MAGICAL REALISM
CHAPTER IV
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Latin America is believed to be an important location for Magical Realism. The term Magical Realism is used to refer to all narrative fictions which present the magical happenings in a realist tone of the narrative and this relates the term to literary realism though it differs from it in the perspective of presenting the fusion of two opposite aspects, the magical and the real thus forming a new outlook. This innovative stance is considered as its hallmark quality since the narrative mode attempts to break down the distinction between the opposite aspects. It enhances the acceptance level of the readers since it tries to provide equilibrium between the ethereal and the real. Magic in magical realism refers to any extraordinary occurrence, particularly to anything spiritual or inexplicable by rational science. It may include ghosts, miracles, odd talents or events, sudden appearances or disappearances, and bizarre atmosphere which go in line with the natural discourse of the story, never inducing severe excitement. The ordinariness of magic in magical realism relies on its capability of being accepted both in the supernatural and natural planes. It is understood that unless the magical aspects are accepted as a part of everyday reality throughout the discourse the writing cannot be acknowledged as true magical realist contribution. Lois Zamora and Wendy B. Farris state in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* that, “... the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it *is* an ordinary matter, and everyday occurrence -
admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism” (3).

The origin of the term has been variously interpreted by the critics. While Maggie Ann Bowers opines that magical realism is an outcome of the combined influence of Magic Realism which originated in the 1920s and Marvellous Realism which originated in the 1940s, critic Angel Flores traces its origin to Spanish literature. His essay “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction,” published in 1955, paved the way for the critical argument on magical realism. He argues in the essay that magical realism is a continuation of the romantic realist tradition in Spanish literature and in its European counterparts (Flores, 109-118). Miguel de Saavedra Cervantes’ novel Don Quixote is praised as the precursor to magical realism. Regarding this novel, Maggie Ann Bowers observes in Magic(al) Realism thus:

Most famously the knight battles with the windmills believing them to be knights he must fight. For his version of magical realism, Flores drew on the interpretation that Don Quixote’s belief in what he perceives is absolute but can be seen by his companion, the squire Sancho Panza, and the reader differently. (17)

Jorge Luis Borges is considered as the Father of Modern Latin American Literature and a forerunner to magical realism. Angel Flores considers him to be a true magical realist and claims his collection of short fiction A Universal History of Infamy (1935) as the first example of Latin American magical realist writing (Bowers, 38). The credit of Franz Roh, a German critic, being the predecessor of current day magical realists cannot be
denied. He has drawn influences from European and Latin American cultural movements which remain as a key aspect of magical realist writing. It can be influenced by European Christianity as much as by, for instance, Native American indigenous beliefs.

Alejo Carpentier’s prologue to his novel *El reino de este mundo* (1949; *The Kingdom of This World*, 1975) may be considered as a significant contribution to the evolution of magical realism because the term has become specific with reference to Latin American context since then. Though the term is undeniably influenced by European models the significance of Carpentier’s presentation lies in his precise use of cultural beliefs. In his novel, he incorporates voodoo beliefs and practices of African American culture. Latin America is a perfect platform for cross-cultural influences which are best expressed through the magical realist fictions. While Carpentier has presented the pied beauty of cultural concepts, Gabriel Garcia Marquez handles the term to express the violence and confusion of Latin American politics and to create the atmosphere of nostalgia. It is an undeniable fact that Gabriel Garcia Marquez has epitomized the image of magical realism thus reinforcing the connection between Latin America and magical realism. He has influenced many writers to adopt the mode and of them, Isabel Allende is one who is known for her innovative use of the technique. Allende is one among the successful followers whose works, though not all, carry the strong aroma of magical realism. Her debut novel *The House of the spirits* is a popularization of Marquez’s style of magical realism and it is a perfect magical realist seat with occasional nostalgia, expressing individual influences and national tragedy. Laura Esquivel’s *Como agua para Chocolate* (1989; *Like Water for Chocolate*, 1993) is a novel which overflows with Allende’s one favourite obsession – voice for the unvoiced. The narration is through
female voice and perspective that it sketches the domestic lives of women with magical realism. As Zamora and Farris notice, magical realism is also used to question the notions of dominant culture. Angela Carter is adept in such exposure, and her novel *Wise Children* subverts the authority of the patriarchal upper class (Bowers, 90-110). The multihued aspects of magical realism as handled by such authors referred to affirm the term’s comprehensive use of various religious ideologies, cultural beliefs, cross-cultural influences, voodoo principles, superstitious beliefs, and similar other aspects including current problems. It is noteworthy that Allende does not confine herself in any one of the beliefs; she exploits almost every reigning principles of magical realism.

Allende’s novels which stand exemplary of this style reflect her as a faithful adherent to this literary tradition. The realistic tales entwined with supernatural intervention are narrated coherently and the extraordinary aspects neither deviate nor hang on loosely from the main stream of the novels. As a modern picaresque writer, Allende employs the magical realist technique to mirror various cultural perspectives and individual influences. Allende’s sense of attributing magical realism as a normal occurrence exclusive to the Third World nations finds an echo in William A. Davis’ article on “The Magic Realism of Isabel Allende” which quotes Isabel Allende thus:

> Isabel Allende, a leading practitioner of the literary art of magic realism, thinks that we should perceive with more than our eyes.

> "Magic realism is a term used to describe Latin American writers," she said, "but it is really a way of accepting the world that the Third World has always had but that the United States and Europe have lost. It means using
instinct and intuition, having a sense of myth and recognizing the tremendous power of nature." (1991)

As the picaresque novels provide ample opportunities in sketching out different plots and characters, the varied presentations of cultures and customs pave the way for the design of magical aspects in the novels.

Magical realism is prevalent in all the novels of Allende under study. She has employed the device suiting to the theme of the novels and that helps in the development of the story. Magical realism is prevalent throughout her first novel *The House of the Spirits*. The employment of magical realism pinpoints the character development of Clara and Alba. Streaks of feminism enhance the dimension of magical realism. It is also employed to emphasize empathy to augment comprehension. In *Daughter of Fortune*, magical realist episodes focus on individual survival and communal survival. *Zorro* exploits the technique for the protagonist’s character formation. Courage, the inevitable parameter in the legend of Zorro, is instilled through the establishment of this device. Allende’s magical realist episodes of *Ines of My Soul* explicitly state the effect of love transcending time and space. The trilogy, *City of the Beasts*, *Kingdom of the Golden Dragon*, and *Forest of the Pygmies*, elaborates this style with reference to our commitment and contribution to ecology. Further it details the devices beyond human perception. In all these novels, apart from the main focus, native indigenous beliefs and customs are scattered evenly to embolden the effect of magical realism.
*Daughter of Fortune* has its own unique way of expressing the magical realist technique since it is entwined with the life style of the protagonist. Allende’s usage of magical realist episodes in *Daughter of Fortune* puts forth her universal acceptance of religious ideologies since she gives equal importance to Christian belief, Native Indian belief, and Chinese religious principles. Mama Friesa, the Indian cook of the Sommers family, influences Eliza Sommers thoroughly since her childhood. Mama Friesa moulds Eliza’s life style in such a way that she becomes aware of all that Mama Friesa knows. She has the habit of following her as a shadow, and Mama Friesa’s leisure hours afford Eliza with innumerable Indian myths and legends. In addition to the art of cooking, she learns how to read the signs of animals and the sea, to decode the messages in dreams, and to recognize the habit of spirits. While her hands are busy in assisting Mama in the kitchen, her mind would be filled in by the cruel Indian legends and saint stories. Magical happenings are never thought of as a separate entity in her life but they are recognized as ordinary events of life. The way Mama treats Jacob Todd’s illness is neither magical nor extraordinary for Eliza but it appears very ordinary and casual. The occasion illustrates that more than a few teaspoons of honey-sweetened bitter herb tea, there is something which has changed the drastic condition of Todd. He begins to feel a strange type of drowsiness when she passed her hands over Todd’s torso and chanted incantations closing her eyes. Even before she could finish, he is fast asleep that prolonged for eighteen hours after which he comes to normal position, though not completely recovered.

