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STRATEGIES FOR THE REMYSTIFICATION OF NARRATIVE IN OKKY MADASARI'S MATA NOVEL SERIES: A WENDY B. FARIS MAGICAL REALISM STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Magical realism presents a compelling subject of study, given the rich presence of magical elements in Indonesia everyday life. Magical realism is an artistic and literary movement that merges reality with the supernatural. According to Faris, magical realism reintroduces the magical, disrupts rational certainty, and creates space for mystery within a realistic world. This topic is particularly intriguing to examine as numerous literary works reflect the magical realm within modern existence. This study employs a qualitative method utilizing a magical realism framework. The finding indicate that remystification in the *Mata* series is successfully realized through the protagonist, Mata, who experiences mystical events involving the butterfly queen in *Mata di Tanah Melus*, and perceives her communication with Molu the cat, Gama the dog, and spiders as ordinary occurrences in *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*. These mystical events become a reality that Matara no longer needs to question throughout the *Mata* series.

Keywords: Magical realism; Remystification; Social reality; Narrative strategy; Wendy B. Faris

1 INTRODUCTION

Magical realism is an artistic and literary movement that merger reality with supernatural elements. It presents a compelling subject of scholarly inquiry, as numerous Indonesia literary works reflect magical dimensions embedded in everyday life. Bowers (as cited in Sholichah, 2004: 20) [23] posits that magical realism is grounded in two contrasting perspectives: the representation of reality and the acceptance of the supernatural. Furthermore, magical realism

presents narrative containing wonder or elements that alter reality, thereby evoking a sense of strangeness that prompts readers to seek logical explanation. Roh (as cited in Sholichah, 2004), a German art critic, asserts that magical realism serves as a mode of representing and responding to reality, depicted through fragments of real life.

Magical realism as a theoretical framework was significantly developed by Wendy B. Faris, in which remystification constitutes a core concept. As a concept, the remystification of narrative refers to the process of reintroducing mystery into a world previously dominated by modern rationality. Remystification differs fundamentally from “mystification.” While mystification involves manipulatively rendering something mysterious, Faris’s concept of remystification reopens the dimension of mystery that has been suppressed by modernity. Consequently, remystification—derived from the root word “mystic”—does not merely present the magical; rather, it destabilizes the dominance of modern rationality through specific narrative strategies.

Modernity tends to explain phenomena scientifically, demystifying reality and stripping daily life of wonder. Nevertheless, in daily life across Indonesia and worldwide, myths and magical occurrences remain integral to social existence, coexisting alongside the physical world. According to Faris, magical realism reintroduces the magical, disrupts rational certainty, and creates space for mystery within a realistic setting. This dynamic is particularly intriguing to investigate, as many literary works continue to reflect the magical realm within modern contexts. In Western cinema, films featuring magical themes regularly attract large audiences. *Ghost* drew massive crowds, while *Jumanji* became a box-office success in the 2000s.

International films incorporating supernatural themes from recent years include Robert Eggers’s *Nosferatu* (2024/2025), a reinterpretation of classic vampire lore. In 2025, the supernatural thriller *Sinners*, starring Michael B. Jordan, depicted malicious terror, while *The Deliverance* (2024) centered on tense demonic possession. In 2025, *Final Destination: Bloodlines* marked the return of the supernatural horror franchise. Previously, *The Black Phone* (2022) explored supernatural encounters through a mysterious telephone, alongside numerous other releases.

In Indonesian cinema, supernatural-themed films have proliferated since the early 2000s. *Jelangkung* (2001) triggered a resurgence in supernatural film production. *Kuntilanak* (2006) gained widespread popularity by featuring the iconic Indonesia long-haired female ghost with her distinct laugh. *Bangsai 13* (2004) incorporated the number 13 as a mystical trope associated with supernatural phenomena. *Pocong 2* (2006) also became a cultural phenomenon based on the belief that a corpse whose shrouds remain untied will turn into a *pocong*. *Danur: I Can See Ghosts*, adapted from the novel *Danur*, achieved massive commercial success as audiences sought to see the book transformed onto the screen; the story portrays a true account of an indigo child possessing a sixth sense to perceive spirits.

