

BORDERLANDS OF MAGICAL REALISM: DEFINING  
MAGICAL REALISM FOUND IN POPULAR  
AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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## CHAPTER 1

### ORIGINS

#### Establishing Borderlands of Magical Realism

*Thus they went on living in a reality that  
was slipping away, momentarily captured  
by words, but which would escape irremediably  
when they forgot the values of the written letters.*

-Gabriel García Márquez (*One Hundred Years Of Solitude*)

Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, defines a borderland as “a dividing line [. . .] a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of a natural boundary. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (3). These borderland spaces have come to represent spaces where seemingly incommensurate elements come to coincide: existing in spite of and sometimes inside of each other. Fittingly, works such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez embody this *mestizo*, or “mixed,” space (Anzaldúa 27), where elements of magic and realism blend and blur together. Although magical realism

originated with Latin American writers, authors who are not Mexican American/Latin American/Hispanic have also embraced magical realism. The genre has now expanded to include non-Hispanic works, including Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.

Current studies of novels recognized as magical realist, such as these, often revolve around the concept of binarism. As Teya Rosenberg explains in "The Influence of the Second World War on Magic Realism in British Children's Literature," "pulling together opposites and balancing seeming binaries are precisely what magical realism does" (81). Rosenberg acknowledges that studies of magical realism in adult novels detail the presence of these binaries, yet she points out, in her article "Genre and Ideology in Elizabeth Goudge's *The Little White Horse*," that "children's literature [. . .] has not been included in discussions of magical realism, nor have studies of children's fantasy taken into account discussions of magical realism [. . .]" (77). As a professor at Texas State University-San Marcos specializing in children's literature, fantasy, and magical realism, Dr. Rosenberg has attempted to introduce the study of children's literature into magical realist genre studies, both through her writing and by teaching classes incorporating novels of popular and children's literature alongside currently recognized magical realist texts. One of the arguments presented in her classes is that while the critics and their studies of magical realism have become more inclusive over the years regarding high art literature for adults, these same critical studies sometimes still ignore or simply overlook popular and children's literature when it comes to discussions of magical realism. Pop cultural works are often lumped into other categories (horror, sci fi, or fantasy) while children's literature containing magical realist properties often falls

under the mislabel of fantasy fiction. In light of these denials, or perhaps in spite of them, I argue that certain pop and children's works utilize borderland spaces, similar to those discussed in Anzaldúa's work, to bring magical realist elements to their works. In doing so, they change the current working definition of magical realism, progressing beyond mere binaries, surpassing what Rosenberg refers to as the magical realist phenomenon of embracing "this *and* that," ("The Influence" 80) to actually embracing this, and that, and that, and that. In particular, this thesis will examine the magical realism in borderlands contained in the pop culture novels *Bag of Bones* by Stephen King and *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris, as well as the children's novels *The Children of Green Knowe* by L.M. Boston and Virginia Hamilton's *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl*. It will utilize various magical realist texts and critical articles to examine the borderlands contained in each work, and use the current working definitions of this genre to argue for a new, more inclusive definition of magical realism, which will herein be called borderland magical realism. This definition will include works of popular fiction and children's literature into magical realist studies based specifically on the presence of the magical realist borderlands they contain.

Pertinent questions, particularly in light of the precariousness of the inclusion of literature not classified as high art into this genre, should include the following. First, how are borderlands and magical realism currently defined, and how can we combine these current definitions in a new working definition of magical realism? Second, how/why have magical realist associations been transposed onto borderlands, and are these transpositions valid? Third, we must ask if determining the presence of pop culture and children's novels within the magical realist genre can be supported through an

examination of these borderlands as they function as magical real spaces within the works.

To answer these questions, a discussion of Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands and border culture is pertinent, in order to relate her conception of borderlands to current definitions of magical realism and argue for a new definition of magical realism based on this fusion. When Anzaldúa writes of borderlands, she talks about a physical place "where two worlds merge [. . .] the convergence has created a shock culture, a border culture, a third country, a closed country" (33). She speaks of a land where escape and reentry take place not on structured bridges, but fluidly, in moving water. She describes the inhabitants of these borderlands as "the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal' " (Anzaldúa 25). Those who inhabit the borderlands are the strange, the outcast, the unwanted, yet their presence in these spaces suggests, as she tells us, "a magic aspect in abnormality and so-called deformity" (Anzaldúa 41). This magic aspect of borderlands and the people who call them home is one reason current magical realist criticism has begun to embrace these spaces, attempting to use the concept of borderlands and culture to describe a magical realist binary space. Yet what Anzaldúa's work points out is the presence in the borderlands of more than binaries, and she even speaks of the fear of "*mita' y mita'* " (half and half) dualities in the negative, and she claims that "what we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other" (41). Her suggestion that we can move beyond being merely one thing or other and somehow embrace both, or even more than both, is the main reason her borderland text is so

important to understanding the type of magical realism present in the popular and children's texts discussed here. These texts differ from current magical realist definitions in that they boast not only binaries and duality but also a sense of liminality, in which the concept of identity is to some extent dissolved and one finds oneself open to ambiguity, possibility, and change. Studying Anzaldua's borderlands, it becomes clear that what the texts we will examine here have in common is an extension beyond the confines typical magical realist binarism imposes, embracing instead a variation of Anzaldua's "third perspective—something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality" (68).

Now that we have a background for the concept of borderlands, it seems pertinent to spend some time discussing the background of magical realism. It has been couched in numerous terms coined by three writers in particular: Franz Roh, Alejo Carpentier, and Angel Flores. Its inception as an art movement in 1925 is described in the article "Magical Realism: Post-Expressionism" by German art critic and historian Franz Roh, who originated the term Magical Realism to describe art in which "the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it [. . .]." (16). His creation of the term stemmed from a need to define a painting style that gravitated more toward the real than did the abstract style of the Expressionist paintings that preceded it, although as Irene Guenther points out, "Roh did not place any special value on his term Magical Realism" (34). As Roh tells us, "Expressionism shows an exaggerated preference for fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects. Naturally, it also resorts to the everyday and the commonplace for the purpose of distancing it, investing it with a shocking exoticism" (16). In essence, he argues that Expressionists exploited reality in order to give their fantastical elements a jolting significance, unlike the new

mode of magic realism, in which “humanity seems destined to oscillate forever between devotion to the world of dreams and adherence to the world of reality” (Roh 17). His essay, which is divided into five main sections titled “The New Objects,” “Objectivity,” “The Proximity of the Object as Spiritual Creation,” “The New Space,” and “Smaller than Natural (Miniature),” describes Expressionist works that evoke impossible things, such as transparent brains, human heads popping like corks from bottles of wine, and animals walking in the sky.

Alejo Carpentier, based on his readings of Roh, “devises his own term, *lo real maravilloso Americano*, to describe what he argues is a uniquely American form of magical realism” (75). Carpentier’s essay, “On the Marvelous Real in America,” sets up a discussion of Magical Realism as a distinctly Latin American art form, in that it serves as an “amplification of perceived reality required by and inherent in Latin American nature and culture” (75). His essay takes us along literarily on his worldly journeys to China, the Soviet Union, and Europe, among others. He uses his travels as contrasting elements in his journey to help him understand his own country and the literary accomplishments of the Americas. He tells us in his travelogue:

I will say that my first inkling of the marvelous real [*lo real maravilloso*] came to me when, near the end of 1943, I was lucky enough to visit Henri Christophe’s kingdom—such poetic ruins [. . .] imposingly intact in spite of lightning and earthquakes [. . .] I saw the possibility of establishing certain synchronisms, American, recurrent, timeless, relating this to that, yesterday to today. I saw the possibility of bringing to our own latitudes certain European truths, reversing those who travel against the sun and

would take our truths to a place where, just thirty years ago, there was no capacity to understand or measure those truths in their real dimensions.

(Carpentier 84)

This excerpt from his essay is particularly telling in its emphasis on the possibility of blending certain oppositions in a sort of inorganic form of Anzaldúa's *mestiza*, a carefully crafted coagulation of oppositions in time, space, and culture. Carpentier seems, in the aftermath of his worldly travels, to be searching for a way of relating, through writing, the places he visited with the Latin American sensibilities to which he returns.

Angel Flores' 1955 essay, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction," gives exceptionally detailed lists of magical realist writers, and credits Jorge Luis Borges with starting a sort of magical realist revolution in 1935. His article does not give credit to Carpentier for the inception of the term magical realism into Latin American literature, a term he devised for that which is uniquely American; instead, Flores suggests that works from sixteenth-century Spanish writer Miguel de Saavedra Cervantes, Franz Kafka, and Kafka's twentieth century counterpart in painting, Giorgio de Chirico, embody this term. His discussions of Kafka are particularly helpful, as they detail the mingling of reality with nightmares, the "amalgamation of realism and fantasy" that flows from a narrative rich in "logical precision" (Flores 112, 115). As he tells us in this essay, "The practitioners of magical realism cling to reality as if to prevent 'literature' from getting in their way, as if to prevent their myth from flying off, as in fairy tales, to supernatural realms" (Flores 115-16). After setting up Kafka as a major influence for Borges, Flores details his belief that the inception of magical realism in the literature of Latin America came as a type of snowball effect stemming from Borges' 1935 collection *Historia*

*universal de la infamia [A Universal History of Infamy]*. From here, Flores tells us, the “nucleus” of magical realism, which centered on Borges (with Kafka as his muse), spread to Cuba, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina (114).

Today, perhaps the most encompassing attempt to define magical realism comes from Wendy B. Faris in her essay “Scheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction.” She defines five primary and nine secondary characteristics of magical realism, seeking to acknowledge the definitions of magical realism’s originators while giving them a decidedly modernistic spin. Faris tells us that for a novel to be magical realist, it must first contain an “irreducible element of magic,” second, “the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world;” third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events;” fourth, the “narrative merges different realms;” and lastly, “magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity” (“Scheherazade” 167-73). In the spirit of brevity I won’t list all of her secondary characteristics, but the ones that apply in the context of my discussion of magical realist borderlands are the presence in these texts of verbal magic, ghosts, metamorphoses, the carnivalesque, and the attention to “ancient systems of belief and local lore [that] underlie the text” (Faris “Scheherazade” 182). Faris’ article is important to discourse on magical realism because her definition seeks to be highly inclusive, making the point that works of magical realism cannot be relegated to one particular period of history or one mode or genre of literature.

In the extensive history of magical realist studies, much has been written on the subject of magical realism literature for adults. However, this history still leaves the

topic of magical realism in children's literature open and undefined, as the works discussed above only deal with magical realism in adult literature. The term *mixed fantasy* has been tossed around in children's literature circles, and boasts a definition so closely related to magical realism as to be almost indistinguishable. Yet, until Teya Rosenberg's articles on magical realism found in British children's novels and in the works of Elizabeth Goudge, no concentrated attempt has been made in magical realist criticism to point out how well children's literature fits in to the magical realist groove. According to Gates et al in *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*, in the chapter on mixed fantasy, this type of literature "presents for authors and readers alike special problems of plausibility because it mixes two seemingly incompatible universes" (49). This choice of words is interesting, because in discussions of works categorized as magical realism the issue of plausibility does not come into play. This simple distinction shows us the wide gulf between the new ways we have begun to look at adult literature and the way we are still stuck looking at children's fantasy literature. A common misconception in fantasy literature for children is that these works boast no room for the magic and the real to occupy the same space simultaneously. Until very recently studies of magical realism have neglected to acknowledge that many children's "fantasies [. . .] combine a finely drawn mimetic realism with magical elements in this world" and instead view these works as dealing only with marvelous, incredible acts of magic: books where reality is something from which to be escaped (Rosenberg, "The Influence" 85). The main problem with defining children's literature under the mixed fantasy label, as opposed to magical realism, is the attempt to still look for means of separation. As Gates tells us, "occasionally, a mortal can pass through a gossamer curtain that separates the

world of magic and the world that only seems real” (53). The key word in that quotation is “seems,” and with this one word, Gates negates the actual simultaneous presence of magic and the real world, even though the preface of her argument is that in mixed fantasy they coexist. Thus it seems pertinent to suggest the replacement of the term mixed fantasy with that of magical realism, bringing children’s literature directly into the same types of categories that adult works of popular fiction are now being placed in, if only on a limited basis. The presence of “mixed fantasy” in children’s literature stands as a testament to why less separation of the literatures is necessary, because the more terms and definitions floating around in critical studies, all meaning the same thing, the more dispersed the term magical realism becomes. As evidenced by all the contradictory terminology placed into the canon by Roh, Carpentier, and Flores, it becomes easy to wonder how one can actually seek a definitive category for magical realism, and it becomes all too easy to question whether such a definitive category can be agreed upon in any sort of universal sense. Adding the argument for the inclusion of children’s literature into the canon only complicates the matter further, bringing with it worries of whether our understanding of magical realism is strong enough to sustain these sort of inclusionary arguments.

