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Renaissance Drama and 'Magic Realism': Mythology and Religion Across Time and Genres

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Renaissance and ‘magic realism’ literature share many characteristics; among these are the prevalence of mythology and religion. It is no new observation to say that contemporary literature has strong and discernible connections to the earlier literature of the Renaissance; scholarship has long seen the parallels between eras that share the collapse of established values and beliefs. The use and treatment of mythology and religion in these respective categories of literature, however, invites a discussion yet to be made in scholarship. An examination of the form and function of mythology and religion in authors of both Renaissance and ‘magic realism’ literature shows how these shared conventions similarly address and respond to relevant social, political, and cultural tensions. While the comparison is not a one to one throughout, analysis will reveal how Renaissance authors of drama and authors of ‘magic realism’ in the late 20th and 21st-century evoke the same spirit in the use of these conventions. Both use these belief systems to explain relevant aspects of humanity, as was the intention of these systems in their original design.

Franz Roh first used the term ‘magic realism’ in his 1925 book *After Expressionism: Magic Realism* to categorize “modern realist paintings with fantasy or dream-like subjects” (“Magic Realism”). In the 1950s and 60s, literary critics of the Americas, such as Angel Flores and Luis Leal, adopted the term in response to the “magic, marvelous, and supernatural” fiction of Latin American authors like Borges, Carpentier, and Garcia Marquez (“Magic Realism,” Bell-Villada 51, 52). Contemporary understanding of ‘magic realism’ literature, however, remains widely disputed amongst scholars; it is unable to secure a valid and definitive position as a genre or subgenre because of the inability to explicitly differentiate itself from other similar genres. According to Gene H. Bell-Villada, ‘magic realism’ attempts to portray “ordinary life” through “popular belief, folklore, home remedies, and even superstitions” (55). The components of magic

and realism in this type of literature create a “recognizable reality” where “supernatural” elements are “a component part” along with realism (52). These magical components are accompanied by, and often manifest through, mythology and religious beliefs in examples of ‘magic realism.’ Our discussion examines mythology and religion as it is displayed in Isabel Allende’s *The House of Spirits*, Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine*, and Haruki Murakami’s *Kafka on the Shore*.

The emergence of ‘magic realism’ fiction in Latin America provided a unique and original voice to literature from the American continents. ‘Magic realism,’ through fictive narratives of the “magic and fantastical,” signifies the rejection of the standard 19th-century model of European linear realism (Bell-Villada 55). Stephen Slemon argues that ‘magic realism,’ which is most present in cultures lacking their own “mainstream literary traditions,” mirrors the “metaphysical clash inherent in colonial history and language” through the opposition of magic and realism in both the narrative and the themes (9-12, 20-21). A post-colonial interpretation of ‘magic realism’ offers an explanation for the combination of religious and mythological conventions. Often, the mythological corresponds with the culture of the narrative as it existed prior to imperialism and/or colonization while the religious corresponds with the systems of belief imposed and established thereafter. Together, they represent the culmination of conflicting cultures and ideologies created through imperialism and colonization, which affects societies to this day.

Bell-Villada acknowledges that supernatural and mythological components are not exclusive to ‘magic realism.’ From the earliest written sources (and earlier in oral storytelling) through the most recent, magic and mythology are present in various examples of literature. Even mainstream religion, as Bell-Villada points out, participates in these magical tendencies

through the miracles of saints in the Catholic narratives of the Middle Ages, not to mention all the magical and supernatural elements present within the Bible itself (49). Despite the useful assertions and observations of Bell-Villada's article, he mistakenly discredits the relevance that Northrop Frye's 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism* offers to 'magic realism,' referring to Frye's discussion as "too time-bound and culture-bound" (52). Bell-Villada's claim fails to see the opportunity of how 'magic realism' might be incorporated into Frye's notion of the procession of literature, which argues that all literary works form a cohesive collective body through the use of consistent archetypes stemming from their presence in classical mythology. In an attempt to rectify this oversight, it is beneficial to now look back to the literature of the Renaissance.

Any observation of Renaissance literature will quickly detect the religious and/or mythological influences present. One of the most fundamental conventions of classicism in Renaissance literature is the prevalence of both implicit and explicit mythological references. While some authors used authentic classical texts as their source material, such as the works of Homer, Ovid, and Virgil, with which most writers and audiences were at least partially familiar, writers of various degrees of learning often referred to handbooks or encyclopedias of mythology. These pseudo-classical sources offered both allegorical and ethical interpretations of classical mythology. As Douglas Bush has observed, the most successful writers, and consequently those who are now most often remembered and revered, used these classical themes and traditions in tandem with a wide range of sources, including those of folklore and Christian tradition. This corresponded with the influence of the growing humanist movement. Isabel Rivers highlights two aims of the Renaissance humanists: "recover[ing] the moral values of classical life" and "imitat[ing] the language and style of the classics as a means to that end" (125). The humanist theory of poetics, which aligns with the Aristotelian view promoted by

Sidney, argues that poetry is ethical and instructive for the development of good citizens; literature from the English Renaissance, therefore, is heavily influenced by morals of classicism along with the morals of Christianity.

Although the Renaissance was fraught with religious tension, Christianity was a staple of both culture and society, largely dictating morals and social norms. Consequently, classical tradition in Renaissance literature is often paired with Christian tradition and ideology, either in an intentionally harmonizing or contradictory way, to communicate and uphold moral, social, political, and cultural ideologies in an era that threatened these established values as technology, intellection, and increased globalization advanced and led the world towards modernity. Our discussion of Renaissance literature begins chronologically with three well-recognized English dramas by two of the era's popular poets: Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*.

Anyone even remotely familiar with Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*¹ is aware of its religious preoccupation. A discussion of the tragedy without mentioning religion is impossible as Christianity is the main focus throughout. The sourcebook for Marlowe's play, *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*, is an English translation from the 1587 German *Faustbook*, based on the historical figure Johann Faustus, whom Martin Luther considered a sorcerer. During the Renaissance, particularly in the 16th and into the beginning of the 17th Century, the legitimacy of magic and witchcraft was commonly accepted: both were widely regarded as the deceptive work of the devil or enacted with his agency. After the fall of Rome, when Christianity began consuming

¹ The shorter A Text (1604) is used in this discussion rather than the longer B text (1616) for the sake of brevity, as we examine numerous texts in our discussion. This decision does not negatively impact the argument of this discussion, however, as the instances and effects of both religion and mythology within the play remain plentiful and is therefore advantageous to the body of this work.

Europe, the pagan gods of classicism became understood as fallen angels or demons. Christian tradition and contemporary religious discussions, therefore, traced magic and witchcraft back to classical mythology. As T. McAlindon attests, the association of mythology with witchcraft and magic in *Doctor Faustus* creates an illusion beyond mere neo-classicism; the tragic hero succumbs to the illusion of the demonic promises of magic and mythology while repeatedly rejecting God and Christianity (214).

The first scene of the tragedy begins with a soliloquy delivered by Faustus as he laments the limitations of human knowledge and learning. As Faustus' speech progresses through sixty lines of verse, the threat his rhetoric poses to universal, celestial, and moral order grows more explicit and blasphemous in a Christian context, forewarned by the Chorus in the play's prologue (1.1-63). Faustus is dissatisfied with even the highest achievements attained from each area of study; it is clear that he desires a position of higher elevation within the Great Chain of Being. Faustus' incorrect reflection on divinity results in his oversight of the goodness and promise of grace and everlasting life in heaven, leading him to "necromantic books" (1.50). Faustus' desire to exceed mortal limitations and upset divine order, as scholarship points out, parallels the arrogance and general pattern of both the fall of Lucifer and the fall of man:

O what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honor, of omnipotence
 Is promised to the studious artisan!
 [. . .] But his dominion that exceeds in this
 Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man:
 A sound magician is a mighty god (1.53-63)

The simultaneous fall from grace and Christianity in pursuit of ambition not only foreshadows the path Faustus' choice will lead to, it also emphasizes a certain intellectual point: C. L. Barber has argued that the Faustus' blasphemy is heroically dramatized. In Barber's view, Marlowe's depiction of blasphemy parallels the Renaissance humanists' pursuit of knowledge and concern with individuality: "a Promethean enterprise, heroic and tragic, an expression of the Renaissance" (173). Reconsidering the blasphemy of Faustus as both religious and as a representation of the humanist pursuit of intellection indicates the potential anxieties involving Christianity in Renaissance culture.

