**Author Details:**

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran.

jegrsalam@gmail.com

2. Assistant Professor, Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Marand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marand, Iran. (Corresponding Author)

maryam.ebadi80@gmail.com

3. Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran.

majidalavi@iaut.ac.ir

# Representation of War-Stricken Communities Dilemma: Reading *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* and *I Stared at the Night of the City* through Faris's Features of Magical Realism

Jegr Salam Hussein[1]; Maryam Ebadi Asayesh[2*]; Seyyed Majid Alavi Shooshtari[3]

**Abstract:** Thiis article sketches the application of Wendy B. Faris's primary features of narrative techniques in magical realist fiction in the selected novels *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* (1990) by the British novelist Louis de Bernières and *I Stared at the Night of the City* (2008) by Kurdish novelist Bakhtiyar Ali, while keeping an eye on Chanady's and Hegerfeldt's perspectives where relevant. The focus is on the authors' use of Faris's features; namely the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging-realms, irreducible elements and disruptions of time, space and identity, to depict their war-torn communities. These novelists have manipulated these characteristics from their diverse viewpoints. Despite their different cultural backgrounds and intellectual perspectives, both novelists attempt to convey a sense of reality by exploring the enigmatic nature of human behaviour and psychology, politics, and life in general. In this study, the researchers aim to elucidate the significance of these features in the selected novels to demonstrate the dilemma of war-stricken communities. Essentially, the researchers seek to unravel how these literary elements help in representing the complex and multifaceted nature of societies grappling with the impacts of conflict. The authors' manipulation of Faris's features becomes a lens through which they examine and articulate the intricate realities of war-stricken communities in their respective works.

## 1. Introduction

Louis de Bernières is a highly acclaimed contemporary British novelist, playwright, and poet. Born in London in 1954, he enlisted in the military at the age of 18, but left after just four months at Sandhurst. Following his graduation from the Victoria University of Manchester, he pursued a postgraduate degree in education at Leicester Polytechnic and later earned his MA from the University of London. Prior to his career as a writer, he worked in various professions, including landscape gardening, motorcycle messenger, and car mechanic. His first three novels, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* (1990), *Senor Vivo and the Coca Lord* (1991), and *The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman* (1992), each of which was heavily influenced by South American literature, particularly magical realism, were written while he was also teaching English in Colombia. He is one of the most profiled British contemporary writers and has earned numerous national and international awards. Currently, he resides in Norfolk, England (British Council).

*The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* is a novel that is set in an unknown Latin American country. "The characters, who are involved in political intrigue, assassinations, kidnaps and utopianism, are largely ciphers, but the exuberant nature of the narrative, and its frequent switches between the comic and the serious, show that this early work had a maturity unexpected in a first novel" (Spence). It revolves around the series of incidents when Doña Constanza frightens local farmers in an attempt to divert a river to provide water for her swimming pool. From these trivial incidents, the novel presents serious political issues with a blending of magical events. The novel incorporates cardinal magical realist elements, including a plague of cats, the resurrection of the dead, characters with supernatural powers, and environmental magical events. These elements are used to illustrate the political crisis in the country through the characters' interactions. The comic and the serious amalgamation of the stories show the maturity of the novelist's artistic merit. De Bernières continued with the same tone for his next two novels in the trilogy. Nick Rennison believes that de Bernières's trilogy is constructed in a way that though incidents and actions are foregrounded beneath them, the conflict between good and evil glitters, and finally the force of goodness wins (40). In addition to his trilogy, de Bernières has penned other notable works, including *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994), *Red Dog* (2001), and *Birds Without Wings* (2004).

Bakhtiyar Ali Muhammad, a Kurdish author, literary critic, essayist, poet, novelist, and most recently, dramatist, is the most widely-read Kurdish writer. In the mid-1990s, he made a notable shift from being primarily a poet and essayist to emerging as a significant novelist. He has written and published thirteen novels, some poetry and essay collections, and most recently, a play. Since the middle of the 1990s, Mr. Ali has resided in Germany, primarily in Frankfurt, Cologne, and most recently, Bonn. In his novels, he has covered a wide range of topics, including the 1988 Saddam-era; the Anfal extermination campaign, the interaction between academics and authority, and other philosophical issues. He frequently modifies or adapts Western philosophical ideas to fit his context when interpreting a problem in Kurdish society.

In 2016, his novel, *Ghezelnus u Baxekani Xeyal* ("Ghazalnus and the Gardens of Imagination"), was published in English under the title *I Stared at the Night of the City*. It was translated by London-based journalist and translator Kareem Abdulrahman and is the first Kurdish-language novel to be published in English (Keating). The novel is a bulky book with about 140 characters and various themes. It consists of 73 sections that cover 542 pages. The novelist employs a range of modern and postmodern techniques to tell the stories, and the sections are loosely related that are connected rhizomatically[1]. The story begins almost from the end. To his credit, Ali has a rich portfolio. His novels fall under the category of magical realism, and his major novels include *Mergî Taqaney Diwem* (The Death of the Second Only Child) (1997), *.Êwarey Perwane* (Parwana's Evening) (1998), *The Last Pomegranate Tree* (2002), *Şary Mosîqare Spiyekan* (The City of the White Musicians) (2006), *Cemşîd Xany Mamim: Ke Hemîşe Ba Legel Xoyda Deybird* (My Uncle Jamshid Khan: Whom the Wind was Always Taking) (2010), *Keştî Firiştekan – Kiteby Yekem* (The Angels' Ship – Book One) (2012), *Dagîrkirdinî tarîkî* (Conquering darkness) (2020), and *Bandar Faili* (2022).

