



## EXPLORING MAGICAL REALISM IN ISABEL ALLENDE'S *THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS*

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### Abstract:

Magical realism is a literary technique in which the ordinary and mundane are blended with the extraordinary and magical in a realistic setting in which everything appears to be ordinary. The usage of this literary device dates back to the early 20th century, and the "el boom" in Latin American literature helped Latin American authors gain greater international recognition for their use of the magical realism in their storytelling from the 1950s to the 1970s. Around this time, the Chilean author Isabel Allende made a name for herself in the realm of magical realism by publishing *The House of the Spirits*, which won her recognition on a global scale. In *The House of the spirits*, Isabel Allende uses magical realism to illustrate feminism issues related to patriarchal oppression while also including themes of Latin American identity, political oppression, and their representation. This paper aims to explore the usage of magical realism in Allende's novel *The House of the Spirits* by drawing on Wendy B. Faris' five characteristics of magical realism: the irreducible element; the phenomenal world; the unsettling doubts; the merging of realms; and the disruptions of time, space, and identity.

**Keywords:** Magical realism, Latin America, The house of the Spirits, Isabel Allende, Wendy B. Faris.

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Magical realism is a literary and artistic style in which the world is shown realistically but also including magical elements, often fusing fantasy with reality. It typically associated with literature, where supernatural or magical occurrences are depicted in a realistic or everyday environment, as in books and plays. In comparison to literary realism or fantasy, magical realism is frequently considered as a combination of real and magical aspects that creates a more inclusive writing form which has made it particularly relevant to late-twentieth-century literature. Mexican critic Luis Leal succinctly described how difficult it is to define magical realism by noting, "If you can explain it, then it's not magical realism." He offers his own definition by writing, "Without thinking of the concept of magical realism, each writer gives expression to a reality he observes in the people. To me, magical realism is an attitude on the part of the characters in the novel toward the world," or toward nature (Leal).

Franz Roh, a German art critic, originally used the term "magical realism" (Magischer Realismus) in 1925 to describe a shift back toward realism following Expressionism's abstraction. Magic realism, as defined by Roh, is a method of viewing mystical, supernatural, and enigmatic objects in paintings. Roh extended the term's usage to include the works of Zola and Rimbaud even though he first used it to describe paintings. His book, *Degenerate Art*, was then reissued under the title *Magical Realism, Post-Impressionism the concept of Magical Realism*. These Rohian ideas were later applied to literature and had a significant impact on Latin America, particularly in literary criticism.

The Latin American literary boom, or "el boom," which lasted from the 1950s to the 1970s, helped Latin American writers who used the magical realism storytelling technique gain more recognition internationally. Jorge Luis Borges, an Argentine author, was one of the first Latin American authors to embrace magic realism in his Wall 9 collection of short tales *Ficciones (Fictions, 1944)* and *El aleph (Aleph, 1949)*. Following "el boom," Chilean author Isabel Allende gained international acclaim for her magic realist work *La Casa de los espíritus (The House of the Spirits, 1982)*. Allende employed magic realism to raise attention to political and feminist issues in Latin America. As a result, Allende became a pivotal figure for female authors working with magical realism.

Isabel Angélica Allende Llonca was born on August 2, 1942 in Lima, Peru to Francisca Llonca Barros and Thomas Allende, a second secretary in the Chilean embassy at the time. Allende studied at a

private American school in La Paz, Bolivia, and a private English school in Beirut, Lebanon.

Allende joined the editorial staff of *Paula magazine* in 1967 and served as an editor of *Mampato[es]*, a children's publication, from 1969 to 1974 where she had published two children's stories, namely, as well as *Civilice a Su Troglodita* which was a collection of articles. When she once asked poet Pablo Neruda for an interview as a journalist, to which he accepted, he advised her to become a novelist instead since she had too much imagination to be a journalist. He also suggested that she publish a book of her humorous columns. She followed through on his advice, and it became her first published book. *The House of the Spirits*, a novel based on the letter and written with the intention of eradicating the evils of the Pinochet dictatorship, was published in 1982 after Allende, then living in Caracas, received a phone call informing her that her 99-year-old grandfather was on the verge of dying. Allende wrote the letter in an effort to "keep him alive, at least in spirit."