Christianity was already challenged by cultural and societal changes during the Renaissance due to the Reformation. The English Reformation, spurred by Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church in the 1530s, led the country to Protestantism; the succession of Mary I in 1553 then attempted to reverse the Reformation and reestablish Catholicism. When Elizabeth I assumed the throne in 1558, the official religion was again reversed, and Protestantism was reestablished. Kristen Poole's study of *Doctor Faustus* discusses these religious contradictions in the Renaissance and the resulting lack of clarity in Christian beliefs. In particular, the religious confusion and tensions contributed to the absence of a unified understanding of predestination and free will (97, 100-106).

Public confusion regarding official Church doctrine is displayed through Faustus' continued struggle as he shifts his thoughts periodically towards God and heaven, reconsidering his decision to sell his soul to Lucifer. The Good Angel (1.16, 1.188), Old Man (12. 26-47), and the scholars (13.14) all implore Faustus to repent. Faustus, berated by Mephistophilis whenever his thoughts turn towards heaven, believes he is completely beyond the mercy and grace of God because of his initial choice. He responds to the scholars: "But Faustus' offense can ne'er be

pardoned! The Serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus” (13.15). Faustus’ belief that his body and soul are fated to a certain end because of his decision to reject God strongly echoes the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Faustus forgets, however, that it was by his own free will that he made the decision to sell his soul. He even blames Mephistophilis, who made the consequences of Faustus’ choice clear, for his decision: “And curse thee, wicked Mephistophilis, / Because thou hast deprived me of those joys” (5.78-79). Faustus does not consider that his own agency in seeking forgiveness may make a difference, as was the mindset of remaining Catholic influence and the existing reassessment of Calvinist theology. In this way, Faustus not only goes against his perception of himself and his own abilities at the beginning of the play, he also aligns himself with Lucifer and Judas of Christianity, neither of whom repented and were thus eternally damned.

T. McAlindon discusses magic and mythology in *Doctor Faustus* working together as “pseudo-divinity,” functioning ironically to emphasize the devilish illusions which pervert and lead the doctor away from true divinity (214-217). This ironic function of mythology corresponds with the Renaissance belief that mythology and magic were mutually rooted in the Devil. This function of mythology is indicated in the prologue:

Till, swollen with cunning, of a self-deceit,
 His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
 And melting heavens conspired his overthrow.
 For falling to a devilish exercise (1.19-22)

Faustus’ fall is coupled with the myth of Icarus for the sake of metaphorical extension. His “cunning, of a self-conceit” is similar to the descriptions of both Lucifer and the serpent of Eden in their respective falls; this use of metaphor places both Faustus and Icarus alongside the

devilish qualities of the falls of both Lucifer and man, preparing the audience for continuing mythological references to highlight the deceit, self-delusion, and illusion encouraged by the promises of the devil.

The function of mythology as demonic illusion encourages Faustus' desire to challenge the order of the Great Chain of Being and achieve the status and effects of a god. Faustus is promised by Cornelius that he will "be renowned / And more frequented for this mystery / Than heretofore the Delphian oracle" (2.141-144). Cornelius' statement encourages Faustus, despite the fact that his learning in divinity would result in his understanding that Apollo and his oracles are in association with demons. Faustus is willing to believe Cornelius' suggestion, for all intents and purposes, and continually references mythological when illustrating his points and desires. When it comes to reality as it is presented to him by Mephistophilis, however, Faustus thinks of hell as foolish "trifles and mere old wives' tales" (5.131-134). Again, he chooses to believe in the mythological and magical whilst regarding theological beliefs as false: "For he confounds hell in Elysium: / His ghost be with the old philosophers" (4.59-61).

Faustus' reliance on mythology, the illusion of magic, and the rejection of God as he approaches his impending death and damnation epitomizes in the vision of Helen of Troy. Faustus, resolute in his decision to succumb to illusion, implores the vision:

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss:

Her lips sucks forth my soul, see where it flies!

Come Helen, come, give me my soul again.

Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips. (12.81-87)

Faustus' search for heaven and redemption from the vision of Helen reveals the same ironic and misplaced beliefs in the same magic and mythology that led him astray. He searches for

immortality--despite the fact that this may have been possible through repentance and a union with God--desperate to save his soul to avoid death and torment. Faustus continually fails to turn towards God and heaven, despite presented opportunities and the suggestions of others. Instead, he repeatedly embraces magic and mythology. His final damnation communicates the inevitable result of one who continually pursues what is beyond human reach through the complete rejection of both Christianity and established divine/earthly order.

As with *Doctor Faustus*, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is heavily influenced by classical mythology. Like many other contemporary poetic, dramatic, and literary works, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is among the comedy's main sources.² The influence of Ovid's mythology is displayed through the persistent theme of transformation, the mechanicals' version of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and Queen Titania's name. Classical mythology is most explicitly observed, however, through the setting of the comedy. The initial setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the city of ancient Athens, ruled by the Theseus, who is set to marry the Amazon Hippolyta at the play's end. While it is supposed that the immediate sources for these characters are Medieval and earlier Renaissance works of Chaucer and Plutarch, respectively, both figures originated in classical Greek mythology. Both Theseus and Hippolyta are generally characterized within Shakespeare's as they are treated in the original myths.

The setting of Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* creates a drama that is, first and foremost, rooted in classicism. Whereas *Faustus* includes mythology to illustrate the illusions of devilry in what might be considered as a "more familiar and realistic setting" that classicism intrudes on, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we observe the intrusion of what is more familiarly

² While this discussion compares a comedy with two tragedies, there is no complication from the different genres in the argument due to our concern with the presence and effects of mythology and religion. Both genres include evidence of this as both religion and mythology are prominent throughout various genres and types of literature.

English on the classic. This is most evident, as scholarship observes, in the magical fairy realm of the forest; fairies, often thought of as “illusions of the Devil,” remained prominent in English folklore and the popular mind (Evans 274). Specifically, we observe Puck, also known as Robin Goodfellow, a trickster fairy well known in English folklore to Shakespeare and his contemporary audience. As classicism is predominant in both the context and the content, elements of Christianity are largely absent from this play; this absence of explicit religion, however, is not necessarily problematic to our discussion as not every example of Renaissance literature contains continued mentions of religion and Christianity. Two examples of Christianity are nevertheless observed: the overarching order of the Great Chain of Being and the allusion to 1 Corinthians 2:9. Bottom’s allusion in Act 4, scene 1 parodies the original biblical passage:

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. (4.2.211-214)

Despite Bottom’s ignorance and irrationality, his allusion to the New Testament reveals a potential understanding of the universe’s order and mankind’s limitations in their desire for improvement. Bottom displays similar awareness earlier in Act 3, scene 2.

In his 1975 discussion, Leon Guilhamet argues that the “praxis” of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is stated by Theseus in Act V: to “find the concord of this discord.” This assertion echoes the Renaissance Neoplatonic belief that “the world’s creative force originates in the union of seeming opposites, love and strife” (258). Approaching *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with Guilhamet’s method of “concord and discord” illuminates the function of the magic and mythology through the opposition of reason and love evident throughout the comedy. In Act I, we observe the four lovers--Hermia and Lysander along with Demetrius and Helena--in opposition to the law and order of Athens. The law in question pertains to Hermia’s marriage to

Demetrius, as instructed by Egeus and supported by Theseus, while the order is due to both characters' higher position in the Great Chain of Being. Here, the city of Athens represents reason, which conflicts with the presented issue of love (1.1.1-90). This conflict is observed by the lovesick Helena:

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity.
 Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind. (1.2.232-235)

The ability of love to “transpose”—to transfigure, in other words—essentially creates an illusion; Cupid affixes this illusion of love to whomever he chooses via his golden arrows. As the setting shifts from Athens to the woods, we observe the subversion of the conflict between reason and love.

The fairies, with their magic and abilities of illusion, possess abilities of transfiguration similar to the classical gods. Guilhamet argues that the fairy world is of “cosmic significance” and the fairies are “the highest level of experience” (263). In other words, in relation to the other characters in the play, the fairies exist at the top tier in the Great Chain of Being (263). This positioning in the universal hierarchy is supported not only by Puck's description of his ability to wander “everywhere,” as Guilhamet observes, but also by the dispute between Titania and Oberon, which affects “the world, if not the cosmos” (263). Considering these points, it is possible to view the fairies, especially their King and Queen, functioning as the classical pagan gods. They are characterized with similar flaws and disputes to that of the Greek gods. Additionally, Puck's transfiguration of Bottom into an ass is reminiscent of tricks or divine punishment inflicted by classical gods, particularly in Ovid.

