deduce that the locale produces their magical essence.

Life away from the house that Esteban builds to resemble the great homes of the U.S. and Europe abates the ontological magic perceived to emanate from folk or indigenous culture – tying the supernatural or magical properties to external influence. Clara, of course, is the exception; still, her intrinsic powers do in fact noticeably fade during her first summer in Tres Mariás. As age induces behavioral changes in Esteban, his ornery deeds cause noticeable changes in Clara as well. Specifically, her desire to use her gifts essentially dissipate: “She had stopped finding everything ‘so lovely,’ and she seemed to have been cured of her habit of speaking with invisible spirits and moving the furniture by supernatural means” (Allende 105). First-hand narration offered by Esteban follows Alba’s description of her grandmother’s first time in Tres Mariás, signifying that her resignation to the bucolic lifestyle of the countryside coincides with Clara’s sentiments felt while away from the city. With the exception of local *curanderas*, Tres Mariás lacks the magic that readers familiar with the exotic setting described in *One Hundred Years* may come to expect. Establishing a voucher system instead of paying the blue-collar cultivators, ironically setting the foundation for the country’s insufferable environment prior to The President’s assassination, the merciless grasp Esteban has on the local economy offers some explanation regarding the lack of spirit within the resident *peones*. The downcast locale and its residents noticeably incites Clara to don a more domestic, stereotypically feminine persona exemplified in her schedule split between sewing, shopping, and educating small children. While the house in the city does not present complete sanctuary or the in-between space that Faris describes, its locale provides an indefinable influence where guesses hold more weight and the metropolis backdrop closer resembles the domestic sphere typically thought to be upheld by women. Seemingly shifting the focus away from empowerment through narrative, Allende explains that her use of magical realism becomes a means of escapism from any undesired setting:

It is the spiritual and the emotional aspect that in literature is called magical realism; it appears with different forms of expression, in all the underdeveloped world. When we live in permanent contact with all forms of violence and misery, we have to look for explanations and find hope in the supernatural. Reality is so brutal that we need the protection of the magical and spiritual world. (qtd. in Faris 184-85)

If, for Allende, magical realism employs author-like architects who use tarot cards to build homes, no foundation can withstand the enterprise of tyranny. A noteworthy counterargument could suggest that Allende’s text negates her commentary: magical realism draws readers into *House* in order to confront them with inescapable reality. However, proposed escapism from a magical existence transforms the novice into a passive body, acquiescent to magic, consigning himself to other’s ability to interpret the consequences of reality. Refuting magical realism’s origins in the exotic and suggesting that well-to-do women can also share in divinity does not excuse a growing dependence on manifestations and predictions. Clara’s earthquake warning and subsequent prediction of ten thousand deaths heeds no response, implying that her family, regular witnesses to her powers, have noticed her diminished skills; those powers prove equally inadequate

“in protecting the tenants from epidemics... her children from abandonment, and her husband from death and his own rage” (Allende 165). Imaginative inspiration for (re)creation serves a far more constructive purpose. Rigorously they prompt readers to decide how the suggestions made through magic best serve them. Novice readers asking how and why Clara’s powers falter or recede begin breaking the passivity or domestication in *Tres Mariás* that continues to question the validity of foresight and her proposed status as a convincing female protagonist. The house in the city is the cornerstone for learning and sharing knowledge, thriving with the Mora sisters’ contributions as well as various artists and poets who seek Clara’s knowledge. Rural community borrowing with little contribution to the cultivation the supernatural distinctly separates the magical realism of *House* from anthropological wonders rooted in the undisclosed Latin American locale. Faris proposes that the development of the mode necessitates a growing landscape: “The affirmation of the local, together with its attachment to the cosmopolitan, with which magical realism began, continues to characterize it” (34). *House* does follow suit with proposed magical landscapes, but transfixes predominant magic in the cosmopolitan atmosphere and the written word – suggesting that magic only vacations in the rural locales. Thus, the text juxtaposes the norms of magical realism and flips the script on the ineffable in-between.

Still, the magic tied to origins in a particular locale provides opportunities for moments of integration and misunderstanding where epistemology should clarify matter. Barrabás, the magical dog found in Marcos’s final positions, exemplifies a persistent link to the marvelous. His growth spurts and voracious appetite differentiates him from any of the worldly birds Clara keeps caged. A common criticism of the text spawns from the gullibility or ignorance of both common people and trained professionals. For instance, the inability to narrow Barrabás’s breed permits a gross misunderstanding on the capabilities for local veterinarians. With the prestige and funds to afford the best consultation, the del Valle family follows Clara’s constructed origins for the dog – making them analogous to the mysticism found in Marcos’s stories. The supposed inability to associate the dog with any large breed complicates reality without use of the supernatural – so much so that it is almost unbelievable in itself. Instead of accentuating such inconceivable rooted in a solidified discipline, the text signifies that particular incursions to the fabric of reality exemplify an opportunity to those who will accept: “[p]opular imagination and *ignorance with respect to his past* [which] lent Barrabás the most mythological characteristics” (Allende 20). The predicating verb “lent” only negates Barrabás’s magical characteristics until further information surfaces. In the meantime, the dog’s ambiguity signifies a merging zone where predominant characteristics will permit a judgment as to the worldly features that best characterize Barrabás. A carping, amplified howl, “the moan of a lost freighter,” announces the death of Rosa the Beautiful; the dog’s vocal intonations, said never to be heard again, foreshadows Clara’s silence after the youth witnesses the embalming and posthumous rape of her sister (Allende 16). Similarly, sexual violence committed against the canine’s impaled mates captures the thematic anguish of the female leads resulting from male depravity. Hyperbolic descriptions result in realistic consequences without negating the fantastic. Barrabás’s grows silent with Clara, and he drags back the corpses of his lovers. He embodies the magic Clara extrapolates from Marcos’s stories. Though susceptible to the slaying power

of a butcher knife – reflecting the same sense of mortality as his congenital, clairvoyant protector – his presence within the text creates a demarcated space where ontological magic comes to stand as the less dogged (no pun intended) of the two varieties suggested above.

Existential limits following Marco's second death defy the most powerful magical implications. In other words, the text re-characterizes the marvelous only to have it consumed by reality. Decisions made regarding the practicality of the suggested powers fall upon the reader to decide. Interaction with narrative resembling an extreme form of Clara's own gifts entices the novice reader's involvement in ways that her magic cannot. Juxtaposition between epistemological and ontological magic synthesizes in pedagogical endeavors; reading lessons undergone by Pedro Tercero affords Alba's narration to set certain expectations for the limitations of the narrative derived from the notebooks: "Within a few weeks, the boy had learned to read voraciously. They entered the wide, deep world of *impossible* stories, gnomes, fairies, men stranded on islands who eat their comrades after casting their fate at dice" (Allende 139, added emphasis). Though the quote continues to mention zoological curiosities, such as Barrabás, the powers granted to those in tune with clairvoyance or any other powers of the mind cannot spawn new unabated supplements to the implied norm set by nonbelievers. Action stems from readers who embrace the power of suggestion afforded by soothsayers and the challenge of that which seems impossible. Pedro Tercero's fable-like tunes provide a more realistic example – particularly as they question the power dynamic of Tres Marías, and later, the country, in order to achieve the improbable.

Occluded in Pedro's reception of the fairy tales and other "magical books" is his hesitation that theoretically follows suit. Questioning the unerring guesses and enervating both paradigms of magic cause a heightened sense of hesitation. Not only does the novice reader possess the power to decide how and why Clara makes a particular prediction or why Esteban's later telepathic calls from Clara go unheard, hesitation prompts him to repeatedly question how the narrative can shape his opinion while providing sufficient evidence to negate its own propositions. While the act of questioning the text benefits the novice as he begins to hone his interpretive skillset, the text consequently develops to align hesitation with Esteban's refusal to believe in the benefits of unempirical skill. It is, ironically, the religiously orthodox Férua who uses a pagan-like curse on Esteban and places him in a state of limbo where he does not want to believe he is shrinking, but goes to great lengths to disprove what he sees as fact. His rationality demands doctoral consultation from the U.S., after earlier concluding "that Latin doctors were all charlatans who were closer to sorcerers than scientists," he subjects himself to an alien-like probing that solidifies the implicit legitimacy of the doctors and their diagnosis (Allende 244). Esteban's worries are ludicrous. He knows that he once was six feet tall and wore a size twelve shoe, but he does not want to accept that his sister's curse has caused him to shrink. Because Esteban also maintains an authoritative position within the text as one of the sources of narration, the reader must doubt even his most seemingly rational contribution, as even Esteban grows perceptible to supernatural suggestion. Though he does not narrate this particular incident, he, as a champion of the "real," exemplifies a distinct parallel to the rationality of those reading in translation. The unidentifiable context in which such a character or event concedes to fantastic suggestions reasserts that

reader hesitation vis-à-vis merger of the real and the marvelous coincides with cultural systems as well. Therefore, novice readers who come to depend on Clara or Esteban for magical or real context will be forced to (re)contextualize once hesitation strikes.

Before Esteban tries to appease his troublesome reluctance to the supernatural, the text expounds to favor the empirically real world over that of the fantastic. Even with the oscillating effectiveness of Clara's abilities, no penetration fazes the suggested, encompassing reality. Clara may charm the novice at times because her supernatural powers do offset her from other characters. Yet, the empirical limitations placed upon her hardly hinder her skills that were never imperative. The novice can grow to accept her flourishing power under ideal circumstances and withholds fault due to the ironically unforeseen objections of reality, which thwart both the ebbs and flows of magical realism. In his discussion of the manufactured marvelous, Alejo Carpentier highlights the reader's shortcoming when "forgetting that the marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality" (85). Carpentier's thoughts are slightly taken out of context; his *lo real maravilloso* is a predecessor to the magical realist mode where the marvelous buds predominantly from an anthropological or ontological state, differing from the predominantly epistemological magic in *House*. Nevertheless, encroachment of the marvelous upon the real best characterizes the world Allende creates prior to Esteban's lingering uneasiness. Readers juxtapose worlds. Character hesitation relieves the pressure of the reader to doubt where the merging zone lies within the text. To clarify, character reaction signals world encroachment. Therefore, Esteban's ambivalence after the U.S. doctors confirm his diminished height and shoe size, coupled with Clara's hastily forthcoming death, signal that hesitation comes predominantly from the reader who continues the story of indecisive magical realism. Empirical superiority consistently making magic irresolute suggests that Clara most often works within her limits, but her ongoing practice reaffirms her confidence in exploring the limitation of possibility, certain acts being understood as utterly impossible. The impossible does not contribute to the creation of a new space where the unfamiliar develops to infringe culpably upon reality. On the other hand, the magically enhanced plausibility does. Thus, as the reader has an inherent understanding of the empirical reality Esteban prefers, which often undermines Clara's magic, he only needs to recall the limited implications made through ontological and epistemological implication in order to gain a sense of familiarity with the supposed antithesis to reality. Limitations posed within the text that could authorize the capability to recapture or to produce ontological magic forces the reader to instead rely on conceptualization of the intended effect of that unrealized third place, the third place creating and finalizing a superimposed space unfamiliar to the reader as well as the characters (McHale 46). In doing so, the reader comes to understand the intended effect of the merging zone. He can therefore (re)contextualize hesitation in order to better understand the suggested limitations of each world, according to the narrator's assertions.

Here I would like to suggest that it is attributes comprising the real and the fantastic that fuels debate regarding reader reaction. According to Amaryll Chanady, the narrator's characterization of the merging point or, as it has been referred to, the merging zone between the real and the fantastic, thought to be conflicting codes in other contexts, can nullify hesitation by accepting the interaction as natural (*Magical Realism and the*

Fantastic 121). In contrast, she claims that works of the fantastic do not resolve the antimony but allow the conflicting codes to create a paradox that will go unresolved, consequently perpetuating hesitation. Employing multiple narrators who harbor different perspectives on happenings stemming from magical suggestion, the juxtaposition between perceptions of believers and predominantly non-believers allows *House* to follow both implications until content overtakes the narrators' perception. The reader (re)contextualizes the events following Clara's death and Esteban's ambivalent resignation through former moments of juxtaposition and magical implication; the new environment created in the absence of outright textual conclusiveness or a dominant perception regarding the superiority of either perception consequently influences the resolution process of forthcoming hesitation. Faris suggests the perspective offered by the narrator's sentiments will not resolve reader hesitation, as hesitation can never achieve total resolve (20). Her implication stems from her own belief that readers have an "[i]nability to decide just where an event belongs on the spectrum from actual to impossible [which] contributes to a central component of much magical realism" (Faris 117). Each work creating its own possibilities through its particular engagement in the magical realist mode certainly validates Faris's claim; however, if, as she suggests, "the reader becomes a creator in a magical realist text," readers must come to a decision as to how they will characterize Allende's use of the mode (30). For Chanady, allowing the reader to decide how to characterize the environment perpetuated by the text potentially infringes upon the integrity of magical realism: "Is it legitimate, however, to define a mode of writing according to the beliefs of individual readers? If it were, the definition would be entirely subjective and useless. The presence of the implied reader in the text partially solves this problem...the reader implied by the text believes in conventional norms of reason" (*Magical Realism and the Fantastic* 51). If such conventional norms of reason exist, their existence is seemingly universal without cultural context according to Chanady's presumptuous implication. For the novice reading in translation, to employ a supposed universal norm, based on a limited perception, would almost undeniably render magical realism implausible. Therefore, the novice's distance becomes essential for reading magical realism as much as it was for Carpentier and others to lay the mode's foundation: distance provides a window for the reader to evaluate what is understood as a conventional norm, but remains ambiguous when his norms should allegedly discredit everything except scientific fact. Difficulties compile when the novice must differentiate between what Karen Christian describes as "'real' ethnic performances" and what the novice regards as unbelievable (126). What the novice may deem as unbelievable is analogous to the exotic or "excessive" performance of culture included in the magical realist text, essentially destabilizing notions of a universal norm (Christian 18). Ironically, it is the destabilization of reality, especially under magical influence, and the distortion of cultural that fosters textual engagement. Under such circumstances, the reader is instrumental in detecting magical realist transgressions, identifying when magic alters the text's established reality. Still, *a priori* belief in what constitutes reality is not absolute or necessarily codependent on cultural norms discarding other realities; consequently, reality is shaped by personal dialectic based on experience and analytical influence in conjunctions with textual cues. However, a personal belief in the excessive cultural performance found in the text, such as a novice's belief in ghosts, is based on a self-

affirmed encounter and potentially alters the reader's reception of the text. Moreover, unprecedented beliefs in the novice further displace Chanady's norms. Therefore, the narrator's declarative speech must cause hesitation in the novice reader when he tries to determine how to perceive the event through experience outside the textual world, building around an understanding that differentiates from his own even if he previously did believe in ghosts.

Chanady's implication suggests that willing suspension of disbelief allows for engagement with magical realism – otherwise conventional norms of reason would deem the text absolute fantasy. When Esteban does not question Rosa's green hair, golden eyes, or ineffable beauty, he exemplifies a willingness to suspend his disbelief in order to satisfy his own desire for a beautiful wife from a well-off family; however, once his perception of reality is decentered by Férula's curse, his visit to the U.S. doctors signifies that his perception does not hold. Ambivalence contrasts his disproven reality, which further leads him to suspend his disbelief once again. To explain further, Esteban is much the same person in his narration, yet after being physically altered by the supernatural, the potential of his world differs. He ceases to reflect the developing novice reader who (re)contextualizes hesitation in order to consider what the episodes *do* in terms of the narrative because he no longer genuinely cares. As the text cannot affect the apprehensive novice's world without his engagement, it can only induce affect with a participating reader, which builds mental capabilities for engagement and analysis. Though the novice's analysis vis-à-vis the informed reader's analysis – recalling Stanley Fish's ideally educated background for reader affect – will not result in the assertions of a professional reader, hesitation introduces the primary step in attempting to understand multiple textual perspectives.