So, what exactly is magical realism? A determinate definition seems to get lost somewhere in all the conflicting terminology, often getting lost between the many terms such as magic realism, magical realism and marvelous realism. As Maggie Ann Bowers tells us in her book, *Magic(al) Realism*:

[. . .] in magic realism ‘magic’ refers to the mystery of life: in marvelous and magical realism ‘magic’ refers to any extraordinary occurrence and

particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science.

The variety of magical occurrences in magic(al) realist writing includes ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents and strange atmospheres but does not include the magic as it is found in a magic show.

(21)

Proposing a definite definition for magical realism seems somewhat daunting, mostly because the multifarious faces painted on its definitional surface have diluted this genre. Must magical realist texts center on presenting the elements of magic as extensions of realism, or can the magic be truly seen for just that, but in such a way that it becomes a part of the natural landscape as it grows in familiarity? Some critics claim that magical realism deals with dream sequences, while others focus on the presence of ghosts in these texts. Still others claim that the presence of dreams and/or ghosts precludes any magical realism in the text. Luis Leal is one critic who denies the presence of dreams in his article, "Magical Realism in Spanish America," telling the reader that "magical realism does not use dream motifs; neither does it distort reality or create imagined worlds" (121). So can this genre include works that invoke dream sequences, or does the presence of dreams negate any magical realism found in the text? His idea of distorted reality might also lead one to question whether or not there can be ghosts in magical realism. Leal would suggest this crosses into the realm of pure fantasy, but what about those works where the ghosts are part of the natural landscape, and organic to the tale in such a way that the story would become less real without their presence?

Things get even more complicated when you consider that Leal's work, along with works by Kathryn Hume, Amaryll Chanady and Brian Attebery, attempts to insert a

discussion of Fantasy and the Fantastic into the realm of magical realism. These discussions, at times, seem to refute Bower's definition of magical realism by claiming, as Hume does, that "fantasy is that literature which deals with the invisible, changes in causality, space, and time; and human degeneration" (13). Hume's book, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, serves as a kind of pre-approach to magical realism, as she seeks to suggest an inclusive definition for fantasy, a definition that allows for the coexistence of fantasy and mimesis within a single novel. Her article delves into what she calls the "faulty assumptions" of Plato and Aristotle "that the essential impulse behind literature is mimetic" (Hume 8). Her article gives basic outlines of exclusive definitions of fantasy, then finally presents us with her own inclusive definition, in which she states that "literature is the product of two impulses," in which "we have many genres and forms, each with a characteristic blend or range of blends of the two impulses" (Hume 20). For Hume, an inclusive definition of fantasy quickly becomes all-inclusive, and she suggests we include into fantasy everything from cloning, telepathy, miracles and monsters, to "those stories whose marvel is considered 'real'" (Hume 21). The problem with this article is the close relation of Hume's definitional inclusion for fantasy that overlaps the definition for magical realism, where the fantastic and the mimetic not only coexist, but also become dependant one on the other. Definitions of fantasy that mirror definitions of magical realism muddy this genre. Thus, the question is raised: Are fantasy and magical realism really all that different? Does the distinction need to be made? Hume does admit in her article that she's not trying to say all literature is fantasy, only that most mimetic literature also contains some elements of the fantastic.

In *Magical Realism and The Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*, Amaryll Chanady takes the discussion of fantasy a step further, suggesting that instead of treating fantasy as a genre we should begin to see it as a mode. Her reasoning for this distinction is that the genre is “a well-defined and historically identifiable form,” whereas a mode is a “particular quality of a fictitious world that can characterize works belonging to several genres, periods or national literatures” (Chanady 1-2). Chanady also makes the argument for magical realism as its own mode of literature, one that is separate yet not entirely distinct from fantasy. Chanady gives us a helpful outline of qualities she believes the mode of magical realism must possess, pointing out that the most important quality is that magical realism includes the presence of the supernatural in our everyday reality. What differentiates the supernatural in magical realism from that found in the mode of fantasy, according to Chanady, is that “in magical realism, the supernatural is not presented as problematic [. . .] since it is integrated within the norms of perception of the narrator and characters in the fictitious world” (23). She goes on to explain that the supernatural present in the magical realist text does not disconcert the reader any more than it does the characters in the story, and that this is the main distinction between the two modes of literature. The characters in these novels will not try to find any “natural explanation” for the supernatural, unlike the fantastic where the supernatural elements can be threatening and are necessarily explained away. Chanady’s definition also refutes the presence of magical realism in texts where “the juxtaposition of a realistic world and an unbelievable one [. . .] only exists in the dreams and hallucinations of strange characters” (29). This is not to say that magical realist texts cannot have dream sequences in them, but that the blending of the magic and the real cannot take place only

within these dream sequences and nowhere else in the text. She also points out that if situations in the text involving the supernatural are described as dreamlike, they enter the world of the “oneiric, and not magical realism” (Chanady 29). Finally, Chanady tells the reader that the third element distinguishing magical realism from fantasy is “authorial reticence,” in which the narrator of the novel never shows surprise, and reserves judgments “about the veracity of the events, the authenticity of the worldview expressed by characters in the text” (30). She points out that this authorial reticence takes place in both the fantastic and magical realist modes, though it works toward different ends. The hesitation of the author in fantasy will make the unexpected seem even more out of place, while the lack of explanation in magical realism serves to assimilate the unexpected into the everyday.

Brian Attebery, in *Strategies of Fantasy*, suggests that when looking at fantasy we step away from talking about mode and return to fantasy as a genre discussion. He acknowledges early in his book that fantasy can be seen as both formula and mode, and suggests that looking at fantasy in these two different ways gives us two different formulations of the same idea: “in one incarnation a mass-produced supplier of wish fulfillment, and in another a praise-and-prize-worthy means of investigating the way we use fictions to construct reality itself” (Attebery 1). His point in making the distinction between fantasy as formula and fantasy as mode is to point out that such all-or-none terminology threatens to lose all meaning after a point. Attebery would no doubt find Chanady’s definition of fantasy and magical realism as modes too inclusive, and he suggests a search for a middle ground both “varied and capable of artistic development and yet limited to a particular period and a discernible structure” (2). In this introductory

chapter Attebery seems to suggest that there is no room in discussion of fantasy for any sort of either/or argument. Fantasy cannot be seen as black and white, but as intermediate shades of gray. The world, as he points out, is not simple enough to place mimesis on one end of a spectrum and fantasy on the other, because they inevitably begin to blend to keep writing from being mere reporting of fact or, on the opposite end, pure invention with no basis in reality as we know it. He does acknowledge that a “realist bias” has prevented many critics from recognizing the merging of these modes in any given literary period, and his book clearly disagrees with this type of polarity in criticism (Attebery 4). His solution of the genre as middle ground seems solid, as it provides more room for diversion from set rules than does a formula, yet has more rules for inclusion than the overly inclusive mode Chanady upholds. His argument is interesting in that it hearkens back to one of the issues at hand here, namely, that of the problem of market formulaity, where a particular market forces a formulaic set of rules for the fantasy that they will purchase. In a bookstore, for example, if a novel does not contain points A, B, and C, it will not be placed in the “fantasy section.” Here Attebery is unknowingly addressing the problem facing writers whose works are not recognized as magical realism, and are instead placed into other categories based on preconceived, and often misinformed, formulae.

Here I would like to come back to Luis Leal as a point of departure from these three discussions of the relationship between fantasy and magical realism, as his essay provides the most negative perspective on the relationship between these two genres, or modes, of literature, and even goes so far as to refute Flores’ essay on the basis that his definition for magical realism is too inclusive. According to Leal, the magical realist

writer “doesn’t create imaginary worlds in which we can hide from everyday reality. Let us keep in mind that in these magical realist works the author does not need to justify the mystery of events, as the fantastic writer has to” (121, 123). He goes on to say that in magical realism “the principal thing is not the creation of imaginary beings or worlds but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances” (Leal 122). He denies Kafka’s influence on works of magical realism in Latin America, and points out to the reader that Gregor Samsa’s transformation into a large cockroach creature is treated more with horrific incredulousness than as a magical occurrence. His work attempts to discredit Flores by suggesting that what he really defined by evoking Kafka was surrealism, not magical realism.

Leal’s essay is important in the overall content of this discussion for two reasons. First, his essay refutes the work of Angel Flores, which he himself describes as the “only study of magical realism in Hispanic American Literature” (Leal 120). In doing so, he sets up the possibility for a re-envisioning of magical realism in Latin American literature by refuting Flores’ definition, where the fantastic and the real blend and converge, and suggesting a definition where elements of the fantastic are simply not present. Leal’s definition of magical realism leaves no room for ghosts and spooks, dreaming or a plot that unfolds in dream sequence, or the presence of psychological explanations for the events that occur in the text. Leal denies the necessity of such explanations, feeling that magical realists forgo the need for explanation in their straightforward presentation of a realistic world such as that in which the reader already resides.

My second reason for including Leal’s work is that reading his essay is what solidified my decision to make this debate the central topic of my thesis discussion. First

exposed to this essay in a graduate seminar on magical realism, I remember thinking to myself that even if Flores' definition is too inclusive, Leal's definition is more than overly exclusive. His essay's refusal to admit that elements of the fantastic can be a part of a magical realist text seemed overzealous, his disregard for these elements disturbing. After all, how can you have magical realism if you remove all elements of fantasy and magic? This question led to an internal dilemma of trying to locate a necessary middle ground between Flores and Leal to apply to the texts I was in the process of reading. I kept searching for and finding spaces in these novels that seemed to fit this state of betwixt and between, often surrounded on the periphery by elements that seemed almost entirely fantastic or almost entirely realistic. When it becomes necessary for these elements to mix, they retire to these "borderlands," specific places written into the text where the magic does seem to palpitate just behind the real. Similarities began to emerge in these texts, in that they all contain what I've come to call magical realist borderlands, which combine Anzaldua's ideas and definitions of borderlands with presently accepted definitions of magical realism to form a type of magical realist hybrid, a hybrid based not on the current idea of magical realism as a concept of mere duality, but a concept that boasts multifarious sides and faces. Based on these observations, I have isolated four main characteristics of these magical realist border spaces:

- (1) The text contains a physical boundary (border) that facilitates the magic behind the real. This can be any physical boundary that serves the function of defining what I've come to call inside and outside space: spaces that facilitate the use of an interloper or outsider infiltrating the realist space and blending with it to create a pocket of magical realism. Conversely, in some texts the interloper comes from a realistic

world, infiltrating a world where the magic is organic to the landscape. These spaces in the texts, as I will later demonstrate in my discussions of *Bag of Bones*, *The Children of Greene Knowe*, *Chocolate*, and *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl*, are all similar in that they mimic real physical borderlands. They generally have a large body of water on at least one side, and often forest or dense wooded areas close off the other sides. These spaces evoke a sense of solitude that aids the mixing of the magic and the real into a *mestizo*, or mixed, space. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* we see this evidenced in the fictional village space of Macondo, “a village of adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones” where “to the east there lay an impenetrable mountain chain” and “to the south lay the swamps, covered with an eternal vegetable scum, and the whole vast universe of the swamp [. . .] had no limits” (Márquez 1, 10-11). These borderlands can also be seen in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, a novel where the ghost girl Beloved appears to Sethe and her daughter Denver out of the water. Their presence in the borderlands is evidenced in this exchange: “‘I was on the bridge,’ said Beloved. ‘You see me on the bridge?’ ‘No, by the stream. The water back in the woods.’” (Morrison 75). The significance of this landscape comes in the way it takes on almost human-like characteristics, physically and mentally manipulating the characters that reside there. As Jeanne Delbaere-Garant tells us in her article, “Psychic Realism, Mythic Realism, Grotesque Realism: Variations on Magical Realism in Contemporary Literature in English,” “the interpenetration of the magic and the real is no longer metaphorical but literal; the landscape is no longer passive but active—invading, trapping, dragging away, etc.” (252). These landscapes take on an active presence in these border spaces, often forcing the characters out of their completely realistic worlds

and into this in-between space, where the formerly realistic elements of their lives succumb to a new reality that is decidedly *mestizaje*, or a “continual intermarriage” between elements of magic and real. (Anzaldúa 27).

(2) These fictions contain a strong folkloric backdrop, and present folk tales as grounding elements to counterbalance the magic in the text. These verbal folktales often contain little or no magical significance. Characters within these texts use these folktales to ground the text, bringing in elements of the real so that the reader does not become lost in the presence of the inexplicable fantastic. These tales present the characters in the novel with the perceived reality of past occurrences, and though the folktale has at best a nodding acquaintance with the real, in these border spaces verbal storytelling takes on the significant job of telling the “real” past in the face of the uncertain present.

(3) The borderlands in these texts boast a single dominating belief system: a belief system that is emphasized, and sometimes caricatured, to call attention to the presence of an interloper boasting an opposing belief system. Anzaldúa details this type of phenomenon when she talks about cultural tyranny in her own discussion of borderlands, telling us that “Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture” (38). Through the presence in these borderlands of a dominating belief system we are most able to see the resemblance to the actual physical borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico, in that these works detail groups boasting cultural, spiritual, and ideological differences. Like the outsider figures of the gypsies in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Grenouille in Patrick Süskind’s *Perfume*, the devil in Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, or Gibreel and Saladin in

Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, these interlopers fall into the orderly, preconceived world of the real and change it, making it a *mixto*, a carnival glass, a body of water rippled by carefully heaved pebbles. They skew perceptions, change longstanding belief systems, and forge alliances.

