

## Magical Realism in Allende's *The House of The Spirits* And Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*

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### Abstract:

This article aims to analyze the application of magical realism in two novels, namely *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende and *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan. Both novels carry the theme of magical realism where both combine the real world with magical elements that seem ordinary in everyday life, a characteristic of magical realism. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a comparative approach to identify the similarities and differences in the use of magical realism in the two works. In *The House of the Spirits*, magical realism is used to describe the experiences of the Trueba family generation dealing with the turbulent socio-political events of Chile, while *Cantik Itu Luka* combines Indonesian colonial history with supernatural elements typical of Indonesia through the story of Dewi Ayu and her family. This study focuses on how the magical elements in the two novels not only strengthen the main narrative, but also reflect the social and historical conditions in each country. The analysis shows that magical realism in both novels plays an important role in the construction of the story. The results of this study confirm that magical realism, in addition to functioning as a literary element, is also a means to reflect the complexity of history and identity in two different cultural contexts or across countries.

**Keywords:** Comparative literature; Magical realism; cross-country literature

### Abstrak:

Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis penerapan realisme magis dalam dua novel yaitu *The House of the Spirits* karya Isabel Allende dan *Cantik Itu Luka* karya Eka Kurniawan. Kedua novel ini mengangkat tema realisme magis dimana keduanya memadukan antara dunia nyata dengan unsur magis yang tampak biasa dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, sebuah ciri khas realisme magis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan komparatif untuk mengidentifikasi persamaan dan perbedaan penggunaan realisme magis di dalam kedua karya tersebut. Dalam *The House of the Spirits*, realisme magis digunakan untuk menggambarkan pengalaman generasi keluarga Trueba yang berhadapan dengan peristiwa-peristiwa sosial-politik Chili yang penuh gejolak, sementara *Cantik Itu Luka* memadukan sejarah kolonial Indonesia dengan elemen supranatural khas Indonesia melalui kisah Dewi Ayu dan keluarganya. Kajian ini berfokus pada bagaimana unsur magis dalam kedua novel tersebut tidak hanya memperkuat narasi utama, tetapi juga mencerminkan kondisi sosial dan sejarah di masing-masing negara. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa realisme magis di kedua novel berperan penting dalam pembangunan cerita. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa realisme magis, selain berfungsi sebagai elemen sastra, juga merupakan sarana untuk merefleksikan kompleksitas sejarah dan identitas dalam dua konteks budaya yang berbeda atau lintas negara.

**Kata kunci:** Sastra perbandingan; realisme magis; sastra lintas negara

## INTRODUCTION

There is one innovative literary genre in the 20th century, the genre is called Magical Realism. Bowers (2004) says in his book that magical realism “Was introduced in Latin America during the 1940s as an expression of the mixture of realist and magical views of life in the context of the differing cultures of Latin America expressed through its art and literature.” In this genre, the real and the fantastic combine, creating a new world where the characters are accustomed to the supernatural and are considered commonplace in the story. This genre has its roots in European traditions—especially through the art critic Franz Roh in 1925—magical realism began to gain strength and influence especially through Latin American literature in the 20th century, with writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende as the main figures in this genre.

Magical realism as a unique narrative device allows writers to depict trauma, history, and power through traditional realist narrative styles in a different way from the usual narrative styles. “The historical context in which magic realist painting developed was that of the unstable German Weimar Republic during the period 1919–23. This era followed the German defeat in the First World War and the abdication and flight into exile of the Kaiser in 1918” (Bowers, 2004). From the above statement, it is not surprising that in the Latin American context, magical realism as a genre is often used to challenge the official narrative that dominates the political history of countries in the region, including military violence, dictatorship, and social injustice. On this side, the element of magic is able to provide space for writers to express voices that are ignored by official history, especially in depicting Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

There have been many literary works that use magical realism as their main theme. Isabel Allende, one of the famous writers with a writing style using magical realism which she poured into her novel. One of them is *The House of the Spirits* to describe the political and social history of the Chilean region through the lens of the fictional Trueba family. In this novel, magical elements, such as the character Clara who has supernatural powers, are combined with real historical events, such as military coups and political oppression that occurred in ancient times, creating a narrative where the magical and the real become inseparable. The novel reflects the traumas of Chile's history, including the rule of Salvador Allende (who is thought to have been inspired by his own uncle), the military coup of 1973, and the repressive regime of dictator Augusto Pinochet.