The majority of the concerns have focused on the perceived worldly perspectives stemming from the characters rooted in the adumbrated version of Chile. At this time, I would like to examine the way the characters in the text understand the origins of magic not inherently tied to Clara. Just as U.S. readers may defer magic to a locale, which appears inherently different, the characters exhibit the similar presumptive outlooks. The literate characters with propinquity to magic all share a common connection with the orient. The magical stories that first help Clara learn how to read originate in a distant land where Uncle Marcos implies magic is reality. Marcos's journals, fairy tales, and belongings capture a familiar sentiment associated with “the ancient Chinese secret,” which comes to be perpetuated once he dies and Clara proceeds to use his tales to teach others to read, resulting in a sentimental mysticism derived from foreign lands. Marcos's immortalized image in the daguerreotype depicts him “as an explorer leaning on an old-fashioned double-barreled rifle with his right foot on the neck of a Malaysian tiger” produces a different image than her imagination embraces of the weathered man who comes to laud her magical abilities (Allende 9). Mirroring the impression of H. Rider Haggard's British adventurer Allan Quatermain, Marcos is the colonizer. The use of his explorer's helmet during his doomed attempt to fly a makeshift zeppelin, described as a motor powered bird guided by the maps crafted with Leonardo da Vinci's theories and Incan knowledge, exemplifies a further desire to craft more exotic stories and journal entries. Those stories nurture Clara's clairvoyant powers and prompt him to buy a crystal ball “in a Persian bazaar, insisting that it had magic powers and was from the East” in

order to enhance his own clairvoyant skills (Allende 15). Though it is subsequently revealed that the ball is in fact a buoy – again undermining the practicality of magic and its instruments – Marcos continues to place the emphasis of his belief in those predominantly Eastern, magical texts stored in his trunk. Interestingly, once his affixation with magic strips away the wardrobe of the English colonizer, death settles in upon Marcos, and he appears as a “savage” (Allende 18). After the African plague kills him on his return journey aboard an Englishman’s ship, his body is nearly dumped overboard. It is the Chinese cook who preserves Marcos’s parchment-skinned frame, as if the cook recognizes and affirms his fascination with the East. Marcos establishes a self-perpetuated image of the East. Travel shrinks the distance between Marcos and the culture that he insists spawns the same magical secrets ruminating in Clara. Furthermore, travel affords him the opportunity to re-invent himself, to change the fixated image captured in the daguerreotype. His death signifies that in relinquishing his colonizer image he will adopt new perspectives that may not understand the East as well as he thinks – him failing to recognize the difference between the buoy and the crystal ball. Much like the novice reader, Marcos’s perspectives change once removed from contextual comfort. The preservation of his – literally – embodied stories emphasizes that interest in understanding the “Other” is the first step for the cultural novice towards building a learned foundation. Thus, reading becomes absolutely paramount.

Memorized stories and the remnants of Marcos’s life become Clara’s tools for teaching Pedro Tercero and Alba how to read. If Marcos provides the encouragement for Clara as a child, then she comes to perpetuate the same sentiments as she preserves his memories and stories – magical tales from afar. Marcos’s belongings smolder after their fantastic properties come to touch those closest to the Trueba family: secrets locked away in the texts come to directly affect how Clara can use the three-legged table and how others will come to believe the possibilities. The mixture of journals, marvelous fairy tales, and diegetic non-fiction used as pedagogical tools resemble the contrasting discourse reiterated throughout the novel. Interestingly, those educated in Tres Marías with Esteban’s “practical texts” – instruction manuals, encyclopedias, and readers – fail to see the practicality of foreign goods. They consider cars, war, and scientific inventions as “[f]airy tales, which did nothing to alter the narrowness of their existence,” just as the radio Esteban builds proves to be “useless when it came to forecasting the weather” (Allende 61). Withheld to build a reasonable community without inspirational notions of wonder, fairy tales signal foreign entities that lack practicality within the real world – secrets do not exist without the willingness to believe in seemingly outlandish capabilities.

Looking back at Robert Antoni’s earlier suggestion regarding the origins of magic, as it emerges from Clara later to be contrasted with the reality of Alba’s story, brings forth new observations as those magic tales that heighten Clara’s otherwise inherent powers originate in Marcos’s trips to the orient. The juxtaposition that time and again blatantly signals the readers to (re)contextualize themselves to either the narrators’ perspective or the suggestive power created by magical infringement upon understood reality marks a direct opposition to the fashion in which magical realism most often attempts to seamlessly blend the real and the fantastic without displacing either entity. As magic often finds its greatest influence in the ability to capture the imagination of young

readers, Allende's implication seems to unravel those assertions made by Carpentier – either anthropological magic or ontological magic stems inherently from Latin America and the Caribbean. Rather than magic originating in Tres Marías, where the indigenous *curanderas* use herbal remedies to heal the sick, magic comes from those stories of China and Tahiti, the mysticism of Marcos's beard, turbans, Egyptian amulets, and finally, Barrabás – the pet Clara decides “was from China, because most of her uncle's baggage was from that distant land” (Allende 19). Shifting magical origins at first comes to decenter the U.S. reader who has misguidedly come to understand magical realism and its origins as inherently tied to Latin America; however, in shifting the magical origins to the orient, the text makes a thought-provoking commentary on the nature of European and North American global influence while simultaneously selling those readers exactly what they want to hear from whom they enjoy hearing it. To clarify, *House* has come to be understood as a novel written for international publication, echoing a take on the orient familiar to European and the U.S. audiences, and as such, the novice discovers an accustomed sentiment that may seem unlikely or unexpected when placed outside of his own cultural context. With the novel's progression, the novice must reconsider how his cultural expectations falter when magic – regardless of its country of origin – proves ineffective and thus alters preconceived notions of cultural norms.

Shifting the locale of the magical while preserving its capabilities to entertain readers through a sense of disbelief simply (re)orients the ongoing post-colonial discourse associated with the magical realist mode. When Rosa likens Esteban to a Spanish conquistador and he later acts the part, ironically modeling Tres Marías on the methods of British colonizers, those early characterizations work the potential for the novice to use Esteban as a signifier of truth, one who offers truthful European and like-minded sentiments. Therefore, when the novice comes to discover that magic is an epistemological entity found in texts derived from the orient and Esteban exemplifies a reality close to the empirical, he aligns his thoughts with Esteban's because the patriarch's thoughts are understood to be closer to practical reality than any the other characters'. Allende's unconventional magical realist mode comes to resemble the methods of old where locale frames the imagination. It begins to perpetuate a fabricated or defamiliarized take on reality rather than a perspective offering a constructive use; yet, it subtly proposes that readers' imagination can feel empowered because it highlights the creation of new readers who discover the influential properties of both fiction and non-fiction. *House* attempts to balance what Chanady describes as the “territorialization of the imagination” (“Territorialization” 131). Referring to Angel Flores's canonical 1954 essay where he first describes magical realism and claims it to be Latin American by nature, Chanady likens Flores's assertion to Carpentier's, discussed above. However, these former perceptions restricting the locale of the imagination cannot hold, prompting Chanady to claim that, “[s]uch institutionalization limits its influence on other spheres (social, political) and condemns it to a compensatory functions: despite the apparent liberation of the imaginary, the institutionalization of art since the end of the eighteenth century has effected a more devastating control than that exorcised by decorum and reason” (“Territorialization” 132). Erected barriers established between countries hegemonically established as exotic or odd do not fall when diverting the center of mysticism elsewhere. Furthermore, the employment of hegemonic values – emulating

British heroes, marrying for class, and attempting to preserve capitalistic democracy prior to the coup – sustain the choice to demonstrate a “[s]imilitude between colonizer and colonized [that] invalidates any justification of the colonial enterprise” (Chanady “Territorialization” 133). Resentment directed towards the shrouded gringo intelligence service – conceivably the American CIA – after they support the overthrow of the democratically-elected socialist president does not break the philosophical allegiance with the would-be colonizers. Rather, the former pact is a loaded gesture meant to annihilate perceptions that link the imitative occidental government Esteban with as a figurehead to oriental magic.

Displacing the magical influence to the orient, Allende deterritorializes magic from Latin America. Arguably used for its known marketability, magic’s expulsion, which bifurcates the text, problematizes or passes the buck on magic spawns and makes its early employment seem contrived. Without a doubt, *House* and Allende must be held accountable for capitalizing on the appeal of magical realist narratives. Reconstituting the origins of magic and effectually melding the last half of the work into a story concerned with matters of reality rather than the initially built fictional space proceeds to highlight how constructed political conclusions diminish into little more than “magic” stories where a tyrannical government hides reproachful evidence or allows food to reappear on store shelves inexplicably (Allende 381). According to Alice A. Nelson, Allende’s text oversimplifies the polemical class struggle within rural Tres Mariás – where it “creates a void in the middle into which the author might step with the magic of resolution (the epic sweep of the romance formula), without having to take into account the troublesome, contradictory, and necessary historical agency of the political center” (199). Social unrest in Tres Mariás foreshadows the later rebellion that tears at the fabric of the nation, and with the destruction, the shift in merging the real with the fantastic will continue without character resistance. In particular, Nelson highlights the shift in Esteban’s sentiments towards the military regime, the formerly dormant but later flourishing love for his daughter and granddaughter that permits him to tolerate Pedro Tercero while maintaining his conservative agenda (201). Continued inconsistencies leave the novice reader to determine where the merging zone’s exist in the story.

If complementary ties between the orient and the magical serve to align the novice reader with the text, then the work proceeds to become a carnivalesque arrangement for interrelationships developed between those who identify with the occident. In accordance with Edward Said’s discourse, the subjugation of the orient emboldens the will or intention to control, manipulate, or even incorporate that which differs from the occident (12). Harboring oriental magic and using it to bolster the waning ontological power no longer inherent in Latin America, but rather inherent in Clara, further entices the exploitation of such potentially redistributed power. Frenchman Count Jean de Satigny gives up his oriental cigarettes to wed the more exotic yet light-skinned Blanca, and while he proves himself a spendthrift, his excavation team of “various Indians who had slipped across the twisted passes of the border” unearth the remains of Incan villages that “lacked the golden splendor of Egyptian tombs,” but can nevertheless be sold for their “historical value” (Allende 255). Ironically, it is only through his status as an exotic commodity – a foreign husband who will keep Blanca from Pedro Tercero – that places him in the position to be paid off by Esteban after Pedro

Tercero impregnates Blanca out of wedlock. The count's disbelief in magic restrains Clara's skills when attempting to read his will or future, ostracizing himself even from Esteban who begrudgingly acknowledges the power of curses. Further differentiating his larceny from Esteban's own susceptibility and exploitation of the Tres Mariás residents, Jean cunningly maneuvers his token marriage to profit from historical relics he formerly saw as insignificant, manipulating the "Indians" to assist him. In Said's introduction to *Orientalism* he describes how the occident often flexes its power, how it "materializes truth" (6). Where there was little value in the relics, the European produces a profit by making a market for Latin American history. Therefore, it is the market established through his French pedigree that makes those stolen relics truly historical.

Interestingly, both Jean and Esteban establish their social hierarchy in similar fashions: each marries under the pretense of furthering themselves through loveless marriages. In doing so, Esteban further aligns himself with the occidental perception he touts. Ironically, Jean must emulate his father-in-law in order to prove his own supposedly inherent occidental status, although this results in the count secretly scrambling to prevent his marriage from infringing upon his closeted homosexuality. Just as the text equates the disappearance of the government's incriminating evidence with magic, Jean similarly disappears after Blanca finds his homosexual erotica. Disappearing before public scrutiny ensues exemplifies a harbored anxiety of being deemed as "Other," only realizing his cultural status through his marriage to Blanca. His only link to the family is his name, which only exists in the recovered journals and faded memories because Alba deems it too exotic to spell (Allende 264). The men and establishments predicated on reality remain indebted to various degrees of described magic – the text suggesting that the occidental simply construes and presents magic in a more dignified way. Little remains stable in *House*. Nevertheless, magic exists because a need to fulfill fantasies persists.

Cause for the Frenchman's disappearance should not be attributed exclusively to his unobstructed homosexual inclinations; rather, readers can attribute it to his potentially unnerving realization that in the unidentified country, so far from his homeland, his fantasies have been fulfilled despite his utter disbelief in magic. His marriage to Blanca cements his status as a well-to-do European who must have a wife before his fortieth birthday, a similar sentiment held by Esteban after his successful cultivation of Tres Mariás. A count who dreams of "marrying a rich, young, beautiful South American heiress" does not disappear because his dream has been realized (Allende 214). He disappears because, despite his disbelief, his fantasy materializes with an accompanied debt. Unlike Conrad's enigmatic Kurtz, Jean does not "go native." Quite the opposite, his desire to wed Blanca carries the assumption that he would maintain his status as a prominent outsider, as he is the occident *par excellence*. Yet, once he becomes a means for Esteban, his estimation of European superiority fizzles. As Said suggests, the truth of the orient has "overpowered the held perceptions of hegemonic forces" (6). Thus, Jean perceives himself as "falling victim to these savage aborigines" upon realizing that he is being used in Esteban's "melodrama" (Allende 214). Interestingly, neither the Trueba patriarch nor Blanca recognizes Jean's excavations as they are presented as a European normative or "civilized behavior" rather than a flagrant transgression. Thus, displacing his frustration by purposely deeming his fiancé and in-laws as savage aborigines, Jean

further acknowledges that the accompanying necessities that would completely solidify his fantasy will go unfulfilled. Nevertheless, he, like Esteban, is left with a persistent doubt regarding the potential to re-establish his pragmatic, real world authority with his exploitative business venture. Losing Blanca while attempting to recapture his financial independence and relishing in his erotic hobby not only purports his need to solidify his perceptual fantasy, it signifies his will to manipulate reality in order to achieve his fantasy. His sense of European superiority and appeal to reason fuels his intent to create fantasy rather than appeal to divination or “hocus pocus.” It is his utter disregard and disrespect that differentiates him from the other travelers in the story who question their perceptions once acculturated to a new land. His final (non)appearance, in a black coffin, in a municipal grave, in a foreign land, signifies the reality and inevitable short lifespan of those who deny the validity of “Other” perceptions. His refusal to consider the possibility of a prosperous or relevant existence other than the one perpetuated in his homeland expounds how essential (re)contextualization is for the outsider – especially the reader – who attempts to evaluate what does and does not constitute normalcy. Birthright offers no guaranteed allegiance to objectivity. While the hegemonic outlook perpetuated by Jean subsides with his death, exploitation of the orient’s perceived exoticism persists in characters that are more fundamental to the text.

Turning first to Tránsito Soto and then Nicolás, I will highlight how each exploits occidental desire for the orient, which creates a potentially evokes further hesitation in the engaged reader. Renowned for her “Tibetan gift of placing her skinny adolescent frame in her client’s hands and transporting her soul to some distant place,” Tránsito Soto’s business sense and oriental capabilities subverts power from her cliental (Allende 69). The initial loan taken from Esteban makes him a partner in her later business, as well as her body when she uses part of the fifty pesos for a permanent. Though the text describes the act of lending as a present, the loan given after the two “make love” is to be repaid “with interest,” according to her wishes (Allende 69). Esteban’s refusal of a monetary payment, preferring a favor to be named later, preserves his status as an investor in her business endeavors and her body. While the loan may be indicative of a sexual favor, Esteban’s lingering feelings for Tránsito suggest that he sees her as more than an entrepreneur: he sees her as a friend and a marital option not taken, saying “for a second I toyed with the fantasy that Tránsito was the woman I had always needed,” momentarily giving him a revitalized strength, distracting him after Clara’s death (Allende 317). Like the suggestive serpent tattoo Esteban notices weaving its way around her navel “as if it were alive,” Tránsito and her business burgeons from selling empiricists the fantasies they did not want to believe possible. The Arabian-dressed doorman Mustafá, the costumes “awaken[ing] the customers’ erotic fantasies,” and the departure of the “phony French madman” all allow the brothel to excel under its new management (Allende 315).

Tránsito effectively pulls the curtain back for the novice to see how distorting reality and embodying fantasy need not violate empirical reality to bring about a sense of imaginatively created pleasure. However, critical scrutiny of Allende’s work often targets her dichotomous characters, which at time holds merit while at others appear overzealous. Deemed a “less flat character” in comparison to the others in *House*, Donald Leslie Shaw uncovers little convincing evidence that this “whore with a heart of gold”

differs from any other rendition of the trope (60). Shaw's exploration of epitomizing characters focuses too narrowly on Tránsito's benevolent qualities rather than her tenacity to not just be "self-empowered" – as such an ambiguous label could describe any *working* girl but, nevertheless, also characterizes an aspiring business operator (60). She successfully sells the image of the colonized "Other" in her renovation of the appropriately named bordello, the Christopher Columbus. Sexual fulfillment of sailors' and government officials' whims safeguards the cooperation between prostitutes and homosexuals – ultimately gaining Tránsito the sway that allows for Alba's exoneration. Influential and atypical, the predominantly self-made prostitute stands as one of, if not *the* most, robust female characters in the text and exemplifies that inherent mystical gifts are not necessary to create merging zones through the power of suggestion – whether originating from business sense or readerly perception.

