



The Rock Creek Review: Reading the Unreal

Volume 5: May 2025



The Rock Creek Review

Reading the Unreal

Volume V

May 2025

Heidelberg University
English Department

ISSN: 2689-7415

The Rock Creek Review

An Undergraduate Journal of Literary Studies

ISSN 2689-7415

2023 Heidelberg University

<https://inside.heidelberg.edu/departments-offices/english/rock-creek-review>

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Logo design by Ethan White

Cover Photo by Chace Boothman

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Published by the English Department of Heidelberg University in Tiffin,
Ohio.

Chair: Dr. Desirae Matherly

310 E Market Street, Tiffin, Ohio, 44883

About Our Editors

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Dr. Barry Devine (he/him) is the Editor-in-Chief and a Founding Editor of The Rock Creek Review. He is an Associate Professor of English at Heidelberg University and teaches Irish and British literature, Literary Theory, and Women's Literature.

Dear Reader,

To be completely honest, I was apprehensive about my role as the managing editor for this year's edition of *The Rock Creek Review*. This position is such a huge responsibility, and filling the shoes of those before me was rather daunting. That being said, I'm so grateful to be here writing what you're reading right now. With such an amazing support system of friends, peers and professors, this task seemed a little less daunting. It has been such a privilege to see my name attached to this amazing publication, and I'm so very proud of the work my team and our authors have put into this.

Of course, as any year-long process would, we had our ups and downs. I am so grateful to our authors and editors for their grace and patience as we extended deadlines, moved things around and crafted this publication. It was such an amazing pleasure to communicate with each of our authors and share their writing with you. Each of them clearly put so much into their papers, and I'm so lucky to be the one to facilitate the sharing of their creations. It truly has been such an amazing experience, and I'm so grateful to be able to say that I've held such a position and pass down the torch. But enough about me and my team, let's discuss this year's theme.

In 1817, English poet, writer, and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge published his two-volume autobiography entitled *Biographia Literaria*. In his writing, Coleridge proposed the idea of the "suspension of disbelief", in which an audience willingly suspends their ideals of what is real or not to fully understand and immerse themselves in a narrative or story. This is a broad theme, as it fits any piece of media that involves something that one would consider "unbelievable". As intended, this led us to receiving papers on a wide array of topics and subject matters, as the theme itself is rather subjective. In my editing, I found each and every one of the papers we received to be interesting and informative, making me think in new ways about their subject matter.

Whether it be an escape from what is real, or a challenge to your perceptions, I hope that you find yourself suspending your own disbelief as you submerge yourself into these readings. Thank you, reader, for your support and attention. On behalf of myself, our authors, and my team, we believe you won't be disappointed.

Sincerely, Katherine Albright
Managing Editor of *The Rock Creek Review*, 2025

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From the small town of Grand Rapids Ohio, this pharmacy major is a major fan of music, the band Ghost BC, and all things literature. Addison Roller is a University of Findlay second year student who loves spending time with her friends and watching the squirrels on campus. Addison has loved writing from a young age and often uses it to blend fantasy and reality in her works. She hopes to one day be both an amazing pharmacist and author.

Beat the Dystopia, Spare the Woman

Addison Roller

Dystopia, feminism, humanity, and hope in the darkest of places, some of the many themes explored in the works of Margaret Eleanor Atwood. Renowned Canadian author, poet, literature critic, and recipient of 55 different literary awards, Margaret Atwood and her work hold a powerful scene in the literary world. Even with this status, Atwood is a very polarized author with many of her books ending up on banned book lists and drawing even more controversy regarding her online presence. Regardless of social standing, it is indisputable that Atwood is a notable figure in literature that continues to make an impact decades after some of her most famous works have been published. One of her most well-known and highly controversial works is *The Handmaid's Tale* published in 1985.

The story takes place in an early 2000s dystopian United States that has been taken over by a religious group called The Sons of Jacob. Some parts of the world have become severely polluted, with fertility and healthy birth rates having significantly declined. Under the authority of a settlement called Gilead, fertile women known as handmaids— which is a biblical reference—are forced into bearing children for the high-ranking men and their wives of this community. Gilead is a place of control, religious extremism, and egregious violations of human rights, all

themes found in many of Atwood's writings. In this research paper, the intent is to observe how *The Handmaid's Tale* fits into overall dystopian media, correlations to feminism and misanthropy, and how Margaret Atwood fits as an author into the scope of dystopian literature.

Delving into how Atwood's famous work relates to dystopian literature as a whole, one major correlation is the governing system of Gilead along with the conditions men and women are subjected to. According to Hicks, "dystopian content is symptomatic of the distinction between the Christian apocalyptic tradition, which culminates in the utopian New Jerusalem, and the secular post-apocalyptic genre, which, without fail, imagines the destruction of modernity as leading to a state of at least provisional suffering and oppression" (Hicks, 17). Atwood's novel is a clear vision of a modern dystopia with the purposeful destruction of modern technologies to return to a state of simplicity and the abhorrent suffering inflicted upon men and women throughout the novel. In Atwood's accredited novel, Gilead holds extreme standards for both men and women with even the smallest mistake for either gender leads to severe and harsh punishment. A quote from the novel, highlighting the pain of this dystopia which comes from Offred reads, "I'm sorry there is so much pain in this story. I'm sorry it's in fragments, like a body caught in crossfire or pulled apart by force. But there is nothing I can do to change it" (Atwood, 267). Atwood's book creates a pressure on the mind of those involved that slowly eats away at the characters and creates a feeling of constant dread where any surmised error could be a brutal and unforgiving death sentence. Although the conditions for women in this world are inhumane and diabolical, men see their own fair share of brutality in Atwood's writing.

Atwood's novel explores not just themes of misogyny with the way women are treated, but also the misandry shown through the way men also suffer within the world of Gilead. A quote from *The Handmaid's Tale* highlighting the tense structure of men and women in this

world reads as follows: “We're all watching him. It's the one thing we can really do, and it is not for nothing: if he were to falter, fail, or die, what would become of us? No wonder he's like a boot, hard on the outside, giving shape to a pulp of tenderfoot. That's just a wish. I've been watching him for some time and he's given no evidence of softness” (Atwood, 88). Men and women in Atwood’s work suffer in different ways, but trying to be apathetic to their own suffering is the deadliest mistake in Gilead. According to Lassange and McMahon, “Resisting the change and aiming at stability instead of resilience is not an option as it would only mean signing humanity’s death warrant” (Lassange and McMahon, 67). Trying to seek normalcy is a death sentence in Atwood’s novel. If a person is unable to adapt, Gilead will swallow them whole with no remorse. Just like women, men are also held to high standards in *The Handmaid's Tale*, always expected to perform their duties or face the consequences which subsequently becomes punishment on top of the physical one taken by women as well as conveying a theme of misanthropy where no one emerges completely victorious no matter how powerful.

While Atwood never explicitly states the novel is a feminist piece, there are many themes of feminism within the story of *The Handmaid's Tale*. In Gilead, women are a device to be used and while handmaids are held to a certain respect because they are producing children, that is the only worth they are given in the theocratic regime. A quote which elaborates on this idea comes from the book *Science, Gender and History: The Fantastic in Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood* by Suparna Banerjee which paints Gilead as a “religious fundamentalist regime that treats women solely as breeders for the state. Urged on by concern about a declining Caucasian birth-rate– but ignoring the environmental reasons for it– the patriarchs of this state (‘Gilead’) use fertile women as baby-making machines for infertile elite couples in a weird sort of surrogacy rationalized through an insidious use of Biblical passages” (Banerjee, 55). This defines

a clear image of how misogyny plays a role in Atwood's novel because of the roles women are pushed into with the only other alternative being death.

To branch out from the novel for a moment, the themes of misogyny in *The Handmaid's Tale* are further illuminated in the Hulu adaptation. Reading the horrors women are subjected to on the page is numbing compared to the haunting and disturbing visuals the series provides. The series is described as a "relentless depiction of extreme violence against women. Anna Silman, for example, described it as "a ceaseless cavalcade of grisly feminist torture porn to rival our greatest misogynist auteurs: horrifying, nauseating, and uncannily familiar in equal measure" (Lassage and McMahon, 93). The series adaptation demonstrates in grotesque visual detail the extreme misogyny in Atwood's book and the effect it has on the women in her story. But besides feminism, how does Atwood fit into the literary scene as a writer overall?

As such a prolific author, poet, and literary critic, Margaret Atwood is a significant figure within the literary world. But how do she and her stories slot into literature as a whole? Because of her diverse yet similar range of writings, Atwood's themes and ideas can be applied across a broad spectrum of literature, even fairytales. A quote from *Margaret Atwood's fairy-tale sexual politics* talks about meta fairytales stating the text "is about "Red Cap" and other fairy tales. In addition to subverting "true romance" and utopian traditions, itself consciously comments on, surrealistically distorts, even reverses the Grimms' tale. *The Handmaid's Tale* is also metacriticism: like *Bodily Harm*, it is about the reading process and literary criticism" (Wilson, 271). It's no shocker that Atwood and the Brothers Grimm would have overlays in their work with all of them drawing similar themes of misery and dramatized, even satirical violence in their works. Margaret Atwood has also been a very influential figure in the modern dystopia writing scene. According to the article *Margaret Atwood's Impact on Contemporary Literature and*

Culture by Esther Lombardi, Atwood often critiques “contemporary society and warns of the dangers of complacency and apathy. Her work has inspired a new generation of dystopian fiction and has become a touchstone for discussions about the role of literature in addressing social and political issues” (Lombardi). Atwood fits into literature by being a still relevant influence on the world of writing, especially regarding modern day dystopias and feminism.

To conclude, Atwood’s famous work fits into overall dystopian media by displaying classic themes of desperation and oppression, it correlates to misanthropy by showing the suffering of both women and men, and finally how Atwood is related to overall literature is through a multitude of different themes and laying the foundations for modern day dystopias in writing. Atwood’s novel and her writing overall seeks to display in full view an often satirical and exaggerated version of suffering and dystopian themes. And yet the reader is still able to place themselves within the realm of her writing due to the nature of its events. All humans on some level can relate to suffering and sexism which are two major events in everyday life both author and reader can unfortunately not distance themselves from. Her contributions to literature continue to inspire feminists, dystopia lovers, and literary scholars. It’s plain to see why she is such an accredited and renowned figure in the world of literature even if not all her views or statements are agreed upon. Her works frequent banned book lists and spark controversy every year. Atwood pushes the bounds of what the reader is comfortable with in their novels and makes one think about what it would be like to step inside one of her works. Overall, *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a horribly fascinating and disturbing novel that further pushes the limits of what readers and scholars alike think of regarding feminism and dystopia, continuing to inspire even four decades after its release.

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Towards a Postmodern Fantasy: The Shift from Paradigm to Psychology in Fantasy Adaptation—Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Rowan Libby

Fantasy as a genre is difficult to define: a trait stemming from its deep roots in the limits of the human imagination. For the purposes of this paper, “fantasy” will refer to the distinct genre within the fantastic mode of literature, most often characterized by the presence of magic as a regular fact of the world. Eric Rabkin distinguishes between a world in which the ground rules, while supernatural, are constant—the “World of Enchantment”—and a “true Fantasy...[which] continues to reverse its ground rules time and again” (Rabkin 37). The “true Fantasy” which Rabkin quantifies will not be the Fantasy at play here; such is the difficulty in using the terms “fantasy” or “fantastic” amid a sea of synonyms and meanings. The fantasy with which this paper will concern itself is, “rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance” (Jackson 4), or what Jackson would call “modern fantasy”. Jackson’s modern fantasy differs from Michelle Eilers’s modern fantasy, which the latter connects to a subtle, multifaceted approach to moralizing while still maintaining rational character (Eilers 327).

The connection between rationality and fantasy is further explored by Jackson as she investigates the ways in which fantasy forms and evolves:

Like any other text, a literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context. Though it might struggle against the limits of this context, often being articulated upon that very struggle, it cannot be understood in isolation from it. The forms taken by any particular fantastic text are determined by a number of forces which intersect and interact in different ways in each individual work. Recognition of these forces involves placing authors in relation to historical, social, economic, political and sexual determinants, as well as to a literary tradition of fantasy, and makes it impossible to accept a reading of this kind of literature which places it somehow mysteriously ‘outside’ time altogether (Jackson 3).

By acknowledging the cultural influence of fantasy, Jackson sets the stage for an understanding of fantasy which also *moves with* culture; as culture changes, so too must fantasy necessarily change.

Here, I examine mechanisms of that change, and investigate instances and effects of such changes to fantasy— between an adaptation and its source— in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*— a landmark among Arthurian tales—and its 21st-century adaptation, David Lowery’s *The Green Knight*. Brian Attebery supports the value of *Sir Gawain* in his own teaching career:

[The fairy tale, ballad, and medieval romance] demonstrate the writer’s freedom to add descriptive details, motivations, moralized conclusions, and rationalized explanations to their folk models. One of the best texts to illustrate all of these changes is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which not only represents a pinnacle of the Arthurian tradition but also suggests a link with twentieth-century fantasy through J.R.R. Tolkien, who played an important role in popularizing the poem (Attebery, *Teaching Fantastic Literature*, p. 408)

In order to map a current trend in fantasy literature (literature broadly encompassing adaptations and representations of fantasy sources, as well) from paradigmatic fantasy– fantasy adhering to the tropes and conventions of landmark fantasy– to psychological fantasy– the creation of a fantasy narrative in which characters are made three-dimensional, and attitudes toward tropes and conventions shift. Such works of fantasy as *Dune* or the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series by Frank Herbert and George R.R. Martin respectively are excluded from this inquiry on the basis of attitude: both are definitely psychological. They each challenge or oppose a fundamental aspect of the fantasy paradigm: *Dune*, the greatness of the hero; *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the assumptions about absolute good and evil and of goodness in royal authority in Tolkien’s work– Martin is a known “anti-Tolkien” in his approach.

Fantasy, by its subtlety and use of hedged morals, becomes an excellent source of metaphor and symbol. Robin Fuxa describes how teaching fantasy literature can similarly use the cover of narrative to help students examine the underlying significance: “those issues that we find the most difficult to discuss– issues that are perhaps a little too close to home– students can discuss more readily through literature that seems to distance the matter...[by] fantasy or...science fiction” (Fuxa 26). As such, understanding the ebbs and flows of fantasy themes, forms, and literature becomes important.

In this work, I propose the term “postmodern fantasy” to capture the self-reflective nature of modern fantasy adaptations, and their tendencies to challenge, oppose, or undermine their source material on the basis of a cultural gap. I examine this using the proposed terms “paradigmatic” and “psychological” to designate attitude towards trope and convention in fantasy literature.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: *Disruption of the Canon*

The first subversion of its literary source in David Lowery's *The Green Knight* is a subversion of form: the narrative elements that comprise the framing of the classic tale are altered to better suit the newly-realized themes, and in that alteration, reconstitute the tone surrounding not only the story's plot, but also its own stature as a narrative. In a postmodern deconstruction of the self-present greatness of the narrative, many of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*'s elements which align with the Arthurian paradigm of brave knights and worthy deeds are undermined directly.

The text begins with the end of the siege of Troy, and traces the great empires of the past through Romulus and Rome and then further into the west: "When the siege and the assault were ended at Troy...Ticius goes to Tuscany and sets up houses...Britain had been founded by this noble lord" (*Broadview Anthology* p. 288-9); its tone is veritably illustrious and self-important. The film, meanwhile, extends past the paradigm of the grandeur of the Arthurian court, the valiance of knights, and undercuts the grave tone with, "this is not that king, nor is it his story". Another instance of such change is the passage of time between Gawain's beheading of the Green Knight and his departure to face a similar blow. The text provides a short description of each major holiday and season that passes throughout the year (*Broadview Anthology* p. 301-2); this has the effect of grounding the narrative in both its Catholic ambience (by holidays) and its pagan anxieties about nature (in its proximity to the natural cycles). This passage is adapted to the screen as a rolling circular calendar, interspersed with shots of a puppet show performed for peasant children, in which Gawain beheads and is then beheaded to much laughter; the tone of this adaptation seems to present Gawain's demise as comic— if not to the audience, then at least to the children. From the onset, the approach of the movie seems to be casting doubt on the

greatness of the protagonist, which is only extended in its cast of characters. King Arthur is “lively in his youth, and a little boyish” (*Broadview Anthology* p. 291) in the manuscript as he feasts, but is old in the film, and complains of a common toothache. The paradigm of Arthur’s character, the knight in shining armor armed with Excalibur, conflicts with the presented character: old, feeble, distracted by the ache of his tooth when talking to his nephew—a psychologization of the paradigm, undercutting its foundations.

