

The Confluence of Time in Allende's *the House of the Spirits*, Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and Borges's *the Aleph and Other Stories*

Ahmed Dhahi K .Al-Haidari¹, Bahee Hadaegh², Sayyed Rahim Moosavinia³

Abstract

This paper discusses how the concepts of time, history, and magical realism interlink in Allende's The House of the Spirits, Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, and Borges's collection of short stories, The Aleph and Other Stories. In each of these works, the author uses magical realism as a means to retell historical incidents and personal experiences, rewriting at least some historical options by nonlinearity, even to the level of philosophical questioning of those historical events. Allende interrelates political history with personal memory through fabulousness, criticising socio-political changes in Chile. Márquez shows time as repetitive; it is the way the Buendía family Trace repeats events related to the historical losses of Colombia. In contrast, the fragmentation of time and multiple realities is realized by Borges while he metaphysically contemplates identity and the nature of truth. This paper demonstrates how these authors converge in their use of magical realism to disrupt linear time and proffer alternative histories, while diverging in narrative technique and thematic focus. The research underlines the importance of the genre for reshaping cultural narratives and highlights the role of memory in constructing identity and confronting historical trauma.

Keywords: *Magical Realism, Nonlinear Time, Alternative History, Cyclical Time, South American Literature.*

Introduction

The reason why South American literature has gained a unique place in world literature is the unique magical realism and its historical juxtaposition with the fantastic. This is a style that became popular in the mid-20th century, wherein supernatural factors were added into realistic settings without any question of their validity; hence, it reflects the most complex realities of Latin American cultures. A good example of such a style is the narrative approach of Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, and Jorge Luis Borges, which tends to mix the magical with the everyday and tends to create an intense interaction among personal memory and historical events and surreal occurrences (Faris 104).

Magical realism reflects the historical and political realities in Latin America, including identity, oppression, and resistance. The genre becomes one through which the authors can comment on forms of sociopolitical condition, usually via circular stories that go beyond linear narration. In the case of García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, time is cyclical, and about historical recurrence; the fictional town Macondo indicates a microcosm of total Colombian history. Similarly, Allende's *The House of Spirits* presents generational trauma and national history, intermingling it with clairvoyance and spiritual elements. Borges was a more philosophical storyteller in works like *The Aleph*, where he utilized nonlinear narratives to call into question the nature of time and reality (Flores 190).

As Flores points out, magical realism "offers the chord and the possibility of reflecting simultaneity, the merging of times—past, present, and future—as one confronted political allegory and cultural identity" (190). This will interact with time, history, and magical realism, converting it into a critical lens with which philosophical questions can be reflected upon, forming part of South American literature. Conjointly, this paper inspects how time, history, and magical realism interlink in the selected works. The present study tries to answer these questions:

¹ Ph.D. Candidate of English Literature, School of Literature and Humanities, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, Email: ahmeddhahi46@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1070-5271>

² Associate Prof. of English Literature, School of Literature and Humanities, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, Email: bhadaegh@shirazu.ac.ir, (Corresponding Author), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5264-7680/print>.

³ Professor of English Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran, Email: moosavinia@scu.ac.ir, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0808-8743>.

To what extent does time act as a shaping force on the narrative structure of these texts?

How does history interplay with personal memory as an implement of critique of socio-political realities through the technique of magical realism?

What narrative techniques are used to represent non-linear or cyclical concepts of time?

The main focus will be on Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, and *The Aleph and Other Stories* by Jorge Luis Borges which provide a comparative framework for exploring the thematic use of time and magical realism in diverse contexts. Thus, this research design will utilize a type of literary analysis that actually delves into the theme of time, history, and magical realism in each text. This model provides an avenue to understand how these texts further the general and overall literary landscape of South American magical realism by providing unique insights into time and historical consciousness.

Theoretical Framework

Magical realism as a mode of narration is woven together with both fantastic and realistic elements, blending the ordinary with the extraordinary as if it were natural in everyday life. It permits a junction of reality and fantasy—a site where the demarcations between what is defined as "real" and "imagined" become permeable (Valdez 102). It first took place in Latin America, with Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, and Jorge Luis Borges at the top, being responsible for establishing the rules of its narrative. Each of them, with their separate, unique voices, resorts to magical realism as an attribute of their style: magical realism as one of many possibilities is there to work out important socio-political themes—developing the complication of time, memory, and history.