As hesitation results in a questioning of the presented perceptions, religious doctrines rooted in belief become conflated with the text's magic. Therefore, religion itself also becomes fair game for similar evaluation, and, in regards to *House*, those religious considerations that may otherwise seem foreign symbolize edifying moments where the reader discovers mainstream popularity often derives from practices that were once perceived as exotic. Inspired by religious beliefs acquired in India, the iconoclast Nicolás sells few copies of his Eastern doctrine, yet the unfamiliar spiritual mantras do evoke a mixed reaction in their ability to bend empirical laws. While using Clara's three-legged table as a medium, Nicolás gains inspiration from hashish and conversations with his Christian-induced²⁴ perception of God to embark on a journey to India where he will adopt a lifestyle closer to that of Mahatma Gandhi – as opposed to the inconclusive spiritual enlightenment provided to him by his contact with faceless spirits. Nicolás returns speaking in "Asiatic parables," and explains that he no longer eats meat (Allende 272). Furthermore, he insists that he can walk on a bed of hot coals, and he can go for three minutes without breathing. Dedication to capturing his thoughts in a winter-long euphoria inspires him to ask Esteban and Jaime for the means to publish his scriptures, which reveal the numerous names for God and various formulas for attaining Nirvana through meditative breathing. Like his earlier endeavors that mirrored Marcos's get-rich-quick schemes, his book largely fails in his home country. Failure attests to the superfluous endeavors of Hindu philosophy in the otherwise Christian country: the suggested lifestyle changes rival the impractical magic found in the big house on the corner, though the soothsayers' magical undertakings never destabilize Christianity as a different religious doctrine. Nicolás's newly acquired practices shifts the focus away from Clara's unorthodox spirituality to highlight Eastern exoticism that, in comparison to "mainstream Anglo-European religions," seems excessive (Christian 124-25). The Eastern religious practices are rejected by the hegemonic Esteban who stands as a metonymical figure for the public. Thus, another cue attempts to shift the origins of magic or exoticness to the East; nevertheless, a curiosity for the exotic ensues. Followers who seek the "millennial knowledge Nicolás had acquired in the East," (Allende 298) prompt him to take over the space his mother and her cohort previously occupied. Much

²⁴ It should be noted that references made to Christianity should be considered an encompassing, derivative term fundamentally linked to sects spreading from the Western world. As no particular sect is linked to the simulacrum, only a fundamental suggestion will be made.

to Esteban's chagrin, he incorporates Alba into his subsequently formed Institute for Union with Nothing – shaving her head and teaching her to “endlessly repeat the sacred word *Om*” – sparking a battle that concludes only after a religious freedom demonstration in which the de facto Yogi humiliates his father with a nude display of his religious piety at Congress' gates (Allende 298, original emphasis). Exile to North America transforms the outrageous Nicolás into a viable religious figure bordering on the status of an international celebrity.

Prior to gaining such a status, Nicolás shapes his belief on those adopted by Clara. Deep-seeded disbelief subsides and results in an estuary for pragmatic potential when orientalism melds into popular religious belief and bodily practice. The early contrast between the orthodox and exotic religious practices appear rightfully at odds; however, the two are destabilized, incorporated, and finally subverted by Nicolás's (re)consideration of his religious beliefs. Unsurprisingly, Marcos exemplifies early religious synthesis: orthodox prayers and his belief in the supernatural spur his supposed resurrection. Clara's earlier description of Marcos as an English colonialist draws a further comparison between her son, an English educated swindler, and her uncle. For Clara, the picture of Marcos posing on top of the vanquished tiger resembles and replaces the image of “the Virgin standing between plaster clouds and pallid angels at the main altar, one foot on the vanquished devil,” only later to have Marcos liken his recreational loincloth – the preferred attire of the enlightened Nicolás – to the “costume in which Jesus of Nazareth had preached” (Allende 9-10). Encouragement to practice magic leaves Clara in little need of orthodox religion and its figureheads who have condemned her as a child. Father Restrepo deems Clara demonically possessed and in need of an exorcism after she questions the existence of hell. Thus, mainstream religion gathers ostensible opposition from Clara and others who do not see divine providence as the ultimate sources for the supernatural and the afterlife because those who do seek mainstream, religious guidance go unfulfilled. Férule's spirit visits her sister-in-law after placing a pagan-like curse on her brother despite her dedication to unanswered, biblical prayers. Subsequently, Clara turns religious perspective upside down by calling orthodox prayers “mystical litanies” (Allende 105). Here, the novice reader (re)evaluates occidental religious implications regarding magical exploits. The magic radiating from the oriental texts and Clara provides an alternative to Christian-based dogma, which has proven inadequate to reward the pious Férule or to ease the pain of her mother who studied saints and religious miracles (Allende 40). Hitherto, Nicolás finds that combining his mother's spirituality with the will to talk to a Christian-based God produces inadequate empirical proof of the miraculous. His endeavors, which started with his reading of *The Lives of the Saints* and concluded with the Mora sisters failed attempt to endow him with their powers, can only be satisfied with the extremities to which he pushes his body and the implication that spirits do not exist without holistic unity with Nirvana. While milieu clearly separates the novice from much of the cultural significance of the text, a generational gap conditions the novice's perception of the intermingling of religious paradigms. Despite a mainstream rise in Hindu religious exercise – according to Trisha Lamb 16.5 million Americans began practicing yoga in 2005 – current religious conservatism separates a younger reader from the more tolerate and exploratory zeitgeist of the 1960s and 1970s (2). Considering the age of the novice reader, he may not

understand irony surrounding Nicolás's doctrine on Nirvana, in particular the mockery of profiting from the ideology that teaches liberation from worldly vices. Still, the engaged novice will notice that the text explicitly states that it produces his wealth in North America.

North American acceptance of Nicolás's doctrine evokes a realization that certain mysticism can garner rational acceptance despite its ties to factual inaccuracies. Exemplifying the shortcomings of both Christian and spiritual-based abilities, *House* prompts readers to question their beliefs in relation to the contextual center of various episodes, to willingly (re)contextualize in order to offer a more well-rounded interpretation that attempts to answer how and why magic preservers. While the text targets an international audience, an audience more apt to become fascinated with magical suggestions as opposed to the Chileans who would likely be concerned with Allende's depiction of the coup, it is nevertheless written with a certain assumption that all audiences understand or are familiar with general Christian ideology. The text is not written with details describing the regional contributions to the overarching belief system, a noticeable difference from the works by Latinas that McCracken highlights, because it attempts to keep the unnamed country's identity a not-so-mystical secret. Therefore, its appeal to a general consensus does not ostracize readers who do not follow the encompassing Christian faith, but, in questioning the general paradigm of the system, it brings those European and U.S. believers to a befuddling conclusion once Nicolás rises to fame: he sells the occult that has previously deemed nonsensical, notwithstanding the tendency to evaluate that which defies reason thus forcing further hesitation, sequential *evaluation*, of what constitutes viable beliefs.

Again, a proposed religious tolerance provides Nicolás the ability to practice and sell his knowledge in the United States. However, as a former Christian who follows an oriental doctrine despite a supposed known existence of the Christian perception of God, he favors and publicizes a doctrine of breathing techniques and empirical feats that attributes his enlightenment to the occidental audience because it fulfills their exact desire. Even the most basic understanding of Nirvana would render Nicolás a fake in the United States: he is not liberated or united with nothingness once he acquires wealth. And though Alba's narration suggests that his wealth was a serendipitous fulfillment of "his quest for God with his luck in the world of business," it jumbles and undermines each of the various mystical paradigms exposed in the text to confront the occidental audience with the fact that an influential contextual source of normalcy – the U.S. public – accepts the doctrine of an oxymoronic, affluent Yogi who was a known conman and gained little more than a handful of followers in his home country, which the CIA thought to be in need of U.S. intervention (Allende 300). According to Tor Egil Følund, the possibility of the supernatural or the miraculous stays intact even in the most empirically based communities because people "have the capacity for what we might call multiple partaking: being part of several plural subjects at the same time, as well as being a private subject, without feeling torn to pieces even when the different subjects oppose each other" (494). To further explain, everyone has the capacity to suspend their disbelief when doing so does not affect their ability to function accordingly with agreed-upon expectations that coincide within a given cultural context. However, Nicolás's doctrine – which draws upon European education, hegemonic religion, Clara's three-legged table,

and Eastern enlightenment – succeeds in its attempt to sell a viable, religious merging zone between actual feats of religious piety and the fantastic promise to become part of the spiritual world. The doctrine further disregards historical relevance as long as its popularity grows in the “developed world,” as long as the exotic is filtered through an uncompromised business plan that stems from an occidental reality – magical realism *par excellence*.

It would be imprudent to come to the conclusion that Allende writes her defining text as a commentary on the audience that continues to flock to her text as similar enthusiasts voraciously absorbed her guiding example in *One Hundred Years*. Yet, the unconventional juxtaposition between the magic that seldom delivers on its proposed wonder and empirical reality that emotionlessly renders crystal balls as buoys and prevents an inexplicable unlatching of Alba’s cell exemplifies a superiority or an unspoken diegetic suggestion attesting to the unpreventable forces of reality, particularly death, capable of stamping out the often competing force of magic. *House* rides the coattails of the magical realist tradition while concurrently negating the tradition’s essences by more often juxtaposing than melding the real and the fantastic, equivocating magic with tyrannical power at times only to suggest that the supernatural pales in comparison. When magical capabilities do infringe on reality, they unravel the proposed hegemonic forces that should seemingly be emulated in order to gain international influence. Power does not spawn from the current developing world of Latin American businessmen and their exploitation of locals; it most often rises out of exotic stories – the basis for growing mystical knowledge – passed down through token acts of conquest. Effectively, Allende salts the Latin American landscape. She deterritorializes magical realism by making distance an emergent necessity for her characters and readers to comprehend changes in perspective. Magic exists to create discomfort with presumed reality, and once Clara embodies that magic, her life ends. Her death exemplifies that the process for creating magic arises from interaction with the familiar, but it is never directly explained. Thus, magic slips through the cracks for the novice to imagine how the text makes it possible. Though Allende’s proceeding works certainly dip into magical realism, none perpetuate the same ostensible ties because setting does not dictate the presence of the supernatural. Readers’ expectations do. The juxtaposition and consequential power struggle between the real and the fantastic fashions beneficial results for the novice reader on the occasions when subtle unempirical suggestions result in reader hesitation, forcing the novice to evaluate why his constructed reading has been overruled by the text’s proposed reality or how the otherworldly suggestion necessitates a reimagining of his once solidified demarcated boundaries. (Re)contextualizing written, static perspective urges the novice reader to inspect the text from multiple angles rather than scouring it for what they want to be *the* correct reading. Exemplary foils to hegemonic reality, orientalism and sacred religiosity, are deconstructed and sold back to the unengaged reader at the price of their own ill-advised unilateral perception, confronting the novice reader with a moment of diffidence: neither the sacred nor the “Other” must hold a denotative significance. When contextual magic produces ruptured expectations and imbricated notions of the real and the fantastic, the text successfully influences the engaged reader to evaluate his own perception – sparking conversation and prompting interpretation.

Chapter Four

“Everything is Known”: Synthesizing Macondo’s Vacant Memories

In this chapter, I explore the different impressions of Macondo as depicted in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Leaf Storm* in order to illustrate the empty spaces within Gabriel García Márquez’s best-known fictional universe where readers, particularly the novice reader, will navigate the community’s social and developmental past to recognize how they too can contribute to its multifarious makeup. While the primary focus resides in the earlier text, the latter complements the fragmented, almost neglected marvelous elements that define Macondo once the gypsies’ goods transform the former sleepy village of twenty adobe houses into a bustling town where modernity ushers in the apocalypse. Societal based memories, communal participation, disengaged community members, and determination respectively contribute to the rise and fall of Macondo. Each contributing factor highlights the undercurrents of each text that ultimately invite the reader to share in creation of the various takes on Macondo’s construction and destruction. Societal based memories provide the means to continue traditions of the past and to refine the opportunities for growth, but as memories are essentially annihilated or modified in Macondo, apathy leaves the characters with little motivation to cultivate their surroundings. Communal participation, in the other words reading and interacting with Macondo’s story, provides readers with the means to envision a potential for growth: engagement with the text will provide an outline of the former small village for the novice reader to shape with insights regarding understood communal structure – just as the town’s textual residents have former social and public ideals they use to outline their early growth and prosperity. However, once the Buendías become disengaged community members, with little conceptualization of their civic duties, they silently approve a stagnant existence. It is lifestyle which induces longing for a childlike past where the paradoxical blessing and hindrance of innocence permits credulous acceptance of social practices because critical eyes capable of recognizing trite approaches become introverted, concerned with individual tasks rather than communal growth. Determination to obtain what is perceived as objective information unites the sentiments of Aureliano Babilonia and the novice reader in his respective clue-hunting phase: both readers search for a sense of objectivity in their respective texts. Lacking self-reliance and the know-how to refute such futile notions, neither the novice nor Aureliano Babilonia demonstrate the critical reading skills necessary to preserve Macondo’s existence.

Throughout the development of García Márquez’s fictitious Macondo community, the narrator of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* implies that the only thing that stays the same is change. The novel begins by describing Macondo’s foundation “built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs” (*One Hundred Years* 1). Highlighting the novel’s inaugural life-death-rebirth simile, the cyclical construction jump-starts the most prevalent theme of the text: separation inevitably buds where modernization breeds communicable stagnation – which initiates communal condemnation and eventual rebirth. As the final pages reveal that the enigmatic and influential gypsy Melquíades pens Macondo’s seemingly predestined story, inexplicable vacancies left within the text propose that the familial Buendía task of translating his scriptures could only be done so

verbatim. To clarify, the Buendías cannot add to the cyclical story because their memories emanate from an imagined space where the past and the future are finite yet veiled. While the third-person omniscient narrator depicts the story in accordance to Melquíades’s translated text as the gypsy enters, exits, lives, dies, and resurrects, it would be a weak assumption to deem the prophetic gypsy the work’s narrator. Memories expunged by various narrators in *Leaf Storm*, and to a lesser extent “Big Mama’s Funeral,” highlight the inconsistencies in a single Macondo timeline. Accordingly, narrative gaps persist. Episodes incapable of being reconstructed by Macondo residents – particularly those during the insomnia plague in *One Hundred Years* – are reconstructed by Melquíades based on his own experiences with the residents he cures. Cerebral paths generally tethering characters to their memories break with the narrator’s influence, thwarting potential efforts to correct perpetually destructive practices and suggesting that incomplete instances of recalling cannot make new possibilities for a seemingly condemned community. Melquíades’s Sanskrit scroll reifies shared memories in Macondo, granting his words a fixed presence within the text while paradoxically presenting a diachronic reading to the audience.²⁵ In relation to *Leaf Storm*, the reliance on the Bristol Almanac indicates that authoritative documentation guides those Macondo residents as well.

Lack of documentation and the founders’ will to initially keep Macondo free from outside influences exemplifies the material from which the narrator draws as the residents’ memories can create a sound narrative – which will compromise much of the scriptures. The inexplicable ability to capture what functions as the paradoxical past-future of the Buendía family, perpetuated and represented as a relentless cycle with each reading of the text, explicitly suggests that the family’s fate can only be (re)imagined by an external reading audience who does not rely on the Sanskrit prophesies. Here, the maturing novice reader can present himself as a disinterested party who can decipher where the narration needs supplementation to maintain the magical realist aura, but only after he realizes that the Macondo community births memories not to be overshadowed by the written word.

