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Introduction: Why We Need Another Study of Magic Realism

Magic Realist Fiction Today

Magic realism. The oxymoronic combination of "magic" and "realism" charges the term with seductive potency. One could persuasively argue, in fact, that few terms in the history of literary criticism have exercised the same evocative power, or sparked a comparable arousal of the affective imagination. Merely enunciating the term in a classroom setting produces an immediate alertness, an attentive, inquisitive awe, as years of teaching experience have repeatedly confirmed. In scholarly circles, the proliferation of critical studies on magic realism that have been generated over the past three quarters of a century, and that continue to get published, points to a similar degree of interest and intellectual curiosity. From the production and marketing perspective, the sheer number of novels and stories that are still being written as and classified under this rubric on an international level would suggest that, far from having exhausted its potential, the attraction and popularity of magic realism have increased.

Both positive and negative consequences ensue from this fascination and willingness to be seduced by the term. On the positive side, this is undoubtedly among the most important factors to have ensured the success and propagation of magic realist fiction, for presumably reception and production foster and promote each other. (Although no study has yet been undertaken on the effects of marketing strategies in relation to magic realism, one can hypothesize that the very appearance of the term on the book cover attracts readers and promotes sales, or at least is intended to.) On the negative side, the force of this affective response may well be the main cause of the confused state of both the scholarship and readers' understanding of the term. This statement may seem surprising, given that approximately seventy-five years have elapsed since Roh first coined the term, that countless stories and

novels have been either written or classified as magical realist, and that hundreds of critical and theoretical studies, which have evolved through a number of intellectual paradigms ranging from the formal to the post-structuralist, postmodern, and post-colonial, have been published on the topic. It would appear reasonable to assume that we have some reliable understanding of what the term means. Disconcertingly, however, when one turns to the scholarly publications in the hopes of discovering a persuasive definition of the term, one is quickly left feeling bewildered. Definitions and theories, be they traditional or recent, are confusingly contradictory. Some consensus does exist, but further investigation reveals that it is only limited to minor points that do not address, let alone resolve, some of the more important, general issues. An unsettling, but in fact, not surprising state of affairs. When one observes and analyzes the enormous variety of works that are collected in anthologies of magic realism, or promoted and accepted as magic realist by book publishers and critics, works that easily fit under other generic rubrics, the source of the problem becomes very clear. Simply stated, fascination has not only preceded, but has too often precluded informed methodological investigation. Intuitively, spontaneously, and indiscriminately, the term continues to be applied as an umbrella rubric that covers a curious range of disparate fictional modes that in some way combine "magic" and "realism." One critic includes the term "magic realism" in a list of trendy, but unproductive!}' vague terms that have become "buzzwords loosely associated with an exotic and undifferentiated multiculturalist flavor" (de la Campa 1999).

Magic Realist Theory and Criticism: State of the Art

Some might argue that it is naive and utopic to aspire for terminological consensus. A few scholars in past years have already drawn this conclusion, and some have suggested abandoning the term altogether. On the other hand, to relinquish all such hope is to accept the proliferation of confusion as an acceptable state of affairs, and to resign oneself to the inevitable consequence of that acceptance, namely that magic realism will continue to be used as a catch-all term. This attitude is clearly counter-intuitive. Common sense suggests that if we are to continue using the term, it must be because there is some discernible fit between the term and textual reality, that is, there must exist a set of texts bearing features that one can designate as "magic realist" as opposed to something else. In other words, that there must be a magic realist mode that exists as a distinct and identifiable literary phenomenon.