As time went by, magical realism began to transcend the geographical and cultural boundaries of Latin America and began to become a tool used by writers from various parts of the world. So what about magical realism works from various countries, such as Indonesia? One example is the work of an Indonesian writer named Eka Kurniawan, who wrote the novel *Cantik Itu Luka*, which was published in 2002. This novel not only raises elements of magical realism but also combines it with Indonesian history, from the Dutch colonial period to the political violence that occurred after independence. Kurniawan carefully processes various important events in Indonesian history, such as the Japanese occupation, the Indonesian Revolution, and the atrocities that occurred during the post-independence period, through the perspective of a family involved in the historical tragedy.

The main character in this novel, Dewi Ayu, is a beautiful woman who lives in a deprived environment, where she is forced to become a prostitute from an early age to satisfy the lust of the colonizers. Through her life story, Kurniawan describes the historical trauma of the nation, which is not only thick with colonial conflict, but also the inner struggles of the characters who are entangled in revenge and guilt. The horrific elements in the novel also highlight the cruel and sadistic nature of history that is often forgotten or ignored. By presenting complex characters, the narrative of *Cantik Itu Luka* shows how historical trauma is passed down from one generation to another, although in a different context, but this is similar to the themes raised in *The House of the Spirits*.

Magical realism is an interesting topic to discuss, even Wall (2020) in his research discussing Allende's *The House of the Spirits* said "As a female author, in a country where women's voices are limited, Allende employs magic realism to unfold her feminist visions and dreams." In addition, research in the scope of Kurniawan's Magical Realism has not been found. Even the research conducted by Ma'shumah and Sajarwa (2022) discusses the translation technique used by Kurniawan in the English version of *Cantik itu Luka* "this research findings showed that resistance to Javanese and Sundanese identities could be identified and formulated through the translator's conflict management.

However, there has been no research that directly compares magical realism in the two novels. And, comparative studies conducted between magical realism works from two different regions, such as Latin America and Southeast Asia, are still rare. Most of the existing studies tend to separate the analysis of these two works based on their respective

historical contexts and geographical regions. This creates a gap in the analysis of literature, due to the lack of cross-cultural analysis, the researcher aims to fill this gap by conducting a comparative analysis between Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* and Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*, focusing on how both novels use magical realism to voice their opinions about historical trauma.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Magical Realism

“In Magical realism, something supernatural or fantastical can occur in the same circumstances as mundane life. Extraordinary events happen as a part of the real-life itself” (Wati & Ayu, 2019). Based on the statement above, magical realism is a unique literary genre because it combines supernatural elements with real everyday life. In magical realism, something beyond reason is depicted as happening along with everyday life without any protest from the characters in the story. This theory allows writers to explore the boundaries between reality and imagination, creating another world where the extraordinary becomes part of everyday life. Magical realism first became widely known through the works of Latin American writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende. In their works, it has become commonplace that events that seem impossible or magical occur in a very natural way and are experienced by the characters in the story. Hasanah et al. (2021) said that magical realism “Irreducible element is accepted as something that really exists in the story, even though it cannot be explained by logic, common knowledge, or received belief.” It is one of the characteristics of magical realism that the magical elements are presented without logical explanation. This creates a sense of wonder and mystery, while also challenging the reader to question the boundaries between reality and fiction. This theory usually uses a real setting but has magical or irrational situations. “The term realism is derived from the root “real”. In fact, realism is a viewpoint in which the objectivity is paid special attention rather than subjectivity” (Rajabi et al., 2020).