The titular character, Sir Gawain, is another source of difference between the original manuscript and the adaptation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Particularly, his status as knight (or the assumptions revealed therein), his attitude toward that part of his identity, and his competence in carrying out the actions expected of him as a knight are all complicated in the adaptation, and, in many cases, undermined. He is questioned frequently about whether he “[is] a knight yet” in the film, and is chosen meaningfully to sit beside King Arthur for the first time at the fated party where the Green Knight will appear; in the text, Gawain is already established as a knight, and “[is] seated beside [Queen] Guenevere” (*Broadview Anthology* p. 291) when the scene opens.

Likewise, Gawain’s attitude and competence are questioned; the text portrays Gawain as stoic in the face of a journey that ends in doom, ready to leave on his quest to receive a reciprocal blow, while the film version of the Gawain admits to his uncle King Arthur, “I fear I am not meant for greatness”. The Gawain of the film is also established in the opening minutes to frequent brothels, drink heavily, brawl, and cover his time spent sinning with the lie that he was at Mass; the upstanding piety of the text version of Gawain is amiss like his other high-standing qualities, which reduces his character in the eyes of the audience at the onset of the story. His competence is tested midway through the movie when a trio of bandits waylay him,

capturing Gawain and stripping him of horse, armor, and blade. The movie includes a shot which seems intended to conflate Gawain with a skeleton for a moment, teasing the possibility of his demise. In the text, however, Gawain is said to fight ogres and dragons in his traipse through the countryside; the action is even skipped because of how unimportant the Gawain Poet seems to deem it for the total narrative. The tension of the movie is elevated compared to the text by reducing Gawain and making him vulnerable— in the manuscript, the only threat which seems a present danger to him is the beheading game at his journey's end:

So many wonders befell him in the hills, *It would be tedious to recount the least part of them.* Sometimes he fights dragons, and wolves as well...Had he not been valiant and resolute, trusting in God, He would surely have died or been killed many times. *For fighting troubled him less than the rigorous winter;* When cold clear water fell from the clouds And froze before it could reach the faded earth (*Broadview Anthology*, p. 307, italics mine for emphasis).

The danger of the text, trivialized by glossing over any description of Gawain's obstacles, and superseded by the perils of cold conditions, is drastically lessened; further, the presentation of these dangers as past, as unworthy of the time it would take to recite, marks them as past issues, untroubling to the "present" of Gawain's story.

Just as the protagonist of *Sir Gawain* changes from the page to the screen, so also does the primary antagonist: the Green Knight. His transformation is especially notable, given the pages of description which are lent to his physical appearance at the start of the story. The clarity with which a reader may imagine the Green Knight only enhances the disparity between the visual version presented in the text and the version in the film. The manuscript introduces the Green Knight as a figure who is of giant proportions, but who is astoundingly comely. He is

unarmored and finely dressed astride a beautiful horse, carrying only a holly branch and an axe; the axe is the only terrible thing about him: “Most attractive was this man attired in green...in one hand he carried a holly-branch...and an axe in the other, monstrously huge; A cruel battle-axe to tell of in words, if one could” (*Broadview Anthology* p. 293-4). Contrastingly, the film keeps only the Green Knight’s implements similar; he is armored for battle astride a fierce warhorse, and is stern and frightening to look upon, his face and body seemingly made of tree bark and vines. He gallops away after being beheaded with a maniacal laughter that is not present in the text, and possesses the voice of Guenevere to read his letter, infusing the scene with even more anxieties about witchcraft and the supernatural than the manuscript entertains.

The attitude of the film is evidently changed towards his purview of nature, as well. As he enters, moss grows over the cobblestones of Camelot, imbuing the Green Knight with an aura of decay, overgrowth, or corruption. His on-screen sanctum is a crumbled church, at once beautiful in its vibrant greens and unsettling as the camera pans to the ruins of a once-Christian holy place. The text portrays the Green Chapel quite differently: it is a cave which is so unassuming, Gawain nearly passes by it: “[Gawain wonders] to himself what it could be...nothing but an old cave, or a fissure in an old rock; what to call it he hardly could tell. “Good Lord!” said the noble knight, “Can the Green Chapel be this place?” (*Broadview Anthology* p. 344). The manuscript version of the chapel is also accompanied by a grinding noise which the film exempts in favor of quiet ambience. In the film, the Green Knight slumbers rooted physically to a seat inside the chapel, once more expanding his perceived connection to the natural world— a far cry from the Gawain Poet’s depiction of the Green Knight: actively sharpening his sword, responsive to the calls and queries of Gawain upon his arrival. The film seems to center the Green Knight as an embodiment of nature or ambassador of the untamed

natural world in a way that the text does not engage with. In the adaptation for a new story, new creative visionaries, and new audience, nature is at the forefront thematically of the film in comparison to the manuscript's privileging of piety and honor.

The adaptation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* features a number of other changes to its translation that seem especially directed for and around a modern audience. The issues and values of the cultural landscape today become the determinants for the direction in which the manuscript is adapted: which issues, characters, and moments are dwelled upon, and which are diminished, which are added that were not previously present, and which are removed.

The treatment of the religious elements surrounding the manuscript in particular points toward an alignment with the religious patterns at play in the modern world. The change from the feast day being New Years in the text to Christmas on the screen may seem small, but is in fact a notable change for how it attempts to recreate festive significance. Medieval New Years was a period of especial change and ambiguity as one year changed to the next— which is why it is such a likely time for supernatural occurrences— but New Years does not ring true to modern audiences the way Christmas does. The choice of Christmas as the temporal setting also allows the intrusion of the Green Knight to become a religious intrusion—a pagan figure interrupting a Christian celebration— in the same way the film uses nature and un-religious forces to desecrate the Green Chapel.

David Lowery further expands the discourse of the story to engage several contemporary issues that the original does not: sexual assault, war, and class. The text of the Gawain Poet abstains from these particular topics, which are instead so prevalent in modern discourse. Gawain encounters the ghost of a woman who had been sexually assaulted before her murder, and he must dive into a lake to retrieve her bones so she may rest. Alongside the dialogue

surrounding sexual assault, this scene serves to contribute to the film's discourse around re-imagining religion and its frequent weakening of Gawain: the lake scene provides a metaphor for baptism— submersion in water, and the evoking of bones and reliquaries—in which Gawain's purpose is reaffirmed— he had before this encounter been ready to give up his quest, signifying again a reduction of competence, attitude, or drive in the film.

Class relations and war are enveloped in the film with the addition of two new characters: Essel, a love interest for Gawain in Camelot, and the bandit, an enemy. The bandit is found scavenging the battlefield after a war, in which his dialogue reveals the victors to be Camelot and the losers to be the Saxons. This contextualizes the physical time and place of the story in a way that the manuscript does not; further, it introduces a futile negativity to war— which is not otherwise tangible— as the bandit sifts through the bones for arrows and coins. Essel's presence allows for the difference in class between herself and Gawain to illuminate the injustice of a feudal society; she is prevented from being Gawain's partner in the long term by the difference of their births. By questioning the economic circumstances and values of the society which is unquestioned in the text, the film steers the discourse and portrayal of social order closer to the audience, which in turn makes the situation seem more "real".

In each effort to make the story seem more real, the characters more three-dimensional and flawed, the setting less idealized, the film necessarily undermines the unspoken presumptions which the text makes in its account; the absoluteness of church and of King, of piety and honor, must be questioned if the social effects and dynamics of those forces are to be adapted, changed, or interrogated. No event in adaptation is so altered, or altered so meaningfully for the transition from paradigm to psychology, as the final moments of the story. Gawain, in the text, meets the Green Knight, flinches twice, then receives a minor cut; the Green Knight is

revealed to be Gawain's previous host, Lord Bertilak, who lays steel to skin only because of a breach of honor on Gawain's part in their game. Gawain returns in shame, but alive.

The movie proceeds differently: Gawain is shown to flinch, then to flee—he marries, has a child by Essel which he takes with him as he leaves her, ascends the throne and watches his son die then himself in war—before the prior events are made out to be delusion, vision, or imagination. Gawain asks, as if embodying the audience's queries at the demise of the protagonist, "Is this all there is?" to which the Green Knight responds with the nonchalant phrase, "Off with your head".

It is primarily by weakening the dogmatic foundations of the setting—the rightfulness of the ruling class to subjugate women and the poor, to wage war— and the protagonist—complicating Gawain by including his vices, and making him vulnerable to the perils of his journey— that the adaptation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* achieves the space necessary to create the more real elements of its story. Characters become more complex and psychologically-driven in proportion to the lessening of the stature of the paradigm upon which they were founded. Similarly, the set of values change around the adaptation, whether by director intention or audience demand, to focus contemporary issues about identity and justice over the original set of inculcated values concerning piety and honor. The manuscript, which initially enclosed a didactic lesson about devotion and the dangers of sexual temptation, is remade to break free of the social factors that uplifted those moral values in the first place.

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A Body and Mind Unknown: The Intersection of Medicine and Fantastic Literature

Gabriella Shetreet

The fantastic is a reckoning: it forces its readers to confront their own judgements, their own beliefs; their own deep-seated, unknowable fears. While reading several fantastic literatures over the course of this past semester and over the short course of my lifetime, it became apparent to me that many of these works share something unalterable in common: the preoccupation with the body and mind— more specifically, the body uncanny; the body and medicine twisted into something bordering on sinister, reveling in uncertainty. I have sought to explore this pattern further, and question why such a preoccupation exists across the history of fantastic literature, spanning many cultures. Were these thoughts simply a product of an author's time? It is possible that their roots took hold due to the social and political climate of their time, but the continuation of fantastic literature throughout history and time negates this thesis. Perhaps the abundance of stories written about medical issues in the fantastic speaks to a larger part of human nature, a deeper anxiety. The 'medical fantastic,' as I will refer to it henceforth, calls to the forefront of the mind the idea of a body, with all that the body encompasses (the mind included in this), that does not function or can not function as it should; more specifically due to medical intervention or lack thereof; in essence, a body deemed uncanny, or unheimlich. This sense of uncanniness, of

unheimlich, is by definition unfamiliar and ‘unhomelike’; and with the body being equated to a home, one can see how quickly the medical fantastic rushes to fit this descriptor.

Time and time again, our canon authors speak to the anxieties at play in the minds of many— with the medical fantastic, this anxiety seems to never diminish. As human beings, we are preoccupied with our bodies— the vessels of our being (or, simply, our being, depending on who is polled)-- and what horrors might happen to our bodies either with or without our consent. We are born with the knowledge that our bodies and the state of being that they exist as are but temporary, and that one day, they will morph into something unfamiliar to us. This— aging— in and of itself is a fear held by many, and certainly has its place in the realm of medically fantastic literature. However, a perhaps deeper fear is the idea that our bodies might undergo sudden and radical changes, without our willingness. Although resilient, they are incredibly fragile, especially when faced with the boundless imaginations of authors and their endless machinations and manifestations of fear. Thus, the medical fantastic is born and given room to breathe, answering the questions of, What might happen when a medical procedure is done incorrectly? and, What will I do when I am unable to recognize my own mind? as well as, How do I exist in this frail/changed body? (I offer the phrase ‘medical fantastic’ as it encompasses the scope of the fantastic as well as the uncanny, despite much of the genre being deep-seated in the uncanny. While the change and/or evolution of the body is a more fantastic and also realist concept, the distrust of both the body and the mind is decidedly in the realm of the uncanny. The moniker ‘fantastic’ is an umbrella term in this sense.) All of these elements explored in the medical fantastic lead to a quintessential truth: human nature is to die. This is the great destiny of humanity— and the question of how we reach this destiny compounds our collective fears.

To both my surprise and delight, several writings have been authored on the concept of the intersection between medicine and fantastic literature. Instead of using literature to analyze differing medical anxieties, these authors focus instead on utilizing medical practices and terminology to analyze literature. Jaime R. Brenes Reyes is one such author, who reframes the medical approach of making the corpus, or body, the most important thing in the room; he argues that the literary text takes on this role of corpus while reading. Applying this ideology while thinking of Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny" adds another element to fantastic literature. Freud grapples with many definitions of the uncanny, utilizing several different languages and terms to attempt to uncover its 'true' meaning, and eventually defines the uncanny as, "...that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (1-2). He uses the words *unheimlich*, meaning unhomely/unfamiliar, and *heimlich*, meaning familiar/homely (the body), both having opposing and yet similar definitions depending on how they are used. Writer Nicholas Royle, in his book "The Uncanny," defines it as follows:

"It is concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural. The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one's sense of oneself (of one's so-called 'personality' or 'sexuality', for example) seems strangely questionable. The uncanny is a crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper (from the Latin *proprius*, 'own'), a disturbance of the very idea of personal or private property including the properness of proper names, one's so-called 'own' name, but also the proper names of others, of places, institutions and events. It is a crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought was 'part of nature': one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world." (1)

The crux of Royle's definition here is the ideology that the uncanny is a "crisis of the natural," a crisis of "one's own nature." Who is a human being when they are unable to recognize themselves? What becomes of their body? What becomes of their mind? What does this human being become? How can one remain human in the midst of their unknowing of themselves?

Brenes Reyes grapples with this ideology as well, asking, "Can medicine sustain itself in the haunting presence of the supernatural and its implied sensations of hope and fear?" (180). These questions are all explored in the fantastic, which Brenes Reyes defines as, "the appearance and disappearance of what is sensed as something more, something hidden" (181).

Although there are multitudes of examples of medical intervention or deformation of the body in traditional fantastic literature (one needs to look no further than E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Sandman," Franz Kafka's "In The Penal Colony," or H.G. Wells' "The Island of Dr. Moreau" for example), Brenes Reyes looks to real life to explain the literary genre of the fantastic, and introduces an example from a psychology textbook from the DSM-5 of a subject, "Mr. Buchalski," who is described as a "strange character" due to his quirks and so-called norm-deviant behavior, such as never having had a romantic relationship, not being "gregarious," and being "a writer of futuristic technologies." However, the actual problem arises when it is discovered that Buchalski's sister passed away, and he fails to report her death. Brenes Reyes states that:

"Despite the attempt of the physician to listen [to Buchalski's account], the patient was deemed to have a disorder because of his inability to explain himself through a 'credible' narrative. Also relevant to the discussion is the fact that there was something else involved: there is something odd about Buchalski." (Brenes Reyes 188)

Buchalski's mental state of being could be described as uncanny, or simply someone who falls outside of the realm of what society deems acceptable; this "something odd about Buchalski" deems his mind foreign and *unheimlich* to the physician who treats him; this *unheimlich* reading of Buchalski is reflected by the physician's own fears of becoming *unheimlich* to himself.

Although Brenes Reyes writes of Buchalski and his uncanny mind, writer Megan Perram from the University of Alberta takes this one step further, which, in my opinion, should be taken with more than a few grains of salt. Perram frames her dialogue and argument solely based on her interpretations of various medical journals and non-peer reviewed digital forums; viewed through the lenses of works of both Sigmund Freud and Martin Heidegger, both considered controversial philosophers and the latter a known follower of the Nazi party, which is inextricable from his philosophy. Perram researches the medical humanities, and explores the relationships between women suffering from hyperandrogenism and their perceived senses of self; she also compares this to women with anorexia nervosa and the distortion of the body; its perceived *unheimlich* qualities. Perram quotes fellow writer and fellow Heidegger fan Fredrik Svenaeus, who writes, "Through processes of the disease that work to morph the body from a state of familiarity to indiscernibility, the body becomes alien to the mind" (201). Perram writes of women with hyperandrogenism that the experience is akin to "...the threat of a surrendering of control over bodily expression. This perceived loss of governance over one's body is complex. ... This realization of our inability to truly govern our bodies leads to a dissolving of selfhood" (Perram 594). She states that the experience "distorts temporal reality by making alien both the past and future" (598). It is certainly a cautious line to walk between writing of women with hyperandrogenism to declaring their bodies as alien, however, one can argue that these real-life

preoccupations and fears with the body and mind becoming alien to each other are great foundations for writing of the fantastic, more specifically the medical fantastic.

