



FROM MÁRQUEZ TO MURAKAMI: REIMAGINING MAGIC REALISM IN POSTMODERN FICTION

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Abstract

*Magic realism has become one of the most powerful narrative modes of modern and postmodern fiction. It became internationally prominent through Latin American writers, especially Gabriel García Márquez, whose *One Hundred Years of Solitude* transformed the literary understanding of reality, history, myth, and collective memory. In Márquez's fiction, magic realism is deeply connected with community, colonial history, political violence, oral tradition, and cultural memory. The magical is not treated as an escape from reality but as a fuller way of representing realities that conventional realism cannot express. Haruki Murakami, writing from a different cultural and historical background, reimagines magic realism in a postmodern Japanese and global context. In Murakami's novels, magical and surreal elements are less connected with collective history and more closely linked with alienation, divided identity, trauma, consumer culture, and metaphysical uncertainty. This paper examines the movement of magic realism from Márquez to Murakami and argues that Murakami does not merely imitate the Latin American model. Instead, he transforms magic realism into a postmodern mode of representing fragmented consciousness and unstable reality. Through Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, *Kafka on the Shore*, and *1Q84*, the paper shows how magic realism shifts from a communal and historical mode to an individual, psychological, and postmodern one.*

Keywords: *magic realism, Gabriel García Márquez, Haruki Murakami, postmodernism, alienation, simulacra, identity, Latin American fiction, Japanese fiction*

Introduction: Magic realism is one of the most significant literary modes of the twentieth century. It challenges the ordinary distinction between reality and fantasy by placing magical, supernatural, or impossible events within an otherwise realistic world. In magic realist fiction, Copyright © 2026, Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies

the magical is not presented as shocking or unbelievable. Instead, it is narrated calmly, as if it belongs naturally to ordinary life. This technique allows writers to question the limits of realism and to suggest that reality itself is layered, mysterious, and shaped by memory, myth, history, and imagination.

The rise of magic realism is most strongly associated with Latin American fiction, especially the work of Gabriel García Márquez. His novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is often considered the classic example of the form. In that novel, the fictional town of Macondo becomes a space where history and myth, politics and fantasy, family memory and national trauma coexist. Ghosts appear, miraculous events occur, time moves in circles, and the impossible becomes part of everyday life. Yet the novel is not a simple fantasy. Its magical events help reveal the historical and emotional truth of Latin America.

Haruki Murakami, one of the most widely read contemporary Japanese novelists, also uses magical and surreal elements in his fiction. His novels contain talking cats, parallel worlds, mysterious forests, disappearing women, supernatural beings, strange dreams, and altered realities. However, Murakami's use of magic realism differs from Márquez's. Murakami does not usually place magic within a strong communal or historical framework. Instead, he often places it within the private world of lonely individuals living in modern cities. His characters are alienated, emotionally detached, and uncertain about their identities. For them, the magical world becomes a way of entering the hidden spaces of memory, trauma, desire, and the unconscious.

This paper studies the movement of magic realism from Márquez to Murakami. It argues that Murakami reimagines magic realism in a postmodern context. While Márquez uses magic realism to represent collective history, mythic consciousness, and cultural memory, Murakami uses it to represent alienation, fragmented identity, late capitalism, and the uncertainty of reality. Thus, magic realism changes its function as it moves from Latin American postcolonial fiction to Japanese postmodern fiction. The movement from Márquez to Murakami is not merely a movement of influence; it is a transformation of the mode itself. Magic realism may be defined as a literary mode in which magical or supernatural events are included within a realistic narrative world and are treated as ordinary by the narrator and characters. Wendy B. Faris argues that magic realism combines realistic description with magical elements in such a way that the reader is made to accept both as part of the fictional reality (1). It differs from fantasy because fantasy usually creates a separate imaginary world

with its own rules. Magic realism, however, keeps the reader within a recognizable world and then introduces magical elements into that world.

One of the most important features of magic realism is its calm narrative tone. The narrator does not explain the magical event scientifically, psychologically, or rationally. The magical is not treated as a dream, hallucination, or illusion. It is presented as part of life. This technique destabilizes the reader's understanding of reality. It suggests that reality is not limited to what can be verified by reason or science.

Magic realism also has a political and cultural function. In Latin American fiction, it has often been used to resist Western rationalism and colonial versions of history. European realism often claimed to represent the world objectively, but magic realism questions that claim. It allows writers to include myths, oral traditions, spiritual beliefs, collective memories, and suppressed histories that official realism may exclude. For this reason, critics such as Stephen Slemon have connected magic realism with postcolonial writing, where it becomes a way of challenging dominant systems of knowledge and representation (407-26).