(4) These spaces contain spirits, ghosts, or the residual residues of past ideals, appetites, or ideologies. Of course, Wendy B. Faris has already pointed out the presence of ghosts in magical realist texts in her article "Scheherazade's Children," telling us that "ghosts [. . .] or people who seem ghostly, resemble two-sided mirrors, situated between the two worlds of life and death, and hence they serve to enlarge that space of intersection where magically real fictions exist" (178). The main difference between Faris' magical realist ghosts and those present specifically in magical realist borderlands is the conscious interaction and interference of these presences with the characters in an effort to either point out or enhance the realism of the space. These figures or past ideologies seem to rise organically out of the humanized landscapes present in these spaces, enhancing the qualities of the real by emphasizing their magical presences.

I suggest these four elements in an effort to enhance the definitions of magical realism laid out by prior scholars, mainly to address the issue of where one can and should draw the line on what constitutes a magical realist text. Until recently there has been very little critical study of magical realism outside the high art canon of "literature." Perhaps this stems from an attempt to shut out works that do not follow a prescribed magical realist pattern from beginning to end, as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does. Or maybe it's due to a kind of literary chauvinism, which deems popular fiction and children's fiction unworthy of acceptance into this genre, despite what I attempt to prove

is an obvious presence of magical realism in these texts. However, many of these popular works, their places on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List already guaranteed, boast anything from temporary flashes of magical realism to magical realist tidal waves. In the world of popular fiction, magical realism becomes an adventure in a land between, a land where paradox rules the day and time is a clock running both fast and slow, forwards and backwards. Would you venture to this land with me? Then take my hand. Let's journey to the borderlands.

## CHAPTER 2

### GHOSTS IN THE WATER

#### Magical Realism In The Landscape

*I saw no ghosts; I decided this was a  
seriously fucked-up carnival just the same.  
-Bag of Bones*

Novelists of popular fiction are often spoken of as hack writers. Their works are often, though not universally, slammed in or ignored by academia, and their place of honor on the bestseller lists earns them little respect in the world of high art literature. It seems odd that this phenomenon of dismissal still occurs in a world where Oprah has turned such works as Steinbeck's *East of Eden* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* into pop fiction icons. And, in light of the Harry Potter craze, it seems no less strange that children's novels are still not getting the critical attention they deserve in academic circles dealing with magical realism. In saying so, I do not wish to suggest that children's literature is completely unacknowledged in academia, merely that its place in studies of magical realism has yet to be definitively carved out. Deborah Thacker attempts to explain the reluctance involved in children's lit criticism in her article "Disdain or Ignorance? Literary Theory and the Absence of Children's Literature," acknowledging

that the “battle against the marginalization of children’s literature within the academic mainstream is an old one” (1). Yet, even in her sixteen-page study of the academic dismissal of children’s literature, the specific problem of the dismissal of children’s literature in criticism related to magical realism is not addressed. Between popular and children’s literature, dismissal of the latter is perhaps the easier of the two to understand, as it seems relatively easy to chalk children’s literature up to simple magic or fantasy and to forget how wonderfully and realistically perceptive kids can be. After all, as Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer tell us in *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*, “what all the different kinds of texts described as children’s literature have in common is the gulf between their writers and their intended readers” (14). Though the argument can be made that the writers of children’s novels do not necessarily grasp the relationship children have with certain types of everyday magic, this does not excuse critics’ reluctance to apply the term magical realism to popular fiction, be it of the adult or children’s variety. My studies of magical realism have led me to see it in numerous works of popular fiction read strictly for pleasure, as well as in children’s novels presented in a magical realist graduate seminar as the ostensible “what if” texts in the course. Going back through my scholarly texts and articles on magical realism, I found various notes on these observations of the similarities between accepted texts in the literary canon and popular novels I was reading at the time or had read on previous occasions. Most of them involved the texts examined here, and it has been interesting to see things like “this is found in *Bag of Bones*” and “the grandmother in *Greene Knowe* does this to Tolly,” all in my customary click-pencil chicken scratch on the margins of various pages.

To some, it may seem strange to compare the novel *Bag of Bones* from horror monger Stephen King with *The Children of Greene Knowe*, a book from a children's serial by L.M. Boston, in an effort to point out that both works encompass magical realism. They target different audiences, evoke different emotional threads, and the former dwarfs the later, boasting 550 pages of additional text. Yet these two works, when looked at simultaneously, call for a chapter dealing primarily with magical realism in the landscape of magical realist borderlands. This discussion is necessary because the magical realism in both stories hinges directly upon the main characters' entrance into a world of lush greenery and water. In the context of both novels, the landscape extends beyond mere backdrop, becoming a character as real and as lively and sometimes as ornery as the characters that inhabit it. Ondaatje notes in his afterward to O'Hagan's *Tay John* that "the landscape [. . .] is not a landscape that just sits back and damns the characters with droughts. It is quicksilver, changeable, human—and we are no longer part of the realistic novel [. . .]" (Ondaatje 271-72). These novels also deal in ghosts, folklore, and ancient belief systems, those things outlined in Chapter 1 as the characteristics of magical realist borderland spaces. And, despite the gap in the age and comprehension level of these works' intended and implied readers, both novels boast remarkable similarities in structure, symbolism, and overall meaning. I suggest that these comparisons stem mainly from each novel's use of borderland space to blend together elements of the magic and the real, mixing them in such a way that it becomes hard to separate one from the other in any satisfactory way.

Stephen King, horror king extraordinaire, gets a lot of flack in the academic world for being little more than a hack artist. Harold Bloom, who took offense to King being

offered The National Book Foundation's Award for his "penny dreadfuls," openly criticizes King in his article, "Dumbing Down American Readers" (Bloom 2003). Yet, despite this opposition, other critics are beginning to praise the talents of King, even when he writes something other than his customary horror. In an online New York Times' review of *Bag of Bones* entitled "Familiar Terrors," Daniel Mendelsohn writes:

Stephen King is so widely acknowledged as America's master of paranormal terrors that you can forget his real genius is for the everyday. But King's appeal has always had a lot to do with his trademarked technique of grounding even the most otherworldly plot lines in the familiar, brand-named reality of everyday experience. (1998)

This, amazingly enough, sounds a lot like the Times is attributing magical realist tendencies to today's reincarnation of Edgar Allen Poe. And King's works have started to change over the years, becoming less about gore and more about the human condition, those everyday little choices and character traits that make people inevitably flawed and endlessly endearing. In *Bag of Bones*, King details the everyday horror of every writer's worst nightmare: writer's block. In this novel, Mike Noonan, a writer who loses his wife Johanna to a heart attack on the first page of the novel, travels to Sara Laughs, his home on the lake, in hopes of regaining his writing ability and alleviating the disturbing nightmares he's had since her death. What follows is a ghost-filled smorgasbord of past occurrences presented in an effort to protect the future: the ghost of his wife Johanna tries repeatedly to show Mike that Sara Laughs, the ghost of the girl for whom his house is named, is plotting to have the locals kill off any offspring of the men who raped and murdered her a century ago. Mike's fight in the novel depends on escaping the horror of

his nightmares at the novel's inception by entering into their reality and facing them head on as a viable part of the landscape.

L.M. Boston has gotten less criticism in the media than King, probably because her works are aimed at an audience that purchases her books with spare piggy bank change. The first novel in her *Green Knowe Series*, *The Children of Green Knowe*, is nonetheless eerily similar to the popular novel *Bag of Bones*, as it deals with the travels of a lone boy named Tolly to his grandmother's house. Called Greene Knowe, her home is a castle-like dwelling surrounded by water at which he arrives in a small boat. Once there, he realizes he and his grandmother are sharing his new home with three ghost children named Alexander, Toby, and Linnet. While Tolly struggles to find the reality of these children amongst their suggested presence, his grandmother, Mrs. Oldknow, tells him stories of when they were alive, stories about the things they did and loved. The adversary in this story comes in the form of a topiary hedge shaped to look like Noah from the Bible story, part of the landscape that comes to life because of an ancient curse placed on Greene Noah by an angry gypsy woman. In this way, the landscape of the story effectively pulls up roots and goes after Tolly, becoming a human-like, threatening force in the story.

Looking closely at the plot lines of these stories, it dawned on me that the most important element to recognize in a study of these works as magical realist, where the magical realism is that present in the borderlands established in the text, is the fact that the magical realism to be found does not come organically from each work's inception and continue uninterrupted from start to finish. In fact, these works almost always begin in a decidedly realistic mode, progressing through the problematics of a life lived fully in

the real before making the leap over the boundaries that separate the real world from one where magic saturates the medium. In other borderland works the realism is carefully interspersed throughout the magical, often in the form of true stories told about certain characters from the past that appear now as ghosts. Because these novels begin (and sometimes even end) in realist mode, it seems fitting that they are often overlooked in magical realist circles. Yet, as Luis Leal points out, in magical realist texts the author “doesn’t create imaginary worlds in which we can hide from everyday reality. In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts” (121). In my examination of *Bag of Bones* and *The Children of Green Knowe*, I argue that this search for truth in reality is escalated by the comparative leap from the world of reality to the world of magical realism. Because the reader is first presented with a completely real world, the elements of magic present later in the text are heightened, and thus their comment on earlier perceived realities takes on depth and validity. In *Bag of Bones*, the real world is a town named Derry, and in this world real things happen to a real person: death, nightmares, and writer’s block. This later is particularly telling, as Mike points out again and again that the ugly reality of this dreaded mental blockage had nothing to do with “spooks.” He tells the reader: “I didn’t sense, as I later did, that I was not alone in a room which appeared empty. I repeat that there were no cold drafts around my ankles, no spectral fingers at the nape of my neck” (King 33-4). And for five chapters or so, until Mike actually journeys to the world of Sara Laughs, there are no magical coincidences, no blending of the magic and the real, merely a string of unhappy, yet entirely realistic, coincidences.

Like King, Boston also begins the first novella in her *Green Knowe* children's series with a decidedly realistic bent. No ghost children are yet present, nor their ghostly animal friends, just a young scared boy with a big imagination alone on a nighttime train. Boston stresses the reality of the scene by emphasizing highly realistic details, like the rain beating against the windows of the train "in an ugly, dirty way" or the two women on the train who "talked without stopping, smacking their lips in between sentences" (1). And the scene shares in common with King's work a pervasive air of solitude, of aloneness, that gives these realistic elements precedence in the text. In *Bag of Bones*, Mike's solitude comes from his wife's untimely death. In *Green Knowe*, Tolly's mother is dead and his stepmother does not want him around, so on the train "he was alone as usual" (Boston 1). Thus, these characters are isolated, and the stark reality of their worlds overwhelms them. Anzaldua speaks of this isolation in her own discussion of borderlands, writing about the reality of how she and her people "were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed, and separated from our identity and our history" (30). Like the isolation Anzaldua describes, the type of isolation present in these magical realist borderland texts also serves a specific purpose, forcing the protagonists to venture beyond the confines of their "real" world and asking them to question the validity of their perceived realities. This phenomenon is pointed out very specifically in a discussion of the *Green Knowe* series in *Children's Literature*, which describes "Lucy Boston's attempt in the *Green Knowe* books to depict her child protagonists' moving from their fragmented and uncertain identities [. . .] into the world of Green Knowe, where they are transformed by their adventures, come to accept the darker layers of their personalities, and at last recover a sense of wholeness" (Butler 104).

The isolation present in this real world also presents a challenge for the authors, asking them to create a new, contrasting world in which the fabric of reality has grown thin, and in some places nonexistent. In this thin space, magical realism develops in the landscape, in the form of a natural borderland that appears when the oppressive nature of reality collides with an express need for occupants to coexist with this reality. Once these characters cross over into the borderlands, they escape, to an extent, the isolation of their “real” world in exchange for the encompassing enclosure of the borderlands, becoming a “a synergy of two cultures” (Anzaldúa 85). And, as these characters venture across the borderlands created by the rift between real and magic, the landscape begins to take on incredibly human-like properties.

These types of human-like landscapes allow magical realism to function as a naturalistic element in novels, and this naturalistic aspect of magical realism has been discussed in many magical realist circles. Molly Monet-Viera, in her essay “Post-Boom Magical Realism: Appropriations and Transformations of a Genre,” writes that “within magical realism the codes of the supernatural and natural coincide, thus transgressing or expanding the laws of nature as we know them” (98). In *Visions of Enchantment*, Hugh Parry specifically acknowledges these “occult places where magical power is concentrated, tapped, and often exercised—enchanted landscapes and waterscapes.” Parry then describes the importance of landscapes, providing readers with a vivid glimpse at the importance of their reflective function for human beings:

The ambiguity inherent in lakes and forests provides images to reflect ambiguities of human experience, from our most desperate fears of sickness and death to our fondest hopes of physical and psychological

health and renewal [. . .] to the degree that they are liminal spaces through which magic enters the human world [. . .]. (Parry 34-35)

Many critics argue that this blending of the natural with the supernatural helps to classify works where the supernatural is deemed scary or out of place as non-magical realist. This might perhaps be true in a traditional novel of magical realism, but in novels that utilize the borderland schema to introduce magical realism, this idea only applies to the sections of the novel that are specifically realistic. In the border spaces, the magic elements include the humanization of the physical landscape, which in many cases serves as one of the novel's antagonists. The landscapes in these works seem to magically transform into green, vengeance-seeking personas, interfering with and sometimes even assailing characters. The magical realism comes through the belief of the characters that this humanistic infiltration of the landscape into their lives is both normal and, to some extent, inevitable.