Understanding the significance of memories is necessary in order to explore how community members remember. According to Jenéa Tallentire, “[a] model [is present] of three essential aspects to ‘community’: interaction, imagination, and process” (197). Members must have an active role in the shaping of a community. This does not imply that a premeditated commitment to establishing social norms must be present, but engagement between community members is a must. Such engagement, even on a casual basis, qualifies as community building, as “the construction of communities is a social process, reproduced in the interactions of social networks, and represented by signs and symbols in the imaginings of individuals internal and external to the community” (Tallentire 197). Tallentire’s assertion solidifies the notion that constructive social

²⁵ Diachronic in the sense that ellipsis in Macondo’s timeline permits the reader to think of the town or village differently in different texts. For an explanation as to how magical realists text bifurcate timelines to exemplify the process of postcolonial, see Selmon 411.

interaction qualifies as community cultivation.²⁶ Simple social interaction inadvertently establishes how community members who are part of a newly built society will behave. Seemingly built atop mnemonic quicksand, Macondo's sense of community constitutes its inhabitant's ways of life. Therefore, Macondo's founding as a community – with few explicit national ties – allows its inhabitants to establish themselves as they see fit. José Arcadio Buendía's stigmatized, incestuous marriage to his cousin Úrsula and his murder of Prudencio Aguilar encapsulates the memories that he and Úrsula intend to leave behind in their former home, Riohacha. Thus, Riohacha, which is never explicitly associated with a nation, let alone Colombia, becomes the basis of Macondo's first makeup of its social foundation. Macondo will move forward from Riohacha's social norms in order to shape its foundational roots. To the novice reader, Macondo function as a new beginning to exhibit a growing skill set, because it represents a rebirth – *tabula rasa* – where general memories seeming to coincide with the human condition are applicable as long as they are based within a functional and established society.

Macondo is without an identity beyond the social constructs of its first inhabitants because it lacks a solid connection to a sense of national identity. Organized politics do not factor into Macondo's founding, which leaves residents live in a self-sustained community appearing to be the site of a utopia: no one dies and ideology does not separate residents. However, José Arcadio's ability to guide his peers puts him in a leadership role and consequentially exhibits a social hierarchy that will stay intact until his de facto status crumbles with the arrival of governmental authority. Prior to the unexpected arrival, Macondo flourishes as a homogenous community with few inherent social flaws, where residents revert to the private routines of their former ways without reinvigorating the town with the restrictive standards of Riohacha. However, rebuilding primarily through foundational norms exemplifies that “community can be extended to all types of groups that possess a sense of shared identity and history based on material or social constructs such as geography, ethnicity, or gender” (Tallentire 197). Paradoxically, Macondo is based upon the inherent actions and thoughts of its minute population of wayfarers. Thus, José Arcadio Buendía can ban cock fighting, which prompted his murder of Aguilar and his subsequent search for a new place to call home. A founder's authority enables José Arcadio Buendía to decide regulatory matters; however, public law has no effect on the fantastic possibility of Úrsula giving birth to a child born with a pig's tail – a potential repercussion of the couple's genetically transgressive marriage. Other founders accept the couple's marriage as they recognize José Arcadio Buendía as a leader. Hence, residents can hardly judge those who commit to the same type of relationship. Understanding amongst community members is a benefit of such a small community, but when communities expand, such understandings are lost.

Through a sleight-of-hand evolution of Macondo, the Buendías fail to see the modernization of the town. Mentions of the growth by the narrator infrequently cue the novice reader into noticing the former village's expedited evolution, but few explanations extend a definitive elucidation as to how Macondo grows from a twenty adobe village into a bustling town appealing to the likes of exotic booksellers and piano instructors. It is

²⁶ Communal destruction certainly holds a place in a community's memory. However, destruction in Macondo tends to be disregarded or completely forgotten – signaling it as a unique take on community. This issue will be further addressed below.

the place of readers to issue interpretations regarding the influence of governmental and industrial impact that alters the town with little help from the original founders. As a consequence of not realizing the communal breakdown, life erodes. Prior to the arrival of Mr. Brown's hegemonic banana company, the Buendía family generally exhibits a self-serving concern for the community after the village begins to take steps towards modernization in the form of their endeavors with experimental science and burgeoning capitalism. Sites of destruction, no matter how vivid, are forgotten. Essentially, García Márquez's story evolves into an allegorical recapturing of post-colonial Colombia. Wishing to embody Melquíades's ability to write the history of Latin America, García Márquez cannot but help portray Latin America as a place of mysticism – fundamentally different from the rational world. Roberto González Echevarría's analysis offers a striking suggestion: he claims that the Latin American narrative does not attempt to capture things as they are or things as they were, rather they are an "unwriting" and rewriting of history (20). Writing the history of Latin America, as it is or as memory serves, perpetuates the notion that Latin American history is a victim's history – Macondo is a synecdoche of Latin America. However, as the novel suggests, the absolute disregard of memory in favor of blind repetition and reliance upon supposedly authoritative works obstructs the development of necessary critical thinking skills that encourage readers to seek multiple perspectives. Through the use of fading memories, the story demonstrates how the memories extracted by the characters within the text serve little purpose if they fail to create a link between modernization, based on economic imperialism, and the exploitation of a local people.

By inexplicably increasing the population of Macondo, the narrator distances José Arcadio Buendía's past and his present. Twenty adobe homes multiply within a short, ambiguous timeframe where "[w]ithin a few years Macondo was a village that was more orderly and hardworking than any known until then by its *three hundred inhabitants*" (*One Hundred Years* 9, emphasis added). Extra inhabitants are injected into the story without any explanation as to how they came to be. As the expansion cannot easily be credited to birthrate and occurs before the gypsies' first visit, it becomes the place of the reader to interject some explanation as to how Macondo continues to grow with few means to do so. While Macondo is still an enclosed environment, an increased population potentially signifies familial expansion – such is the case of the Buendías. Of course, the later inclusion of magical properties will open further possibilities. Nevertheless, support for new life emboldens responsibility and prosperity to make the village into an environment to preserve family values. Breakdown in communication between the text and the reader presents this potential problem as an early opportunity for the reader to become engaged in the text – a conclusion cannot be attributed to magic as it does not yet exist. *Post hoc* magic offers an explanation once the gypsy magic flourishes, but, as the novel is the quintessential work of magical realism, the novice cannot but help have a preconceived conception of what is to come. For the novice reader reliant solely on his tendency to scour the text, Melquíades's scriptures can viably explain all, but this sentiment proves problematic as his various absences in Macondo's timeline fail to make him the ultimate authority. Though Melquíades's death signifies him as a general resident once he settles, Melquíades first represent the onslaught of outsiders who detrimentally alter the peaceful village.

Expanding communities suffer from severed connections between inhabitants. Fissures form in the community, and when they form, the community is susceptible to shaping by outside influence: “The first time Melquíades’ tribe arrived, selling glass balls for headaches, everyone was surprised that they had been able to find that village lost in the drowsiness of the swamp” (*One Hundred Years* 9). Capitalism has no place within the utopian-like Macondo; still, these holders of convenient commodities become the de facto bourgeoisie. A warm welcome into Macondo allows the capitalistic gypsies to alter the ideology of the communal, self-sustained village. Accordingly, those who look to improve or contribute to the village’s cultivation and contribute to its culture are welcome – if they can find it. Opening the page drops the novice into Macondo, but as its cultivation proves necessary, building the village from the ground up, the passive reading or scouring cannot suffice. Something must be contributed. Something must garner trade for the gypsy magic. According to Benedict Anderson, notions of trade with the outside world demarcate the community at large: “Thus, in world-historical terms bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis” (77). A connection to an unforeseen supply and a developing demand for foreign wonders makes the final product of José Arcadio Buendía’s alchemic craft a necessity in an imagined market.²⁷

Medieval science paradoxically unifies and segregates Macondo. Unofficial travel bands Macondo’s original residents together in their search for a sea port – ensuring a potential connection to the outside world when they deem their budding community fit for outside stimulus. Yet, aside from their demonstrated work ethic to be self-sustained and their desire to emigrate from coastal Riohacha without any intention of return, residents show little solidarity in their identity as residents of a new society. Unification centers on residents’ aim to leave the past; such a desire for change keeps a metaphorical door open to new concepts. Furthermore, the novel’s cyclical structure keeps the door propped open in fashion where social establishment gain a rudimentary identity with little success: an absence of newly established practices originating in Macondo fail to spark memories tying residents to their own established ways of life before allowing the outside world into their new homes. Thus, a malleable foundation enables Melquíades’s foreign wares to fascinate Macondo – absorbing residents into a formerly unconsidered world of magic, a state exemplifying how plausibility can subvert possibility. The elliptical sleight of hand the narrator applies further emphasizes that once magnets, alchemy, and ice inhibit the development of practices linked to the newly established Macondo. The items Melquíades introduces to the village sever ties to reality and induce José Arcadio Buendía to believe in science he knew to exist, a discipline which he could only recognize with a seemingly authoritative introduction. Uncertainty regarding Melquíades’s mortality and his drafted scriptures likens his function in the novel to that of the narrator; moreover, his manipulative goods expand the perception of the reader, who consequently must alter the limitations of reality to coincide with what the text signifies as acceptable premises. To simplify, wonder captures the reader just as it does the characters, where fascination and obsession leads to magical results. The narrator provides the influential suggestions that would allow readers to find it permissible to

²⁷ For a thorough definition of the imagined community, see Anderson 6.

accept anything being sold from the gypsy caravan. Macondo's residents do not juxtapose former limitations of their existence with the one being offered by Melquíades because a new way of life is their reason for relocating. Little communal identity makes forming memories associated within said community difficult. Ice, but most of all, alchemy take away any sense of leadership or community organization that Macondo had in José Arcadio Buendía: "‘Incredible things are happening in the world,’ he said to Úrsula. ‘Right there across the river there are all kinds of magical instruments while we keep on living like donkeys.’ Those who had known him since the foundation of Macondo were startled at how much he had changed under Melquíades’ influence" (*One Hundred Years* 8). Nomadic gypsies and their marvels provide the desired collective identity that Macondo's inhabitants could not while disconnecting the sense of central leadership José Arcadio Buendía provided. Residents and the novice take a passive role when reliable memories no longer predicate the past, with the exception of some foundational roots.

The homogenous community of former Riohacha residents shares a sense of solidarity established through their exodus and from their memories. Heterogeneity encapsulated not only by the gypsies' presence but by the nature of the gypsy culture implies that Macondo's evolution is inevitable. Macondo is no longer just a village of three hundred self-sustained people. It is also a town worthy of a stop on the gypsies' tour route, a place where profits can be made. José Arcadio Buendía's insatiable interest in the gypsy "science" demonstrates how the village's initial lifestyle withholds them from joining in the "incredible things" – leaving him to attest to the necessity of the world outside Macondo (*One Hundred Years* 8). Integration with this traveling band of gypsies becomes a way to establish a productive identity beyond benefits of Macondo's utopian atmosphere, which boasts of equal shares and similarly built homes. Furthermore, his obsession with Melquíades's marvels makes him the ambassador of Macondo's amalgamated identity – separating his personal from his public persona. No longer can he fully embody the leadership that necessitates both "the *personal identity*, made up of cognition about the person's uniqueness and individuality; and the *social identity*, made up of the groups and social categories to which that group belongs" (Gaskell and Wright 180, original emphasis). Ironically, José Arcadio Buendía's reclusive behavior becomes a necessity for the rest of Macondo to establish its social memory. Perspective begins to change when others attest to an ordinary home only harboring a potential for gypsy magic.

Introducing another perspective or timeline in which Macondo exists – as changed yet similar – illustrates the potential of multiple perspectives or interpretations for community formation; these multiple, solidified perspectives act as a helping hand to the novice reader looking to gain access to the depicted history embedded in the narrative. Disjointed, any authoritative chronicle of Macondo's history resists solidification: the town fluctuates through the textual inhabitants' and readers' perceptions. The metamorphosing outlines of the Macondo depicted in *One Hundred Years* intertwine with visions depicted in *Leaf Storm* and "Big Mamma's Funeral" and refute the idea that the community's past – captured through their memories and subsequent narratives – exists on a single plane. Residents who comprise the textual background for the Buendía family do exist, yet they do not attest to the same marvelous

events depicted in the Macondo that the Buendías experience. Nevertheless, they harbor similar prejudices against outsiders as the Buendías. For example, generational perspectives offered by the Colonel, his daughter Isabel, and her young son in *Leaf Storm* attest to the communal repugnance directed towards the nameless doctor who is given a place to live in the Colonel's home, the doctor's acceptance predicated on a letter of recommendation from Colonel Aureliano Buendía (*Leaf* 17). Of course, Colonel Aureliano Buendía carries a defiant, hyper-revolutionary and hyper-sexualized sentiment only forgotten in the final chapters of García Márquez's *magnum opus*, not a mere twenty-five years after his campaigns. Chronologically, the letter writer only holds an anecdotal position within the novella, perhaps rightfully so given the crushing weight of memories and his lost legacy in the Macondo of *Leaf Storm*. Nevertheless, an allusion to the Colonel's past as the son of two founders of Macondo who were first cousins looking for a "promised land, [and] peace" draws strong implications to a shared parental lineage with Colonel Aureliano Buendía (*Leaf* 24).

Death breaks the suggested familial tie between the two colonels: as the oldest of the three *Leaf Storm* narrators recalls a discussion with the Guajiro Indian Meme, the reader learns that the Colonel's mother dies in childbirth and his father remarries, thus freeing him from the solitude almost inherently tied to the Buendías in *One Hundred Years*. In retrospect, this version of Macondo seems to co-exist with the Buendías's; however, explicit notions of founding established in *One Hundred Years* applicably, but loosely cross-referenced in *Leaf Storm*, suggest that Macondo's history is not fixated; rather, timelines overlap differences between the intersecting existential realms where details suggest that in different times the characters were slightly different people or had different legacies. Duplicating names and epithets while drawing similarities to characters only to break them, García Márquez leaves the history of Macondo to be re-created through the characters, not entirely by the semi-authoritative narrators. It is a methodology that resembles the suggestive world Jorge Luis Borges creates in "The Garden of Forking Paths," in the sense that visions of Macondo juxtapose themselves against one another. Different memories produce different outcomes, which highlight a synthesis of the socially constructed memories, the speaker's narration, and the listener's conception. In one Macondo, the Colonel is a member of the Buendía family. In another, Big Mama is the sovereign ruler, just one in a dynasty lasting two hundred years, where "[t]he town was founded on her surname," yet "[n]o one knew the origin, or the limits or the real value of her estate" ("Big Mama" 186). Funeral processions and the subsequent wake for Melquíades following his second death rival the celebration of Big Mama's life – more a century after her birth – yet no memories are held or recounted of her rule in either vision of Macondo before an allusive utterance unmakes its existence. Initial reliance on the text for explanations, the novice obliges to engage when no such resolution emerges; the cross-referential tendency to think using the various Macondo contexts, both the magical and the generally more empirical, diminishes the anxiety to follow textual indications. Thus, different links to the village's past must be consulted to formulate a comfortable decision. *Leaf Storm* provides a textual example: the Colonel strongly depends on Meme, the Meme of his Macondo, to re-establish his self-perception as it relates to the town's founders. His decision holds precedence regarding how the public will remember him and how that socially constructed memory will reverberate in a

town where the funeral arrangements he makes for the publically despised doctor could be reconstructed and misconstrued in a detrimental manner. The recalled past(s) and considered future(s) form an adumbrated, ontological vision shared across the community. It provides a pliable mindscape for memories, a home for suitable and willing participants. Consequently, stories will form to narrate each vision, to give glimpses of the past: “I [the Colonel] was sitting across from the Indian woman [Meme], who spoke with an accent mixed with precision and vagueness, as if there was a lot of incredible legend in what she was recalling but also as if she was recalling it in good faith and even with the conviction that the passage of time had changed legend into reality that was remote but hard to forget” (*Leaf* 24). Macondo’s own history becomes a thing of legend, ideas that had to ruminate within its own locale before being shared, a past not to be chronicled. Meme’s indigenous ancestry causes her mere tone to capture a double-voiced discourse – tied to the heightened magical realist mode that later versions of Macondo will explicitly highlight – suggesting that different perspectives on the limitations of reality can manifest in a single re-creation of community.

Incidentally, Meme’s presence evokes the anthropological roots of magical realism originated by Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Ángel Asturias. Time stands still for Carpentier’s narrator/protagonist in *The Lost Steps*; the cocooned village of Santa Mónica de los Venados provides a euphoric calm in contrast to the fast-paced, New York life. The Colonel’s narration emphasizes the necessity of passing time to turn fact into legend, which will enable Macondo to have its founding shrouded in obscurity yet paradoxically undertakes a booming transformation into a bustling city where self-sufficient isolation grows boring and obscure after perceived magic has altered the limitations of reality. Macondo’s evolution stands in direct opposition to the metaphorical rebirth undertaken by Carpentier’s anonymous protagonist where a canal flows through the doorway to a magical existence that grows inconvenient when Santa Mónica de los Venados’ muse-like calm excites more musical creativity than the limited paper supply can hold. The need for modern goods obligates the composer to board the plane, which incites a “joyous cry” from the Indians just prior to his death-like slumber as a lingering mist engulfs the aircraft (238). In Macondo, advances in science are no longer “white man’s thing[s],” but unlocked ideas conflated with the fantastic – perpetuated by foreign entrepreneurs who look to exploit those who have been blinded by ostentatious parades (Carpentier 232).