This presupposition is clearly implicit in critical studies of magic realist fiction. Nevertheless, even in the most recent, post-colonial scholarship, there is still enormous confusion regarding what constitutes this distinctiveness. The seventies and eighties witnessed the emergence of numerous attempts to define the mode and delineate its boundaries, but the most influential of these have yet to be subjected to critical scrutiny. During the nineties, scholarship on magic realism is generally marked by a more passive adoption of these earlier, uncontested approaches. Typical of much of this scholarship are serious flaws and omissions, such as the random and indiscriminate choice of research sources to follow, (which betrays an unawareness of the important extant research), the inaccurate extraction and citation of parts of theories at the expense of the total picture, and a disinterest in critically questioning previous assumptions, statements, and models of magical realism, which betrays a surprising lack of interest in the general theoretical issues. A sense of uncomfortable resignation with a confusing state of affairs permeates the scholarship on magic realism, as scholars continue to search for bits and pieces of significant clues among the rubble of theories and definitions.

To accept this confusion as an inevitable state of affairs, and to declare futile the attempt to put some order to this chaotic theoretical situation is to abdicate the professional responsibility of the literary scholar, for the burden of scholarly responsibility demands that if the term is to be used, it must have some sense, and this implies some degree of consensual agreement. Today, the formulation of a new, more rigorous, and up to date theory of magic realism has become a pressing necessity in the world of literary scholarship. Literary researchers must once again rise to the challenge of sorting through the chaos and establishing clear and logical parameters. Until we succeed in redefining the mode, misguided usages of the term will continue to proliferate. The purpose of this volume is precisely to meet that challenge. Accepting it implies the belief that a new definition is indeed an attainable goal. This conviction provided the main impetus for this project.

Building theoretical models is, even under the best of circumstances, a most arduous undertaking. If any conceptual headway is to be made, a logical first step is to identify the source of the problem, and critically analyze the errors and misconceptions inherent in extant theories. Once this has been accomplished, an alternate model that corrects previous errors must be first developed, and then applied rigorously to a vast number of works. The first step then is to attempt to identify the source of the confusion. In all fields of learning, basic but difficult problems sometimes remain unsolved as scholarly

attention is diverted to the pursuit of other promising, new. and trendy paradigms and approaches. A careful scrutiny of the history of magic realist theory and criticism reveals that this is precisely what happened to research in this area. It is not the purpose of this Introduction, or of this volume, to exhaustively review all the research in this field; a great number of such critical summaries already exist (Chiampi 1983; Llarena 1997). Rather, it is simply to outline the major trends and the problems inherent in them, so as to contextualize the specific focus of this collection of essays.

Formalist Approaches to Magic Realism

Generally speaking, scholarship on magic realism falls into two main categories. The first, ranging from the 40's to the mid 80's, is formal in nature, and is constituted by the works of those critics who sought to elaborate a poetics of the genre by locating the features of magical realism within literary texts. Early representatives of this trend include Flores and (Flores 1955; Leal 1967), and one of the latest exponents is Amaryll Chanady, who corrected and refined former critics' work in her seminal book *Magic Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy* (Chanady 1985). To date, it remains the most comprehensive and influential formal theory of magic realism. It is these critics who first identified the textual categories they believed encapsulated the specificity of magic realism. For Flores, the specificity of the mode resided in the ontology of the fictional world; for Leal, it ensued from a combination of the ontology of the fictional world and the particular nature of the narration. Borrowing these valuable insights from her predecessors, and preserving the notion that the specificity of magic realism lies at the level of both the ontology of the fictional world and the particulars of the narrator's discourse, Chanady corrects some of their imprecision, and formulates, with methodological sophistication, three indispensable conditions of magic realism (see Bortolussi article for further elaboration). To these scholars we owe whatever understanding we have of the poetics of magic realist fiction. Unfortunately, and this marks the historical source of the problem, this line of investigation was never adequately pursued. As a result, the conceptual and logical flaws in Chanady's work have never been identified and revised. For example, isolating the ontological nature of the fictional world as one of the sufficient features of magic realism is highly problematic, as it can be easily demonstrated that the same properties also typify the fictional world of other genres (see Dixon's contribution); and as some of the papers in this volume

demonstrate, the role of the magic realist narrator and the properties of his or her narration are much more complex and sophisticated than Chanady accounts for. At the precise moment when the necessary groundwork for a formal theory of magic realism had been laid, and a more refined and cogent explanation of magic realist poetics was most needed, this line of research was cut short. Curiously, sixteen years after its publication, her formal theory still has not received the critical attention it deserves, and even the most current scholarship continues to quote her arguments uncritically, indeed, often naively. Subsequent scholars stopped asking the question of what constitutes magic realism on the false assumption that it had already been adequately answered. It was not.