In an online interview with Peter Conrad, Stephen King tells readers that "The skin of the world is thin, that's what my books show" (2004). His admission that the nucleus of his stories hinges on so much gossamer seems fitting in a discussion of the world he creates in *Bag of Bones*, a story decidedly less gore-soaked and more spirit-based than the vast majority of his works. Prior books like *Carrie* and *The Shining* deal with internal, and to a large extent psychological, horrors that fester in and finally explode from a single person onto the present world of the novel, wrecking havoc as they go. These works can be classified easily as works of horror, as they make no pretense that their focus is on anything but examining the inner workings of the psychotic mind. *Bag of Bones* can be separated from this realm of horror and placed into the magical

realist category based mostly on a close examination of the novel's antagonist, which, in the case of novels boasting borderland magical realism, seems to manifest in their personified landscapes. Rawdon Wilson best describes the duality of these human-like landscapes in his article, "Metamorphoses of Fictional Space: Magical Realism," telling the reader: "in magical realism space is *hybrid* (opposite and conflicting properties coexist)." This discussion of hybridism, which Wilson borrows from Lubomír Doležel's discussion of Kafka's fiction, describes a text in which a "magical realist fictional world asserts its connection to an extratextual world [. . .]" (Wilson 220). Stephen King combines these two types of worlds in the lake house in *Bag of Bones* that the locals call Sara Laughs, a house named after a centuries-dead black folk singer named Sara Tidwell. The home relates to King's extratextual world in location, as the home is located in western Maine where King lives in real life. The magical realism comes from the essence of life given to this house, and to the surrounding landscape. As Mike Noonan, the reluctant hero of the story opines, "I think houses live their own lives along a timestream that's different from the ones upon which their owners float, one that's slower. In a house, especially an old one, the past is closer" (King 124). The landscape of Sara Laughs, based on Mike's description, embraces and proves Wendy Faris' idea that magical realist fictions "carefully delineate sacred enclosures [. . .] and then allow these sacred spaces to leak their magical narrative waters over the rest of the text and the world it describes" ("Scheherazade" 174).

Dark Score Lake, as well as Sara Laughs, the house that sits on this landscape, in effect becomes a living entity within the novel. The first function of this personification is obviously a concerted effort on King's part to pull Mike from the land of reality and

into a magical realist landscape. To do so, the novel focuses on dreams that Mike has about the lake house while still living in Derry, and then places the abnormal elements of those dreams into the reality surrounding Sara Laughs. Mike dreams about out-of-season sunflowers growing out of the stoop of his lake home, and then his caretaker gives him actual photos of the home that verify their existence. As Mike marvels, there are “three sunflowers...not two, not four, but three large sunflowers with faces like searchlights. Just like the ones in my dream” (King 97). After this event, Mike moves into the lake house, and the landscape actually begins to interfere with the everyday reality of his existence; while talking to his new friend Mattie and her daughter, Kyra, his mouth suddenly and inexplicably fills with lake water from Dark Score, water “cold and fresh, which a faint metal tang like blood” (King 139). Yet, when he turns to spit the water out, there’s nothing there. After this, Mike begins to see the woods and the lake, and even his own home, as active participants in a steadily unfolding mystery, and he believes himself to be a sort of catalyst for its awakening; “I was touching something in Sara that was entirely beyond my experience, and it fascinated me” (King 238). Later, Mike comes face to face with a “green lady,” whose “leaves around the [. . .] trunk almost made a peering face...on a breezy day it would seem to smile or frown [. . .] or perhaps to laugh” (King 175). Later, Mike tells us, that “even with the evening sun shining fully upon her, it was hard to see her for what she actually was—just a birch tree with a half-dead pine standing behind it...making a pointing arm” (King 396). Mike’s acknowledgement of the landscape as something more than inanimate facilitates more incidents like that with the lake water and the green lady, and the landscape grows increasingly more agitated and invasive. At the same time, Mike becomes increasingly more cognizant of these

systematic infiltrations; at one point in the novel, he tells readers: “I looked at trees and saw arms; I looked at bushes and saw faces” (King 558). Later, his knowledge of human characteristics in the landscape becomes more specific, taking on properties of people he actually knows: “And in the wavering trees I saw green faces, the faces of the dead. Devore’s was there, and Royce’s, and Son Tidwell’s. Most of all I saw Sara’s. Everywhere Sara” (King 639). Mike presents all these events in completely matter-of-fact tones, and herein we see the magical realist aspects of the text, where “marvelous events are depicted without any surprise” (Monet-Viera 102). The landscape as character becomes a constant, described by Mike on nearly every page of the novel and accepted as reality.

Like the landscape of Dark Score Lake, the landscape found in *The Children of Green Knowe* also takes on humanistic qualities and eventually begins to interfere with Tolly’s life once he arrives at Grandmother Oldknow’s home. As Pamela Gates writes in *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*, “the magic of Green Knowe is almost palpable” (18). This novel initially boasts the same sense of isolation as King’s novel, as Tolly arrives at his new home to find that “everywhere there was water—not sea or rivers or lakes, but just senseless flood water with the rain splashing into it” (Boston 1). Once he reaches his grandmother’s home, this entrapping water shuts out the narrow glimpse of Tolly’s “real world” that we see on the train, and Tolly learns from his grandmother that “the river is a very lively inhabitant here, always to be reckoned with [. . .]” (106). And in this world surrounded by an ornery river, Tolly finds that he has come to a place where animals and shrubbery take on peculiarly humanistic qualities. He first experiences this when a chaffinch comes to tap on his window, hoping to be let in for food, as chaffinches

had done with children occupying this room for centuries past. Grandmother Oldknow tells Tolly, “I am surprised they have remembered for so long...I think they must tell stories to their nestlings” (37). Animals continue to be bestowed with human qualities, including a “green yew squirrel [. . .] that seemed to be listening” and a catfish named Neptune who once belonged to Toby, and who, Mrs. Oldknow tells Tolly, “came when he [Toby] called it [. . .]. Toby used to tell Linnet that it understood Latin. He always talked to it in Latin” (47, 43). Eventually Tolly even begins to feel the house he lives in is alive, and “full of shiny black eyes, all looking at me” (65). Like the landscape at Dark Score Lake, Tolly’s surroundings start off passive and become gradually more antagonistic. The antagonism escalates when Tolly taunts a supposedly haunted topiary hedge shaped to look like Noah from the biblical tale. Suddenly, Tolly finds himself in the shadow of “a tree where no tree should be—a tree shaped roughly like a stooping man, that waved its arms before it and clutched at the air with its long fingers” and is worried that he will be “pounced upon and feel the tightening of [. . .] leafy fingers” (158). And these are not simply the imaginings of a frightened and lonely child; the tree *really* does pull up roots and go after Tolly, and the tree *really* is struck by lightning, halting its course, and the burned tree *really* is found the next day by the groundskeeper Boggis in a completely different location, “on the edge of the lawn” (161). For both *Bag of Bones* and *The Children of Green Knowe*, these human-like and to some extent antagonistic landscapes correspond directly with Wendy Faris’ first primary element of magical realism, the “‘irreducible element’ of magic, something we cannot explain according the laws of the universe as we know them” (“Scheherazade” 167).

Another element these magical realist borderland novels boast is the heightened presence of ghosts, spirits, and the residual residues of past ideologies that seem to grow organically from the landscape. According to Lois Parkinson Zamora in her essay “Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S. and Latin American Literature,” “ghosts in their many guises abound in magical realist fiction [. . .] and they are crucial to any definition of magical realism as a literary mode” (497). Looked at in the context of magical realism specific to borderlands, these ghosts serve not only to “enlarge that space of intersection where magically real fictions exist,” but they also serve the extended purpose of actually generating and maintaining the borderlands where magic and the real blend and retract, simultaneously enabling them to re-blend in new hybrid forms (Faris “Scheherazade” 178). Often these ghosts are linked with ancient folklore, and garner power from the repetitious nature of storytelling. As Geoff Hancock tells us, in his article “Magic Realism, or, the Future of Fiction,” magical realism occurs in works that “place their extraordinary feats and mysterious characters in an ordinary place, and the magic occurs from the sparks generated between the possibilities of language and the limitations of physical nature” (5). Though Hancock’s argument does not specifically refer to ghosts, the essence of his statement suggests a magical realist writer’s ability to infuse normal landscapes with magical acts through the art of tale telling. Because the residues of humankind persist beyond the confines of the grave through word of mouth, it becomes easy to make a connection between the ghosts in magical realist borderlands and the stories that physically serve to open doorways through which they are able to return. In this way, the magic of these spectral figures is wholly dependant on a sort of historical

learning curve, in which the continued relation of their history drives their ghostly presence.

The ghosts in *Bag of Bones* are highly dependant upon the ever-encroaching reality of Dark Score Lake's local lore. Mike comments on this reality early in the novel, telling the reader that where he lives, on "Lane Forty-two, you find that all the smoke and mirrors have been removed" (King 108). The main ghost that Mike must deal with after his return to his home on the TR is Sara Laughs, the name locals have come to call the spirit of Sara Tidwell, a murdered black folk singer who lived almost a century prior to the novel's time frame. Sara Laughs also becomes the name of Mike's home, based on local legend that Sara haunts that particular area of Dark Score Lake. As a ghost, Sara embodies the definition of a certain type of ghost described in Zamora's ghost essay, which informs readers that:

[ . . . ] ghosts carry the burden of tradition and collective memory: ancestral apparitions often act as correctives to the insularities of individuality, as links to lost families and communities, or as reminders of communal crimes, crises, cruelties. They may suggest displacement and alienation or, alternatively, reunion and communion. ("Magical Romance" 497)

Sara fits this description, as her continued presence in Dark Score Lake stems both from the horrific events leading to her death and the folklore surrounding her life. During the course of the novel, her ghostly presence becomes increasingly "real" as Mike begins to untangle her story, finding the reality behind the myth. What also becomes quite apparent is that these particular types of ghosts, those that bewail an unsettling past, are almost always just one piece of a much larger picture. Thus our first glimpse of Sara's

materialization is not direct; instead, it comes in the form of “weeping, a child’s weeping” (King 119). The magical realism in this novel stems from the very realization that the ghost of Sara intensifies and becomes more real, more solid, as the true story of her life and the real cause of her death are finally told; Wendy Faris would see this as confirmation that “history is the weight that tethers the balloon of magic” (“Scheherazade” 170). Mike, as a former novelist, understands the escalation of reality through historical storytelling all too well, and soon after he begins to hear this child crying in the night, he automatically begins to think: “*She is alive. Sara is alive* [. . .] she belonged to me. I had claimed her. For good or ill, I had come home” (King 167). For Mike, the reality of Sara and her ghost entourage even begins to overshadow events in his “real world;” at one point, Mike acknowledges that “the crying child in the night seemed somehow more real than the call from Max Devore” (King 169).

The line between folklore and historical fact is as blurry as that between the real world and the borderlands, and in the end, they are both predicated on a symbiotic balance between belief and knowledge. Wendy Faris says it best in her book, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, stating that magical realism often invokes a type of “defocalized narrative:”

[. . .] pre-Enlightenment traditions, including myths, ghosts, and journeys to the lands of the dead . . . [these narratives] visit dead civilizations in order to bring back a communal voice of indeterminate origin but possessing creative authority, with which it revivifies the narrative discourse of realism. (80)

She seems to be pointing out that magical realist works evoke ghosts and spirits, residues of an unresolved past, in an effort to instigate written discourse that brings them out of the world of the dead and into a realistic light. Faris states simply that the main purpose of this reintroduction of the spirit body is “to use the past to reorient that future” (*Ordinary* 80). In *Bag of Bones*, King uses Sara as a tool for reorientation, and this reorientation becomes for Mike a vicious cycle. At the novel’s inception, the only stories he knows of Sara consist of insubstantial and highly inaccurate local lore: he knows her only as “Sara Tidwell, the turn-of-the-century blues shouter whose last known port of call had been right here in TR-90. When she and her folks [. . .] had left the TR, they had gone on to Castle Rock [. . .] then had simply disappeared” (King 183). Sara’s cyclical nature soon becomes all too clear to Mike, as the more he discovers about what really happened to her, the more physically present and potentially dangerous her ghost becomes. Yet, Mike knows that unless he uncovers the history behind the myth he cannot hope to remove himself from under Sara’s shadow. This knowledge prompts him to seek out information about Sara’s past, and he goes to great lengths to discover whatever information his wife, Joanna, had stumbled upon about Sara before she died. He continues to pump the “old ones” for information on Sara Tidwell, a group of old men who live on the TR that he calls “bags of bones who knew what they knew and kept it to themselves. Except some of them had talked to my wife” (King 551). After this, Sara’s reality begins to escalate, and Mike begins to actually see and feel her in his presence. He wakes up in the night with “someone running a hot finger up and down the middle of [his] back,” and sees “Sara Tidwell. She was grinning. There were no pupils in her eyes. ‘Oh sugar, I’m almost back,’ she whispered in the dark” (King 562). And Mike is not the

only one who can see Sara; a little girl, Kyra, can see her too, along with the rest of her ghostly entourage. She tells Mike, “ ‘He was black like on that funny show me and Mattie watch. There are other black people, too. A lady in a big hat. A man in blue pants. They watch us’ ” (King 626).