Brenes Reyes claims that, “The fantastic has the potential to become an avenue for a dialogue: a prognosis [fore-seeing] rather than a diagnosis” (188). The fantastic, more specifically the medical fantastic, and its sense of extremism, makes fear in our own lives more palatable; exaggeration is a tool used to more easily come to terms with the state of being. “If I had to put the fantastic metaphor into medical terms, as a non-expert in medicine my words would be the following: the fantastic is an infectious disorder (or syndrome) with variable psychiatric and somatic symptoms” (Brenes Reyes 188). By exploring these varying “symptoms” across fantastic and specifically uncanny literature, we are able to uncover a “prognosis” of humanity, uncovering our great fears; our unwelcome desires. The intersection between medicine and fantastic literature is something that can not be ignored or covered– it is a necessary intersection of our collective and respective human experiences. The medical fantastic is a genre that must continue to endure, and will always endure throughout history, so long as humanity continues fearing the one thing we shall always fear– our own selves.

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Characterization and Systemic Racism in “The Ballad of Black Tom”

Alex Handrock

Eleven shots. Eleven bullets for holding a guitar. Eleven bullets for being a black man. Eleven bullets in an innocent man. Eleven bullets make a dead man. An innocent dead man. The Ballad of Black Tom by Victor LaValle is a novella that follows the life of Charles Thomas “Tommy” Tester, a hustler in Harlem. When he loses his father, Otis, to police brutality, he takes on the persona of Black Tom. Black Tom is bent on revenge, which he achieves through the magic of the Supreme Alphabet he stole from Ma Att and learned from Suydam. Victor LaValle, an African American author, highlights the prevalence of racism through homage to H.P. Lovecraft, setting, and allegories; especially in the police force, and the hardships of being a black man through his novella, The Ballad of Black Tom.

Victor LaValle dedicated his novella, The Ballad of Black Tom “for HP Lovecraft, with all my conflicted feelings”. He read and looked up to Lovecraft before becoming an author, but he was disheartened by the obvious racism in his literature. In LaValle’s book, Black Tom says to the police, “I’ll take Cthulhu over you devils any day” (LaValle 143). This is a direct reference to the author H.P. Lovecraft, who created the monster Cthulhu in “The Call of Cthulhu”, a short

story. The quote in his writing shows the connection between his character as an opposition to how Lovecraft would have cast the protagonist. As an African American, LaValle continually decided to combat Lovecraft in his own writing by showing the prevalence of racism. “For both Ruff [another author] and LaValle, placing Black men at the center of their responses to Lovecraft foregrounds the everyday racist threats of lynching and police violence faced by the protagonists, which make the monsters and demons less horrifying by contrast. (Requiem 70). Lovecraft was known not only for his cosmic weird fiction, but also for his tendency to be racist and xenophobic in his writing. He often placed Anglo-Saxon people as higher up than people of colour and often perpetuated eugenics. LaValle wanted to flip the story around and show the truth of living as a black man, and what may drive someone to become the villain.

Systemic racism has been around for many years, even in 1924 when *The Ballad of Black Tom* was set. The police brutality that Tommy Tester’s father, Otis, was the victim of, put the entire story of Black Tom into motion. In the 1920’s, the Klu Klux Klan had a second rise to power, and a new branch of women was formed. This branch was called the WKKK and provided education on their controversial views to children. These young minds were impressionable, which was the key to continuing white supremacy. “The KKK in this era made white supremacy and institutionalized racism successful using rhetoric, marketing schemes, and a widely accepted public image” (Schoen 3). With a new wave of the Second Klan, and the WKKK’s ability to market to children and the common public, racism and white supremacy became “normal” again. There was a whole slew of underground schools by the WKKK that taught children eugenics and twisted history to make white figures the “good guys”. Racism was institutionalized not just through schools and education, but it was systemically in the police force and the government (as it still very much is today). In *The Ballad of Black Tom*, the police

and detectives who are following Tommy Tester, kill his father Otis, because they believed he was holding a weapon. The supposed weapon turned out to simply be a guitar, however, there is no remorse or guilt shown from the detective who killed him. Just an excuse, and no apology to Tommy. Earlier in the novel, Tommy had talked about pretending to be a simple black man to trick the police into thinking that because of his race he was stupid and therefore could not understand what he could have done or been doing wrong. These examples show how the police in 1924 where he lived were known for treating black men differently and easily saw them as the lesser race. This prejudice is what pushed Tommy to become the villain, Black Tom.

As an African American author, LaValle showcased the hardships of being a black man through the character of Tommy Tester in *The Ballad of Black Tom*. “If I didn’t make my monsters of my mysteries into allegories for racism in the United States, if I actually showed black characters (and Native Americans) acting in appalling ways, being, essentially, villains, wouldn’t I be betraying a certain solidarity I was supposed to uphold?” (Francis 952). An allegory symbolizes a generalization about a group through characterization. LaValle writes Tommy Tester as someone that he reflects himself into. Tommy is a relatable African American man. “I tried to purposely think of any reader, of any gender, race, and so on being able to see themselves” (Francis 953). It is so important for people of color to see themselves represented in literature and in the media, which LaValle advocates for. The allegory for racism shows when Tommy Tester becomes Black Tom. This drastic change in persona is to display all the racist generalizations that the people surrounding him (and people in everyday life) make about black individuals. Tommy becomes what people treat him as. This “villain” is used as a symbol.

Victor LaValle tries to bring to light the prevalence of racism to his audience through his literature; he combat’s H.P. Lovecraft’s racist ideations, uses the setting of the 1920’s in Harlem,

and characterizes his villains as allegories for racism. As Tommy Tester said after his father's death by police brutality, "what was indifference compared to malice?" (LaValle 66). When someone chooses to be silent, they (even unknowingly) stand with the oppressor. When it is not an everyday occurrence to be met with hatred, fear, and mistreatment for things you cannot change, it is easy to be indifferent. If it is not affecting you, why should you care? LaValle makes his audience care through his portrayal of racism in his works and weird tales.

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Gender and Race in the Construction of Monstrosity During the Medieval and Early-Modern Period.

Mia Itani

Monstrosity has been a concept that has fascinated the medieval and early modern period. Yet, what has constituted monstrosity has not always been stable as categories such as gender, race, and class have continuously affected its definitions. During the medieval period, monstrosity held an epistemological connotation to it thus, a 'monster' was never considered to be repugnant because nothing that was part of God's creation could be viewed as unnatural (Brenner 163). On the other hand, during the early modern era the idea of monstrosity pivoted to a more negative connotation; monstrosity means being horrible, dangerous, and repugnant (Brenner 163). However, one thing that both periods have in common is the association of monstrosity to femininity. Both Marie De France's *lai* "Bisclavret," and Shakespeare's Sonnet 126, 127 and 144, demonstrate the evolving definition of monstrosity over the two periods. In Marie de France's *lai*, Lady Bisclavret has arguably been made to be monstrous because of her disobedience to her husband after seeking out the truth of his identity which is further emphasised through her mutilated appearance. On the other hand, in Shakespeare's republished sonnet sequences, the beloved, who holds female pronouns, is considered to be the "Dark Lady"

of the sonnet, which itself holds negative connotations as it refers to sexual love and therefore sinfulness. Thus, while what has constituted as monstrosity has not been concrete, what has been stable in the construction of monstrosity is its association with femaleness and sinfulness because of the changing perspective of gender and race.

In Marie de France's twelfth-century romance poem, "Bisclavret," the poet presents the unnamed wife of Bisclavret as a monstrous woman before her physical mutilation, which is then used to enhance her monstrosity further. This monstrous representation of Lady Bisclavret is created because she betrays her husband upon finding out the truth of his lycanthropy leaving her "red with fear" and not wanting to "lie beside him anymore" (de France lines 98-102). This moment is pivotal to Lady Bisclavret becoming the antagonist of the *lai* as her rebellion against her husband is a direct rebellion against female gender roles; by rejecting her husband, she rejects her role as the submissive and unquestioning wife. Furthermore, by going against gender norms it indicates her going against the patriarchal society which was built upon God's will. It is important to note that during the Middle Age, society adhered to the structure of the Great Chain of Being, which was believed to mirror the Christian belief that all of God's earthly creatures held a specific place and purpose in society. In particular, women were created by God to be subservient to men and were thus unfit to rule over them as it would symbolise "unnaturalness" (Brenner 167). It is ironic that Lady Bisclavret is depicted as monstrous, given that Bisclavret himself is the actual beast in the *lai*. However, he is not seen as monstrous because his actions don't reflect those of a beast; instead, he shows fealty, kindness, and loyalty to the king which aligns with the expected norms of behaviour according to the Great Chain of Being. Consequently, Lady Bisclavret's defiance of the patriarchy, driven by her desire for knowledge

and truth (epistemology), is in defiance of God which parallels Eve's rebellion which further fuels the association of monstrosity to femininity (Carlisle et al. 85).

In addition, Lady Bisclavret's defiance of gender norms because of her desire for knowledge prods the patriarchal society to punish her by physically mutilating her, exiling her, and having divine interference place a generational curse on her female descendants as a reminder of her deviance. Firstly, Lady Bisclavret's transition from what constitutes as "essentially good" to "essentially bad" mirrors her shift from natural to unnatural, with "inherently bad" being perceived as a departure from the natural order and therefore the deformation of her femininity (Brenner 171). Additionally, her noselessness further implies her newfound vulnerability as the nose is used as a metaphor of knowing, as it is a primary sign of knowledge for a wolf. Therefore, the brutal removal of her nose not only signified the demolition of her femininity and humanity as it portrays a grotesque form of womanhood, but it also alludes to the Eve archetype she embodies, suggesting that a woman's pursuit of knowledge and truth, particularly knowledge that challenges social hierarchies, is deemed monstrous. Thus, Lady Bisclavret is seen as monstrous within the medieval context not only because she deviates from nature as God created it, but because she has challenged the societal and divine hierarchy which was believed to be God-ordained through her search for knowledge and truth.

On the other hand, during the early-modern period, the meaning of monstrosity shifts which is seen in Shakespeare's sonnets, in particular Sonnet 127; the shift of monstrosity pivots into a more negative connotation – one of repulsion. Ultimately, monsters become objects that cross boundaries of what we perceive to be normal and natural. In this case, feminine monstrosity is connected to the divisions of the sexes, starting with Eve's creation from Adam's "crooked rib" to the formation of gender in the womb; women, being considered as "deformed

men” in their creation by God, are therefore deemed monstrous because of their physical inadequacy (Brenner 172). Additionally, with the growing popularity of cosmetics, cosmetic beauty becomes a way that blurs what is natural and what is artificial. Hence, the idea of what normal and “natural” womanhood is decreases and the list of behaviours and of women that defy these restrictions expands (Brenner 175). For example, by stating “Fairing the foul with art’s false borrowed face” suggests that since women are beginning to have access to cover their face with white powder (cosmetics), it muddles with the perception of what true natural beauty is (Sonnet 127 line 6). Shakespeare continues to explore this shift through the poetic construction of “Fair Boys and Dark Ladies”. One way he does it is through the manipulation of the structure of the sonnet leading to Sonnet 127. Sonnet 126 stands out as a pivotal point in the sequence as it signifies a thematic shift– it preludes the transition to the sonnets dedicated to the “Dark Lady”. Unlike the standard fourteen-line sonnets following a conventional rhyme scheme, Sonnet 126 is composed of only twelve lines. This deviation from what we perceive as conventional symbolises the shift from natural to unnatural. Transitioning into the sonnets addressed to the “Dark Lady” suggests moving into the realm of the unnatural which reflects the gender biases of the era. Hence, the shift in Sonnet 126’s structure, as we move from addressing the “Fair Boys” mirrors the societal attitudes toward gender and naturalness.

Finally, the shifting of the beauty standard and the “Dark Lady” herself is moving away from what is deemed natural. Kim Hall insists on considering how fairness is racialised in early modern culture especially given that Christianity has long symbolised order in which good, purity, and Christianity are associated with light and whiteness, while evil and sexuality are linked with darkness (Languay slide 3). The “Dark Lady” in Sonnet 127 becomes associated with dark imagery with her “raven black” eyes and not being “born fair” implying her dark

complexion, which juxtaposes the “Fair Youth” who are fair skinned and have eyes that are “more bright” (Sonnet 127 lines 9-11; Sonnet 20 line 5). This is further emphasised in Sonnet 144 where the poet describes the “Fair Youth” as “the better angel is a man right fair” while the “Dark Lady” is associated with “the worser spirit a woman coloured” (lines 3-4). Her dark complexion suggests an underlying implication of exoticism and sexuality. Therefore, this is one way in which the “Dark Lady” archetype becomes associated with sexual desire and sinfulness which relates back to the concept of women, as descendants of Eve, being monstrous. On the other hand, it can be argued that the poet is pushing the boundaries of what is considered as beautiful by suggesting that dark is beautiful which becomes problematic because of the Christian belief of what is deemed as “holy”. Yet, this depiction of womanhood and race distorts femininity into something unnatural and monstrous, especially when compared to the perception of manhood.

In conclusion, while the concept of monstrosity has evolved from the medieval period to the early-modern period, shifting from an epistemological connotation to a more physical state, the persistent link of monstrosity with femininity remains because of the longstanding implication of sin attributed to womanhood. For example, the medieval text of “Bisclavret,” brands the rebellious women as “monstrous” for rebelling against traditional gender roles and seeking out the truth while in the early-modern texts, monstrosity is more connected to women’s physical look, especially in terms of race and its relations to sexual desire and sinfulness. Both period present women as evil because of the patriarchy’s inability to control their bodies and agencies.

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Being Told and Not Told: Epistemology as a Literary Device and Theme in *Never Let Me Go*

Charlotte Melville

Is knowledge a form of control? How much knowledge should children have? What are the requirements for true knowledge about a subject? The philosophical study of epistemology has to do with the nature and extent of knowledge. Similarly, Kazuro Ishiguro's speculative fiction novel, *Never Let Me Go*, deals with questions of knowledge, and in particular what happens when we do not know or understand details about the world. Told through the perspective of a young woman named Kathy H. who is a clone being raised for her organs, Ishiguro forces the reader to consider many questions surrounding the understanding of the characters in the book, as well as our own understanding. Ishiguro uses the idea of limited knowledge as both a literary theme and a literary technique. He purposefully limits knowledge of both reader and character to illustrate the ways that being kept ignorant can be both a kind of protection for children, but also a kind of control that can extend into adulthood. Furthermore, Ishiguro highlights the debate about how much information adults are responsible for telling children about difficult truths about the nature of life and death.

One theme that Ishiguro traces throughout the novel is epistemological ambiguity. At a crucial midway through the novel, one of the Hailsham student's guardians named Miss Lucy attempts to warn them about their limited understanding of the world and what their future really

has in store. She explains that the students have been “told and not told” (81) about the nature of their existence. Miss Lucy indicates that the students at a baseline seem to know what the arc of their lives will be: that they will eventually leave Hailsham and become carers and then “complete,” but they don’t seem to understand the broader implications that this will have on them. For example, they do not realize that they will be prevented from living out their dreams and desires that they might have beyond this singular path. As Bożena Kucała explains, the characters live in “partial knowledge, at first having only very vague ideas about the world outside the school and, later, even when living independently at the Cottages, remain lost and confused” (4). However, just as the characters live in this state of partial knowledge and partial ignorance, Ishiguro similarly relegates the readers to a state of partial understanding about what is actually happening. Miss Lucy states that the students have “been told” but that they don’t “really understand” (83), and in the same way the readers have been directly told from page one that Kathy is a “carer” and expecting to “donate” soon. However, the readers are never directly told what these words mean and the weight that they hold until Miss Lucy’s speech on page 83, a decent way through the novel, just as the characters are decent way through their short lives when they receive this wake-up call. Even after that point in the novel, there are many questions that the reader could have that Ishiguro frankly never answers. We are kept in the dark about much of the process of donations, like what organs they take. We are not told much about the details of the lives of other clones, we are simply told that they are mistreated.