Allende currently resides in San Rafael, California with the majority of her relatives live nearby, including her son and his second wife as well as her grandchildren who still live in the house she and her second husband left. Then, in April 2015, She and Gordon filed for divorce. Some of Allende's works include *Of Love and Shadows (1987)*, *Eva Luna (1987)*, *Two Words (1989)*, *The Infinite plan (1991)*, *Daughter of Fortune (1999)*, *Portrait in Sepia (2000)*, *Zorro (2005)*, *Ines of My Soul (2006)*, *Island Beneath the Sea (2010)*, *Maya's Notebook (2011)*, *Ripper (2014)*, and *The Japanese Lover (2015)*.

*The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende is a novel published in 1982. It depicts the story of three generations of a Latin American family, the Truba's, in the twentieth century. In the middle of an environment of modernization and ideological effervescence, Allende weaves elements such as social inequality, the changing position of women in society, and the popular resistance against tyranny. Allende's literary debut as a storyteller, this work rapidly became a controversial best-seller which is attributed to a number of factors: in terms of literature, Allende combines a factual portrayal of modern Chilean events with mystical and fantastic aspects. Allende is controversial in her non-literary elements, both because of her own political ideas and because of her family ties to Salvador Allende.

There are two narrators in *The House of the Spirits*: Alba, who relates the story in retrospect from an omniscient third-person point of view, and Esteban, who tells some of it in first person. The story begins with Severo and Nvea del Valle, who

raised a large and successful family in the early twentieth century. Severo and Nvea are both liberals; she is a pioneering feminist, whilst he wants to be a politician. Among the many children of this marriage, Rosa la Bella and Clara the clairvoyant stands out. Clara is the oldest of her five siblings who possesses a great capacity for telekinesis, spirit communication, and divination. Her sister, Rosa la Bella, or Rosa the Lovely, is engaged to Esteban Trueba, a miner who works in the northern part of the nation. Unfortunately, she passes away after consuming some tainted brandy meant for her father, Severo which is presumably sent by one of his political enemies. Clara, who had clairvoyant abilities from birth, saw this terrible death coming. She then witnesses her sister's autopsy, and the shock of both that experience and the prophecy's fulfillment renders her speechless for the ensuing nine years.

After Rosa's passing, Esteban quits his job in the mines and takes over the Tres Maras, a rural estate owned by his family. As a powerful patrón who is feared, he gains fortune and starts raping the young peasant girls who live on his property. He consequently has several illegitimate children, one of whom was born to his first victim, Pancha Garca. A local sex offender named Tránsito Soto, who wants to move to the capital and follow her dream of becoming wealthy and well-known, also hangs out with Esteban. Tránsito Soto asks for a 50-peso loan. She promises that one day she'll pay the debt back.

Ten years later, Esteban visits his sick mother in the city. To fulfill her dying wish of carrying on the Trueba line, Esteban visits the del Valles to see if they have any more daughters who would make good wives. Clara anticipated his arrival after finally announcing her engagement to her sister's fiancé a few months earlier. After being married, Clara and Esteban move into a lovely new house that Esteban built. Blanca, Clara's daughter, is born shortly after she swiftly becomes pregnant.

During Blanca's childhood, a devastating earthquake obliterates the ranch and breaks every bone in Esteban. Once the kids are sent to boarding school, Clara stays behind to take care of her husband; sadly, his escalating bad temper causes the marriage to fall apart. After leaving Tres Maras pretending to be ill, Blanca returns to find Pedro Tercero banished from the estate for promoting socialism among the peasants. Secret meetings between the two leads to their eventual marriage. A visiting French nobleman named Jean de Satigny learns about their affair and tells Esteban. Clara never speaks to Esteban again, and she and her daughter leave for the city as he brutally whips and strikes her when she stands up for her daughter.

Pedro Tercero is pursued by Esteban, who regrets his violent tendencies after just sawing off Pedro Tercero's fingers as opposed to killing him.

When it is discovered that Blanca is expecting Pedro Tercero's child, Esteban forces her to wed the French count. On the other hand, Blanca leaves her married home when she learns that the count is subjecting their servants to sexual experiments. She returns home and gives birth to a girl named Alba, whom Esteban and the rest of the family adore and who Clara predicts will lead a good and happy life.