KKN di Desa Penari (2022) not only became a viral sensation as the highest-grossing Indonesia horror film, but also prompted widespread internet sleuthing to locate the real-world settings. Such films consistently draw attention because the mystical experiences encountered by characters closely resonate with real-life beliefs. *Badarawuhi di Desa Penari* (2024), centered on a dancer ghost, also met with commercial success. *Alas Roban* (2026) gained traction due to the forest’s reputation as a haunted site, leading viewers to correlate local lore with the filmic narrative. *Danur: The Last Chapter* (released March 18, 2026) marks the final installment of the franchise.

Authors crafting supernatural literature often draw upon lived magical experiences, refining their narrative abilities through direct encounters, folklore, or exposure to magical-themed media. Such experiences infuse their novelistic narrative with magical qualities derived from fairytales, myths, and legends in daily life. These elements are dramatized to generate narrative conflicts. As Maslikatin (2007: 57) notes, conflict animates the narrative and renders it dynamic, without which a story becomes flat. Supernatural narratives are intrinsically linked to setting, as specific geographical regions embody distinct spiritual traditions. Abrams (as cited in Nurgiyantoro, 2005: 216) defines setting as the foundational element encompassing physical location, temporal relations, and the social environment in which events unfold.

Faris (2004: 39) notes that magical realism was first coined by Franz Roh (1925) to describe European paintings that reintroduced realism following Expressionism, integrating realistic modes into expressionist styles. Roh (as cited in Sholichah) characterizes magical realism as a mode of representing and responding to reality through concrete fragments. According to Faris (2004: 1), the core concept of magical realism involves a synthesis of realism and fantasy, allowing extraordinary occurrences to appear ordinary within everyday setting and blurring the boundaries between them. Faris formulates five primary characteristics of magical realism in narrative:

- The irreducible element;
- The phenomenal world;
- Unsettling doubts;
- Merging realms;

- The disruption of time, space, and identity.

A critical research gap emerges from contrasting foundational assumptions in prior scholarship. Existing studies on Okky Madasari's work predominantly focus on textual analysis, structural components, moral values, educational aspects, patriarchal ideologies, genetic structuralism, value education, character education, critical discourse analysis, and the sociology of literature. Previous magical realism research on Madasari's oeuvre has been confined to isolated examinations of individual novels such as [15] *Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018) and [16] *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* (2018). In contrast, this study examines not only the literary texts themselves but also the author's engagement with the supernatural dimension and its relation to her creative work. The author's ideological framework is analyzed using secondary data that illuminates Madasari's socio-cultural background and creative process.

Addressing this gap, the novelty of this study lies in revealing the socio-cultural reflection of supernatural existence across the entirety of Madasari's *Mata* series. It examines how the text presents magical elements as ordinary occurrences and investigates their connection to local wisdom. Beyond offering a comprehensive analysis of Madasari's series, this study's originality resides in bridging two distinct domains: the author's creative process and the mimetic dimension of literary works as they relate to the supernatural context of their production.

Okky Madasari's *Mata* series has achieved widespread popularity among Indonesian literature readers and scholars alike. Madasari integrates local culture heritage infused with supernatural occurrences experienced by the protagonist, Mata. These supernatural experiences are elaborated across the series, which includes [15] *Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018) and [16] *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* (2018).

Mata di Tanah Melus was discussed using a mimetic approach [6] by Sadida, Shintya Dwi Anggraini B., and Taufik Arochman C. A. (2025) in an article titled "Discourse Analysis of Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* through a Mimetic Approach." Sadida et al.'s study emphasizes that literary works are imitations and representation of real life. [8] "Magical Realism and Socio-Cultural Context in Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata di Tanah Melus*" (2022) was written by Wildanta. [9] Ahmad, Ashabul Kahfi Susanto, and Farooq Shah (2022) discussed the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* under the title "Hidden Adult in Okky Madasari's Book *Mata di Tanah Melus*," published in *English and Literature Journal*, Volume 9, Number 2, Desember 2022, pages 137-147. [13] Kinanthi, A.M., Andayani, and Suyitno (2020) highlighted Character Education Values in *Mata di Tanah Melus* with their article titled "Psychological Analysis and Character Education Values in *Mata di Tanah Melus* and Their Application in Literature Teaching." [12] *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* was discussed by Rusmiati, Ali Nuke Affandy, and Insani Wahyu Mubarak (2024) in an article titled "The Irreducible Elements in Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*," published in *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling Prodi Bahasa Indonesia* in 2024. [21] Rahmania, M. (2020), in her undergraduate thesis, examined *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* by Okky Madasari: A Sociology of Literature, titled "Children's Novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* by Okky Madasari: A Sociology of Literature Analysis." She highlighted the close link between the author's social background and literary creation, specifically the author's role as a mother. [22] Rahma, Y., Sarwiji Suwandi, and Edy Suryanto (2025) discussed four of Okky Madasari's novels using liberal feminist theory in their article titled "Feminist Values in Okky Madasari's *Mata* Novel Series." [24] Sri Widyati (2025) analyzed nationalism values in Okky Madasari's novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* at STIT Al Multazam. [25] Atikah (2024), in the journal *Widyaparwa*, authored an article titled "Environmental Damage in the Novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*: A Literary Ecocriticism Study." [26] Rivai, A. revealed values of honesty, discipline, creativity, and hard work in the characters of *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* in an article titled "The Relevance of Moral Values in Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*." [27] Ali (2024) highlighted the novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi: Adventures Diving into Indonesia History*, where children are invited to explore Indonesia history through story.