The main goal of this volume is to resume this abandoned strain of literary studies on magic realism with a view to developing a new theory of magic realism. Several of the contributions engage directly with Chanady's work, thereby constituting the first concerted effort to address, and redress, the inherent limitations of her theory. Some might consider Chanady's work to be now somewhat passe, and might object to the emphasis on her work, arguing that more recent theories have contributed valuable insights to our understanding of magic realism. This is indisputable. However, as the rest of this introduction will demonstrate, their lack of due consideration for formal and generic issues has engendered methodological flaws and false assumptions and presuppositions that have in fact contributed to an increased confusion regarding the specificity of magic realism.

Methodology: The Necessary and Sufficient Features Approach

One could adduce at least two reasons for the shift in scholarly attention: the general decline of formalist studies in the wake of emerging post-structuralist approaches, and frustration with the difficulties inherent in producing stable definitions and reliable taxonomies. If the abandonment of an important line of research marks the historical origin of the problem, the inability to deal appropriately with issues related to genre studies mark the methodological source of the problem. As Fischelov has pointed out, the solution to flawed generic taxonomies and definitions is not to abandon all taxonomical and terminological aspirations, but to improve the method by which demarcations and definitions are established (Fischelov 1993). Obviously this implies that any attempt to discuss a genre or mode must be grounded in some conscious, prior assumptions about what constitutes a legitimate and productive method

for determining relevant boundaries between literary genres. In the field of magic realism theory and criticism, this conscious awareness is notoriously lacking. While Chanady does inquire about the difference between modes & genres, she does not pursue the issue of genre methodology. Without explicitly naming her genre study approach, she in fact employs the method that consists of systematically determining necessary & sufficient criteria. This method is not without its own challenges, one of the most serious of which is determining the appropriate level of generality at which to operate. If overly general features are adduced, they will be found to apply to a wide range of divergent phenomenon. On the other hand, if features are sought at a very restricted level of generality, they could prove to be of unusually limited interest or application. In other words, casting the net too wide results in definitions so broad that they fail to recognize important lines of generic demarcation, and casting it too near results in definitions that are so restricted that they either preclude much of what common sense would sagely include, or fail to capture what is most interesting about the mode or genre. As some of the contributions demonstrate, Chanady's theory casts the net both too far in some ways and too near in others, including works that are easily classified under other generic rubrics, and excluding others that intuitively could be included.

A further problem with trying to establish necessary and sufficient criteria is that such features are often proposed on the basis of the comparison of only a small number of works. One of the surest methodological safeguards is the cross-generic, comparative analysis of the greatest possible variety of literary examples. When one casts the literary net farther to include other examples, one may discover that the same features that have been identified as distinguishing properties of the prototype are also present in a variety of other, very different modes and genres, so that the features isolated as distinctive may be necessary, but not sufficient. Conclusions of this sort, which have not been adequately exposed, continue to constitute a recurring problem in post-formalist scholarship on magic realism.

Straddling the formal and contextual approaches, and anticipating the latter is the work of Chiampi on the marvelous real, which attempts to place textual signs in the context of production and reception, although she treats both of these at a purely speculative level (Chiampi 1983).

