An Approach to Nonlinear Time in the Short Stories of Gabriel García Márquez Through the Middle Way of the Majjhima Nikāya

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Original Research Articles

An Approach to Nonlinear Time in the Short Stories of Gabriel García Márquez Through the Middle Way of the Majjhima Nikāya

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Abstract

This research examines the phenomenon of fragmented time in Gabriel García Márquez's short stories through the lens of the Middle Way (Majjhima Paṭipadā) as presented in the Majjhima Nikāya. Within the works of Márquez's magical realism, temporal structures no longer operate along a conventional linear axis; instead, they are disrupted, inverted, and repetitive. This study indicates that such non-linearity resonates with Buddhist Middle Way thought a path that transcends two extremes. Utilizing structuralist, comparative, and socio-historical critical methods, the article analyzes fragmented temporal structures as pieces of reality where past, present, and future intersect inseparably. Drawing from the Middle Way perspective in the Majjhima Nikaya, the research interprets the bottlenecks of fragmented time as a consequence of clinging (upādāna) to discrete temporal fragments. Furthermore, it asserts that attaining an awakening to the Emptiness (suññatā) of time is the key to decoding the deconstructive narrative techniques in his works. This study not only opens a new direction in Buddhist literary criticism but also contributes to innovating the pedagogy of Latin American literature in universities, guiding students toward multi-dimensional and practical thinking on non-dual existence.

Keywords: Buddhist Criticism; Gabriel García Márquez; Majjhima Nikāya; Temporal Fragmentation; The Middle Way

Introduction

This study focuses on bridging a Western art form with Eastern Buddhist thought, serving not only as a cross-cultural dialogue but also as a catalyst for an alternative reading that brings Latin American literature and Buddhist teachings into a shared artistic space. Rather than a mere intercultural comparison between Western narrative forms and Eastern Buddhist philosophy, this research proposes an alternative hermeneutic framework where Latin American literature and Buddhist doctrines can mutually reflect and illuminate one another. By approaching Gabriel García Márquez's short stories through the lens of the Middle Way (Majjhima Paṭipadā) as presented in the Majjhima Nikāya, the article suggests a reading that transcends traditional Western theoretical models to highlight the experiential and ontological dimensions of temporality.

Firstly, in Gabriel García Márquez's artistic universe, time does not operate along a linear axis from past to future; instead, it is frequently fragmented, repetitive, or frozen in eternal moments. H1: Non-linear time represents a lived experience rather than a chronological order. Short story collections such as Eyes of a Blue Dog (1950) or Big Mama's Funeral (1962) expose a reality where the boundaries between life and death, and between fact and fiction, are blurred by an illogical temporal structure (Márquez, 2014, 12). However, decoding this fragmentation solely through Western theories such as psychoanalysis or postmodernism may occasionally fail to capture the spiritual depth and the quintessential nature of existence in Márquez's work.

Secondly, in the East, the Majjhima Nikāya, one of the most significant collections in the Pali Canon, contains profound teachings on the nature of reality and time. The core of this collection is the Middle Way (Majjhima Paṭipadā), a path that avoids the two extremes of Eternalism (the belief that time and the self are permanent) and Nihilism (the belief that everything ends completely at death). H2: Temporal fragmentation manifests the Middle Way between memory, reality, and imagination. In the Mūlapariyāya Sutta (The Root of All Things), the Buddha pointed out the misconception of the uninstructed worldling who "perceives earth as earth" and clings to concepts of existence (Thích Minh Châu trans, 2012a, 2). It is precisely this clinging (upādāna) that creates a temporal loop, paralleling the temporal impasse experienced by characters in Márquez's short stories. David J. Kalupahana, in his commentary on Middle Way philosophy, asserted that human entrapment stems from reifying concepts into fixed entities: "The clinging to concepts as eternal realities or the total denial of all values are the extremes that prevent man from seeing the dependent arising nature of the world" (Kalupahana, 1986, 5).