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a foundational text of magic realism. The novel tells the story of the Buendía family across several generations in the fictional town of Macondo. At one level, it is a family saga. At another level, it is a symbolic history of Latin America. The novel includes civil wars, colonial exploitation, modernization, political violence, and social change. Yet these historical realities are narrated alongside ghosts, prophecies, miraculous ascensions, impossible births, and strange natural events.

The magical events in Márquez's novel are deeply connected with collective experience. They do not belong only to one character's private imagination. Instead, they are part of the shared world of Macondo. For example, the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar returns as part of the family's guilt and memory. Remedios the Beauty ascends into heaven while folding sheets, and the event is narrated with remarkable calmness. A rainstorm continues for years, turning natural weather into a mythic and historical force. These events are extraordinary, but within the world of the novel they are not treated as impossible.

Márquez's magic realism is also closely connected with oral storytelling. The narrator often tells impossible events in the tone of someone repeating a family legend. This gives the novel a communal quality. The magical is not simply invented; it feels inherited, remembered, and passed down. The world of Macondo is shaped by stories, and these stories become part of the town's reality. In this sense, magic realism becomes a narrative form of collective memory.

Another important feature of Márquez's magic realism is its treatment of history. The novel does not present history as linear progress. Instead, history appears circular and repetitive. Names repeat across generations, mistakes repeat, desires repeat, and violence returns in different forms. The Buendía family seems trapped in a pattern that it cannot escape. This circularity is supported by the magical atmosphere of the novel. Prophecies and repetitions suggest that history is not simply a sequence of events but a mythic pattern.

The banana plantation episode in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* shows how magic realism can also expose political violence and historical erasure. After the workers are massacred, the official version denies that the massacre happened. The magical and exaggerated quality of the narration makes visible a truth that official history tries to suppress. Here, magic realism becomes a form of historical resistance. It records what power wants to erase. Thus, in Márquez, magic realism is not decorative. It is central to the novel's understanding of reality. It allows him to represent Latin American history as a mixture of violence, myth, memory, absurdity, and wonder.

Haruki Murakami belongs to a different literary world. His fiction emerges from postwar Japan, global popular culture, urban life, and postmodern uncertainty. Unlike Márquez's Macondo, Murakami's fictional spaces are often anonymous apartments, jazz bars, libraries, offices, hotels, underground passages, and city streets. His protagonists are often solitary individuals who live routine lives. They cook pasta, listen to music, read books, drink coffee, and move through modern cities with quiet detachment. Yet into this ordinary world, strange and magical events enter.

Murakami's fiction may not always be described as magic realism in the same classical sense as Márquez's, because it also contains elements of surrealism, fantasy, detective fiction, science fiction, and metaphysical fiction. However, his novels often use a magic realist method: the magical appears within realistic settings and is treated as part of the fictional world. The characters may be confused by magical events, but the narrative does not fully explain them away. Instead, the reader is asked to accept uncertainty.

In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Murakami presents two parallel narratives. One is set in a futuristic Tokyo involving information systems, technology, and the manipulation of consciousness. The other is set in a dreamlike walled town where people lose their shadows. The novel combines science fiction and magic realism, but its central concern is identity. The divided structure of the novel represents a divided self. The magical town is

not simply a fantasy place; it is a symbolic space where the protagonist's consciousness is separated from ordinary life.

In *Kafka on the Shore*, Murakami uses talking cats, falling fish, spirits, prophecies, and mysterious forests. These elements are not fully explained. They appear naturally within the narrative. Kafka Tamura's journey is not only physical but also psychological and mythic. Nakata's ability to speak with cats is connected to a mysterious childhood event that damages his ordinary intelligence but gives him access to another dimension of reality. The magical elements reveal trauma, memory, and hidden connections.

In 1Q84, Murakami creates an alternative reality in which two moons appear in the sky and mysterious beings called the Little People influence events. The world of 1Q84 is almost the same as ordinary 1984, but it is slightly and disturbingly different. This difference creates a postmodern uncertainty about reality itself. The characters do not know whether they have entered a new world, a parallel world, or a distorted version of their own world. Magic realism here becomes a way of representing the instability of reality in contemporary life.

Murakami's magic realism differs from Márquez's because it is not primarily rooted in communal myth or collective history. It is rooted in private alienation, memory, unconscious desire, and metaphysical uncertainty. The magical in Murakami often emerges when the ordinary self cannot bear or understand its own emptiness. His magical worlds are inward, psychological, and symbolic. This is the most important shift from Márquez to Murakami: the movement from collective memory to individual alienation.