The Colonel’s belief in Meme coupled with his position as military and narrative authority represents a conjoining legacy in the fashion of history making, exemplifying how various strands of history offer the opportunity for others to compose a story drawing upon hazy memories. Hence, threads of societal remembering recede when juxtaposed with one another. Macondo never breeds the same memories in its public perception. It is constantly changing, evolving. Furthermore, different timelines present different conceptions, thus Macondo itself is never signified. Historicity encapsulated in the diachronic term “Macondo” indicates that the events within Melquíades’s supposed master narrative change regularly with interpretation of historic timelines – just as the enigmatic gypsy’s parchments seemingly surpass the authoritative influence of the Bristol Almanac that earlier substitute religious scriptures in the Pup’s sermons. Still, scriptures

do not solidify Macondo's fate. Interpretation based on shared memories and perception only offer guiding principles.

The marvelous inventions of a more modern world give residents of the Buendías's Macondo further incentive to formulate their identity around magical capabilities. Thus, residents can differentiate themselves from their former selves in Riohacha. Tallentire suggests that fresh environments and notions of community share individual sentiments instilled with the memories of those who share a space: "Social memory can be generally understood as the shared narratives of a community's past, which are essential to its identity and cohesion" (198). The gypsies and their marvels create what Mark Freeman calls a "sign post" in the evolution of Macondo (265).²⁸ Thus, paradox surrounds the gypsies. Their presence triggers the first collective memories worth noting, but magic overshadows a past rooted in reality. Nevertheless, residents can finally begin to share their own recollections rooted in Macondo's nascent past. The novice reader also finds comfort once the foundation has supposedly been solidified: a sense of textual certainty gives him a substance on which to base observations. However, as magic potentially overshadows the potential for other readings, the consequence of the novice's scouring methodology would leave him susceptible to complacency, just like the Macondo residents before being displaced by outside influence.

In opening the gates to the gypsies, Macondo is no longer a strictly self-sufficient village. Allowing the gypsies a place to stay and trade their wares opens the vagabonds' capitalistic network; on the other hand, residents now have an opportunity to distinguish themselves as well as to cultivate the land for the public good: Gaskell and Writght emphasize how "memories remain and/or become vivid recollections because they constitute positively to personal and social identity and thus serve to maintain or enhance self-esteem" (180). The memories associated with the gypsies promote Macondo's identity. Úrsula's fearful observations of her husband's obsession with trying to find treasure with magnets or with attempting to create a memory machine so that he can remember everything that the gypsies have brought to Macondo opposes his unsuccessful scientific endeavors. Such differences in personal perception beneficially disjoint communities: insistence on capturing on objective reality stymies the critical, perceptive mind. Consistent yet apprehensive, the Buendía patriarch prefers a search for validity before unveiling his work. Like the novice reader formerly in need of authorial clues, he fears subjectivity: only public acknowledgment testifying to an objective, golden validity in alchemic and scholarly efforts can garner satisfaction. Memories of the gypsies' arrival and the subsequent repercussions matter only because they unite Macondo's social memory. James Fentress and Chris Wickham explain that validity is only a partial agent for social solidification: "'Objective' memory is simply the better vehicle for the conveyance of information; it is the aspect of our memory most easily available to others.... what emerges at the point of articulation is not the object part of memory, but its social aspect" (6-7). Memories sparking modernization within Macondo open community, and to the perceptive Úrsula, acceptance of the gypsies feels troubling. Their presence does not create upheaval or exploitation, but the sign post memory, the

²⁸ Freeman describes a sign post as a catalytic maker for remembered event(s) that lacks the detail that would make for descriptive recall.

normalization of accepting outsiders, leaves the doors open to an epoch of aggregate forgetfulness.

The amnesia plague – deemed an insomnia plague – is brought to Macondo along the same trade route travelled by the gypsies. After a group of hide dealers bring the infected Rebeca worlds fade and blend. While Úrsula had previously brought a group of people who appeared to be outsiders, their roots trace back to the same as Macondo's founders: "They were men and women like them, with straight hair and dark skin, who spoke the same language and complained of the same pains," as opposed to Rebeca who begins her trip from the town of Manaure (*One Hundred Years* 36). Her origins are never completely disclosed other than by a letter that loosely ties her to the Buendías. Rebeca functions as a vehicle for the novel's plot; the ensuing insomnia plague cannot happen without her. Another sleight of hand best describes this girl's introduction and consequential evolution of the story when taking into consideration her foretold presence. Visitación's recognition of the plague's symptoms prompts her to inform José Arcadio Buendía that Rebeca could infect other residents, triggering severe memory loss within Macondo. José Arcadio Buendía, as a man of science, disregards superstition and returns to his obsessive endeavors in alchemy. Insomnia forces Macondo to stay awake in a state of idiotic limbo; the plague severs ties to the residents' most basic memories, coinciding with Connerton's perception of past activities where, "knowledge of all human activities in the past is possible only through a knowledge of traces" (13). Aureliano aptly perceives the traces linked to the town's dissolving past, present, and future: he encourages preservation through the written word, recommending his father to place a sign at the beginning of the road that reads "Macondo." The sign around the cow's neck explaining how to sterilize milk suggests that residents cannot evoke memory through action either: "Habit is knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body; and in the cultivation of habit it is our body which 'understands'" (Connerton 94). Involuntary forgetting abolishes agency: the illness forces Macondo's residents to depend on written instructions to remind them of who they are and how they are supposed to function before being cured. Signs and instructions hold value where recounted narrative cannot.

Unfortunately, selective forgetting – purposely forgetting painful events – previously used to ease former anxieties is lost as well. José Arcadio Buendía's obsession with the gypsies' wonders prompt him to neglect his commitment to the cultivation of Macondo that would consequently bolster social memory. Shutting out his personal memories exacerbates his stagnant imagination and his ability to see beyond the Macondo cultivated by the gypsies. Obsession serves as a fulfilling distraction or blockade for José Arcadio Buendía rather than a complete erasure; however, his once enjoyed therapeutic forgetting cannot exist when Prudencio Aguilar's ghost visits. What was purposely lost prior to the insomnia plague resurfaces and re-establishes troubling memories. The power to forget the past essentially serves as a defensive mechanism, as Paul Ricoeur explains: "Forgetting impressions and events we have experienced (that is to say, things we know or knew) and forgetting projects, amounting to omissions, to select ignorance, reveals a sly side of the unconscious when it is placed on the defensive" (447). Fear of the insomnia plague pacifies frantic learning and prompts conservational efforts to preserve basic forms of identity – demonstrated through the "Macondo" sign.

Essentially, memory preservation exhibits an effort to ensure that selected memories can be enjoyed while those chosen to be ignored will stay that way. Incidentally, a neighboring sign stating that “God exists” reflects the sentiments of García Márquez’s predecessors, namely Carpentier and Asturias: aligning scientific interest with religious piety exemplifies the melding of European surrealism and Latin American anthropological beliefs that the two magical realist precursors use to counteract the occidental dismissal of Latin American literature. Not coincidentally, a set of English encyclopedias – believed to harbor objective truth – will negate Macondo’s existence outside the written word and provide the means ultimately to destroy the subaltern world, discussed further below. In regards to the plague, Ricoeur’s discussion of public and private memory lapse emphasizes how “[i]ndividual manifestations of forgetting are inextricably mixed with its collective forms, to the point that the most troubling experiences of forgetting, such as obsession, display their most malevolent effects only on the scale of collective memories” (443-44). The illness resulting in a scattered existence could be ideal for the Buendías who have traveled to escape their past, as well as the community that relies on polychromatic gypsies to define communal culture. If authoritative signs cement meaning, the novice reader should take heed. Assertions imposed on Macondo from the outside world publicize the constructive behavior of the novice reader to fill the portions of the story that neither the narrator nor any scripture can provide.

Total erasure leaves the reader and Melquíades in the position to rebuild in their respective vision. The temporary loss of identity functions as a punishment for steps taken towards a modern existence; it foreshadows the future for the residents of the former utopia. Memories erased by the insomnia plague are inherently linked to identity, and as Fentress and Wickham explain, people have the power to be their own creators through their memories, but without a basis, identity is lost: “When we remember, we represent ourselves and to ourselves and to those around us...the way we present ourselves in our memories, the way we define our personal and collective identities through our memories...and the way we transmit these memories to others – is a study of the way we are” (Fentress and Wickham 7). The Buendía’s community identify as people who can be their own innovators just before the plague. When Rebeca unleashes the plague, the normative is associated with scientific advances and a postal service. However, when unable to cure themselves of the plague, they grow reliant once again on gypsy magic. Melquíades has the power to give Macondo the means to advance their civilization, and he can cure their ailments when they overstep their boundaries. His memories of Macondo before the plague will influence the Macondo’s written future, yet his clear vision, unlike Aureliano’s befuddled memories, remain inaccessible until Macondo has advanced far beyond its once utopian identity.

The clairvoyant Aureliano Buendía’s announcement regarding Rebeca’s arrival further provides circumstances for revisiting the circularity of the narrative. Aureliano’s ambiguous prediction regarding a new arrival falls upon deaf ears as the community open to outsiders. Engaged readers may perceive Aureliano’s gift as glimpses into the future; however, the boy’s clairvoyance potentially links past memories, which Melquíades will capture in his Sanskrit scrolls, consequently forcing the characters to relive the document’s contents for the current and future readings. Under such conditions, Rebeca’s

arrival is not ploy to further the plot, but a circular spinning of the story, making Aureliano's gift a tie to memory as well as clairvoyance. Born with his eyes open, Aureliano becomes the one male Buendía who keeps traces of his experience through repetitive cycles of birth and death. Aureliano appears to possess the potential to live outside Melquíades's text, yet the cyclical implication made by the scrolls portrays Aureliano's gift as somewhat of a paradox. Upon completion of the novel – and simultaneously the completed translation of the Sanskrit scrolls – one of the looming questions is whether Aureliano actually has clairvoyant powers. Would his gift better be characterized as a dim memory? To clarify, the fulfilled prophecy at the end states that “races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on the earth,” but the prophecy's precision depends on the cyclical behavior of the Buendías, particularly their propensity for incest (*One Hundred Years* 417). While the Buendías may not have a chance to right their wrongs, they remain in a textual purgatory; Aureliano apathetically remembers as his fate cannot be changed. As Paul Connerton suggests, traces of experience contribute to the building and understanding of memories: “More fundamentally, it is that in all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all; that prior to any single experience, our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines, of typical shapes of experienced objects” (6). Thus, Aureliano is a link from the present to the past, yet his trace memories do not enable him to alter the present because ennui for Remedios, described below, drives him into apathetic despair. If he does represent a link to the past and the future, then his would-be actions exemplify another link to other timelines.

Implications made regarding Macondo's cultural and metaphysical potential seep from the expressive language used to describe the parallel lifespans of the one-time small village. If multiple versions or timelines exist, then the most obvious windows to those the side-straddling universes are metaphors and “as if” constructions found in the stories. Metaphors used in *One Hundred Years* often foreshadow supernatural occurrences that will later come to fruition. Born with his eyes open, alluding to his powers of sight where sight should not be present, the future Colonel Aureliano Buendía accurately predicts the arrival of Rebecca to Macondo; moreover, his prophesies come to fruition despite empirical impossibility: “The pot firmly placed in the center of the table, but just as soon as the child made his announcement, it began an unmistakable movement toward the edge” (*One Hundred Years* 15). Power residing within the authority of the Sanskrit scriptures written in hindsight offers some explanation to the prehistoric egg-like rock/metaphorical realization question. The young Aureliano Buendía's pot prediction continues as follows, “*as if* impelled by some inner dynamism, and it fell and broke on the floor” (*One Hundred Years* 15, emphasis added). An implied explanation presents itself within the accompanying “as if” construction – heightening the marvelous capabilities beyond the initially uttered suggestion. To explain, not only does Aureliano foresee the containers destruction, it is infused with a power all its own, defying the typical limitations of its capabilities. Confidence in the established unempirical limitations and expectations focused on magic dissolve before the reader's eyes. Anderson explains that the idea of a novel presents a basic form of imaging where a textual cue, such as “meanwhile,” allows readers to shift from one event to another that

takes place in the same timeline, but in a different location (25). Employing the notion of multiple timelines, it is pertinent to note the idea of “elsewhere” signaled through the “as if” construction used in describing the broken pot. Compelled to move, the pot completes its destiny to break, but as Úrsula does not share in Aureliano’s foresight, her surprise signifies that in another of Macondo’s timelines, the pot does not shatter.

In relation to *Leaf Storm*, the notion of metaphor primarily functions as a means of difference or deferral. Resembling Jacques Derrida’s notion of “différance,” the overarching leaf storm metaphor disguises and delays the onset of the torrential rains that will drive the banana company from Macondo before the winds foreseen by Isabel can bring existential impossibility. The leaf storm epitomizes a concept within a metaphorical vernacular of residents undergoing post-colonial exploitation, and it suggests a proposed reality where existence will end in a natural disaster unleashed by an imposing force – industry being a “natural” manifestation in Macondo’s timeline. Here the “as if” construction solicits the ripening novice reader to take a step beyond the tame or marvelously mild Macondo of *Leaf Storm*. Here, it is best to remember the “as if” construction connected to Meme’s depiction mentioned above. The textual cue imposes a notion of imagination buried within the construction – a type of hesitation that differs from the outright confrontation found in more explicit merging zones of the marvelous and the real, as explained in this work’s introduction. The expressive metaphor wills physical identification. Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. and Teenie Matlock concisely explain the process: “Metaphorical simulations are not abstract, or amodal, but are created in terms of ‘as if’ bodily action, where people imagine moving their bodies in ways specific to their metaphorical understandings of the abstract concepts noted in the metaphorical statement” (165). The “as if” construction asks the novice to imagine magical possibilities unavailable within *Leaf Storm* – and for that matter the real world – possibilities more likely found in *One Hundred Years*. Conceptualizations of the possible materialize by imagining the body acting in an abstract manner; the engaged novice imagines himself opening a door to a separate existence where what is not possible in one context is both possible and probable in another. Regarding the notion of timelines, the novice reader may consider what it would be like to live in separate exists where those embodied, metaphorical actions could be real – where different versions of the same world can exist. Though such an idea would not explain the use of magic, as discussed in chapter two, it can aid in the idea of separate metaphysical timelines where evaluating the use of magic leads to textual analysis. In order to perceive how such possibilities may be construed, the novice ponders the embodiment of the metaphorical “as if.” Emboldened possibilities – literalizing metaphors – helps create a link between the various versions of Macondo.

An implied “as if” construction is employed with the introduction of an enigmatic authority figure whose presence transforms Macondo’s identity. After the insomnia plague subsides, “Don Apolinar Moscote, the magistrate, had arrived in Macondo very quietly. He put up Hotel Jacob...and on the following day he rented a small room with a door on the street two blocks away from the Buendía house” (*One Hundred Years* 55). Using the plague as a forefront, lost memories in Macondo allows the insertion of a new man who will shift Macondo’s identity from a village to a town through civil oversight. Moscote’s introduction mirrors Melquíades’s. Both bring a sense of evolutionary promise

to Macondo. However, unlike the gypsy, governmental authority, which is almost non-existent prior to his introduction, forces a problematic relationship with founders from the moment of arrival. Moscote delivers a mandate that every house must be painted blue to celebrate national independence; such a blatant use of authority upsets the balance Macondo establishes with itself after its scientific revolution: ““In this town we do not give orders with pieces of paper, he [José Arcadio Buendía] said without losing his calm. ‘We don’t need judges here because there’s nothing that needs judging’” (*One Hundred Years* 56). Moscote’s metonymic mandate attempts to erase the last traces of a pure Macondo. While flight and magic butterflies are forthcoming, Moscote’s introduction accounts for a different moment of hesitation not linked specifically to the marvelous. His ostensible appearance is a potential red herring. It is the narrator’s unspoken dare to clue collectors: was he present before the plague? Has evidence been missed? Ellipsis used in a world that blends the marvelous and the real produces the difficulties in the novice’s former skillset. Acting as an inquisitive extension of the maturing novice, José Arcadio Buendía recognizes the potential danger in Moscote, but his response is tardy. Moscote has already established himself as a fixed member of Macondo.