Thirdly, connecting Márquez's magical world with Buddhist philosophy is by no means an arbitrary imposition. H3: The deconstruction of fragmented time in Márquez's short stories serves as a vehicle to lead characters (and readers) toward a state of awakening, where human existence is no longer dominated by time. In fact, the temporal fragmentation in Márquez's prose is the artistic embodiment of disrupting the continuity of the "Self." When Márquez describes a character living in infinite waiting or experiencing death as another state of being, he is

inadvertently touching upon the boundaries of deconstructing temporal dogmas. According to the Middle Way perspective, time possesses no independent inherent existence (svabhāva) but is merely the dependent arising (paṭiccasamuppāda) of mental fragments. This correspondence provides a fertile ground for applying Buddhist concepts to interpret Márquez's narrative structures, thereby discovering an exit for characters trapped in relentless temporal loops. This hypothesis suggests that when the structure of time disintegrates, both characters and readers are compelled to relinquish the habit of clinging to the continuity of the ego. In Márquez's short stories, the disruption of time is not merely a technical game but a deliberate effort to eradicate Eternalism. According to Nāgārjuna's Middle Way thought as interpreted by Kalupahana, liberation only arises when one recognizes the Emptiness (suññatā) of all phenomena: "Truth does not lie in metaphysical conclusions about beginnings or endings, but in the understanding of the correlation of conditions" (Kalupahana, 1986, 85). When characters cease attempting to possess time as a linear entity, they achieve a state of "detachment from clinging" (upādāna-nirodha), as described in the Mahāvedalla Sutta: "Friends, through the fading away of lust, through the fading away of delight, through the fading away of craving, through the fading away of clinging, and through the liberation of the mind this is right view" (Thích Minh Châu trans., 2012, ec457).

In summary, these hypotheses suggest that temporal fragmentation in Márquez's short stories constitutes an artistic expression of Middle Way thought an endeavor to dismantle both Eternalist and Nihilistic views of time to pave the way toward wisdom (prajñā). By hermeneutically interpreting Márquez's narrative structures through Buddhist philosophy, this study aims to provide a fresh and comprehensive perspective on his literary world while demonstrating the broad applicability of Buddhist concepts as a critical framework in literary studies. Decoding literature through a Buddhist lens is not only a novel direction but also reaffirms the universal values of the work. Consequently, this article expects to offer a holistic and renewed vision of Márquez's artistic universe.

Objective

1. To analyze non-linear temporality in Gabriel García Márquez's short fiction through anachrony, repetition, and narrative stasis.

2. To examine the convergence between Márquez's deconstruction of time and the Buddhist Middle Way.

3. To interpret non-linear time as a strategy for dissolving the historical self in alignment with Buddhist concepts of non-self and mindfulness.

Literature Review

Fragmented and Non-Linear Time in Literary Studies

The concept of fragmented and non-linear time has long occupied a central position in modern and postmodern literary criticism. Early philosophical challenges to linear temporality emerge in Henri Bergson's Time and Free Will and Creative Evolution, where durée is defined as qualitative, continuous, and internally experienced rather than externally measured. Similarly, Martin Heidegger's Being and Time reconceptualizes temporality as existential, arguing that human existence (Dasein) is structured through anticipation, retention, and presence rather than objective chronology. These philosophical foundations significantly influenced twentieth-century narrative theory and literary modernism.

In narratology, Gérard Genette's seminal work Narrative Discourse articulates how literary time diverges from chronological order through analepsis, prolepsis, ellipsis, and repetition, establishing the categories of order, duration, and frequency as core analytical tools. Paul Ricoeur further develops this inquiry in Time and Narrative, proposing that narrative mediates between cosmological time and phenomenological time, thereby transforming lived experience into intelligible form. Ricoeur's emphasis on emplotment underscores how fragmented temporal structures reflect the human effort to reconcile memory, history, and identity.

Postmodern literary criticism extends these insights by foregrounding temporal disjunction as a response to historical rupture and epistemological uncertainty. Scholars such as Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale argue that postmodern narratives destabilize temporal coherence to question the authority of grand historical narratives. In this sense, non-linear time becomes not merely a formal innovation but a mode of epistemological critique.

