



20 - 1 Jan - Mar 2026

Published on 14, Jan - Mar 2026

ISSN:2320-4842 (P) 3049-2688 (O)

**Refining the Relationship between Reality and Infinity through
the Magical Realistic Vision of Jorge Luis Borges’
“The Lottery in the Babylon” and “The Zahir”**

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Abstract

Jorge Luis Borges’ works frequently explore the liminal space between reality and infinity by creating a unique tapestry of philosophical inquiry through the lens of magical realism. This article examines how Jorge Luis Borges negotiates the interplay of the real and the infinite in “The Lottery in Babylon” and “The Zahir”. Jorge Luis Borges uses the framework of magical realism not merely as a stylistic device but as a philosophical medium to interrogate human perception, destiny, and the metaphysical nature of human existence. This article emphasizes Jorge Luis Borges’ conceptualization of reality as a mutable construct and the infinity as a persistent medium of constructing the story, focusing on the intricate balance between determinism and chance in human experience.

Keywords: Magical Realism, Reality, Infinity, Metaphysical Nature, Destiny, Human Existence and Determinism.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) stands as one of the most inventive writers in world literature and he is renowned for fusing philosophical inquiry with fantastic narrative. His works are grounded in the magical realist mode which merges the ordinary with the extraordinary to expose deeper truths about existence. Jorge Luis Borges’s vision transforms reality into a labyrinth of infinite interpretations. “The Lottery in Babylon” (1941) and “The Zahir” (1949) explore his ability to depict the infinite as both a metaphysical idea and a lived experience. In both tales, Jorge Luis Borges refines the relationship between reality and infinity through the use of allegory, paradox and symbolic realism.

The Magical realism in Jorge Luis Borges’ works does not depend on supernatural spectacles but rather on the intellectual wonder of the infinite. Jorge Luis Borges’s realism accommodates the irrational within the rational and the metaphysical within the mundane. His stories are set in ordinary contexts, but governed by laws of chance and infinity. Jorge Luis Borges’s narrative method dissolves the distinction between reality and imagination by demonstrating that the miraculous may be inherent in thought itself. The seamless interweaving of myth, philosophy, and

logic becomes a symbol of his magical realist vision. Jorge Luis Borges redefines the perception of truth, not as a stable entity but as a fluid and infinite process.

In Jorge Luis Borges' "The Lottery in Babylon", lottery is portrayed as a game of infinite chances. The lottery is depicted as a god as it has control over human beings. There is no fixed outcome of the lottery that reflects the paths of labyrinths forking into different paths. The infinity of lottery lies within the infinite divisions of time which is equated with Zeno's paradox, where Achilles can never catch the tortoise in the race as the distance can be divided infinitely. This is described as:

In reality, the number of drawings is infinite. No decision is final; all branch into others. The ignorant assume that infinite drawings require infinite time; actually, all that is required is that time be infinitely subdivisible, as in the famous parable of the Race with the Tortoise (CF 105).

"The Lottery in Babylon" explores the evolution of a game of chance into an omnipotent system that governs every aspect of human life. The things that begins as entertainment transforms into a vast metaphysical structure that determines the destiny of an entire civilization. The Company is an anonymous and invisible authority that embodies the idea of infinite order concealed within chaos. Jorge Luis Borges uses this allegory to question whether reality itself is subject to random or divine regulation. The blurring of human and metaphysical agency illustrates how reality becomes an infinite pattern of possibilities.

The magical realism technique of any story lies in its rational acceptance of the irrational. The narrator reports the strange system with bureaucratic precision by treating the miraculous as commonplace. This ironic tone creates an atmosphere in which infinity operates within daily existence. Jorge Luis Borges suggests that lottery is a form of reality, which has an

infinite network of unpredictable outcome and it symbolises the philosophical labyrinth where free will and fate are indistinguishable. Thus, "The Lottery in Babylon" transforms the idea of chance into a metaphor for infinite reality.

"The Zahir" is also a masterpiece of Jorge Luis Borges's magical realist vision, centers on an ordinary coin that becomes a symbol of infinity. The protagonist's growing obsession with the coin transforms his consciousness and perception of the world. The Zahir means "the visible" or "the apparent" in Arabic. The Zahir is an object that occupies the mind until all else fades into oblivion. Jorge Luis Borges turns this simple event into a metaphysical parable about fixation, reality and transcendence.

In "Zahir", the ordinary coin is claimed to be extraordinary by the author and the story is narrated in the way that the Zahir exist in this universe. The author thinks of historical and mythological characters when he looks at the coin for the first time. He thinks of Charon's signifying death and passage between the worlds and he also thinks of Belisarius' alms reflecting downfall of the human beings. The thought of Juda's thirty pieces of silver reflects betrayal and guilt. The sensual temptation is aroused by the thought of the drachmas of the courtesan Lais and the ancient coin of the Ephesian sleeper symbolizes resurrection, while the enchanted coins of the 1001 Nights that turn into paper reveal the deceptive nature of appearances. The author describes the act of remembering the ancient and mythological aspects after looking at the coin in the following way:

I was given the Zahir; I looked at it for an instant, then walked outside into the street, perhaps with the beginnings of a fever. The thought struck me that there is no coin that is not the symbol of all the coins that shine endlessly down throughout history and fable. I thought of Charon's obolus; the alms that Bel-

isarius went about begging for; Juda's thirty pieces of silver; the drachmas of the courtesan Lais; the ancient coin preferred by one of the Ephesian sleepers; the bright coins of the wizard in the *1001Nights*, which turned into disks of paper (CF 244).

Jorge Luis Borges reveals the paradox of the infinite through his obsession over the coin. The coin has endless meaning within itself. The Zahir becomes a gateway to the infinite, reflecting Jorge Luis Borges' conviction that reality is not external but a construct of perception. The story fuses psychological realism with metaphysical speculation and it depicts the ways in which human consciousness itself is capable of infinite expansion. Jorge Luis Borges' narrative technique of mixing personal anecdote with philosophical meditation turns the story into a magical mirror reflecting the boundless nature of thought.

Both "The Lottery in Babylon" and "The Zahir" explore the intersection of the finite and the infinite, where reality dissolves into abstraction. In "The Lottery," the infinite emerges through collective belief in chance; in "The Zahir," it manifests through individual obsession. Jorge Luis Borges refines the relationship by presenting the infinite as an internal human experience. His magical realism allows for the coexistence of logic and mystery, reason and wonder.

The philosophical concepts of Jorge Luis Borges' works appears to be drawn from idealistic concept of Berkeley and Schopenhauer, who viewed reality as a construct of perception and mind. The infinite is not outside human comprehension, but embedded within it. Both stories imply that to experience reality fully is to confront its infinite dimensions. Jorge Luis Borges's art transforms metaphysical abstraction into narrative form, making the philosophical tangible through symbolic storytelling. His magical realism becomes a method of philosophic revelation rather than mere aesthetic novelty.

Through "The Lottery in Babylon" and "The Zahir" Jorge Luis Borges refines the relationship between reality and infinity by portraying them as mutually defining forces. In both narratives, reality is not static but dynamic, where a continuous interplay between perception and the unknown happens. The infinite operates within human consciousness, shaping how one interprets the world. Jorge Luis Borges's magical realistic vision transcends conventional boundaries, offering a literary framework where reason and imagination coexist. Ultimately, his works depicts the search for reality is an infinite pursuit, and the mystery of boundless lie within the mundane.

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