*I Stared at the Night of the City* is a bulky novel. The protagonist of the book is Ghazalnus, a poet whose worldview is in sharp opposition to that of the Baron of Imagination, a powerful politician. The Baron seeks the poets of the town and intellectuals for assistance in designing his project as part of his own strategy to build a lovely neighbourhood; a mini-paradise. Meanwhile, a group of like-minded friends are led by the poet on an expedition to

---

[1] Originally the term 'rhizome' is derived from botany. The idea of the rhizome was initially formulated and applied to literature in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature," published in French in 1975 and later translated into English in 1986.

locate the bodies of two lovers who were murdered by the authorities. The heroes ultimately decide to compile a book memorializing those who lost their lives following the 1991 uprising. Three primary authors, Ghazalnus, Majid-i Gul Solav, and Trifa, contribute to it, each giving it a distinct title.

*The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* and *I Stared at the Night of the City* by contemporary novelists; Louis de Bernières from England and Bakhtiyar Ali from the Kurdistan region of Iraq respectively utilize the techniques of magical realism to depict the worries and anxieties of their authors in the war-stricken communities. As such, these two novels have been selected for comparison and analysis due to their similarities, including their use of magical realism, the political climate of their respective countries, or implied countries, and other factors.

## 2. Literature review

Once, in his work "On the Marvelous Real in America", Carpentier sought to establish that magical realism was a purely Latin American literary genre. However, subsequent developments in the genre have proven him incorrect. Today, magical realism is a technique employed by writers across the world, with each adding their own cultural and social nuances. Erik Camayd-Freixas has even declared that magical realism is one of the most compelling techniques of fiction writing in the world (583). As a result, there is a vast array of literature, research papers, and articles on the subject, each approaching it from a unique perspective. Due to the diverse vein of the literary schools, movements and techniques encapsulated within the mode, it is dealt with from different angles and perspectives. Each critic tries to approach the mode from one of the sides of the spectrum.

*Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative (2004)* by Wendy B. Faris is one of the most cited books in the field, and it also gives a valuable dictionary of terminologies in the sphere. It investigates magical realism as the most important trend in contemporary international fiction, defines its characteristics and narrative techniques, and suggests a new theory to explain its significance. Additionally, *Patriarchy and Power in Magical Realism* (2017) by Maryam Ebadi Asayesh presents a comprehensive chronological development of the mode and is a valuable resource for the present study as it is one of the rare works to consider writers from both the East and West. *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy (1985)* by Amaryll B. Chanady sheds light on the concept of magical realism and fantastic literature. Another

book, *Magic(al) Realism (2004)* by Maggie Ann Bowers explores the concepts of 'magic', 'magical' and 'marvellous' realism and the distinctions between the terms. The author also explores the relationship of magic(al) realism with other artistic movements, such as surrealism, and provides a historical overview of the geographical, cultural, and political contexts within which the genre has developed. *Traumatic Experience and Repressed Memory in Magical Realist Novels: Speaking the Unspeakable* (2020) by Md Abu Shahid Abdullah examines the intimate bond between the literary representation of historical trauma and the alternative narrative form of magical realism, and the writer accentuates the importance of memory, empathy, and imagination. Aghnia Kamilia Ulfa, in an article, utilizes Faris's features and the theory of adolescent psychology developed by Dr. Arthur T. Jersild to analyze Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls*. The author portrays the psychological connection between the two main characters in the novel. Although the majority of writers make references to the histro-political context of the mode, none of the studies concentrates on the topic of the present study.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

The authors Amaryll B. Chanady, Wendy B. Faris, and Anne C. Hegerfeldt have made a significant contribution to the cataloguing of the essential characteristics of magical realist texts. In their respective works, Chanady, in *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* (1985), compares fantastic literature with magical realism and highlights three literary elements: the natural and the supernatural, antinomy, and authorial reticence. Similarly, in *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004), Faris identifies five characteristics of magical realist texts: the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity. Warnes believes that "Faris's approach shows a full appreciation of the necessity of starting with a clear and unambiguous definition of magical realism" (5). In comparison to Chanady and Faris, Hegerfeldt, in her book *Lies that Tell the Truth* (2005), identifies five additional features of magical realism: the fusion of realistic and fantastic elements, matter-of-factness, the literalization of metaphor, fantastic reality, and the production of knowledge. Asayesh contends that the features Faris identifies seem to be an extended version of Chanady's due to their considerable overlap, as the coexistence of the natural and the supernatural mirrors Faris's irreducible element and the phenomenal world. Furthermore, the antinomy can be paralleled by her merging-realms and the authorial

reticence to her unsettling doubts (46). Although Hegerfeldt's elements have their roots in the two critics' elements mentioned above, the new and valuable element that she introduces is 'the production of knowledge'.

The current investigation examines the application of magical realist techniques in two specified novels, intending to demonstrate the degree to which their authors adhered to the principles of magical realist fiction. To accomplish this, the study concentrates on the primary features of narrative techniques in the selected novels, as delineated by Faris. Rooted in Chanady's *Magical Realism and the Fantastic*, Faris outlines five defining traits of magical realist texts: the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging-realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity. The researchers in the present study concentrate on Faris' features to distinguish magical realism from its related genres and to illustrate the predominance of the mode in portraying the dilemma of war-stricken communities.

## 4. Methodology

The researcher employs a comparative approach within the intercultural domain to examine the significance of Faris's features in the selected novels. The goal is to deepen comprehension of diverse cultures and literary traditions, fostering cultural exchange and dialogue between these two works through the lens of magical realism. In our contemporary global society, characterized by the intersection and intermingling of languages, literatures, and cultures, it becomes essential to broaden our perspective and perceive the world in a more comprehensive manner. This study strives to contribute to the development of global citizenship by cultivating appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures. Despite the disparate cultural backgrounds of the novelists, both aim to portray a sense of reality by delving into the mysterious aspects of human behavior, politics, and life in general. While they share common ground, their distinct focuses and methodologies also come to the forefront.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. Irreducible Element

The first primary characteristic of magical realism is the presence of an "irreducible element" that refers to the supernatural or magical aspect of the oxymoronic formula. According to Faris, a magical realist text encompasses this "irreducible element," which is "something we

cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them" ("Scheherazade's Children" 167) in the manner that Western empirical discourse has developed them. As a result, the reader finds it challenging to gather proof to address doubts regarding the veracity of events and characters in these fictions. The narrative voice describes unusual, magical experiences in the same manner that regular, everyday events are described. These events are not typically verifiable through sensational perception. Events indicate that, according to the text, magical occurrences "actually" take place (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments*, 7). This inability to decipher the magical events scientifically prepares the ground for the emergence of the other elements too.