The year of Todd’s visit to Chile is immortalized in the school textbooks and in the memories of grandparents owing to great storms. A series of minor temblors cropped
up resulting in the complete collapse of regular life. Processions could be seen on streets praying for God’s mercy. One column of faithful followers bears Cristo de Mayo, the May Christ, which has been brought from Santiago especially for the procession. It is considered to be the most miraculous image in the world since it is the only one capable of changing the weather. The miracle is explained to Todd thus:

Two hundred years before, a devastating earthquake had leveled the capital, completely destroying the church of San Agustin except for the altar that held this Christ. His crown had slipped from his head to around his neck, where it stayed because every time they tried to put it back where it belonged the earth began to tremble. (Daughter, 33)

The magical quality of the statue seems to be very normal that people believe that it has the power to change even the weather.

If magical things are perceived with an ordinary outlook, ordinary things may possess magical powers unperceivable at the outer layer. The author beautifully substantiates this with Eliza’s love mania. The magical influence of love is best experimented with Eliza. When Eliza is completely overcome by the strong passion of love, it affects her to the core causing her physical and mental damage. Though Rosa has noted the change in Eliza, it is Mama who takes the effort to free her from the strange net. She approaches a famous machi, an ancient Mapuche Indian witch, to help Eliza get released from the entanglement. To Mama’s dismay, she tells that she could be of little help in this matter since there is no cure for this as everyone knows. In response to the fear of Mama if she would die, she adds that she could not tell anything on this matter
and one thing that is very sure is that she is going to suffer a lot in the near future. The root cause for that illness is identified as a strong trouble which has arisen from the fixation of love. She personifies love and attributes to it the quality of a spirit which completely rules over one’s body and soul. She declares that the girl has left her windows open on a clear night and it has crawled into her body when she was asleep. According to her, no spell can cure this. Mama leaves the place disheartened since she knows that if a machi cannot change the fate of Eliza, then all other means, including pious ones, will be hopeless. As she has predicted Eliza suffers in the ensuing years and it needs another healer to relieve her from the strange and strong obsession. Allende wants to emphasize the magical quality of love whose fatal touch has spared not everybody.

Tao Chi’en’s life style is basically accelerated by magical realist aspects. As a trained acupuncture physician from China, he travels to various places by water though his anguished soul lingers on his motherland. The episodes concerning his wife Lin are coloured by this technique which is deliberately handled by the author to demonstrate the tenets of Chinese beliefs and customs. Tao Chi’en, whose beliefs are deep rooted in the Chinese ideologies, serves as a medium of exposing the magical as real. He has rendered his helping hand to Eliza by boarding her secretly in the ship. He is not committed to her in any way, and his attitude is largely that of a third person in the beginning. When her pregnancy is revealed to him at the time of her lethal suffering, he curses himself for having taken risk needlessly. He even thinks of getting rid of her along with the garbage as soon as she dies. Centring on his safety, his mind refuses to accept the dictates of the heart. The sooner she dies, he could get rid of the problem of hiding her. When his mind is relentlessly wandering over this issue, the shift of his standpoint from mind to heart is
initiated by Lin’s presence. Lin is his adored, deceased wife who died due to lung disease. The presence of Lin diminishes his material safety promoting human safety. When Tao is about to leave Eliza to her fate, he feels a strange presence on his skin. He is scared at first but when he lifts the lamp, with absolute clarity, he can see his beloved wife Lin standing at a short distance from him. It is his first encounter with a spirit that he loses his nerve and trembles. He even goes to the extent of attempting a prayer to exorcise the spirit since he is confused if it is really Lin or a devil which has taken Lin’s form to confuse him. But when he senses the nearness of Lin he loses verbal expression:

Then Lin bent down to him with her unforgettable delicacy, so close that he dared he could have kissed her, and whispered that she had not come so far to frighten him but to remind him of the duties of an honorable physician. She herself had nearly bled to death after the birth of her daughter, and he had been able to save her. Why did he not do the same for this young woman? ... If a woman is prepared to travel the world buried in a nightmarish hole in order to find her man, it is because she has much *qi*. *(Daughter, 203)*

Tao has so many times felt the presence of Lin during meditation but not so close and clear as in the sea voyage. During meditation, he could not distinguish between the real spirit and the illusion of his love stricken soul. But his experience on board is peculiar and concrete when compared to his previous ones. Lin brings out the conscience of Tao to surface. The seeds of serving the sufferers have been deeply sowed in his heart starting with Eliza. Years later, Tao’s helping tendency reaches out to all the suffering prostitutes in and around Santiago. He buys the prostitute girls abandoned by their bosses and tries
to redesign their destinies after saving them from tragic ends. His success is very rare in this case but he does not yield to the obstacles and difficulties.

Tao’s view that he has learnt a lot about women through Lin and Eliza gives equal emphasis to a spirit and a living human being. A complete balance between the two in the life of Tao is explicit since he accepts that the idea of helping the girls is not his but Lin’s and the acupuncture master’s. On the day he meets the Chinese prostitute girls in Chinatown, his heart melts brooding over their fates. Those Chinese girls remind him of his lost sister and so, he avoids visiting the Chinese whores. When he beholds the fate of the prostitutes who die uncared for, there comes a turning point in his mission. His material outlook is replaced by humane outlook and it shoots up higher with the inspiration of Lin and the acupuncture master. A permanent contact is made between Tao and Lin during the night he has visited the brothel house to gather information about the brothels. As on board, he has not seen her right in front of him but feels her presence in the core of his heart which signifies a change in his stance. Lin stays with him till morning and leaves saying goodbye. The episode gets completed with the visit of the acupuncture master. Till sunrise the question answer session follows and by the time sun rises, he feels rejuvenated by their visits. He no longer sees the prostitutes with indifference but strives to safeguard them thereafter.

On many occasions, he calls Lin and she descends with a smiling face he had been seeing for years. When he starts rescuing the prostitutes, their contact becomes closer than before. Lin is the first to realize the strong bond of love between Tao and Eliza. Without Eliza’s knowledge Lin has become her ally, far from being her rival. She even talks with Tao the perfect pair they would make even though Tao is worried about
their position in China. During all his critical situations and mental agonies, Lin is the one who consoles him and gives him the right suggestion boosting up his waning spirit. Lin’s part is essential in Tao’s life since she tunes his mental condition to suit the codes of human values. Her nearness and advice bring back his original self to surface. Ted Andrews elaborates in *How to Meet and Work with Spirit Guides* on the temperament of the spirits as follows:

> In fact, spirit beings are often as interested in establishing relationships with us as we are with them. They can serve many functions and take many forms. They can inspire creativity, help us to open to abundance, provide insight and information, and protect or simply serve as companions. We can all benefit from contact with them and often do so without even realizing it. (5-6)

Thus, the episodes concerning magical realism play a pivotal role in deciding the mission of an individual and in giving asylum to a forsaken community.

*Zorro* is one of Allende’s best productions in which the application of magical realism owes greatly to the Native Indian indigenous beliefs. Allende’s exploitation of this technique is not only concerned with the regular course of the story but also exposes the author’s curiosity in exploring the veiled mystery. Regina, the mother of Zorro, suffers on the verge of death in child-birth when her mother, White Owl—a shaman, makes a timely appearance and saves Regina from death. It is to be noted here that she has never appeared before in the colony of the Spaniards after the marriage of her daughter.
Alejandro, the father of Zorro, attributes the timely appearance of his mother-in-law to the Indian communication system, a mystery Whites could never unravel:

A message sent from the Presidio in Monterey took two weeks to reach Baja California, with horses drooping beneath their riders, but when it arrived it was already old news to the Indians, who had received it ten days before through some magical means. (Zorro, 31)

The odd way of communication prevailing among the Indians is a striking point which declares the superiority of the natural ways and means over man’s intelligence.