In *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, and "The Aleph" and Other Stories by Jorge Luis Borges, time is a fluid nonlinear concept, an important device by which these authors negotiate memory, identity, and the post-colonial experience. Each text deploys a form of time that transgresses the limitations of the linear by embracing, respectively, the cyclical, fragmented, and overlaid temporalities. This treatment of time is not an aesthetic whim but a thematic discussion on how history and memory determine both individual and collective identity, particularly in post-colonial contexts.

In this framework, time in magical realism is often presented as a dynamic force deeply interwoven with personal and collective histories. For Allende, García Márquez, and Borges, time is not some static, clock-bound entity but rather an active, living force mirroring the complexities of human experience. The intertwinement of the past, present, and future thus reflects not only a person's histories but an appeal to collective memory which different nations are facing amid debates about historical traumas and identities. According to Paul Ricoeur's theory of time in narrative, the telling and relationship of time is essential to the construction of both historical and lived experience (100). For Ricoeur, the narration of time is intrinsically related to the ways in which individuals and societies remember and interpret their pasts; in a way, it connects personal experience and historical memory (Ricoeur 125).

In *The House of the Spirits*, Allende uses time in the interconnectedness of her characters, which involves generations in a tale that is as much a personal story as it is political narration. Time is passed through so smoothly in the text by Allende that memory can be said to be a personal and a collective phenomenon. As the characters in the novel experience their personal tragedies and triumphs, their lives are marked by the larger socio-political upheavals in Chile's history. The use of time by Allende—where characters can traverse between the past, present, and future—echoes the cyclical nature of Chile's political struggles and the recurrent waves of oppression and resistance that define the nation's collective memory. Through such a nonlinear conception, Allende has brought out the fact that the past is never really past; it keeps informing both the present and the future to make one cycle unending of reflection, loss, and renewal.

Similarly, one may consider García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which is famously populated by a world of cyclical time, where history seems to repeat itself ad nauseam. Thus, it is that the Buendía family, whose fate consisted of a series of inevitable repetitions of events, makes a good illustration of how history is not linear but circular—a chain of actions constantly echoing through generations. In the novel, time is used as a metaphor for the political and social stagnation that characterizes all of Latin American history, where the same circles of violence, power struggles, and revolutions repeat without resolution. Márquez's magical realism, where events simultaneously are and are not timeless and immediate, underlines how memory of the past shapes the present and future, trapping people in an endless circle of history. The magical realist treatment of time in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* serves to underscore the fact that the trauma of history—in particular, colonialism and its aftermath—is never really exorcised but rather recurs continuously in the lives of persons and nations and must therefore be overcome by common social effort.

In “The Aleph” and Other Stories, he undertakes a more abstract way in which time is fragmented into infinity or multidimensional. In stories like “Aleph,” time is portrayed as something that could even be seen simultaneously in every respect: past, present, and future—when the whole universe huddled in one point catches the sight of its main character. For Borges, time is neither linear nor even cyclical but a malleable construct, subject to infinite possibilities. His fascination with infinite time, parallel worlds, and the interconnections between past, present, and future challenges conventional understanding of temporal boundaries. Borges treated time as an illusion and a reality, suggesting thereby that even memory is untrustworthy, fragmented, and subject to interpretation. This ambiguity reproduces the post-colonial condition of Latin American identity, in which the past is ever-elusive and always in change, a presence ceaselessly reinterpreted and re-shaped by personal and collective memory.

Henri Bergson's notion of *la durée*, or duration, especially pertains to the discussion of the treatment of time in the narrative of magical realism. According to Bergson (89), time is not a sum of discrete, measurable moments but a continuous flow integrating memory, intuition, and perception. This idea of time-as-subjective-experience takes center stage in the conception of magical realism; the entire narration often becomes indistinguishable between reality and non-reality, past and present (Widdifield 147). In Allende, García Márquez, and Borges, the time flow is a function of the inner world of characters, a function of their cultural history and political destiny. According to Bergson (47), memory is not an inert record of the past but an active matrix through which individuals perceive the present and future. This subjective experience of time in magical realism allows the authors to confront historical traumas, re-imagine national identities, and explore the relationship between personal and collective memories.

