

*Fables of the Plague Years:  
Postcolonialism, Postmodernism,  
and Magic Realism in  
"Cien años de soledad"*  
["*One Hundred Years of Solitude*"]

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**A**KIN TO THE strain of poststructuralist theory Jacques Derrida practices in his essay "The Law of Genre," governed by "a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy" and initiated as "a sort of participation without belonging—a taking part in without being part of" (59), the diagnostic method of this paper purports to enchain strains of postcolonialism and postmodernism as a model for the theory and practice of magic realism in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*].<sup>1</sup> The model of magic realism under construction here is a double-helix: postcolonialism as one genetic strand, postmodernism as the other. In this model, magic realism and the magic realist text are collocated in the twists and gaps of this double discourse, that is, the discursive of enchainment of postcolonialism and postmodernism.

In the essays collected by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris for the anthology *Magic Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995), postmodernism and postcolonialism entwine as non-identical theoretical discourses in the genealogy of magic realism. Like postmodernism and postcolonialism, magic realism is recognized as a historical product of the discourses of modernism and colonialism. It is accepted among commentators on magic realism that in 1925 the German art critic Franz Roh coined the term in reference to post-expressionist visual art.<sup>2</sup> As well, critics generally observe an alternative concept of magic

realism, though not the term itself, pioneered by the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier, who coined the phrase “lo real maravilloso” [“the marvelous real(ity)”] in his preface to *El reino de este mundo* (1949) in order to disengage his literary practice from that of European surrealism (Zamora and Faris 7; Connell 96). Critics often cite Carpentier’s term “the marvelous real(ity)” in conjunction with Roh’s “magic realism,” sometimes conflating the two terms. In parsing each term, Liam Connell underscores the problematic correlation: “that Carpentier uses *maravilloso* rather than *magico*, and that critics who wilfully mistranslate Carpentier’s phrase or, by not translating, imply a simple correspondence between ‘the marvelous reality’ and Magic Realism — not only obscure a genealogy which includes a Surrealist interest in the marvellous (Breton, *What Is Surrealism?*), but also invoke a number of cultural attributes which follow from the magical . . . which are not, I think, similarly associated with the marvellous” (96). The “magic realism” versus “the marvelous real(ity)” debate is now so widespread that I cannot detail it beyond its critical origins: in short, because Roh writes from a European, post-expressionist perspective and Carpentier from a Latin American, post-surrealist perspective, the debate inevitably invites antagonism among critics. Angel Flores’s landmark essay “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction” (1995) recognizes neither Roh nor Carpentier as the starting point for what he names the “new phase of Latin American literature, of magical realism,” opting instead for Jorge Luis Borges’s 1935 collection *Historia universal de la infamia* (189). Although Flores does not cite Borges’s 1932 essay “El arte narrativo y la magia” as an originary moment in the theorization of magic realism, the widely acknowledged influence of Borges on García Márquez suggests that critics should also consider Borges’s essay as a prototype. Moreover, to situate Borges in relation to García Márquez not only avoids the Roh versus Carpentier debate, but also diagnoses better the strain of magic realism in *Cien años de soledad*, especially in the context of Latin American postmodernism and postcolonialism.

Theo D’haen presents the history of the term magic realism as one coextensive with the history of the term postmodernism. For D’haen, magic realism is the progeny of the continental

European avant-garde (post-expressionism, surrealism) and, as such, constitutes a discourse “ex-centric” to the “privileged centre” of Anglo-American modernism (203). Citing a consortium of international postmodern theorists (Douwe Fokkema, Allen Thiher, Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale, Ihab Hassan, David Lodge, and Alan Wilde), D’haen locates the origin of the term postmodernism with the Latin American critic Frederico de Onís in the 1930s (192-93).<sup>3</sup> D’haen suggests that the co-emergence of magic realism and postmodernism in the 1930s occurs when “Latin America was perhaps the continent most ex-centric to the ‘privileged centres’ of power” (200); that the international acceptance of postmodernism would eventually absorb its “ex-centric” discourse into the “privileged centre” discourses of Europe and the United States; and that, at the same time, magic realism would establish itself as the province of “ex-centric” cultures including, but not limited to, Latin America. At present, D’haen determines, “in international critical parlance a consensus is emerging in which a hierarchical relation is established between postmodernism and magic realism, whereby the latter comes to denote a particular strain of the contemporary movement covered by the former” (194). D’haen’s reconciliation of the critical histories of magic realism and postmodernism leads him to conclude that postmodernism enacts “aesthetic consciousness-raising” and magic realism “political consciousness-raising . . . within postmodernism” (202), or, to borrow from Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, that their narratives perform “a socially symbolic act.” D’haen does not propose an excavation of the Latin American roots of postmodernism in the same way he does the continental European origins of magic realism, but rather advocates a recognition of the dissemination of the theory and practice of postmodernism and magic realism in an international context.

To read the genealogies of postmodernism and magic realism D’haen constructs without skepticism, however, would be to contract the strain of historical amnesia experienced by the town of Macondo in *Cien años de soledad*. D’haen’s genealogies infect us with postmodern strains of García Márquez’s insomnia and banana plagues; they block our memory of the histories of colonial-

ism and repress theories of postcolonialism designed to unblock our memory. The culturally specific location of the term postmodernism with the Latin American critic Onís is part of the history of colonialism; that is, the appropriation of *postmodernismo* by an international critical community clearly constitutes a kind of colonization of the Latin American term. In fact, to some Latin American critics, the current international application of the term postmodernism to Latin American fiction represents a type of discursive recolonization.

As a reaction to international postmodern theorists, the Latin American critic Iris Zavala decries "the uncritical, normative, univocal acceptance of '(post)modernism' . . . in order to object, from a Hispanic perspective, to some Anglo-American and French currents of the philosophical and meta-theoretical mainstream and their tendency to apply the term (post) modernism globally and a-historically" (96). Zavala reminds Anglo-American and continental European critics of the historical and cultural specificity of *modernismo* in Hispanic literature.<sup>4</sup> In augmenting Onís, Zavala then posits a modified definition of *postmodernismo*:

If one wants to conserve the term 'postmodernism' at least a somewhat more reliable point of reference from which to ask the question is needed. Going back to Onís, we must agree that modernism is the literary expression, and the stylistic motivation, of the entry of the Hispanic world into modernity, adding to his definition that it is the product of a severe rupture with past modes of production and of the emergence of industrialized societies. . . . This argument can be qualified if modernity is understood as an unfinished project in *some* societies and cultures, a program which constantly rewrites itself.