The transformative power of love creates chaos within the forest. Attempting to reclaim the changeling child from Titania, Oberon instructs Puck to afflict her with a flower, described as “love-in-idleness” (2.1.167). Pitying Helena’s distress and lovesickness, he orders Puck to do the same for her and Demetrius. The comic result is mistaken and irrational love and emotion from all parties. This effect denounces all reason and emphasizes the issue of love as described by Helena in Act 1, scene 2. Cupid is indeed “painted blind” when Titania becomes infatuated with the “base and vile” Bottom, whose head is transformed into that of an ass (3.2.128-200). Likewise, Demetrius and Lysander’s sudden infatuation with Helena, and the consequential rejection of Hermia, further emphasizes the irrationality and issues of irrational and blindly directed love. It is Bottom, during Titania’s seduction, who draws attention to this continuing conflict: “And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends” (3.2.142-147). Bottom’s consideration of coexistence among love and reason, neither playing the dominant role, offers a resolution to the constant conflict in their competition and discord throughout the comedy.

Once Oberon successfully resolves the dispute with Titania by reclaiming the changeling child, Puck is again sent to distribute the “love-in-idleness” to the Fairy Queen, Hermia, Demetrius, Helena, and Lysander (3.2.448-462). This time, however, the effects establish order, correctly pairing Lysander and Helena while restoring Hermia’s love for Demetrius, who is now transfigured into returning this love. Upon discovering the two pairs of lovers, now appropriately paired, Theseus reverses his original decision, which is within his right as the highest positioned mortal in the Great Chain of Being (4.1.177-186). Theseus’ decision also solidifies the balance of love and reason that was created in the irrational fairy realm of the woods. By extension, he

also brings the oppositional settings of Athens and the woods into balance and order. The newfound balance and order of reason and love corresponds with the Renaissance Neoplatonic view of poetics whilst also communicating the importance of this balance to a society where emotion and superstition was becoming largely and increasingly absent with the advance of intellection. In Act V, Scene I, the exchange between Theseus and Hippolyta illustrates this conflict between reason and love with Theseus' criticisms against "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet," who seem devoid of reason (5.1.1-23). Hippolyta's assertion that "their minds transfigured so together, /

. . . grows to something of great constancy" suggests that the balance of love and reason was achieved with the four lovers, corresponding with their balance gained from the exploits of the forest and the balance discussed by Bottom in Act 3 (5.1.24-28). In addition, this Neoplatonic view corresponds with the notion that reason and folly are in perfect balance in God, something humanity cannot attain but forever strives towards.

The first performance of *Macbeth*, the latest of Shakespeare's widely regarded "great tragedies," is generally estimated to have occurred in 1606. Scholars agree the play was likely a commission for King James I, who succeeded the throne from Elizabeth I in 1603, in honor of the King of Denmark's visit to the Stuart Court the summer of 1606 (Shamas 18). A majority of the play's content directly reflects political and religious ideologies in support of the new English King. These ideologies correspond with, and are communicated through, mythological and religious allusions, metaphors, and themes within the tragedy, which is about "about the eclipse of civility and manhood [and] the temporary triumph of evil" resolved through the restoration of order, "virtue and justice" (Kermode 1355). *Macbeth*, like many other Shakespearean dramas,

holds a mirror to the audience through an examination of the human condition in relation to Renaissance society.

The principle source for *Macbeth* was the 1587 2nd edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, a source of questionable accuracy frequently employed in Shakespeare's histories. While Shakespeare deviates from this text, a common occurrence due to dramatic and authorial liberties, the basis of the plot comes from Holinshed's account of Duncan and Macbeth. Shakespeare's retelling validates James I's succession of Elizabeth I through the lineage of Banquo and perpetuates the "Stuart Myth." Other sources potentially include: Reginald Scot's 1584 *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, James I's 1597 *Daemonologie*, and Matthew Gwinn's 1605 *Tres Sibyllae*.

Macbeth's Weird Sisters, identified in the First Folio as "the three Witches," are the prominent source of magic and mythology within the tragedy; it is these three who incite the dangerous and corrupt ambitions of Macbeth, resulting in the continual unfolding of tragic action. Laura Shamas, in her thorough examination of the Weird Sisters, refers to them as an "Anglo-Saxon trinitarian mythological goddess construction," which accurately describes the complexity of sources and ideologies amassed into these entities (35). In Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the Weird Sisters are described as "creatures of an ancient era-- goddesses, nymphs, or fairies-- with the ability to prophesy" (11). Similarly, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* describes them as "Scottish versions of the Fates" (11). The Weird Sisters are the result of the conflation of contemporary beliefs of witchcraft, magic, folklore, and classicism.

Indeed, the characters and their relationship with time and prophecy heavily evokes the Fates of classical mythology, well known to Shakespeare's contemporary audience. The character of Hecate, who introduces herself as "mistress of [the witches] charms, / The close

contriver of all arms” (3.5.6-7), is an explicit reference to Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft and sorcery in classical mythology. Although the Fates of classicism are independent of external control or influence, Shamas attributes the Weird Sisters’ subversion and association with witchcraft to the influence of James I, who launched a witch-hunt in Scotland prior to becoming King of England. James I was publicly outspoken against witches due to an ideology perpetuated by Christian beliefs. This same Christian association with witchcraft and mythology interrelates the contradictory systems of religion and mythology in *Macbeth*.

The imposition of Christian beliefs on the Weird Sisters, as Katherine M. Briggs asserts, was entirely necessary; the result of a more explicitly mythological or magical depiction of the three sisters would certainly threaten the Christian ideologies of James I, society, and the tragedy itself (Shamas 21). The conflated version of the Weird Sisters presented to us by Shakespeare, therefore, are only able to tempt Macbeth with their prophecies. As is noted in scholarship, the Witches present events rather than actions that will achieve those events: “All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter!” (1.3.50-51). Macbeth, receiving no further information, begins considering his sudden fate:

This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature? Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings:
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
 Shakes so my single state of man that function
 Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
 But what is not. (1.4.130-142)

Here, as scholars have long attested, Macbeth begins equivocating. Equivocation, “a Jesuit device by which a prisoner under interrogation might pervert the truth in order to avoid self-accusation,” was a key component in the Catholic-led Gunpowder Plot against King James I in 1605 (Kermode 1356). The original audience of *Macbeth* was well aware of the recently developed religious and political significance of equivocation; its presence in the tragedy and its relevance to the reigning monarch was not insignificant.

Macbeth continually equivocates throughout the tragedy, failing to heed Banquo’s warning that “The instruments of darkness tell us truths, / Win us with honest trifles, to betray ‘s / In deepest consequence” (1.3.123-126). The sentiment Banquo expresses here is commonplace in Christian tradition; similar deceit is evident when the Serpent tempts Eve in Genesis 3. The traditionally accepted position on the equivocation of devils and witchcraft was that “no one does an evil act unless the consequences of it appear to him more desirable than the consequences of not doing it” (Kermode 1357). The desire of evil is clearly displayed in the anxious language and response of the previously quoted passage (1.4.130-142). These desires are confirmed by Macbeth in the conclusion of the same scene: “Stars, hide your fires, / Let not light see my black and deep desires” (1.4.50-51). In a manner similar to Doctor Faustus, Macbeth’s rhetoric aligns himself not only against Christianity and with the mythology/witchcraft closely associated with

demons, it also aligns him with the treasonous rhetoric that threatened both religious and political ideology in Jacobean society.

Macbeth's equivocation and self-deception, however, is unable to convince himself; Act I, scene 7 reveals Macbeth's reluctance to tarnish the "golden opinions" others adorn him with (line 32). Macbeth, not wanting to go through with the murder of King Duncan, speaks to Lady Macbeth: "I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares [do] more is none" (1.7.46-47). Macbeth is aware of the restrictions and limitations imposed on man and natural order, implicitly referencing the Great Chain of Being. The respect of order is later perverted by Macbeth as he attempts to convince the Murderers to kill Banquo: "Now, if you have a station in the file, / Not i' th' worst rank of manhood, say't" (3.1.101-102). Through constant equivocation Macbeth advances towards his continual and progressive sin. We observe his consequential descent into madness, which again reveals that he is unable to completely convince himself of the benefit of his evil actions.