From Kluwick's perspective, the supernatural does not harmoniously blend with the natural world; rather, it is seen as a disturbance of reason and an affront to reason and logic. But as it implies that the remarkable presence of the aura is irreducibly magical, the fact that its existence must be granted despite all rational objections simply helps to enhance the reader's acceptance of the irrational (23). Thus, as a disturbance of his reason, in WDENP, Antoine writes to his mother in France: "I said to Pedro, 'So was my wife's cancer natural, or are you going to tell me it was caused by evil spirits?'/ "He replied very gravely, 'If you think for a minute, everything is natural, and everything is spirits" (192). This mirrors Bakhtiyar Ali's statement that inside every reality, there are several dimensions of the unreal. Inside each real city, there are many imaginative cities, and behind every place, there are plenty of unseen dimensions (*Like the Birds* 61). Consequently, for Pedro, the coexistence of magical and real incidences is a common phenomenon, but for Antoine, it is not. Antoine is in conflict with his rational parameters. He cannot decipher the magical incidents rationally; therefore, he is not able to welcome them easily.

Various irreducible incidents in *WDENP* contribute to the magical side of the novel. The first ten chapters are manipulated to create a vast, realistic arena, and then the irreducible elements are injected. Even within the course of the novel, some chapters are strategically presented to reinforce the reader's belief in accepting the events. For example, chapters 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, and 19 lack any clear magical incidents, while chapters 10, 11, 14, 17, and 20 contain such events. From chapter 29 onward, almost all the chapters are designed to be one realistic, and one magical realistic. Therefore, de Bernoeries incorporates extensive irreducible elements, from superstitions and cultural beliefs to magical incidents. The types vary, but the most important examples are the spirits (Parlanchina and Federico),

resurrected people (the Spanish army and their slaves), the plague of cats and laughter, mirror spirits, magic, and so on. These various types of elements contribute to the rich tapestry of the novel. The first clear irreducible element is narrated when the people want to know the foundation date of their community to set the anniversary date. The narrator declares that twenty years before the date had been consulted to establish the date. With some magical ceremony, a brujo finally decided that "the pueblo was three hundred and twenty-one years old" (68). From this denotation on, the novelist masterfully blends both magical and real events inseparably.

In an irreducible incident, Parlanchina runs after her cat, and she steps on a mine that Aurelio refers to as "sudden-death-by-thunder" and she dies. And then, "Aurelio bent down and in her ear he whispered to her her real name. When he moved upright, Parlanchina was lying with her eyes wide open, astounded at her own death" (100). After passing away, Parlanchina transforms into a spirit and communicates with the living via her father, Aurelio. In essence, Parlanchina, like a shaman, swings between the two worlds.

Federico dreams one night of the stunning wild girl who lives in the forest and has huge brown eyes and black hair that reaches her waist (179). He sets out to search for her in the jungle, and he is tragically killed by a big cat, which may have been a tiger. He dies simply as if he had transformed through a dream into another world. When he dies, he realizes that the girl of his dreams is Parlanchina. Aurelio asks her if she was responsible for Federico's death, to which she replies: "'Gwubba,' he accused her, 'did you lead him to death, because you love him?'/ 'No, Papacito,' she said. 'I tried to prevent him. But some things one cannot prevent. He came to his death because he loved me'" (182). In this magical incident, Aurelio takes on a shamanic role as someone who can transcend between the two worlds. He possesses the potential to perceive the two ends of existence's spectrum, much like a magical realist writer who can play on the cords of magic and reality.

Another irreducible element is presented that cannot be comprehended by means of cause and effect. When Capitan Rojas finds Maria, General Fuerte's donkey, lying in the stable, she gives birth to "the four little black bundles of fur ... The Capitan watched, his military mind unable to believe the evidence of his senses" (211). Thus, the captain, as the common reader, is unable to interpret the magical birth of the cats from a donkey within his rationalistic perspective, and yet the magical event is there; in front of him. This underscores the functioning of the oxymoronic formula in a magical realist text.

In Ali's work, diverse magical abilities and occurrences are prevalent, as compared to the other novel under consideration. The presentation of irreducible elements is much more widespread than in the other selected novel on the levels of quantity and quality. They vary from magical sexual intercourse that produces magical and imaginative children, to people with magical abilities. For example, Majid-i Gul Solave, who later in the novel gets the nickname of the Imaginary Magellan, conducts journeys for the blind children through imagination and there are people with magical senses like Darsim Tahir. Therefore, Ali works on grand scales of magical people and events.

One of the cardinal characters with a magical sense of sniffing out buried dead bodies is Darsim Tahir. Majid narrates Darsim's magical ability when they try to find Murad Jamil's body. He comments that "after a half-hour walk, Darsim, like a well-trained dog, started sniffing the earth … He paused his sniffing from time to time and, as if gazing at a huge map in his mind … he started digging … Two workers shovelling dirt could not have kept up with him" (15). The majority of the characters; with magical abilities, have lost something special in their lives, and some have gained power from that loss. For example, Darsim finds out about his magical ability while searching for his dead father's body. Darsim resembles Grenouille in *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (1985), a novel that explores the theme of loss and its impact on an individual's life. Also, Trifa Yabahri obtains her magical power of carpet weaving after fleeing from her brutal brother. It is obvious that the characters with magical powers usually are those who have troubled social and political milieu.