Interestingly enough, in this novel King takes the manipulation of narratorial past one step further, creating a ghostly counterpoint for Sara, the glass panel in the other half of magical realism’s “two-sided mirror” (Faris “Scheherazade” 178). This ghostly other half of Sara is the ghost of Mike Noonan’s deceased wife Joanna, who falls into the category Zamora calls “agents of aesthetic effect.” According to Zamora, these ghosts:

[ . . . ] are often bearers of cultural and historical burdens, for they represent the dangers, anxieties, and passional forces that civilization banishes. They may signal primal and primordial experience, the return of the oppressed, the externalization of internalized terrors. (“Magical Romance” 497)

Jo’s ghost fits this description on several levels; as facilitator, her ghost enables Sara’s to become almost human again, by guiding Mike to the truth about Sara’s death. Her ghost also serves both as a notice to Mike of Sara’s presence and as a mediating factor between the two. And at certain points in the novel, it becomes hard to distinguish one ghost from the other; they seem to blend and reform into a haphazard amalgamation of past and present, history and historian. Like Sara, Jo’s ghost starts off more whisper than shout; Mike first senses her presence in the nightly ringing of a bell that she hung, while she was alive, around a stuffed moose head in the living room of the lake house. Later, Mike sets up a recording device during the night to validate what he’s been hearing, and Jo’s voice

whispers “*Oh Mike*” during the playback (King 188). The first sense of ghostly synthesis between Jo and Sara comes in Mike’s basement, as he tries to communicate with the presence he feels. Mike asks the presence if they can tap once to answer yes, two times to answer no, and the first question he asks is “ ‘Are you Jo?’ ” The presence answers: “*Thud*. That soft fist on insulation. A pause, and then: *Thud-thud*. Yes and no” (King 216). What makes these ghostly presences magical realist is not only their continued presence in the lush, water-filled landscape of the borderlands they inhabit, but also Mike’s blasé attitude towards their continued presence. Throughout the novel, Mike continues to speak to these ghosts as though they were normal, everyday fixtures in his life. One such incident comes when Mike discovers the word “hello” magically written on his refrigerator during the night in magnetic numbers and letters. Though this was the first time he’d seen the letters on the fridge move to spell words, instead of acting surprised he merely opens his fridge, saying “ ‘Hello [. . .] Whoever or whatever you are, hello.’ ” (King 221). A few nights later, Mike addresses the ghosts in the same lackadaisical, almost dismissive manner, saying: “ ‘You ghosts take care of it [. . .]. If you can change the pants and the underwear around on the whirligig, you can put my clothes in the hamper.’ ” (King 441) This nonchalant attitude continues until the end of the novel, when all the pieces of the puzzle finally begin to come together and both ghosts begin to manifest in highly realistic ways. The showdown between the two opposing factions is very realistic, with the two ghost women chunking desks at each other while Mike stands unresolved in the middle. For a long while he watches and listens to this battle with almost clinical detachment, until Sara begins to hurt Jo. He hears Sara screaming “ ‘*Git out, bitch! You git on out! This ain’t none of yours—*’ ” and

he yells at her to quit hurting his wife, as if both of them were real people capable of hurting and being hurt (King 645). The reactions of the ghosts to each other also become more realistic as they fight, and in this way we see both the magic and the realism of this scene gathering power as these ghosts continue their battle.

As they do in Mike's lake home at Sara Laughs, ghosts permeate the atmosphere when Tolly makes the journey from his real world to his grandmother's home in Greene Knowe. These ghosts become even more "real" than Sara, because for a long time in the novel Tolly does not know that the children he keeps glimpsing in hall mirrors and hearing laugh in other rooms are, in fact, dead. In this story, too, the distortion of reality based on belief is due to the extended presence of a verbal folklore tradition, one carried on in *The Children of Green Knowe* by Grandmother Oldknow. She introduces into the novel the idea of mirroring so often associated with ghostly presences in magical realism, in which ghosts "bring absence into presence, maintaining at once the 'is' and the 'is not' of metaphorical truth" (Zamora "Magical Romance" 497). She does this when she first sees Tolly, greeting him as though he's always been a resident of her home, and perhaps just come back from a short visit away. She tells him: "'I wondered whose face it would be of all the faces I knew,' she said. 'They always come back. You are like another Toseland, your grandfather'" (Boston 12). Later on, Grandmother Oldknow accidentally calls Tolly Toby, the name of one of the ghost children in the story. When he points out that she mistakenly called him Toby, she simply says: "'Why, so I did! I was forgetting'" (Boston 30). Thus begins the conscious link between alive and dead, and this linkage generates that third element of mixed space that characterizes the borderlands. The magical realism in this space comes in the presentation of the ghost

children who inhabit the house at Green Knowe as real, present-day children. After Tolly sees these children in a portrait on the wall, he begins to ask questions about them in the present tense, questions such as: “ ‘Has Toby got a real sword?’ ” and “ ‘Is Alexander going to be a musician?’ ” Grandmother Oldknow answers these questions in the same tense, as though the children are still alive, telling Tolly that “ ‘Yes, of course’ ” Toby has a real sword and that Alexander “ ‘will go to the University. He wants to be a poet’ ” (Boston 24-5). The ghosts in this story, verbally presented as real and present beings, take on metaphoric weight, becoming physical manifestations of a never-ending past.

*The Children of Green Knowe* is also remarkably similar to *Bag of Bones* in the way the ghosts present in the text are discovered gradually, progressing slowly from less to more real. Tolly’s first experience with the ghost children, Toby, Alexander and Linnet, is remarkably similar to when Mike first becomes aware of Sara’s ghost. On Tolly’s second night at Green Knowe, while lying in bed “he thought he heard little bare feet running across the floor, then laughter and whispering.” To himself he thinks, “It might be Alexander and Linnet looking at pictures by moonlight...But where are they?” (Boston 40-1). The next day, after seeing the children’s footprints and playing a game of hide-and-seek with them, he tells his grandmother of the game, and wonders “whether she thought that he and she were playing a game together pretending that there were other children, or whether she thought, as he did, that the children were really there” (Boston 51). Like Mike, as Tolly’s knowledge of the ghost children’s history grows, so do their appearances and solidity. What makes his knowledge interesting is the way the historical facts, the reality behind these children, is presented in the text. Unlike *Bag of Bones*, which starts off realistic, becomes magical realist in the borderlands, and then reverts to

realist at the novel's end, *Green Knowe* is structured in such a way that little spurts of realism keep interrupting the magical moments Tolly experiences. This realism presents in the form of stories told by Grandmother Oldknow, true stories about Alexander, Toby and Linnet when they were alive. At different points in the text, she tells Tolly stories about all three children, starting with a story about how Toby and his horse Feste saved Linnet when she was very ill, progressing to a story about Linnet seeing the stone statue of St. Christopher in the garden come to life one night, and finally getting to a story about Alexander, whose beautiful voice earned him the honor of singing before the King at court. The most interesting thing about these stories, aside from how real they seem in comparison to the magical realism surrounding them, are the way these stories seem to pull the children more into the world where Tolly lives, as they begin to manifest in ways other than just verbally. After the Toby story, Tolly actually sees the children for the first time, in a large mirror in the entrance hall, "flattened against the wall on tiptoe to make themselves as thin as they could, their faces puckered with holding in their laughter, he saw Linnet and Alexander" (67). No sooner does he spy them, however, than they disappear into thin air. After hearing Linnet's story, Tolly finally physically interacts with the children for the first time, and from them he gets his first warnings about Green Noah:

'Did you make that enormous snowman with no eyes?' Tolly asked Toby.

There was a silence.

'Keep away from him,' said Toby.

'I'm not afraid of him,' said Linnet. 'He can't hurt me. I'm dead.'

‘I didn’t mean you, little Flipperty-gibbert—I meant him,’ said Toby, nodding toward Tolly. (Boston 114)

Again, like before, after minimal interaction with Toby the children simply disappear again, leaving Tolly alone and “desolate” (116). Only after hearing Grandmother Oldknow’s final story about Alexander does Tolly finally begin to feel fully part of the world of these ghost children, as they help save him from the wandering, cursed topiary form of Green Noah. In the midst of his peril, he calls out hopelessly to Linnet, and suddenly hears her voice calling “ ‘St. Christopher, St. Christopher, come quickly, St. Christopher!’ Other voices joined hers, Toby’s and Alexander’s, piercing and boyish, and other unknown children” (158). After this, Toby gives Tolly his coat to wear so that he might finally be able to see the ghost of the horse, Feste. For Tolly, this last story and the events that follow fully incorporate him into the world of the ghost children and they into his; “he no longer feared that the children would disappear and leave him [. . .] He felt that they were like brothers and sisters who come and go” but “are sure to come home again” (178-9). In this way, two disparate worlds finally and completely merge, bringing the 17<sup>th</sup> century home to mingle with the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a time-eschewing borderland.

After such in-depth discussion of two main elements of magical realist borderlands, the personified landscape and ghostly presences that realistically materialize with a progressing knowledge of folklore and history, it seems pertinent to discuss two other less obvious details of magical realism that can be found in these texts. The first of these is the presence of what Faris calls the “phenomenal world,” in which certain “objects may take on lives of their own and become magical in that way”

(“Scheherazade” 169-70). These objects do so by becoming more than they are, proceeding beyond their descriptions as magical objects as they become larger metaphors in the text. Bunter’s bell and the alphabet letters in *Bag of Bones* do this, as they move quickly beyond their functions as inanimate objects to become moving metaphors for danger and ghostly presences in the house. In *The Children of Green Knowe*, things that belonged to the ghost children, such as the china dogs, ebony mouse, and rocking horse, all serve as representations of the real thing, and become real in that way. Faris also says that in the phenomenal world, “materiality extends to word-objects as metaphors, and they too take on a special sort of textual life, reappearing over and over again until the weight of their verbal reality more than equals that of their referential function” (“Scheherazade” 170-71). *Bag of Bones* and *The Children of Greene Know* both do this repeatedly with names and naming, and the repetitious nature of this phenomenon. In *Bag of Bones*, Mike notices that all the first names of generations of children of the men who raped and murdered Sara Tidwell and her son, Kito, all begin with the letter K, “*Kyra, Kia, Kito*” (King 468). Later, looking down at names in the phone book, he realizes how much further reaching it is than that: “There were . . . Kia . . . Kiah, Kendra, Kaela, Keil, and Kyle. Kirby and Kirk. All those K’s. ‘Holy Christ, it’s like fallout,’ I whispered” (King 565). In *The Children of Green Knowe*, naming becomes synonymous with family and history, as each new face that arrives in Green Knowe bears both the name and physical features of those that bore that name before. Therefore, Tolly is sometimes mistakenly called Toby, and Grandmother Oldknow’s name is Linnet, and each looks or has looked like their namesake. These names keep appearing repeatedly as

the story progresses and more history is learned, and in this way, the names themselves take on a life on their own.

Finally, both works emphasize the slippery surface of time, and the way the boundaries between one time and another can sometimes become thin and even disappear. This happens toward the end of *Bag of Bones*, when Mike and Kyra find themselves “magically” transported to a carnival that takes place 100 years before their own time. Mike himself describes the phenomenon of time’s fluidity by simply telling readers: “time was also thin, it seemed to me. Kyra and I *had really been* at the Fryburg Fair—some version of it, anyway; we had *really* visited the year 1900” (King 558-59 emphasis mine). And Mary Buckalew talks about this phenomenon at Greene Knowe in her article “Global Time in Lucy Boston’s Green Knowe Novellas,” in which she discusses Tolly’s experiences with time, asserting that “Tolly does not have the faintest idea that he in the twentieth century and Toby in the seventeenth appear to Linnet, poised upon the invisible boundary between the two centuries, to occupy the inglenook simultaneously” (182). In essence, when the ghost children appear in Tolly’s space, time becomes elastic; two worlds merge into one and then separate again. According to Brenda Cooper in *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing With A Third Eye*, “magical realist time tries to be neither the linear time of history, nor the circular time of myth” (33). Based on my close observations of these two novels in particular, I believe time in magical realist novels tries instead to blend the two in a kind of forwards/backwards/sideways hybrid, where the entire concept of time defies definitional confinement by becoming shapeless, intangible. Time, particularly time in the borderlands, becomes a doorway through which to escape, a surface on which to dance, a

mirror in which to ponder one's own reflection. It becomes for the characters in these novels yet another active participant in their fates, acting as an enabler for the merging of two distinctive worlds.