The goddess Hecate, along with witchcraft and sorcery, is associated with both visions and dreams, which is directly relevant to Macbeth's madness. As Hecate says to the Weird Sisters in Act 3, scene 5:

And that, distill'd by magic sleights,
 Shall raise such artificial sprites
 As by the strength of their illusion
 Shall draw him on to his confusion (lines 26- 29)

This mythological/magical instruction for interference arrives after we already begin to witness madness and confusion manifest in Macbeth's mind:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,

The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Are thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but

A dagger of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (2.2.33-39)

Whether or not the dagger is a “false creation” does not alter Macbeth’s experience or perception of it; his vision of an unseen dagger, just as the “false creations,” “illusions,” and “artificial sprites” described by Hecate, creates a version of reality for our tragic hero. The illusion of madness is conducive, therefore, with the illusions of created in prophecy, which according to Christian tradition, stems from devils. Just as Doctor Faustus, Macbeth succumbs to the illusionary promises and seductions of magic and mythology through his own free will. These illusions, however, are based on what already exists in Macbeth’s corrupted mind: they manifest externally through magic whilst internally manifesting through madness.

Our discussion and analysis of Renaissance literature explores the use of both religion and mythology through relevance to the English dramas, as well as relevance to contemporary social, religious, and political ideologies and tensions. From this discussion, we proceed towards an examination of late 20th and 21st-century ‘magic realism’ in order to explore the similar ways that contemporary authors include and treat religion and mythology within their narratives. Rather than use these elements to maintain a certain standard or ideology as it pertains to society, politics, and culture, these authors use religion and mythology to challenge and examine the tensions created by their respective cultures and societies, as well as to provide a direct and explicit voice against social and cultural tensions created in the post-colonial world. Isabel

Allende's *The House of Spirits* and Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* are the best examples of this; our third example, Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, embodies the tensions and use of mythology and religion on a broader, but nonetheless relevant, scale.

Allende's 1982 novel *The House of Spirits*, not unlike *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth*, is concerned with religious and political tension; these tensions occur within a narrative that is undeniably one of magical and mythical proportions. While the specific setting is explicit within the narrative, Allende confirmed that the novel began as a letter she was writing to her dying grandfather in 1981. *The House of Spirits* is largely based on Allende's own family and the political crises in Chile that arose in 1973 with the military coup and dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. This coup led to the death of the former Chilean President, Allende's godfather, Salvador Allende. Chilean culture, society, and politics, similarly to that of the Renaissance, is colored with political and religious tensions originating with the Spanish colonization of the 16th Century.

The predominant religion of Chile is Catholicism; according to PEW Research Center, this demographic is "likely to subscribe to indigenous beliefs and practices" such as "reincarnation, witchcraft/ sorcery, communicating with spirits, spiritual cleansing, traditional healers, and black magic." Julie McCarthy, in a transcript from *National Public Radio*, discusses the influence of indigenous beliefs in Chilean Catholicism on the island of Chiloé, a place where the "supernatural world sits comfortably alongside centuries-old Catholic faith." McCarthy explains that, on the island, indigenous beliefs were incorporated into religious context by the evangelizing Jesuit missionaries. Indigenous myth and legends endured colonization and conversion, which created a "strong sense of identity" within the newly imposed Catholic ideology. As this conflation is not standard with colonization or assimilation, however, this was

not the predominant way in which the missions or the religion operated, especially moving towards contemporary modernization. Throughout Allende's narrative, we observe evidence of Catholicism influenced by myths along with the juxtaposing conservative Catholicism.

The narrative of *The House of Spirits* is framed by the clause "Barrabás came to us by sea" (Allende 1, 481). The significance of this opening is not clear until after we complete the novel and observe the repetition in the epilogue. Barrabás is treated as a beast with "mythological characteristics"; he is introduced as "arrivi[ing] on a Holy Thursday. He was in a despicable cage . . . and had the lost look of a hapless, utterly defenseless prisoner; but the regal carriage of his head and the size of his frame bespoke the legendary giant he would become" (1). Barrabás, not mentioned again for eighteen pages, is incorporated into the narrative later after we are presented with the intersecting elements of religion, politics, and mythology.

All these elements are alluded to in the very first introduction of Barrabás, whose name immediately evokes Barabbas³ of the Christian Gospels. The Barabbas known to Christianity, much like the description of the beast of this novel, was the prisoner released instead of Jesus of Nazareth by Pontius Pilate in correspondence with their Passover tradition. The arrival of Barrabás in Allende's narrative on Holy Thursday places the both figures in a similar timeline within Holy Week. It is widely thought by scholars that Barabbas was a revolutionary, arrested for crimes committed against the occupying Roman forces. The allegory of Barrabás/Barabbas functions as foreshadowing. The death of Barrabás, described as a "bad omen," and the perverted way his corpse is treated by Esteban Trueba continues this foreshadowing: the mythological beast, representative of both magic and a political revolution, is destroyed (Allende 102, 103,108).

³ The difference in the spelling of "Barrabás" and "Barabbas" is an issue of orthography, not of substance.

The narrative is guided by this same pattern. Robert Antoni discusses the predominant style of a “third-person-omniscient, magical realist narration,” which is the “collective-feminine voice” of the novel (19-21). This voice begins with Clara and continues through succeeding generations, briefly passing to her daughter Blanca, until the voice continues and concludes through Alba, who synthesizes the collective-voice and memories: “[Clara] was already in the habit of writing down important matters . . . I would use her notebooks to reclaim the past and overcome terrors of my own” (Allende 1). Antoni asserts that the narrative “begins in the tradition of magic realism . . . until finally there no longer magic but only realism, and the novel becomes the tragic political history of Chile” (21).

In addition to the allusion of Barrabás, the opening chapter “Rosa the Beautiful” explicitly establishes the interrelation of magic/mythology and religion as it pertains to the politics of the novel. We are introduced to the conservative and zealous Catholicism that, at this point in the novel’s timeline, significantly impacts the society and politics of the fictional-Chile.⁴ The setting and theme of religion is obviously relevant and significant; its influence is also present in the language of the narration itself: “the forked tail of the devil pricked most insistently at Catholic flesh” (Allende 2). The metaphorical language in tandem with the sense of mythological influence and active agency communicates the way Catholic ideology, in this narration, is perceived. The priest too, whose “mission” is described with a typical Christian pastoral metaphor of “rous[ing] the conscience of his indolent Creole flock,” communicates the importance of enforcing and upholding conservative Catholicism, especially considering the threats of “modernism,” Liberal politicians, and activists, such as Clara’s parents, who each threaten Catholicism with their political, religious, and moral ideologies (2, 3, 4).

⁴ Until the introduction of the country’s Constitution in 1925 Chile had no separation of Church and State; prior to this the Catholic Church had authority and influence over education, laws, and government.

Within this same scene we are introduced to the juxtaposition of magic and mythology. Clara's eldest sister, who dies not long into the novel, is described as "made of different material from the rest of the human race," "the most beautiful creature to be born on earth since the days of original sin," "an angel," "placed her squarely on the tenuous line between human being and a creature of myth," "dreaming of new beasts to embroider on her tablecloth, creatures that were half bird and half mammal, covered with iridescent feathers and endowed with horns and hooves" (Allende 4, 5). Rosa's description, allusive of both Christianity and pagan mythology, aligns with the supernatural, magical, and mythological Catholicism existing in Chile. It is Rosa's sister Clara, however, who carries the body of this magic in the narrative. Although she is condemned and thought of as possessed by the Father Restrepo, the Jesuit priest, Clara's supernatural abilities are generally not regarded as such within the narrative. The existing cultural conflict of ideology and identity is communicated by the priest's perception of her, especially since her prophecies are not altogether dissimilar to the "apocalyptic visions" more standard to Catholicism (3). A similar conflict between magic and Christianity is displayed in our Renaissance texts. Since it is the "less dominant" culture of mythological Catholicism that is most relevant to the earlier narrative of *The House of Spirits*, the effect is not a predominant focus in associating demons with magic and mythology. Instead, this notion is quickly dismissed.

Clara's eccentricities and supernatural abilities include prophesying, interpreting dreams, and communicating with spirits. She is described as "Clara the Clairvoyant" and "as happy to read the magic books from her Uncle Marco's enchanted trunks as she was to contemplate the Liberal Party documents her father kept in his study" (Allende 85). The ability to prophesize is observed in both mythology and Christianity. In classicism, as we saw in Marlowe's tragedy with Cornelias' comparison of Faustus with the "Delphian oracle" (2. 141-144), oracles

communicated with the gods and delivered prophecies through divination for political, societal, religious, or social reasons.⁵ In Christianity, prophets were similarly sent by God to deliver His messages or warnings. Likewise, dream interpretation is significant to both mythology and religion; we see examples of it in relation to prophecy in both Homer's *Odyssey* and with Joseph in the Book of Genesis.