In Márquez, magic realism belongs to the life of the community. Macondo is a collective space. The magical events are part of the town's memory and history. The Buendía family's private story becomes inseparable from the story of a whole society. Even solitude in Márquez is often historical and collective. It is the solitude of a family, a town, a nation, and a continent. In Murakami, by contrast, magic realism usually begins with isolation. His characters are disconnected from family, society, history, and stable identity. They are not surrounded by a strong community of storytellers. They are often alone in apartments, offices, libraries, or anonymous urban spaces. The magical appears not as shared cultural memory but as a private doorway into the self.

This difference reflects a broader historical and cultural transformation. Márquez writes from a postcolonial Latin American context in which history, politics, and collective memory are central. Murakami writes from a late capitalist, postmodern society in which the individual is often separated from traditional structures of belonging. His characters live in a world of

consumer goods, media images, music, brand names, and urban anonymity. They are free in one sense, but they are also emotionally disconnected. Murakami's magical events often appear as responses to this alienation. A character enters a well, a forest, a parallel world, or a dreamlike town because ordinary reality has become insufficient. These magical spaces are not communal myths; they are psychological landscapes. They reveal what the character cannot express in ordinary language: loneliness, trauma, desire, guilt, and the need for connection. Postmodern fiction often questions stable reality, fixed identity, linear history, and absolute truth. It uses fragmentation, intertextuality, parody, open endings, multiple realities, and uncertainty. Magic realism fits naturally into postmodernism because it also challenges the boundary between real and unreal. Both postmodernism and magic realism question the idea that reality can be represented in a single, stable, rational form. Fredric Jameson describes postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism (1). In such a world, culture is deeply connected with commodities, images, media, and surfaces. People live among signs and simulations. Identity becomes unstable because it is shaped by consumer culture and external images. Murakami's fiction reflects this condition. His characters listen to jazz and classical music, eat Western food, wear branded clothes, read global literature, and move through commercialized urban spaces. Their lives are full of objects and cultural references, but these do not give them a stable identity.

Magic realism in Murakami disrupts this surface reality. When a second moon appears, when cats speak, when a well becomes a passage into the unconscious, the ordinary world is shown to be incomplete. The magical event reveals the hidden emptiness beneath the surface of consumer life. It suggests that rational modernity has not removed mystery; it has only buried it. Murakami's postmodern magic realism also resists closure. His novels rarely explain everything. The reader is left with ambiguity. This is different from traditional realism, which often seeks to organize events into clear cause and effect. Murakami's fiction suggests that reality itself may not be fully knowable. His magical elements are not puzzles to be solved but signs of the limits of rational explanation.

Jean Baudrillard's idea of simulacra is useful for understanding Murakami's transformation of magic realism. Baudrillard argues that in contemporary culture, signs and simulations may replace reality itself. A simulacrum is not simply a copy of something real; it may become a reality in itself. In a world of simulacra, the distinction between original and copy becomes unclear. Murakami's parallel worlds often create this kind of uncertainty. In 1Q84, Aomame realizes that the world has changed because there are two moons in the sky.

Yet the world still resembles the ordinary one. This creates a disturbing sense that reality has been copied, altered, or replaced. The title 1Q84 itself suggests a distorted version of 1984, where the letter “Q” stands for question. The world becomes questionable. Reality is no longer stable.

This is different from Márquez’s magic realism. In Márquez, the magical often expands the real world. In Murakami, the magical often destabilizes the real world. Márquez’s magic realism makes history deeper and more mythic. Murakami’s magic realism makes reality uncertain and fractured. This reflects the difference between a world shaped by collective memory and a world shaped by postmodern simulation. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, the two narrative worlds also raise questions about reality. Which world is more real? Is the walled town a dream, a mental construct, a technological creation, or a metaphysical space? Murakami does not give a simple answer. The uncertainty itself is the meaning. The novel suggests that the self may be a system of divided realities rather than a unified identity.

Solitude is a major theme in both Márquez and Murakami, but it takes different forms. In Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, solitude is historical, familial, and collective. The Buendía family repeats patterns of isolation across generations. The town of Macondo itself becomes isolated from history and then destroyed by it. Solitude is connected with memory, desire, pride, violence, and the inability to learn from the past. In Murakami, solitude is more individual and psychological. His protagonists are often alone by choice or circumstance. They live in modern cities but feel emotionally disconnected from others. Their solitude is not grand or mythic in the same way as the Buendías’ solitude. It is quiet, ordinary, and deeply postmodern. It appears in daily routines, failed relationships, emotional numbness, and the inability to communicate.

For example, Kafka Tamura in *Kafka on the Shore* runs away from home and becomes isolated from family and society. His solitude is connected with his search for identity. Aomame and Tengo in *1Q84* are also lonely individuals searching for connection in a distorted world. Their love becomes a possible way out of alienation, but it remains fragile and uncertain. Magic realism helps both writers represent solitude, but in different ways. Márquez uses magic realism to show solitude as a historical condition. Murakami uses it to show solitude as an inner condition. Márquez’s solitude belongs to a family and a continent. Murakami’s solitude belongs to the divided self.