In many ways, this experience of being “told and not told” is a common experience of childhood. Just as children are thrust into a world that is filled with definitions that they must decipher, the reader is brought into Kathy’s world and left to figure it out by themselves. Reminiscent of childhood experiences, Ishiguro crafts “aha” moments for the reader, where the

reader is more explicitly told about what is happening and then is able to make more connections about what is happening, such as with Miss Lucy's speech about being "told and not told." In addition, the way that Kathy matter-of-factly discusses the topic of donations with the reader likely imitates the way that she learned about it. It is likely that donations were a concept that weren't ever formally introduced to the students, but rather discussed with them from the very beginning of their lives as a fact, causing them to never have to process or think critically about why the donations were occurring in the first place.

In addition to developing ignorance and limited knowledge as a theme throughout the novel, Ishiguro purposefully limits the reader's knowledge through the first-person point of view of Kathy. The story is told exclusively through her perspective, giving the reader no access to other points of view that might provide more context about the world that they are living in. How different would the narrative be if it was told from the perspective of one of the guardians, who has an understanding of how unusual the lives of the students are? But because it is told from the point of view of a student, there is no frame of reference for the reader for what a life is like outside of Hailsham.

This limited frame of reference is not just something that the reader experiences. It is also something that the characters contend with throughout the novel. For the first sixteen or more years of their life, they have no outside frame of reference based in the rest of the world that would help them to realize how unusual and precarious their position is. This lack of outside context is an integral part of the students' education. At Hailsham, the students are taught about certain aspects of the outside world. Notably, Miss Emily attempts to teach the children about sex by having two anatomical skeletons act it out and saying that in the "outside world...sex meant all sorts of things" (84). Even though the students are taught what sex is and are taught

that it is significant to outside people because that is how you have kids, the students still seem to lack a certain understanding of how relationships work. Kathy notes that the older couples at the Cottages seem to try and replicate the behaviors of couples that they see on television. The students have been given no frame of reference for sex and relationships outside of the “facts” that their teachers have presented and the fictionalized representations of couples seen in their (again limited) media. There doesn’t seem to be any adult couples that they can model behaviors from or learn about healthy relationships through. As a result, there is this sense that the relationships that they do form are shallow and performative. There is little discussion of love amongst the couples that Kathy observes. In addition, Kathy pretty arbitrarily picks who she wants to have relations with, in the example of Harry, with whom she decides to have sex with, after little emotional consideration (98). Another scene in which the reader becomes familiar with just how unaware the students are is when they realize that Madame is scared of the students. While it is unclear whether or not the students really know that they are clones at this point in time, they are baffled by the idea that she could be scared of them because their societal position as clones has not been explained to them. This confusion, and then harsh realization, indicates the limited extent to which their teachers have really prepared them to understand their situation as clones and what that could mean for their adulthood, when they will have to face their deaths. With this consideration about context and understanding, *Never Let Me Go* can be read as making an implicit argument about experiential learning. Ishiguro illustrates how a disconnection from reality leads Kathy to struggling to understand.

In the final scene where Kathy and Tommy seek answers about the nature of their existence and Hailsham from Miss Emily, one of the guardians that raised them, the reader gets an inside look at what the philosophy behind the educational model that Hailsham employs. It is

not until the end of the story that the main characters and the readers are clued into the fact that there are other clones living in worse conditions. Miss Emily tells Kathy and Tommy that although they have been technically living in the outside world, they do not "know the half of it" (260). Miss Emily goes on to say that the limited knowledge that the students were given about the world outside Hailsham was for their protection. She claims that the students "wouldn't be who [they] are" (268) and that "Hailsham would not have been Hailsham" (268) without the bubble that she provided. In this portion, Ishiguro highlights the question of childhood and innocence: to what extent should we shelter children from harsh realities to preserve their happiness? Kucala does point out that Kathy's "best recollections are those of her school years, as yet unshadowed by the thought of death" (6), so it does seem that Miss Emily's efforts to protect their well-being during childhood were successful. While it might be true that the students lived happier lives with their limited knowledge, we are still forced to ask whether or not these determined lives were truly fulfilling. Although Miss Emily's protection allowed the students to study and be creative, it also controlled them, as they became content with life. When the students are "told and not told," they are given a sense that they do understand what is happening, even if they don't fully understand. This information control causes the students to not question their life path and not even fully recognize the injustice that is being done to them.

Ishiguro does not explicitly answer this question of childhood and knowledge, but by replicating the experience of limited knowledge, he invites the reader to experience what it is like to not fully understand. Through *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro not just tells readers about the nature of understanding and ignorance, but shows it to them through the limited perspective of the characters and the limited perspective of the readers. With the ending, Ishiguro depicts how limited knowledge can lead to some level of happiness, but he encourages the reader to consider

if the characters have satisfying and fulfilling lives. Instead of making a conclusion about whether or not we should be more honest with children, Ishiguro rather gives readers a medium to think about the limits of our own understanding and its implications. Although it is easy to critique the characters for not reacting in a typical way for someone faced with certain death, we must ask how much we have considered the imminence of our own deaths, the impossibility of accomplishing our own dreams, and the myriad of ways that we simply do not have control over our lives as humans. Perhaps Ishiguro is indicating that the real issue is not limited knowledge, but that we are ignorant to our limited knowledge. All of our knowledge will inevitably be limited as we cannot know or understand everything, but we must be aware of this limit so that we can seek to understand and ask questions, something that the characters in the novel struggle to do. Thus, *Never Let Me Go* isn't simply a critique of ignorance; it is a wake-up call to readers.

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“So Comes Snow After Fire”: Cyclical Episodes of Salvation in The Hobbit

Jasmine Sirvent

In an increasingly secularized world, the idea of spontaneous salvation is often cause for skepticism. However, the victorious ending of *The Hobbit* is a success owing to the novel's structure: Tolkien's narrative is repetitive in nature, detailing waves of desperation overcome by deliverance. Through unorthodox syntax and a unique cyclical structure, Tolkien portrays his characters as dependable and the universe as salvatory, inviting readers to trust that the party will be rescued in their times of need. While Tolkien himself was a devoted Catholic— and although salvation is often associated with divine intervention in the Christian tradition— Middle Earth has no blatant evidence of ritualistic religious practices; there is no church or higher power. Thus, understanding this novel through a lens that reconciles religious influences with literary aesthetics opens the door to a new reading of *The Hobbit*. Through episodic representations of embedded faithfulness, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* conditions readers to have faith in redemption and teaches them not only to accept but expect the novel's salvific conclusion.

In an era where it is possible not to believe in God, people doubt the prospect of salvation— and their need for it. Charles Taylor, in his book *A Secular Age*, describes this shift by claiming that we have moved from a society when it was “virtually impossible not to believe in

God,” to the twentieth century when, “many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable” (25). And yet, Tolkien’s novel about salvation and providence remains a paragon of English literature. In a world where religious faith is not ubiquitous, people still desperately want to have something to believe in. Society often divides the secular and the religious with a heavy-duty-rebar-enforced cement wall. Given this tendency, James K.A. Smith suggests how we should adapt to such changes: “there’s no undoing the secular; there’s just the task of learning how (not) to live—and perhaps even believe—in a secular age” (11). Through this post-secular perspective, *The Hobbit* is helping people remember how to have faith amidst a society that has coerced them into forgetting.

That said, *The Hobbit* neither necessitates a Christian or a Catholic worldview nor forbids such an outlook. The novel’s aesthetic qualities and its repetitive structure prompt us to have faith that all will turn out for the better; and it does this so well that we begin to believe our own actions can be part of that redemptive work. This new age we find ourselves in supports that the secular is, as Smith claims, “not concerned with what people believe as much as with what is believable. The difference between our modern, ‘secular’ and past ages is not necessarily the catalogue of available beliefs but rather the default assumptions about what is believable” (19). Tolkien’s novel challenges the new secular perceptions by making the unbelievable easy to believe. Wise and massive eagles— and almost everything else in the novel—sound outrageous, but when they come to rescue Bilbo and the rest of the “good guys,” it is believable and a relief. The satisfaction we feel when the party is saved is evidence that the novel rewards us for believing in the unbelievable.

In exploring the narrative structure, Gandalf is the first person to embody this training in faithfulness. Gandalf as a wise, grandfather figure opens the door for readers to place their trust

in him: “an old man with a staff . . . his long white beard hung down below his waist” (5).

Gandalf first proves his loyalty to the party when Bilbo and the dwarves get attacked by the trolls. Initially, the situation feels almost irredeemable:

A nice pickle they were all in now: all neatly tied up in sacks, with three angry trolls (and two with burns and bashes to remember) sitting by them, arguing whether they should roast them slowly, or mince them fine and boil them, or just to sit on them one by one and squash them into jelly; and Bilbo up in a bush, with his clothes and his skin torn, not daring to move for fear they should hear him. (37-38)

Because the sentence is so long, the reader does not get a chance to breathe rhythmically, instead the pauses are abrupt and in unexpected places. The semicolon, colon, multiple commas, and even parenthetical statement have all been uncomfortably crammed into one sentence. Tolkien encourages the reader to accompany the dwarves in their feelings of stress and hopelessness. In the same way that Bilbo can do nothing now to save the dwarves, neither can the reader. That being said, right before their predicament reaches the one-hundred percent probability of certain death, Gandalf reappears to rescue the party. The quick return of Gandalf in the subsequent paragraph, allows the reader to feel instant relief: “It was just then that Gandalf came back” (38). As compared to the tortured syntax from the earlier passage, this short sentence produces immediate catharsis. Gandalf has yet to completely rescue the party, but the reader knows all will turn out well. The sun then rises, Gandalf strikes a rock, and the sun’s rays turn the trolls into stone. Gandalf’s actions encourage readers to put their faith in him and trust that he will continue to demonstrate loyalty to the party in the future. Gandalf, in this episode, is the vessel through which salvation comes.

This pattern of embedded faithfulness is similarly perpetuated when the Eagles save Bilbo and the dwarves after they escape the underside of the Misty Mountains. As the party scrambles to save themselves from the Wargs and forces themselves up the neighboring trees, Tolkien writes: “now you can understand why Gandalf, listening to their growling and yelping, began to be dreadfully afraid, wizard though he was, and to feel that they were in a very bad place, and had not yet escaped at all” (94). Here, even Gandalf is terrified, arguably frantic as evidenced by the use of polysyndeton. Compounding the sentence twice with “and . . . , and” delays closure of the sentence, heightening the anxiety for the reader. The situation the party has been forced into, therefore, must be quite dire.

When the hope of surviving their present predicament has nearly vanished, Gandalf prepares to sacrifice himself. The goblins surround the tree and pose as a seemingly unconquerable obstacle in the party’s journey; Bilbo and the dwarves feel as though these are their last moments, even Gandalf doesn’t see a way out of the predicament besides self-sacrifice. Gandalf stands ready to jump from the tree and smite the evil horde of goblins, effectively ending his life in the process: “but he never leaped. Just at that moment the Lord of the Eagles swept down from above, seized him in his talons, and he was gone. . . . Bilbo had escaped only just in time!” (98). The readers are assured that the Eagles indeed saved them. Here, the party is not saved because of Gandalf; salvation emerges from the story itself. Therefore, the reader is being set up not to expect salvation from any person, but possibly the narrative itself. Tolkien is showing that salvation is not just made manifest by individual beings but that it’s the way of the world. The universe tends towards deliverance.

On a deeper level, *The Hobbit* also presents the opportunity for everyone to participate in the work of salvation. If salvation is embedded in the world inherently, and different actors can

partake, then it stands to reason that anyone can participate in this work. This is best shown through the next episode in the novel: the spider encounter. Bilbo and the rest of the dwarves are separated and lost in the never-ending maze of trees and creepy crawlies: “But the cries of the others got steadily further and fainter, and though after a while it seemed to him they changed to yells and cries for help in the far distance, all noise at last died right away, and he was left alone in complete silence and darkness” (140-141). While the scene demonstrates the same use of polysyndeton and overly long sentence structure as the encounter with the wargs, the effect on the reader is different for three reasons. First, everything Bilbo trusts in moves farther and farther away from him with every repeated conjunction, leaving him all alone. The commas and conjunctions work to carefully separate each independent clause, underscoring Bilbo’s separation and isolation. Second, although the punctuation is both less intense and less random, the grammar here is very complicated, signifying Bilbo’s powerlessness. This is a compound sentence, stitching multiple independent clauses together. In the first couple clauses, the “cries” are the subject and phrased in the active voice; the “cries” are acting on Bilbo, meaning he has no control— he’s hopeless. However, in the final clause, Bilbo becomes the subject, but not in an empowering kind of way; the clause then changes to passive voice meaning that Bilbo still has no control— all the horrible things are happening to him. Bilbo being the subject is still useful, though, because it puts the reader in his mind and shoes, bidding us to sympathize with his feelings of desperation. And finally, the redundant nature of the sentence’s diction is reminiscent of weariness: “further and fainter,” and “far in the distance,” and “silence and darkness.” This kind of phraseology mimics Bilbo’s exhaustion from having to suffer one horrible thing after another. This passage relays a quiet kind of suspense as opposed to the action-packed tension

with the trolls or the Eagles. As a result, instead of stress and breathless anxiety, the reader feels hopelessness and isolation.

In this instance, it is up to Bilbo to rescue himself and the party; through this we discover that being a savior is not only a job for elite, powerful beings, but it requires the participation of even the smaller beings. Being in one of his “most miserable moments” (141), Bilbo nearly gives up entirely. He sits himself under the canopy of a tree and gives himself over to sleep. He dreams of home: “his far-distant hobbit-hole with its beautiful pantries . . . deep in thoughts of bacon and eggs and toast and butter” (141). After a little while, he wakes up realizing that he is about two seconds away from becoming a spider snack. However, despite being in a worse situation than he was before his nap, Bilbo is rejuvenated and fights the spider with renewed strength. He brutally– and not very elegantly– kills the spider. Then he faints. And when he wakes, he makes a profound realization:

There was the usual dim grey light of the forest-day about him when he came to his senses. The spider lay dead beside him, and his sword blade was stained black. Somehow the killing of the giant spider, all alone by himself in the dark without the help of the wizard or the dwarves or of anyone else, made a great difference to Mr Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder in spite of an empty stomach, as he wiped his sword on the grass and put it back into its sheath. (141-142)

Salvation does not only occur from extraneous persons; it is something every character can participate in, even Bilbo. Bilbo reveals, however, that salvation is sometimes a painful and nasty business. After the killing is over, the scene enters a despondent, dark kind of calm: “dim grey light” and “his sword blade was stained black.” For Bilbo and the reader to symbolically exit the brutality and carnage of such a traumatic scene, Bilbo wipes “his sword on the grass and

[puts] it back into its sheath.” In a beautiful religious allusion, Bilbo washes the blood shed as the price paid for redemption, showcasing that salvation rarely comes without struggle and pain. Moreover, salvation not only helps those being rescued, but also the rescuer. Bilbo becomes a more heroic person through saving others. This does not mean that cautious, tea-drinking, doily-loving Bilbo was bad, rather that Bilbo, having finally revolted against the complacency of his former self, was able to save his friends and make change, even though the process was ruthless.

The consistent situations of raised stress and tension followed immediately by relief and comfort condition the reader to have faith that despite whatever misfortune the party encounters, they will be rescued. And it doesn't happen once, or twice, it happens over and over again. This can do nothing if not affect the reader profoundly: this education in faith truly produces joy. We feel enjoyment as we read because we too begin to believe that salvation is a must, that we get to be saved too. This kind of salvation not only emerges from one particularly heroic person but is one that every person has the opportunity to participate in. The novel further refines people's idea of redemption by giving the reader hope, not in persons only but also in the nature of the universe. Most significantly, though, Tolkien's salvation is unique because he does not shy away from showcasing its expensive and harsh cost; it isn't easy and it definitely isn't painless, but Tolkien portrays it as always worthwhile. All of these prepare the reader for the party's final battle where they face one of the most fundamental and important elements of Tolkien's storytelling: eucatastrophe.