Concerning these abilities and access to the spiritual world, Clara is connected to three characters of an archetype already familiar to our discussion: the three Mora sisters, "three translucent ladies" who are "students of spiritualism and supernatural phenomena" (Allende 139). Much like the Weird Sisters of *Macbeth*, the description and characterization of the Mora sisters immediately evokes the Three Fates of classicism. As with Shakespeare's Witches, the archetype is adapted to the needs and confines of this literary work. The abilities of Clara and the Mora Sisters exist outside what is mainstream and of common occurrence, despite its relevance to Chilean culture; these abilities, along with her Liberal political interests and "almost all the most important people in the country . . . attending the spiritualist meetings, the cultural discussions, and the social gatherings" at Clara's house challenges society and connects her to an older and forgotten world of magic and myth (313). In addition, the magic and myth actively aid the forces of the novel who are in opposition to the established society and political sphere. Our discussion of *Macbeth* observed the political significance of the Weird Sisters' prophecies regarding the monarchy; Clara's prophecies are similarly relevant to the rising political tension of the fictional-Chile. Her prophecies also function as warnings of impending natural disasters, similar to the foretelling of the plagues of Egypt in Exodus.

⁵ While prophesying and fortune telling exists in the indigenous beliefs and religions, the vast cultural influence and anonymity of the fictional-Chile makes classicism the most convenient comparison here.

Clara's husband, Esteban Trueba, is the opposite of Clara; for a majority of the novel, he is antagonistic not only within the story of the family, but also to the social and political progress and revolution attempted in the later portion of the narrative. Antoni points out that Trueba's narrative voice is occasionally present in first-person. These instances are the quintessential "masculine voice" that was typical in Latin American literature: the "authoritative discourse" that is "representational" of a "political, historical voice" in opposition to the "collective-feminine" voice of Clara's magic and later, Alba's "political activism" (Allende 18-21). Trueba's voice embodies the conservative and traditional Catholicism and politics that are challenged in the novel, juxtaposing Clara's reality of supernatural, magic, and spirits (72-75). This stark contrast is integral to the prophecy and fate that looms over the entire collective memory of the narrative, which is first hinted at by Clara's prophecy of his marriage proposal: "He did not know that she had already made up her mind to marry without love" (101).

Despite Trueba's distance from the magic and mythological, we observe that even he does not altogether escape its effects or influences. A man of many sins and a violent temper, Trueba is cursed by his pious Catholic sister: "You will always be alone! Your body and soul will shrivel up and you'll die like a dog!" (Allende 147). The curse, which conflates the mythological with the Catholic, is mentioned several times throughout the narrative (39, 202, 305, 272). The effect of the curse is definitively confirmed after Clara's death: "Ferula was right, I thought; I've been left all alone and my body and soul are shriveling up" (339). Trueba himself acknowledges the magic and mythology of the culture, despite his rejection and opposition (334). Its relevance is explicitly brought to his attention during the rising action of the political conflicts within the novel, when the election is about to be taken from the Conservatives before the coup overthrows it: "Marxism doesn't stand a chance in Latin America. Don't you know it

doesn't allow for the magical side of things? It's an atheistic, practical, functional doctrine" (340). Here, it is clear the "magical" is of both mythological and religious relevance to the Latin American culture.

The tensions between the magical/mythological and political culminate in Clara and Trueba's granddaughter, Alba. She is raised between the "magic" and "realism" of the narrative: "completely ignorant of the boundary between the human and the divine, the possible and the impossible" (Allende 333). After Clara's death and the shift away from magic and towards realism as political tension in the mists of the Socialist political victory rises, one of the Mora Sisters delivers a prophecy to both Trueba and Alba. This prophecy continues the motion of Clara's earlier prophecy and the fate established later by Alba (405, 406). The prophecy, of course, plays out. In addition to the Conservative assault against the new Socialist government, which results in a coup succeeded by a dictatorship (corresponding with the history of Chile in the 1970s and 80s), Alba is taken from their house for aiding refugees and her involvement with the rebels during the new regime:

Alba immediately recognized the voice of Esteban Garcia. At that moment she understood that he had been waiting for her ever since the distant day when he had sat her on her knees when she was just a child. (449)

Garcia, the firstborn (and one of many) of Trueba's illegitimate children conceived through rape, appears intermittently in the narrative and is largely overlooked by Trueba and Alba until this point. The collective-voice and memory of the narrative is unified through the fate and prophecy involving Esteban Garcia. This climax of tragedy results Trueba's attempt at redemption when he recognizes and acknowledges his transgressions to see Alba rescued (464, 468).

The epilogue, narrated by Alba in first-person, reflects on her experience with Garcia and its correlation with the collective-memory that began with Clara. Alba understands all the tragedies and events that affected her family as pieces of a complete “puzzle,” joined together primarily through Clara’s notes, Trueba, and Blanca’s letters:

The day my grandfather tumbled [Garcia’s] grandmother . . . he added another link to the chain of events that had to complete itself. Afterward the grandson of the woman who was raped repeats the gesture with the granddaughter of the rapist, and perhaps forty years from now my grandson will knock Garcia’s granddaughter down among the rushes, and so on down through the centuries in an unending tale of sorrow. (Allende 480)

This resolution and outlook of fate, reminiscent of the trajectory of myths such as Oedipus, is undeniably created by the magic/mythology of ‘magic realism.’ The established “reality” of magic/mythology in the narrative allows fate and prophecy to function as an aspect of that reality. In our Renaissance discussion, both Faustus and Macbeth incorrectly view prophecy and fate as it functions “realistically” in *The House of Spirits*. The predominance of Catholic tradition, the function of magic/mythology and religion in Renaissance literature, and the contemporary culture does not allow for the magic/mythology of prophecy and fate to exist along this same “reality,” resulting in our tragic heroes’ fatal misunderstanding of the “illusion” of magic and mythology earlier in this discussion.

The realized influence of fate and prophecy in *The House of Spirits* reveals the microcosm of post-colonialism, beginning with Trueba and continuing through Garcia and Alba. The recognition of the pattern of fate with Trueba existing as the cruel patriarch who suppresses those of a lower status, rejects magical indigenous culture, rapes and sires as he pleases with little accountability, and contributes to the start of a political regime that results in a complete

redesign of the country's structure, creates a microcosm similar to colonialism within the novel. Trueba functions as the continuation of the cultural disruption first created when the Spanish colonized Latin America, symbolizing the way in which this disruption continues evolving and shaping in contemporaneity and through history.

Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine*⁶ is a compilation of collective-memory, similar to the collective voice observed in Allende's novel. Through this collective-memory, Erdrich's novel expands on Allende's briefer focus on the juxtaposition of indigenous beliefs with Catholicism. *Love Medicine*, originally written as independent short stories, was first published in its novel form in 1984. The novel, composed of sixteen chapters, is an expanded collection of these interrelated short stories. Except for short sections in several chapters and "Crown of Thorns," each short story is told through first-person narration, spanning several generations over half a century. Each first-person narrator is a member of the Kashpaw-Lamartine extended family. Together these non-chronological narratives create a collective-memory of the American-Chippewa family's history. Erdrich herself grew up in Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota and is of Chippewa descent. Like Allende, Erdrich's culture greatly inspired and influenced her writing; she was raised Catholic and "tr[ies] to follow the Ojibwe and Catholic tenets of what makes a good person" and "prefer[s] to have some [spiritual/supernatural] beliefs that don't make logical sense" (Farry, 31). The juxtaposing systems of belief permeate the novel through the magic and mythology of Ojibwe beliefs and Catholicism. The interrelation of both communicates the Native American struggle of identity in a post-colonial society.

⁶ Several sections of *Love Medicine* were first published in various locations as short stories; while these stories were first compiled and published in the novel form in 1984, we use the 2009 *Newly Revised Edition*. The use of this edition does not complicate the examination and analysis of the text; it is, however, important to note that the organization of the short stories differs, and a section present in the original version is absent from this edition of the text.

The history of tensions between European colonizers and the indigenous population of North America does not require much discussion here; we are all aware of the general treatment, marginalization, and genocide of the native tribes and their identities.⁷ As with many “dominant” societies in the process of colonization, the colonizing Europeans actively worked to assimilate the indigenous people to their Western ideologies. An important factor of this colonization and assimilation was, of course, Christianization. While Christian conversion missions began in the 19th Century, they did not gain significant momentum or influence until the 20th Century. During this later era of the missions many Ojibwe incorporated Christianity into their native beliefs, as was similarly done in areas of Chile. Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* depicts the conflict of identity existing among these intersecting ideologies: Catholicism is that of the white colonizers whilst the magic and mythical beliefs and practices are that of the marginalized Ojibwe.