Post-Structuralist Approaches to Magic Realism

The second trend, spanning approximately the past two decades, is post-structural in nature, and includes post-modern and post-colonial approaches which seek to articulate the relationship between magic realism on the one hand, and either the aesthetics of postmodernism, or post-colonial contexts, on the other. Among the critics of this second trend, to mention but a few, are Jameson, Baker, Cooper, D'Haen, Paris, Durix, de la Campa, Linguanti, and Lopez (Jameson 1986; Baker 1991; Cooper 1991; D'Haen 1995; Paris 1995; Durix 1998; de la Campa 1999; Linguanti 1999; Lopez 2001). Beyond any doubt, these more contemporary studies have yielded crucial insights. For example, the recognition of the self-reflexive dimension of magic realist narratives, ignored by previous critics, and the development of concepts such as the "carnivalesque," "syncretism," "hybridicity," and "transculturation" have shed an important new light on magic realist fiction, shifting the focus from representation and identity-oriented ideologies to the playful and ironic qualities of narrative that resist and even undermine the very notions of representation and identity.

However, in spite of such very valuable insights, this scholarship has also contributed to an obfuscation of our understanding of magic realism. One of the most serious conceptual problems ensues from the tenuous methodological assumption that there exists a homologous correlations between cultural and textual products, and that this correlation can successfully describe the properties and functions of a set of literary texts. This assumption is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it confuses observation with correlation. When critics observe similarities between the features of the context and the text, the inference they are tempted to draw is that whenever one observes a similar feature in a context, it must exist in other texts. However, this is by no means a foregone conclusion, and must be established through the empirical observation that includes the study of a wide variety of texts — newspaper articles, popular fiction, etc., produced in a variety of different contexts. For example if one is interested in studying post-colonial contexts, the first step would consist of the examination of these diverse texts in the same context to determine if a) the same features recur in other, non-magic realist discourses, and b) if within this context there are narratives of the same genre (magic realism) which do not manifest those features. Following this first step, one would then have to examine different (non-post-colonial) contexts to determine if they have produced texts that contain the same

feature. None of the post-structuralist criticism and theory on magic realism displays anything that comes remotely close to such methodological rigor. Yet for the inference that texts correlate with contexts to be valid, one must engage in a systematically observation of many contexts and the texts they produce.

Let us consider the complications related to the first methodological step. We know that any cultural context gives rise to a variety of different textual productions, so that, to follow the post-colonial example, even contexts that could in principle be defined as post-colonial, (a task which has proven to be a serious point of critical controversy), produce a variety of very different narrative texts for a variety of different reading publics with both divergent and coinciding tastes and interests. The same economic (late capitalist), political (neo-liberal) conditions engender a variety of very different literary texts, both magic realist and non magic-realist, and the latter may share some of the same magic realist properties. But not all literature containing magical elements and produced in what by some criteria can be considered a post-colonial context is necessarily magic realist. The example of the Galician work *El Basque Animado,* by Wenceslao Fernandez-Flores illustrates the point; it too presents magical events very naturally in order to document the encounter between the rise of urban capitalism and the traditional mythical beliefs and superstitions of the rural Galician people, but it is definitely not magic realist. Similarly, with respect to post-modern contexts, many different kinds of narrative, some containing magic, and some not, are recognizably postmodern, but even though the latter may share properties in common with magic realism, they are not necessarily magic realist. What then differentiates magic realist fiction from other postmodern or post-colonial narratives? This issue continues to be ignored by post-structuralist critics; for example, the works of Paris, and D'Haen (1995) employ a very broad and unmeticulous family resemblance method to determine exclusively the similarities between postmodern fiction and magic realism, not the fundamental differences. We know that cultural productions that are very different from each other can accomplish the same thematic and pragmatic goals; for example, several critics have claimed that Latin American testimonial and some magic fiction share the same ideological functions, but testimonial literature is not magic realist. Therefore the conclusion that some characteristic features of a correlation constitute the specificity of any mode or genre amounts to an invalid inference. Therefore by loosely selecting elements of a context, post-colonial,

postmodern, or other, and correlating them with selected elements of specific texts, critics multiply correlations devoid of any real functionality.