These two works have shown us a number of pressing issues in magical realism, and have gone a long way toward proving the presence of magical realism in both popular and children's fictions. They have also gone a long way towards exposing us to the phenomenon of the magical realist borderland, which comprises those places in fictional works where pockets of magical realism are situated between realist intentions. This chapter has detailed some of the elements to be found in these borderlands, focusing mainly on magical realism in the landscape, or surface world, of these stories. The other magical realist elements that can be found in these border spaces, as we will explore in Chapter 3, are less landscape-based, and can be found more organically in the language of the novel, where actual words, instead of trees, take on lives of their own.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE DARK SIDE OF LIGHT Magical Realism in Language

*“Magical realism strives [. . .] to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites; it contests polarities such as history versus magic, the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present and life versus death. Capturing such boundaries between spaces is to exist in a third space, in the fertile interstices between these extremes of time or space”*

-Brenda Cooper (*Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*)

In the previous chapter, we examined magical realist borderlands in *Bag of Bones* and *The Children of Green Knowe*, detailing how the presence of these types of borderlands is dependant on the presence in these novels of personified landscapes and ghosts. Yet this type of magical realism can also manifest in the language of a novel, and this language-specific version of magical realist borderlands can be found by doing what Brenda Cooper calls, in her book *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*, “seeing with a third eye” (1). This third eye, which is remarkably similar to Anzaldua’s idea of a “third perspective” discussed in Chapter 1, functions, like its corollaries the sixth sense and the gut feeling, as a means for seeing a middle ground between the ever-present binaries in works of magical realism, ultimately making a place for elements falling

outside “a synthesis of duality” (Anzaldúa 68). This faculty seems pertinent in finding not only a middle ground between the magic and the real, but between representations of this blending in children’s and popular adult literatures. Virginia Hamilton’s *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* and Joanne Harris’ *Chocolat* both employ this type of in-between space in their novels, using language to detail borderlands, third spaces, between past and present, they and we, good and bad, and insiders and outsiders, thus infusing these borderlands with elements of magical realism. In this way, two female authors of different races, historic backgrounds, and target audiences find common ground in their use of female-driven magic space, verbal magic, and carnivalesque-infused borderlands.

An examination of *Chocolat* and *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* necessitates a slight shift in focus from the previous chapter, which detailed magical realism specific to the decidedly human-like landscapes of borderlands, to that presented with special regard to the novel’s use of language. The borderlands in these novels make the most of magical realism through what Wendy Faris refers to as “linguistic magic,” where we begin to see magical realism in texts where language “thrives on the pervasive intertextual nature of much postmodern writing and the presence of intertextual bricolage” (“Scheherazade” 176). This often occurs in texts that reference particular time periods and the events that take place within these periods; the intertextuality often comes from the way metaphors are turned into reality. Faris gives the example of blood *really* being thicker than water in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and we can even see it at times in *Bag of Bones*, such as when Mike casually remarks that Sara Tidwell had left her mark in more than just old photographs, and then begins to see her physical mark in

every aspect of his life. In Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, another magical realist novel, the metaphor become reality presents itself in the line "there was just water" that repeats throughout the text, a line that metaphorically represents Biblical and other types of flood tales, but where the metaphor also comes to life in the bursting dam that creates a real flood at the end of the novel. There is also water throughout the novel, such as the large puddle into which Babo's car disappears or when the toilet overflows at the Dead Dog Café. In the borderland texts, we only see these metaphors become reality once we have stepped out of the stage of realism and into the in-between space of magical realism, and in these texts, the interlopers present in the border spaces infuse metaphors with magic. What we often find, and what we will find specifically in these two texts, are opposing forces of dark and light that serve as proponents of this type of verbal magic, and these opposing forces present the magic in different metaphorical and figurative ways. Both Hamilton and Harris make the most of language and the magic of language in their novels, and each infuses the story of their novel with such rich, magical details that the words on the page seem to leap right off and come to life.

In a 1995 interview Virginia Hamilton answered the age-old question, "What do you want children to get from your stories?" with the answer: "I want to show African-American children that their history goes backward and forward" (Coles 1). This acknowledgement of intentional binaries in her works sets a precedent for the creation of an alternate border space in Hamilton's *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl*, a novel saturated in the blending of past history and folklore to detail a forward-moving diaspora of African American freed slaves and their God-guides. Pretty Pearl, a "god child" and younger sister to the great God John de Conqueror, decides one day to come down from

her home high on Mount Highness, after “spyin’ on de way-low ground” of Africa and seeing the people there in the grips of slavery (Hamilton 9). After the novel textually enables the three hundred years of slavery preceding the civil war to go by in a flash of three god-days, Pretty starts out alone across America armed with her brother’s warnings and her “john de conqueror root,” a magic talisman that holds both the magic Pretty has yet to grow into, as well as Pretty’s spirit entourage, “Dwahro, de Fula-la-fafa, de Hodag, and de Hide-behind” (Hamilton 40). Here we see for the first time the manifestation of Hamilton’s magical real borderland: a dark forest in Georgia where hundreds of freed African-American slaves hide themselves from the outside world and “outsiders” described as “de bad sort you [. . .] has to run into come day or night” (Hamilton 82). In this forest, the magic of Pretty Pearl and her adult-self Mother Pearl seamlessly intermingles with the realism of post-civil war America, with the forest between acting as a veritable magic force field to protect the insiders from these outsiders.

Like Hamilton, Joanne Harris also deals with oppositions in her novel *Chocolat*, explaining to an interviewer that “*Chocolat* is actually written from two points of view, one that of a man, the other that of a woman” (Addison “Interview”). Remarkably similar in plot to Hamilton’s *Pretty Pearl*, *Chocolat* tells the tale of Vianne, a woman who blows into the small town of Lansquenet on a wind, armed with Pagan tradition and chocolate. Vianne, along with her child-like counterpart, her daughter Anouk, sets up a *chocolaterie* in town, from which she sells wares and wellbeing. Along the way she meets with opposition from the town priest Reynaud, seen by Vianne as “the essential core of the machinery that turns lives” in the town, though not to its advantage (Harris 32). Despite the opposition, Vianne befriends both Josephine, the town thief, and the

resident “witch” Armande, while cavorting with gypsies all under the careful watch of Reynaud and God. She thus sets out to effectively rid this town of the need for an inside space contained in an exclusive religious system. The novel’s battle between insiders and outsiders embraces this Christian versus Pagan guise, though underneath lays the more significant battle between the dark and light halves of Reynaud and Vianne, which combine as the ultimate outsider. Vianne’s journey to Lansquenet, dictated by nature as much as by her inner capriciousness, enables a small town full of repressed townspeople to break free and find the ultimate sweet sin: life. Vianne thus creates her own borderland, a middle ground between pagan magic and lingering religious piety.

Both *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* and *Chocolat* deal, in their attention to the function of language and the concept of space, with borderlands that become what Jean Billingslea-Brown calls “places of communication, negotiation and exchange” (1). In *Pretty Pearl*, the forest becomes not only a place where magic and realism combine; it becomes a personified being, a place “alive, living, it knew no hard times [. . .] knew no wrong, no war [. . .] it recognized the sound and frenzy of kinds, human, good and bad” (Hamilton 55). *Pretty Pearl* recognizes immediately not only this personified nature of the forest, but its seeming eternalness: “even after the war had passed and the reconstruction of life into a new order of living had begun [. . .] the forest was, still” (Hamilton 55). In this space, *Pretty Pearl* and *Mother Pearl* first encounter the “inside folk.” Here, in the deep recesses of the forest, two worlds combine; *Pretty Pearl* and her spiritual accompaniment cross the border between outside and inside and immediately become accepted members of the inside community. This novel reiterates Wendy Faris’ assertion in “Scheherazade’s Children” that magical realism “exists at the intersection of

two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions” (172). Anzaldúa also deals with the concept of mirroring in her own cultural discussion of borderlands, telling us that “a mirror is a door through which the soul may ‘pass’ to the other side [. . .]. The mirror is an ambivalent symbol. Not only does it reproduce images [. . .] it also contains and absorbs them” (64). Within the double-sided and dual-purpose mirror described by Faris and Anzaldúa could easily lay Hamilton’s forest borderland, a space where Pretty Pearl and her spirit company move fluidly between concepts of interloper and family, all the while blending these outsider and insider sensibilities in such a way that the inside people never see their magic as abnormal or extraordinary. Instead, the mirror serves here as “an act of seeing. Seeing and being seen. Subject and object, I and she” (Anzaldúa 64). The double-sided mirror enables readers to see into the between space inside the mirrors, while simultaneously enabling them to see the projection of magic and real that separate on either side of the double-mirrored panes. Borderlands of magical realism, in their position as middle ground between, and even as an extension above and beyond two opposing binaries, presuppose this sort of internal inclusivity. Within the borderland of the forest, magic becomes normal, gods become human, and ancient folklore takes on elements of the real present and future-extending histories of a people.

*Chocolat* too creates these borderlands of magical realism, these in-between spaces where the outsider becomes an accepted and integral part of the landscape. The landscape of this novel, a small town in France called Lansquenet-sous-Tannes, serves as a large canvas of sorts for the painting of a resplendent magical realist borderland: “what was once an ordinary, rather drab old house like all the others around it has become a red-

and-gold confection on a dazzling white ground” (Harris 21). Vianne’s whirlwind descent as outsider into inside space begs for the creation of this neutral ground, and the *chocolaterie* effectively becomes the realm where latent magic melds with the histories of the townspeople to create a sweet and sense-pleasing concoction. In this space gathers a new conglomerate of insiders; this borderland embraces equally the discordant outsiders the gypsies as well as tried and true insiders, Reynaud’s aptly named Bible groupies. This novel highlights an aptitude in magical realism for the physical creation and manifestation of a borderland benefiting a group of people for whom nature and circumstance did not deign to create one. The borderland Vianne creates comes less from a natural pursuit of physical freedom, like that of the insiders in *Pretty Pearl’s* forest, than a repressed desire for release from spiritual bondage. In this sense, the *Chocolaterie* becomes not only a borderland between magic and real, but between the religious corollaries of these binaries, paganism and Christianity respectively.

Another remarkable similarity Hamilton and Harris’ borderlands have with Anzaldúa’s borderland is their dependency on the female protagonist as magical interceder, and subsequent catalyst for the magical realist space. Physically as dissimilar as black and white, *Pretty* and Vianne nonetheless find concord in their magic ability to sense real spaces in need of an outsider’s magic perspective, yet be simultaneously embraced by the insiders of this space as one of their own. Their feminine importance is similar to discussions in *Borderlands/La Frontera of la Virgen de Guadalupe*, who represents “a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered. She is the symbol of the *mestizo* [. . .] (Anzaldúa 52). This female-driven influence causes these works to diverge

from the magical realist touchstone text, García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which the creation of Macondo as a borderland of magic/real inside space stems from the conscious movement of an entire race of people into that space, along with a coterminous presence of their presently unfolding creation story and history with their ever present and therefore unremarkable everyday magic. Instead, *Pretty Pearl* and *Chocolat* depend upon the feminized infiltration of the magic into a pre-established real space to achieve the same level of magical realism. The apparent real-ness of these permeating outsiders to the already present insiders, who remain consistently unconscious of their magic, begs an interesting question: Where does their magic come from, and how does it externalize? Here it is again helpful to look to Faris, and her discussion of verbal magic. She writes: "the reader may experience a particular kind of verbal magic [. . .] a demonstration of what we might call the linguistic nature of experience" ("Scheherazade" 176). Both novels use this verbal magic, and it depends, in both novels, on the recognition of the magic in these female protagonists by fellow outsiders within the inside space, and these outsider's subsequent verbal relation of this magic to the reader.

In Hamilton's novel, the inhabitants of the forest, the inside folks, "never knew there were godly creatures so near" (Hamilton 129). They accept these outsiders for what they appear to be: a girl-child and a respectable mawmaw woman. This acceptance drives from a surface-level, almost superficial sameness, a transference of "insideness" onto the outsiders based on the simple admission that though "they be all colors, inside folks," they are essentially all black and thus the same (Hamilton 123). The magic of the novel's female intercessors is undermined in the pursuit of this physical sameness. Their

magic externalizes not for the perception of these inside folks, but for their fellow outsider the reader, through the verbal magic reaction of what Hamilton calls the Real People, the Cherokee Indians. These Real People “know spirits when they see them, for they see them all the time” (Hamilton 103). Faris describes the phenomenon of magical realism presented through verbal magic in *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, where she details her coinage of the term *defocalization*, describing text in which “the narrative is ‘defocalized’ because it seems to come from two radically different perspectives at once” (43). She goes on to explain that in this type of defocalized narrative, the perspective presented can often shift from one perspective to another, and back, with no warning and no explanation.