Within Latin American literature, temporal fragmentation assumes particular cultural and political resonance. Critics such as Seymour Menton, Lois Parkinson Zamora, and Roberto González Echevarría emphasize that magical realism disrupts Enlightenment notions of progressive historical time by integrating mythic, cyclical, and ancestral temporalities. Zamora, in particular, argues that magical realist narratives operate within a "plural temporality" in which indigenous cosmologies, colonial histories, and personal memory coexist. Time in such narratives is neither purely remembered nor strictly present; instead, it unfolds as a layered continuum in which past, present, and future intersect. This supports the critical view that non-linear narrative time reflects lived experience and collective consciousness rather than objective chronology González Echevarría, R. (1990).

Time, Memory, and Imagination in Márquez's Short Fiction

Gabriel García Márquez's short fiction has been widely examined for its innovative manipulation of time, memory, and perception. Scholars consistently note that Márquez dissolves the boundaries between memory, reality, and imagination, producing narratives in

which temporal continuity is fractured or suspended. Michael Bell observes that Márquez's narrative time often resists forward movement, instead circling around moments of memory, obsession, or waiting. Similarly, Gene Bell-Villada emphasizes the presence of repetitive and stagnant temporal patterns, interpreting them as expressions of political paralysis and existential confinement Bell, M. (1993).

Other critics, such as Stephen Minta and Gerald Martin, situate Márquez's temporal experimentation within broader Latin American historical experiences, particularly colonial violence, cyclical authoritarianism, and the instability of national memory. From this perspective, temporal distortion functions as a symbolic critique of official historiography. Meanwhile, scholars influenced by myth criticism, including Mircea Eliade's concept of sacred time, argue that Márquez's fiction reflects a mythic consciousness in which time is regenerative rather than linear Bell-Villada, G. (1990).

Despite these valuable contributions, much of the existing scholarship treats temporal fragmentation either as a stylistic hallmark of magical realism or as an allegorical representation of socio-political conditions. Less attention has been paid to fragmented time as an intermediary or mediating space—one that resists rigid binaries such as realism versus fantasy, memory versus actuality, or history versus myth. This critical gap invites an alternative interpretive framework capable of articulating how Márquez's narrative temporality operates as a dynamic equilibrium rather than a polarized opposition Minta, S. (1987).

Buddhist Thought and Literary Temporality

Buddhist philosophy offers a radically non-essentialist understanding of time that contrasts sharply with Western linear and teleological models. In the Pāli Canon, particularly in texts from the Majjhima Nikāya and Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha repeatedly critiques fixation on past and future as sources of suffering, emphasizing instead mindful awareness of the present moment. Time, from this perspective, is not an independent entity but a conceptual construction arising from dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda). Siderits, M. (2007).

Core Buddhist doctrines such as impermanence (anicca), non-self (anattā), and suffering (dukkha) destabilize the notion of a continuous, enduring subject moving through linear time. As scholars such as Nāgārjuna (in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā) and, in modern scholarship, David Kalupahana and Mark Siderits argue, temporal continuity is sustained through mental clinging (upādāna) rather than ontological substance. The Middle Way (majjhimā paṭipadā) thus rejects both eternalism and annihilationism, offering a relational understanding of existence and temporality. Ziporyn, B. (2012).

In literary studies, Buddhist philosophy has been applied to modernist and postmodern texts by scholars such as Robert Magliola, Brook Ziporyn, and Steven Heine, who explore how non-dualistic temporality challenges Western narrative conventions. These studies often focus on East Asian literature or Western modernism, examining how fragmented narrative time mirrors Buddhist insights into impermanence and emptiness (suññatā). However, the application

of Middle Way philosophy to Latin American magical realism—and to Márquez's short fiction in particular—remains largely unexplored Nāgārjuna. (1995).