Bowers (2004) in her book wrote a lot about magical realism and its origins. Although initially magical realism was used for visual arts in 1925 to combine realistic and magical painting styles, this term was later adapted in literature by Latin American writers who wanted to depict the complexity of culture and politics in their regions. The peak of

the development of magical realism in literature occurred with the publication of Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Márquez's narrative strategy, in which supernatural elements in his novel such as flying carpets and eternal rain are considered normal, set the standard for the development of this genre. The success of Márquez's work inspired other Latin American writers, including Isabel Allende, who used similar techniques in her debut novel *The House of the Spirits* (1982).

This study explores how the differences in the two authors' approaches reflect the historical and cultural contexts of Chile and Indonesia, and reveal the potential of magical realism as a universal means of depicting themes of violence, memory, and trauma

### **Comparative Literature**

Tiwari (2021) quoted from Susan Bassnett that she “defines that comparative literature involves the study of text across cultures, interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literature and other studies across both time and space (Susan, 1993: 1). She adds that the true task of comparative literature is to examine the phenomena of literature as a whole, to compare them, to group them, to inquire into the causes of them and to determine the results of them.” *Critical Analysis of Comparative Literary Studies* emphasizes the importance of context when analyzing literary genres across cultures. In *What Is World Literature?* (2003), Damrosch argues that genres such as magical realism must be understood in relation to the specific socio-political realities of the regions in which they are produced. Both Allende and Kurniawan adapted magical realism to suit the historical and cultural circumstances of their respective countries. Both used the genre to address themes of colonialism, political oppression, and dictatorship. One of the main strengths of comparative literature is its ability to highlight the universal and the particular. Magical realism, although originally Latin American and developed there, has now become a global genre that writers have adapted to reflect their local issues.

Relevance to the Current Study A comparative framework is essential to understanding how magical realism operates in *The House of the Spirits* and *Cantik Itu Luka*. This study will build on previous research by examining how each author adapts magical realism to reflect the specific historical traumas of Chile and Indonesia, while also contributing to a broader global conversation about the genre's capacity for political and social critique.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used descriptive qualitative methods in the form of library research. The researchers use a research approach that relies on the study and analysis of relevant literature as the main data source. Researchers use methods with available data in the form of books, journal articles, papers and other sources that researchers can access online and offline, which is called the library method (George, 2008).

With this approach, the main focus is on the interpretation of words, symbols, and meanings behind the elements of magical realism found in the text. This qualitative research was conducted by the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of the two novels without relying on numerical data, but rather emphasizing the focus on the meaning and cultural context contained in the texts of the two novels. The subjects of this study were two literary works that represent the use of magical realism in the historical context of two different countries, namely *The House of the Spirits* which is set in Chile, and *Cantik Itu Luka* which is set in Indonesia. These two novels were chosen as samples because both explicitly use elements of magical realism to depict historical and socio-political trauma in the context of each country.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *The House of the Spirits* (1982) by Isabel Allende

*The House of the Spirits* (1982) is Isabel Allende's first work, which tells the story of the Trueba family in a town believed to be in Chile. The story follows three generations of the Trueba family, starting with Esteban Trueba, an ambitious conservative man, and Clara del Valle, Esteban Trueba's wife who has supernatural powers. The novel begins with the tragic death of Rosa, Esteban Trueba's fiancée. After Rosa's death, Esteban works hard to build his wealth and power as a landowner on a large plantation called Las Tres Marías. In the midst of his ambition, Esteban marries Clara, Rosa's younger sister, who is known to have the ability to predict, speak with spirits, and telekinesis or manipulate objects with her mind.

Clara becomes the spiritual center of the family, bringing balance amidst the ambition and violence that surrounds her husband, Esteban. Clara is a character who plays an important role in combining elements of magical realism with the daily life of the

Trueba family. Clara often communicates with the spirit world and has the ability to see the future, which she often uses to warn her family of bad events to come. Clara's psychic powers are underestimated by those around her, creating an atmosphere where the real and the supernatural overlap and are considered normal. Political and social changes in the country are depicted through the Trueba family, which is inseparable from the influence of history.