The residents’ inability to remember – or to create new memories – under the influence of the plague provides the necessary gap for a much more efficient modernization of Macondo. Macondo has roads. The Hotel Jacob is only three *blocks* from the Buendías’ house. Moscote’s silent arrival ushers in a second epoch of modernization and a resolute bourgeoisie presence – much more efficient than the first. Though José Arcadio Buendía shows hostility towards establishing advancement, signified by Moscote’s “Magistrate” sign, it inherently makes him a part of Macondo’s battle against the insomnia plague. Moscote establishes his function and purpose just as the rest of the residents used the written word to prevent memory loss. Fentress and Wickham describe this strategy as capturing a visual and mnemonic understanding of a word. In this case, “magistrate” imposes a “mnemonic map [that] would be just an extension of our ‘memory of words’... The map would embody the ‘thing’ it represented” (17-18). Because his formal introduction follows Melquíades’s miracle cure, Moscote can assert himself as a member of Macondo using a similar strategy that the residents previously utilized to signify their place and to clarify the process of daily chores. His sign differs significantly as it propagates an institution that was formerly nonexistent. To clarify, he grants himself authority which allows him to unite signifier and signified without communal ratification. Unclear memories sway residents into accepting said authority: the emulated methodology he uses to assert himself gives his presence a sense of foundation or belonging that is inherent in the other labeled items. Moscote belongs in Macondo. The insertion of a governmental influence makes paths into roads. Adobe houses become refined homes. Sections transform into refined blocks. Moreover, these subtle changes allow José Arcadio Buendía’s hostility towards Moscote to subside. His will to appease Macondo’s residents by repealing his decree and expelling a makeshift military demonstrates a keen ability to be present but not in focus. Initially, Moscote does not drastically change Macondo because his influence is not an accepted necessity – like Melquíades’s – rather his presence injects a slow acting contagion into Macondo until it ironically accepts Moscote through his proximity to the Buendía lineage.

A remedy for the feuding families, Moscote's nine-year-old daughter Remedios becomes the obsession of Aureliano – stifling the ill will directed at Moscote and exposing Macondo to Moscotes' corruption. Aureliano's strange, obsessive love for the young girl leads to an impending marriage and unification between the two families that cannot be consummated due to Remedios's physical immaturity. Prior to making his love public, Aureliano's yearning to be loved by Remedios drives him into the bed of Pilar Ternera, his brother's former lover. Upon Remedios's maturity, Aureliano fathers a child with his young wife – matching the biological production he shares with Ternera. Aureliano's sons are named after him, Aureliano José and Aureliano. The repetition of names signifies the undying, monotonous of experiences echoing through the Buendía family. While it has caused many readers confusion – arguably requiring the first edition of the English translation in 1970 to include a genealogy following the title page – Maurice Halbwachs's assertion regarding the repetition of names within a given community traps the consequences of such memories within subsequent generations:

It [a first name] has been chosen not only from a repertory of names fixed by society, each one of which recalls in common thought certain memories....For this reason, first names, even though they have been chosen without taking the subject to which they are applied into consideration, seem to be part of their subject's nature. (72)

Reflecting the familial tendencies highlighted for the reader, the boys bearing their predecessors' monikers become the physical unification of private and social memories. Along with José Arcadio's son, Arcadio, they represent the perpetual cycle of Buendías that will grow ambivalent to Macondo's modernization as it nears desecration. When Moscote falsifies votes in the suddenly democratic society of Macondo, he sparks his son-in-law's interest in politics and war: "Then they sealed the box again with a new label and the first thing on the following day it was taken to the capital of the province. 'The Liberals will go to war,' Aureliano said" (*One Hundred Years* 96). Leaving home to find purpose in war, Aureliano returns to a consumer-based Macondo – thriving on his mother's animal-candy business, the Hotel Jacob, and Pietro Crespi's music shop. The subtle war waged by the newly titled Colonel Aureliano Buendía evokes a nostalgic undercurrent of desire and a sense of civil ambivalence in the Buendías, which allows Mr. Brown's hegemonic banana company an opening to Macondo.

The epoch of war and its aftermath mirrors the scientific revolution as the third generation of Buendía offspring secludes themselves in their personal matters. Colonel Aureliano Buendía's reclusive behavior highlights the split in the public and private influence of the Buendía's third generation. Upon his return, the colonel banishes himself to his workshop in his mother's home, where he obsessively replicates little gold "fishes" that resemble the one he gave to Remedios before their marriage: "He was not a hero of the nation as they said but an artisan without memories whose only dream was to die of fatigue in the oblivion and misery of his little gold fishes" (*One Hundred Years* 214). The colonel's struggle to recycle the old relics mirrors José Arcadio Buendía's endeavors with alchemy and his effort to expel Moscote – preserving Macondo's medieval scientific revolution. Furthermore, the colonel's reclusive environment also reflects his father's prison underneath a chestnut tree. Guglielmo Bellelli and Mirella A. C. Amatulli contest

that a longing for days-gone-by exemplifies a type of nostalgia originated in Kant's studies:

Kant maintained that the person who feels nostalgia desires to go back to his childhood more than to his native village, which is a kind of Holy Land or enchanted island. Thus, it seems that the recalling, which is typical of nostalgia, may be oriented not only spatially, but also toward a particular time, to which one cannot return. (209)

Father and son each yearn for a time before critical junctures in the formation of the community's memories and a changing of their identities – a “golden age” (Fentress and Wickham 109). Aligning the fate of José Arcadio Buendía and Colonel Aureliano Buendía emphasizes their strong influence in the shaping of the town's habits and memories; however, each man's apathy allows outsiders to manipulate Macondo: José Arcadio Buendía's obsessions culminate in a total loss of his mind shortly after Moscote's arrival, and Colonel Aureliano Buendía's obsession with making golden fish conceals him from the outside world. Originally in denial, he dies when he acknowledges that he “falls into the trap of nostalgia” (*One Hundred Years* 266). His death comes in vain as he has shown little concern for his sons' demise, the presence of the banana company, or the self-serving behavior of his nephew, Arcadio.

Mentioned above, the instability of Macondo's timeline exemplifies distinct moments in which the novice can pursue possible outcomes not explicitly featured in the narrative – the ellipses providing cues for the novice to engage with the text. The signification of nostalgia as a cause of death and apathy as grounds for appropriation, the banana company's occupancy signifies an era of neocolonialism; a sleight of hand is no longer necessary to evolve the town because the presence of a Western power temporarily shifts magic to the outskirts of the community in favor of the advances José Arcadio Buendía's always wanted. An outstanding, clearly depicted moment in Macondo's history functions similar to the sign post memories: the novice gains perspective on the epoch and uses familiar notions to fill the details of occupancy.

The Buendías' neglect and apathy allows the town's blatant modernization before Mr. Brown's arrival. A phonograph echoes from Crespi's shop. A telephone rings in the railway station. Hotel Jacob is fully occupied. Now, Colonel Aureliano Buendía's apathy begets Arcadio's connections to his conceited father – resulting in a disconnection between Arcadio and his roots as a Buendía and negating the memories he should withhold as a family member. Arcadio presents himself as one who can live beyond group think, conceptualizing his own perception of Macondo as opposed to novice reader when only reliant strictly on the text for answers. Halbwachs explains that if family members disappear, a connection should still exist based upon a first name: “In fact, if a group has affected us with its influence for a period of time we become so saturated that if we find ourselves alone, we act and think as if we were still living under the pressure of the group” (73). Yet, Arcadio's character does resemble his father's negligent attitude towards Macondo; he denies the cyclical Buendía lineage that dictates Arcadio's confrontation with Mr. Brown. In this sense, he fails to preserve the memories of the men who defended Macondo before him. He does not create his own means to preserve the

past: he becomes utterly apathetic. Thus, he allows Mr. Brown's banana company to defile Macondo further and exploit the inhabitants: "They changed the pattern of the rains, accelerated the cycle of harvests, and moved the river from where it had always been and put it with its white stones and icy currents on the other side of the town" (*One Hundred Years* 227). Arcadio's conceit transfers to his son, José Arcadio Segundo, who will re-establish connections aligned with Halbwachs's assertion in the fight against the banana company's socially unjust, yet modern, attempt to make Macondo a site of global capitalism.

The army, under the influence of the "gringos" and their money, unleashes the second and much more thorough memory erasure. Following José Arcadio Segundo's anonymous encouragement for the banana workers to strike, he relinquishes his supervisor position in the company, described as rivaling, "the same impulsive decision with which he had auctioned off his fighting cocks" (*One Hundred Years* 227). His contempt is anonymously met with "four revolver shots," prompting the decrepit Úrsula to unveil explicitly what her family has missed for years, "'Just like Aureliano,' Úrsula exclaimed. 'It's as if the world were repeating itself'" (*One Hundred Years* 227-8). José Arcadio Segundo's tie to his great-grand father, José Arcadio Buendía, does not signal the impending doom associated with the cyclical nature of modernization. Nevertheless, José Arcadio Segundo challenges the hegemonic banana company only to find that their destructive power culminated in their ability to influence the use of martial law and to advocate the slaughter of their striking workers: "They were penned in, swirling about in a gigantic whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicenter as the edges were systematically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodological shears of the machine guns" (*One Hundred Years* 306). The horrific scene enables what Brown and Kulik describe as flashbulb memories to take effect: "These memories are the result of a neurological mechanism not used for memory of most events...when a person encounters a surprising and consequential event, aspects of the immediate surroundings are imprinted in memory" (Gaskell and Wright 176). Flashbulb memories function as vivid memories of catastrophic events. They capture the events leading up to a disaster, but focus on the surrounding and the circumstances of those memories. Creating slightly different, yet a structurally unified picture, flashbulb memories unify a community under a general understanding of any such event. Yet, this is not the case in Macondo after the slaughter of nearly three thousand strikers: "The woman measured him [José Arcadio Segundo] with a pitying look. 'There haven't been any dead here,' she said. 'Since the time of your uncle, the colonel, nothing has happened in Macondo'" (*One Hundred Years* 308). A total erasure of the incident among the rest of the community, as well as the army, demonstrates the power held by this allegorical corporate giant.²⁹ A Western version of the period of social unrest, forgotten by Macondo's residents, appears in Meme's set of English encyclopedias and her school books – the imagined massacre excluded from official records.

In contrast to the events (not) experienced by the Buendías, *Leaf Storm* offers an alternative perspective on the presence of the banana company in the textual background as the story surrounding the suicide of the doctor foregrounds the private decision the

²⁹ Explained below, Mr. Brown's company is commonly equated with the former United Fruit Company.

Colonel makes – despite the very public repercussions of both the doctor’s refusal to offer his services to Macondo and the eventual decision to bury the publically condemned, heretical man. Transformation and destruction follow the banana company; however, the subtle unmaking of society drastically differs from the massacre and biblical flooding witnessed in the Melquíades’s chronicles which focus on the Buendía family history. For instance, the edict imposed by the mayor’s office, realized following a crippling suggestion made by the company doctors, bans any medical practice without first officially “registering a degree,” effectively negating the unnamed doctor’s public persona (*Leaf* 48). Consequential hardships and a long-anticipated death sparks the conflict and necessity for the Colonel to decide how to care for the doctor’s bodily remains, a drastic juxtaposition regarding technological advancement and its accompanying company-influenced zeitgeist – the leaf storm – in comparison to the absolute cleansing of the Earth penned by Melquíades. Here, overlapping narration functions as a suggestively comprehensive answer to the realized and almost unchangeable truth captured in the Sanskrit scriptures – each narrator offering a perspective on the doctor’s burial which attempts to thoroughly fill potential voids likely left by a single voice. Thus, the shared dialogue places value on multiple perspective.

Following the Colonial’s narration of the conciliatory conversation held with Macondo’s mayor, the subsequent perspectives – narrative by Isabel and her son – all include a mantra reiterated throughout the work, “In any case, whatever happens, it had to happen. It’s as if it had been announced in the almanac” (*Leaf* 95). A reference to Colombia’s Bristol Almanac, the town wide sentiment, one shared even by “The Pup” in his church sermons, carries a striking similarity to the objective authority bestowed upon the Sanskrit scriptures as a comparatively more powerful “surge of wind” or “cyclone” unmakes Macondo’s existence (*One Hundred Years* 415). Isabel admits that she expects a similar wind, one that will “sweep away Macondo...and its silent people devastated by memories,” but her memories remain, manifested in the narrative (*Leaf* 94). Memories surrounding the doctor as an outsider or stranger provide the ability for the three narrators to subvert the devastation of the leaf storm into a personal narrative, thus making the notion of stranger or outsider fundamental to the story and subsequent re-creations of each vision of Macondo (Bell 13). Though Melquíades’s scripture includes textual gaps foreseeably supplemented with similar memories, his outside perspective – one welcomed as an ironically productive communal asset and his death worthy of “honors reserved for Macondo’s greatest benefactors” – drastically differs from the almanac that provides only empirical observations (*One Hundred Years* 73). The paradoxical making and breaking of history suggests that stories born through re-created or borrowed memory hold a more influential position than raw, public data and industry.

A comparison between the two narratives exemplifies how residual memories exist within different objects while others form through habitual practices. Still, the ironic lack of reflection in the Buendía’s Macondo of mirrors stifles the ability to create a narrative that could contest Melquíades’s work. The founding described in *One Hundred Years* generally coincides with the shadowy description in *Leaf Storm*. The early village and the discovery of the Spanish galleon mark instances when Macondo’s timelines persists across texts. Other textual signposts include the position held in the church where Father Antonio Isabel succeeds “The Pup” (*One Hundred Years* 185). However, as *One*

Hundred Years is supposed to stand as an expedited chronicle of Macondo – almost resembling an elongated encyclopedia entry – it simultaneously typifies the perpetual unproductivity of those who live a cyclical existence. José Arcadio Buendía lives for his trial-and-error alchemic experimentation. Colonel Aureliano Buendía exists in the repetition of losing civil wars and the crafting of his golden fish. Amaranta weaves and unweaves tapestry. The spark to end the recurring, monotonous wasting away comes to Aureliano Segundo through his lineage as he is seemingly destined to begin the transcription of Melquíades’s scriptures “because that hereditary memory had been transmitted from generation to generation and had come to him through the memory of his grandfather [José Arcadio Buendía]” (*One Hundred Years* 184). A show of interest in the transcription work falters as Aureliano Segundo exhibits the hedonistic tendencies of his suspected namesake – José Arcadio – as he and his twin brother were confused or switched at birth; still, José Arcadio Segundo takes up the transcription task, vowing to preserve the memory of the people who were massacred by the banana company. However, he cannot fill depict the present as his obsession with the past ostracizes him from the rest of society. He can only live his life based primarily on Melquíades’s study, emulating the destructive tendency the family shares of immersing themselves into a particular task which comes to define them; the interests and memories passed down from the earliest Buendías allow him to recognize those events based on preserved memories.

While memories misfire and the novel evolves through the suggested erasures of communal memory, the dictum of absolute memory preservation renders imaginative reading strategies unnecessary because truth exists in textual clues; reading according to the memory-based perceptions of those who provided the source material for the Sanskrit scriptures, Aureliano Babilonia exemplifies tendencies similar to those of unengaged novice readers. He relies on Melquíades’s version of Macondo, not the past or present in which he lives. If the scrolls reflect the entirety of the tangible text, they become his window into the rest of Macondo. His task only requires an accurate transcription to acquire the seemingly objective answer behind the town’s impending destruction. All the shared memories arguably become those which can most easily be deciphered, as he can recall the past and use the scroll to dictate validity. Unlike his kin, Aureliano Babilonia does not exhibit the same tendency to “translate” as Aureliano Segundo: the latter arguably uses the (un)translated English encyclopedia to entertain the children through imagined stories coinciding with the printed images (*One Hundred Years* 322). Just like the school books, the English encyclopedias characterize the communities past, and the unwillingness to explore or (re)create that past solidifies the authority of the text, therefore suggesting that Aureliano Babilonia’s translation of Melquíades’s work must hold true to the scriptures.