This absence underscores the originality of the present study, which proposes Buddhist temporality as a productive interpretive lens for understanding Márquez's fragmented narrative time. By framing temporal disruption as a Middle Way between realism and fantasy, memory and imagination, this research contributes a cross-cultural philosophical perspective to Márquez studies and expands the scope of Buddhist literary criticism beyond its conventional geographic and textual boundaries.

Materials and Methods

This research employs a tripartite methodological framework to provide a systematic and multi-dimensional perspective on the subject, comprising structural criticism, historical-cultural criticism, and comparative criticism.

Firstly, structural criticism serves as the pivotal method for decoding narrative techniques and temporal fragmentation. The study focuses on analyzing narrative fragments through the concepts of text time and story time. According to Gérard Genette, the disruption of temporal order anachrony is a distinctive device used to generate new meanings: "To study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal sections have in the story" (Genette, 1980, p. 35). Furthermore, the research utilizes Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's perspective to clarify how characters are frozen within repetitive structures: "Repetition involves a relation between the number of times an event is presumed to have occurred in the story and the number of times it is narrated in the text" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 57). Dismantling these structures helps identify the non-linear nature of Márquez's short stories not merely as a formal device, but as an ontological reality.

Secondly, historical-cultural criticism situates Márquez's work within the Latin American cultural context and aligns it with the philosophical background of the Majjhima Nikāya. This method illuminates how indigenous Colombian conceptions of death and existence intersect with the Early Buddhist worldview. To understand the operation of these motifs, the study also inherits Formalist perspectives in examining the defamiliarization (ostranenie) of literary texts relative to historical reality: "The prime object of literary science is not literature, but literariness (literaturnost), i.e., that which makes a given work a literary work" (Erlich, 1981, p. 172). Consequently, fragmented temporality is perceived as a literary attribute reflecting the ruptures in both history and human consciousness.

Thirdly, comparative criticism is the primary method for establishing the relationship between Latin American literature and Eastern philosophy. The research conducts an interdisciplinary comparison between the temporal models of magical realism and Middle Way thought. Kalupahana (1986) emphasizes the dangers of the extreme interpretations that Márquez inadvertently portrays through his characters: "The clinging to concepts as eternal

realities or the total denial of all values are the extremes that prevent man from seeing the dependent arising nature of the world" (Kalupahana,1986, p.5). Comparative criticism here helps identify that, despite geographical and temporal differences, both systems converge in their effort to liberate humanity from clinging to a single, fixed reality.

Results

The Middle Way and Non-Linear Time

In Gabriel García Márquez's magical realist fiction, time is not a linear progression but a non-linear structure in which reality, memory, and imagination intersect. As Wendy B. Faris observes, magical realism blurs boundaries between the real and the unreal. This is formally realized through Gérard Genette's concept of anachrony, the disruption of chronological order, where narrative sequence diverges from the actual order of events. In stories such as Nabo: The Black Man Who Made the Angels Wait, Márquez fragments time according to memory and emotion rather than clock time, compelling readers to reconstruct events themselves. Time is often compressed, expanded, or repeated, producing circular rather than linear temporality. As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan notes, repetition transforms narration into stasis. Characters frequently remain trapped in a single moment or psychological state, as in Someone Has Been Disarranging These Roses, where a child's spirit exists eternally within a fixed past that coexists with the present. Non-linearity is further intensified through the spatialization of time. In The Sea of Lost Time, physical time dissolves entirely: corpses do not decay, and villages persist in an atemporal space. Time ceases to be a flow and becomes a static condition of being. Similarly, in Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo, prolonged rain erases temporal measurement, reducing time to subjective experience rather than objective chronology. Through anachrony, circularity, and stasis, Márquez dismantles linear time and challenges narratives of progress, presenting reality as a multi-layered convergence of history, myth, and consciousness.