During Diego’s transcontinental journey, the glittering lights on the waves are referred to by the captain as the signals of the presence of the living dead, Christian sailors drowned in the attack by Turkish pirates. Since their souls could not receive absolution for their sins, they could not make their way to purgatory. During nights, the souls rise to the surface and steal everything available on board including sailors as they want to sail towards Christian lands. The captain says that one may easily find them by their capes as a camouflage to shroud the clattering of their poor bones. Allende makes use of this style to expose the inhumaness of the sea pirates who are known for their atrocities since ages. It is finely described through Jean Lafitte and the Grand Island. The sea is used as a symbolic platform for pointing out the consequence of human sin which pursue the sinner till absolution. As death may come at any unpredictable moment, the necessity to lead a disciplined life, devoid of passions that result in miseries, is stated through the living dead.
Allende’s magical realist technique paves the way for instilling confidence in Diego while he takes on Rafael Moncada in a duel. The risk is enormous since guns are allowed in the duel. A dangerous situation ensues when he becomes the first to face the attack from his opponent. At that crisis, the image of White Owl flashes in his mind. He can clearly feel the presence of White Owl beside Bernardo with her rabbit-skin cloak and staff, raising the staff and shaking it vigorously. The presence bestows enormous strength and power on him. Jose Stevens and Lena S. Stevens opine about the shamanic powers in *Secrets of Shamanism: Tapping The Spirit Power Within You* thus:

> Shamans know about energy and how it works both in the environment and in the human body. They recognize the inherent power in all of nature and sense their own connection with it. They know about the spirit body and how to communicate with it for health and extra stamina. (11)

The flash of this image kindles his innate defending potentials taught by White Owl in his earlier stages. Diego begins to feel invincible and faces Moncada fearlessly. Obviously, he wins the duel.

Juliana’s attraction towards Jean Lafitte may be due to her voracious appetite for adventurous novels but her union with Jean is indebted to magical realism. Madam Laveau, the high priestess of voodoo, identifies Catherine Villars’ permission in accepting Juliana as the right step-mother to the son of her and Jean Lafitte. The ceremony of identification with its bizarre atmosphere connects three zones, the living, the dead, and the unborn. She presumes that Catherine arrives and leaves between the two worlds, the living and dead, and is in an intermediate position in search of the right step-
mother. With all these descriptions Juliana at once senses, “That odor of orange blossoms that floated on the island air was Catherine’s scent who in her spiritual form was watching over little Pierre and searching for the right step-mother” (Zorro, 314). Juliana’s association with Lafitte announces the radical transformation that may dawn on Lafitte since Juliana represents humanity. Contradictory to the attitude of Catherine Villars who was always after pleasing Lafitte, Juliana states his vices to his face boldly. Allende delivers her seemingly favourite message of feminism – unvoiced to voiced – through this episode.

The initial, intermediate, and final stages of Diego’s initiation are paradigms of magical realism. Regina being the heir of a shaman wants her son to undergo initiation- a process in which one is put in contact with the Great Spirit through the four stages of initiation in which one’s destiny will be revealed. Diego and Bernardo are put into this trial by White Owl. They both spend the given time in the destined area and come out successfully though Diego is completely battered by the trials and is saved from death at the right time by a fox. The presence of a nocturnal animal in the day light continuously for three days following a particular boy is not an ordinary event. The company of the fox is later explained by White Owl to Diego that it is his totemic animal. She says that the fox, Zorro, is his spiritual guide, and he needs to cultivate its skill and its intelligence. Her words prophesied his future and directed his activities in future. The intermediate level of initiation ascribes to his enrolment in La Justica. Having gone through all the trials of initiation successfully, when he is about to choose a code name for him, the reddened eyes of the fox which followed him during the initial stage of his initiation flash before his eyes, and he knows for sure that it is not his imagination but he has really seen
them. This event assures the accompaniment of his totemic animal in all his endeavours. Also, the specific use of the eyes of the fox denotes his totemic spirit’s watchfulness over all his activities. Brad Steiger observes in his *Totems: The Transformative Power of Your Personal Animal Totem* thus; “…the totem represents the physical form of one’s spirit helper, his or her guardian guide” (4). Intuitively, Diego opts for Zorro as his code name thereby becoming the personification of his animal spirit.

White Owl, before the process of initiation, has told both Diego and Bernardo that in the spiritual journey of getting *okahue*, the centre of oneself should ideally coincide with the centre of the world. If that connection is reached, a brilliant flame from the bowels of the earth blazes up, and dances in the air for a long time showering light and warmth on the initiate. Zorro, after enduring so many troubles in order to establish justice wherever he goes, comes at last to the cave with his friends where the first stages of his initiation had started in childhood. They all pledge their service for justice with their blood:

At that moment, when the mixed blood of the three friends dripped onto the centre of the circle, they thought they saw a brilliant surge from the depths of the earth and dance in the air for a few seconds. It was the *okahue* that grandmother White Owl had promised. (*Zorro*, 384)

Attainment of *okahue* guarantees the acquisition of the five basic virtues which indicate that they are righteous persons. Allende includes Isabel in the final ceremony and it is notable that she has not undergone initiation as Diego and Bernardo. Yet *okahue* is accomplished by her also. A close scrutiny would reveal that apart from ceremonial
activities, the will to serve humanity is obligatory. The ceremonial methods and some extraordinary events propel one towards the attainment of this basic virtue – will to serve without expectation. Isabel is a magnificent tool used by the author to indicate the priority and primacy of human will in any enterprise.

While Zorro undertakes a journey crossing geographical borders from California to Spain in a ship, the captain Santiago de Leon turns to be a man of unique personality who has a mania of collecting fabulous maps. Allende mentions the magical realist spots of the world through the map. The map locates the mysterious spots of the world which the adventurous voyagers had tried to locate for centuries. It consists of El Dorado, the city of gold; Atlantis in which the human beings have gills like fish; and the islands of Luque Barali Deaux where mustard flows in streams and it is said to cure even the worst wounds. The inhabitants of that island are enormous boneless sausages possessing sharp teeth, and they move in herds always. The map proves to be a key for those magical worlds whose doors are not yet found. The geographical temptations which kindle the adventurous spirit of mankind have been structured as the magical spots prompting further discoveries.

The spirits of the dead people largely influence the magical realist episodes of Ines of My Soul. The legend is centred on the adventures of Ines Suarez, and her actions are chiefly observed and guided by the spirit of her dead husband Juan de Malaga. Ranging from the valiant actions which demand strong bodily energy down to tranquil heart which promotes mental peace, Ines is aided by the spirits. Catalina, the maid servant, is a strong support to her not only in her physical needs but also in confronting supernatural elements and in reading her future. Whenever Ines beholds her first husband
Juan de Malaga, she is provided with the energy she is in need of or the turn of events is in favour of her. The appearance of her second husband Rodrigo de Quirgo guarantees serenity and solace. Juan, beyond aiding her in crisis, acts as a right critic of Ines’ actions. Juan who has proved to be a futile husband for Ines in the temporal world stands as a good support in his spirit form. Ines states:

From that day, I have been haunted by the near certainty that Juan did not receive a Christian burial, and that his soul is wandering in pain, seeking repose. Juan de Malaga followed me on my long journey to Chile; he was with me as we founded Santiago; he held my arm when I executed caciques, the Indian chieftains; and he made fun of me when I wept out of rage and love of Valdivia. Still today, forty years later, he appears from time to time, although my eyes are failing now and I often confuse him with other ghosts from the past. (Ines, 83)

On the long way to Chile, despite the severe rationing, the travellers soon run out of water. The soldiers descend down to the level of drinking their own urine and the urine of the horses. They even suck out the last drop of blood from the Ilama’s skin. Valdivia’s strong discipline has kept them under control from further severe catastrophe but everybody is on the verge of breaking. That night Ines sees Juan who looks terrible in his ragged clothes covered with dried blood and dust. Juan’s expression is as desperate as that of the travellers and his appearance coincides with a thirst stricken soul. So, with all these descriptions it is clear that Juan has been travelling with them on the lengthy way to Chile. The next morning water is found by Ines’ divining, and the underground water is more than adequate to quench the thirst. The past, in the form of Juan, the present
journey, and the future turn of events like finding water seem to influence one another dissolving the definite line between them. The magical feature with regard to the time factor is observed by Bruce Holland Rogers in his article “What is Magical Realism, Really?” as, “The distant past is present in every moment, and the future has already happened. Great shifts in the narrative's time sequence reflect a reality that is almost outside of time” (2010).