Gazalnus is one of the major characters, and he is like the spinning point that the other characters move around. He is born out of an irreducible event. When Mulla Hajar falls in love with a married woman; Baharbanu, and his religious belief makes him feel guilty; he experiences an internal split between his desire and his belief. As a result, he becomes two people with two different identities magically: Mulla Hajar and Mulla Sukhta. Sukhta engages in magical lovemaking with the other imaginary part of Baharbanu, resulting in the birth of a real child, Gazalnus, with a line of ghazal inscribed on his chest. Therefore, when Gazalnus was born, "The Mulla paced frantically up and down near Baharbanu's home like a madman … but he kept it secret and no one heard anything about until he was on his deathbed" (25). The Mulla knows that the child is the outcome of their magical lovemaking. What he knows is concealed from the world of common people. Later in Chapter 9, before

he dies in exile in a hospital in Urmia, he writes a letter to Gazalnus to inform him about his magical birth. He claims that Gazalnus is the product of his imagination and he is his son. Ali does not consider the amalgamation nature of the magic-real oxymoron as two different poles but two sides of one coin that complete each other. Thus, it can be seen in his characterizations, such as Ghazalnus-Murad Jamil, and Mulla Hajar-Sukhta.

In chapter 47, Baron of Imagination orders the list of the Imaginative Creatures, and Tarkhunchi brings him the names of most of them:

> engineers who built imaginary towers, bridges and buildings; gardeners who could grow flowers and grasses by merely looking at the land; lovers who, when they walked through a street, impregnated its walls, stones and soulless pillars with the scent of love … shy vendors who counted among their wares items that were only useful for imaginary journeys; medicine-sellers whose powders conjured up dreams of flowers, the taste of sunshine and the texture of the moonlight … It was an endless list. (351)

The list of the Imaginative Creatures denotes that they are from different parts of society; and each bears a unique magical capability. This illustrates the effects of war and the troubled social formation in the war-stricken community. Ali thus develops a variety of types of magically gifted characters for *SNC* and each possesses a unique superpower. Magical abilities and events usually manifest in those characters that cannot have them in the real world. Often, it is because their war-stricken communities are in the midst of turmoil, and the circumstances of their societies do not let them find the magical abilities that every human being is capable of possessing.

## 5.2. The phenomenal world

The second characteristic of magical realism, the phenomenal world, is the other side of the oxymoronic formula. It is the opposite side of the irreducible element. Faris declares that the descriptions detail the strong presence of the phenomenal world. This realism in magical realism sets it apart from a lot of fantasy and allegory, and it manifests itself in various ways. By using a lot of detail, realistic descriptions often produce a fictional world that is similar to our own (*Ordinary Enchantments* 169). As a result of this prominent feature in magical realist novels, it is widely acknowledged that "there is no literature in the world that can completely disregard reality. Genuine literature is that which seamlessly swings between reality and fantasy" (Ali, *Like the Birds*, 98). No matter how imaginative the work is, still, there is a pillar of reality.

Magical realism creates an irreducible element that is illustrated in accordance with a detailed, realistic narrative. The reader is drawn away from the mysterious nature of the magic to concentrate on the realistic descriptions provided by magical realist writers, who provide a great deal of realistic, descriptive detail of the magical event. This takes the reader's attention away from the supposed "magical" events, even though this is generally the writer's main point and theme. According to Faris, the irreducible element originates from the realistic narrative details (*Ordinary Enchantments*, 74). Therefore, Chanady accurately asserts that a story cannot be considered magical realism solely based on the representation of both natural and supernatural elements. The extent of the manipulation of these elements plays a crucial role in determining the category to which a specific narrative belongs. If the narrative lacks a sufficient degree of realism, it may lean towards pure fantasy or fairy tales. Additionally, if there is no systematic code governing the supernatural, it may be viewed as absurd, out of context, or as a dream or hallucination within a realistic story (57). From this perspective, Ali writes, "In fact, I get benefit from reality; no writer of fiction is exempt from the benefits of reality; however, this manipulation of reality is generally used to illustrate the unrealistic vein of reality. It is to show that the unseen side of reality is tied to myth, imagination, and fantasy" (*Like the Birds* 50). As a result, the realistic or phenomenal component of a magical realist text is a decisive component of the oxymoronic formula.

In WDENP, de Bernieres skillfully blends elements of reality and fantasy by first establishing a firm realistic foundation through the use of various techniques. Throughout the first ten chapters, the writer gives enough realistic descriptions of the major characters and the setting to indulge the reader in the matter-of-fact style of the story. De Bernieres initially establishes a sense of realism in the novel by portraying the setting in a lifelike manner. As a result, these authentic descriptions construct a world that mirrors the reader's everyday life, thus priming the reader for the fantastical events to come.

He gives a detailed description of the incidents realistically and with the ingredients of the names of real literary figures like Don Quixote, Wittgenstein, and Shakespeare, politicians such as Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Lenin, countries like USA, Columbia, France, and Chile, books like *Tiran lo Blanc, Idle Days in Patagonia*, and *Vogue*, organizations as CIA, and OPIC, and so on. The author demonstrates exceptional skill in his multi-referential technique, using historical events to convey universal messages about the plight of humans

in tyrannical systems.  Therefore, he begins chapter 24 with real historical references. The narrator talks about Uruguay indirectly he wants to tell the reader that it resembles Chariguana. He says that Uruguay had a historically uneventful and monotonous political landscape dominated by two centrist parties, the Colorados and the Blancos, akin to Britain's Whigs and Tories. However, the differences between these parties were barely discernible. This political situation in Uruguay resembled that of Colombia, where Liberals and Conservatives similarly held sway (166). These factual references from Latin America and Britain serve an eminent deal to his depiction of a supposed war-stricken society.