The Middle Way and the Deconstruction of Time

In Early Buddhist philosophy, the Middle Way (Majjhima Paṭipadā) functions not only as an ethical path but as an epistemological stance that dismantles distorted perception. The Buddha identifies suffering as arising from reification—the attachment to fixed concepts such as self, substance, or time. The Middle Way replaces conceptual perception (sañjānāti) with direct understanding (pajānāti), allowing phenomena to be seen as dependently arisen processes rather than stable entities. Central to the Middle Way is non-attachment to views. In the Alagaddūpama Sutta, the Dhamma itself is compared to a raft meant to be abandoned after crossing. Clinging even to correct views leads to stagnation. Similarly, the Sabbāsava Sutta warns

that metaphysical speculation about self and time produces a "thicket of views." Liberation arises not from affirming or denying existence, but from observing dependent origination without conceptual fixation. This equilibrium transcends the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism, dissolving rigid distinctions between being and non-being.

Convergence of Non-Linearity and the Middle Way

The non-linear temporality in Márquez's short stories parallels the Middle Way's deconstruction of fixed realities. By dismantling linear time, Márquez undermines eternalism—the belief in a permanent, continuous self-unfolding through history—while avoiding nihilism. Indeterminate temporal zones, such as the underwater world in The Sea of Lost Time, allow the dead to persist without affirming eternal existence or total annihilation. Time becomes relational rather than absolute. Narrative stasis represents the most radical form of this convergence. In stories like Nabo and Someone Has Been Disarranging These Roses; time is suspended into an eternal present. This stillness mirrors the Buddhist ideal expressed in the Bhaddekaratta Sutta, where liberation arises from neither clinging to the past nor projecting into the future, but fully inhabiting the present phenomenon. Such suspension is not the death of time, but freedom from its conceptual tyranny. Ultimately, Márquez's fragmentation of time dissolves the historical ego constructed through memory and anticipation, echoing the Buddhist doctrine of non-self (anattā). Non-linear time thus functions not merely as a literary technique, but as an ontological strategy that liberates consciousness from rigid cognitive structures. In this sense, Márquez's magical realism approaches the wisdom of the Middle Way: using the disintegration of temporal order to reveal a reality grounded in mindfulness, dependent origination, and non-attachment.

Table 1 Comparison of temporal milestones and anachronic structures under the Middle Way perspective

Work	Chronological Cycle/Milestones	Actual Narrative Sequence	Technique
Montiel's Widow	(1) Tyranny prevails → (2) Montiel grows wealthy → (3) Montiel dies → (4) The widow lives in solitude.	Continuous interleaving: The scene of the widow at milestone (4) is interrupted by memory fragments of (1) and (2).	Flashback
The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow	(1) Marriage → (2) Travel to Paris → (3) Nena scratches her finger → (4) Nena dies	Starts from milestones (3) and (4) in the very first	Prolepsis

Work	Chronological Cycle/Milestones	Actual Narrative Sequence	Technique
	→ (5) Billy receives the news.	sentences, then returns to (1) and concludes at (5).	
Nabo	(1) Gramophone music → (2) 15 years of waiting → (3) Appearance of the angels.	Milestones (1), (2), and (3) are blended; it is impossible to distinguish between the present reality and Nabo's hallucinations.	Second-level anachronies
The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World	(1) Corpse washes ashore → (2) Villagers dress the body → (3) The glorious future of the village.	Jumps from milestone (1) to the vision of (3) through the villagers' imagination, then returns to (2).	Prolepsis

Through comparison, it is evident that Márquez often chooses to begin his texts at a moment of conclusion or a major chronological event. When the narrative sequence no longer depends on actual chronology, time loses its power to bind the characters. Genette (1980) asserts that these forms of anachrony create a "temporal autonomy of the narrative". In the short stories of G.G. Márquez, this autonomy is synonymous with declaring linear time to be merely an illusion. When the temporal axis is fractured, the character's historical self also dissolves. There is no longer a "self" traveling from point A to point B, but only moments of simultaneous existence. Temporal anachrony serves as an artistic tool to practice the Middle Way, abandoning the view that time is a rigid container of reality. Instead, through deconstructive narrative, reality is revealed as a dependently arisen whole where all temporal fragments are interpenetrating and interacting, with none existing independently or inherently. The way Márquez shuffles these temporal milestones forces the reader to relinquish the habit of categorizing reality, thereby reaching a state of detachment from views, without clinging to any predetermined temporal order. Genette refers to this phenomenon as a violation of "the sacred frontier between two worlds". When Márquez allows the narrator to perceive and penetrate the character's timeline as a co-present entity, he abolishes the isolation of temporal levels. This invasion proves the lack of inherent nature in temporal layers. The narrator's time and the character's time possess no self-contained borders; they interpenetrate and interact with one another. Thus, non-linear time in Márquez is essentially a totality where every fragment contains the others. If anachrony fractures the temporal axis in terms of order, then repetition deconstructs time in terms of frequency. Gérard Genette (1980) defines iterative narrative as: "narrating one time what

