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la espalda de Elsa me dio la impresión de algo sucio y triste.'[28] This is followed by another emotionless allusion to a sexual act: 'Nos tiramos en la alfombra al apagarse las luces. Vicky y David se habían esfumado. Nadie discutó más,'[29] the last sentence of which precludes any further analysis or discussion of the event either by the narrator or by the protagonist.

The writing of the tertiary text stalls in the last sentence of 'chapter' 3. After Gabriel the protagonist has had all the sexual experiences described in the story, including a rather sordid homosexual encounter with Jacques,[30] he evaluates his work so far: 'Tras releer el último capítulo de mi novela, me dieron ganas de destruirla.'[31] This is very similar to what Gabriel says originally about writing a novel. It should also be noted that both the first and the third statements appear at the end of sections in standalone paragraphs. A difference in text styles used between the 'chapters' and separate paragraphs suggests that the 'chapters' are written by an amateur author, whereas the standalone paragraphs are reminiscent of entries in a personal diary. In this case, the text in between the two standalone paragraphs in 'chapters' 1 and 3 is the novel that Gabriel the narrator is writing, and Gabriel the protagonist's intent to write a novel becomes a plot device. By the end of the story, several plot lines are rejected because they are unsustainable with the existing characters or because the characters become less and less believable. 'Chapter' 4 starts with Gabriel the narrator contemplating the next step in his novel. He decides to continue the storyline of his relationship with Elsa, and adds a series of clichés: Elsa's friend, Vicky, runs away from him to live with her boyfriend;[32] Elsa gets pregnant, has an abortion and finds out that she cannot have children.[33] The last episode is another example of character erasing. Elsa's childless future

28 'Looking at Elsa's back I was getting the impression of something dirty and sad' (Agustín, 77).
29 'We fell down on the carpet when the lights went out. Vicky and David had gone off. Nobody argued anymore' (Agustín, 81).
30 Agustín, 28.
31 'After re-reading the last chapter of my novel, I wanted to destroy it' (Agustín, 90).
32 Agustín, 89.
33 Agustín, 97–8.

may be seen as the termination of the original design of her character as Gabriel's potential partner.

By the end of the story, it is clear that Gabriel the protagonist's character has been manipulated too many times to fit multiple plot developments. It is no longer believable, and the narrator erases the protagonist from the story by apparently making him commit suicide. However, the examination of the suicide scene reveals that the protagonist is indeed a textual construct. But is it Gabriel the tertiary protagonist, Gabriel the secondary protagonist or Gabriel the narrator who apparently shoots himself at the end of the story? The first paragraph of 'chapter' 1 contains the same reference to 'techo azul,'[34] which is considered unoriginal by the end of 'chapter' 4: 'debí haber discurrido algo ingenioso. Y el techo sigue azul y *El Lohengrin* sigue sonando.'[35] The blue roof and *Lohengrin* appear both in the supposed novel and the paragraphs that do not conform to the style of the novel. Therefore, this is the same text membrane, or the primary text. Since the last sub-section of 'chapter' 4 is about Gabriel's supposed suicide, the coincidental reference to a roof and *Lohengrin* in Gabriel the protagonist's novel and Gabriel the narrator's novel indicates that both are erased from the narrative by the end of the story. In this case, the editor is the owner of the original storyline. He chooses to terminate it because it has become too intertwined with the secondary text (Gabriel the protagonist's novel), and as a result, contaminated with its lack of sustainability.

The narrator and the two protagonists are interlinked. Each text developing from within its predecessor creates a protagonist based upon the nature of the preceding protagonist. This means that any re-creation of the text would lead to the destruction of the protagonist by the narrator. Both the narrator and the protagonists share the ability to destroy and re-create their respective texts within the constraints of the degree to which they own the text and are able to manipulate it. The control of all texts in 'La Tumba' is reserved for the editor. The simultaneous presence of multiple

34 'blue roof' (Agustín, 11).
35 'I should have pondered something ingenious. And the roof is still blue, and *Lohengrin* is still playing.' (Agustín, 101).