The text-context correlation is problematic for a second reason. Logically, to reduce a literary phenomenon to the context in which it is produced, e.g., to claim that magic realism originates in post-colonial contexts, is to posit an unproven, indeed untenable natural link that precludes the possibility of magic realist texts emerging in other contexts. Yet there is no logical or inherent reason why magical realist works can't arise in other, very different contexts. After all, some critics posit that the German author Patrick Suskind's *Perfume,* is magic realist, (although the criteria for labeling it as such are never made clear) (Paris 1995). Jean Weisgerber's entire book, *Le Réalisme Magique: Roman, Peinture et Cinéma* argues that magic realist fiction was produced in Europe long before Miguel Angel Asturias and Gabriel Garcia Marquez produced their classic magic realist novels (Weisgerber 1987). One such novel is Alfred Kubin's *The Other Side.* These earlier, European texts have been all but forgotten by contemporary critics of magic realism, who assume that the mode or genre started in Latin America. Yet it is of crucial importance that the early European and Latin American varieties of magic realist narratives be compared and explored to determine their commonalties. This has never been done in any systematic, or even cursory fashion. One cannot simply reject these texts on the basis that they were produced in a very different context. Without a clear poetics that defines the fundamental features of magic realism, this comparative analysis that could potentially be very valuable, is impossible.

A third reason that the text-correlation assumption is problematic has to do with the inherent complications that such a study poses. Any social, political, historical, or cultural context is an immense field constituted by multiple, diverse, and contradictory domains and activities, so that the task of identifying neat and simple correlations or determining which correlations are functional are extremely complex and delicate endeavors.

A fourth problem is that the reduction of textual specificity to a common context of production amounts to subsuming all texts under the abstract notion of textuality, which neglects fundamental, significant differences in favor of an absurd, untenable essentialism. Post-colonial critics often approach the presumed magic realist text with presuppositions about their political relationship to the post-colonial and first world contexts. However, these presuppositions frequently amount to interpretations about the themes or content of the work, something which only textual evidence can

validate. In fact, as will *be.* demonstrated by some of the contributions in this volume, magic realism may well defy all such ideological reductions.

Consequently, the completion of the formal project of elaborating a poetics of magic realism is a necessary prerequisite to semantic or thematic analysis, and to correlational studies.

Methodology: The Family Resemblance Approach

Criticism and theory of magic realism has succumbed to another methodological pitfall related to genre studies, and that is the very problematic family resemblance method. Generally speaking, it consists of classifying new literary examples on the basis of perceived resemblances between a work and other members of the genre. More specifically, the method consists of determining a list of features of an object, and then observing how many of them exist in another object. This method is by far the most natural and intuitive approach to genre classification, for it allows one to conclude that object *y* does not need to share all of the traits of *x* in order to be related to it, but only some subset of the whole. Scholars of magic realism, both formal and post-structuralist, typically adopt this method, consciously or unconsciously. Its popularity is easy to understand; it is a highly flexible method that allows readers to evoke the presence of any dominant similarity as an important aspect of the genre. However, this very flexibility allows for idiosyncratic classification by remote resemblance and arbitrary comparisons. Feature *x* may be adduced as the essential magic realist property for works *a* and *b,* but feature j may be adduced by the same or other readers, to explain how works *c* and *d* are magic realist. Thus, the issue of which features are important for the mode or genre remains unclear. In other words, the method does not discriminate between the features. Moreover, the family resemblance approach allows the family to grow in an undisciplined and disorganized fashion. Work *b* may be adduced to be magical realist because it is similar to work *a,* work *c* may be adduced to be magical realist because it is similar to work *b,* work *d* may be seen as similar to work *c,* and so on. Ultimately, the term may become useless because it is so inclusive as to lose meaning it originally had.

For example, typical of research on magic realism is the tendency to take for granted that works bearing some loose resemblance to, that is, having some number of traits in common with Garcia Marquez' prototypical *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* can be legitimately called magic realist. It is precisely this loose application of the family resemblance approach that has lead critics to classify Milan Kundera's *The Book Of Laughter and Forgetting,* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe,* as magic realist (Paris 1995, D'Haen 1995). But the first text only contains one type of magical event - levitation, while the second has no recognizable magic at all.