happened n times". In Márquez's literature, this technique is not merely for summarization but is a scientific strategy to eliminate the uniqueness and isolation of historical events.

Table 2 Narrative models and temporal transformation

Analysis Level	Definition	Operational Model	Deconstruction Value
Event	Serves as temporal milestones; points marking chronological history.	**Cyclical Repetition**: Events repeated over n days. **Conventional Narrative**: 1 Event →1 Incident (Time flows). **Márquez's Narrative**: 1 Event → n Incidents (Time stands still).	**Neutralizing temporal milestones.** When 15 years are reduced to a single milestone, time is no longer a yardstick.
Occurrence/ Action	The active behaviors and sequence of the character's activities.	**Temporal Absorption**: Time is swallowed by the present. Oc1=...=.... Oc2=...=... Ocn....	**Abolishing distinctiveness.** Individual actions lose their separation.

In traditional narrative, each incident is considered an independent entity with an inherent nature (for example: event X occurs on day A). In conventional thinking, time is understood as a succession of sequential events (Day 1 → Day 2). In the work *Macrostructures* (1980), Van Dijk defines incidents and events based on state change and teleology: "Actions are a subclass of events, viz., those events that are brought about by a conscious agent... An event is a change of state in some possible world, at some time point or time interval" (Van Dijk, 1980, p.113-115). An occurrence (action) is the smallest unit, representing the movement of a character. In Márquez's stories, incidents such as Nabo listening to music or the child picking flowers are performed times. However, instead of creating progression, these incidents are dissolved due to their absolute repetition. An event represents a turning point and a temporal milestone; it is the "node" marking a change in the state of reality. A conventional sequence of occurrences leads to an event (the result). Yet, Márquez utilizes Genette's compression technique to lock thousands of occurrences into a single event, such as a 15-year timeframe. According to discourse structure, when repeated occurrences no longer produce any state transformation for the event, the chronological axis becomes paralyzed. The 'suffocation' of the temporal milestone under the pressure of repetitive action is the technique of deconstructing the inherent nature of time. This

leads reality away from the governance of linear causal logic, guiding characters into the present phenomenon of the Middle Way, where time is no longer a measure of ego-change but an eternal state of equanimity. Simultaneously, G.G. Márquez compresses thousands of repeated occurrences into a single event, demonstrating that the author has stripped time of its "quantitative" attribute. Time transforms from a line into a point. When the temporal milestone is no longer used to distinguish the difference between actions, it loses its independent existence; it becomes merely an empty frame. Furthermore, G.G. Márquez frequently employs adverbs of frequency combined with the imperfect tense to create segments of suspended time. By grouping the times Nabo waits into a single narrative sentence: "For fifteen years, Nabo stood there...", Márquez annihilates the distinction between the first day and the five-thousandth day. The boundaries between *ksanas* (moments) are blurred. When the temporal amplitude between events is eliminated, the reader no longer perceives the flow of chronological time but only an immutable state of existence. Typically, the human ego is built through distinct incidents (accumulating experience); if a character performs ten different actions in ten days, they possess a history. If they perform one action ten thousand times within the same event milestone, they have no history. When G.G. Márquez turns every day into a single day through repetition, he dissolves the character's historical self. This shatters the kinetic structure of time; time no longer flows but simply *is*. This is the state of equanimity in the Middle Way a reality where there is no accumulation of the past nor the propulsion of the future. If every moment is identical, then the self of today is no different from the self of ten years ago. Lacking a foothold in temporal change to affirm themselves, the character (and the reader) is pushed into the equanimity of the present phenomenon. As in the Bhaddekaratta Sutta, when "the past is not followed" because it repeats in the present, consciousness achieves liberation within the loop. Márquez does not narrate incidents; he narrates the rhythm of the event. Utilizing repetition allows him to construct fixed worlds where time is not an enemy that robs life, but an eternal loop where life and death are co-present. This is how he employs Genette's modern narrative techniques to express the notion of a dependently arisen reality, where elements repeat endlessly to maintain the equilibrium of the Middle Way.