Indigenous religions are deeply connected to the natural world and its spirits; as discussed by Karla Sanders, “‘magic’ is part of the natural world” and the Ojibwe viewed it as a “part of culture and society” (132). All magic and religion were thought of “as ‘medicine’ or as ‘power,’ expressed through visions and purchased formulas and exercised responsibly or hostilely toward society” (qtd. in Sanders 132). Ojibwes believed that “a person freshly born is ‘empty’ of characteristics and of identity” resulting in encouragement to “pursue the supernaturals and move them to fill up his emptiness” (qtd. in Sanders 132). The “purest” example of an Ojibwe who is largely untainted by the juxtaposing ideologies and cultures of the narratives is Moses Pillager.

⁷ A lack of depth and description intends no disrespect or minimization of the history of indigenous populations or the way in which they suffer from it even to this day; it is only due to our familiarity that we pass over a review of history for the sake of brevity and continuing our discussion and analysis.

Moses' real name is absent from the narrative. We are offered only the false name given to him as an infant by his mother. The name Moses, a biblical allusion to Moses of Exodus, was given to him when his mother tricked Ojibwe spirits into thinking he was dead to spare him from diseases that spread from colonization and eradicated many indigenous peoples. This backstory closely parallels the way the biblical Moses was hidden and spared by the Egyptians in Exodus. Moses Pillager essentially lives as a spirit, wearing backwards clothes of the dead in accordance with Ojibwe tradition and living in isolation "to the island in Matchimanito" (Erdrich 75). He is even ascribed mythological status in his comparison to wiindigoo: an evil being "created whenever a human resorts to cannibalism" (Weiser). Moses Pillager's lifestyle is completely ascribed to the beliefs and practices of traditional Ojibwe (or as much as possible in early 20th-Century post-colonial society). He speaks "the old language," which has subsided as a result of the predominance of English, and actively engages in the "magical" rituals of "the medicine ways" (73). When Lulu journeys to Pillager's island in her narrative, she describes how he "touched the medicine bag at his waist. It was beaded on velvet with the sign of the horned lynx" and struck fear in her (78). The medicine bag, carried by shamans for protection and spiritual power, represents spiritual life. In addition, "the horned lynx," or *Mishipeshu*, is "the most important underwater being" to the Ojibwe because of its importance to medicine, protection, "successful hunts and an abundance of food," and healing (Weiser, Lemaitre). The mythological figure is also feared due to its danger and control over the lakes, which could result in drowning: "the worst death for a Chippewa" since "the drowned weren't allowed into the next life but forced to wander forever" (Erdrich 291). Although no other character is as explicitly connected to Ojibwe traditions as Moses, the magic and mythology is consistent throughout the novel. It is through Moses' lineage that this connection to past tradition and magic is strongest.

In the narrative immediately preceding Lulu's introduction of Moses, we observe a narrative dominated by Catholicism. Marie Lazar's narrative juxtaposes the magical and mythological of nativism, emphasizing the conflict existing between the two in society. When Marie travels up to the reservation's convent, she describes it as "where God had only half a hand in the creation. Where the Dark One had put in thick bush, liquor, wild dogs, and Indians" (Erdrich 45). Despite Marie's Ojibwe ties, however minimal they might be through blood relation, she demonizes the native population by attributing their creation to Satan, much like the European colonizers. Marie then equates herself to "those bush Indians who stole the holy black hat of a Jesuit and swallowed little scraps of it to cure their fevers": the "ignorant" natives who put their faith into the very thing that killed them (45). This evokes the memory of European colonization and indicates Marie's insecurity regarding her own identity, revealed through her oscillation between Satan and Catholicism. Her interests in Catholicism are not out of devotion or piety. Instead, they are sourced in her desire to surpass and prove herself to the authority of the white Catholic nuns and ultimately, herself (43,49, 57, 59, 60).

These examples establish a background of cultural and ideological conflict in the history of the family's collective-narrative, setting the tone for the more contemporary conflict that occurs later in the action of generations during the 1980s. This conflict is set in motion by the death of June Kapshaw, whose death looms over the contemporary narratives. The first narrative of the novel, one of the few examples of third-person narration, introduces June's death. Her death epitomizes the conflict of identity displayed throughout the novel:

Even when it starts to snow she did not lose her sense of direction.....Even when her heart clenched and her skin turned crackling cold it didn't matter, because the pure and

naked part of her went on. The snow fell deeper that Easter than it had in forty years, but June walked over it like water and came home. (Erdrich 7)

“The pure and naked part” refers to June’s spirit (or soul), which is drawn towards the reservation in death and connects her to her native origins. This description of her spirit is paired with the biblical allusion of “walking on water.” This description, even in the Gospels, was seen as supernatural and magical. It was through faith that Peter was able to do the same as Jesus before failing out of fear. In addition, “forty years” is another biblical allusion; forty days and forty years both correspond with periods of struggle, temptation, and exile in Christian tradition. June’s death, through its mythical and biblical description, unifies these two identities as her spirit moves towards the “natural world” of the reservation. Furthermore, the biblical allusions of faith and exile foreshadow Lipsha’s struggle with identity in his later narrative.

The effect of June’s death on her alcoholic ex-husband is extraordinarily similar to the effects of murder and “dark desires” on Macbeth in Shakespeare’s tragedy. The history of Gordie’s abusive relationship with June haunts him and consumes his sanity, observed as he speaks to her spirit in a drunken state: “I was a bastard, but so were you” (Erdrich 213). Similar to the visual illusions that haunt Macbeth, Gordie sees a bloody and gaunt vision of his dead wife in a mirror (214). In an attempt to escape her, he drives off and hits a deer; believing it dead, he puts it in his car. When he actually kills the deer with a crowbar, it “transforms” into June, not unlike the transfiguration in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or the “magical illusions” in both *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth*. Gordie’s history of abusing June is then equated with the murder of the deer: “What had he done this time? Had he used the bar? It was in his hands” (218). At this point, Gordie does not see a deer but the corpse of his ex-wife. In his delirious, drunken, and confused state, he takes the deer/June to Sacred Heart and tries to confess his murder. Sister

Mary Martin, after his description of the events, is shocked and emotional when she discovers that Gordie killed a deer, not his wife. As a result of the magic and spirits haunting Gordie in his anguished state, he appeals to the Christian tradition of confession in a desperate attempt to absolve himself of his fictitious sin: the culmination of guilt and madness resulting from June's death. The conflation of cultural identities in Gordie, resulting from the effects of colonization and religious conversion, allows for this desperate attempt of reconciliation. In contrast, although mythology and religion are similarly present in *Doctor Faustus*, the established Christian perspective of magic/mythology and religious conflict as it pertained to Renaissance society resulted in his failure to do so.

Lipsha Morrissey, the “abandoned” son of June Kapshaw and Gerry Nanapush, is connected to the mythology and magic of Ojibwe tradition through his father, who is the son of Moses Pillager. Gerry is described as a mythological trickster, seeming to defy temporal reality in his ability to escape: “He boasted that no steel or concrete shitbarn could hold a Chippewa, and he had eellike properties in spite of his enormous size” (Erdrich 195). Lipsha, like his father and grandfather, possesses magical and mythical abilities of Ojibwe tradition: “I know the tricks of mind and body inside out without ever having trained for it, because I got the touch” (227). Lipsha, despite this “touch,” is insecure of his identity until his parentage is revealed to him by Lulu. This insecurity manifests in the perversion of his magic abilities:

I told myself love medicine was simple. I told myself the old superstitions was just that-- strange beliefs . . . As I walked back from the Red Owl with the rock-hard, heavy turkeys, I argued with myself about malpractice . . . I thought to myself that faith could be called belief against the odds and whether or not there's any proof. (241)

Lipsha's perversion of love medicine rejects the traditional Ojibwe rules. He defies the native ideologies while still taking advantage of the concept of magical healing and love medicine, merging it with the beliefs of Catholicism in an attempt to cut corners (244). This is not unlike the colonists, who exploited the Native Americans to benefit from them. The choice of using turkey hearts, rather than a heart from another animal like a chicken, recalls the historically controversial tradition of Thanksgiving, further distorting Lipsha's practice of love medicine. The abuse of his Ojibwe roots results in Lipsha's "touch retreat[ing] back into the darkness" (247), essentially signifying that he corrupted himself in his perversion of Ojibwe identity. This corrupted identity parallels the biblical allusions faith necessary to "walk on water" and the struggle and exile associated with "forty years" mentioned in relation to June's death. Lipsha's "touch" returns only after he sees his egregious error and reconnects with nature through pulling weeds (254).