The trustworthiness of the scrolls calls into question the possibility of creating a different story using a similar notion of Macondo’s ontological formation. Letters in Sanskrit are deciphered with the help of the English encyclopedia as a codex. Aureliano Babilonia’s mastery of Sanskrit, based entirely on print, suggests that the parchment can only be read “as if it had been written in Spanish” during Macondo’s final moments, no dialectical understanding of Melquíades’s mother tongue (*One Hundred Years* 415). In other words, it is the encyclopedic translation rather than an interpretation based on

recognition of the past that eliminates the opportunity for him to re-envision the ending. His desire for a definitive answer reinforces the cataclysmic destruction and thus the validity of the translation. Like his mentor José Arcadio Segundo, who reads several books to their unfilled endings, as they were missing, Aureliano Babilonia will only use the texts as they stand unconscious of the infinite possibilities granted by his own imagination (*One Hundred Years* 184).

Demonstrating no will to personally understand the past, both men who attempt to transcribe the text are utterly lost within their own history. Preserving the memory of the banana company's victims disenfranchises José Arcadio Segundo from the rest of Macondo, and his life is subsequently given to the parchments. And while he recognizes that time passes, his intentions remain to decipher a text that will reinforce cyclical existence, cemented as he utters the same lines of linear-time-affirming dialogue first spoken by his great-great grandmother Úrsula, from whom "none of her descendants inherited her strength" or perception to guide her kin away from a cyclical existence (*One Hundred Years* 336). Ironically, Aureliano Babilonia too echoes sentiments of the past, touting his self-perceived mastery of knowledge gained from books and the six English encyclopedias: "Everything is known" (*One Hundred Years* 373). The scroll's incomplete transcription highlights his hubris and confidence in the rational knowledge of foreigners. Furthermore, it suggests that his neglect of the present for the study of the past cannot simply be supplemented by deciphering the parchments at a later date. As he is not fathered by a Buendía, he lacks the generational memory bestowed upon the men before him. While seemingly a blessing, his reliance on the encyclopedic descriptions of Macondo's most notable figures and events – such as Colonel Aureliano Buendía and the banana massacre – puts him at odds with the goals and teachings of his mentor, José Arcadio Segundo. Thus, ensconced in rational knowledge derived outside of Macondo, Aureliano Babilonia, the second to last of his line, cannot believe the marvels described in the scrolls which he transcribes daily, leading him to deny sanctuary to the "only survivor of Colonel Aureliano Buendía's seventeen sons" just moments before this missing Buendía is shot in the street outside the family home (*One Hundred Years* 374). Aureliano Babilonia is a carnivalesque reflection of the reader who has become ostracized from reality through their enthusiasm for magical realism: he becomes defamiliarized from empirical facts of his world, favoring beliefs only found in other encyclopedic minds.

Macondo's social memory resides in textbooks that deny its worth. Preservation of memory through oral narratives and the songs of Francisco the Man die with Aureliano Babilonia's lack of imagination and dedication to rationality. The genetic legacy of those tied to the Buendía bloodline seal the family's fate; the oral prophecy Pilar Ternera gives Aureliano Babilonia regarding his lineage seems untrustworthy to the man of books. Her instructional condemnation of his incestuous birthright lacks viability, as she persists through the use of her tarot cards and her age-defying imagination; therefore, Aureliano Babilonia must consult the baptismal certificates to trace his lineage. His "encyclopedic knowledge, his rare faculty for remembering the details of remote deeds and places never having been there, were...useless" once he fulfills his role as strict translator and incestuous Buendía – ultimately suggesting that memories find their own sense of solitude once captured in print (*One Hundred Years* 408). Emphasis falls on the attentive

listener to preserve direct information that will unavoidably meld to the shape of personal, oral retellings. Therefore, with the exception of the utmost memorization, the orality formally championed by Francisco the Man emphasizes personal summation when his words are spoken by another. Print potentially narrows the corridors of retelling into a bottleneck when the reader has little context and depends on the authority of a narrator or an encyclopedia to decipher a text rather than actively engaging. Enigmatic and seemingly unreliable, the nearly complete translation disheartens Aureliano Babilonia, as it can only literally depict a past filled of flying carpets and floating priests. His reading disregards the moments of hesitation and memory recall that empowers the burgeoning reader's interpretation. Thus, finding nothing of consequence in the church records, resignation explains Aureliano Babilonia's lost parentage and his son's pig tail. Memories are no longer traceable or valuable. Finally, Melquíades proves worthy of his Macondo burial: his memories of a vivid Macondo entrenched in the parchments drop a judgment hammer on the gray future incapable of change. Life extinguishes in such memories when they no longer carry influence for the future.

Opening the discussion to a wider field in order to include critical perspectives on memory and transcription in the narrative, I would like to consider how these attributes contribute to circular and allegorical notions that have been argued to accuse the text of impinging on reality. According to Michael Bell, the reader who comes to the end of the novel is left with a final decision to make: "Is the question of how far its meaning is enclosed in the local text, the foretold history, written in Sanskrit by Melquíades, or is [it] rather to be found in Marquez's Spanish narrative which, through the medium of future translations, passes beyond the local consciousness to a world audience" (54). As discussed above, the fluctuating memories of other versions of Macondo suggest that Melquíades's vision, despite its approval and reinforcement by its translators, can account for only a single vision. Meaning does not inherently exist in his text, as it does not exist in any solely translated text. Proposals for readers to mimic the process of "deciphering" the texts carries the implication that they too will engage in a shameless solitude where the replication of memories provided by others preceding them will create a story worthy of transcribing (Fagan 46). The goal of every translator is to preserve the integrity of the work. However, preservation efforts drastically differ from the task of the reader who crafts a new story from a work's linguistic signals. Conversely, translators' work can be viewed as an art form, but an art form with limits, and such is the case of the novel's translator to English, Gregory Rabassa, who feels he must "erase any associations with himself and the words he chooses in a translation" (Fagan 48). An implication based on Bahktinian theory suggests that the dialogue undergone between translators and their respective foreign documents will conclude in a synthesis, in this case the end translation that must carry unexpressed meaning through the same words.³⁰ Both fiction and non-fiction translators attempt to re-capture the author's vision – preserving the original authorial intent no matter how closely it may or may not resemble their own. The authorial overshadows unarticulated sentiments. Thus, Melquíades's scriptures represent a didactic tool that essentially robs its translators of unrealizable memories. The translation becomes an axiomatic imprint of reality. It speaks objective truth. It touts pre-

³⁰ See Allen, 25

determined reality and asks its translators to absorb its objective truth, resembling Plato's cyclical life and paradigm re-learning knowledge that was formerly acquired.

Mnemonic misfires do seem problematic when what was originally portrayed as fiction becomes conflated with reality. Specifically, danger exists in overstepping the boundaries of textual interpretation and disregarding the text's signals and the contextual past. Mirroring the 1928 United Fruit massacre in Colombia, Mr. Brown's company highlights a stunning abuse of power and a private company's role in twisting memories by silencing voices. Fictionalized exposure has been met by a scathing criticism that portrays García Márquez's novel as a fellow creator of shattered memories. Regina Janes faults García Márquez for creating false memories of the 1928 banana strike in a paradoxical effort that aims to expose the tragic event. Janes acknowledges that García Márquez successfully brings the necessary exposure to the hegemonic capitalism in developing countries, but her criticism condemns his method: "At any rate more than forty years after the initial publication, the novel has done what it set out to do – recover an episode for historical memory – though it has also distorted it, creating fake historical memories in which some people 'remember' too little and some too much" (456). Accurate facts of the strike and ensuing massacre do not resonate in the novel. As Janes goes on to point out, many facts are embellished – creating a hyperbolic state of false awareness that resembles ill-conceived flashbulb memories: "A problem with flashbulb memory hypothesis is that although many people confidently report clear picture-like memories for certain events, these reports are not always accurate" (Gaskell and Wright 176). A vivid narrative amalgamating exaggerated details perpetuates misrepresentations without for correction. Consequently, false memories intertwine with these same flashbulb memories because readers begin to associate actuality with the fiction. People may remember learning about inhumane working conditions in a developing country and associate those factual occurrences with the memories of *One Hundred Years*. As García Márquez reifies the memories of his characters to create the cyclical evolution of Macondo, Janes does not accept his hyperbolic recapturing as a well-conditioned means to create awareness. Her argument exposes the negative repercussions of believing fiction as fact, but her conclusion ignores the possibility of allegory and undermines readers' ability to differentiate fact from fiction.

A novel associated with its Nobel Prize winning author, *One Hundred Years* holds a high esteem that keeps it in the hands of various types of readers; still, an elementary understanding of the novel or any work of fiction may only go as far as noticing the allegorical similarities between fact and fiction. The crux of Janes's argument stems from the novel's ability to reify obscure fact: "The one glaring, intentional inaccuracy in García Márquez's account, the three thousand dead, has become real, accepted, quoted history" (447). Her claim rests on the reader who lacks a critical eye and cultural contextualization. While these are likely the same readers who only notice similarities between fact and reality, it is the role of the educator or peer to nullify such unquestioned acceptance. She appears to assume that the biblical-like flooding of Macondo would be surely associated with fiction, but the massacre would be associated with fact. Thus, Janes accepts the banana company's hyperbolic expulsion, but she negates the use of allegory in regards to the matter-of-fact narration of the three-thousand-victim massacre – as the narrator's tone has become such a common-place

indicator of the magical realist mode for most critics. The assumption she makes about reader apathy, characterized by readers' supposed indolence to check facts before quoting, characterizes her own unease directed towards figurative texts: "Not only does poetry make nothing happen, but, in describing the horrors of the past, it merely predicts the horrors of the future. These days an apocalyptic wind threatens Detroit and leaves other company towns desolate and out of work. Who needs it?" (Janes 474). Re-characterizing the United Fruit's role in the massacre encourages readers to judge it harshly, despite the current workers' denial of the past; moreover, Janes's previous suggestion essentially proposes a reshaping of memory where only authoritative memories – if such memories exist – holds precedence. Of course, memories spawn fiction. Fiction will only produce fictionalized commodities based on kernels of truth rather than actual events. Authors blur memories and facts, as Janes admits, for specific reasons; however, her analysis suggests that distorting facts and relying on the optimistic power of allegory in order to shape behavior gives the subaltern a voice loud enough to be heard, but memory sharing – with its shortcomings – does not qualify as a legitimate reason to do so. Her claim makes a moot point at best when it fails to explain how mnemonic propositions jettison problematic historical discourse without proposing who is fit to relate objectivity or how it can be related without subjective human memory.

Commonly known to scholars, García Márquez draws upon his grandmother's oral stories as inspiration for his works. As the centerpiece of the global Latin American "Boom" phenomenon, various readers will read about the Buendías with preconceived expectations that shape interpretation before completing the text's opening line. Cultural significance and the factual events providing a skeletal foundation for the original stories and the novel remain, but they remain as notions overshadowed by flashy yellow butterflies and magic carpets. In his discussion of the horizon of expectation, Hans Robert Jauss considers the possibility to "comprehend and represent the history of literature in its unique historicity [which] depends on whether this horizon of expectations can be objectified," but, as objectivity alludes all, readers with a budding perspective constructively fail to put their reading into the proper context – if there is such a thing (22). Explored in chapter ones and two, the novice's imagination must contextualize textual cues in familiar ways that do not rely on the historicity of the text, but the methodology for which a particular scene can be seen. Print's ability to violate the immediate locale and thus the immediate context of oral traditions opens the possibility of new understandings of a work. Literary analysis often notes how the human condition conceals itself in various settings – only shaped into an allegory dependent on contextual cues. Though Janes's commentary regarding the validity and worth of allegorical or mnemonic contributions made by literature disregards supporting history feels extreme, the scholarly tendencies of the novice reader must be taken into account. Assumptions concerning consequent consultations of actual facts that García Márquez draws upon must be questioned: fiction bears no obligation to subsequent research. One could consider how the current wave of parodies featuring zombies and werewolves wreaking havoc in works of classic literature requires no familiarity with the original texts. Only in the case of scholarly necessity does the novice reader feel coerced into engaging with the actual happenings fictionalized by the text. However, lacking historically accurate knowledge does not relegate a reader's ability to differentiate supernatural suggestions

within a work of fiction from the physical laws that regulate reality beyond the work. In the case of García Márquez, his stories do carry a notion of reality that has caused him to assert that he does in fact believe in the outwardly perceived marvels of Latin America.³¹ Thus, his work sparks an overarching question regarding memories and the reliability of encyclopedic fact.

García Márquez, influenced by the massacre that predates his birth by a single year, recollects the events through his family's memories and provides a voice to the silenced people who lived on the edge of a horrific reality and shocking fantasy for years after United Fruit (Janes 459). Proximity allows him to connect to the site of the massacre. Jay Winter explains, "The critical point about sites of memory is that they are there as points of reference not only for those who survived traumatic event, but for those born long after them" (313). Thus, García Márquez creates memories not strictly associated with the site, but his intentions for doing so should count for more than the facts of the matter. His link to the massacre allows him to don the voice of a once neglected community – a process that Fentress and Wickham describes as solidifying a group identity where "Perhaps the most powerful element we have met is the memory of the community in opposition to the outside world, for this is one of the most effective resources any social group has to reinforce its own social identity in opposition of that of others" (114). Depicting the voice of the voiceless is necessary when tragic or disadvantageous circumstances become more shocking than fantasy. Examining Chile's 1973 military coup d'état, the basis of many events discussed in the previous, Elizabeth Lira explains difficulties of depicting the two worlds: "The symbolizing process was distorted. Through this process, the outer world – the body, the feelings, and the words – took on new meanings associated with the situation of persecution and torture" (227). Though there has certainly been much resistance against the fashion in which García Márquez's work emblazons an entire community – and subsequently an entire content – through his hyperbolic allegory as it draws a sense of awareness that the exploitation failed to elicit when it was illusive fact. Of course, the skewed perception and exploitation of the magical realist vision within the global print market does nothing to counteract or remedy a new phase of exploitation. Ends never justify the means, yet the impairment circling magical realism certainly continues to provide new avenues toward the study of literature and critical thinking that allows for the re-evaluation of history: "[N]ovels are never content with fiction, [sic] they must pretend to deal with the truth. So, paradoxically enough, the truth with which they deal in the modern period is fiction itself. That is to say, the fictions Latin American culture has created to understand itself, the myths about the origins of its history" (González Echevarría 21). Budding scholars follow those above-mentioned avenues to articulate how novels striving to bend the lines of fact and fiction do in fact revise the ways in which history is taught.