In this novel, the two perspectives are that of the spirit entourage and the Real people who can see their magic for what it really is. Without the verbal magic of the Real People, the magic of Pretty and Mother Pearl lost on the inside folks might also be lost on the reader. Once Pretty Pearl and Mother Pearl enter the space of the forest, they lose most physical manifestations of their magic powers as they become rapidly more like human beings. Yet the Cherokee serve as constant verbal reminders to the reader of this ever-present magic, telling us that “they couldn’t believe that the inside man was actually talking to something they knew to be a spirit” (Hamilton 108). The way Hamilton sets up this type of indirect verbal magic is fascinating; these Indians never speak out directly to attest to the magic of Pretty Pearl, and their thoughts about this magic always begin with reference to themselves as a universal “they.” The Real People, present in the inside space as welcomed outsiders, have a voice only the reader can ascertain, and it is for us their verbal magic works. Through them, we know that “they

felt the presence of ones who were more than humankind. They would respect all those inside. But they would not look at [. . .] them” (Hamilton 129). The Real People, through the perception of the reader, lend Pretty Pearl and Mother Pearl their magic, enabling them to construct, without the knowledge of the insiders, the forest as magical realist borderland space.

*Chocolat* too makes use of this indirect verbal magic and defocalization, employing descriptions of Vianne as the “magic” of her created space, descriptions that directly affect the reader’s perception of this magic. The old adage of “it takes one to know one” might apply here to both works, in that the verbal set-up of magic space and the female impetus of that space come through the descriptive observational force of other outsiders within that space. In *Chocolat*, Reynaud serves as the descriptive force of Vianne’s magic; through Reynaud’s verbal magic the reader becomes aware of the potent magical powers she has over him. Despite Reynaud’s initial claim that he doesn’t “really see her” and that he “hardly thinks of her at all,” by the end of week one she becomes to him the devil incarnate (Harris 15, 23). A witch he must fight at all costs, Vianne becomes Reynaud’s mission, his disturbance, his enemy. And for a woman so easily manipulated by the wind, through Reynaud, Vianne gains rich color, a weight heavy enough to keep her tethered to Lansquenet forever. His descriptions of her clothes, her hair, and even her smell all fall under a magical weight greater even than the power her chocolates hold over him; he gets bogged down in the descriptive weight of her “long black hair” and her “flame-colored skirt and black sweater...like a snake or stringing insect” (Harris 56). Her very presence becomes a supernatural force, invading his mind and “pulling the threads of [his] senses apart” (Harris 127). Ultimately, in his

descriptions Reynaud hints verbally at a duality between himself and Vianne, telling the reader: “she is tall, too tall for a woman, my own height. She stares at me eye to eye” (Harris 56). Thus he verbally aligns her “witch” with his “saint,” and establishes a sort of either/or duality, a written acknowledgement of their status as outsiders in the space Vianne penetrates. And because Harris’ Reynaud, like Hamilton’s Indians, relays this magic directly to the reader, who can then use Cooper’s concept of the “third eye” to superimpose this magic on the real space, she too capitalizes on this sort of indirect variation of Faris’ verbal magic.

In dealing with the concept of escaping mere binaries through borderlands in these novels, a final comparison should detail the way the binaries of insiders and outsiders in the two novels combine in these border spaces as a manifestation of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, an element that highlights the essence of magical realism these spaces convey. David Danow, in his work *The Spirit of Carnival*, defines the carnivalesque as the interspersion of physical carnival into a literary work, creating [. . .] a spirit that supports the unsupportable, assails the unassailable, at times regards the supernatural as natural, takes fiction as truth, and makes the extraordinary or ‘magical’ as viable a possibility as the ordinary or ‘real,’ so that no true distinction is perceived or acknowledged between the two (3). His definition bears striking resemblance to Brenda Cooper’s definition of magical realism at the beginning of this paper, and facilitates grounds for a strong parallel between the two. Danow’s work deals with the carnivalesque as an essential element of magical realism, and Wendy Faris too acknowledges the carnival as one of magical realism’s secondary characteristics. The presence of carnival, in its multifarious forms, infuses each novel’s inside spaces with

both dark and light sides, a nefarious yet simultaneously entrancing fairground where various oppositions come to recognize their inextricable links and undividable oneness. The carnival space depends, as do the borderlands it occupies, on the amalgamation of binary oppositions into textual and spatial liminality, occupied by persons and places with multi-sided characteristics and magical realism as their connecting force.

Hamilton's novel too embraces this carnivalized space in small doses and in individual characters, interspersing these elements throughout her novel. She fully capitalizes on what Danow refers to as "the introduction of a fool, madman, or clown to serve as a necessarily short-lived 'regent' in the carnival space" (4). She finds this clown in the spirit Dwahro, a riotous dancer/singer/human wannabe, fittingly wearing an "off-white muslin suit printed with...blue stars and moons" that bears remarkable resemblance to a typical clown or magician's costume (Hamilton 44). Dwahro's stint as the novel's temporary "regent" comes from his position as subservient to Pretty Pearl and simultaneous position as her informed superior. Dwahro embraces the light side of this carnival archetype; his ability to "feel any song in the world [. . .] and [. . .] translate it into words" combined with his "energy and his dancing," captivates the inside children (Hamilton 181). With Dwahro as ring leader, these children learn the art of singing and dancing the folk song, and the power of making a "circle most strong" to unify and give credence to what might be perceived as no more than childhood revelry (Hamilton 183). Yet, his position as the clown and merrymaker of the inside space is temporary, due to his ultimate desire to discard his "spirithood" and become human. At the novel's end, John de Conquer grants this wish, and Dwahro embraces the human and less jovial side of himself; "he did not sing or dance. Dwahro wouldn't put on a show this day, or the next

[. . .]” (Hamilton 288). For Dwahro, crossing over and transcending the borderland of the inside space necessitates this reversal and renders his carnival features obsolete outside the borderlands.

In *Chocolat*, Harris conversely chooses to portray the dark side of the “fool, madman, or clown,” in Muscat, the town bar keeper and resident drunk (Danow 4). This veritable puppet-on-a-string for the conscious and unconscious will of Reynaud uses his power and his temper to wreak havoc as only a carnival madman could. He acts as the novel’s textual Archangel Uriel, standing at some proverbial gate to the inside space armed with his fiery sword, literally gasoline, to defend against the dirty gypsy horde. As the dark side of this carnival archetype, Muscat garners none of the joy and elation of the lighter half of the “fool” detailed in Hamilton’s Dwahro. Armed with “a foolish, sly grin” and self-righteousness, he sets about to destroy the elation of the delicate balance between carnival and inside space in the novel, setting fire to what Reynaud calls “the carnival scene,” a party taking place on the boats of the gypsies (Harris 162). In his capacity as destroyer, Muscat serves as a reminder that the carnivalesque embraces both a “bright, life affirming, ‘magical’ side as well as its dark, death-embracing, horrific aspect” (Danow 5). As a temporary regent, he embraces the aspects of death and destruction, yet his time as destroyer of carnival merriment in the novel is relatively short-lived. In the end, Muscat too is removed from within the boundaries of the inside space he sought to defend; in his absence, even his own bar is transformed to embrace the decadent essence of the magical realist borderland that already surrounds Vianne’s *chocolaterie*.

Hamilton's *Pretty Pearl* also embraces the carnivalesque in her female protagonist, and this female's subsequent relation to the inside space and its occupants. The carnival in this novel materializes in and around Pretty and Mother Pearl, physically split segments of a single duality. In this novel, Mother Pearl serves as the stabilizing factor of the carnival space. Around Mother Pearl, the carnival takes on the guise of the "inside folks" having their nighttime meal and fellowship. Food takes on great importance in this novel, with Mother Pearl as the human mawmaw woman magically feeding the masses, inviting these inside people, through the essence of carnival fellowship and freedom, to breach the natural borders they've set up in themselves against outsiders. In this space the insiders "pass bowls of kingombo" while their "song went on and on in the firelight" (Hamilton 131). The emphasis on this joyful, circular, nocturnal space also exemplifies the essence of carnival, a place where boundaries are ultimately broken.

If Mother Pearl represents the stabilized half of the carnival essence, Pretty Pearl serves as its clumsy house of cards. Her status as this destabilizing deck, established early in the novel, comes as she and John de Conquer play a hand of cards, "a sleight-of-hand card game that had no end and no winner" (Hamilton 24). This card game, which Pretty has no hope of winning, symbolizes and foreshadows the hand she plays in the novel's chaotic carnival moments and her subsequent fall from grace. Perhaps the most pertinent example comes late in the novel, as Pretty and her inside children friends walk through the dusk-like woods to the ginseng fields with food for the hands. Pretty, angry with the children for not noticing her powers, thinks "I got real, magical importance, me!" She then uses her John de Conqueror root to release her spirit the Hide-Behind on

the children, a spirit whose power is to “scare and terrify” (Hamilton 189). What follows closely resembles a carnival spook house, with children quickly walking through the darkness holding hands and jumping at every shadow. Petulant Pretty knows there’s no danger, effectively taking her rightful place as the spook house’s master carnie. Pretty, the female-duality’s dark and dangerous side, takes on the position of destroyer as much from an unalleviated arrogance as from her child-like naivety.

Harris too emphasizes the carnival through her female protagonist Vianne, and the inside space she occupies. Like Mother Pearl, Vianne rules over her “carnivalized” space with food and fellowship. Her very entrance into Lansquenet stems from the relentless blowing of “the wind of the carnival,” and her headlong entrance into this chaotic yet compelling space directly sets up a sort of looking-glass into the future state of the inside space she invades (Harris 1). This initial carnival (and Vianne’s place as an outsider within that space) highlights a propensity for future role reversals, as Vianne sets up her own inside carnival spaces of food and festival that beckon to even the most reluctant of outsiders. She tells the reader: “No one looks at us. We might as well be invisible; our clothing marks us as strangers, transients” (Harris 3). Yet for all of Vianne and Anouk’s transient state, the real interlopers in this early scene are the townspeople who have hidden their inside personas behind brightly colored carnival clothing. This initial carnival serves as a catalyst for the magical realism we find within its created borderland, and this novel deals with carnival on a direct and rather large level, and at least four large carnivals take place within the short space of the novel, which extends from Shrove Tuesday (Feb. 11) to Easter Monday (Mar. 31). These carnivals mirror that overseen by Mother Pearl in Hamilton’s novel, with Vianne set in place as head of the table, to cater

the food and provide her magical chocolates. Her concoctions at the carnival on the boat of the river people, at Armande's birthday party, and at her final chocolate festival, all spin together magic and an essence of disorder combined with "the noise, the fun, the gaiety of it all" (Harris 302). She creates the magical realism of the novel with her insistence on this disordered and outsider-embracing space.

In *Chocolat*, Reynaud serves in much the same capacity as the dark duality that Pretty does to Mother Pearl. As dark saint of the Christian religion, Reynaud rules over the inside space of Lansquenet, a town that in its very definition means a game at cards. In essence, Reynaud rules over nothing more than a game of chance, a game he ultimately loses. Reynaud, like Pretty, works his carnival magic in the essence of a petulant child; his moment of carnival too comes late in the novel, and results from his own breakdown and subsequent removal from the inside space he seeks to protect. Reynaud recognizes his inevitable link to Vianne, in that they are both outsiders within the inside space; they are, in a sense, balance and counterbalance for each other's magic. Because they are linked and because they share an inextricable oneness, Reynaud can harm Vianne only through a disturbance of her self-created inside, carnivalized space. His own carnival moment takes place in this space, as he embraces with a "dry grin of contempt" the "hour of the pig, the cunning pig" (Harris 295). He then proceeds to gorge himself on her chocolates, vicariously embracing the essence of her carnival while working his destructive magic on this carnival space. In this way Reynaud highlights what Danow calls the two forms of carnival space: "one represents [. . .] the bright side of human experience [. . .] the other literary manifestation reveals the darkest side of human capacity" (7). Mother Pearl and Pretty Pearl embrace this dual manifestation, as

do Vianne and Reynaud. And because of these inseparable dualities, the carnival spaces they create and occupy take on the magical realism evident in their borderlands, and suggest that more than these dualities can exist within these spaces.