Lipsha's union with his father and the winning of June's car in a game of poker fully connects him with his identity and Ojibwe roots, previously absent with the anonymity of his parents. Gerry recognizes Lipsha as his son, "a Nanapush man," through "the odd thing with [their] hearts"; this surely relates to their mutual "form[s] of touch" (Erdrich 332). Lipsha, in his return to the reservation with June's car, achieves a sense of security in his identity: "I'd heard that this river was the last of an ancient ocean, miles deep, that it once covered the Dakotas and solved all our problems . . . So there was nothing to do but cross the water and bring her home" (333). This passage clearly illustrates Lipsha's connection with his indigenous identity and roots. Sanders argues that "bring her home," referring to the car, signifies June's spiritual return home through Lipsha (153). Indeed, there is a clear parallel between Lipsha crossing water to return to the reservation and June's spiritual return when crossing the snow in the beginning of the novel.

This return home-- a return to magical and cultural identity-- frames the novel through two “endings”: June’s death in the beginning and Lipsha’s return with her car in the conclusion.

Similar to Erdrich’s narrative, Haruki Murakami’s 2005 novel *Kafka on the Shore* depicts the eponymous character’s quest for identity through the use of religion and mythology as it is relevant to Murakami’s culture and experiences as a Japanese author. Matthew C. Strecher argues that Murakami uses ‘magic realism’ “as a tool to seek a highly individualized, personal sense of identity” (269) in response to the “threat to the development of self or individuality” of 1970s Japan, which resulted from the decline in public political concerns as the Japanese “became consumed by material goods” in their “determination to share in the wealth and affluence of the country” (264). Accordingly, Murakami’s writing habitually rejects “traditionalistic nationalistic Japan[ese]” literature: the “‘pure’ literature [of] the highest ideal,” which consists of “strict generic styles” (Yeung 3).

Murakami’s style manifests through the conflation of Western classicism and Japanese religious traditions. We observe that it not only aligns with the rejection of “pure literature,” it also parallels the increasing influence of Western culture in modern-day Japan (Rowland). While Strecher asserts that Murakami’s ‘magic realism’ functions as establishing identity “rather than as a rejection of the thinking of one-time colonial powers or the assertion of a national (cultural) identity based on indigenous beliefs and ideologies,” if we apply the similar effects of post-colonial identity with Murakami’s postmodern style we observe that the concurrent use of magic/mythology and religion in *Kafka on the Shore* creates identity through a process of globalization. The idea of globalizing culture and identity, although not comparable to post-colonialism through intent or action, yields similar results through the expansion of cultural influence on a larger and continued scale.

In Murakami's fiction, the metaphysical realm, *achiragawa* or "over there," is both psychological and spiritual; the "magical," as Strecher attests, "is presented through "the mechanism [of this] 'other world'" (15). He discusses the connection of "the illusion" of the metaphysical realm with the traditional Shinto tradition of souls and the spirit world: "in addition to the body we can see and touch, people thought there was another, more exquisite and detailed body, invisible to our eyes" (23). The psychoanalytical interpretation of this metaphysical realm is similar to "traditional visions of the underworld, of the mystical 'world soul,' and the spirit world" (71). Strecher describes it as, among other things, "an unconscious shared space, similar to Jung's collective unconscious" (71). In addition, the idea of Jung's "collective unconscious" makes sense of the conflation of Western and Japanese religion and mythology. These factors of the metaphysical realm and its connection to Kafka contribute to his prophecy and sequential quest for identity, as is maintained by Strecher (25).

The most obvious mythological material in the narrative is the Oedipus myth. In addition to its explicit reference in the narrative, much of the action and plot is due to the influence of the myth. Prior to Kafka's connection to Oedipus, we observe various allusions to different components of this classical myth. In the beginning of the narrative, Kafka converses with "a boy named Crow," who is the metaphysical, spiritual, alter-ego of Kafka, about his impending plan to run away from home (Murakami 1). Crow introduces the concept of fate, comparing it to a sandstorm in a way that metaphorically communicates the conflict of fate vs free will:

Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions This storm is you. . . . So all you can do is give in to it When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm is all about. (Murakami's boldface 5, 6)

The possibility of free will is absent from this conversation between Kafka and Crow; instead, the pair imagines this cryptic prophecy, its inescapable fate, and the resulting transformation that is expected as a result. Kafka and Crow's view of free will here is similar to that of Dr. Faustus' in Marlowe's tragedy. The path both Kafka and Faustus are on cannot be altered by choice or any decision; instead, it is decided by the fate that is already determined. Kafka follows this direction of fate as a runaway and allows it to guide him to Komura Library (95).

Upon discovering the news of his father's murder, Kafka discusses the interrelation of fate and identity with Oshima, the befriended librarian who explicitly compares himself to the hermaphrodite myth. Now, the conflict of fate and free will is presented as conflicting with Kafka's sense of identity: "it's like my identity's an orbit that I've strayed away from" (199). Oshima metaphorically equates Kafka with Oedipus, explaining the irony of virtue aiding the tragic in Greek tragedies and its function as a metaphor: "everything in life is metaphor" (200). Shortly after, Kafka is literally equated with Oedipus through the revelation of the curse/prophecy his father gave him: "That prophecy is like a timing device buried inside my genes, and mother can change it. *I will kill my father and be with my mother and sister*" (202). The revelation of this Oedipal prophecy makes sense of Kafka's earlier thoughts of whether or not Sakura is his unknown sister, their initial sexual encounter, and Kafka's ponderance on the possibility of Miss Saeki as his mother (24, 33, 91, 92, 40).

Kafka suggests that his father, the famous sculptor Koichi Tamura, "was connected to something very unusual" (203). Oshima elaborates on this, describing him as "something beyond good and evil. The source of power" (203). The previous chapter details the "murder" of Koichi Tamura in the alternating narrative of Nakata, who is connected metaphysically to Kafka and consequently carries out half of Crow's earlier prophecy (139). Prior to the revelation of the

Oedipal prophecy and death of Kafka's father, we are introduced to Tamura as "the iconic figure" Johnnie Walker:

Anyone who enjoys whiskey would recognize me right away . . . I'm famous all over the world. I've just borrowed his appearance and name. (126)

Another "capitalist icon" is encountered later by Hoshino when he and Nakata are searching for the entrance stone to the metaphysical realm. Introducing himself and borrowing the appearance of Colonel Sanders, this figure's description of himself parallels Oshima's remark about Kafka's father: "Since I'm neither god nor Buddha, I don't need to judge whether people are good or evil. Likewise, I don't have to act according to standards of good and evil" (284). These figures correspond with the traditional religion of Shintoism; they are spiritual entities: kami. As Strecher notes, the "will and desire of [kami] reflects culture" (119), and this explains the kamis' adopted identity of capitalist icons in a society most concerned with "consumer capitalism" (266). Additionally, both these capitalist figures belong to the metaphysical realm; Johnnie Walker instigates the prophecy that disrupted both temporal reality and the metaphysical while Colonel Sanders' "function" is to correct it (Murakami 284, 285).

Koichi Tamura/Johnnie Walker, like Kafka, is connected to classical myth as well as to traditional Shinto beliefs. This connection adds its contribution to Kafka's quest for identity. In the alternating narrative, Nakata searches for a missing cat and discovers that Johnnie Walker, the "cat-catcher," kills the "missing" cats, eats their hearts and "collect[s] their souls" to create "a special kind of flute" in order to "collect even larger souls" (Murakami 140). Strecher's book discusses the parallels between this scene in *Kafka on the Shore* and the Homeric hymn where the god Hermes constructs a lute from a tortoise: "Living, you shall be a spell against mischievous witchcraft; but if you die, then you shall make sweetest song" (qtd. in Strecher 126).

Kawai Hayao's comparison of Hermes and Johnnie Walker extends beyond the act of sacrificing animals to construct musical instruments, observing their similar demeanor and attitude, which does not align with the moral binary of the "human realm" (qtd. in Strecher 126). Hayao observes the mutual disconnect present in the concepts of good and bad in the kami figure of Johnnie Walker and the classical god Hermes, conflating the description of kami as existing "beyond good and evil" (Murakami 203). In Hayao's view, Tamura/Walker is both classical and Japanese; this conflated mythology is passed through to his son and applies to him through both their lineage and the prophecy that is passed down through his genetic code.