The intersection of time and memory in magical realism powerfully enables the social and political realities of post-colonial Latin America. By depicting time as fluid, cyclical, and often fragmented, Allende, García Márquez, and Borges contest dominant historical narratives and offer other ways of making sense of the colonial legacy. The various authors use time in its fullest form, developing its relevance for commentary on colonialism, complex notions of nationality, and ways in which the role of memory in developing a sense of culture works. As Teng (58) relates, “The freedom created by magical realism permits, at last, the reinvention of political reality—a chance for them to resist received history, as their newly formed discourse about the past was always perceived, and, moreover, was.” By interweaving history, memory, and time together, these authors allow for the re-imagining of personal and collective identities in the postcolonial condition.

In sum, the treatments of time are a complexly engaged relationship among memory, history, and identity in *The House of Spirits*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and “The Aleph” and Other Stories, respectively. As such, through the magical realism characteristic of each respective author—Allende no less so than García Márquez or Borges—these works throw into light many ways in which time functions as a tool to question the historical narratives elaborating on post-colonial experience. Merging the magical and the real, these authors open up a space in which time is not just linear but a site of negotiation, memory, and transformation.

Discussion

In Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, nonlinearity in the telling presents a generational saga—the story of the Truebas—where time is circular rather than linear. Time shifts kaleidoscopically; events from different times weave into other events. This is the nature, both of personal memory and of historical memory. This notion of continuity is literally embodied in Clara, one of the major characters of the book, who possesses clairvoyant abilities to foresee events which will connect generations. For instance, Clara says, "memory is fragile and the space of a single life too brief to contain all its episodes" (Allende 432). This fundamentally delineates how personal memories elude time, pulling together past, present, and future in the telling. For instance, critics have noted how Allende uses nonlinear time, which serves to disrupt readers' expectations based on historical linearity and which reveals just how memory itself forms experience—a hallmark of magical realism (Walling 1440).

The political background of the novel engages with turbulent Chile; from the rise of socialism to the military coup in 1973. In the character form of Esteban Trueba, a representative of the conservative elite, Allende lays an all-out assault on abuses built into patriarchal, authoritarian structures of power. The personal accounts of memories in particular—Clara's and later those of her granddaughter Alba—form the core of storytelling, thus showing how personal traumas are part and parcel of national history. Clara's spiritual and psychic experiences represent an "invisible world" that does endure through the political turmoil: "Clara wrote everything down so that nothing would be forgotten" (Allende 123). Writing, in this case, represents how personal memory guards history in a continuous process when politics tries to eliminate and distort it (Inanc 204).

Allende uses magical realism to interlace visions, prophecies, and supernatural events within everyday life. Clara's foreseeing skills reflect, in turn, the porousness of time within the novel. As critics note, the use of prophecy along with flashback within the book leads to a narrative in which history seems to be at once predetermined and fluid (Hart 120). Clara's visions blur the line between realism and the supernatural, tucking under one of the prominent ideas of the novel: memory and history are an individual construction, not an objective series of facts. For example, she says, "I see you, my love, living far beyond me and after me" (Allende 174), as it shows that personal visions extend into the future and shape how characters will engage with history and memory.

Time is not linear but circular in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; the repetition in generation after generation of the Buendía family. Consider, for example, the first sentence, which immediately seems to evidence a crumbling of time: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice" (Márquez 1). The circular structure of the narrative speaks to the idea of the repetition of history in this fictional town of Macondo, where every successive generation goes through some repetitive patterns of love, betrayal, failure, etc. Members of Buendía's family seem to not avoid some kind of pattern of behavior, demonstrating Márquez's critique of historical determinism (Hart 112).