Similar to de Berniere, Bakhtiyar Ali begins his novel, SNC, with a firm, realistic tone. The unknown narrator says, "In the beginning of the spring of 2006, a slender, dark-skinned man set out for a village in the rugged mountains of the North on a highly confidential mission with a specific task to perform" (1). Apart from the realistic tone, Ali presents the names of many realistic cities and countries such as Urmia, Iran, and Kuwait, writers like Heraclitus, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Plato and Sohrab Sepehri, books like *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Trial*, and *Othello*, films such as *Finding Neverland*, *Jumanji*, and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, actors as Johnny Depp,  Robin Williams, and Jessica Lange, mythological figures like the gods of Olympus,  Sisyphus, sphinx, and historical people like Magellan and Marco Polo. This multi-referential technique is to prepare the reader to embrace the irreducible elements as a matter-of-fact reality.

Indeed, the novelist incorporates actual historical events into the narrative such as the sales drop at the Niya factory between 1990 and 1992, during the period between the invasion of Kuwait and the establishment of the first government in Kurdistan region (113). This serves to further lend credence to the story and create a sense of realism. Furthermore, when the Baron of Imagination tries to show the Leader the danger of imagination in destroying the pillars of tyranny, he refers to several prominent poets. Therefore, he tells him, "Pushkin and Lermontov eroded the foundation of the Tsar's regime. First come the poets who denigrate the regimes, only later, well, along come other people to topple them with just a little push. There are clear examples among our own neighbours: the Shah of Iran fell the day he hanged Khosrow Golsorkhi" (495). To further reinforce the authenticity of his text, Ali draws upon historical events and influential poets who have played significant roles in shaping the world. By manipulating these events and poets, he highlights the power of imagination and its ability to inspire revolutions. The Baron of Imagination is indeed

correct in his assertion that the starting triggers of many revolutions can be found in the realm of human imagination. Through the use of true historical references, Ali prepares and convinces the reader to accept the magical occurrence presented in his text.

## 5.3. Unsettling doubts

The third characteristic that Faris suggests in magical realist texts is the experience of unsettling doubts on the part of the reader. She asserts that it is because the reader faces the presence of two opposite interpretations of the incidents (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17). At the heart of magical realism lies the dynamo of hesitation. Both of the selected novels foster the reader's doubt regarding their narratives in the manner of an absurdist literary work that keeps the reader in a state of menace.

In these novels, the narrator does not even try to explain the supernatural events, nor does he try to question how such things are conceivable. The narrator "naturalizes the supernatural to a point where we hardly see it as such" (Chanady 151). However, according to Hegerfeldt, "reader hesitation must be considered a built-in feature of magic realist fiction, a feature which, while not shared by the focalizers, nevertheless is encoded in the text" (88). Accordingly, Faris identifies the sources of hesitation in the magical realist texts. She identifies that the reader hesitates on three grounds. The first and most crucial is that the reader wonders whether the incidents that are narrated are possible and could be true. This primary hesitancy elevates the intensity of the two others, which are speculations about whether the writer really witnessed the phenomenon and "whether the introduction is fact or fiction" (*Ordinary Enchantments,* 19). Various types of hesitation can arise in magical realist texts, including those caused by the perceived irreducibility of the event, the childlike stance of the narrator, the untrustworthiness of the narrator or focalizer, and the literal instructions provided by the text.

On the other hand, Hegerfeldt provides some other strategies for creating unsettling doubts. She asserts that magical realist literature uses hesitancy in several ways. One technique is to emphasise the matter-of-factness of incidents, which obviously contradicts that. A second technique for making use of hesitation is to offer possibilities of recontextualization, only to rapidly withdraw them. In essence, these strategies don't stand out distinctively but frequently appear reciprocally (90–91). In Clifford's terms, making the familiar strange and the strange familiar (542) is a technique that intensifies hesitancy on the part of the reader.

In WDENP, the presence of doubt is limited to a specific instance where the narrator questions Federico's state of being between life and death. It is found only when the tiger kills Federico, and he is between life and death; the narrator shows his doubt, and that stimulates the reader's doubt too. The narrator declares, "Whether Federico opened his eyes and saw Parlanchina, or whether he saw her only in the dream of his death it is not possible to say" (181). Usually the doubt and hesitancy, on the part of the reader, is a prominent key to motivate him or her to search for the solution. From there, the engagement of interpretation starts. In SNC, after a long realistic description of the exposition of the novel, the hesitation begins when the narrator declares that "this book, which begins simply with Magellan's story, is in fact more intricate, more multi-dimensional and more interlinked than might at first appear" (19), and it is intensified with the miraculous birth of Ghazalnus, the main character. The inability to choose between two conflicting interpretations creates hesitation on the part of the reader. This hesitation troubles the safe zone of the human psyche. This startle in human consciousness leads him to contemplate, interpret, and be a part of the recreation of the text. Therefore, Hegerfeldt asserts that magical realism's hesitancy prompts attempts to reinterpret the conflicting parts to bring them together (97). This is apparent in the selected novels and leads the reader to make his or her own interpretation.

In SNC, the existence of unsettling doubts is evident on multiple levels. It can be observed in the multi-vocality of the narration, the doubt of a narrator or vocalizer, the identity shifting of some of the characters, the different world views of the characters, and so on. There are a variety of examples, including the belief of Ghazalnus that Hassan-i Tofan was not an assassin, but rather the product of his imagination's evil inclination (297), and later he doubts his own past life as an assassin. He suspects himself as well as Shibr (298). These examples effectively illustrate how doubt on the reader's part is essential in these novels. Reader doubt is crucial because it engages the reader in interpreting the text and actively participating in the process of deriving meaning from it. Additionally, in a society ravaged by war, the origins of atrocities are often open to interpretation, and the reader may be the one seeking to uncover a resolution.

When Majid asks Ghazalnus whether the Chinese Youth is his friend or not, he replies: "I couldn't tell you and the others anything at the outset, because I still struggle to understand it myself. I can't put a name to it. I have doubts about myself, about him" (356).