September 11, 1541 has something disastrous to add to the history of Chile since Michimalonto’s men and their allies have attacked Santiago. It is such a terrible fight that the loss on the Spaniards side keeps increasing and anything related to life keeps decreasing in number. The ferocious attack comes to a saturation point when the Spaniards begin to lose. The chaos of the situation is at once comprehended by Ines and overtaken by rage she looks towards the cell where Indian captives are kept. Despite the commotion and smoke she clearly sees Juan, leaning against a door frame and staring at her. Standing with pained eyes, he makes a gesture of calling her. Within a fraction of a second the action she has to do flashes in her mind, and she runs towards the cell where the captives are. She says:

I did not stop to ask permission, I simply pushed them aside and lifted the heavy bar with one hand, aided by Juan de Malaga. The guards followed me in, unwilling to confront me and never imagining my intentions. Light and smoke sifted through cracks in the walls, choking the air, and reddish dust rose from the ground, making everything hazy, but I could see the seven prisoners chained to heavy post, straining like demons as far as their chains would allow, and howling to their warrior. When they saw me burst
in, accompanied by the bloody ghost of Juan de Malaga, they felt silent.

(Ines, 200)

Guided by her intuition and aided by Juan, Ines decapitates all the six prisoners one by one and throws their heads amidst the battle field. At this gesture, the frightened Indians make a terrific flight leaving the war field. The remaining lives of Santiago are saved. The aid of Juan at the two crucial moments is significant since the decisions not only save Ines but also the lives of the victim group. The appearance of Juan prompts Ines to take wise decisions intuitively. The spirit of Juan takes up the role of a perfect husband which had been missing in real life. N.K. Das opines in his Culture, Religion and Philosophy about the attributes of spirits that they “help or harm people but can be manipulated to serve human needs” (12). In the case of Ines, the spirit of Juan aids her not out of compulsion but because of consideration.

When the Spaniards further advance towards the Mapuche territory touching Bio-Bio River, it kindles the fury of the Mapuche resulting in a battle. The Spaniards try to occupy the territory by building a fort around the place. Scarcely have they built the wall than Lautaro, the Mapuche chief, appears there with thousands of men. Pedro orders his soldiers to go out of the territory and fight. But whether going out and meeting them or letting them come inside to fight, both are going to be fatal for them. As the head of the fifty horse formation has feared, it seems to be an endless task to subdue them. The Mapuche in the first squadron win easily but within minutes retreat hurriedly abandoning the war field and they are immediately followed by the other three divisions. The Spaniards are confused at this retreat and wonder if this is a new tactic for a renewed attack. Realizing that the Indians are running out of fear, the Spaniards pursue them and
capture some Indians. The miracle which has made the Indians quit the field is something magical which has appeared on the sky as a large arc of flame. It is perceived by the spectators according to their own beliefs:

Those who were present swore that the miracle was visible to everyone, that an angelic figure, brilliant as lightening, descending over the field, flooding the day with a supernatural light. Some believed they recognized the person of the apostle Santiago, Saint James, riding upon a white steed, and that he faced the savages, delivered an eloquent sermon, and ordered them to surrender to the Christians. Others saw the figure of Nuestra Señora del Socorro, a resplendent lady robed in golden silver, floating high in the air. The Indian prisoners confessed that they had seen a flame that traced a large arc in the sky and exploded with a great noise leaving a trail of stars in the air. (Ines, 280)

Scholars of the later years have suggested that it might have been a celestial meteor, a natural phenomenon. But whether it is a natural or supernatural phenomenon, absence of this miracle could have only resulted in the complete disintegration of the Spaniards’ mission and possession of Chile would still be a dream. The occurrence of the marvel on the verge of the Spaniards’ losing the battle is an incredible coincidence which endows the incident with magical attribute.

Ines calls Catalina a magic. She is a very good healer who has adequate knowledge of various powerful poisons, aphrodisiac potions, and herbs which are unique in their healing capacity. She can read one’s future and can talk with the dead. By
drinking a concoction, she can transport herself to another world inhabited by angels. According to her description, the angels are transparent, winged beings which are able to bring forth death with the fire of their gaze. She enumerates that she is given advice by those angels whenever she needs guidelines. But Catalina’s spells have not yielded good results always. Once she has tried to eject the spirit of Juan since he keeps on haunting the house, bothering them. But several hens die the same night she has cast the spell and the next day a two headed Ilama appears at the centre of Cuzco. The two headed Ilama flames the disparity between the Indians and the Spaniards. The former believes it to be a reincarnation of Inca Atahualpa and the latter kills it to prove it a poor mortal being. This is followed by an altercation which results in so many deaths. Thus the spell of Catalina which has been cast to yield the desired result has altered its way resulting in many disasters since it cannot eject the spirit of Juan. The evidence for this is that till the time of Ines’ death she can clearly feel the presence of Juan along with other spirits.

As Ines could sense the presence of Juan de Malaga, she senses the presence of her second husband Rodrigo after his demise. The warmth of his love, in his spirit form, is cherished by Ines. The existence of Rodrigo throughout the night beside her on bed is sensed by her and by the time of dawn, he departs. A mark of his arm on her and his fragrance on the pillow proclaim his visit to Ines. During the period of her solitude, she comes to know how timid the spirits are. Ines knows that her mansion is a hiding place for spirits, sprites, and death. During the sleepless nights she roams round the house with a lamp in search of death. Ines personifies death as a lady, and she gives an account of her personal experience with that lady:
There are many hiding places for errant spirits, demons, or Death, which is not a hooded skeleton with empty eye sockets, as the priests tell us to frighten us, but a large, roly-poly woman with an opulent bosom and welcoming arms: a maternal angel… At times I have been so close to her that I have caught her scent of freshly laundered clothing, but she is clever, and a tease. I cannot catch her, she slips away and hides among the multitude of spirits that inhabit this house. (Ines, 83-84)

Her narration explains that she moves towards death but the destined time has not come yet.

Ines’ suffering during the time of Pedro’s tormenting days is yet another example. Lautaro has inflicted torturous death as punishment to Pedro. His fatal suffering during his last three days is experienced by Ines miles away. A healthy woman suddenly becoming sick to the extent of losing her life is mysterious and the mystery owes greatly to the unification of their hearts. Before her mind could get any information from external sources, her heart has received the exact experiences. She lies desperately with violent vomiting bouts and burning fever which affect her dearly. In her delirium, she clearly could hear Pedro’s painful screams and his good bye to her and Chile for the last time.

The trilogy, City of the Beasts, Kingdom of the Golden Dragon, and Forest of the Pygmies, proves to be a fine ground for the spectacle of magical realism. Based on indigenous Indian beliefs and supernatural elements the stories run on the parallel rails of magical and real. The mental powers are exhibited in such a way that the events proceeding out of it seem to be magical but real. The titles of the novels are so apt and
reveal the magical realist spots; the city in which the Beasts exist, the kingdom in which the Golden Dragon is kept, and the forest in which the Pygmies live. While the city of the Beasts beautifully sketches the theory of evolution with reference to magical realism, the Golden Dragon stands as a symbol of myth and culture. The forest of the Pygmies provides the ground for the oppositional forces of witchcraft and virtue. The part of the totemic animals in the development of the story is significant and inevitable.

If the identification of the power of the totemic animals which form the basis for the overflowing energy to execute desired and needed actions can be counted on for the inner development of an individual, the change of an individual to the physical form of his or her totemic animal is credited to magical realism. The protagonist of the trilogy, Alexander Cold, along with his companion Nadia, is compelled by various circumstances of the novel which focus on the progress of the theme to take up his totemic animal, the jaguar, both at the physical plane and on the energy level. While the physical form of the jaguar is projected at the disappearance of Alexander, Nadia is capable of ejecting her totemic animal in a way of mental projection, completely alienating both physical forms with their own attributes.

In the episodes concerning the identification of the totemic animals of Alexander and Nadia, Alexander seems to sense his destiny in store beyond normal human insight. On seeing Mauro Carias’ recently caught pet jaguar, Alexander is completely overtaken by the majestic bearing of that great feline animal that he moves closer to that in a trance like state without any premonition or clue that it is his totemic spirit. He feels a strange attraction, to say precisely, a kind of oneness with that animal:
Cat and human were so close that Alex could distinguish each golden fleck in the pupils of the beast as their eyes locked in a silent dialogue. Everything faded away. Alex was alone, facing the animal on a vast amber plane surrounded by lofty black towers, beneath a white sky in which six transparent moons were floating like the heads of medusa. He saw the cat open its jaws, he saw the gleam of its enormous pearl-white teeth, and in a human voice, but one that seemed to issue from the depth of a cavern, it spoke its name: Alexander. (*City*, 104-105)

The extraordinary affinity that he possesses for that animal at that time and his strange relation with it prompts him to free it from the cage which he could not activate actually.