(105)

Bill Ashcroft offers an important corrective to the ahistorical and global applications of the term postmodernism to which Zavala objects. The discursive colonization and recolonization of *postmodernismo* is but one international incident in the long history of colonialism in Latin America. According to Ashcroft, "the colonization of Latin America obliges us to address the question of postcolonialism at its roots, at the very emergence of modernity" (13). In this view, not only does modernity originate with European imperial expansion and colonization of Latin America, but

also “postmodernity is coterminous with modernity and represents a radical phase of its development . . . in the same way postcolonialism is coterminous with colonization, and the dynamic of its disruptive engagement is firmly situated in modernity” (15). “My contention,” Ashcroft continues, “is that postcolonialism and postmodernism are both discursive elaborations of postmodernity, which is itself not the overcoming of modernity, but modernity coming to understand its own contradictions and uncertainties” (15). Ashcroft’s placement of the discursive category postmodernism at the advent of postmodernity in Latin America obviously extends beyond the reach of postmodern theorists who locate the origin of postmodern aesthetics at the moment of Onís’s coinage in the 1930s. Moreover, Ashcroft’s conjunction of modernity and postmodernity and enchainment of postcolonialism and postmodernism in a Latin American context constitutes a double discourse analogous to the discursive code of magic realism in *Cien años de soledad*. For at the originary juncture of postcolonialism and postmodernism, *Cien años de soledad* narrates the “contradictions and uncertainties” that follow from imperial expansion, colonization, and modernization of Latin America.

Like postmodernism, magic realism is subject to colonial imperatives. For instance, those critics who limit the term magic realism to its first issue from the European avant-garde claim that “Latin American reality is colonized by the term” (Janes 102). Yet even in a Latin American context, Borges’s attempt to reconcile the difference between magic and narrative realism promulgates a colonial imperative. The tacit colonialist project of Borges’s essay “El arte narrativo y la magia” is made manifest in his explication of narratives of colonization: William Morris’s *Life and Death of Jason* (1867), Edgar Allan Poe’s *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), and José Antonio Conde’s *Historia de la dominación de los árabes en España* (1854-55). To interpret the law of cause and effect in narrative, Borges enjoins Sir James Frazer’s reduction of magic in *The Golden Bough* to “una conveniente ley general, la del la simpatía, que postula un vínculo inevitable entre cosas distantes, ya porque su figura es igual—magia imitativa, homeopática—ya por el hecho de una cercanía anterior

—magia contagiosa” (“El arte” 88) [“a convenient general law, the Law of Sympathy, which assumes that ‘things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy,’ either because their form is similar (imitative, or homeopathic, magic) or because of a previous physical contact (contagious, or contact, magic)” (“Narrative” 37)]. Rather than recognize difference, Borges intends “demonstrar que la magia es la coronación o pesadilla de lo causal, no su contradicción” (“El arte” 89) [“to show that magic is not the contradiction of the law of cause and effect but its crown, or nightmare” (“Narrative” 37)]. Borges’s sense of the non-contradictory relation between the law of magic and the law of cause and effect betrays a colonialist tendency to assimilate the former (the premodern discourse of the colonized) to the latter (the modern discourse of the colonizer). As a corollary, the colonizer’s discourse is contaminated once it comes into contact with the colonized’s discourse, and vice versa; this principle of discursive contamination is manifest, as we will see, in the narratives of the insomnia and banana plagues in *Cien años de soledad*. For at the colonial juncture of the premodern and the modern, narrative discourse functions according to “a principle of contamination, a law of impurity” (Derrida, “Law” 59); this strain of narrative discourse inhabits magic realism, which originates not with Borges himself in the 1930s, but with the colonial narratives of the earliest explorers of Latin America.

Adopting this long historical view, Amaryll Chanady identifies the colonial origins of magic realist narratives in Latin America. Chanady represents and contests several different definitions of magic realism: the portrayal of a supernatural indigenous world-view (magic) combined with the description of contemporary political and social problems (realism); the perception of Latin America as exotic; and the representation of an authentic geographical, ideological, and historical expression of Latin America (50). “In fact,” Chanady posits, “magic realism is often defined as the juxtaposition of two different rationalities—the Indian and the European in a syncretic fictitious world-view based on the simultaneous existence of several entirely different cultures in Latin America” (55). Like Borges’s “El arte narrativo y la magia,” Chanady’s location of the emergence of magic

realism is coterminous with the emergence of colonialism in Latin America, but Chanady's recognition of difference between Latin American cultures counters Borges's notion of the non-contradictory relation between discursive worlds. For Chanady, neither term in the self-contradictory phrase magic realism is therefore reducible or separable: "magic" cannot be reduced to a premodern native world-view, nor "realism" to a modern European world-view. As a discursive formation, magic realism in the Latin American context elaborates those "contradictions and uncertainties" that arise out of the co-existence of multiple cultures and discourses, and that stem from the simultaneity of imperial colonization and modernization.

Chanady cites Spanish exploration narratives in order to illustrate the history of colonialism as a metanarrative subtending Latin American magic realism.<sup>5</sup> Her first text, from Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* on the discovery of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, speaks to colonial textual representations of the new world as fabulous: "[Éstas] grandes poblaciones . . . parecía a las cosas y encantamiento que cuentan en el libro de Amadís . . . y aun algunos de nuestros soldados decían que si aquello que veían si era entre sueños. Y no es maravillar que yo aquí lo escriba desta manera, porque hay que ponderar much en ello, que no sé como lo cuente, ver cosas nunca oídas ni vistas y aun soñadas, como vimos" (238) ["These great towns . . . seemed like an enchanted vision from the tale of Amadís. Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream. . . . It was all so wonderful that I do not know how to describe this first glimpse of things never heard of, seen or dreamed of before" (*Conquest* 214; qtd. in Chanady 50)]. Her second text, from Hernán Cortés's second *relación* to Emperor Charles V in 1520, presents a colonial encounter with the new world congruous with the experience García Márquez ascribes to the inhabitants of Macondo: "son tantas y de tantas calidades, que por la prolijidad y por no me ocurrir tantas a la memoria, y aun por no saber poner los nobres, no las expreso" (*Cartas* 52) ["there are so many," that is, things in the New Continent, "and of so many kinds, that because of the great number of them and because I do not remember them all,

and also because I do not know what to call them, I cannot relate them" (Chanady 51)].<sup>6</sup> García Márquez, in the opening paragraph of *Cien años de soledad*, introduces a fictional world analogous to the "unnamed" continent faced by Spanish explorers: "El mundo era tan reciente, que muchas cosas carecían de nombre, y para mencionarlas había que señalarlas con el dedo" (9) ["The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" (11)]. This condition of namelessness in *Cien años de soledad* predicates the meta-narrative of colonial history. The lack of language necessary to name the colonized world points to the formation and awareness of discursive gaps, disruptive postcolonial sites of "contradictions and uncertainties" at the very origins of colonization in Latin America.