Tolkien's eucatastrophe in *The Hobbit* is, of course, the Battle of the Five Armies. The party is facing insurmountable odds and, in all probability, will die: “on all this Bilbo looked with misery” (255). The effect of this on the reader is a powerful sense of doubt; however, this

does not mean the reader has lost faith— it does not mean that the reader has stopped believing in the characters’ trustworthiness— it simply shows how calamitous their situation is. Therefore, when the party is rescued, the effect is more palpable. When Bilbo sees the faithful Eagles that rescued him earlier in the story, and recognizes that the battle is not lost, he is overcome with relief, yelling and dancing. However, in his joy, a rock falls on his head, and “he fell with a crash and knew no more” (256). After Bilbo wakes up, the story of how the battle turned out is related after the fact. The dwarves and the rest of the heroes keep fighting, but Bilbo remains comatose. This proves that salvation was going to occur anyway, with or without Bilbo. This retrospective narrative supports the idea that the party has been victorious all along. The battle has already been won! Maybe, even, before it has begun. And when the battle is finished, Bilbo relinquishes adventure for home with the words: “So comes snow after fire, and even dragons have their ending” (264). The opportunity for salvation is open to everyone; something better is always ahead.

The Hobbit’s insistence that the world should be a place that precipitates salvation provides a new layer of meaning to eucatastrophe. Tolkien used the term “eucatastrophe” to describe a joyous turn of events that is strong enough to bring grown-ups to tears; it is an unexpected and beautiful reversal of calamitous disaster that is necessarily believable. In his essay, “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien describes eucatastrophe as a quick joyous turn:

This joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially “escapist,” nor “fugitive.” In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so

far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. (14)

The eucatastrophe is not just a convenience, nor is it an escape from reality: it is a deep and fundamental truth about the world. The Hobbit does not deny sorrow or failure—unfortunately people will die. But without this sacrifice, and without this overwhelming fear of failure, the victory wouldn't feel as gracious or miraculous. In fact, every episode thus far has begun with “dyscatastrophe,” but the point of The Hobbit is that these moments of despair are not the end—deliverance is coming. And these salvific episodes are not mini examples of eucatastrophe, they are part of the eucatastrophe! That is, the final victory would not have been possible if it were not for those cyclical episodes preparing the characters for the last battle. This kind of salvation, of course, was inspired by Tolkien's catholic beliefs, but manifests itself differently in The Hobbit. He claimed that the real world's eucatastrophe is the resurrection of the Christian Jesus. For Tolkien, eucatastrophe is a grace that rescues the party from unpreventable evils and the worst parts of themselves.

Craig Bernthal, author of Tolkien's Sacramental Vision, states that in coining the term, “Tolkien wanted a word that meant the unexpected overturning of evil by good. As in tragedy, the turning point is a recognition and reversal, but of unexpected good overturning what had been seen as the sure triumph of evil” (Bernthal 51). Bernthal himself has a deeply religious interpretation of the concept. He believes that Tolkien's impetus behind fabricating and implementing eucatastrophe in his works was fundamentally Catholic. “Death would not be the end,” Bernthal claims, “The ultimate eucatastrophe would be the defeat of death itself, which the Christian enters as through a gate, following his leader Christ, into a new life” (52). For Bernthal, eucatastrophe in The Hobbit, then, is an almost sacramental process. Bilbo is metaphorically

baptized, putting to death his old self and breaking through a threshold into new life, becoming a more adventurous person.

On the other hand, Rebecca Munro argues that for too long critics have been criticizing Tolkien's works with adamantly Catholic interpretations when a purely secular perspective is more beneficial. She argues: "reading Tolkien as a literary artist provides a more appropriate method by which we may appreciate [his works] as the author intended, as literary art" (636). Although Munro discusses *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, her philosophy can be readily applied to *The Hobbit*. In response to critics who focus solely on religious allusion and may forget its artistic significance, Munro argues:

Insights may be gained by much of the thoughtful theological analysis of Tolkien's masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*; such analysis has its place, yet as any theoretical position that is attached to a specific agenda does, this brand of analysis may limit the text to a closed field of interpretation. In circles of the academy where theology dominates discussions of Tolkien, it behooves us to remember the generic domain to which his fiction belongs and appreciate and approach it as the author intended: as imaginative literary art. (639)

Reading *The Hobbit* as a Catholic allegory, then, does a disservice to Tolkien's intention behind his novel and its inherent aesthetic goodness. In the same way, Munro might claim that analyzing eucatastrophe from a Catholic lens— in an allegorical comparison with the resurrection of Jesus or any other archetypical messianic triumph— takes away from the novel's beauty. By this argument, eucatastrophe is believable simply because the text presents it as truth and because it does so in a literarily elegant manner.

Although both critics make compelling arguments and are informative in their own rights, they leave a gap in the field. Bernthal makes an excellent point in positing that

Middle-Earth must be a function of Tolkien's own personal and religious beliefs, but we cannot necessarily import Catholic doctrine into a fictional world that lives extraneously from our world's religions. And while Munro is right to maintain the distinction between the fictional Middle Earth and the real-life Jesus of Christianity, she seems to miss the fact that the reader doesn't live in Middle Earth. These perspectives bypass how the aesthetic structure of *The Hobbit* encourages readers to believe in salvation in the real world. Because of the nature of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, it is imperative that we utilize an alternative kind of lens with which to interpret eucatastrophe, one that neither eliminates religion nor hyper-fixates on it. There is no religion in Middle-Earth, and yet salvation, forgiveness, and redemption are inherently religious ideas! Understanding this dichotomy of religious history and secular practices can help readers better understand why the novel's aesthetic structure and Tolkien's Catholic beliefs are the underlying pillars of eucatastrophe.

We can contextually elucidate a deeper meaning behind Tolkien's eucatastrophe in *The Hobbit* through this bipartite lens. Because of Tolkien's earlier depictions of Gandalf and the Eagles and Bilbo, following that cyclical structure, this rescue feels less like a convenient happenstance and more like a "what took you so long!" Eucatastrophe does not mean that there will be no suffering—there is no shortage of death in *The Hobbit*. But it does mean that all will turn out well. Every death, every loss will eventually bear fruit to a reconciliatory ending. Tolkien proves that calamitous situations, instead of destroying hope, can catalyze faith, not as the absence of doubt, but the perseverance of redemption. Salvation when all hope is lost is not portrayed as an unlikely coincidence or a *deus ex machina*; instead, Tolkien's eucatastrophe is not only believable but eagerly expected. Smith, in a tangential vein, describes belief and its rationale like this: "religion might just be true simply because it is beautiful" (9). Eucatastrophe,

in the same way, might be believable simply because it is joyous. He is teaching the reader what it means to have faith by restoring to them joy. Eucatastrophe is deeply embedded in *The Hobbit*, and it encourages the readers to dig deeper, past the pessimisms of life, and into true joy. But this eucatastrophe is only made possible through Tolkien's implementation of those systematic representations of true loyalty and faithfulness that prime us into accepting the final victory.

The idea of redemption in the real world is often so unbelievably convenient it feels fake. However, this is what makes Tolkien's eucatastrophe so effective; because it is in the form of a fantasy novel, it is easier for the readers to believe in it. Geoffrey Vaughan and Jennifer Vaughan argue to this effect: "Fantasy allows us to gaze at the 'arresting strangeness' of our own lives reflected back in a new way." Similarly, Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy Stories" states:

"Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view . . . We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness" (53). Tolkien is trying to convince his readers to look at the world in a different light. And this fantasy works because it engages the readers through implementations of repeated recovery. David Sandner further claims: "[the] movements toward grace, perform a vanishing narrative, a moment when the aesthetic, the literary, fails or fades away and allows the reader—or so they claim—to somehow slip through the text, past words into faith" (171). Both the aesthetic structure and the novel's religious influences aggregate in helping the reader better empathize with Bilbo and understand the significance of salvation.

Tolkien's eucatastrophe is so influential because he makes it easy to believe in salvation despite a world that makes it so hard. When looking at *The Hobbit*, it is not beneficial to eliminate Christian symbols from an analysis, nor is it fruitful to assume that eucatastrophe is

best understood through a religious lens. Instead, it is imperative to recognize that the party participates in a world influenced by religion, by the love of God in Tolkien's life, and by redemption. The Hobbit, then, encourages people to believe in salvation extraneous from societally constructed religious practices. Tolkien's eucatastrophe is a comfort not because it is convenient, but because the text presents it as the way of the world, as something each and every person can participate in— if they are willing. In a gentle way, Tolkien's cyclical pattern of destruction followed by deliverance reinvigorates the reader's faith in the overall triumph of good and a benevolent providence.

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Cyclicalities of Colonization: Examining Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Through the Legacy of Colonial Trauma in Latin American Modernity

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Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* endures as one of Latin America's most intricate narratives on history and identity. Its depiction of the fictional town of Macondo and the rise and fall of the Buendía family has captivated readers for decades, not only for its evocative language and use of magical realism to convey exceptionally complex dynamics, but also for the way in which it mirrors the labyrinthine, often painful legacies of colonialism in Latin America. Despite its prominence, however, Márquez's work is increasingly seen as part of an "older" canon, overshadowed by the rising voices of new authors who address the region's contemporary challenges. Yet, in setting aside Márquez, we risk losing sight of the rich, foundational insights his work offers—most notably, his portrayal of colonialism as an inescapably cyclical, persistent force that shapes Latin American cultural consciousness across generations.

In examining *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, we find ourselves confronted by the notion that history, particularly in a postcolonial context, is not a linear progression, but rather a series of repetitions: echoing cycles that revisit old wounds and reshape identities over time. For

Márquez, colonialism is not a chapter closed; rather, it is a legacy that reinvents itself through recurrent family names, traumas, and the very soil of Macondo. The novel's structure, its generational narrative, and its elements of magical realism combine to blur the lines between past and present, suggesting that colonial histories are more than mere relics. By tracing these patterns of repetition in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, we can better understand how Latin America grapples with its historical identity in the context of modernity through the study of literature.

In this paper, I argue that Márquez's depiction of colonialism as an unending cycle of trauma, identity, and erasure holds crucial insights into the way Latin American societies contend with their histories. By returning to his presentation of colonialism as a recursive, multi-generational force, I aim to uncover how this novel specifically presents colonialism *not* as a finite event of the past, but instead functions as an ongoing process embedded in the fabric of historical and social consciousness. Additionally, in engaging with modernism as a movement, Márquez challenges the concept of progress as a linear trajectory, offering a critique that reshapes modernist approaches to studying cultural development, further elucidating the importance of understanding history as a repetitive and multi-generational process deeply entwined with the enduring legacies of colonialism. Through an exploration of generational trauma, cyclical patterns of identity, and the deep entanglement of land with memory, I will demonstrate how *One Hundred Years of Solitude* provides an indispensable framework for studying Latin American history and literature.

Furthermore, in positioning Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* alongside contemporary writer Karen Tei Yamashita's *Brazil-Marú*, I seek to show how Márquez's foundational text continues to resonate, and why revisiting his use of magical realism in

particular is crucial for understanding the modern, globalized perception of Latin America.

Yamashita extends and reframes Márquez's exploration of colonial trauma by addressing similar themes - cyclical histories, intergenerational struggles, and the deep ties between land, memory, and identity - while situating her narrative within a more transnational and multiethnic context. By engaging with Márquez's questions and advancing his narrative strategies, Yamashita similarly uses magical realism to uncover the layered impacts of cultural, familial, and historical displacement, offering a fresh lens through which to examine colonial legacies.

The juxtaposition between the cyclical nature of history and the enduring legacy of colonialism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* creates a profound tension, underscoring the novel's critique of linear historical narratives. While Márquez presents history as endlessly repeating—echoing patterns of violence, erasure, and resurgence through the Buendía family—this cyclicity does not negate the enduring impact of colonialism. Rather, it complicates it, illustrating how colonialism persists not as isolated events but as a structure woven into the story's fabric. Each successive generation of the Buendía family faces variations of the same dilemmas: a struggle for autonomy, the weight of inherited trauma, and the inevitability of external forces that reshape their lives. This interplay between what is presented as cyclical versus shown as simply enduring mirrors the broader postcolonial dilemma: how to reconcile a history that refuses to stay in the past with the necessity of moving forward. Through this lens, Márquez critiques modernist ideas of progress as a linear trajectory, instead emphasizing that history itself unfolds in layered, recursive patterns. The narrative's non-linear form, with its temporal shifts and echoes, invites readers to recognize the coexistence of these forces, revealing how the legacy of colonialism remains an unresolved tension at the heart of both personal and collective histories.

The study of [post-] colonialism, as a framework, goes beyond addressing the immediate aftermath of colonization to encompass the profound and enduring effects that colonial histories imprint on a society's culture, identity, and structures of power. In Latin America, colonialism is not restricted to a singular historical period confined to the past; rather, it is a force that transcends temporal boundaries, shaping each successive generation. Through a narrative model that mirrors the gradual influence of colonialist structures and reflects the cyclical nature of Latin American history, Márquez illuminates how colonial trauma and cultural dislocation are continuously woven into the social fabric, influencing each new generation in ways both visible and obscured.

I argue that Márquez structures his novel into four distinct stages of colonialism: (1) early colonial encounters; (2) outside influence and establishing conflict; (3) foreign economic control and exploitation; and (4) a destructive return to isolation. This outline expands significantly on the conventional division of the narrative into two broad phases centered solely on the development and experience of the Civil War, and the arrival of the Banana Company positioned alongside increasing settlement and activity in post-war times. While existing scholarship offers valuable insights into these stages, I find such approaches overly reductive, neglecting the nuanced interplay of earlier foundational and later disintegration phases that frame the cyclical nature of colonial exploitation in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

By reducing the narrative to two phases, these scholars risk erasing the nuanced ways in which Márquez portrays colonialism as a recursive, multi-generational force. The result is an oversimplified reading that neglects the subtleties of the novel's critique of colonialism, which operates not as a singular or binary phenomenon, but as a series of interconnected processes that shape Macondo's social, cultural, and historical evolution. This notable bifurcated trend in

existing scholarship, while certainly capturing the novel's broad thematic shifts, risks simplifying the narrative's portrayal of colonialism as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon. This limitation highlights the need for a more segmented approach that acknowledges the gradual and cyclical progression of colonial influence within the novel. By proposing this expanded structure, I contribute a more layered understanding of how these stages shape and reflect the persistent entanglement of history, identity, and modernity, symbolizing the unending reverberations of colonial influence. In my approach, the four phases I outline better capture the cyclical and evolving nature of colonialism, which Márquez emphasizes through his portrayal of the Buendía family's enduring struggles and the repeated cultural, social, and ideological shifts in the town. Each phase individually highlights a particular aspect of colonial power - whether it be through language, religion, scientific advancement, or corporate imperialism - underscoring how colonialism operates not as a single, monolithic event, but rather as a series of transformative encounters that shape identity, memory, and social order over time. By expanding this framework, I aim to show that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* not only reflects the broader historical arc of Latin American colonialism, but also critiques the reductionist lens that often views colonization as a series of isolated or disconnected events. As Charles Gibson asserts in his piece, *Colonial Institutions and Contemporary Latin America: Social and Cultural Life*, colonial histories establish relentless social hierarchies and governance structures that continue to shape societal relations today, not only influencing institutional frameworks but also embedding colonial power dynamics deeply within cultural identities and individual experiences (Gibson, 380).¹ This argument underscores my claim pertaining to the necessity of seeing

¹ Gibson's analysis delves into how colonial institutions, such as encomiendas, haciendas, and the Catholic Church, structured the social and economic hierarchies of colonial Latin America, creating systems of power that privileged European elites and marginalized Indigenous and Afro-descended populations. These structures, Gibson argues, were not dismantled after independence but adapted into the frameworks of emerging nation-states, perpetuating cycles of inequality and dependency. He also examines the cultural legacy of colonialism, particularly the enduring

colonialism as an ongoing force, rather than a resolved historical event, thereby offering a crucial lens for understanding the themes explored in Márquez's work.