Alexander’s identification of his animal spirit precedes Nadia’s detection of her totem though Nadia leads a life of serenity and simplicity with her spiritual knowledge in contrast with the life of Alexander who is directed by materialism and sophistication. It is Nadia who helps Alexander to conquer the impediments of the journey and in opening his eyes to worldly and spiritual wisdom. She is the one who suggests that the jaguar might be his animal spirit and in spite of all these singular tendencies, her totem announcement is delayed. Allende seems to emphasize the time factor which has a crucial role to play in all human lives. Nadia realizes her animal spirit only days later by the time of which Alexander has started realizing the strength of his totem. As Nadia has already known the means of employing the power of her totem, it is disclosed to her at the right time but with Alexander, as he is to learn everything regarding his animal spirit through Nadia, he is in need of a training period for which he is intimated by his aiding spirit earlier. Nature’s precise execution of actions which in turn would influence the future events is
pictured by the author with reference to this identification process. Also Nadia’s earlier idea about her totemic spirit is something connected with water and she hardly expects that to be one among birds as she fears altitudes. But divine strategy is different from mundane musings and as nature is the best teacher, it knows what is to be bestowed upon based on the ideological sphere one has to work. Nadia’s apprehension of heights is mitigated by her totem, the white eagle, whereas Alexander’s docility is overcome through the spirit of the king of the Amazon forest. Yvonne Hammer remarks about the magical transformation of the two protagonists in her article “Conflicting Ideologies in Three Magical Realist Children's Novels by Isabel Allende” as:

Magical intrusions establish individual power through totemic identification - Alexander as Jaguar; Nadia as Eagle. Once established in the first novel, this magical ability to transform is activated and is instrumental in the rescue of indigenous characters throughout the series.

(2008)

The real vigour and the world of their totemic animals are experienced by Alexander and Nadia when they drink the magic potion, the powerful *ayahuasca*, given by Walimai. It facilitates seeing deep into one’s heart. Alexander and Nadia undergo various experiences peculiar to normal human occurrences. The ground begins to split open beneath them, and the sky which is painted with brilliant colours shines with so many geometrical figures. They begin to tremble to the core and doubt if they are alive or dead. They are propelled into many chambers of light until they reach the kingdom of the totemic animals:
Alex felt his limbs grow longer, and burning heat inside him. He looked at his hands and saw two paws ending with sharp claws. He opened his mouth to call out and a terrible roar rumbled from his belly. He was transformed onto a large, black, sleek cat, the magnificent male Jaguar that he has seen in the courtyard of Mauro Carias. The animal was not in him, or he in it; the two of them had blended into a single being, simultaneously animal and youth… He made a few great leaps through the forest, possessed with supernatural energy… He knew he was powerful, feared, solitary, invincible; the king of the South American jungle…

Nadia soared upward and in a few instants’ time lost the fear of heights that had always plagued her. Her powerful eagle wings barely stroked… She was flying at a great height, calm, unworried, detached, observing the earth beneath her without curiosity. (*City*, 225-226)

Aided and abetted by their totemic spirits, Alexander and Nadia venture into the abode of the Beasts as the protectors of the Indian tribe, accompanied by Walimai. It is notable that the author specifically relegates the jaguar as the animal totem of Alexander since the animal spirit is considered to be very powerful thus being the embodiment of astounding force in the world of animal spirits and it is confirmed by Ted Andrews in *Animal-Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great and Small* as, “To the Indians of North and South America, the jaguar especially in the form of the black panther - was endowed with great magic and power” (299). Nadia acquires the three crystal eggs, the diamonds, which she has seen in the vision and they form the source of Diamond Foundation established by Kate to safeguard the People of Mist.
In the *City of the Beasts*, the feats of Alexander and Nadia are largely influenced by their animal spirits but in the *Kingdom of the Golden Dragon* and in the *Forest of the Pygmies*, their physical transformation at the instances of crisis contribute to the pages of magical realism. In the *Kingdom of the Golden Dragon*, Nadia’s attempt to escape from the Scorpion Sect results in her falling down the ravine resulting in the dislocation of her shoulder bones. Her totem projection is beheld by the Lama Tensing and his disciple Dil Bahadur, and they are then guided by the white eagle to the destined place only to witness near Nadia a ferocious black jaguar, which is actually Alexander, ready to spring at them at any moment to protect Nadia. Through their transformation, the author hints at the importance of body for the proper execution of action, whether real or magical. The waning physical spirit of Nadia could project her totem only to a limited space while the black jaguar overflows with energy owing to the strong physique of Alexander.

Physical transformation takes place for the second time when the journey towards Chenthen Dzong is undertaken. While the former one saves the life of Nadia, the current transference saves Alexander. When Alexander ventures onto a wooden bridge to test its endurance, a landslide occurs endangering his life. The form and the spirit of the black jaguar become active with a terrible roar. He leaps across the rolling rocks with incredible energy landing on his four paws in a split second. At the same time, Nadia is also transferred to the bird for observing Alexander from atop. Allende utters the potentials of our inner energy which on proper channelization has even the capacity to save life. Allende’s appropriate indication of this life force underscores her desire to envision its activated form throughout proclaiming the dawn of a divine civilization.
The concluding part of the *Forest of the Pygmies* has an eerie atmosphere which proves to be a hallmark setting of magical realism. The mission of Alexander and Nadia is achieved at the end of the prequels with their adventurous tactic in their original human forms but *Forest of the Pygmies* provides a thrilling climax with the animated spirit of their totemic animals along with other supporting forces since the target of attack is not a human force but a terrific sorcerer. Sensing the unlimited power of him, Alexander and Nadia decide to collect forces from every side. Nadia goes off in her eagle form while Alexander keenly watches the scenario in Ngoube. Alexander, in his jaguar form, is able to subdue the commandant Mbenbele but Sombe, the sorcerer, is challenging and terrific. He begins to whirl in great speed that when he stops and points at somebody, the person would fall and suffer according to the spell he has cast. The victim would lie stiff or bleed through nose, mouth, and ears. Sombe begins to dance on the bonfire throwing handful of burning coals at the crowd. From the smoke out of the flame comes out a number of demonic figures which accompany him in his dance. Miraculously, the flames of fire do not hurt his legs. The tragic end of him is signified by the flight of the large white bird which circles the square many times. It is none but Nadia who has arrived there on time collecting forces of allies from the four prime points:

The eagle had convoked forces that streamed into Ngoube from the four cardinal points. The gorillas of the jungle led the parade, black and magnificent, great bulls in the lead, followed by the females with their young... Tensing was there, the lama from the Himalayas who had answered Nadia’s call in his astral body, along with his band of fearsome
Yetis in war attire. Walimai and the delicate spirit of his wife had brought thirteen fabled mythological beasts with them from the Amazon. .. And finally into the jungle trooped the vast shining throng of the jungle: the ancestors, and spirits of animals and plants thousands and thousands of souls that lit up the village with the sun of midday and cooled the air with a clean, fresh breeze. (Forest, 284-285)

The good forces make the sorcerer’s size shrink and reveal his actual identity. He is the king and commandant who has kept the Bantu people and the Pygmies under his iron clutch. So, it is revealed that the king, the commandant, and the sorcerer are one and the same. His fate ends up in a well which is his usual place of execution. The joint endeavour of Alexander and Nadia uproots the vicious forces with the aid of the totemic animals.

Walimai is a powerful shaman who lives for centuries seeing many generations. As a true representative of nature, Walimai’s shamanic powers pull out the totemic energy lying inherent in Alexander and Nadia. The importance of this shamanic medium is emphasized by Ted Andrews in his Animal-Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great & Small as follows:

The true shaman, the true naturalist, works to reconnect conscious human life with Nature and Spirit through totems and ritual. The images of the animals and the expressions of Nature help us to transcend our normal, waking consciousness so that we can more easily attune to the ethereal realms and beings. The first step begins with realizing that all vision and
imagery, originating in Nature or the inner mind, has validity on some level. (4)

This extraordinary man of short stature has the magical quality of transporting him to the world of immortals, and he proclaims himself to be the messenger of Gods. He is always accompanied by his angel wife and his relation with Nadia is quite peculiar. The credit of Nadia’s profound spiritual knowledge goes to Walimai, and he responds to Nadia’s call even after his death. He keeps her company in the icy peaks of the Himalayas till help arrives. Similarly, he responds to her call from Ngoube and arrives there on time with the mythological Beasts to counter the sorcerer of Africa. His appearance at the needed time implies the value of faith and execution of virtue.