Situating the concept of magic realism in a postcolonial context, as Stephen Slemon proposes, "can enable us to recognize continuities within literary cultures that the established genre systems might blind us to": continuities, that is, between contemporary magic realist texts and texts written at earlier stages of a culture's literary and colonial history ("Magic Realism" 409). The magic realist text enters into a dialogue with genres of colonial and pre-colonial history and mythology; this dialogism marks Latin American magic realism as postcolonial discourse. For this reason, Slemon writes, there is "the perception that magic realism, as a socially symbolic contract, carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial centre and to its totalizing systems of generic classification" ("Magic Realism" 408). Like D'haen's conception of magic realism as a postmodernist discourse, Slemon holds that magic realism as a postcolonial discourse performs "a socially symbolic act." According to Slemon, the agon between narratives and the decentering of dominant metanarratives of generic classification characterize the magic realist text as postcolonial:

In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the "other," a situation which creates dis-



junction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences. (“Magic Realism” 409)

For García Márquez, the absence of language adequate to describe the phenomenal, unnamed world is signified through the “gaps, absences, and silences” in the magic realist text of *Cien años de soledad*. These silences and memory gaps are foregrounded in the insomnia plague, where precolonial and colonial discursive systems collide, and again in the banana plague, where neocolonial imperialist and judicial discourses delegitimize and erase the local political histories of the banana workers’ revolt and of their massacre. But are such contestations between narratives and collisions between discursive worlds limited to magic realism as a postcolonial discourse?

Brian McHale argues in *Postmodernist Fiction* that one of the functions of the postmodern study of ontology as the “theoretical description of a universe” is to ask such questions as:

What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects? How is a projected world structured? And so on. (10)

These questions lead McHale to propose the double thesis that “the dominant of postmodernist fiction is *ontological*,” whereas “the dominant of modernist fiction is *epistemological*” (9, 10) and functions as if to ask such questions as:

What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty? How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability? How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower? What are the limits of the knowable? And so on. (9)

What I am forwarding here—as a heuristic strategy—is less the modernist or postmodernist status of *Cien años de soledad* than the notion that the novel, to import McHale’s thesis, “dramatizes the shift of dominant from problems of *knowing* to problems of *modes of being*—from an epistemological dominant to an ontological one” (10). In my view, the shift from questions of knowledge to questions of being is dramatized in the acts of reading embedded

in *Cien años de soledad*.<sup>7</sup> Melquíades's parchments—and the epistemological task of reading, interpreting, and translating them taken up by successive generations of the House of Buendía—are revealed in the final pages by Aureliano Babilonia, the last Buendía, to be the narratives of his own life and his family's history: the parchments, written prior to the events of the novel by Melquíades himself. Suddenly the embedded reader, Aureliano Babilonia, and the implied reader of *Cien años de soledad* are thrown, as Robert Alter puts it, into an “ontological vertigo” (6). For Aureliano Babilonia, the world of the parchments he reads is indistinguishable from his world, the world of Macondo: for him, reading as a mode of interpretation gives way to a mode of being. So too, for the implied reader of the novel, a mode of interpretation is transformed into a mode of being. The text of *Cien años de soledad* therefore looks back upon both the implied and the embedded reader as “un espejo hablado” (350) [“a speaking mirror”] (383).

The ontological status of the implied reader is called into question in what Jon Thiem names a “fable of textualization” (231):

Not being literally in the text permits the reader to enjoy the exciting and dangerous fictional world without having to suffer the consequences of living in this world. . . . In a textualization this balance is upset. The world of the text loses its literal impenetrability. The reader loses that minimal detachment that keeps him or her out of the world of the text. The reader, in short, ceases to be reader, ceases to be invulnerable, comfortable in his or her own armchair, and safely detached, and instead becomes an actor, an agent in the fictional world. (239)

But what is the ontological status of this displaced reader? If we consider the relationship between reader and text in terms of the hierarchized binary of “self” and “other,” the displacement of the reader from the privileged position of “self” into the position of “other” performs what Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* terms “aesthetic and political consciousness-raising” (73). From a postcolonial perspective, Chanady argues that the exotic representations of Latin America in magic realist texts are “directed towards a reader who has little knowledge of certain aspects of Latin American nature and civilization. That reader

need not be European—he can also live in a large Europeanized metropolis like Buenos Aires” (52). Chanady’s location of the (euro)centric reader in relation to the postcolonial, ex-centric text recalls Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s construction of postcolonial theory and practice in *The Empire Writes Back*; this displacement of the magic realist text from privileged centres of imperial culture represents a postcolonial discourse writing back from a place “other” than “the” or “a” centre. While D’haen may theorize “the notion of the ex-centric, in the sense of speaking from the margin, from a place ‘other’ than ‘the’ or ‘a’ centre . . . [as] an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism we call magic realism” (194), it is critically important to theorize writing back from a place “other” than the centre in that strain of postcolonialism we call magic realism.

The discursive enchainment of postmodernism and postcolonialism—the double-helix of magic realism in *Cien años de soledad*—is foregrounded in what I am calling fables of the plague years: the tales of the insomnia plague and the banana plague. The isolation of these fabulous tales in the text is perhaps analogous to the medical practice of quarantine; but it is, in keeping with my metaphor of the double helix, an attempt to isolate elements of a double code of postmodernism and postcolonialism in the generic code of magic realism. I will first isolate the insomnia plague in chapter three of *Cien años de soledad* as a kind of allegorical narrative, a fable in the broad sense of a fabulous tale, of the theoretical concerns of magic realism as a postmodernist and postcolonialist narrative discourse. Proceeding from the theoretical symptomology of the insomnia plague, I will then isolate the conditions of the banana plague beginning in chapter twelve of *Cien años de soledad* as an allegorical narrative of the sociopolitical concerns of magic realism and as a counter-colonialist and imperialist narrative discourse.