Both *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* and *Chocolat*, when looked at alongside a close examination of the previous works, *Bag of Bones* and *The Children of Green Knowe*, show us still more ways of looking at magical realist borderlands. They still embody all the characteristics of magical realist borderlands laid out in the introductory chapter, but they do so in varied and distinctive ways. Rather than boast actual physical ghosts, these novels instead deal with the residual residues of past and present ideologies and certain dominating belief systems. Their magic is seen in a carefully crafted presentation of the power of language, and the magic organic to the language of the characters within these border spaces is what acts as the binding agent between the magic and the real. The reader, privy to the magic of the enclosed space through the metaphorical weight given to outsiders in the border space by the ever-present insider, is fully cognizant of the level of magic commingling with the real at all times. This type of borderland magical realism is, if anything, more pure, more organic, than that we saw in the texts where actual ghosts permeated the atmosphere, in that the power of language is one from which the characters can never escape. It grows organically from within their very nature, becoming a part of their souls, and in this way the magic that saturates the realistic medium puts down even stronger roots once these characters cross over into the borderlands. As Anzaldua tells us, “For some of us, language is a homeland [. . .] a border tongue which developed naturally” (77). Looking at magical realism in the borderlands in this way, as a central part of the linguistic soul of

each character present in these spaces, gives us an even stronger argument for inclusion. One of the elements of borderland magical realism is, as we have seen here, a part of the individual language of the characters we read. In searching for and finding this type of language, the burden of proof shifts from a set, definitive list of characteristics to a literary meeting of the minds, a recognition of magical realist language inherent in certain texts by readers who have come to carry this language within their own inner beings.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SPACE BETWEEN

#### Conclusions, Findings, and Musings on the Future

*Magical realism thrives on transition,  
on the process of change, borders and ambiguity.*

-Brenda Cooper (*Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing With a Third Eye*)

In concluding, I would like to return to a question I raised at the start, which has to do with the problem of categorization. By evoking the concept of borderlands, this thesis shows the problem in magical realist criticism of complete exclusion when it comes to works outside the literary canon, and argues against the mis-categorization of these works based only on the fact that they are not accepted within this canon. In academic circles, as well as on the best-seller list, it is now common to see nearly all of Salman Rushdie's works falling under the magical realist category, but if he were to ever be locked into only one brand of literary achievement, it would deny his abilities as an artist. I would argue the same holds true for writers of popular fiction for both children and adults, whose works are denied their true categories, and are often lumped into a single category based simply on a preconception about or even a misnomer of their

novels, which are often not looked at on a case-by-case basis. Walking through Barnes and Noble, one automatically heads to the Horror section to look for any and all Stephen King novels, yet his works also include crime drama, children's fiction, and even a serial novel that is a strange conglomerate of different genres King himself says is based on old spaghetti westerns. Joanne Harris' novel *Chocolat*, because it was turned into a Hollywood movie success that involved Johnny Depp, obviously can't be a serious work of literature either, right? As for magical realism in children's literature, it becomes all too easy to lump these stories into the fantasy category, regardless of whether there are actually any wand-wielding wizards or dragons involved. Children, it seems, are often not expected to process magic as anything but an extravagant, otherworldly phenomenon, even though what most of these novels show are children whose daily lives are filled with the simple, everyday magic of reality. Where does it end? At what point do we have to stop and question these categories, this mislabeling, this inattention to the truth behind works being ignored in academia?

Part of the problem, mentioned earlier, is the at times sketchy definition of magical realism, and the issue of what exactly does and does not constitute a magical realist text. The very nature of magical realism makes pinning down a definition almost impossible, as this literary genre is one that thrives on ambiguity and change. The problem with definites in this genre comes from the ever-changing nature of the genre itself, and thus it seems reasonable, if not necessary, to continue to expand the definition of this genre to include works that might not have been deemed magical realist at an earlier time. Of course, an attempt at inclusion should not suggest we become all-inclusive, and trying to categorize children's works like the *Harry Potter* series or even

Stephen King's other popular fiction, such as *The Stand*, as magical realism would be foolhardy. Nor can we go back to the time before *el boom*, when magical realism was "largely a Latin American mode of writing" (Monet-Viera 95). The need then comes for a categorical middle ground, a space between, and I would argue that the borderland texts examined here provide this vital element. The concept of borderlands, borrowed from Anzaldúa, provides us with a means of inclusion for works on the edge, works that seem to hesitate between the genre of magical realism and some other genre, yet when all is said and done they fall into the magical realist category. I would argue that these works on the periphery are those that bear the closest scrutiny when it comes to expanding the magical realist genre, mostly because categorizing works that are magical realist from start to finish requires little or no hesitation on the part of the reader or critic. If the true point of literature is to challenge readers, to skew what we thought were our perceptions, and to make us think in new and exciting ways, then a new level of inclusiveness is both warranted and necessary.

Of course, the problem with a new level of inclusivity becomes: Where do we draw the line? If we take a novel from one genre and place it into the magical realist category, can it still be classified in that other genre? I would argue that the issue is simpler than critics would like to make it, because aside from the characteristics I have outlined in the previous chapters, magical realism is often predicated on quantity as well as quality. In all the books examined here, magical realism permeated the body of the story, although the format of the novels often started in the mode of realism. The borderlands in these novels, spaces where magical realism resides, are present for most of the novel. While these borderlands may be interspersed with moments of pure realism,

one can still state that most of the novel is written in a magical realist vein. This prevents the inclusion of novels that boast one or two lines, or even one or two full scenes of magical realism, as these works are not thorough in their saturation of magic into a realistic medium.

As for the problem of genre bending or hopping, Brian Attebery addresses this issue to some extent in *Strategies of Fantasy*, where he walks the reader through a discussion of the different variations of genres, modes and formulas. Attebery's article also deals with approaching genres through the idea of "fuzzy sets" (12). This theory of fuzzy sets, he tells us, comes from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, and suggests that "genres [. . .] are defined not by boundaries but by a center" (Attebery 12). If one applies this theory to works that seem to encompass multiple genres, including magical realism, then the either/or definitional problem becomes nonexistent. Take horror, for instance. Let's say that the works of Stephen King are works of horror, at least at their center. Attebery might suggest we quantify these works as *quintessentially* horror. Surrounding this middle layer are other layers, like science fiction and fantasy and magical realism and realism, and these layers build out upon one another from that center core. The fuzzy set comes into play because, as Attebery tells us, there are "no clear boundaries between categories. Fantasy edges into science fiction, science fiction impinges on mainstream fiction; mainstream fiction overlaps with fantasy" (13). His study is important to literary studies because it negates a need in literary criticism to try to place literature into carefully constructed boxes.

Children's literature is even more likely than other popular fiction to be placed in these boxes, as the term children's literature often becomes its own all-encompassing

genre. Deborah Thacker points out the long term problematics inherent in this type of categorization, telling us that “while children as readers are frequently dismissed and children’s texts are ignored, an awareness of both is crucial to an understanding of how readers are enabled to take up this creative responsibly” (2). The dismissal of children’s literature as discussed by Thacker often seems to stem from the fact that while sometimes divided into subsections such as fairy tales, mixed fantasy, and hero stories, children’s literature, overall, simply is a genre, with no room for categorical intermediaries. The main argument here is that until recently there has been little or no critical attention paid to the possibility of defining certain works of children’s fiction as magical realism; after all, in the article, “Thinking About Fantasy: Are Children Fundamentally Different Thinkers and Believers From Adults?” Jacqueline Woolley suggests the negative consequences of the fact that “children are often thought to live in a world in which fantasy and reality are undifferentiated—a world in which horses can talk, fish can fly, and dreams come true” (Woolley 991). Her article wishes to point out the invalidity of this commingling, seeming to suggest that children who mix fantasy and reality will soon be party to the complete negation of reality as a whole. What Woolley fails to grasp in her article is the basic fact that most children view their realities as magical, without the aid of mythic flying creatures. And adults who create children’s fiction innately grasp this childlike ability to portray magical events in highly realistic and even mundane ways. Looking through the vast catalogue of children’s and young adult literature, myriad examples of magical realism abound besides those discussed here, and these works differ from fantasy because of their lack of magic as spectacle. In Florence Heide’s *The Shrinking of Treehorn*, a young boy finds himself shrinking away to nothing. He tells his

mom that his clothes are suddenly yards too big, yet she does not act like this is strange at all. Drawings accompanying the text confirm Treehorn getting smaller and smaller, and show his parents behaving as if this were a completely normal, everyday course of life.

In *Fire and Hemlock*, Diana Wynne Jones presents the story of a girl named Polly, a girl with two different sets of memories, both of which are true. Thus the story really deals with two lives lived simultaneously by one girl, and the events that unfold as she seeks to reconcile these dissimilar lives. One of E. Nesbit's many contributions to the magical realist genre, *The Enchanted Carpet* is the story of three children who "pretend" magic things into actuality. Just like in *The Children of Green Knowe*, the landscape is alive in this novel, where statues of ancient dinosaurs come to life and paper puppets suddenly begin to applaud the children's attempts at drama. In another Virginia Hamilton novel, *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*, a girl named Tree has conversations with a man named Brother Rush who lives in a certain room in her house, a man who's really a ghost. She fancies him her boyfriend, though he's really the ghost of her uncle come to deliver both a message and strength to Tree in a time of crisis. This is just a small sampling of the examples of magical realism that can be found in children's literature, pulled from many different styles of writing and different levels of comprehension. The main point in looking at this sampling is to prove that a sight unseen placement of all children's literature into only one category is both haphazard and without merit. Some children's literature boasts magical realism from start to finish, while others present us with magical real borderlands, spaces into which children cross to finally experience the blending of their real world with a type of magical existence. These books should be placed alongside popular fiction for adults in genre-expanding studies of magical realism in

contemporary fiction, thus adding to the genre while providing additional criteria for the placement of such literature.

Aside from these general observations, a quick look to the future of magical realism in literature and elsewhere is in order. Looking through the literature, some arguments have actually been made that magical realism cannot be separated from other types of literature. Stephen Slemon presents this argument in his “Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse” article, telling readers that:

In none of its applications to literature has the concept of magic realism ever successfully differentiated between itself and neighboring genres such as fabulation, metafiction, the baroque, the fantastic, the uncanny, or the marvelous [. . .] it is not surprising that some critics have chosen to abandon the term altogether. (407)

Yet there are obviously departures in magical realism from all these other genres, if one chooses to look. What interests me most in a discussion of magical realism’s future is not whether magical realism is a valid genre, but rather the expansion of magical realism into other areas of experience besides the written word. The argument for inclusiveness seems valid on so many levels, and I would argue that critical discussions of magical realism should begin to look not just at magical realism in writing, but in other mediums such as film and theater, where magical realism has begun to materialize. Aside from filmic adaptations of current magical realist novels, one of the most stunning examples of this phenomenon I experienced first hand, in a fascinating onstage blend of magic/real sensibilities in a Cirque Du Soleil performance of *Varekai!* This rainbow-colored spectacle seamlessly combined myth with daily activity, the concept of life with death,

and animate with inanimate landscapes. In this production the dark figure of death walked soundlessly among the brightly colored living, and was taken as no more or less than a central piece of the tightly knit puzzle that fit together both magic and real pieces. It was no shock to see figures representing Icarus fall from the sky, while animals danced, and women about town walked the streets with baskets filled with greenery. I sat in my chair thinking unspoken thoughts: “So this is what magical realism *looks* like. This is how it feels to watch from the periphery. To see it close enough to touch, and be just enough too far out of reach. This is how magical realism would look if it didn’t depend on the magical properties of language, of the written word. *This is what it feels like to be outside the written word!*” Yet, in current discussion of magical realism, being outside the written word would be more hindrance than help, as definitional references to magical realism seem to imply an innate need for the presence of literature and language and textuality. I’d like to suggest that this need for magical realism to be presented in written form should eventually be overlooked, reconsidered, and that we should begin to expand the boundaries of magical realism even further, including in current magical realist criticisms the vast mediums of expression captured by our other various senses.

Of course, before we can even begin to include other forms of magical realism into the canon we must first acknowledge the problems addressed here; namely, the historical exclusion of popular and children’s literatures from this genre. As we have seen, an argument for inclusion based on the presence of magic realist borderlands in texts normally not included in discussions of magical realism is enough to classify these texts as magical realist. Though these works do not follow the normally prescribed pattern of the magical realist novel, they nonetheless boast staunchly magical realist

intentions and inclinations. They also present the reader with decidedly magical realist spaces, borderlands where realist sensibilities meet magical elements, spaces where worlds collide, different becomes same, and fixities become elastic. This elastic property is very important in understanding the concept of magic realist growth, in that the very nature of the genre is one of expansion and extension. The novels examined in magical realism are unique, in that their realist properties expand to include seamlessly any magical elements, and the magical elements blend effortlessly with the realism surrounding them. In the preceding chapters on *Bag of Bones*, *The Children of Green Knowe*, *Chocolat*, and *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl*, it became very clear that the presence of borderlands, a concept borrowed from Anzaldúa and then transformed, reinvented in a delicate balance beam between the concepts of magic and real, provides readers with a new way to look for the presence of this genre in novels that seem to present on the cusp. These respective novels have shown us that magical realism must not be determinable merely by frequency or adherence to certain cultural sensibilities. It must instead be discoverable, as these novels show, in the mere pounding of the waves on a shore, in the bedtime stories of a small child, in the food we eat for comfort, and in the talismans we embrace for the promise of wisdom and power. And, as this argument for the presence of magical realist borderlands began with an idea I had while reading the work of Anzaldúa, it seems only fitting to end this paper with another of her ideas, one that I feel truly represents the idea behind a magical realist text. In her poem, "To live in the Borderlands means you," Anzaldúa writes:

To survive the Borderlands

you must live *sin fronteras*

be a crossroads. (217)

Only when we begin to acknowledge that to find magical realism we must not only look in the crossroads between the magic and the real, but actually embrace these crossroads, can we hope to make the most of this genre. That means looking past the arguments for magical realism as a Latin American phenomenon, or a product of high art literature, and finding magical realism in the everyday, in the mundane, and yes, even on the bestseller list.

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