And when the Imaginary Magellan asks Ghazalnus about how he was a part of the Chinese Youth, and how he was a part of him, Ghazalnus says, "All my life, I've tried to solve the puzzle … I've asked that question for years, but never found an answer. No one can answer it" (361). Here, Ghazalnus's doubts mirror the reader's doubts, as this incident cannot be explained via a rationalistic parameter. Thus, in contrast to realist texts, where the reader can easily obtain answers by following the narration, the reader of these novels is constantly in a state of chaos and must interpret the events of the text. The reader remains skeptical throughout, unable to fully trust what they are reading.

## 5.4. Near-merging of two realms

The fourth suggested feature of magical realist texts is the near-merging of two realms, usually the realm of the living and dead, though it is substituted by some writers with a different formula. Faris asserts that the reader experiences the convergence of two worlds, arguing that the position of the mode is like a double-sided mirror that brings together the worlds. The fluid boundaries separating the realms are delineated solely to be transcended ("Scheherazade's Children", 172). The existence of these two categories of realms is crucial because as Ali writes in SNC, "truth oversimplifies things, makes them one-dimensional" (190). The existence of these two categories of realms is crucial because, as the selected authors assert, it is difficult to understand what atrocities occur in war-torn societies from a purely rationalistic perspective. By manipulating this technique, they have more freedom to illustrate their messages due to their fluctuations between the realms.

In WDENP, the narrator reveals that Aurelio has acquired the arts of communicating and mediating with spirits through the guidance of a paje (77). Aurelio subsequently informs Carmen, "I am an Indian. Spirits appear naturally to us. To your kind they must be summoned by spells, and the white man refuses to see them anyway" (136). Aurelio facilitates communication as a shaman between the two worlds: the world of the living and the world of spirits. When he goes back to the jungle to do some vital jobs, the narrator declares the thin distinction between the two worlds and he says, "When he felt that the veil between this world and the next was so thin that he could reach through it" (293). Aurelio experiences a shamanic position, and upon his return, he brings "four hundred Indians of both sexes and the troop of fifty Spanish soldiers in full armour" (295), who have been resurrected. As Faris observes, there is a "web of connections between the lands of the living and the dead"("Scheherazade's Children", 173), and the near-merging of two realms is at its

peak; the worlds of the dead and the living meet face-to-face. The novelist prompts the reader to reexamine history, pinpointing the moment in time that serves as the origin of today's turmoil.

In SNC, the near-merging realms are depicted artfully. Upon discovering Murad Jamil's body, Majid-i Gul Solav, subsequently referred to as the "Imaginary Magallan," asserts, "Today, I can swear to you that Hamlet didn't lie. He really did see the apparition of a dead man, and I saw Murad Jamil's apparition many times during those nights" (137). His sense of wonder and astonishment overwhelms him when he first comes across Murad Jamil's body, as it becomes evident later in the novel that Murad is an integral part of Ghazalnus's existence.

In another situation, when the old woman takes Ghazalnus to aid a sick woman, an irreducible incident happens. The sick woman gives birth to a child, and she informs him that she has been dead for several days (162). She tells him "I've given that child a dead person's milk for a week now, imaginary milk from my lifeless breasts, to make sure he survives" (163). She further asserts, "Take my pulse, Ghazalnus," and Ghazalnus wanders, "Khanim, you are a cold corpse" (163). The woman endeavours to provide evidence of her demise, as the magical realist employs realistic details to validate the magical events.

Postmodernism, in response to the perceived lack of spirituality in modern humans, seeks to revive it through forms such as magical realism, which aims to transcend the confines of reality. Therefore, Brady posits that postmodernism points us away from the the philosophical dogmatic perspectives towards spiritual perspective (183). This literary technique transcends the boundaries of reality, recognizing that humans are both physical and spiritual beings who cannot be fully realized without both. The near-merging realms allow readers to venture beyond the constraints of realism, offering a spiritual dimension that they can approach and engage with.

## 5.5 Time, space, and identity

The fifth feature of magical realist texts is the questioning of established ideas about time, space, and identity (Faris, "Scheherazade's Children", 173). Both selected novels exhibit a marked disturbance of these classical concepts. Therefore, the novelists approach the issues distinctively. They employ this feature differently to suit their literary merits. This fluidity is particularly appropriate for depicting the complexities of war-stricken communities, which cannot be pictured in linearity.

Magical realism, as a postmodern mode, diverges from the pattern of realistic novels, with a well-structured plot, characters, and theme. It manipulates nonlinear time sequences and, in doing so, challenges the notion of sacred time. The deviation of traditional course of time, provides more freedom to the writer and indulges the reader more actively to be a part of meaning making than the traditional style. Therefore, this type of fragmentation of time order is not only a mental process but also a practical issue in magical texts. It is presented as an actual phenomenon in both novels.

A rhizomatic plot is used in WDENP, so the incidents happen in non-chronological order. Some chapters are a story in themselves and are connected as fragmented parts of the whole story. In chapter 10, when a brujo is consulted about identifying a day to commemorate the establishment of their society, it is decided that "the pueblo was three hundred and twenty-one years old" (68). This sort of time resembles the declaration of the narrator in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* that "it rained for four years, eleven months, and two days" (154). Therefore the notion of sacred time is disrupted. This approach is followed by the novelists to demonstrate the universality of their novels, which transcend temporal constraints.

This disruption of sacred time is clearly seen in WDENP, when the narrator talks about the guerrilla leaders' campaign to raise funds for their revolution and their corruptions; the linearity of the time movement is disrupted as he declares that, "the second leader was to do exactly the same thing a year later, but at the time of which we speak he was unpleasantly present" (81). De Berniere utilizes this non-linear time sequence to grant himself a certain creative freedom in shaping the novel's plot while also captivating the reader with his intricate mental games.