Another example of the confusing nature of the over-generalizing family resemblance method is Chiampi's book on the marvelous real. Rejecting the term magic realism, she subsumes the marvelous real, a rubric under which she nevertheless includes classical works of magic realism, such as Asturias' *Men of Maze,* and Garcia Marquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* under the broader category of the Latin American new novel that emerged in the 1940's and 50's. By so doing, she fails to distinguish between a number of very different literary form (Chiampi 1983).

Comparing Magic Realist Fiction?

Today it is widely accepted that magic realism is far from an exclusively Latin American phenomenon. Given this reality, it is important to reconsider the goals and methods of literary comparativism. In fact, the problems implicit in the comparison of cross-cultural literary movements are the same ones that comparatists have always faced. What is the relationship between the text, the context of production, and the reception of the works? What methodologies are most suitable for the study of each of these? With respect to the study of contexts, literary critics must take heed of the sophisticated methods developed by social scientists. With respect to reception, empirical approaches that include the study of real readers of magic realism must be, buy have still not been employed. And how to integrate these different aspects of the literary phenomenon? Solving, or even addressing all these issues by far exceeds the scope of this volume. What is obvious though, is that a method based on intuitive and random correlations can only yield limited, if not misguided inferences. The purpose of this volume is very modest: it proposes to develop a new poetics for the comparative study of magic realist fiction, on the assumption that we cannot compare if we do not know what qualifies as magic realist fiction, and in the hopes of dispelling the misconceptions and confusion about the nature of this popular literary trend and constituting a more solid framework upon which future research can build. The fact that the basic problem has not been resolved does not mean that it is not worth answering; rather it points to the need to return to it, and, with the benefit of hindsight

and new insights, to revise the theory of magic realism. Advocating the return to a truncated project does not amount to dismissing posterior insights. Rather, it calls for a more productive future integration of formal and contextual approaches. Text - context correlations must be grounded in a more cogent poetics of magic realism.

Selected on the basis of their original engagement with, and important revisions of the formal theory of magic realism, the papers that comprise this volume provide a cogent demonstration of the weaknesses of extant theories, and propose more suitable criteria on which to found a more dynamic conceptual framework for magic realism. Together, these contributions suggest concrete solutions by specifying pertinent levels of analysis on which to focus one's critical attention. Not all of the contributions deal extensively with the Latin American masters of magic realism; some explore the poetics of the genre in works written in English. This focus by no means reflects a lack of awareness of the superb fiction of Latin America, nor a discourteous unwillingness to acknowledge its importance. On the contrary, by isolating and developing, in a more discriminating fashion, the more relevant aspects of magic realist poetics, these contributions establish a more cogent comparative link with the masterpieces of Latin American magical realism.

The two articles by David Danow and Alicia Llarena, explore important issues related to the theory of magic realism in relation to post-Marquezian fiction produced both within and outside of Latin America. Both offer original insights that invite us to rethink traditional conceptions of magic realism.

David Danow's paper, "Magical Realism: Mosaic of Excess," proposes that magic realism be thought of as a "poetics of excess," and describes some of the fundamental properties of that poetics, including hyperbole and paradox, with respect to two works, Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo,* and Garcia Marquez' *The Autumn of the Patriarch.* Although he does not sustain a dialogue directly with any particular theory, his paper directs the focus of analysis to a level ignored by Chanady's theory. Casting the net beyond the textual properties of the narrator's discourse, Danow explores the design to which the structuring of that discourse belongs, as well as the reader response that it elicits. Previous conceptions of magic realism focus on the natural presentation of magical events, which presumably engender a receptive attitude based on a willing suspension of disbelief. Danow's "poetics of excess" constitutes a challenge to these conceptions by suggesting that a playful irony with respect to the magical events permeates the text, and that

this in turn elicits a corresponding reader response based more on dubiety and vacillation than facile acceptance.