Clara, with her magical powers, often predicts disasters that will befall her family, but despite her predictions, no one can change the destiny that has been determined. The next generation of the Trueba family, such as Blanca, Jaime, and Nicolás, are also caught up in the political conflict that is developing in Chile. At the climax of the novel, the reader is taken to the military coup of 1973, in which Chile's democratic government was overthrown by the military, supported by conservative elites such as Esteban. The coup shook the entire country, including the Trueba family, who had to face the consequences of Esteban's political decisions and his involvement in supporting the military government. Alba, Clara and Esteban's granddaughter, was kidnapped and tortured by the military regime, making this family's trauma a reflection of the national trauma experienced by the entire country.

The main element of magical realism in this novel is the character of Clara, who has supernatural abilities. Clara has shown extraordinary abilities since she was a child, such as talking to the spirits of the dead, predicting the future, and moving objects with her mind. Clara is also often associated with the spirits of her deceased family, who give her clues or warnings about future events.

They had also grown accustomed to the youngest daughter's prophecies. She would announce earthquakes in advance, which was quite useful in the country of catastrophes, for it gave them a chance to lock up the good dishes and place their slippers within reach in case they had to run out in the middle of the night (Allende, 1982).

Clara's powers are accepted by those around her as something natural and normal, even though her irrational nature clearly goes beyond the boundaries of normal reality. With the real setting of Chile where they live, Allende decorates it with magical elements regarding the prediction of an earthquake disaster that will hit Chile. In the text Clara clearly predicts an earthquake that will occur, what is unreasonable is that the earthquake

actually occurs. The characters in the story also act normally when Clara predicts things that will happen and when Clara performs telekinesis.

It was true there had been times, just like that they were about to sit down to dinner and everyone was in the large dining room, seated according to dignity and position, when the salt cellar would suddenly begin to shake and move among the plates and goblets without any visible source of energy or sign of illusionist's trick. Nívea would pull Clara's braids and that would be enough to wake her daughter from her mad distraction and return the saltcellar to immobility (Allende, 1982).

The text describes that the Incident occurred in a real setting, namely the Trueba family dining room, but combined with magical elements where objects fly illogically. Clara's power and the character's attitude towards her reflect the concept of magical realism where absurd elements are present in everyday life without question or doubt from other characters in the story.

Clara's abilities not only function as fantastic elements in the story, but also as metaphors for the memories and traumas that continue to live in the Trueba family. Clara, with her powers, becomes a link between the past and the present, creating the impression that history and past memories continue to haunt the family and the nation.

The element of magical realism concerns Clara's ability to predict the future including the death of those closest to her. When she predicts the death of her husband or her grandson, this illustrates that destiny has been predetermined, and no one can change the course of life that has been predicted. The relationship between the supernatural world and political reality creates an atmosphere full of uncertainty and power that cannot be controlled by ordinary humans. One example is;

He could hardly guess that that solemn, cubic, dense, pompous house, which sat like a hat amid its green and geometric surroundings, would end up full of protuberances and incrustations, of twisted staircases that led to empty spaces, of turrets, of small windows that could not be opened, doors hanging in midair, crooked hallways, and portholes that linked the living quarters so that people could communicate during the siesta, all of which were Clara's inspiration room built in another part of the house, and if the spirits told her that there was a hidden treasure or an unburied body in the foundation, she would have a wall knocked down, until the mansion was transformed into an enchanted labyrinth that was impossible to clean and that defined any number of state and city laws (Allende 1982).

In the text above, Allende uses a house in Chile as a real setting and combines it with magical elements where the rooms in the house are larger than their actual size. The

depiction of a house that turns into a labyrinth “that defies a number of state and city laws” can also be interpreted as a metaphor for how the political regime, in this case the Chilean government at that time, began to violate existing laws and regulations. The house that is “impossible to clean” reflects the conditions in which political chaos and corruption are increasingly rampant, making social order increasingly difficult to restore. Clara, although she died during the coup, remains present in a spiritual form, accompanying her family through difficult times. Her presence shows that the past is never really dead, and the political trauma experienced by the previous generation continues to haunt the next generation. *The House of the Spirits* is not only the story of the Trueba family, but also a social and political commentary on Chile’s violent history, where magical powers are used to show the deep impact of historical trauma.