Similarly, in SNC because of the multi-vocality of the narration, the chapters are presented in non-linear time sequences. For example, the novel begins with "In the beginning of the spring of 2006" (1), and the following chapters are narrated from different points in time: spring 2004, early winter 1992, March 1974, and so on. As a result, there is no Aristotelian unity of time, and the conventional idea of the timeline's order is entirely shattered. The vocalizers or narrators usually disrupt the notion of time by telling the stories by flapping between past, present, and future tenses.

Thus, these selected novels illustrate the disruption of the notion of sacred time practically, which resembles psychological time processing as Bergson asserts that

psychological time is determined by "duration," which he defines as the fluctuating pace at which the mind comprehends the length of experiences based on their distinct intensities, contents, and significance for each individual (Child 58). In other words, the novels illustrate a departure from conventional temporal frameworks and provide a more fluid and subjective experience of time based on individual perceptions and experiences.

As Faris posits, "many magical realist fictions delineate near-sacred or ritual enclosures, but these sacred spaces are not watertight; they leak their magical narrative waters over the rest of the texts and the worlds they describe, just as that exterior reality permeates them" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 24). Moreover, Faris claims that the homogeneity of space renders the idea of hallowed space outdated. Similarly, the adoption of clock-based timekeeping and the implementation of measurable routines replace traditional methods of time measurement ("Scheherazade's Children", 173). As such, the disruption of sacred time and space is a salient characteristic of magical realist texts. This deviation from the conventional notions of space allows writers to seamlessly transition between realms, which is a fundamental aspect of magical realist literature.

In WDEN, the majority of the space is depicted as realistic until a catastrophic flood forces the inhabitants of Chiriguana to evacuate and settle in a new world. When Parlanchina passes away, Aurelio assumes the role of a shaman, connecting the two worlds. Aurelio can perceive the spirit of his daughter in the alternate realm, yet his wife Carmen is unable to do so. As a result, Carmen inquires, "Why do I not see her? Why does she not communicate with me?" (135). Throughout the novel, the author frequently employs imaginary spaces as sanctuaries that provide refuge from the unsettling political and social upheavals, offering the characters a sense of security amidst the chaos.

The concept of sacred space shutters in SNC, although it is depicted in different ways. With realistic places, there are always imaginary or magical counterparts. The story goes on in both types of places. On the one hand, there are many realistic spaces such as the city, Nwemiran, the carpet weaving factory, the Idle Murderers' Club, and so on. On the other hand, the magical counterparts are Hazarbagh, Mahnaz's house after her death, Ghazalnus's house, and many other places. In SNC, imaginary spaces substitute for spiritual ones in the other texts. For instance, Hassan-i Tofan describes a magical garden that is only accessible to the Imaginative Creatures, those endowed with magical powers. He says, "That night they took me to a district that, until then, I hadn't known existed in the city. It was called

Hazarbagh or 'One Thousand Gardens'. I hadn't heard the name of this district before" (181). Furthermore, Mahnaz lacks imagination, so Ghazalnus helps her develop it by teaching her how to utilize it. As she discovers her secret imaginative realms, she produces magical things: "At night, her room became an infinite garden. She populated the house with bulbuls and curious creatures she created in her mind" (192). Therefore, her house obtains a fluid state which is not a real space anymore. Ali disrupts the whole notion of space. The portrayal of imaginary spaces is as prevalent as that of real spaces.

The recurring theme of identity distortion in the selected novels is a notable aspect. Faris claims that the characters in magical realism lean toward drastic multiplicity, reflecting both the multivocal aspect of the narration and the cultural hybridity that constitutes it (*Ordinary Enchantments* 25). Moreover, she asserts that "Magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space but our sense of identity as well" ("Scheherazade's Children" 174). There are multiplicities and shifts of identity among the selected texts, but each has the flavour of its novelist's merit.

In WDENP, apart from the hybridity of the population in Chiriguana, which gives a fluid identity to the citizen, the distortion of the sacred identity is also illustrated, as seen in the case of Parlanchina and her dog. Parlanchina holds two identities throughout the novel, one as a hybrid daughter of Aurelio, an Indian and Carmen, a Negress and the life of a spirit who is seen only by her father. Through him, she tries to help her people. The other characters cannot see her. As her mother at the end of the novel asks Aurelio: "'Have you spoken with Gwubba?' asked Carmen. / 'We have spoken.'/ 'Why do I not see her? Why does she not speak with me?'" (135). After that Carmen says: "Gwubba was not an Indian,'…, 'and she had a real name" (136). Even though her mother does not identify her as an Indian, she is a mixed race. So is she Indian or Negress? This ambiguity renders Parlanchina's identity indeterminate, challenging the traditional methods of identity classification. In another occasion, in chapter 12, the narrator presents Father Garcia as an adulterous, Catholic, and Marxist priest (80), who resembles the Whisky Priest in Graham Greene's *The Power and The Glory*.  He cannot be identified with a fixed type of mindset. Thus, the technique that the magical realist mode uses to present the fluidity of identity is expertly demonstrated in the novel.

Similarly, there are several characters in SNC whose identities change constantly, such as Mullas and Ghazalnus. Even Trifa's identity is in the same state of confusion. She is the

offspring of imaginary lovemaking like Ghazalnus, while she is known publicly as the child of her uncle. When a young man tells Ghazalnus about the story of Mulla Gharib-i Hajar and Mulla Sukhta, he clarifies that they have fluid identities, which later creates confusion even for Ghazalnus. He declares that "The one who died in Urmia was Mulla Gharib-i Hajar. Mulla Sukhta died a short while afterwards, in the hospital here. They were one soul but became two different people, and so their deaths were one death; they just occurred in two different places at two different times" (97). Consequently, the personalities and relationships between both Mullas and Baharbanu shatter the notion of Ghazalnus's identity. It also creates the same confusion on the part of the reader. The fluidity of identity extends beyond one generation. It continues with the identities of Ghazalnus and Murad Jamil. After deciphering Murad Jamil's (The Chinese Youth) story, Ghazalnus tells Majid that "I both was and was not "The Chinese Youth" (361). Ghazalnus is outside time, it seems; he goes beyond it.