Discussion

This study set out to examine the phenomenon of fragmented time in Gabriel García Márquez's short stories through the philosophical lens of the Buddhist Middle Way (Majjhima Paṭipadā) as articulated in the Majjhima Nikāya. The findings demonstrate that Márquez's disruption of linear temporality is not merely a stylistic hallmark of magical realism but functions as a deeper ontological inquiry into the nature of reality, attachment, and perception. When read alongside Middle Way philosophy, fragmented time emerges as a narrative manifestation of non-dual existence, where conventional distinctions between past, present, and future collapse.

Fragmented Time and the Rejection of Temporal Extremes

One of the central objectives of this research was to determine how Márquez's narrative structures resonate with the Middle Way's rejection of extremes. The analysis indicates that Márquez avoids both strict chronological determinism and complete temporal chaos. Instead, his stories frequently oscillate between recurrence, suspension, and inversion of time, creating what Ricoeur (1984) describes as a "refigured temporality" that resists linear progression. From the Middle Way perspective, this narrative stance parallels the Buddhist rejection of eternalism (the belief in fixed, enduring entities) and annihilationism (the belief in total discontinuity), both of which are explicitly critiqued in the Majjhima Nikāya. By refusing to anchor meaning in a single temporal point, Márquez's fragmented time aligns with the Middle Way's emphasis on dependent arising (paṭiccasamuppāda), where phenomena exist only in relation to conditions rather than as isolated absolutes. This finding supports previous literary interpretations that view Márquez's temporality as cyclical or mythical (Zamora & Faris, 1995), while extending them by framing non-linearity as a philosophical middle position rather than a purely cultural or mythic device.

Fragmentation, Clinging, and Narrative Bottlenecks

Another key finding concerns the interpretation of temporal "bottlenecks" moments where narrative time stalls, repeats, or folds back upon itself. From a Buddhist perspective, these disruptions can be understood as consequences of upādāna (clinging). The research suggests that characters, communities, and even narrative voices in Márquez's stories cling to particular memories, traumas, or expectations of the future, resulting in temporal fragmentation. This reading resonates with Buddhist psychological theory, where suffering (dukkha) arises not from phenomena themselves but from attachment to them (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995). In Márquez's fiction, time becomes distorted precisely when characters attempt to fix meaning within a specific temporal frame. This insight deepens socio-historical readings of Márquez that link temporal repetition to Latin America's cycles of violence and colonial trauma (Sommer, 1984), by suggesting that such cycles persist through collective clinging to unresolved pasts rather than through historical inevitability alone.

Emptiness (Suññatā) and the Deconstruction of Narrative Time

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study lies in its interpretation of fragmented time through the concept of suññatā (emptiness). The findings indicate that Márquez's deconstructive narrative techniques implicitly gesture toward the emptiness of time as an inherent entity. Past, present, and future in his stories are shown to be mutually conditioning and ultimately inseparable, echoing the Middle Way understanding that all phenomena are empty of independent essence. This interpretation complements

poststructuralist readings of Márquez that emphasize indeterminacy and narrative instability (Foucault, 1970; Derrida, 1978), while offering a non-Western philosophical grounding for these observations. Rather than viewing temporal fragmentation as a sign of narrative breakdown, the Middle Way framework reveals it as an invitation to awaken from dualistic thinking. In this sense, reading Márquez becomes an experiential process akin to insight (vipassanā), where readers are led to recognize the constructed nature of temporal perception itself.