When Alexander starts applying all sensory attributes to his heart, he could see his mother receiving chemotherapy in a Texas hospital. He could see the exact location of each medical object in her room including the colour of her woollen cap and the liquid which dripped from a plastic bag. At the same time, there in Texas, Lisa Cold, Alexander’s mother, also could feel the presence of her son. She clearly hears his voice pleading with her to fight and repeating that he loves her. With this meeting they both feel rejuvenated that John Cold, Alexander’s father, is surprised to see Lisa smiling and notes that the colour of her cheeks has changed. This instance is yet another example to validate the insignificance of the space factor which is dissolved in the mysterious secrecy. The conversation in the Texas hospital is as follows:

“How do you feel Lisa?” he asked with concern.

“Happy, John, because Alex was here,” she replied.
“Lisa, what are you saying...? Alexander is in Amazon with my mother, don’t you remember?” her husband murmured, frightened about the effect the medication might be having on his wife.

“Yes I remember, but that doesn’t change the fact that he was here a moment ago.”

“That isn’t possible,” her husband rebutted.

“He’s grown, he looks much taller and stronger, but his left arm is very swollen…,” she told John, and closed her eyes to rest. (City, 238-239)

If Alexander’s arm swollen by red ants bite is clearly seen by her, then it is something magical which could not be explained by rational science. His swollen arm testifies that the meeting is not an illusion.

Allende gives equal emphasis to natural and supernatural elements; natural things with supernatural powers and extraordinary things done in a natural way. With an ecological brush in her hand, she paints a vivid picture of ancient models at the backdrop of the contemporary world. The Beast which appears in the City of the Beasts and the Yetis which appear in the Kingdom of the Golden Dragon are typical examples. Not stopping with these, there are numerous pictures of peculiar animals and birds which make this world a magical realist sanctuary. The pathway to the Sacred Mountain, the abode of Gods of the People of the Mist, is a boon of natural landscape and is filled with many extraordinary creatures. Alexander sees a strange bird like winged reptile which resembles winged dragons. The delicate spirit of Walimai’s wife flies across and
descends on the back of that strange bird, and the bird makes an elegant whirl over their heads, and finally settles on a rock of blue crystal. They pass through a labyrinth of tunnels which connects the outside world with the fabulous world inside - El Dorado. The labyrinth has many extraordinary things to excite Alexander:

They passed through other grottos, but none as spectacular as the first, and they saw other strange creatures: birds, with red plumage and four wings, that growled like dogs; and white cats, with blind eyes, which were on the verge of attacking but backed off when Nadia soothed them in the language of felines. They passed through a flooded cave where they had to walk through water up to their necks with Boroba perched on Nadia’s head. They saw golden winged fish that swam between their legs and suddenly took flight, disappearing into the darkness of the tunnels.

In another cave, which emitted a thick purple fog the color of certain twilights, indescribable flowers were growing out of living rock.

*(City, 259)*

The portrayal of the Beasts and the Yetis bears a testimony for the fantabulous imagination of the author and the description is at once magically real and an ecological wonder. The Beasts are more than ten feet tall with powerful arms ending up in sharp claws. Covered with thick, wiry hair, they usually emit a dreadful odour which could pierce each cell of the human body and immobilize them. Only Walimai is authorized to talk with them, and they converse in the language of the People of Mist. The pace with which the conversation moves on is imperceptible. The total sketch of the
Beasts gives Alexander the idea that they are prehistoric mammals which have a symbiotic relationship with the People of Mist. These extraordinary beings serve as a storehouse of every word of the tribe’s history while the tribe protects the secrecy of El Dorado thus protecting their Gods from the exterior world. The memory of the Beasts contains the history of the tribe ranging from its beginning, which is twenty thousand years before, down to recent births and deaths. Beasts are symbolic representing the dominance of memory over the written word. The Yetis are pictured as a horde of repulsive creatures covered from head to toe with filthy, white hair. They are four and a half feet tall; their arms are long; and they possess short bowed legs ending in enormous feet. Their mental attribute is similar to that of the Beast but they have a remarkable thirst for fight. They are very slow in absorbing any situation, and they blindly obey the order of their chief Grr-ympr.

A critical analysis on the parallel mental condition of the Beasts and the Yetis reveals that the slow nature of their mental condition is compensated by the memory power and activeness respectively. Through Tensing, Allende seems to demonstrate the danger of the stagnant point in evolution, either individual or societal, if mobility is limited by the space factor. Alexander’s determination to protect the Beasts and Tensing’s desire to safeguard the Yetis highlight Allende’s double motive. At the literal level, she remarks the need to protect the nearly-extinct species, if otherwise, in near future, only the bones of such species would proclaim their past existence. In the metaphorical level, the author exposes her determination in protecting tribal’s history which is hardly cared for or is merely invisible like the People of Mist.
Allende extends the magical quality from living things to lifeless objects; the amulet in the *City of the Beasts*, the Golden Dragon in the *Kingdom of the Golden Dragon*, and *Ikemefuma* in the *Forest of the Pygmies*. The amulet summons Walimai transcending even great distances for aiding Nadia. The Golden Dragon prophesies the future to the kings of the Forbidden Kingdom that they find ways to tackle problems and to design their present endeavours in accordance with the oncoming events. *Ikemefuma*, the revered symbol of the Pygmies, has magic potion in it which could heal any sort of illness. The three entities are the link between subject and object, present and future, disease and remedy respectively thus asserting Allende’s favourite theme: fusion of the opposites.

Alexander and Nadia’s exploration of the African market ends up in a place devoted to witchcraft completely. It is a variety show of all sorts of magic practitioners, fortune tellers, fetishists, healers, exorcists, and voodoo priests. There is a display of a massive range of exotic items to allay the horror of life. They come across a voodoo priestess Ma Bangese who pronounces her as a messenger between the real and the supernatural world. The atmosphere inside her peculiar hut is a typical seat of witchcraft. Ma Bangese calls Nadia magic; her statements regarding Alexander and Nadia are true enough, and they start believing her prophesy that they are to face danger lying ahead in the forest risking their life. Ma Bangese stimulates them to undergo an astral journey which reveals to them the violent images of war, death, blood, animals, and human beings, and their palpitation increases as they behold a worst nightmare, a three headed ogre with crocodile skin. They fight relentlessly and at the final stage evolve as their totemic animals but even though they are not competent before that formidable enemy.
With that their vision comes to a close. Ma Bangese has shown them the danger and the prophecy comes true later. The three headed ogre represents the trio, king Kosongo, commandant Mbembele and sorcerer Sombe, who are one and the same. As hinted at the end of the vision, Alexander and Nadia needed to collect supernatural forces along with their totem spirits to counteract the terrific sorcerer, days later.

The way a healer of the Masai nomad cures a child is yet another demonstration of African witchcraft. Mushaha’s camp is the spot where the Masai nomads and the healer meet. They have no modern equipments to communicate with her but learn somehow that she would appear there. This could be paralleled with the Indian Communication system referred to in Zorro. As the nomads expect, the healer arrives at dusk. She identifies the cause of the trouble - a spirit of an offended ancestor has entered the child. The ritual begins:

They placed the naked boy on a blanket on the ground, surrounded by the many members of his family. The old woman began to beat her magic sticks and shake her gourds, dancing in circles and chanting, and soon the tribe joined in. After a while she fell into a trance; her body shook and her eyes rolled back. As that happened, the child on the ground grew rigid; his back arched until only his head and heels supported his body. (Forest, 30-31)

The ceremony takes place for several hours and at the end of it the healer has absorbed the evil spirit into her body. The child relaxes from its rigid position and begins to cry which is an indication of good health. Alexander, who has been observing all these
miracles, comments that Tomothy, who is suffering from fever, could be treated by her. With this, it is understood that Alexander’s perspective has changed to the extent of suggesting African witchcraft to treat one of his co-travellers. Michael Mushaha who has obtained graduation from London University firmly believes in this system and suggests that doctors should work along with such healers to obtain good results. His suggestion becomes another example of Allende’s interest in unifying the opposites.