History plays a central role in Márquez's magic realism. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can be read as a symbolic history of Latin America. The novel includes civil wars, foreign exploitation, political violence, and collective amnesia. Magic realism allows Márquez to represent history not only as fact but also as memory, myth, and trauma. Murakami's relationship to history is more indirect, but trauma remains important. His novels often deal with hidden wounds from the past. These wounds may be personal, familial, or historical. In *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka's family history is surrounded by mystery and violence. Nakata's childhood trauma changes his entire life. In *1Q84*, the trauma of cult violence and sexual exploitation shapes the lives of the characters. The magical elements become ways of approaching trauma that cannot be directly understood.

The difference is that Márquez often turns trauma into collective memory, while Murakami turns trauma into private symbolic experience. Márquez's massacre belongs to the history of Macondo. Murakami's wounds often appear in the inner worlds of individuals. Yet both writers use magic realism to represent what ordinary realism cannot fully show. Trauma, whether collective or private, often resists direct explanation. Magic realism gives it form without reducing its mystery.

Murakami's fiction shows that magic realism is not fixed. It can travel across cultures and change its function. He takes the basic principle of magic realism—the coexistence of the ordinary and the extraordinary—and adapts it to a world of postmodern alienation. In Márquez, the magical is often connected with tradition, myth, and collective storytelling. In Murakami, it is connected with jazz, popular culture, detective fiction, science fiction, psychology, and globalized urban life. His magic realism is hybrid. It combines Eastern and Western references, high culture and popular culture, realism and fantasy, philosophy and entertainment.

This hybridity is itself postmodern. Murakami's fiction refuses purity. It does not belong entirely to Japanese tradition or Western tradition, realism or fantasy, literary fiction or popular fiction. This mixed quality makes his magic realism different from Márquez's but not inferior to it. It shows how the mode can be renewed in new cultural conditions. Murakami's reimagining also shifts the purpose of magic realism. Instead of recovering communal myth, it explores the broken interior life of the modern subject. Instead of presenting a town like Macondo as a symbolic world, it presents parallel realities as symbolic states of consciousness. Instead of emphasizing historical repetition, it emphasizes psychic division and metaphysical uncertainty.

This transformation proves the adaptability of magic realism. It can represent both the collective memory of a colonized culture and the lonely consciousness of the postmodern individual. From Márquez to Murakami, magic realism becomes a global language for representing realities that exceed ordinary realism.

Conclusion: The movement from Gabriel García Márquez to Haruki Murakami shows the evolution of magic realism from a Latin American historical and communal mode into a postmodern psychological and metaphysical mode. Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* remains one of the most important examples of magic realism because it uses the magical to represent collective memory, colonial history, political violence, and the mythic structure of Latin American experience. In Márquez, magic realism deepens reality by showing that history is also shaped by myth, memory, and wonder.

Murakami, writing from a very different cultural world, reimagines magic realism for postmodern fiction. His novels use magical and surreal elements to represent alienation, fragmented identity, consumer culture, trauma, and unstable reality. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, the magical appears through divided consciousness and parallel worlds. In *Kafka on the Shore*, it appears through talking cats, prophecies, spirits, and mysterious journeys into the self. In *1Q84*, it appears through altered reality, two moons, and the disturbing uncertainty of the world itself.

The difference between the two writers is therefore not merely stylistic. It reflects a larger transformation in the function of magic realism. Márquez uses magic realism to tell the story of a community and its history. Murakami uses magic realism to explore the loneliness and instability of the postmodern self. Márquez's magic is public, historical, and collective. Murakami's magic is private, psychological, and fragmented.

Yet both writers share a basic belief: reality is not simple. The visible world is incomplete. Ordinary realism cannot fully represent human experience. There are hidden forces—memory, trauma, myth, desire, history, and the unconscious—that shape life in ways that rational explanation cannot exhaust. Magic realism gives literary form to these invisible realities.

From Macondo to Murakami's parallel worlds, magic realism continues to challenge the boundaries of fiction. It questions official history, rational certainty, stable identity, and the authority of the visible. In Márquez, it reveals the magical truth of collective history. In Murakami, it reveals the haunted uncertainty of postmodern existence. The journey from Márquez to Murakami is therefore the journey of magic realism itself: from cultural memory

to fragmented consciousness, from communal myth to private alienation, from historical reality to postmodern hyperreality. This reimagining confirms the continuing relevance of magic realism as one of the most flexible and powerful modes of contemporary fiction.

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