Prior to analysis of such theoretical allegories, however, an account of the insomnia plague itself is in order: an orphan—who is somehow related to Úrsula and José Arcadio Buendía but remembered by neither, who is subsequently named Rebeca (after her mother, so named in a letter of introduction), who

refuses to speak until she is spoken to in the Guajiro native language by the servant Visitación, who actually speaks fluently in the Guajiro and Spanish languages, and who suffers from the vice of eating earth until she is cured by Úrsula's homeopathic medicine—is revealed to be a carrier of the insomnia plague which infects the House of Buendía with the illness of insomnia. Visitación relates to the Buendías the critical manifestation of the insomnia plague—the loss of memory—which José Arcadio Buendía dismisses as a native superstition. The town of Macondo is then infected with the illness by eating Úrsula's candied animals. In order to remedy the inevitable loss of memory, José Arcadio Buendía first marks every object in the town with its name and later appends a kind of instruction manual for each object, so transforming the town of Macondo into a text. He then embarks on the construction of “la máquina de la memoria” (48) [“the memory machine” (54)]: an encyclopedic text in imitation of the marvelous inventions of the gypsies, “se fundaba en la posibilidad de repasar todas las mañanas, y desde el principio hasta el fin, la totalidad de los conocimientos adquiridos en la vida” (48) [“based on the possibility of reviewing every morning, from beginning to end, the totality of knowledge acquired during one's life” (54)]. Despite José Arcadio Buendía's attempts to forestall the decimation of the collective memory of Macondo with his strategies to inscribe and transcribe the totality of language-based knowledge, the insomnia plague ultimately effects the complete erasure of linguistic signifiers and signifieds: “Así continuaron viviendo en una realidad escurridiza, momentáneamente capturada por las palabras, pero que había de fugarse sin remedio cuando olvidaran los valores de la letra escrita” (47) [“Thus they went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which would escape irredeemably when they forgot the values of the written letters” (53)]. As an alternative system to José Arcadio Buendía's memory machine, the fortune teller Pilar Ternera conceives “el artificio de leer el pasado en las barajas como antes había leído el futuro. Mediante ese recurso, los insomnes empezaron a vivir en un mundo construido por las alternativas inciertas de los naipes” (48) [“the trick of reading the past in cards as she had read

the future before. By means of that recourse the insomniacs began to live in a world built on the uncertain alternatives of the cards" (53)]. In the end, the panacea for the insomnia plague, restoring meaning to the meaningless yet textualized world of Macondo, is procured by the gypsy Melquíades. He returns as if from the dead, for it is believed that "la tribu de Melquíades, según contraron los trotamundos, había sido borrada de la faz de la tierra por haber sobrepasado los límites del conocimiento humano" (40) ["Melquíades' tribe, according to what the wanderers said, had been wiped off the face of the earth because they had gone beyond the limits of human knowledge"] (45). While José Arcadio Buendía and Pilar Ternera face the problem of meaning in terms of interpretive or epistemological strategies, the problem of the insomnia plague is revealed to be ontological, a theoretical description of a world "beyond the limits of human knowledge," an ontology of the magical real known only to Melquíades.

From the position of postmodernism, I interpret the insomnia plague in terms of what Thiem calls a "fable of textualization," that is, a type of textualization which takes place when "the world of the text literally intrudes into the extratextual or reader's world" (236). Textualizations, Thiem writes, "partake of a dreamlike quality which aligns them with a host of other magic realist devices and motifs. . . . [T]he oneiric resonance of textualization . . . , like so many other dream occurrences, . . . arises out of the literalization of a common metaphor" (237). The literalization of common metaphors, such as plague and illness in *Cien años de soledad*, parallels the argument of Susan Sontag's book *Illness as Metaphor*, which opens with a kind of fable:

Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous [and oneiric] citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place. (3)

Analogous perhaps to the manner in which we speak of "master narratives," Sontag refers to "master illnesses" (71): so in the phrase "illness as metaphor," metaphor functions as a narrative in miniature. But Sontag urges the demystification of illness as a

poetic figure. To argue that García Márquez literalizes the metaphor of “plague” or “illness” forces Sontag’s point that “illness is *not* a metaphor” (3). In the textualized town of Macondo, the “illness” is literalized as a text inscribed upon an extratextual world. Thus in a “fable of textualization” such as “la peste del insomnio” (44) [“the insomnia plague” (50)], where “the world of the text literally intrudes into the extratextual or reader’s world,” both *lector in fabula* (embedded reader) and (perhaps more tentatively) *lector ex fabula* (implied reader) literally become contaminated with the illness of insomnia.<sup>8</sup>

For the oneiric citizen of Macondo, the insomnia plague also stages the exhaustive possibilities of postmodernist metafiction:

Los que querían dormir, no por cansancio sino por nostalgia de los sueños, recurrieron a toda clase de métodos agotadores. Se reunían a conversar sin tregua, a repetirse durante horas y horas los mismos chistes, a complicar hasta los límites de la exasperación el cuento del gallo capón, que era un juego infinito. (46)

[Those who wanted sleep, not from fatigue but because of the nostalgia for dreams, tried all kinds of methods of exhausting themselves. They would gather together to converse endlessly, to tell over and over for hours on end the same jokes, to complicate to the limits of exasperation the story about the capon, which was an endless game (51)].

The fictions developed by the insomniacs of Macondo recall John Barth’s theorization of postmodernist fiction as “‘the literature of exhausted possibility’—or, more chicly, ‘the literature of exhaustion’” (“Literature of Exhaustion” 64). The metafictional implication, of course, is the theorization of a “literature of replenishment” (Barth, “Literature of Replenishment” 193): the restoration of dream narratives, that is, the metanarratives of the unconscious. But postmodernist metafiction in the insomnia plague does not deliver the panacea; it theorizes the deferral of sleep, the endless game of exhaustion, the automation of insomnia.