The real encounter with the spirits takes place in the village of the ancestors. It is the cemetery where the people of Ngoube throw the dead bodies along with offerings. They believe that stepping into that realm would offend the spirits of the ancestors, and they consider that their present misery is due to the anger of their ancestors. Alexander and Nadia decide to stay in the village of the ancestors simply to convince the Pygmy men that their ancestors have blessed them to defy the king and the commandant. To Alexander, staying in the village of the ancestors is a strategy to instil confidence in the Pygmy men and the last thing he wants to accept is the existence of the spirits in that seemingly very ordinary cemetery. The night has not only changed his idea about spirits but also provided information on their nature. They find to their surprise Nana Asante, the lost queen of Ngoube, lives there. Her words confirm the presence of spirits which keep her good company as friends. They keep informing her about everything that happens around. Alexander, who has first thought her to have become insane due to isolation, listens with astonishment to the minute details she elaborates regarding Ngoube including their visit to the village of the ancestors. When they hear all these theoretically, practical disclosure begins:
An enormous full moon, yellow and radiant, rose over the clearing in the jungle. While it was shining, something magic happened in the cemetery, something that in years to come Alexander and Nadia would remember as one of the pivotal moments of their lives.

The first sign that something phenomenal was occurring was that Alex and Nadia could see perfectly, as if the cemetery were lightened by enormous stadium lamps. For the first time since they’d been in Africa, they were cold. Shivering they hugged each other for courage and warmth. A growing murmur like bees, filled the air, and before the young people’s astounded eyes the clearing filled the translucent beings. They were surrounded with spirits. It was impossible to describe them because they have no defined form. They seemed vaguely human, but they change constantly as if sketched in smoke. They were neither naked nor clothed; they had no color but were luminous. *(Forest, 206-207)*

This experience completely washes out all the doubts in the mind of Alexander regarding supernatural existence. He has tried a lot to substantiate the theory of evolution with the Beast and the Yetis, annihilating the effect of supernatural effects, but regarding the current occurrence nothing works out because what he has seen is inexplicable and man-made words are limited to disclose the real essence of his experience. His queries culminate with the entry of true knowledge on supernatural and worldly existence, and it is the final phase of Alexander’s transformation.
Allende’s fine usage of magical realist episodes to voice her ecological concern could be identified in her trilogy. By the portrayal of the Beasts and the Yetis, Allende pronounces the predicament of both by their way towards extinction; the former, by the advent of mankind into its realm, and the latter, limited within the circle of its existence. Alexander’s reluctance in detailing the facts about the Beast, even to his grandmother, shows his will to preserve the species from further intrusions thus making the jungle atmosphere conducive for them to live in. A horde of repulsive creatures, the Yetis, is on the path to extermination at the outset of the novel and the recovery of the species which ensues after, indicates Allende’s desire to safeguard the nearly-extinct species of the ecological system. She puts forth her idea of inter-breeding here stating that if a particular species is isolated for a long period, they breed among themselves and in course of time, they become few, weak, and unsocial. To Allende, survival of the marginal biotic factors too contributes its share for a healthy eco-system.

Man’s precarious weapon of oppression for exploiting the natural resources of the earth is shown by Allende through Mauro Carias and King Kosongo. They both scheme to usurp the natural wealth by annihilating the tribal people of and by suppressing the Pygmies of Ngoube respectively. The attempt of Carias is initially overcome by the deliberate intervening of the Beasts for protecting the tribal people. Similarly, the tyranny of the three headed ogre - King Kosongo, Commandant Maurice Mbembele, and Sorcerer Sombe, all one and the same – is overthrown by the supernatural forces convoked from the four cardinal points thereby restoring environmental balance in Ngoube by the cordial relation between the Bantus and the Pygmies, and by the enthronement of the lost queen Nana Asante. Magical realism
dominates both the scenes without which the environmental balance would not have been achieved. A closer analysis would further unravel the fact that the activation and the conservation of the supernatural forces is stimulated by man’s will power and energy for which Alexander and Nadia stand as examples.

Alexander and Nadia are portrayed as eco-warriors who not only defend the natural resources but also decide to save the nearly-extinct species from the greedy men folk by saving their existence only in their memory. Realization of their totemic spirits certifies their stance as eco-warriors. The potential energy takes its kinetic form at the instances where there is an ecological imbalance. Yvonne Hammer, after analyzing the merge of magical realism and eco-concerns in the trilogy, observes as follows:

These representations of the consequences of environmental and cultural abuse construct ideological confluence between magical realist ideologies and ecocritical frames. Each narrative establishes a strong narrator presence - a dominant representative voice - which speaks from the margins to educate and inform readers, to privilege minority culture, and finally to give voice to other ways of perceiving the world. (2008)

Allende’s note is clear that a light tilt or break in the established network would amount to big calamities risking the life of both biotic and abiotic components. Entangled by worldly pleasures and personal desires, man does not realize that he would be a victim at the end of his endangering ventures of dismantling the ecological structure. The author’s magical realist scenes proclaim her ecological concern and the need to preserve the pre-ordained web of nature. It is apt to quote King Dorji’s words here; “If we harm the
natural world, we must pay the consequences. Only a madman would commit such a folly” (Kingdom, 149).

*The House of the Spirits* is set at the backdrop of an eerie atmosphere which blends naturally with the normal life of Del Valle family. The spirits are part and parcel of their life and their presence is hardly noticed. The title signifies the role of supernatural in the household of the Del Valle, and the story starts with the arrival of Barrabas, an extraordinary dog. He is of mysterious ancestry and shares nothing with the roving dogs in the street and the aristocratic breeds. Even the veterinarian is not capable of identifying his origin owing to his unlimited capacity for growth. At the end of a year he becomes as tall as a colt. The family members begin to doubt if he is really a dog or some exotic creature caught by Uncle Marcos. His crocodile claws and sharp teeth are enough to bite off one’s head and gobble up a small child as Nivea Del Valle fears. In contrast to his fearsome exterior, he is extremely docile. But that does not hold back inspiring terror in the beholders:

Delivery men fled precipitately whenever he stuck his head out into the street, and once he caused a riot among the women who were lined up waiting to buy milk, startling the dray horse who took off like a shot, scattering milk pails every which way on the pavement. . . . Popular imagination and ignorance with respect to his past lent Barrabas the most mythological characteristics. It was said that he would not stop growing, and if a butcher’s cruelty had not put an end to his existence, he would have reached the size of a camel. Some people believed him 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, like the beasts Rosa was
embroidering on her endless tablecloth. *(House*, 32-33) He dies accidentally on the betrothal day of Esteban Treuba and Clara. As everyone has feared if he had not died, he would have had an enormous growth.

Starting from the dog, Allende portrays the blend of natural and magical in almost all the characters of Del Valle family. Owing to her extraordinary beauty, Rosa occupies the rarefied position which is between a human being and a mythological creature. The creativity of Rosa is depicted through the table cloth she embroiders and it is filled with creatures that are half-mammal and half-bird. Uncle Marcos is able to design an airplane with proportionate blending of his imagination and logical details. Clara reads both the magical books of her uncle and the political treatises. Even Alba is brought up in an eccentric atmosphere transgressing the distinction of real and ethereal. In this regard, Levine identifies that, “Allende continually seeks that hybrid zone where traditional categories are dismantled and differences coexist or fuse into one” (34). Allende does not stop with presenting concrete coexistence but extends it to abstract reconciliation. Clara and Treuba stand apart due to their different ideologies which form a magnificent barrier between them. The obstacle is dissolved after the death of Clara and reconciliation occurs between them, Treuba in the corporal world and Clara in the spiritual world.

Clara, the youngest child of the Del Valle family, is a clairvoyant. Her magical qualities and her permanent contact with the spirits are familiar to all of the family members. Since her childhood, she has been able to foretell the catastrophes, both inside and outside home, like earthquakes, deaths, and other natural disasters. Parallel to the
magical scale runs her knowledge on worldly affairs which she gathers from her uncle’s travel experiences. She knows about the various dialects of the Indian tribes and their customs, the lamas, the unpronounceable names of flora and fauna, the opulent women of Tahiti, the rice fields of China, and the white prairies of the North. She has predicted death in their home but never expected that to be that of Rosa. The shock of Rosa’s death and her direct experience in seeing the dissection of Rosa’s body prompt her to be mute for ten whole years. As she has fallen into silence, so does she evolve out of it very normally. Allende, by depicting her muteness twice in the novel breaks the feeble line between the opposites – verbal expression and repressed elocution.