Esteban gradually distances himself from his family members, with the exception of Alba. In addition, he is an active member of politics, having joined the Conservative Party. As Alba is still a young child, Clara passes away peacefully, and Esteban is devastated by her loss. Growing up, Alba is affected by her mother, grandfather, and uncles. Blanca rekindles her relationship with revolutionary songwriter Pedro Tercero. Eventually, Esteban sends Nicolás overseas to practice his unusual spiritualism experiments. Alba becomes an adult and enrolls in university, where she meets and falls in love with Miguel, the younger brother of Nicolás's girlfriend. Because she cares about Miguel, Alba supports his revolutionary endeavors, and she celebrates with him when the Socialists gain power.

To topple the new administration, Esteban and his party colleagues plot a military coup; but, even once the uprising is successful, the army refuses to cede control. In the confusion, some soldiers with an eye for power kill Jaime. After coming to his senses, Esteban helps Blanca and Pedro Tercero depart the country and they end up happily and peacefully settling in Canada. Due of her connections to Miguel, who has joined the rebels, Alba is being held in custody. She is raped and tortured by Colonel Esteban Garca, Esteban's grandson by Pancha Garca. At Tres Maras, where Garca had abused Alba as a child, Garca and Alba had previously met. His anger toward the Truebas is now directed at Alba. Alba sees a vision of Clara's soul telling her to live and write.

Esteban pays a visit to Tránsito Soto, the affluent and well-connected owner of a hotel in the city center. By finding Alba and bringing her back to Esteban, she pays back his obligation. Now that Alba is expecting, she doesn't know if the child is Miguel's or the product of a rape. Alba, on the other hand, decides to let go of her resentment in an effort to stop the cycle of resentment and retaliation. Together, Alba and Esteban create the family's history, and Esteban passes away softly. While she waits for Miguel and the birth of her

child, Alba accepts the uncertainty surrounding the parentage of her child.

*The House of the spirits* by Isabel Allende is filled with magical realism elements. As such, this paper is an attempt to explore the aspects of magical realism and the themes of Latin American identity, political and patriarchal oppression in the novel by using Wendy B. Faris' theory in *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narratives*. In this book she defines Magical Realism with the help of five different characteristics: i) the irreducible element, in which "the text contains an irreducible element of magic." ii) the phenomenal world, in which, "descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world." iii) unsettling doubt, in which "the reader may experience some hesitation in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events"; iv) merging realms, in which, "the narrative merges different realms"; and, v) the distortion of time, space and identity in which, "magical realism disturbs accepted ideas about time, space and identity" (Faris 15).

Faris emphasized that the author employed magical realism narrative to reveal elements that had been buried and prevented from being revealed in the literary work owing to realism dominance due to the magical realism in its storytelling approach, which seeks to alter reality. According to Faris' description, a magical realism tale connects the incredible to reality. The author's thorough description of "the ordinary," or the world beyond the narrative's "the marvellous," is what gives it its magic. It is neither an extraordinary event nor anything wholly apart from or foreign to reality; rather, it is a hybrid reality that 'organically' blurs the distinction between the two so that it is accepted as a normal occurrence (Faris 1).

### **Elements of Magical Realism in *The House of The Spirits*:**

In her book *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narratives*, Wendy B. Faris defines magical realism by identifying five different characteristics. She uses terms like the irreducible element; the phenomenal world; the merging realms; the unsettling doubt; and the disruptions of time, space, and identity. All five of these characteristics that Faris mentions can be found in Isabel Allende's book *The House of the Spirits*.

### **The Irreducible Element:**

In her book, Faris first introduces the irreducible element, describing it by quoting Young and Holman, as "something we cannot explain

according to the laws of the universe" since they are grounded on empirical based discourse. "Therefore," Faris explains, "the reader has difficulty marshalling evidence to settle questions about the status of events and characters in such fictions" (Faris 7). The things that happen in a story that may seem absurd, foreign, unique, or peculiar are known as irreducible components. These essential components are used by Allende to illustrate and discuss key concepts and subjects relating to the patriarchal and political tyranny that was prevalent in Latin America at the time.