The authors may intend to convey to the reader that an individual's identity is not solely determined by their current circumstances, but is also shaped by the legacy of past generations and the historical context in which they find themselves. This is especially true in the midst of chaotic, war-torn communities, where there may be no stable foundation on which to base one's sense of self. As a result, even the process of self-identification can be fraught with uncertainty and confusion.

## 6. Conclusion

This article aims to illustrate the significance of Faris's features in analysing the two selected magical realist novels, namely *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* and *I Stared at the Night of the City* and shows how the novelists have manipulated magical realist mode to depict the dilemma of their war-stricken communities. In conclusion, it is apparent that both the selected novels manifest Faris's five features to a certain extent, albeit with differing levels of emphasis.

First, they are different in providing irreducible elements. De Bernieres draws from Latin American mythological beliefs, using them to create magical incidents, while Ali takes an artistic and innovative approach. Both authors explore characters with magical abilities, often linked to personal loss. In their narratives, these abilities arise in characters who face difficulties in the real world due to societal turmoil, preventing them from realizing their innate magical potential. Secondly, the phenomenal world immerses the reader in the

straightforward narrative style of the story. Consequently, these genuine descriptions build a world that reflects the reader's ordinary life, effectively setting the stage for the extraordinary events that follow. In employing this approach, both novelists use the mode to depict the essence of the communities affected by war, moving beyond mere caricatures of conflict and providing a more nuanced portrayal. Thirdly, creating doubt in the reader stimulates active engagement and interpretation. This prompts contemplation and involvement in deciphering the text's meaning. In societies marked by war, where atrocities' origins are often ambiguous, readers become key players in seeking a reinterpretation of reality. Fourth, by blurring the boundaries between two realms, novelists gain the flexibility to convey their messages through the fluctuation between these worlds. This prompts readers to reassess history, identifying the pivotal moments that serve as the roots of contemporary turmoil. Finally, the fluidity of time, space, and identity is particularly appropriate for depicting the complexities of war-stricken communities, which cannot be pictured in linearity.

Additionally, the distinct ways in which the features are employed demonstrate varying levels of artistic merit between the authors. Each novelist endeavors to convey his messages through diverse techniques and styles infused with his cultural, intellectual, and social backgrounds. Thus, Faris's features are convenient for analysing the selected novels to gain a deeper understanding of their underlying messages. Indeed, these features act as vehicles, assisting the reader in gaining a clearer vision of the literary worlds presented.

**Conflict of Interests:**

There is no conflict of interest to disclose.

**References**

Abdullah, Md, Abu Shahid. *Traumatic Experience and Repressed Memory in Magical Realist Novels: Speaking the Unspeakable*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020.

Ali, Bakhtiyar. *I Stared at the Night of the City*. Translated by Kareem Abdulrahman, London: Periscope, 2016.

—. *Like the Birds in the Horrible Jungles*. Slemani: Andesha, 2012. [The extracts are translated from Kurdish into English by the researcher.]

Asayesh, Maryam Ebadi. *Patriarchy and Power in Magical Realism*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.

Bowers, Maggie Ann. *Magic(al) Realism*. London & NY: Routledge, 2004.

Brady, Veronica. "Postmodernism and the Spiritual Life." *The Way*, www.theway.org.uk/back/36brady.pdf. Accessed 04 Dec. 2023.

Camayd-Freixas, Erik. "Reflections on Magical Realism: A Return to Legitimacy, the Legitimacy of Return." *The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1 June 1996, pp. 580–589., https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/crcl/index.php/crcl/article/view/3852. Accessed 17 Oct. 2022.

Carpentier, Alejo. "On the Marvelous Real in America." *MAGICAL REALISM: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, translated by Tanya Huntington and Lois Parkinson Zamora, DUKE UP, Durham & London, 1995, pp. 75–88.

Chanady, Amaryll Beatrice. *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*. London & NY: Garland, 1985.

Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Surrealism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1981, pp. 539–64. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/178393. Accessed 7 Jan. 2023.

De Bernieres, Louis. *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts*. Vintage Books, 1991. https://www.pdfdrive.com/the-war-of-don-emmanuels-nether-parts-d199389450.html. PDF download.

Faris, Wendy B. *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

—"Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction". *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, New York: Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 163-190.

Hegerfeldt, Anne C. *Lies That Tell the Truth: Magic Realism Seen through Contemporary Fiction from Britain*. NY: Rodopi, 2005.

Keating, Joshua. 'The First Kurdish Novel Ever Translated into English Bridges Politics, Poetry, and Johnny Depp Movies'. Slate, 30 Dec. 2016, https://slate.com/culture/ 2016/12/i-stared-at-the-night-of-the-city-is-the-first-kurdish-novel-ever-translated-into-english.html. Accessed 10 Jan. 2023.

Kluwick, Ursula. *Exploring Magic Realism in Salman Rushdie's Fiction*. London & NY: Taylor and Francis, 2011.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. NY: Avon, 1970. PDF.

Rennison, Nick. *Contemporary British Novelists*. London & NY: Routledge, 2005.

Spence, Rob. "Louis De Bernières". *The Literary Encyclopedia*. First published 06 May 2015, https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=5525. Accessed 23 September 2023.

Ulfa, Aghnia Kamilia. "A Concept of Characteristics of Magical Realism in Patrick Ness' A Monster Calls: A Merger of Objective and Adolescent Psychological Approach." *IJELS* 6.5 (2021): 98-94, <https://ijels.com/issue-detail/vol-6-issue-5/>. Accessed 24 September 2023.

Warnes, Christopher. *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence*. London: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2009. PDF.