Nakata murders Tamura/Walker, as is the intention of the kami figure, in the conclusion of the previously discussed scene; he functions metaphysically as Kafka and undertakes the first part of completing the prophecy. Tamaka/Walker recognizes the metaphysical shift in identity that occurs:

You're no longer yourself . . . The most important thing of all. *O, full of scorpions is my mind!* (Murakami 148).

The explicit reference to the magical and psychological illusions of Macbeth's madness corresponds with the magic/spiritual shift occurring metaphysically and within Nakata. Kafka also recognizes his own spiritual/magical agency in this shift: "I'd lost consciousness for a few hours. About waking up in the woods behind the shrine, my shirt sticky with somebody's blood . . . But *In dreams begins responsibilities*, right?" (203, 204). This initial completion of part of the Oedipal prophecy, carried out in the metaphysical/magical/spiritual realm of the narrative, is beyond Kafka's free will or conscious decision; the remaining pieces of the prophecy, however, are more intentionally executed.

Miss Saeki functions as Kafka's missing mother; it is not of great importance whether or not this is factually true because the greater importance is the belief of this possibility. Kafka falls in love with the fifteen-year-old "living spirit" of Miss Saeki that visits him at night; the concept of ghosts and spirits in Japan, in addition to Shintoism, traces back to the beliefs of the indigenous Ainu. In the novel, Oshima explains "living spirits" as part of our metaphysical realm, observed during the Heian period (Murakami 225). When Kafka first fornicates with Miss Saeki, it is not with her spirit version of the metaphysical realm but with the sleepwalking Miss Saeki of "real life" (280). Her dreaming state places this scene within the metaphysical and Kafka and Miss Saeki become intertwined through their metaphysical connection, continuing their sexual relationship until shortly prior to Miss Saeki's death: "You tell her she must know who you are . . . Your lover- and your son. The boy named Crow. And the two of us can't be free" (281, 319). This language of fate is due to the overlying prophecy they are both part of: Kafka embraces the decision of Miss Saeki as his mother as well as his choice to continue with their relationship.

This decision to embrace the fate of his Oedipal curse continues with Kafka's fulfillment of the prophecy during his dream:

You've already murdered your father and violated your mother— and now here you are inside your sister. If there's a curse in all this, you mean to grab it by the horns and fulfill the program that's been laid out for you.

(Murakami's boldface 370)

Strecher, in his book, discusses "the superb irony of these acts being carried out as an act of will (albeit in the metaphysical world) [in] that they allow Kafka to succeed where Oedipus failed: he completes the prophecy placed in his path . . . and in so doing turns it to his advantage" (148).

Despite the imposition of free will and choice that Kafka exudes through the process of completing his prophecy, the curse in his “DNA” continues to prevent him from completing his quest for identity (Murakami 387).

When Kafka enters the metaphysical realm in the climax of the intersecting plots of his and Nakata’s narrative, he forgives the spirit of Miss Saeki and releases the anger and control resulting from his mother’s abandonment of him. In this forgiveness, Miss Saeki offers Kafka her blood, which he ingests before returning to “reality” (Murakami 444). As Strecher observes, this consumption of blood “replaces (or at least dilutes) the hated blood of his father . . . He has not so much “cheated” fate as he has simply forced it to work in his favor” (150). Thus, in securing a “blood relationship” with his mother, Kafka completely carries out both the prophecy of his father and the prophecy discussed with Crow at the beginning of the narrative, securing his identity through his connection to his mother similar to Lipsha’s connection to his parents in *Love Medicine*. The mythological and religious/spiritual elements that made up the components of the prophecy function within Kafka’s own identity and mimic the identity of Murakami’s writing, where it creates “confrontation between generations” and “destruction of old collective narrative . . . in favor of the individual” (157). In this way, the content matches the form; in a postmodernist conflation of mythology and religion, Murakami creates a globalized identity for both his narrative and Kafka, reacting to relevant contemporary issues of culture and society in Japan.

Our discussion of Renaissance drama and ‘magic realism’ literature examined the way in which three texts from each respective category and time period treat mythology and religion. We observed the way Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* interrelates mythology and religion in correspondence with the contemporary threats of society and intellection that challenged

Christian tradition. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare uses mythology, along with a brief nod to Scripture and the underlying universal order of Christian tradition, to correspond with the agreeing contemporary views of Renaissance Neoplatonism and Christianity in the function of poetics. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* treats religion and mythology similarly to *Doctor Faustus*, creating parallels and perpetuating beliefs and ideals relevant to James I, the reigning monarch. Each of our examined Renaissance dramas contain many more examples and other functions of mythology and religion. The differences among the treatment of religion and mythology in our Renaissance examples is apparent. Where we observe mythology and religion functioning with strong and direct relevance to political and religious discourse, as in *Macbeth* and *Doctor Faustus*, we again observe other examples where the function is more subdued and implicit in the relevance to social or philosophical statements, such as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The differences in the treatment and function of religion and mythology in these examples, however, are unified in the sense that each author uses elements of both in correspondence to contemporary concerns in their society. Our brief examination and analysis reveals the way in which Renaissance authors employed both mythology and religion as a reaction to contemporary culture and society, rather than simply for poetic convention or style.

The more recent literature of 'magic realism,' on the other hand, is not guided by culturally relevant conventions of classicism or a predominant style that calls for the explicit use or presence of mythology and religion. Regardless, we observe components of both, in correspondence with the 'magic' of 'magic realism,' dominating the narratives of all three of our examples. Isabel Allende's *The House of Spirits* uses religion and mythology as it is relevant to the culture of Latin America; both function to emphasize the historical and political conflicts that affected the society, reacting against the structure and order, which upset the original traditions

and culture, imposed by colonialism. In the same spirit, Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* uses traditional Japanese religion alongside mythology of Western classicism in order to reject the Japanese traditionalism and nationalism of previous generations while simultaneously using it to establish identity in the content of his narrative; the globalized quest for identity through mythology and religion parallels the intent and effect in our other examples of 'magic realism.' Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, similar to *The House of Spirits*, uses mythology and religion to accentuate the issues of identity that affect contemporary Native Americans, resulting from European colonization and religious conversion. As with the Renaissance dramas, the examples discussed are not the only ones present in the narratives; for the sake of our study, however, these examples do well to illustrate the authors' use and function of both mythology and religion. In our discussion, we observed similar comparisons between Renaissance literature and 'magic realism' literature; we also observed comparisons that revealed the subversion of function and intention of examples in religion and mythology. The apparent reversal of Renaissance functions of mythology and religion in 'magic realism,' such as through the proliferation of magic/mythology and the decline of Catholicism in *Love Medicine*, reveals the way in which 'magic realism' rejects what is traditionally that of European colonization and/or of dominant oppressive culture. Furthermore, mythology and religion in 'magic realism' literature displays the same unification observed in Renaissance literature: each of our authors use elements of both to voice contemporary issues of society and culture as it is historically and socially relevant.

In a discussion of his novel *Kafka on the Shore*, Haruki Murakami explains that "[he] didn't have [the Oedipus myth] in mind at the beginning. Myths are the prototype for all stories. When we write a story of our own it can't help but link up with all sorts of myths. Myths are like a reservoir containing every story there is" (Murakami). Northrop Frye would have absolutely

agreed with this assessment. Murakami's assertion that myths are present in all literature does not make our comparison of Renaissance and 'magic realism' literature redundant. Rather, it proves the early assertion of this discussion that Frye's notion of the procession of literature allows for the inclusion of 'magic realism,' especially in relation to the similar treatment of mythology and religion to Renaissance literature. Regardless of whatever Murakami's original intentions were, he made the decision to explicitly incorporate the mythology in his narrative, as did all our other examples of literature; this is the same for the religious examples, which largely function and correspond with the moral and social functions of mythology and is in itself a form of mythology. The inclusion of both religion and mythology in the writing of our five authors, separated by many hundreds of years and thousands of miles, reveals how 'magic realism,' like Renaissance literature, makes the conscious decision to use mythology and religion as a reaction to contemporary issues in society, culture, and politics; our 'magic realism' authors, therefore, display intention and execution that is shared with that of the Renaissance. The comparison of Renaissance drama and 'magic realism' literature does not attempt to argue that similarities observed in religion and mythology result in a profound discovery. It certainly does not; both mythology and religion have been used similarly long before the existence of literature. The comparison does reveal, however, that the contemporary literature of 'magic realism' actively strives towards a traditional use of mythology and religion, similar to that of Renaissance literature, in order to give voice to aspects of humanity which are difficult to explain otherwise, even in an era moving faster towards facts and secularization and further from magic and religion, than ever before on a global scale.

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