### ***Cantik Itu Luka* (2002) by Eka Kurniawan**

*Cantik itu Luka* (2002) by Eka Kurniawan is a novel that combines Indonesian history with magical and strange elements. The story centers on Dewi Ayu, a beautiful prostitute who rises from the dead after 21 years to witness the destruction experienced by her family. Dewi Ayu was born into a complicated family tree where she was born from a sibling relationship. This happened because her grandfather had children from his wife and concubine of different genders then they fell in love. From this concubine he actually had a first love where his first love was married to Dewi Ayu as her first husband. However, he instead chose to commit suicide by jumping from a hill where his grandfather’s concubine also died.

*Sore hari di akhir pekan bulan Maret, Dewi Ayu bangkit dari kuburan setelah dua puluh satu tahun kematian* (Kurniawan, 2002).

(On a weekend afternoon in March, Dewi Ayu rose from the grave after twenty-one years of death)

With the real Dewi Ayu grave as the setting, Kurniawan combines magical elements where after 21 years Dewi Ayu was buried there, the grave exploded and Dewi Ayu rose in her full form. This resurrection occurred without any rational explanation and was accepted by the people around her as something natural. Dewi Ayu’s resurrection is a historical symbol that never really dies and continues to haunt Indonesian society. The trauma that Dewi Ayu experienced during her life, including being a victim of colonialism and political violence, continues to influence the next generation, even after her death.

This novel covers various periods in Indonesian history, from the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese occupation, to the political violence that occurred after independence, including the 1965 tragedy. Dewi Ayu, who was a descendant of the Dutch, was forced to become a prostitute during the Japanese occupation, and her extraordinary beauty made her a symbol of power and destruction. Her life was full of tragedy and suffering, but she continued to survive with extraordinary strength. She had four daughters who were all born with extraordinary beauty, except for her last child named “Si Cantik”, but was born with a very ugly appearance.

Kurniawan combines magical elements with the reality of violence to depict the absurdity of Indonesian history. Dewi Ayu’s children, all cursed by their beauty, face a tragic fate. This beauty curse is a metaphor for how society views beauty as a source of power, but at the same time, beauty brings suffering to those who have it. All descendants of her family continue to experience tragic things like being cursed by someone, which in the end it is known that the one who cursed them was the spirit of Dewi Ayu’s first husband. Kurniawan also discusses the tragic tragedies that Indonesia has experienced, such as the communist massacre, by telling the story of Kliwon, the husband of Dewi Ayu’s third child named Adinda, who was carried away by Marxist ideology and joined the communist party. Where not long after he became a party leader, there was a betrayal by his party in the middle and the communist party was massacred. Kliwon survived at that time because of Alamanda’s help, that day Halimunda was covered in blood because of the indiscriminate massacre. Corpses were left scattered in the settlements and even on the streets. However, after everyone was massacred, instead of being peaceful, the communist spirits began to haunt the land of Halimunda.

*“Jika Sang Shodancho melihatnya, ia akan menjerit dengan wajah pucat, mepet ke dinding terjauh dari jendela kamar. Mendengar jeritan itu Alamanda akan datang dan mencoba menenangkannya.*

*“Pikirkanlah, itu Cuma hantu orang komunis,” kata Alamanda.*

*“Ia hendak membunuhku.”*

*“Mati sekarang atau sepuluh tahun lagi apa bedanya, Shodancho?”*

*Tapi Sang Shodancho tak pernah bisa terhibur oleh kata-kata semacam itu, hingga Alamanda harus mengusir hantu tersebut dari jendela kamar mereka. Kadang-kadang hantu itu tak mau pergi, dan terus mengerang seolah ia minta sesuatu. Mencoba menebak-nebak, Alamanda kadang memberi hantu itu minum atau makan, dan mereka minum bagaikan telah melintasi padang pasir luas, atau makan bagaikan telah berpuasa selama tiga tahun, sebelum menghilang dari jendela dan Sang Shodancho bisa ditenangkan.” (Kurniawan, 2002).*

(If Shodancho saw him, he would scream with a pale face, pressing himself against the wall furthest from the bedroom window. Hearing the screams, Alamanda would come and try to calm him down.