In her paper "De Nuevo el Realismo Mágico: Del Mito a la Posmodernidad" ("Magic Realism Again: From the Myth to Post-modernism"), Alicia Llarena scrutinizes some postmodern and postcolonial discussions about magic realism in an attempt to explain its unbridled popularity. Pondering critiques that accuse Latin American magic realist authors of reinforcing exoticized views of Latin America and alterity, she offers insightful and persuasive counter arguments that serve to revitalize a scholarly discourse that now betrays intellectual fatigue. Among other things, she reflects on the reasons why magic realism is considered a derogatory sign in writings of Latin American female authors. In the spirit of the revisionary character of this volume, Llarena revisits and revises established assumptions, and explores new ways of thinking about magic realism, thereby pushing the theoretical envelope beyond its current confines.

Enlarging the scope of magic realist criticism by incorporating into the scholarly field of inquiry a related genre until now completely neglected by literary scholars - popular fantasy, Peter Dixon draws our attention to the previously ignored commonalities between that genre and magic realism. Concerned mainly with fantasy narratives, his evidence and arguments nevertheless prove the need to return to square one and rethink the formal properties that were thought to determine the generic boundaries between fantasy and magic realism.

In my paper, "Implausible Worlds, Ingenuous Narrators, Ironic Authors: Towards a Revised Theory of Magic Realism," I critically revise the main issues that typify extant theories of magic realism, including Chanady's, and propose a different set of criteria for defining the mode and better differentiating it from other related ones, such as the fantastic.

David ReddalPs "Divine Funeral Games: A Discussion of Magical Realism and Theothanatology" proposes an alternative to two of Chanady's conditions for literary magic realism. Drawing from both literary critics and philosophers as diverse as Brian McHale, C.S. Pierce, Roderick Chisholm, and N. Rescher, he hypothesizes that the concepts of "the rhetoric of contrastive banality" and "fallibalism" constitute intrinsic properties of magic realism. Following this theoretical discussion, he lucidly applies the concepts to Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* and James Morrow's *Towing Jehovah* to argue that these are magic realist novels in the same sense as the Latin American classics.

Beata Gesicka's paper, "On the Carnivalesque in Magic Realism: Reflections on Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said"* continues nicely the line of thought developed by David Danow. Contrary to the established view that magic realism validates some pre-modern, or indigenous belief in wonders, a line of thought prominent in the work of some post-colonial scholars, although contested by others like de la Campa and G. Spivak (quoted in de la Campa), to mention a few, Gesicka argues that the magic in fact serves to emphasize the arbitrary and relative nature of all myth making systems (de la Campa 1999). Drawing on the notion of the carnivalesque, she demonstrates that magic realism, like the liberating spirit of the carnival, undermines the logic upon which *all* established patterns of thought, symbolic conventions, and belief systems — European, native American, and many others, are founded.

Valerie Henitiuk's "Step into my Parlour: Magic Realism and the Creation of a Feminist Space" takes issue directly with Chanady's notion of "resolved antinomy." Maintaining that rather than resolve the antimony between the magical and real worlds, magic realism deliberately sustains it, she lucidly analyses Carter's Nights at the Circus" and demonstrates that the author's use of magic realism in this novel serves a feminist, subversive agenda. To substantiate her claim that this sustained antinomy is typical of Latin American magic realism, she provides evidence from Garcia Marquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude.*

Theory must serve literary analysis and interpretation, and it stands to reason that a cogent theory of magic realism can only contribute to more fruitful textual analysis and interpretation. The insights and revisions to extant theories of magic realism offered by the contributors of this volume provide the necessary parameters for more fruitful analyses of magic realist narratives. Several papers in this volume are testimony to this; in addition to their theoretical merit, they constitute the most lucid accounts to date of the specific effects that magic realism accomplishes in the novels they analyze.

Concluding this volume is a very special contribution. Amaryll Chanady has kindly agreed to provide the final commentary to all of the preceding contributions. Many scholars have no doubt been wondering what she may think today about the mode, how her main ideas may have changed, and if so, in what ways? We are most grateful to her for her willingness to participate with us in this project, and to offer us once again her enlightening insights.

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