In *The House of the Spirits*, the irreducible element is first presented to us through Barrabás, the dog, owned by Clara in the del Valle family. For instance, he is said to have more characteristics of a "thoroughbred racer" than a dog, his tail growing "as long as a golf club" (Allende 21). The dog becomes larger than a grown-up sheep and some people even believed it to be a "cross between a dog and a mare, and expected him to sprout wings and horns and acquire the sulfuric breath of a dragon" (Allende 29). Barrabás lies next to Clara in bed when he becomes too big to fit in her bed with her, his "horses' hoof" resting in her hand (Allende 22). Moreover, the irreducible element is also shown in the novel's protagonist, Clara, who had Clairvoyance and telekinetic powers as she can move objects without touching them and she could detect other people's intentions and predict the future. Allende writes:

She predicted her father's hernia; all the earthquakes and other natural disturbances; the one and only time snow fell in the capital, freezing to death the poor people in their shantytowns and the rose bushes in the gardens of the rich, and the identity of the murderer of school girls long before the police discovered the second corpse; but no one believed her. (Allende 86)

Clara 'the clairvoyant' was also able to predict her sister, Rosa's, death when she announces that there will soon be an accidental death in the family. Rosa falls sick soon after and subsequently dies after taking lemonade with a shot of brandy prescribed by the doctor. Clara is terrified to learn that the brandy, which was intended for Severo and was brought into the home with the gifts from the guests, was poisoned: "She was terrified that Rosa had died because she had said she would. She believed that just as the power of her mind could move the saltcellar on the table, she could also produce deaths, earthquakes, and other, even worse catastrophe." (Allende 40)

Barrabás the dog and Clara's myth-like powers are rarely questioned by the other characters as Faris notes that the "irreducible elements are well assimilated into the realistic textual environment,

rarely causing any comment by narrators or characters, who model such an acceptance for their readers. Paradoxically, though, because they also nevertheless frequently surprise those readers and their realistic expectations, they also say, in almost existential fashion" (Faris 21)

Clara learns to utilize her powers at a young age. For example, when Clara's father tells the gardener to remove Barrabás the dog, Clara refuses by saying, "He's mine, Papa. If you take him away, I'll stop breathing and I promise you I'll die" (Allende 21). Clara, therefore, can control her father's decisions as he knows that what she often says comes true. Clara gains the ability to influence the decisions and behaviours of those close to her, as evidenced by her decision to save Barrabás. In a society where men are more influential than women, Clara sees this as a turning point and a revelation that she does have some impact in it.

As she becomes older, Clara further develops her talents, which she later employs to limit the power that her future patriarchal husband, Esteban Trueba, has over her. The only domestic skill "she ever mastered" is knitting, thus Clara spends her days utilizing her three-legged table to communicate with spirits (Allende 88). Clara, rather than doing domestic works is always seen "as distracted and smiling... in everything else; relaxed and simple but absent" (Allende 150). This is one way she defies her patriarchal husband's demands.

In another incident, Esteban discovers his sister Ferula in bed with Clara and kicks her out of the house, threatening to kill her if she ever comes near his family again. As she leaves, Ferula curses Esteban, saying, "I set my curse on you, Esteban!... You will always be alone! Your body and soul will shrivel up and you'll die like a dog!" (Allende 154). Surely, Esteban finds himself shrinking as the novel progresses: on the night Clara dies, Esteban lies next to her in bed and examines her frail state and how he "had always felt like a giant next to her," however when he "lay down next to her on the bed I saw that we were almost the same size" (Allende 321). Esteban nevertheless tries to rationalize it by treating it like a medical problem and leaves for the United States as the "pain in his bones and the secret illness that only he perceived, he had decided it was time to be examined by foreign doctors" (Allende 269). At the end of the novel, however, Alba, the great-granddaughter of Esteban and Clara, comes across an old photograph of her grandfather and how in the picture, Esteban looked "young and stood six feet tall," and points out that this is "irrefutable proof that Férula's curse came true and that his body shrank in the same proportions as his soul" (Allende 469).

### The Phenomenal World:

The second characteristic that Wendy B. Faris introduces to us is the phenomenal world. In her book, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004), Faris describes that the the phenomenal world is the realism part of magical realism. According to Faris, this phenomenal world does exist but is altered since it is "grounded textually in a traditionally realistic, even explicitly factual, manner" (Faris 15). Furthermore, Faris writes that magical realism "may include magic and folk wisdom...but real history is a weight that tethers the balloon of magic as if to warn against too great a lightness of mythical or magical being" (Faris 16).