“Think about it, it’s just a communist ghost,” Alamanda would say.

“He’s trying to kill me.”

“Die now or in ten years, what’s the difference, Shodancho?”

But Shodancho could never be comforted by such words, so Alamanda had to chase the ghost away from their bedroom window. Sometimes the ghost wouldn’t go away, and kept moaning as if it was asking for something. Trying to guess, Alamanda sometimes gave the ghost something to drink or eat, and they drank as if they had crossed a vast desert, or ate as if they had fasted for three years, before disappearing from the window and Shodancho could be calmed down.)

Alamanda’s response clearly shows one of the characteristics of Magical Realism where things beyond reason are considered normal by the characters. With the setting of their house in Halimunda, it shows a real setting but is wrapped in magical elements, namely the spirits of the wandering communists. Alamanda feeds the ghost with an indifferent attitude, as if the people she feeds and drinks are ordinary people. This section also touches on how cruel politics were in Indonesia in ancient times. Kurniawan cleverly uses magical realism to show how brutal history and political violence continue to haunt Indonesian society.

*“Tak lama setelah kematian Sang Shodancho, dan keyakinan Dewi Ayu tak lagi tergoyahkan, akhirnya ia memanggil roh jahat itu dengan bantuan si tukang jailangkung Kinkin. Kini roh jahat itu berdiri di depannya, sekali-kali tertawa, menampakkan kebahagiaannya yang tak terbendung”* (Kurniawan, 2002).

(Shortly after Sang Shodancho’s death, and Dewi Ayu’s faith was no longer shaken, she finally summoned the evil spirit with the help of the jailangkung Kinkin. Now the evil spirit stood in front of her, laughing occasionally, showing her unstoppable happiness)

The quote is set in Dewi Ayu’s house and is wrapped in magical elements in the form of an evil spirit that is summoned using a real medium called jailangkung. This does not make sense where the evil spirit can communicate with Dewi Ayu casually while being seen by Kinkin. The quote also continues with the scene;

*“Setelah beberapa detik saling memandang, dengan sekuat tenaga, tenaga seorang perempuan yang memendam kemarahan yang begitu mendalam, mungkin pada akhirnya sekuat dendam si roh jahat, ia menikam bekas suaminya itu. Darah muncrat, dan ia menikamnya lagi, darah keluar lagi, ia menikam lagi, lima tikaman dengan kekuatan yang bertambah dari satu tikaman ke tikaman yang lain. Si roh jahat ambruk ke lantai, mengerang dan memegang dadanya”* (Kurniawan, 2002).

(After a few seconds of looking at each other, with all her strength, the strength of a woman who harbored deep anger, perhaps in the end as strong as the revenge of an evil spirit, she stabbed her ex-husband. Blood spurting out, and he stabbed her again, blood came out again, he stabbed again, five stabs with increasing force from one to the next.

The evil spirit collapsed to the floor, groaning and clutching his chest)

This quote reflects elements of magical realism through its combination of a real setting and a magical situation. On the surface, this scene depicts a real physical act, namely a woman stabbing her ex-husband. The detailed description of the spurting blood, repeated stabbings, and intense sense of revenge give the impression of a realistic violent situation. However, the magical element appears with the mention of “the evil spirit,” which depicts the ex-husband as a supernatural entity. Although the physical actions are real—blood and her husband groans in pain—the depiction of the figure as an evil spirit brings a magical element to a scene that is essentially full of mundane violence.