Márquez's novel also functions effectively as an allegory for the turbulent political history of Colombia. The civil wars, the labor struggles, and the military coups that have taken place in Macondo reflect real incidents in Latin American history and serve to build up how inextricably linked the personal and political worlds are. Indeed, the story often blurs fact with fiction, even to such a degree that it gives miraculous events no greater or lesser weight than historical reality. An example would be the plague of insomnia that causes the residents to forget the past altogether (Márquez 44). This play of memory and speech underlines how collective memory can lie about political realities—mostly because history and personal memory are malleable, always open to modification and reinterpretation (Geetha 29).

Márquez expresses magical realism in the distortion of time and narration using hyperbole, paradox, and fantastic events. For example, Remedios the Beauty ascended to heaven as one would go about a normal activity (Chaia 109). This is beyond the limits of realism. The novel's cyclical nature, in which events circle back on themselves, leads Aureliano Babilonia in his quest to decipher ancient prophecies, which he realizes

at the end that will lead to the destruction of Macondo once he finishes reading about it (Márquez 448). This is a quintessential finale to the play, given the themes of eternal recurrence where both the personal and societal transformations are deemed illusory.

Jorge Luis Borges, through works like *The Aleph* and *The Garden of Forking Paths*, carries out ideas concerning subjective and infinite time in his short stories. This work disintegrates the existence of a linear concept of time, instead presenting time as fragmented and recursive. In *The Aleph*, the eponymous object allows the viewer to see every point in the universe at once in a single glance: "I saw everything, vast oceans, sunrises and sunsets, all the mirrors in the world" (Borges 125). This passage is representative because time and space reduce into a singularity with a lack of time and insinuates that all realities are happening at once.

Similarly, *The Garden of Forking Paths* serves as an exploration into multiple, parallel timelines. As the character Albert describes, "Time forks perpetually toward innumerable futures," one that keeps the protagonist Tsun entangled with a concept that at each moment of decision and choice, there can be an infinite number of outcomes (Alarcón 97). Many times, Borges refers to history as a labyrinth, replete with twists and repeats and subjective perceptions. By the labyrinthine metaphor in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, the revising of history is captured in multiple foci, all versions considered equal in validity. This idea is literally taken up in the novel within the story of Ts'ui Pên, embracing within its structure all possible events to create an "infinite spider web of parallel universes" (Abadi 40). Symbols like the mirror and the labyrinth form part of his way to insinuate the impossibility of grasping historical truths in constant change, taking form according to subjective perspectives of those through whom the events are experienced (Mihály 205).

It was this interplay between time, memory, and identity that formed one of Güney's central themes taken from Borges' work. This UC ability to see the time and space by the protagonist in *The Aleph* is symbolic of all times and spaces existing together. Still, this is not the omniscient view that would yield clarity or escape from the labyrinth of existence. Through a futility of his writing, Borges demonstrates that the human condition is ultimately condemned, even while the knowledge is infinite, to be caught within infinite paradoxes of time and identity. Similarly, in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, the story is illustrative of the manner in which individuals devise meaning about them through memory and perception. Each of these options that were to be made in the labyrinth represents an alternate version of the self—the self would, nevertheless, be increasingly complicated with regard to identity and time (McMurray 60).

Conclusion

Magical realism, thus, appeared to provide a unique way of portraying history and time due to the mixing of the fantastic with the real. In Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and Jorge Luis Borges' *The Aleph and Other Stories*, time is considered nonlinear, circular, fragmented, and put out of its usual context in major historical narration. Allende narrates personal memory together with political history, giving shape to a generational narration that reflects the politically turbulent situation of Chile.

In the case of Márquez, the rise and fall of the Buendía family become the means to outline the cyclical character of time, whereby events of a personal and historical nature are repeated in successive generations, that is a true reflection of the stormy past that passed through Colombia. On the contrary, Borges moves in the opposite direction, using labyrinthine structures to paint time as infinite and subjective, painting history as a multitude of parallel realities that run every instant of time with several options for each event.

These three authors meet at the juncture of fluid and complex time, facilitated by their struggle to be released from a linear narrative structure. In terms of narration, however, they tend to be quite different: Allende focuses on political allegory entwined with personal remembrance, Márquez creates a mythic history, and Borges looks through the optic of philosophy into metaphysical preoccupations like infinity and identity (Martin 20). This diversity of issues testifies to the versatility of magic realism in relation to histories both personal and collective.

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