Allende, in an interview with Nina Buckless for the *Fictions Writers Review*, has explained that her novel was based on her personal life, stating, "when I wrote *The House of Spirits* I told the story of a family, and I was also telling the story of a country...when I finished the book, I realized that's what happens with history. Our personal stories are determined by the circumstances in which we live" (Buckless). In *The House of the Spirits*, we see the history of the political situations and the oppression faced by women at the time in Chile or Latin America in general. A family sage, the novel spans three generation of the Trueba Family set in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that spans fifty years.

There are several instances that alludes to the novel being set in Chile. For example, Esteban travels to his family's property, Tres Marias, "outside the town of San Lucas," which is a town in Chile's far south, in order to rebuild it (Allende 59). This establishes a setting ground for the readers for credibility, as with a realistic setting along with historical elements makes the story credible, while also building narrative reliability.

The phenomenal world as described by Faris is evident in Nivea Del Valle, Clara's mother, and her passion for politics, who wishes for her husband to be elected to Congress so she may "secure the vote for women" (Allende 10). Allende introduces us to her character as a representation of the fight for women's rights that arose during the starting of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Chile as Lisa Baldez in her book, *Why Women Protest: Women's Movement in Chile*, notes that "women's movements formed... over the course of the twentieth century" (Baldez 10). Nivea Del Valle husband, Severo, was also a politician of the Liberal party but he had retired after a presumed murder attempt by the opposing party to kill him with poisoned brandy which unfortunately killed Rosa the beautiful instead.

Following this, Nivea would go on to start her own political campaign. Allende writes:

“She would chain herself with other ladies to the gates of Congress and the Supreme Court, setting off a degrading spectacle that made all their husbands look ridiculous... Nivea went out at night to hang suffragette posters on walls across the city and that she was capable of walking through the heart of the city in the plain light of day with a broom in her hand and a tricorned hat on her head, calling for women to have equal rights with men, to be allowed to vote and attend the university, and for all children, even bastards, to be granted the full protection of the law (Allende 79). Allende also shows the reaction of men to the women's movement at the time through Esteban's remark of Nivea being “sick in the head!” and that “it would go against nature. If women don't know that two and two are four, how are they going to be able to handle a scalpel? Their duty is motherhood and the home. At the rate they're going, the next thing you know they'll be asking to be deputies, judges—even President of the Republic! And in the meantime they're sowing confusion and disorder that could lead to disaster” (Allende 79).

Allende's depiction of real Chilean political and literary personalities is another instance of the phenomenal world. The first is the “Poet,” a reference to the famed Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, a family friend and source of inspiration for Allende's writing. Allende through her character, Clara expresses her admiration for the Poet, “the beautiful verses of a young poet she had taken under her wing – a poet who was beginning to be talked about everywhere” (Allende 160)

Allende often describes the former Chilean President, Salvador Allende, as “the candidate.” She adds, “Word spread that the president had died, and no one believed the official version that he had committed suicide,” alluding to the real-life controversy about whether Salvador Allende was assassinated by a military coup or committed suicide. Also, General Hurtado parallels the persona of Augusto Pinochet, who led the military coup in the novel. The military coup also “beat, stripped from his clothes, tied at the hands and feet with barbed wire, starved from food and water for days in his excrements and blood, and then shot and dynamited to death” Jaime, after he declines to assist them in their scheme to get the president's suicide by intoxication televised. Alba is also subjected to torture by the military coup participants, who “rape her, cut off her fingers, and plunged her head into a bucket of excrement until she fainted from disgust.” (Allende 449). Trueba worked tirelessly to promote the right-wing regime, much like Pinochet did when he deposed

leftist President Salvador Allende. Pinochet eventually became president, and Trueba remained disillusioned, alienated, and ignored by the military government.

The story also depicts the social and socialist movements that took root and grew throughout Chile, beginning with worker unions in mines and ending with the campaign for agrarian reform. Trueba's mines, for example, were shut down by striking minors, and his hacienda was taken over by the very employees he had hired for decades: “Tres Marias was one of the last haciendas in the South to be expropriated under the agrarian reform. The same peasants who had been born there and had farmed the land for generations formed a cooperative and took title to the property” (Allende 388).

The readers are able to relate and understand the injustice that were faced by the people of her country during the Pinochet regime through her depiction of the military coup which supports the element of the phenomenal world within magical realism in *The House of The Spirits*.