Reading the insomnia plague in the context of a magic realist strain of postmodernism, subtended by Lyotard’s definition of the postmodern condition as “incredulity toward metanarratives” (xxiv), demonstrates a corrosion of the semiotic chains of signifier and signified, a collapse of metalinguistic systems

of referentiality, and a world without access to legitimation of knowledge based on metanarratives about knowledge. Yet meaning is restored to the world by way of Melquíades's panacea, a magical remedy perhaps for the postmodern condition. But the ontology of the panacea is, of course, but a nostalgia for what Derrida calls the *pharmakon* (*Dissemination* 95ff).

Reading the insomnia plague in the context of a magic realist strain of postcolonialism requires attention to the specific history of a marginal character—Visitación. That the insomnia plague is the same one which exiled Visitación and her brother Cataure from “un reino milenario en el cual eran príncipes” (44) [“an age-old kingdom where they had been prince and princess” (49-50)] suggests that one mutation of the insomnia plague is the history of European imperialism and colonialism in which the critical manifestation of amnesia (loss of memory) effects the violent erasure and expulsion of indigenous people and their cultures. For Visitación, “su corazón fatalista le indicaba que la dolencia letal había de perseguirla de todos modos hasta el último rincón de la tierra” (44) [“her fatalistic heart told her that the lethal sickness would follow her, no matter what, to the farthest corner of the earth” (50)]. For José Arcadio Buendía, “se trataba de una de tantas dolencias inventadas por las superstición de los indígenas” (44-45) [“it was just a question of one of the many illnesses invented by the Indian's superstitions” (50)]. Documentation of lethal sickness in colonial history would support Sontag's point that illness is not a metaphor and give evidence to prove that for colonized people illness is neither a metaphor nor a superstition. Yet the fabled representation of “an age-old kingdom” foregrounds the fabulous origins of the illness of insomnia and the fabulous narrative of the insomnia plague itself. The dialogic form of magic realism in a postcolonial context, then, incorporates the genre of the fable from an immemorial time in Visitación's age-old indigenous culture. According to Chanady, the incorporated genre of the fable in magic realism also originates in the fabulous tales of explorer narratives. To reiterate Chanady's point, “magic realism is often defined as the juxtaposition of two different rationalities—the Indian and the European in a syncretic fictitious world-view

based on the simultaneous existence of several entirely different cultures in Latin America" (55). The double code of the insomnia plague in a postcolonial context thus enlists magic realism in what Rawdon Wilson calls the "analysis of postcolonial discourse as the mode of a conflicted consciousness, the cognitive map that discloses the antagonism between two views of culture, two views of history . . . and two ideologies" (222-23). Wilson's analysis occasions one final speculation on the double cultural, historical, and ideological code of the insomnia plague: that is, while a colonial strain of the insomnia plague effects Visitación's exile from "an age-old kingdom," it could be argued also that a postcolonial strain of the insomnia plague effects the temporary erasure of the colonial imperialist system of naming. If only for a short spell, as it were, the world of Macondo is suspended in a fabled primordial narrative of namelessness.

Given the strain of colonial imperialism evident in the insomnia plague, the magic realist narrative of "la peste del banano" (199) ["the banana plague" (217)] exhibits the exposure of the inhabitants of Macondo to the sociohistorical epidemic of *neocolonial imperialism*. After the construction of the railroad into Macondo by one of Colonel Aureliano Buendía's illegitimate sons, Aureliano Triste, "no sólo para la modernización de su industria, sino para vincular la población con el resto del mundo" (192) ["not only for the modernization of his business but to link the town with the rest of the world" (209)], the town is exposed to what is, in effect, a modern plague of industrialization and neocolonial imperialism. The railroad, as an effective and historically precedented vehicle for neocolonial imperialism, is the catalyst for the banana plague. Moreover, the narrative of the banana plague and the modernization of Macondo by railroad evidences Jameson's definition of magic realism, which "depends on a content which betrays the overlap or the coexistence of precapitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features" (311).

As a conduit to multinational corporations, the railroad first brings about the "invasión" (197) ["invasion" (215)] and re-colonization of Macondo by "los gringos" (197) ["the gringos" (214)], which provokes the town-dwellers to speculate on the



relation between recolonization and their past experience of the catastrophic effects of civil war:

No hubo, sin embargo, mucho tiempo para pensarlo, porque los suspicaces habitantes de Macondo apenas empezaban a preguntarse qué cuernos era lo que estaba pasando, cuando el pueblo se había transformado en un campamento de casas de madera con techos de zinc, poblado por forasteros que llegaban de medio mundo en el tren. . . . Dotados de recursos que en otra época estuvieron reservados a la Divina Providencia, modificaron el régimen de lluvias, apresuraron el ciclo de las cosechas, y quitaron el río de donde estuvo siempre y lo pusieron con sus piedras blancas y sus corrientes heladas en el otro extremo de la población, detrás del cementerio. . . . Tantos cambios ocurrieron en tan poco tiempo, que ocho meses después de la visita de Mr. Herbert [the banana company representative] los antiguos habitantes de Macondo se levantaban temprano a conocer su propio pueblo. (196, 197, 198)

[There was not much time to think about it, however, because the suspicious inhabitants of Macondo barely began to wonder what the devil was going on when the town had already become transformed into an encampment of wooden houses with zinc roofs inhabited by foreigners who arrived on the train from halfway around the world. . . . Endowed with means that had been reserved for Divine Providence in former times, they changed the pattern of the rains, accelerated the cycle of the harvest, 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, behind the cemetery. . . . So many changes took place in such a short time that eight months after Mr. Herbert's visit the old inhabitants had a hard time recognizing their own town (214, 215)].