To illustrate this trend of approaching *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by dividing its narrative into two primary phases, let us briefly examine the work of several scholars who adopt this perspective, focusing on how they frame the novel's structural and thematic bifurcation in their analyses. Gene H. Bell-Villada, in *Gabriel García Márquez: The Man and His Work*, frames the novel as a study in opposites, highlighting the idyllic, almost mythical early years of Macondo as distinct from its ultimate dystopian collapse, particularly marked by the arrival of the Banana Company. Bell-Villada situates this division within a broader historical cycle of Latin America, but his focus on the polarity between beginnings and endings overlooks how the transitional phases of colonialism complicate this binary. Similarly, Michael Wood, in *Gabriel García Márquez: One Hundred Years of Solitude*, emphasizes the thematic contrasts between the magical realism that defines Macondo's rise and the brutal modernization and political violence that precipitate its fall. While Wood's work draws attention to the shift in tone and theme, it flattens the nuanced progression of colonialism by prioritizing broad oppositions over interconnected stages. Furthermore, in *Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude (Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations)*, Harold Bloom adopts a similar perspective, dividing the novel into a creation-oriented first half and a destruction-oriented second half. He connects these phases to Márquez's critique of modernity and the cyclical nature of history, yet Bloom's dichotomous approach neglects the incremental forces of colonialism that underpin both creation and destruction, such as the influence of Melquíades and the religious institutions that quietly shape Macondo's trajectory. Moreover, Philip Swanson, in *The Cambridge Companion to*

influence of the Catholic Church in shaping education, morality, and community organization, which continues to define cultural identity and social cohesion in many regions today.

Gabriel García Márquez, frames the novel around Macondo's transformation from a vibrant, isolated community to one engulfed by external forces like the Banana Company and political instability. While Swanson's reading captures the broad strokes of Macondo's decline, it downplays the significance of earlier phases, such as the introduction of scientific knowledge and religion, which gradually erode Macondo's cultural autonomy and set the stage for later exploitation. By focusing on the endpoints of creation and destruction, these readings often overlook the transitional periods where colonialism evolves, infiltrates, and transforms Macondo in ways that are not immediately visible or accessible.

Furthermore, it must be noted that experiencing colonialism through a non-Western lens, as Márquez displays via *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Yamashita does with *Brazil-Marú*, fundamentally alters our understanding of its impacts by centering the lived experience of those who are the colonized, rather than those in power. Typically, colonial narratives are told through the perspective of the colonizers, who frame events as linear progress or unavoidable modernization, and portraying their actions as benevolent or inevitable. Márquez and Yamashita's approaches, however, subvert this perspective, highlighting the devastation, cyclical trauma, and identity dislocation imposed on Latin American communities. This inversion not only challenges the Eurocentric narratives of colonial 'success,' but truly reveals colonialism as an ongoing, multi-generational force that leaves deep cultural and psychological scars on the colonized and challenges the simplifications of Western historical chronicle. In *Historical Subversion and Violence of Representation in García Márquez and Oulouguem*, Edna Aizenberg expands on this subversion of colonial narratives by critiquing how Western storytelling conventions often use a linear progression toward modernity as an endpoint, relegating

non-Western histories to the past and overlooking their continued relevance (Aizenberg, 1238).²

Aizenberg's analysis sheds light on how Márquez challenges this model by presenting colonialism's trajectory as both linear and transcendent, enabling readers to see how colonial trauma is intricately woven into the fabric of memory, social structures, and generational identity within Macondo.

To return to the novel itself, the first major phase of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with the arrival of the nomad Melquíades and his scientific knowledge in the rudimentary town of Macondo. This phase symbolizes the allure and complexity of early colonial encounters, marking the first introduction of foreign influence into the town. Melquíades, an outsider to Macondo, brings with him inventions, scientific wonders, and mystical knowledge that captivate José Arcadio Buendía, the town's founder. His presence represents the initial fascination with colonial knowledge, where advances in science and technology promise progress but carry with them the seeds of dependency and control. Melquíades' role in the novel is significant not just as a bearer of knowledge, but also as a symbol of the collision between the rational and the magical. His teachings on alchemy, alongside his mystical and often contradictory nature, exemplify the complex duality of colonial encounters—where the introduction of foreign knowledge offers the potential for growth, yet simultaneously sets the stage for cultural dislocation and subjugation.

This early phase of discovery mirrors the beginnings of colonization in Latin America, where initial encounters were not purely destructive, but rather filled with a sense of discovery and potential. Language, religion, and scientific knowledge were introduced as forms of

² Aizenberg contrasts Western storytelling, which traditionally emphasizes linear progression, resolution, and historical finality, with non-Western narratives that often embrace cyclical structures, fragmented timelines, and unresolved tensions. She highlights how Márquez's blending of magical realism and historical subversion resists Western conventions, instead drawing from non-Western traditions that foreground the interconnectedness of past, present, and future. This narrative approach critiques the colonialist tendency to marginalize non-Western histories by confining them to a static, pre-modern past, demonstrating how Márquez reclaims historical agency for Latin America by embedding colonial trauma within the ongoing fabric of lived experience.

progress— albeit ones that carried the implicit consequences of dependence. The imposition of Latin, for instance, as a Westernized language, alongside the establishment of religious institutions like the Catholic priest Father Nicanor (Márquez, 81), reflects the colonial structures that begin to shape Macondo's social and cultural fabric. Father Nicanor's role, as a figure representing the persistence of religion as a colonial institution, underlines how the colonial legacy endures through institutional power and cultural imposition, a theme that echoes throughout the novel. Márquez's presentation of these influences is marked by an ambiguity that reflects the dual nature of colonial encounters. While bringing knowledge and apparent advancement, they also initiate a process of cultural erasure, dependency, and trauma. This cyclical quality emerges early in the novel, as the influence of Melquíades— though seemingly a force for knowledge— ushers in a subtle yet significant shift in Macondo's trajectory. Just as Melquíades' eventual return from death and his continued influence suggest the cyclical nature of history, his introduction of new knowledge mirrors the way colonialism establishes long-lasting patterns that transcend generations. The first phase sets the stage for recurrence, where the promise of progress is inevitably followed by the degradation and isolation of the very society that once embraced it. The early stage of colonialism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* introduces the pattern that will persist throughout the novel: a cycle of discovery, dependency, and eventual destruction. The ambiguous nature of these early colonial influences— a mix of promise and ruin— sets the tone for the phases that follow, and marks the beginning of the novel's broader commentary on the repetitive nature of history.

As the novel progresses through encounters and interactions with outside influences, Macondo's history advances to a period of division and conflict, marked by wars and political upheaval which reflect the height of colonial domination and its enduring psychological impact

on society. In the novel's secondary stage, colonization is no longer a distant or benign influence, but an invasive force that fractures the community. The violent political divisions and civil wars that plague Macondo mirror the conflicts across Latin America that erupted in response to colonial structures and the imposition of foreign ideologies. Grounded in authenticized history, these wars serve as a clear allegory for the real-life Colombian civil war known as "The War of a Thousand Days," where two political factions clashed violently throughout the late 19th century.³

This period introduces immense trauma into the collective consciousness of Macondo's inhabitants, as conflicts deepen societal divides and create legacies of violence that haunt future generations. Here, Márquez's depiction resonates with Shaobo Xie's call for a nuanced understanding of postcolonial discourse in *Rethinking the Problem of Postcolonialism*, emphasizing the agency of local experiences while acknowledging the lasting impacts of colonial rule (Xie, 8). Xie critiques traditional postcolonial studies for oversimplifying colonialism into binary terms of oppressor and oppressed, instead highlighting the complex interplay of agency within colonized societies. This agency is not inherently liberatory or destructive but reflects the multifaceted ways communities navigate and adapt to colonial influence. In Macondo, Márquez's depiction of the wars reveals that colonialism's effects are not uniformly negative or positive, but simply inextricably interwoven in the town's development. While the wars undeniably introduce violence and instability, they also catalyze certain forms of social cohesion and identity formation among Macondo's inhabitants. The town's struggles to assert its autonomy amidst external pressures suggest that colonial influence, while oppressive, also

³ The War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902) was a devastating civil war in Colombia, fought between the Conservative and Liberal parties. Rooted in deep political and social divisions, the war arose from tensions over centralized governance versus federalism, economic instability, and social inequality. It resulted in approximately 100,000 deaths and widespread destruction, particularly in rural areas, and weakened Colombia's control over Panama, indirectly leading to its independence in 1903. The war's legacy of political polarization and cyclical violence profoundly shaped Colombian society and culture, serving as a historical backdrop for Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and its critique of persistent cycles of conflict and trauma.

fosters moments of resilience and ingenuity. The wars, for instance, serve as a vehicle for Macondo to articulate its collective identity even if this identity remains fractured and contested, just as Xie suggests. Similarly, the development of the land itself reflects this duality; while colonial exploitation disrupts traditional ways of life, it also brings infrastructure, technologies, and opportunities that Macondo integrates into its evolving cultural framework. Márquez portrays this integration not as a simple embrace of modernity, but as a selective process wherein Macondo's inhabitants exercise agency in adopting, rejecting, or transforming colonial legacies. In this way, Márquez continues to orient itself alongside Xie's argument that postcolonial societies are not passive victims, but rather active participants in shaping their destinies within and beyond the structures imposed by colonial rule. Márquez's cyclical portrayal of Macondo's wars and those participating in them suggests that these divisions are not anomalies but a repeated feature of colonial influence, where each conflict revisits the traumas of the past, embedding them deeper within the generational psyche.

The arrival of the Banana Company, symbolizing foreign economic control and exploitation, signals the peak of colonial intrusion in Macondo and the start of the third stage. This phase, which parallels the economic imperialism imposed upon Latin America, brings with it a new wave of trauma as the town becomes subject to the whims of external forces that have no regard for local customs or stability. The company not only disrupts Macondo's newly defined social order, but reshapes the town's identity, dividing its people and leaving deep scars in its wake. The division and exploitation experienced during this period mark a critical point in the community's collective trauma, where the effects of colonialism shift from abstract structures to lived experiences of repression and subjugation. For new generations born after these wars, colonial trauma manifests differently: they experience its echoes and residual effects rather than

the original violence. This multi-generational effect of colonial trauma— where subsequent generations feel the ever-lingering impact of past injustices— aligns with Adam Sharman’s interpretation of colonialism as an unending process, one that transforms from direct domination to a pervasive influence shaping every aspect of society, from economic structures to social relations (Sharman, 497).⁴ Sharman, in his piece, *Latin American Modernity, and Yet...* critiques the notion of modernity in Latin America, questioning whether the region has fully embraced modernity or if it remains trapped in a cycle of colonial legacies. Sharman principally argues that while Latin American societies have made significant strides toward modernization, they continue to grapple with the sociocultural and political challenges rooted in their colonial past. He explores the tensions between traditional practices and modern influences, suggesting that modernity in Latin America is characterized by a duality that complicates the narrative of progress. Each generation’s identity becomes partially defined by the conflicts and losses of its predecessors, creating a legacy where trauma is as inherent to the community’s identity as its land and history.

While the intrusion of the Banana Company marks the apex of colonial exploitation in Macondo, it also sets in motion a chain of events that leads the town back into isolation, revealing how deeply colonialism has embedded itself in the town’s identity. As the story nears its end, the consequences of this economic domination become evident in Macondo’s inevitable return to primitivity, underscoring the cyclical and unyielding nature of colonial trauma, with the Buendía family’s lineage fading and the town itself dissolving into obscurity. However, this final

⁴ Sharman identifies a particular tension between modernity and tradition, where attempts at modernization often coexist with, and sometimes perpetuate, traditional colonial structures. He highlights how this duality creates a cultural and political environment in which the traumas and inequalities of the colonial period continue to define the region’s identity. Sharman critiques the assumption that Latin America has fully embraced modernity, noting that, despite efforts to modernize, the region remains influenced by its colonial past. He explains that this colonial legacy has evolved from direct, overt domination into more subtle forms of control, influencing everything from economic systems to social relations.

phase does not signify an escape from colonialism's grasp. Rather, it represents a tragic repetition of history: a return to when Macondo was composed of a small group of inhabitants and alienated from the rest of the world. The novel's structure emphasizes this circularity, with future characters and events closely resembling those of past generations, as if each new iteration of the Buendía family is fated to repeat the experiences and mistakes of those before. This cyclical structure also draws on Biblical allegory, such as the catastrophic flood that parallels stories of divine punishment and renewal. The flood, which both destroys and cleanses, becomes emblematic of Macondo's destiny— an act of obliteration that marks not merely a rebirth, but a return to obscurity, culminating in the dissolution of Macondo and the evident repetitive struggles of the Buendía lineage. Throughout these events, the figure of Melquíades stands as a haunting reminder of the circularity of Macondo's fate. His return from the dead and his role as both a harbinger of knowledge and a symbol of colonial intrusion echoes the inescapable repetition of history, where even knowledge and progress, brought to the town through his inventions, are ultimately absorbed into the cycle of destruction. Melquíades, bridging the scientific and the supernatural, embodies the dual nature of colonialism itself— offering both potential and doom, the promise of advancement paired with the inevitability of decay.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the generational impact of colonialism manifests most vividly through the Buendía family, with each new generation reliving cycles of trauma, identity crises, and unfulfilled destinies that evoke Latin America's own tortured colonial past. The recurrence of names and personalities within the Buendía family is not merely a narrative device but serves as a powerful commentary on the haunting persistence of colonial trauma across generations.⁵ Through the repetition of characters named José Arcadio, Aureliano, and

⁵ For those unfamiliar:

Generation 1 - José Arcadio Buendía marries Úrsula; they give birth to Aureliano Buendía, José Arcadio, and Amaranta.

Amaranta, Márquez presents each new iteration as both an echo and a living embodiment of ancestral burdens, all connected through a lineage shaped and scarred by the forces of colonization. This cyclical lineage of the Buendías suggests a family— and a society— unable to break free from the traumas embedded in its history. Their lives, like the history of Latin America, become a “...machine with unavoidable repetitions,” (Márquez , 396) where inherited trauma and identity bind each generation to the failures, mistakes, and hopes of those who came before.

Through Úrsula Buendía, the family matriarch, Márquez offers readers a truly unique perspective on the awareness of repetitive cycles, and it is through her eyes that the nature of generational trauma is revealed. As she ages, Úrsula alone begins to recognize the repetitions within her family, observing her descendants struggling with the same conflicts, desires, and sorrows as earlier generations. Her eventual confusion between generations, where she mistakes grandchildren for children or siblings of previous Buendías, exemplifies the merging of identities imposed by colonial legacies. Her realization that time moves in a circle, rather than passing linearly (Márquez, 335), represents more than just the family’s fate: it mirrors Latin America’s cyclical confrontation with its colonial past, suggesting that the Buendías— and by extension, Latin America— are trapped in the inescapable cycles of history. Úrsula’s extraordinary longevity allows her to witness every generation, except for the "pig baby" at the end, the very thing she feared from the start of the novel from her unification with José Arcadio Buendía. Additionally,

Generation 2 - Aureliano Buendía marries Remedios Moscote, and gives birth to Aureliano José (by Pilar Ternera) and 17 Aurelianos (by 17 various women). José Arcadio marries Rebeca, and gives birth to Arcadio (by Pilar Ternera).

Generation 3 - Arcadio marries Santa Sofía de la Piedad, and gives birth to Remedios the Beauty, Aureliano Segundo, and José Arcadio Segundo.

Generation 4 - Aureliano Segundo marries Fernanda del Carpio, and gives birth to Renata Remedios (Meme), José Arcadio, and Amaranta Úrsula.