#### **The unsettling doubts:**

The Unsettling doubts is the third characteristics of Magical realism as put forward by Wendy B. Faris. Faris states that, “before categorizing the irreducible element as irreducible, the reader may hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events, and hence experience some unsettling doubts” (Faris 7). It is how readers respond to magical realism's underlying components, particularly the irreducible elements and the merging realms. Faris says that the readers might hesitate to believe some of the narratives depending on cultural context as someone who is familiar with the culture of magical logic might not hesitates as much as opposed to someone who is not.

In *The House of the Spirits*, the character of Clara is a prime example of how readers might feel the “unsettling doubt” of her clairvoyance, her ability to move things without touching them which seems like logical fallacy. Clara notes that Esteban Trueba's character has become slightly sweeter as a result of Alba's birth; only Clara, through her magic, is able to see the imperceptible, but her perspective is real and accurate. Due to Clara's ability to use magic, it is impossible to tell if her observation of Esteban's alteration as a result of Alba's influence was caused by magic or by “real” perception. Faris notes that there are many ways to encompass the unsettling doubt “as existing during a story when a reader hesitates between the uncanny, where an event is explainable according to the laws of the natural universe as we know it,

and the marvelous, which requires some alteration in those laws" (Faris 17).

Allende's narration guides the readers into accepting the magical elements through the other characters in the novel. For example, when Nivea pulls Clara's braids which causes Chara to move a saltcellar, Because the extraordinary event is typical of the characters' life, Nvea's lack of surprise enables the readers to accept it. Rosa the Beautiful "with her incredible green hair... her fairy-tale manner, and her special way of moving as if she were flying" and her skin tone of "soft blueish lights" is another example (Allende 31). They appear indifferent to her half-human-half-myth features, except for only ever admiring her beauty, which invites the audience to accept Rosa's peculiar appearance.

### The Merging of Realms:

The fourth characteristic, the merging realms is the way the magical element makes two realms combine into one. Faris states that, here, "In terms of cultural history, magical realism often merges ancient or traditional-sometimes indigenous-and modern worlds. Ontologically, within the texts, it integrates the magical and the material." (Faris 21). Clara's ability to talk and communicate with the spirits is an example of merging realms in *The House of the Spirits*. Clara is able to converse with the spirits and vice versa as she entered her youth, where she didn't feel the need to speak and "spent [the] time wrapped in her fantasies, accompanied by the spirits of the air, the water, and the earth" (Allende 96). The spirits also try to warn her of Barrabàs' death by whispering through the curtains during her wedding night. The rooms at her husband's Mansion become "full of whispering ghosts" after they move in (Allende 427). Clara also develops a friendship with the Mora Sisters, a pair of spiritualism learners who grew close because they had similar abilities. Allende writes: "They established telepathic contact with her, and immediately realized they were astral sisters... They became intimate friends, and from that day on they met every Friday to summon spirits and exchange recipes and premonitions" (Allende 142).

Clara uses her clairvoyance to communicate with the spirits of the dead, which helps her deal with the pain of losing her parents in a car accident. Furthermore, when Clara is about to die, Jaime wishes to save her, but quickly discovers that Clara has accepted her fate and is ready to die. Clara has the opportunity to explain to Alba and the rest of the family that dying is only a natural part of life and that she will not truly abandon them when she

passes away, saying, "Dying is like being born: just a change" (Allende 318).

Fèrula, who always looked after her family, and wished she "would like to have been born a man..." because of the harsh social expectations from her as compared to her brother, Esteban, who enjoys a "destiny that [is] bright, free, and full of promise," is liberated from Esteban's and society's oppression when she dies and transcends into the merging realms since the merging realms is a place he or society cannot control (Allende 56). Because of the merging realms, Fèrula can now interact with Clara, which Esteban had forbidden. Ultimately, Clara is summoned in a spiritual form by Fèrula so that she can tend to her body shortly after her death.