That the droves of foreigners coming to Macondo by the railroad and occupying the town are described as “una invasión tan tumultuosa e intempestiva” (197) [“a tumultuous and intemperate invasion” (215)] invokes a discourse signifying a neocolonialist invasion; this invasion of Macondo, therefore, is a recolonization of colonial space. When the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* argue that “the construction or demolition of houses or buildings in postcolonial locations is a recurring and evocative figure for the problematic of postcolonial identity” (28), it suggests that the neocolonialist invaders settle in Macondo and so transform it into a postcolonial location. For a definition of the postcolonial in such a context, Slemon proposes that “the concept proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a

post-independence historical period in once-colonized nations but rather when it locates a specifically anti- or *post*-colonial *discursive* purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others” (“Modernism’s Last Post” 3). Taken together, the invasion of Macondo, the construction of encampments, the rerouting of the river, and the magical alteration of meteorological and seasonal cycles thus signify the inscription of neocolonial imperialism on an already colonial location. The invasion of Macondo even extends into the Buendías’ home when “la invasión de la plebe” [“the plebeian invasion”] of foreigners comes to inhabit and transform the house into “un alboroto de mercado” (199) [“a marketplace” (216)], and thereafter recolonize the home of the ancestral colonizers of Macondo, the House of Buendía. However, as a counter-narrative strategy, García Márquez’s defamiliarization of the historical representation of a neocolonial invasion through the narrative discourse of magic realism serves to destabilize rather than monumentalize the history of neocolonial imperialism represented by the invasion of Macondo.

The invasion is only a preliminary symptom of the banana plague, not the plague itself. Instigated by the Buendías’ hospitable offer of bananas to Mr. Herbert, who arrives in Macondo as a hot-air balloon businessman and amateur entomologist, the subsequent “plebeian invasion” by rail and later land survey by “un grupo de ingenieros, agrónomos, hidrólogos, topógrafos y agrimensores que durante varias semanas exploración los mismos lugares donde Mr. Herbert cazaba mariposas” (196) [“a group of engineers, agronomists, hydrologists, topographers, and surveyors who for several weeks explored the places where Mr. Herbert had hunted his butterflies” (213)], leads to the banana company’s invasion of Macondo. The banana plague lies dormant for a year following the arrival of Mr. Herbert, after which the invasion of Macondo comes to fruition: “Había pasado más de un año desde la visita de Mr. Herbert, y lo único que se sabía era que los gringos pensaban sembrar banano en la región encantada que José Arcadio Buendía y sus hombres habían atravesado buscando la ruta de los grandes inventos” (199) [“More than a year had gone by since Mr. Herbert’s visit and the

only thing that was known was that the gringos were planning to plant banana trees in the enchanted region that José Arcadio Buendía and his men had crossed in search of the route to the great inventions" (216)]. Just as the great inventions, the products of capitalist industrialization and ideology, arrive by rail, so too do the banana company and the banana plague, the producers and products of neocolonial imperialism and its ideology. They invade Macondo by the same route. The colonization of "the enchanted region," the barrier isolating the town from the industrial world, thus signifies the exposure of Macondo and its inhabitants to a particular ideological strain of neocolonial imperialism, that is, the banana plague.

The invasion and settlement, exploration and mapping, and later martial government of Macondo by the banana company and its plebeian workers work through the ideology and militant practice of colonial imperialism, though in the modern guise of multinational industrial capitalism. Colonel Aureliano Buendía's planned armed resistance to this neocolonial hegemony—"una conflagración mortal que arrasara con todo vestigio de un régimen de corrupción y de escándalo sostenido por el invasor extranjero" (210) ["a mortal conflagration that would wipe out the vestiges of a regime of corruption and scandal backed by the foreign invader" (229)]—gestures toward a post-colonial resistance narrative, but remains unrealized for the reason that his ideological position, as a militant civil revolutionary, is virtually powerless against the multinational and anonymous forces backing the new colonizer, the banana company. Colonel Aureliano Buendía's dream of "la guerra total" (210) ["the total war" (228)] against the unspecified and unspecifiable "foreign invader" is a nostalgic remnant of an outworn ideology. The imperialist ideology of the new world colonizer, symbolized by the House of Buendía, is absorbed and then displaced by the neocolonial imperialist ideology of multinational industrial capitalism, symbolized by the banana company. Hence the naturalization of this neocolonial imperialist ideology in Macondo is signified by its penetration into the quotidian routines of the House of Buendía:

La fiebre del banano se había apaciguado. Los antiguos habitantes de Macondo se encontraban arrinconados por los advenedizos, tra-

bajosamente asidos a sus precarios recursos de antaño, pero reconfortados en todo caso por la impresión de haber sobrevivido a un naufragio. En la casa siguieron recibiendo invitados a almorzar, y en realidad no se restableció la antigua rutina mientras no se fue, años después, la compañía bananera. (217)

[The banana fever had calmed down. The old inhabitants of Macondo found themselves surrounded by newcomers and working hard to cling to their precarious resources of times gone by, but comforted in any case by the sense that they had survived a shipwreck. In the house they still had guests for lunch and the old routine was never really set up again until the banana company left years later (236)].

Like a latent disease, the “banana fever” settles into remission; its narrative recedes but does not disappear because its carrier is the House of Buendía, whose narrative is *Cien años de soledad*. Diagnosed by his wife Fernanda to be a carrier of “la sarna de los forasteros” (217) [“the rash of the foreigners” (237)], José Arcadio Segundo, who is later employed as a foreman with the banana company, not only infects the House of Buendía with the neocolonial imperialist ideology of banana plague, but also realizes the narrative of resistance against the same ideological strain.

“Illnesses have always been used as metaphors to enliven charges that a society was corrupt or unjust” (72), Sontag writes in the introduction to her analysis of sociopolitical disease metaphors. For instance, Colonel Aureliano Buendía’s metaphor of militant resistance that “would wipe out the vestiges of a regime of corruption and scandal backed by the foreign invader” at once deploys the figurative language of a plague, but it simultaneously redeploys the figure in order to attack it, as it were, using the plague metaphor to counteract the sociopolitical conditions of neocolonial imperialism embodied by the banana plague. As a figure of postcolonial discourse, the banana plague carries a politicized narrative of invasion and resistance; it is a socially symbolic narrative of neocolonial imperialist ideology and postcolonial resistance to this ideological strain. However, the enactment of resistance to the sociopolitical corruption and injustice signified by banana plague is, significantly, not carried out by Colonel Aureliano Buendía, but by an actual carrier of the plague, José Arcadio Segundo.