A reversal of perceived power dynamics has been made in reference to the Aureliano Babilonia's position as translator and translated, leaving the reader to confront how the story in fact affects their ability to answer Bell's question regarding the sanctity of the translated parchments and the solidification of the novel. If, for all intents and purposes of this work, Wolfgang Iser's assertions hold regarding the ability of the reader

³¹ Refer to page 15 of the introduction

to take the textually implied strands of unexplored possibilities – the textual blanks – and further the story through his vision then the inquisitive, detective-like methodology can function as an imperative aspect of construction. The novice reader consequently depends on his skillset for self-created interpretations rather than clues that will hopefully uncover the “correct” authorial intention (182). Again, the novice reader’s tendency to scour text as a textual detective for what he perceives to be the most fundamental aspects of the work will hit speed bumps – portions of the magical realist text necessitate an evaluation of how and why a particular event occurs in relation to the surrounding material encountered throughout the reading. Evaluation and questioning of the text sparks the initial process of interpretation as opposed to synoptic gathering or literal translation and prevents magical realist implications from creating an unbalanced experience where “what we think we control may in the end control us” (Faris 93). Various opportunities to exploit the incompleteness of Rabassa’s translation of the (internal)translation present themselves within *One Hundred Years* and the other highlighted Macondo stories. However, the literary landscape in which Macondo exists defies construction of the more welcoming and easier navigated “readerly” texts. Introducing Roland Barthes’s concept, Graham Allen explains its relation to a notion of reading that re-affirms its methods through subsequent use where, “[r]eaderly texts...reinforce cultural myths and ideologies which Barthes symbolizes through the term *doxa*...the idea that stable meaning is possible...that a truth can finally be delivered by an author to a reader” (79). Allen’s suggestion exemplifies how the readerly text (specifically works such as those of Poe and Balzac highlighted for the purpose of exploring intertextuality before the modern work) encourages reading as a detective, yet his notion carries the implication that the detective simply waits for answers to be unveiled. Post-modern texts refuse to make such generous offers. Barthes’s opposing construct, the *paradoxa*, which suggests a breaking of apparent cultural norms, should be understood as a symbiotic notion used to interrupt the developed sub-cultural tendencies of the novice reader in order for them to engage with the moments of hesitations produced by magical realism; perseverance and longevity presents the most complicating problem for novice readers as they adopt and sharpen new skills for traversing Macondo’s complicated terrain.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that *One Hundred Years* encourages inquisitiveness through its suggestive narrative constructs – drawing readers into a mutable communal background and prompting them to question the necessity of a fixed, modern world. The cyclical nature of the novel leaves it up to the reader to take a role in the action of exposing hegemony as it exists from multiple worldly perspectives, and reads like a broken record without the reader’s action. To clarify, the novel instills a sense of duty to lift the needle rather than return to Macondo’s founding. The infamous chicken or egg riddle has no place in such consideration: Melquíades’s story or Macondo’s destruction, it does not matter which came first. Rather, as modernization goes unnoticed by those who do not share in a community’s interest, opportunities to make social change will not exist in the most desperate of times. Maggie Ann Bowers sees García Márquez’s novel as a social calling, “considered to be the turning point of the ‘new novel’ away from fiction in which emphasis was placed on the experimental, and towards fiction that was politically and socially motivated” (39). Of course, the absolute irony comes in the commodification of the supposed marvelous Latin American

experience. The Buendías avert their eyes because they are consumed by obsessions stemming from the developing world around them, and the family’s story turns into gold – alchemy 2.0. They have been pinpointed on the map, reaping the troubles and benefits in the same fashion that the “Boom” and magical realism creates a frustrating paradox in Latin American literature, a literature once perceived by Western scholars as nonexistent or of little consequence. Nevertheless, the Buendías unrealized sacrifice emphasizes the equivocated use of solidarity: the novice reader can discover that the Buendías’ have the capability to craft their own story. Yet, they cannot do so when reliant on answers prophesized from a master text, largely ignoring the redemptive qualities of a community shaped through malleable ideas geared towards prosperity.

Conclusion: Maturing as a Community

If, as I have suggested throughout, magical realism demonstrates a potential to bolster the reading methods or strategies of the novice reader, the edifying potential manifests most explicitly in the moments where subtle and explicit changes to the worldly compositions in a given text encourages readers to consider the viability of said text's multiple interpretive avenues. Originally rooted in the New Critics' reading methods, the strategies of the novice reader stand as a basis upon which new strategies can form. Stanley Fish argues that all reading strategies are learned, and he advocates for the evolution of reading strategies, to the point where "meanings are no longer handed over or extracted" (Fish 172). When texts are perceived to retain the author's meaning, the discipline of literature is misconceived. Investing in the aesthetic response of every reader showcases a commitment to considering alternative interpretive strategies. Students no longer need to attempt to capture what has been said by others with empowering strategies made available to them. While familiar schemas exist for explaining magical manifestations, the gaps in the examined texts prompt original conceptions for describing the origins and inner-workings of magic. In other words, the novice reader who interprets magic can potentially formulate an original perception of the text that he or she can share with others. The ability to forego strict empirical influence in favor of formulating a textual analysis would demonstrate a growth in readerly confidence. Considerations of the magical intrusions that protrude from textual environments solidify evolving standards for evaluating the difference between the real and the fantastic – where subsequent judgments will be made regarding how and why magic exists within each textual universe. In essence, the moment of hesitation, a consideration of how one demarcates the real and from the fantastic, creates the potential for readerly evolution. To question how or if magic affects a given event is to oppose the clue-collecting methodology first used to signify the apprehensive novice reader who searched for authorial intent.

Imagination fuels aesthetic reading, and novice readers who demonstrate the ability to relinquish their former methods can grow to enjoy the autonomy the imagination affords. As mentioned in the work's introduction, proponents of critical camps who tout an alleged strategy of objective reading standards target undeniably subjective strategies. The possibility of magic in settings that otherwise obey the axiomatic laws of physics present an opportunity to shape a story – enabling a particular reader's elucidations. Employing the analytical assistance of the imagination presents circumstances that accentuate reader relativity and thus expose a potential for direct attacks. Such is the case when the reader accepts the responsibility for satisfying the text's blank spaces, a direct repercussion of the act of reading, in order to shape the text while denying objectivity. Opponents who favor close reading strategies exemplify similar interpretive strategies that denote the importance of stuffy literary traditions used to champion their interpretive community. Fish describes his own community as "made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in a conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (171). Critics have eschewed Fish's disappearing or constructed text; however, there is little

denying that to consider interpretive objectivity a possibility every reader who attempts to analyze a text should arrive at the same or very similar conclusions by utilizing similar strategies, but this is not likely the case. Professional readers ameliorate the articulated value of their findings in comparison. Those with less experience, in a literary and subsisted sense, will offer a learner's version of similar answers. Unification under a school of thought preserves the tactical maneuvering of a particular group, and it should follow that the collective formation of a doctrine and alacrity for engaging in dialectic with or about the text constitutes the basis for an interpretive community.

The strategies the novice reader employs while reading a work of magical realism are no different. As a literature with a global reach, magical realism not only initiates novice readers into a more egalitarian interpretive community where their constructed work will justifiably deviate from others', it initiates the novice reader into a particular imagined network of readers. Benedict Anderson defines the imagined community as a "political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Though Anderson applies his notion to the study of nations, the honing of skills that contribute to the strengthening of affect techniques, where the reader shapes textual discourse with aesthetic responses and unites those who adhere to the same approach in an imagined space. The reader cannot know who shares in his or her strategies, but the promise that they share in an imagined, interpretive community suggests that "in the minds of each lives the image of communions" (Anderson 6). Without objective answers to be found, the freedom granted to offer original understandings signifies a lack of restrictions in re-shaping the text; the maturing novice reader who develops through analytical subjectivity develops with the potential to see value in fellow community member's autonomy. Within the classroom environment, the novice reader can discover where paths both diverge and depart from others. The opportunity to (re)imagine or to (re)consider how cues lead to a particular reading grows further through face-to-face dialects with other readers and also prospers in future reading endeavors. Previous engagement with a particular textual cue, Clara's erratic clairvoyance for instance, proliferates in a group setting through elaborated thought processes and rationale behind those conclusions.

To dovetail Anderson's implication of limitation within the imagined community, it is the self-imposed limitations associated with the detective-like, apprehensive novice reader that present the true limitations on an imagined community of aesthetic readers. A clear difference exists in the phenomenological and social contexts that influence readers while formulating a response; nevertheless, taken outside the arena of self-reliance, the novice reader demonstrates a commitment a tendency to lapse back to the passive reconstruction of the author's intent. Anderson includes limitations on practicality to ensure the homogeneity of *nations* – explaining that it is no longer feasible for any "nation to imagine itself as coterminous with mankind" (7). Pliable boundaries draw limitations only at the capacity dictated by its population: while it may be idealistic to hold onto a desire for everyone to become a reader, there is no foreseeable evidence to suggest that those students who only read to satisfy scholastic expectations will not benefit from performing critical thinking activities – where they articulate their thought process used to generate a reading – rather than having them explain, for example, why fate is a common motif in Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*. Scavenging for textual turning points or indicators of textual significance such as the death of a foil

character does unite those maturing readers in an interpretive community prior to engaging with what I have argued are the beneficial features of magical realism's frame. However, uninterested scouring exemplifies no potential for evolutionary exegesis. Minding the author and adhering to normalized standards ensures a rutted road for the novice who tries to imagine what authors mean and what instructors want because those methods are reading strategies, but not interpretative strategies. Readers who see little worth in reading literature have the potential to break the proposed limitation upon community membership, but it is the appeal process and coaxing to change reading methods that present the greatest challenge. Giving the apprehensive novice reader texts with pliable limitations on the nature of reality can help evolve their methodology, especially when they outgrow stagnant traditions of understanding. No longer turning to teachers or mentors for help in illuminating clues, those mentors offer a much more prominent role in guiding readers once the worldly considerations of the maturing novice reader places him in a global arena.

The novice reader's interpretation possesses political potential. Perhaps unaware, the conclusions he or she makes regarding transnational relationships showcase rudimentary global considerations. For example, *Like Water for Chocolate* places an American audience in a position of interpreting the actions of Mexican characters and their residence in a border town where both Anglos and Mexicans effortlessly cross the national divide. The text can potentially evoke politically charged conclusions: students may notice Tita's crossing into Texas and consider the ubiquitous border debates. A codified yet remarkably thin line exists when crafting a response, and those responses hold the potential to alter the real-world perception of countries, such as Colombia, Chile, and Mexico, or the people who live in said countries. Problems arise when fictional perceptions reinforce stereotypes or cloud judgments regarding reality, the interpretation perhaps defaming the actual. The McOndo group and numerous others have spearheaded magical realism potential to create false impressions about Latin America – i.e., all of Latin America operates on magic or every rudimentary town exists in the thick of tropical lush. Associating magical realism with direct places not only starts to typify those locales, it restricts or territorializes magic. Referring to the limited and sovereign stipulations of Anderson's imagined communities, Wen-chin Ouyang argues that “[m]agical realism, in its combination of the fantastic and the real, has been producing political discourses that partake in imagining communities... while subverting realism that has been so much part of the post-Enlightenment empirical worldview that included nationalism” (225). Ouyang considers his thought to be a warning that exposes the potential to make nationalistic conclusions based on magical discourse, claiming the texts to be a “hybridity-accommodating type of postcolonial politics” (225). While novice assertions do not carry the same political weight as a professional reader's, considering embryonic conclusions is a constructive means to exemplify the potential for interpretations to influence reality. Sharing aesthetic responses evoked from a globally focused mode of literature asks readers to debut their budding political agency.

While believing in Gabriel García Márquez's fantastic, politically charged world of Macondo or Isabel Allende's Chilean simulacrum is not necessary to formulate an analysis, negating the possibilities presented in these various planes of existence demonstrates a clear resistance to the text or an unwillingness to suspend a sense of

disbelief. It is the exploration of the fantastic possibilities in magical realist works that encourages the novice reader to consider existence without the looming laws of physics. An inability to differentiate between narrative expressions, say the use of a metaphor, and descriptions of magic prompts the reader to hesitate between the suggested reality and the points of magical expression. The give and take dynamic between the real and the fantastic, where neither solely dictates the makeup of a worldly perception, suggests that readers considering how both could be viable under the contextual circumstances presented exhibit more potential to enhance their analytical skills. Streamlining possibilities starts when adherence to the knowledge of physical laws dissipates, but does not disappear entirely. Ingrained circumstances ease when the novice reader can rationalize or consider how imagining the fantastic can work on a hypothetical, “as if” basis. García Márquez demonstrates such a technique when he offers multifarious outcomes for Macondo: he suggests that his world is not finite. It has the potential to bend at his will when he (re)imagines how it was (re)formed. When the novice’s interpretation no longer adheres to territorialized laws of reality or hinges on what the author meant, exploration of the real and imaginative context can begin on a hypothetical basis, which accentuates the possibilities triggered by the “as if” paradigm. Imaginative thoughts developed by reformulating the unspecified limitations of textual magic make it possible for the reader to explain the foundation of their reading. When novice readers use the text as a foundation for conjecture and contemplate how textual cues appearing even as simple metaphors can alter the text’s magical state of being, they actively alter the author’s narrative in order to arrive at their own insight. In other words, one of the novice reader’s “as if” deliberations, comprised of both the narrative’s circumstances and the reader’s conception of how and why magic exists, is the crux of his or her reading. Considering the various ways that magic makes sense will result in a favored outcome – where the gaps in the text have been filled to the reader’s satisfaction. Of course, such satisfaction cannot coalesce with the original text: a satisfactory analysis finds the reader imagining various circumstances until those clues that were so valuable earlier are useless.

While I have argued magical realism can provide a frame for the novice reader to explore texts through the imagination and formulate analyses, I would like to reiterate that the literature itself cannot displace the educator. Removing the author’s definitive authority consequently instills the reader as a builder of texts; therefore, the role of the educator changes from a supplier of meaning to fellow interpreter. Teaching moments focus on a novel’s context and the methods for engaging in textual cues rather than scavenging for textual clues. Such change in pedagogical approaches relegates previous signifiers or classification clues used to pigeonhole constituent evidence of magical realism. Consider the finite stipulation of the narrator’s matter-of-fact tone Regina Janes uses as the core for her criticism of the banana massacre in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as explored in the previous chapter. Tone demarcates the limitations on a projected worldly perception where it signifies the hegemonic company’s ability to keep some of Macondo’s residents enthralled. Still, as the repercussions of magic alter the course of public and private events, the narrator’s tone can be misleading. For example, the oft examined moment when Úrsula is shocked by José Arcadio’s blood that has navigated across town exemplifies a shortcoming in tone’s ability to capture the

predominant characteristics of magical realism. When an instructor highlights the possibility of pursuing different interpretations of such a textual cue – perhaps making the case that if Melquíades is the narrator, the somber tone may reflect his de facto role as a “professional” maker of magic – he or she expounds the possibilities of interpretation and denies authorial intent. Neither the intermittent presence of magic nor the narrator’s matter-of-fact tone can corroborate when the ordinary ceases to be commonplace, thus the reader presumes a role fundamental to the text’s prosperity.

Research on the effectiveness of using magical realism as a pedagogical tool is pending; however, this should not discourage thoughts about potential strategies for implementation and consideration of how current waves of pop culture may be useful in the exploration of developed interpretive schema, both of which exhibit noteworthy potential for further studies. To begin with the latter, the novice readers’ repertoire and the potential for exercising interpretative strategies via magical realist texts widens with the tech industry’s constant expansion. The exploration strategies through contact amateur movie magic found on YouTube, the addictive world of massive-multiplayer-online gaming, and e-graphic novels does not hold a place in this work, but rapid advances in technology continues to alter the mediums and processes that readers will potentially use to analyze magical realist worlds. Those who do interact with virtual media that blend reality with fiction, such as the World of Warcraft’s realm of Azeroth, engage their unique interpretive strategies when traversing the terrain of Macondo. Interpretive strategies do not absolutely suggest that a given reader will find García Márquez’s world easily relatable; as a matter of fact, Macondo’s connection to reality may be undermined and dubbed synonymous with other worlds of fantasy. Nevertheless, cyberspace invites novice readers to interact with suggestive worlds where newly created empirical advances regulate plausibility – all while otherwise restricting information could appear in a new browser window. Advances in the digital humanities exhibit a potential for exciting research projects: the near necessity of a person’s relationship with social media and technology perpetuates different ways of reading and understanding that guarantees everlasting life for literature of the past and of the future. Understanding how readers occupy two worlds within a single space – for example using multiple browsers on a computer – poses the question as to how they transfer those interpretive strategies to tangible media. To explore other factors fueling the novice reader’s repertoire can help educators streamline catalysts for student interpretation. In the meantime, classroom lessons ought to take shape around personal memories and textual cues that help shape a reading.

Memories preserve those extraordinary moments in literature and life that jumpstart analysis. On the one hand, memories are both frustrating and unreliable. On the other hand, they offer a rich opportunity for lessons where students explain how reshaping memories can parallel analysis. For example, students can complete two exercises where they recall the same important childhood memory – as vividly as possible. Students will be asked to repeat the task again one month later. Completing both writing assignments in class to prevent exact repetition, both recounts can be returned with a new assignment that instructs students to evaluate why their depictions changed. Specifically, they will consider how changed details do not necessarily alter the entire narrative, but provides the means for interpreting the same story in a different fashion.

Later, students will be asked to implement magical realist-like elements into the same story – while being instructed to preserve the essence of the original memory. A round-robin activity where groups of four read these stories will culminate in asking students to interpret or explain how certain details or scenes cued them to implement their own understanding – exposing the thoughts used to fill their peer’s memories. The ability to share readings with those who return the infamous, acknowledging “nod” that Fish explains denotes a fellow community member, welcomes the novice into a comfortable space to grow as a reader (173).

The classroom provides a tangible place for a gathering of an otherwise imagined community of readers. It is a place of preparation where a work’s multiple interpretations can be found in a single, accessible locale – permitting students to rely concisely how and what each sees in a text. Demonstrating such an ability to formulate analysis where conclusions no longer rely on authorial intent but rather upon an independent reading that can change with subsequent readings signals the maturity of the novice reader.

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