Generation 5 - Renata Remedios (Meme) gives birth to Aureliano (by Mauricio Babilonia); Amaranta Úrsula marries Gaston, and gives birth to Aureliano (by Aureliano).

the historical experience presented in the novel contrasts sharply with the traditional Western view of time as a linear progression, with one event following another in a clear cause-and-effect sequence. Instead, Márquez integrates this remembered colonial heritage into the fabric of contemporary social and political life, suggesting that the past is never truly past— it continues to shape the present. As Úrsula approaches the end of her life, her shrinking to the size of a fetus, described as "a newborn old woman" (Márquez, 341), underscores this theme of cyclical rebirth within a magical realist context. The novel's cyclical structure of time, rather than a linear progression, traps the Buendías in a loop, where colonial trauma perpetuates itself through each successive generation. This cycle not only shapes the family's destiny but also the fate of Macondo itself. History, experienced as a sequential chain of cause and effect, stretches across a linear timeline while simultaneously integrating a remembered colonial heritage into the contemporary social and political life of Latin America.

Furthermore, Márquez's portrayal of the Buendía family's connection to the land they inhabit deepens the sense of generational entrapment, tying memory and history to the physical space of Macondo. As Steve Stern argues in *The Tricks of Time: Colonial Legacies and Historical Sensibilities in Latin America*, land itself can bear trauma, acting as a repository of collective memory and embodying the unresolved wounds of history (Stern, 389).⁶ This idea is expanded in Stern's work with his wife Barbara Stern in *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*, where they assert that colonial legacies have embedded themselves not only in societal

⁶ In *The Tricks of Time: Colonial Legacies and Historical Sensibilities in Latin America*, Steve Stern explores the idea that land is not merely a physical space, but a symbolic and literal repository for the collective memories and traumas of a society. Stern argues that the land, particularly in the context of Latin America, serves as a powerful symbol for the unresolved historical wounds stemming from colonialism, exploitation, and violence. He emphasizes how the landscape becomes intertwined with the identity of the people and the nation, reflecting both the permanence and recurrence of historical injustices. The land, Stern asserts, holds the legacy of colonial rule in ways that shape social relations, memory, and even the prospects for future development.

and economic structures but also in the cultural and spatial dimensions of Latin American life.⁷ Macondo, in this sense, is not merely a passive backdrop to the Buendías' saga but an active participant, its soil permanently marked by the scars of colonial exploitation and societal transformation. The land “remembers” cycles of violence and upheaval, such as the war or the arrival and eventual departure of the Banana Company, which leaves Macondo physically and spiritually ravaged. These cycles mirror the family’s trajectory, where moments of prosperity and growth are inevitably followed by decay and devastation, emphasizing how colonialism’s exploitation of land and resources parallels its toll on human lives and relationships. By linking the Buendías’ fate with the town’s destiny, Márquez personifies Macondo as a living, breathing witness to generational trauma. The land reflects the family’s entrapment within cycles of repetition, prosperity, and destruction, reinforcing the Sterns’ assertion that colonial legacies persist through interconnected economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Macondo’s identity as a place bound to the cycles of its colonial past deepens the Buendías' sense of historical and emotional entanglement, making the land both a source of connection and an inescapable reminder of their collective burden. In this way, Márquez not only situates the family within a personal narrative of trauma, but also within a broader commentary on the cyclical nature of colonial devastation across Latin America.

The relationship between land and memory, as Úrsula and others experience it, creates a shared history that becomes inseparable from the identity of the Buendía family. Throughout the generations, younger Buendías seek traces of their ancestors in the faces, actions, and traits of

⁷ In *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*, Steve and Barbara Stern argue that the enduring legacies of colonialism have penetrated deeply into both the societal structures and cultural landscapes of Latin American countries. They explore how colonial history continues to influence social hierarchies, economic systems, and political institutions, shaping the relationships between different groups within society. Beyond these institutional effects, the Sterns also highlight the cultural and spatial dimensions of colonialism's impact, noting that colonial power structures have left a profound imprint on the way people inhabit and relate to their environments. In their analysis, the Sterns suggest that the colonial past is not just a historical moment but an ongoing presence, manifested in the landscapes, built environments, and cultural practices that continue to define Latin American societies.

their descendants, almost as if drawn by an instinctual need to remember and reclaim the past. Simultaneously, the older generations are instinctively drawn to the younger ones, fascinated by their resemblance to ancestors, which manifests either in a nurturing or protective manner, or through more troubling, sexualized attractions, as exemplified by Amaranta Úrsula's fixation on young Aureliano, and his own infatuation with her. This inheritance of identity and trauma illustrates precisely how colonial experiences embed themselves into a community's memory. Stern's analysis of how colonial genealogies persist in contemporary Latin American politics, especially in struggles over land rights and class dynamics, echoes Márquez's portrayal of generational struggles within the Buendía family (Stern, 388).⁸ Stern further argues that the land is not merely a passive element but a bearer of historical consciousness, a living repository of the violence and exploitation that marked Latin America's colonial heritage. The land itself becomes an inextricable part of this cycle, embodying collective memory and generational trauma that bind the Buendías to a colonial past as they struggle to forge a new identity while being haunted by memories and traits inherited from previous generations. This cyclical sense of nostalgia, embedded in both the land and the family's psyche, reveals how colonial trauma lingers, continuously influencing identity formation and social structure.

The interconnectedness between the Buendías and Macondo underscores a fundamental aspect of Márquez's critique: colonialism does not simply alter the land, people, or culture in isolated episodes; rather, it embeds itself into every aspect of identity, memory, and place.

Márquez weaves the theme of hereditary memory, where family members not only inherit

⁸ In his analysis, Steve Stern recounts a poignant example from Bolivia to illustrate how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary struggles over land and identity. Stern discusses the story of the *Campesinos* (indigenous rural workers) in Bolivia, who, in their fight for land reform, confronted not only economic and political inequality but also deep-seated cultural and historical grievances stemming from the colonial period. From his discussions with a Bolivian in La Paz in 1983, Stern quotes him as saying, "They have been waiting during four hundred years to resolve pressing social issues... [they were] worried the Indians up on the altiplano could surround and besiege the city, as they had in 1781." These communities, marked by a history of subjugation and dispossession under colonial rule, inherited not only the physical scars of that past but also a collective memory of injustice and displacement.

physical and personality traits but also the colonial burdens of their forebears. As Márquez writes, “[the] history of the family was a machine with unavoidable repetitions,” an unbreakable cycle that sees each generation struggle with the same patterns of ambition, destruction, and longing (Márquez, 396). This blending of past and present, in conjunction with the Buendías’ shared memories—passed down as much through blood as through the land itself—mirrors Stern’s distinction between ‘experienced time’ and ‘conventional historical time.’⁹ The past is not a distant memory, but an immediate presence within the lives of the family, resurfacing continuously and shaping each new generation’s experience as if colonial history itself has never truly ended.

Ultimately, as generations pass and Macondo deteriorates, the deaths of successive Buendías serve as symbolic resets, yet the town’s fate remains tied to the inescapable cycles of colonial trauma. Each generation’s attempts to break free—whether through love, ambition, or physical rebellion—only reinforce the repetition of patterns rooted in the scars of colonialism. Returning to Aizenberg, she suggests that Latin America’s history originates from the rivalries and repressions of the colonial period, which continue to manifest as unresolved tensions in post-independence society.¹⁰ These fractured histories create challenges to identity and stability,

⁹ Stern distinguishes between “experienced time” and “historical time” to analyze the ways in which societies understand and relate to their past. “Experienced time” refers to the lived, subjective perception of time that is shaped by personal, familial, and community histories, often passed down through generations. This type of time is deeply intertwined with memory, trauma, and the ongoing consequences of past events. On the other hand, “historical time” refers to the more formal, linear, and objective understanding of time, typically framed by official historical narratives and events. Stern argues that Latin American societies, due to their colonial legacies, often experience these two forms of time simultaneously, with “experienced time” remaining fluid and cyclical, marked by recurring traumas and unresolved histories. In contrast, “historical time” tends to present a more linear, progressive narrative.

¹⁰ Aizenberg points out how the initial pages of the novel present imagery to intentionally remind readers of Latin America’s history of, “... abandonment, obliteration, and illegitimacy.” (pg. 1241). She mentions how the astrolabe and sextant represent the Spanish voyages from the 16th century, the buried suit of armor directs us to Spain’s medieval heritage provided to Latin American countries, and how the ice and band of nomads are indicative of Western scientific development from the anachronistic outside world. As Macondo establishes and loses its independence, objects such as these recur in various formats to draw that recollection to the forefront of the reader’s mind; as Aizenberg says, “Macondo is a settler colony, but its inhabitants experience a profound sense of alienation from Peninsular norms.” (pg. 1242).

underscoring Márquez's portrayal of Macondo as a space where the wounds of colonialism remain entrenched and transformative change proves elusive. This perspective is further supported by Sarah Anderson's analysis in *A New Definition of Magic Realism: An Analysis of Three Novels as Examples of Magic Realism in a Postcolonial Diaspora*, which highlights the mystical representation of time in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Anderson emphasizes how the beginning and end of the Buendía family's story exist simultaneously through Melquíades' parchments, creating a cyclical sense of time where past and present converge (Anderson, 28).¹¹ The interconnectedness of land, memory, and time underscores Márquez's vision of history as a recurring force, where attempts to move forward inevitably circle back to the past. The titular solitude experienced by the Buendía family is both a product and a perpetuator of this cycle. Aizenberg describes solitude as central to the exploration of Latin America's fractured and unstable identity, noting that it arises from the violence of a colonial past and its enduring legacy. (Aizenberg, 1239). This solitude, far from being incidental, is a manifestation of the unbroken thread of colonialism in the Buendías' lives, shaping their relationships and their destinies. The magical realist framework employed by Márquez further emphasizes this cyclical entrapment, where moments of mystical revelation—such as the deciphering of Melquíades' parchments—illuminate how history reinvents itself with each generation, and yet was still predetermined at the start of the century. He writes, “It was the history of the family, written by Melquíades, down to the most trivial details, one hundred years ahead of time... [he] had not put the events in order

¹¹ In her analysis, Sarah Anderson explores how *One Hundred Years of Solitude* uses magical realism to depict a non-linear and cyclical conception of time. She emphasizes the significance of Melquíades' parchments, which serve as a medium through which the past and future are interwoven. Anderson notes that the parchments suggest a cyclical pattern of events, where the Buendía family's story is not bound by chronological order. Instead, the beginning and end of their narrative unfold simultaneously, creating a sense of time that loops back on itself. This technique allows for the convergence of different time periods, illustrating how the past continually resurfaces in the present, reinforcing the novel's themes of repetition and the enduring nature of colonial legacies. Anderson argues that this structure challenges traditional notions of time and narrative progression, suggesting that history in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is both a repeating cycle and an inescapable force that shapes the lives of the characters.

of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant." (Márquez, 415). The family's repeated failures to break free reflect a broader commentary on Latin America's ongoing reckoning with its colonial heritage, where progress is illusory and each new iteration of history deepens the cultural wounds left by colonial rule. By integrating the non-linear structure of time, the mystical nature of memory, and the trauma inscribed in the land, Márquez crafts a poignant exploration of how colonialism persists: not as a historical relic, but as a living force within the identities of those who inhabit its legacy in contemporary Latin America.

Modernism, as a literary and cultural movement, emerged in response to rapid historical and technological change, reflecting displacement, fragmentation, and the erosion of stable identities. In the context of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, these hallmarks of modernism are inseparable from the novel's depiction of colonialism and its enduring effects.¹² Modernism's displacement mirrors the experience of the Buendía family and the town of Macondo, where the cyclical intrusion of external forces fractures both individual and communal identity. In tracing the trajectory of Macondo— from its isolation to its connection with the globalized world, followed by its descent into renewed isolation— Márquez critiques the modernist notion of progress as a linear trajectory. Instead, the novel's structure reveals how colonial histories continuously reemerge, undermining efforts at modernization and perpetuating historical trauma.

¹² In *Latin America Writes Back: Traditionalism and Modernity in Latin American Culture*, José Joaquín Brunner explores the complex relationship between Latin American literature and modernism. Brunner argues that Latin American writers have consistently navigated the tension between traditionalism, rooted in colonial and indigenous histories, and the forces of modernity, which often reflect Western ideologies of progress. He highlights how contemporary Latin American writers engage with this duality, not simply accepting modernity as an inevitable forward march but critiquing it through their literary works. By examining how these writers address historical legacies, cultural memory, and national identity, Brunner underscores the continuing relevance of Latin America's colonial past. He posits that rather than embracing a straightforward narrative of modernity, many Latin American authors intertwine elements of the past with modernist techniques to articulate the region's unique struggles and transformations.

In a similar vein, Karen Tei Yamashita's *Brazil-Marú* exemplifies the negotiation between modernity and colonial legacies that Márquez explores in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Yamashita, like Márquez, examines how historical forces— particularly colonialism— shape both individual and collective identities, emphasizing the complexity of cultural integration and displacement. In *Brazil-Marú*, the characters' experiences of fragmentation and identity erosion resonate with modernist concerns, yet Yamashita challenges the notion of linear progress by highlighting the cyclical and often contradictory nature of modernization. Just as Márquez critiques the illusion of progress in Macondo, Yamashita's portrayal of the Japanese-Brazilian community's struggles reflects a similar tension between adaptation to global forces and the ongoing impact of colonial histories. In this way, both authors prompt readers to reconsider modernity as a continuous negotiation rather than a clean break from the past.

A return to Sharman allows us to further underscore the duality of modernity in Latin America, where colonial histories complicate narratives of progress. His insights illuminate the tension within *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where modernization brings both promise and devastation to Macondo.¹³ The arrival of the Banana Company epitomizes the collision between cultural hybridity and exploitation, where foreign influences disrupt local traditions while imposing a homogenized modernity. This disruption parallels Sharman's contention that Latin American modernity cannot escape its colonial roots. Márquez's depiction of the town's decline following the company's departure reinforces the cyclical nature of colonialism: modernity in Macondo is not a step forward, but a return to earlier patterns of dislocation and

¹³ Adam Sharman discusses how Latin American societies, despite significant strides toward modernization, remain ensnared by the legacies of colonialism. He argues that the region's modernity is a complex, ongoing process, shaped by a duality where progress often coexists with enduring colonial structures and inequalities. Sharman emphasizes that while Latin America's pursuit of modernity involves economic growth and social change, it simultaneously reproduces colonial power dynamics, particularly in how the region's cultural identity is continually shaped by its past. This tension is reflected in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where modernization brings new opportunities but also intensifies old traumas and inequalities, further complicating the narrative of progress.

disenfranchisement. The novel thus demonstrates the importance of studying colonialism to understand modernity, particularly in regions like Latin America, where colonial histories shape contemporary identities and societal structures.

Brazil-Maru similarly addresses the tension between cyclical histories and enduring colonial legacies through its portrayal of Japanese-Brazilian immigrant communities. The novel centers on a group of Japanese immigrants who seek to forge a new beginning in Brazil while carrying the burdens of their cultural heritage. Yamashita's depiction of the settlers' attempts to reconcile their Japanese identity with the demands of Brazilian modernization reveals the deep contradictions within their pursuit of progress. Their community faces internal fractures as economic pressures, assimilation, and cultural hierarchies disrupt their idealized vision, echoing the exploitative modernity seen in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and how these challenges leave marginalized communities in a constant state of flux. The immigrants in *Brazil-Maru* experience an intense dislocation of identity, culture, and belonging as they are caught between the remnants of Japanese colonial ambitions and the harsh realities of life in Brazil. Furthermore, the settlers' construction of *Brazil-Maru* as a utopian town mirrors the ambitious projects often undertaken in Latin America— projects that promise development but ultimately reproduce colonial patterns of labor, displacement, and disillusionment. By exploring the tensions between collective memory and cultural erasure, Yamashita underscores how colonial legacies persist across generations, particularly within immigrant and diasporic contexts. Yet, just as the arrival of the Banana Company ultimately destabilizes Macondo, the attempts to modernize *Brazil-Maru* reveal the ways in which colonial legacies persist, often through the displacement and disenfranchisement of marginalized communities. Both novels illustrate how modernity, in its promise of progress, fails to break free from the historical patterns of exploitation and

subjugation, highlighting the inextricable link between colonialism and the struggles for identity and self-determination in post-colonial societies.