The death and resurrection of Dewi Ayu, and the curse of beauty passed on to her children, reflect how historical trauma recurs in the lives of individuals and societies. Through the use of supernatural elements, Kurniawan provides commentary on colonialism, political repression, and how social trauma can be passed down from generation to generation. The lives of Dewi Ayu and her descendants symbolize the unhealed wounds caused by the history of violence and injustice that has plagued Indonesia.

### **Comparison of the Use of Magical Realism in *The House of the Spirits* and *Cantik Itu Luka***

After examining the elements of magical realism in *The House of the Spirits* and *Cantik Itu Luka*, it is clear that although both authors use the same genre, they convey it in different ways, influenced by their respective historical and cultural contexts.

#### ***Representation of Historical Trauma***

In *The House of the Spirits*, magical realism is used to depict how political trauma in Chile, especially the political violence during the military coup, impacts personal and family life. Magical elements such as Clara’s ability to predict the future and speak with spirits are used to show how dark history continues to haunt the next generations. Although political violence is depicted implicitly, its effects on the characters in the novel are clear.

In contrast, *Cantik Itu Luka* uses magical realism to depict a more explicit historical trauma. Kurniawan not only displays physical violence blatantly, but also uses grotesque and supernatural elements to show the absurdity and cruelty of Indonesian history. Dewi Ayu's resurrection from the dead and the curse of beauty that befell her children are examples of how past trauma never truly disappears and always reappears in new forms.

### ***Use of Grotesque vs. Subtle Elements***

The grotesque elements in *Cantik Itu Luka* are more prominent than in *The House of the Spirits*. Kurniawan uses explicit depictions of physical violence and cruelty to show how Indonesia's violent history affects individuals and society. The supernatural elements in the novel are often combined with grotesque imagery, creating a tense and absurd atmosphere.

Meanwhile, Allende uses magical elements more often in subtle and symbolic ways. Clara's psychic powers are used to reflect the helplessness of humans in the face of greater historical forces, but these elements are not depicted in a harsh or explicit manner. The magical elements in *The House of the Spirits* tend to be more subtle, creating a melancholic and reflective atmosphere.

### ***Symbolism at magical realism***

In *The House of the Spirits*, magical symbolism is often used to convey deeper meanings related to fate and power. Clara becomes a symbol of spiritual strength and intuition in the face of political chaos, where her supernatural powers illustrate human helplessness against a predetermined fate. The use of magical elements such as spirits that come and go in the lives of the Trueba family shows that history and political trauma never really end, but are always present in the form of unavoidable memories.

In contrast, in *Cantik Itu Luka*, magical symbolism emphasizes irony and grotesque. The resurrection of Dewi Ayu after her death symbolizes not only the trauma of the past that never dies, but also the irony of cursed beauty. Her children who are cursed by destructive beauty, as well as the birth of the last child who is very ugly, symbolize the destruction caused by violence and injustice that continues to be passed down from one generation to the next. Magical realism in *Cantik Itu Luka* is also used to explore the absurdity of Indonesian history, where violence and injustice seem so extreme that they can only be represented through magical and grotesque elements.

## CONCLUSION(S)

Overall, both Isabel Allende in *The House of the Spirits* and Eka Kurniawan in *Cantik Itu Luka* use magical realism as a tool to explore historical trauma, albeit with different approaches. Allende uses magical elements subtly to depict the trauma that affects personal and family relationships in the context of Chilean political turmoil. In contrast, Kurniawan uses magical realism more explicitly and grotesquely to depict the absurdity and violence of Indonesian history, where trauma is felt not only by families but also by the wider community. Also, their obvious symbolism elements are used for different purposes. These differences reflect the historical and cultural contexts of each country, where political trauma in Chile tends to be more internal and personal, while violence in Indonesia is more sadistic and pervasive throughout society. Although both use magical realism for the same purpose of depicting trauma that cannot be expressed in conventional ways, each author's style and approach differ in how they represent historical events and their impact on their characters.

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