### The Disruption of time, Space, and Identity:

When the author presents time and space in an unfamiliar manner, time and space are disrupted. The disruption of identity is the last characteristics that Faris put forward and, according to her, it is a "mysterious sense of fluid identities and interconnectedness" (Faris 25). Allende stresses a woman's existence as viewed from the perspective of Clara, whose entire life seems to be a rupture of time and space. Clara travels through her parents' mansion as a child, detached from a time that the readers are made aware of. The mansion's walls and the outside world have conflicting perceptions of how time moves. Allende says:

It was a world in which time was not marked by calendars or watches and objects had a life of their own, which the apparitions sat at the table and conversed with human beings, the past and the future formed part of a single unit, and the reality of the present was a kaleidoscope of jumbled mirrors where everything, and anything could happen. (Allende 92)

Here, the disruption of space is represented by apparitions from the merging realms who "converse with human beings." The fact that nothing is "marked by calendars or watches," and that the present world is a "kaleidoscope of jumbled mirrors," indicates time as disrupted. Moreover, the story is not told from start to finish in chronological order. For instance, the novel starts with the announcement of Barrabas' arrival, then shifts back to earlier that day when the family is in church, jumps back even further to Rosa's birth, then shifts back to the family in church, and then jumps forward to a hint of a time years later when Nivea would remember that exact moment in church.

Clara wields more power in their marriage than Esteban would like, as indicated by her refusal to do the domestic responsibilities required of her.

Instead, she “wandered from one room to the next without ever being the least surprised to find everything in perfect order and sparkingly clean. She sat down to eat without ever wondering who had cooked the food or where it had come from, just as she was oblivious to the person serving it” (Allende 145). This shows how as the mansion is the centre of domestication, Allende mocks the patriarchal societal norms by allowing time and space to be disrupted within it. Furthermore, Esteban is rendered powerless in stopping Clara because the power of her inspirations triumphs over his demands, “he would lose his patience and furiously shake her awake, shouting the worst accusations he could think of, but then he would end up weeping in her lap and begging her forgiveness for his cruelty” (Allende 147). Allende represents the power of female inspirations in Latin America, which are equally as resilient as their male counterparts which is a disruption of the identity of women as being submissive.

### Conclusion:

Magical realism is an amalgamation of fantasy and reality, a literary and artistic style used to convey and perceive historical and socio-political truth. On exploring the five characteristics of Magical Realism by Wendy B. Faris in her Book *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical realism and the Remystification of Narrative* in Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, we have also found the portrayal of Latin American identity, their political and patriarchal oppression. The myth-like qualities of Barrabas the dog and Clara's Clairvoyance indicate the presence of the irreducible element in the novel. Allende is able to reveal the patriarchal oppression that exists in Latin American society through Clara's magical abilities, which also help Clara realize she actually has some influence in a world where women are deemed less influential than men. The Phenomenal World is depicted in Allende's portrayal of the political oppression during Pinochet's regime, a real-life event that occurred in Latin America. Then, the magical instances like Clara's ability to predict the future and her telekinetic powers, and Rosa's myth-like features causes unsettling doubt in the readers, however, due to their family's indifference to their unusual traits, the readers also end up accepting them as normal.

The merging of realms can be seen in the encounter and conversations between Clara and the spirits where she is able to cope with the death of her parents and eventually her own due to her clairvoyance. Here, we also witness Ferula's liberation when she dies, as she is free from the social expectations of looking after her family and

her brother's oppression after being banished by Esteban to leave his family when she is caught in bed with Clara. In the spirit realm, she is no longer under their shackles and is now able to communicate with Clara freely. Finally, the disruption of time, space and identity is seen in the narration of the novel, where time leaps occur often from past or present, as the story begins with the arrival of Barrabas the dog, and then shift back and forth to Rosa's birth and the church. The disruption of space is seen in the del Valle and Trueba house, where spirits and human converse through the merging of realms; and the disruption of identity is seen in the very existence of Clara, as she often spends her time in her own world, talking to spirits through which she also avoids the domestic duties that is expected from her identity as a woman in a patriarchal society. Through the female characters, Clara, Nivea, Ferula, and Rosa, we witness women's oppression in a patriarchal society and their need to find their own identity; Then, Allende's portrayal of political figures, such as The Candidate and General Hurtado, and the agrarian reform, shows the appalling political situations of twentieth century Latin America. Finally, Magical Realism mixes the real and fantasy, as such Isabel Allende has given the characters of the novel such as Clara, Rosa, and Barrabas the dog, magical elements in the real world setting of Chile. On this account, we find that Isabel Allende has used of the five characteristics of Magical Realism set by Wendy B. Faris to talk about Latin American history and her experiences with the culture to showcase it through the characters in *The House of the Spirits*.

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