While the former fable of the plague years, the insomnia plague, presents a positive condition of namelessness, a utopian moment of the deinscription of colonial imperialist power, the latter, the banana plague, presents a negative act of erasure, a dystopian moment of the disempowerment and later depopulation of the banana workers. Like the narrative of the insomnia plague, the banana plague narrates a crisis of representation, but in the context of judicial and political discourse, and a loss of referential meaning, in the context of the banana workers' legal demands against the banana company. Reaper-like harbingers of the death of referentiality in the discursive arena of the court, "[l]os decrepitos abogados vestidos de negro que en otro tiempo asediaron al coronel Aureliano Buendía, y que entonces eran apoderados de la compañía bananera, desvirtuaban estos cargos con arbitrios que parecían cosa de magia" (255) ["[t]he decrepit lawyers dressed in black who during other times had besieged Colonel Aureliano Buendía and who now were controlled by the banana company dismissed those demands with decisions that seemed like acts of magic" (279)]. Masters of illusion and the deferral of meaning, the lawyers represent deft poststructuralist practitioners of judicial discourse; their professional capacity, absorbed into the neocolonial imperialist power structure of the banana company, serves to exercise a sociopolitical hegemony over postcolonial subjects, namely, the banana workers. That the lawyers' "acts of magic" can cloak the neocolonial imperialist reality of the banana company speaks to the danger of discursive fabulation as a rhetorical and narrative device; that is, the reappropriation of magic realism into the judicial discourse of neocolonial imperialism strategically erases and ineffectuates the oppositional narrative discourse of postcolonialism. This discursive erasure of persons through the operations of fabulous judicial processes is evident in the concatenation of events prior to the massacre of the banana workers:

Los luctuosos abogados demostraron en el juzgado que aquel hombre [Mr. Brown, a banana company executive] no tenía nada que nadie pusiera en duda sus argumentos lo hicieron encarcelar por usurpador. . . . Cansados de aquel delirio hermenéutico, los trabajadores repudiaron a las autoridades de Macondo y subieron con sus quejas a los tribunales supremos. Fus allí donde los illusionistas del

derecho demostraron que las reclamaciones carecían de toda validez, simplemente porque la compañía bananera no tenía, ni había tenido nunca ni tendría jamás trabajadores a su servicio, sino que los reclutaba ocasionalmente y con carácter temporal. . . . [Y] se estableció por fallo de tribunal y se proclamó en bandos solemnes la inexistencia de los trabajadores. (255, 256)

[The mournful lawyers showed in court that that man had nothing to do with the company and in order that no one doubt their arguments they had him jailed as an impostor. . . . Tired of that hermeneutical delirium, the workers turned away from the authorities in Macondo and brought their complaints up to the higher courts. It was there that the sleight-of-hand lawyers proved that the demands lacked all validity for the simple reason that the banana company did not have, never had had, and never would have workers in its service because they were all hired on a temporary and occasional basis. . . . [A]nd by a decision of the court it was established and set down in solemn decrees that the workers did not exist (279)].

For Slemon, one of the ways in which the postcolonial is distinguished from the postmodern depends upon the different theorization of the referentiality of language. While the postmodern text “necessarily admits a provisionality to its truth-claims” (2), the postcolonial text maintains “a mimetic or referential purchase to textuality,” a claim which admits “the positive production of oppositional truth-claims” (“Modernism’s Last Post” 5). However, if the textual referents (contracts, degrees, laws) are governed by a judicial and political system which is controlled by a neocolonial power such as the banana company, the postcolonial purchase to textuality is rendered meaningless and powerless. On the one hand, then, the positive production of oppositional truth-claims subtends the banana workers’ contestation of the banana company as a postcolonial resistance narrative; on the other hand, the provisionality of truth-claims underlies the sleight-of-hand lawyers’ proof of the non-existence of both Mr. Jack Brown and the banana workers. The lawyers’ poststructuralist language games, as a postmodernist strain of magic realist narrative discourse, thus overpower the banana workers’ resistance narrative, as a postcolonial strain of magic realist discourse. This double-handed discursive logic ultimately effects the “real” massacre and disappearance of three thousand banana workers who “did not exist.”

The prognosis for the banana plague is that of terminal illness. As a historiographic realist narrative—that is, a narrative based on textualized versions of history—the massacre of the banana workers might have terminated with the dissemination of “un bando nacional extraordinario, para informar que los obreros habían obedecido la orden de evacuar la estación, y se dirigían a sus casas in caravanas pacíficas” (262) [“an extraordinary proclamation to the nation which said that the workers had left the station and returned home in peaceful groups” (286)]. Such a narrative, an official record of history sanctioned by the neo-colonial imperialist agenda of the banana company, would have erased the other narrative of three thousand banana workers, massacred, then stacked and exported “en el orden y el sentido en que se transportaban los racimos de banano” (260) [“in the same way in which they transported bunches of bananas” (284)]. The collision between these two narratives, one of official neo-colonialist history and the other of unofficial postcolonialist history, creates a discursive situation in which both of the separate narratives are rent by silences, absences, and gaps in that each is negated by the existence of the other. Magic realist narrative discourse allows for the coexistence of such contradictory narratives of history. In the postmodernist strain of magic realism, Linda Hutcheon would describe this crisis of representation as “historiographic metafiction” (106)—insofar as the banana massacre narrativizes the construction of historical narratives (although this designation would be dependent upon the textual referent of official history, that is, the neocolonial imperialist textualization of history). In the postcolonial strain of magic realism, conversely, I would posit José Arcadio Segundo’s unofficial account of the history of the banana company as a postcolonial resistance narrative. José Arcadio Segundo, the only survivor of the massacre, lives to pass on to Aureliano Babilonia, the last Buendía, “una interpretación tan personal de lo que significó para Macondo la compañía bananera, que muchos años después, cuando Aureliano se incorporara al mundo, había de pensarse que contaba una versión alucinada, porque era radicalmente contraria a la falsa que los historiadores habían admitido, y consagrado en los textos escolares” (296) [“such

a personal interpretation of what the banana company had meant to Macondo that many years later, when Aureliano became part of the world, one would have thought that he was telling a hallucinated version, because it was radically opposed to the false one that historians had created and consecrated in the schoolbooks (322)]. What the foregoing attests is how the magic realist text stages a crisis of representation in which the double discourse of postmodernist and postcolonialist narratives, official and unofficial histories, acts out its contestations and contradictions.