Clara has the ability to interpret dreams which is her inborn talent. She elaborates on the dream of Honorio, the gardener, and the results are the same as she has calculated. This gives way to numerous queries from outsiders regarding dreams which are deduced by her with the help of Honorio but at the back of her mother. Not only the dreams but also the future could be interpreted by her. She can very easily read a person’s intentions and abilities. Apart from decoding messages pertaining to the outsiders, her single glance on Getulio Armado, the business partner of her father, reveals his wickedness. She can very easily read it in the colour of his aura. But her father neglects the message and suffers at the partner’s betrayal. Her ability to move objects extend to the extent of moving the keys on the piano with its cover down. Her tutors could not put up with the daily routine of her magical attributes and flying objects, and as a result quit the scene. When her magical aspects start dominating the household, her father starts to restrict her:

Her father forbade to read future in cards and to invoke ghosts and mischievous spirits that annoyed the rest of the family and terrorized the
servants, but Nivea understood that the more limitations and shocks her
daughter was subjected to the madder she became, and decided to leave
her in peace with her spiritual tricks, her fortune-telling games and her
cavernous silence, and did her best to love her unconditionally and accept
her as she was. (*House*, 97)

The supernatural world is like an important organ in her body without which she cannot
function normally. The time Clara enters into adulthood is mentioned in her diary as a
magic world. Clara has spent those times encircled by her fantasies and accompanied by
the spirits of the air, the water, and the earth. Esteban Treuba feels happy that Clara has
accepted his proposal but he does not know that he has been summoned to propose to her
by the power of her thought.

Marital life does not stop the magical qualities of Clara, and she continues to live
in her own world. She predicts the birth of her children including their names, the death
of her parents, and of her own. In her later stages, she begins her first attempts to
communicate with the extraterrestrial beings. Her experimentation gives her a clue that
the message sent through the pendulum and the three legged table may be by those
extraterrestrial beings and they should not be confused with the souls. After her death,
she continues to haunt the house in her spirit form and guide her family members through
visions and the Mora sisters.

Patricia Hart, in her *Narrative Magic in the Fictions of Isabel Allende* notices the
novel as a kind of “Magical Feminism” or “magical realism employed in a femino-centric
work” with regard to Clara’s role as unspoken deprecator of patriarchal power (29-30).
From her young age, she becomes a defender of her gender. The term propounded by Hart signifies Clara’s magical attributes blending with her realistic feminist propaganda. It is appropriate here to quote Robert Antoni who, in his literary review “Parody or Piracy: The Relationship of *The House of the Spirits* to *One Hundred Years of Solitude,*” recognizes the last chapters as “Historical realism” (24). The historical events centring on the Chilean military coup of 1973 starts dominating the text eclipsing the magical trait. Considering these two terms, ‘Magical Feminism’ and ‘Historical Realism’, the pervading concept of the novel Magical Realism is obtained with history and feminism as the implicit elements of the novel.

The three Mora sisters who visit Clara are the students of supernatural phenomena. They have a firm belief that souls can take any form so that they do not acknowledge what Clara has suggested about extraterrestrial creatures. They come to know about Clara by mysterious connections available only to the initiates. The telepathic contact with her proves them to be astral sisters. Obtaining her address they meet her personally every Friday. They give her several sets of geometrical figures and mysterious tools. They become friends, and the Fridays are spent in summoning spirits and exchanging premonitions. A good number of similar practitioners are identified and the gathering takes place in Clara’s house. They discern the way to transmit mental energy from the house of Clara to the abode of them and vice versa because that would give them moral support at times of need. The Mora sisters have their contact with the house even after the death of Clara. Allende makes use of the supernatural phenomena to deliver national and personal disaster. Luisa Mora prophesies the catastrophic political calamity and warns Alba about the nearing danger. Alba is advised to cross the ocean
since her spiritual protectors are powerless. But Alba becomes a part of her national tragedy foretold by Luisa and thus magic and history blend together. History and feminism are proclaimed through Alba.

Alba, the granddaughter of Clara, is also accustomed to the weird environment of her household. The heritage of passing on magical and mysterious stories persists through Alba. The peaceful atmosphere of her house stands in sharp contrast to the number of cruelties she undergoes in the concentration camp. When the curfew is in force, the prophetic words of Luisa Mora come true. That period is really a hard time in the life of Alba since she suffers to the verge of death. Being the lover of Miguel, the guerrilla leader, she is tortured mercilessly. In these episodes, the author has beautifully shown the difficult times during the military coup of Chile. When the torments cross their limits, Alba starts to await death eagerly because she has lost the energy to survive:

When she had nearly achieved her goal, her grandmother Clara, whom she had invoked many times to die, appeared with the novel idea that the point was not to die, since death came anyway, but to survive, which would be a miracle… Clara also brought the saving idea of writing in her mind without paper or pencil, to keep her thoughts occupied and to escape from the doghouse and live… ‘You have a lot to do, so stop feeling sorry for yourself, drink some water, and start writing,’ Clara told her granddaughter before disappearing the same way she had come. (House, 469-470)
The power of written expression and mental assimilation are instilled in the mind of Alba. She withstands all troubles and insults inflicted on her with a valiant heart. She then tries to change the atmosphere inside by passing over the magical stories to the children in the prison. The two women Clara and Ana Diaz belonging to the supernatural and corporeal world respectively inspire Alba to give concrete shape to the tortures inflicted on the victims thus voicing female resistance for considering their body as a “primary location of power, around which domination is exercised” stated by Nina Molinro in *Foucault, Feminism, and Power: Reading Esther Tusquets* (23). History is stated here from the feminist perspective as a result of which history and feminism blend together.

The story of ants in the country estate of Esteban is interesting. Once, a plague of ants attacks the country estate of Esteban completely devouring the plants first and starts to pursue the animals next. There is no remedy to stop the growth of these ants since day by day they keep on increasing and invading even households. The pesticides and the agricultural technician are of no help. To save Tres Marias, the old Pedro Garcia arrives, collects some ants in a white handkerchief, takes them off the border, and leaves them showing the way out. The next morning, surprisingly no ant is found in the terrain. When asked, the old man says that he has talked with them and has explained the nuisance they cause in their area. According to him, they just understand what we say and act in accordance. The old Pedro’s activity of caring not to disturb even the tiny creature of nature is in contrast with the very idea of possession, power, and other ideologies of colonization that go against nature. His action clearly demonstrates the enhanced level of understanding between human beings and other species. The language of compassion
surpasses the strategy of science. With regard to this, Susan Frenk observes in *Latin American Women's Writing: Feminist Readings in Theory and Crisis* as:

> In *La casa de los espíritus*, for example, *campesino* knowledge is represented as more efficacious than Western scientific knowledge in dealing with the plague of ants... the *campesino* resists this system with a narrative which symbolizes an alternative discursive relation to Nature, that of a conversation which places humans on an equal, not superior, level with the other inhabitants of the earth in relations of ecological negotiation. (80)

The author tries to state that talking with animals or birds which is perceived as an extraordinary talent is not a matter of unusual thing regarding the doers. Such capability promotes harmony in the world crossing the boundaries of species even. With all these extraordinary events and episodes, *The House of the Spirits* stands one among the unexcelled artistic demonstration of magical realism.

Magical realism plays a pivotal role in Allende’s treatment that its explicit force accentuates the course of the protagonists towards self-comprehension and societal contribution, uprooting apprehension. The implication of this term finds its implementation at almost all crucial moments that at once become fine ground for Allende’s innovative experimentation and the protagonists’ equiangular outlook. This popular technique is employed by Allende not only to launch its assertive framework of unifying the opposites but also to enhance the reader’s discernment regarding cultural conventions worldwide. With its nature of transgression, magical realism manipulates
Allende’s manifold exposures bringing history and feminism into its fold. Ecological concerns are also accommodated inviting a universal concern for preserving the ecological web. Owing to such comprehensiveness, magical realism is labelled as one of the most celebrated narrative form that constructively exploits various social and cultural dimensions.