Juan De Castro further illuminates the novel's engagement with modernization and its tensions in his piece, *Cultural Contact, Modernization, and Imperialism in One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He highlights how Márquez uses Macondo as a microcosm of Latin America, showing how cultural contact and imperialism exacerbate social fragmentation.¹⁴ The recurrence of external influence in Macondo reflects the broader historical experience of the region, where the legacies of colonialism continuously disrupt modern efforts at cultural and political self-definition. De Castro's analysis aligns with Márquez's broader critique of modernity: in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, modernization does not resolve colonial trauma, but instead has a tendency to perpetuate it. The novel's exploration of cultural hybridity— the blending and clashing of indigenous, European, and modern elements— emphasizes that understanding modernity requires grappling with the unresolved histories of colonialism. By illustrating this dynamic, Márquez contributes to a deeper understanding of how historical trauma shapes not only the past but also the present and future of Latin America. The novel's repetitive patterns of isolation, contact, and decline, highlight the failures of modernization to break free from the past. This perspective is vital for understanding the broader implications of modernism, where cultural hybridity and historical fragmentation challenge traditional narratives of progress. By situating modernity within the context of colonialism, Márquez's work invites us to re-examine how historical trauma shapes the present and to consider the role of literature in uncovering and

¹⁴ De Castro argues that Márquez uses the fictional town of Macondo to illustrate the disruptive effects of imperialism and cultural contact on Latin American societies. He contends that the novel captures the complex relationship between modernization and imperialism, highlighting how external influences - whether from foreign powers or internal cultural shifts - further fragment already tenuous social structures. De Castro discusses how the interplay of imperialism and modernization leads to a destabilizing cycle of progress and destruction, demonstrating that the forces shaping Latin America's transformation are both external and deeply ingrained in its colonial past.

addressing these legacies. In doing so, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* offers not just a critique of the past, but also a roadmap for understanding the complexities of the modern world.

In *Elements of Postmodernism in One Hundred Years of Solitude* by G.G. Márquez, Elahe Tangestani et al. argue that Márquez's use of postmodern narrative techniques, such as magical realism and non-linear storytelling, deepens the novel's critique of colonialism and modernity.¹⁵ The fragmented timeline reflects the disorientation experienced by Macondo's inhabitants as they navigate the rapid upheavals of history, while magical realism blurs the line between reality and fantasy. This blending mirrors the complexities of cultural hybridity, capturing the inseparability of colonial legacies from contemporary identities. By integrating the magical into the real, Márquez resists the linear, rationalist frameworks imposed by Western historical discourse, instead offering a reimagined view of cultural memory. Magical realism, in particular, fills the voids left by historical erasure, allowing forgotten or suppressed narratives to resurface. By rejecting the rigid boundaries of Western realism, Márquez opens space for storytelling practices rooted in Latin America's lived experiences, where the past continues to shape the present in tangible and intangible ways. This narrative approach not only critiques colonialism, but also celebrates the resilience of local cultures and the power of imagination to reconstruct lost histories. In this way, magical realism becomes both a narrative strategy and a form of resistance, reclaiming history and identity through a uniquely Latin American lens.

In his piece *Magical Realism and the History of the Emotions in Latin America*, Jerónimo Arellano explores the intricate relationship between magical realism and the emotional and

¹⁵ Tangestani et al. argue that Márquez's employment of magical realism, non-linear storytelling, and the blending of reality and fantasy reflect the complex and fragmented nature of Latin American identity, shaped by its colonial history. By intertwining these postmodern strategies, they claim that Márquez challenges traditional narrative structures and linear progressions, mirroring the cyclical and unresolved impact of colonialism on both individual and collective memory. Tangestani et al. assert that this narrative style not only critiques modernity's promises of linear progress but also illustrates the persistence of colonial legacies, which continue to shape societal structures and identities in Latin America.

historical landscapes of Latin America. He argues that magical realism cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the emotional and psychological experiences shaped by colonial histories, political turbulence, and social upheaval. Arellano contends that the genre's blending of the fantastical and the real reflects not only the complex historical realities of the region but also the deep emotional responses to those realities. In his view, magical realism is a mode that allows for the expression of emotional truths and the exploration of the inner lives of characters, particularly those grappling with the legacy of colonization and the ongoing challenges of modernity. Arellano emphasizes that magical realism in Latin American literature is not merely an aesthetic device but is deeply tied to the collective emotions of the characters and societies depicted. He highlights that the genre often emerges in response to the emotional turmoil experienced in post-colonial contexts— where the ghosts of the past linger, where personal and collective histories collide, and where the boundaries between reality and imagination blur. For Arellano, magical realism becomes a space in which the emotional impact of history can be processed, represented, and, in some cases, healed. By combining the supernatural with the everyday, magical realism in works like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reflects the complexity of the region's emotional history, shaped by both the trauma of colonialism and the ongoing struggles of contemporary Latin American societies. This approach allows for a richer, more nuanced understanding of how emotions— such as grief, nostalgia, hope, and anger— are intertwined with historical and political forces in Latin America.

Furthermore, as noted by Tangestani et al. in their analysis, magical realism collapses linear time, allowing the past to constantly re-emerge and shape the present. This temporal distortion mirrors the cyclical nature of colonialism itself, where the trauma of past colonial encounters is not confined to history but is perpetually re-lived through the generations. In *One*

Hundred Years of Solitude, the recurrence of events in the Buendía family, particularly the repetition of violence, failure, and exile, underscores this process. The fantastical elements— such as the ability of characters to ascend to the sky or the physical manifestation of history in the form of Melquíades’ parchments— are not mere narrative devices, but rather extensions of the colonial trauma that imprisons Macondo, demonstrating how the family and the land are caught in a loop of historical repetition. The blending of reality and the supernatural emphasizes the inseparable link between the present and the colonial past, suggesting that the unresolved wounds of history cannot be easily severed.

In *Brazil-Marú*, Yamashita similarly uses magical realism to highlight the dislocation of identity experienced by the Japanese-Brazilian immigrants. The novel’s surreal elements serve to illustrate the in-between spaces these immigrants inhabit, disconnected from both their Japanese heritage and their Brazilian surroundings. This use of the magical allows Yamashita to explore the ways in which colonialism, in the form of Japanese imperialism and Brazilian exploitation, continues to shape the lives of these characters, even in a foreign land. The supernatural acts as a mirror to the real historical forces that displace and reshape the community’s cultural identity, much like the magical realism in Márquez’s novel, where the physical land of Macondo and its inhabitants become both a symbol and a manifestation of the colonial trauma they cannot escape.

The theory presented by Tangestani et al. helps to deepen the understanding of how magical realism functions in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by framing it as a method to represent the persistence of colonial history in the present. According to their analysis, the blending of magical elements with the everyday in Márquez’s narrative reflects the notion that colonialism is not a past event but a living force that continuously shapes the present. This is evident in the way the Buendía family’s story is interwoven with elements of the supernatural,

where history is not linear but cyclical, returning in various forms through the family's generations. The magical elements thus become a metaphor for the enduring grip of colonialism, which is never truly overcome but re-emerges in new forms, just as Macondo itself seems destined to repeat its own downfall. Magical realism, then, in both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Brazil-Marú*, operates not just as a stylistic device but as a means of illustrating the complex and continuous nature of colonial trauma. In both novels, the supernatural forces do not exist outside of history but are intrinsic to it, representing the unacknowledged and unresolved legacies of colonial domination. The land, the characters, and the very structure of each novel reflects the cyclical nature of colonialism: its ability to endure, reappear, and reshape the present. Through this lens, magical realism becomes a profound tool for exposing the mechanisms of colonial power and its ability to distort and entrap the identities of those caught within its reach. By using magical realism to collapse the distinctions between the real and the imagined, both Márquez and Yamashita offer readers a view of colonial history as a persistent, cyclical force that refuses to remain in the past. Instead, it continues to reshape and redefine the present, reinforcing the idea that colonialism's impact is not simply a historical event but an ongoing process of transformation and reconfiguration.

The narrative voice in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* serves as an additional critical device in Márquez's examination of colonialism, modernity, and history. Through an omniscient narrator that transcends the limits of time, the novel is able to convey a non-linear sense of temporality, challenging the Western conception of historical progress. The narrator's ability to seamlessly transition between past, present, and future renders the concept of linearity and modernity itself irrelevant, instead emphasizing cyclical repetition. For instance, the novel presents several generations of the Buendía family, each encountering seemingly identical

historical cycles of war, exploitation, and technological progress, making it clear that modernity fails to deliver true advancement. The massacre of workers by the Banana Company, despite being presented as an event that shocks the characters, is treated almost as a historical inevitability. The fact that such an event reoccurs in different forms— whether through labor strikes, political violence, or economic exploitation— demonstrates how colonial violence and capitalist exploitation are ingrained in modernity's design, rather than exceptions to it. However, after the massacre, only José Arcadio Segundo retains the memory of the brutal event, while everyone else repeatedly denies its occurrence, emphasizing that no one has died in Macondo since the wars. This is thus encapsulated in the chilling words directed at José Arcadio Segundo, underscoring the cyclical nature of the town's fate, where history is not a series of progressive steps but a repetition of the same traumatic patterns. The officers insist to him, “Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing ever will happen.” (Márquez, 310). In effect, the narrative voice in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* critiques not only the personal failures of the Buendía family to solidify their history, but also the broader failures of modernity to address broader colonial histories, creating a profound commentary on Latin America’s continued struggle with the legacies of colonialism.

Furthermore, the narrative’s portrayal of time reflects the broader thematic concerns of the novel, namely the continuous entanglement of colonial histories with modernity’s promises of advancement. Through its repetition of events and the inevitability of historical recurrence, Márquez critiques the Western notions of progress that underpin modernity. Each new phase of development in Macondo is presented not as a breakthrough or liberation, but rather as a trap that perpetuates the same cycle of exploitation and disillusionment. When external forces— be it the arrival of the Banana Company or the introduction of new technologies— invade Macondo, they

do not lead to prosperity but instead facilitate further disintegration and violence. Moreover, the narrator's treatment of the events surrounding the Banana Company's operation serves as an allegory for Latin America's broader history of exploitation by foreign capital and imperial powers. These forces promise economic development and modernization but deliver only cultural erasure, environmental destruction, and human suffering. In portraying the actions of the Banana Company with a tone of detachment and inevitability, Márquez critiques the way modernity's so-called progress allows for the continuous destruction of local communities and cultures. The indifference with which these cycles unfold highlights the underlying apathy of modern capitalist structures, which, rather than providing genuine development, continue to extract from marginalized communities.

Márquez's handling of the narrative voice also challenges the dominant historical narrative and questions the very nature of "progress." While the world of Macondo is constantly shifting under the influence of colonial and capitalist forces, the story resists offering any linear or ultimate resolution to these forces. Márquez writes, "Races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth." (Márquez, 417). This concluding line encapsulates the novel's critique of historical progress and modernity, emphasizing the inescapable cycles of violence and exploitation rooted in colonial histories. It underscores the narrative's resistance to closure, portraying Macondo's destruction as a culmination of these forces rather than a finite end to the legacies of colonialism. The refusal of closure is a deliberate critique of both the idea of historical finality and the supposed end of colonialism in the modern era. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* challenges readers to recognize that colonial violence is not a relic of the past but a pervasive force in contemporary global structures. Through the portrayal of Macondo's ultimate fate, obliterated by the forces of imperialism and the ghosts of its own

history, Márquez offers a scathing critique of the failure of modernity to address the legacies of colonialism. The novel's final, devastating image of the town's destruction reinforces the notion that colonialism's legacy is not only enduring but cyclical, always returning in new forms.

Moreover, Yamashita's transnational perspective raises a geographic question that parallels Márquez's vision of Macondo: where can displaced or colonized peoples locate belonging when the place itself becomes a product of colonial intrusion? Both authors use geography as a site of tension and resistance, highlighting how the physical and cultural landscapes of Latin America remain inseparable from their colonial legacies. In *Brazil-Marú*, the journey to Brazil is not simply one of migration but of dislocation, as the immigrants attempt to build a utopian society in a land that resists their vision. Similarly, Márquez's Macondo begins as a space of promise, only to become a microcosm of colonial exploitation. In both cases, the land is both refuge and prison, shaped by external forces yet also deeply tied to the identities of those who inhabit it. By framing geography as an active participant in historical and cultural trauma, Márquez and Yamashita expose the enduring tension between place, memory, and identity in the postcolonial world. And, by engaging with both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Brazil-Marú*, readers are invited to reflect on the broader, systemic nature of colonial violence and its persistent impact on modern identities.

However, Yamashita's *Brazil-Marú* diverges from Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in its focus on a non-native, inorganic settlement of immigrants, contrasting with the deeply rooted familial ties of the Buendías to Macondo. While Márquez's narrative is anchored in a family native to their land, whose lineage is inseparable from the physical and cultural fabric of Macondo, Yamashita's novel portrays the struggles of Japanese-Brazilian immigrants attempting to create a utopian colony in an unfamiliar and often hostile environment. This

distinction underscores a critical thematic divergence: whereas Márquez examines the cyclical decay of a family that embodies the land they inhabit, Yamashita interrogates the challenges of forging belonging in a place that resists integration. The immigrant settlers in Brazil-Marú are disconnected from the history and memory of the land they inhabit, creating a tension between their aspirations for a new beginning and the reality of cultural and environmental dissonance. This focus on an inorganic settlement reveals the precariousness of imposing an imagined ideal onto a land with its own history and agency. Yamashita critiques the settlers' utopian ambitions by illustrating how their attempts to recreate a cohesive identity clash with the complexities of displacement and cultural hybridity. Unlike the Buendías, who are trapped in a cycle of repetition rooted in their connection to Macondo, the settlers in Brazil-Marú grapple with the absence of such a connection, highlighting the alienation that arises from attempting to transplant one's identity into an unfamiliar context. This lack of rootedness amplifies their vulnerability to external forces, such as economic exploitation and social fragmentation, which ultimately undermine their collective vision. By juxtaposing the Buendías' inextricable ties to Macondo with the settlers' struggles in Brazil-Marú, Yamashita broadens the scope of postcolonial critique, exploring how displacement disrupts not only identity but also the very notion of belonging to a place.

Upon significant reflection and analysis, Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* provides an unquestionably crucial framework for understanding the complex, cyclical interweaving of colonialism and modernity. Through its cyclical narrative structure and critique of the myth of linear progress, Márquez exposes the enduring legacies of colonial violence and modernity's failure to transcend them. His portrayal of colonialism unfolds in four distinct phases—each representing a different facet of colonial power, from the early encounters marked

by scientific knowledge and cultural exchange to the violent political upheavals, the economic domination of the Banana Company, and concluding with a return to isolation. By structuring the narrative in this way, Márquez emphasizes the recurrence and persistence of colonialism, which, instead of fading away, regenerates and adapts, leaving deep and lasting scars on both land and people.

When juxtaposed with Karen Tei Yamashita's *Brazil-Marú*, the global scope of colonialism's reach becomes clear, demonstrating that the effects of colonial violence are not confined to Latin America but resonate across the globe. Both authors challenge readers to reconsider dominant narratives of modernity, urging us to recognize the persistence of colonial power structures and reimagine what true progress might look like. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Brazil-Marú*, the authors not only critique colonial histories, but also offer a radical reimagining of them—acknowledging the cyclical nature of colonialism and proposing a more inclusive understanding of modernity, one that confronts the past rather than attempting to erase it. Through their use of magical realism, narrative voice, and cyclical structures, both authors present a profound critique of colonialism's legacy and the failure of modernity to address the traumas it has left behind. Magical realism becomes not just a stylistic device but a critical tool for exposing the complex and continuous nature of colonial trauma, allowing these narratives to resist the linear, rationalist frameworks of Western historical discourse. By blending the real and the fantastical, both Márquez and Yamashita offer readers a view of colonial history as a persistent force that continues to reshape and redefine the present, underscoring the necessity of confronting its ongoing impact.

Ultimately, these texts transform literature into a powerful tool for resistance, reflection, and reclamation, reminding us that the past is never truly past; it continues to live, reshape, and

challenge the present. This cyclical entanglement of history and modernity on both a country and its people offers not only a critique of colonialism's enduring grasp, but also a call to rethink how we approach the narratives of those who inhabit its legacy.

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