Conclusion

This study has examined the phenomenon of non-linear and fragmented temporality in the short stories of Gabriel García Márquez through the philosophical lens of the Middle Way (Majjhima Paṭipadā) as articulated in the Majjhima Nikāya. The findings demonstrate that temporal disruption in Márquez's fiction is not merely a narrative technique characteristic of magical realism, but an ontological strategy that interrogates deeply rooted assumptions about time, selfhood, and existence. By applying Early Buddhist concepts such as dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda), clinging (upādāna), non-self (anattā), and emptiness (suññatā), this research reveals a structural and philosophical resonance between Márquez's fragmented narrative time and the Middle Way's rejection of both eternalism and annihilationism. Temporal fragmentation in these short stories functions as a middle position that dismantles linear causality without collapsing into nihilistic discontinuity. In doing so, Márquez's narratives create spaces where past, present, and future interpenetrate, mirroring the Buddhist understanding of time as a dependently arisen and conceptually constructed phenomenon. The study further argues that narrative "bottlenecks" and temporal stasis in Márquez's fiction symbolically arise from attachment to memory, trauma, and anticipation. Liberation—both for characters and readers—emerges when linear time is no longer grasped as an object of possession. This insight reframes Márquez's magical realism as an implicit critique of temporal reification and aligns his narrative practice with the Middle Way's emphasis on non-clinging and direct experiential awareness.

Overall, this research establishes a new hermeneutic framework that bridges Latin American literary studies and Buddhist philosophy. It demonstrates that Buddhist thought can function not only as a thematic reference but as a rigorous critical methodology capable of illuminating modern narrative forms. By transcending conventional Western theoretical models, this study contributes to global literary criticism and affirms the universal relevance of non-dual philosophical perspectives in interpreting world literature.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Implementation

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that literary education—particularly at the university level—adopt interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches when teaching texts characterized by non-linear temporality. Integrating the philosophical principles of the Middle Way into the analysis of magical realism and postmodern literature can help students move beyond binary interpretations such as realism versus fantasy, history versus myth, or past versus present.

In practical terms, instructors may incorporate comparative philosophical readings alongside literary texts, encouraging students to reflect on how narrative structures shape perception, identity, and ethical awareness. This approach fosters multidimensional thinking, enhances interpretive flexibility, and promotes mindfulness toward the act of reading itself. Such pedagogical applications are especially relevant in courses on world literature, comparative literature, and cultural studies, where diverse epistemologies intersect.

Additionally, this framework may serve as a model for curriculum innovation by demonstrating how Eastern philosophical traditions can productively engage with Western literary forms without reducing either to cultural ornamentation or allegory.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research may extend this analytical framework to Gabriel García Márquez's longer works, particularly One Hundred Years of Solitude and The Autumn of the Patriarch, where cyclical and stagnant temporal structures operate on a broader historical and political scale. Comparative studies could also explore non-linear temporality in other Latin American writers or global literary traditions that engage with mythic, cyclical, or fragmented time.

Further interdisciplinary research may integrate Buddhist temporality with cognitive narratology, reader-response theory, or phenomenology to examine how readers experience non-linear time at the level of consciousness. Comparative philosophical studies involving Buddhist temporal theory and indigenous cosmologies, Daoist thought, or process philosophy may also deepen understanding of non-dual temporality across cultures. Such inquiries would expand the scope of Buddhist literary criticism and contribute to a more pluralistic global humanities discourse.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests associated with this research. The study was conducted solely for academic purposes and was not influenced by any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as a conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

This research is a theoretical and interpretive study based exclusively on published literary texts and canonical philosophical sources. It does not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures. As such, no ethical approval was required. All sources have been appropriately cited, and scholarly integrity has been maintained throughout the research process.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest is defined as any financial, professional, or personal relationship that could inappropriately influence or bias the research process, interpretation, or presentation of findings. In accordance with academic publishing standards, the author affirms that no such conflicts exist in relation to this study.

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