Turning back to the final pages of *Cien años de soledad*, which I have already interpreted in terms of a postmodernist code of textualization, an alternate thesis presents itself and a reading in terms of a postcolonial decoding of historical, colonial narrative. In these final pages Aureliano Babilonia deciphers Melquíades's parchments to reveal the historical conditions of colonialism, that is, the absurd history of Sir Francis Drake attacking Riohacha and hunting alligators with cannons and stuffing them as trophies for Queen Elizabeth, which predicates the narrative of the House of Buendía: "Sólo entonces descubrió que Amaranta Úrsula no era su hermana, sino su tía, y que Francis Drake había asaltado a Riohacha solamente para que ellos pudieran buscarse por los laberintos más intrincados de la sangre, hasta engendrar el animal mitológico que había de poner término a la estirpe" (350) ["Only then did he discover that Amaranta Úrsula was not his sister but his aunt, and that Sir Francis Drake had attacked Riohacha only so that they could seek each other through the most intricate labyrinths of blood until they would engender the mythological animal that was to bring the line to the end" (382-83)]. In brief, Aureliano Babilonia's decipherment of the parchments decodes both the *arche* (origin) and *telos* (terminus) of the historical narratives of the House of Buendía and of colonialism. Beyond the code of colonialism hovers the postcolonial possibility, beyond the threshold of the magic realist text, as it were, in the unwritten absence, gap, and silence left after the decoding of the colonial code and the eradication of the House of Buendía: "Sin embargo, antes de llegar al verso final ya había comprendido que no saldría jamás de ese cuarto,



pues estaba previsto que la ciudad de los espejos (o los espejismos) sería arrasada por el viento y desterrada de la memoria de los hombres en el instante en que Aureliano Babilonia acabara de descifrar los pergaminos, y que todo lo escrito, en ellos era irreplicable desde siempre y para siempre, porque las estirpes condenadas a cien años de soledad no tenían una segunda oportunidad sobre la tierra” (351) [“Before reaching the final line, however, he had already understood that he would never leave that room, for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatably since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth” (383)]. As both *arche* and *telos*, the final paragraph of the novel reflects upon the unnamed world in the opening paragraph: *Cien años de soledad* is indeed a city of mirrors, a *mise en abîme*. As the colonial narrative of the House of Buendía, Melquíades’s parchments (and *Cien años de soledad*) mirror the colonial narrative of Melquíades’s tribe, for the Buendías (“exiled from the memory of men”) are likewise “borrada de la faz de la tierra por haber sobrepasado los límites del conocimiento humano” (40) [“wiped off the face of the earth because they had gone beyond the limits of human knowledge” (45)]. After Aureliano Babilonia’s final act of decoding Melquíades’s parchments, the “exile” of the House of Buendía and the erasure of colonial history impose closure upon one narrative and open the possibility for postcolonial narrative.

To rearticulate Slemon’s theorization of the confrontation between two oppositional discourses—that is, an encounter in which “each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the ‘other,’ a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences” (“Magic Realism” 409)—also reiterates the agon I have tried to mediate between the strains of postcolonialism and postmodernism and the gaps between their separate discursive systems. Because of the very difficulties theor-

ists have with the term magic realism, it has often been considered a "theoretical void" (González Echevarría, "Isla a su vuelo fugitiva" 18).<sup>9</sup> But magic realism read through a double code of postmodernism and postcolonialism facilitates, if not a unilateral agreement between oppositional discourses, then an arbitration of aporias and theoretical voids.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> All subsequent English translations that follow the original Spanish of *Cien años de soledad* refer to Gregory Rabassa's translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.
- <sup>2</sup> See Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (1925).
- <sup>3</sup> Among the essays collected in *Postmodern Fiction in Europe and the Americas*, co-edited by D'haen, Iris M. Zavala's "On the (Mis-)uses of the Post-Modern: Hispanic Modernism Revisited" locates Onís's coinage of the term postmodernism in his 1934 *Antología de la poesía española e hispanoamericana (1882-1932)* (Zavala 84).
- <sup>4</sup> For a current survey of critical discussions of *modernismo* see Gerard Aching's *The Politics of Spanish American Modernismo* (163).
- <sup>5</sup> Flores first delineated the colonial origins of "magical realism": "realism, since the Colonial Period but especially during the 1880s; the magical, writ large from the earliest in the letters of Columbus, in the chroniclers, in the sagas of Cabeza de Vaca" (189). Where Flores separates realism and the magical into two historical periods, Chanady recombines the two in her analysis of colonial narratives.
- <sup>6</sup> I have maintained Chanady's own translation of *Cartas de relación de Fernando Cortés, Historiadores primitivos de Indias*.
- <sup>7</sup> For other analyses of the act of reading in *Cien años de soledad*, see the following: Julio Ortega, "Postmodernism in Latin America" and "La risa de la tribu, el intercambio signico en *Cien años de soledad*"; Jon Thiem, "The Textualization of the Reader in Magic Realist Fiction"; Anibal González, "Translation and the Novel: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*"; Roberto González Echevarría, "*Cien años de soledad*: The Novel as Myth and Archive"; Edwin Williamson, "Magical Realism and the Theme of Incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*"; Michael Palencia-Roth, "Los perigamos de Aureliano Buendía"; and E. Rodríguez Monegal, "*One Hundred Years of Solitude*: The Last Three Pages."
- <sup>8</sup> In his introduction to Hannes Wallrafen's photographic text *The World of Márquez*, García Márquez describes yet another kind of textualization of the extratextual world:

I have always had great respect for readers who go off in search of the reality hidden behind my books. I have even greater respect for those who find it, because I've never been able to. In Aracataca, the Caribbean village where I was born, this seems to have become an everyday occupation. Over the last twenty years a whole generation of sharp children has grown up there, lying in wait for the myth hunters at the railroad station so they can introduce them to the places, things, and even the characters from my novels. . . . These children haven't read my novels, of course, so their knowledge of the mythical Macondo can not have been acquired through them. The places, things and characters they show tourists are real only to the degree that the latter are willing to accept them as so. That is to say, behind the Macondo created by literary fiction there is another

Macondo, even more imaginary and mythical, created by readers and authenticated by the children of Aracataca with a third visible and palpable Macondo which is, without a doubt, the falsest of them all. Fortunately, Macondo isn't a place, but a state of mind that allows people to see what they want to see as they see fit. (5-6)

<sup>9</sup> I have followed Chanady's quotation and translation of González Echevarría's phrase (Chanady 49).

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