Khoirunnisa, Ni'matuzahroh, and Niyarci (2022) from Universitas Negeri Semarang researched children's character values in *Mata dan Manusia Laut* under the title "Analysis of Character Values in Okky Madasari's Children's Novel *Mata dan Manusia Laut*." Chaulia, M., Muhajir, dan Ahmad Rifaimaura examined story facts and literary devices in "10 Story Facts and Story Devices." *Mata dan Manusia Laut* was also published as an article by Sholihah (2021) titled "Marxian Personality of the Main Character in Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata dan Manusia Laut* (Erich Fromm's Marxian Personality Psychology Study)" [14]. [10] Annisa, a student of Indonesia Language and Literature at Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (2022), titled her work "Representation of Bajau Tribe Myth in Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata dan Manusia Laut*." [19] Khoirunnisa, H., Ni'matuzzahro, and Niyarci (2022) highlighted character values in *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, published in *Junral Tinta Emas* under the title "Analysis of Character Values in Okky Madasari's Children's Novel *Mata dan Manusia Laut*." [20] *Mata di Tanah Melus*, *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, and *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* were also discussed in *Jurnal Bahtera Indonesia* by Burhanudin, Ahmad, Anas Ahmadi, and Ririe Rengganis (2023) under the title "Three Novels by Okky Madasari: An Environmental Criminology Perspective." Burhanudin et al. highlighted the environmental destruction depicted in the three novels. [21] The title *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* was discussed using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. [11] Oktavia (2022) examined *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* as instructional material in her undergraduate thesis titled "Okky Madasari's Novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* and Its Application as

Teaching Material for Fantasy Story in Junior High School,” an undergraduate thesis at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.

2 MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method utilizing a magical realism approach. The foundational assumption of the magical realism framework is that literary works function as mimesis or reflections of society's socio-cultural conditions [31] [32] [33]. This method is applied to interpret the remystification of narrative within the *Mata* series and to examine the author's strategies in introducing the supernatural into modern existence. Broadly speaking, this research emphasizes library research; however, to deepen data acquisition, it is also supported by Focus Group Discussion (FGD) techniques involving a selected community.

The material object of this study consists of the *Mata* novel series, comprising two titles: [15] *Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018) and [16] *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* (2018) by Okky Madasari, based on the assumption that these works represent the author's magical realist worldview. The formal object consists of the theoretical concepts of magical realism formulated by Wendy B. Faris. The unit of analysis includes supernatural or magical discourse within Okky Madasari's works—encompassing sentences, paragraphs, passages, and other information—that represent aspects of the author's supernatural dimension as reflected in [15] *Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018) and [16] *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* (2018). Additionally, regarding the social background of the author and readers, the units of analysis include various discourses or contextual information reflecting the socio-cultural aspects of both author and readership, including data collected through the FGDs.

The data collection procedure involved closely examining supernatural discourses in Okky Madasari's two novels and scrutinizing information related to her socio-cultural context. The collected data were classified into two major categories: magical/supernatural discourses and remystification within the works. These data were analyzed using Wendy B. Faris's theory of magical realism by interpreting and decoding literary discourses in relation to and reflection of social reality. This analysis leads to a mimetic understanding focusing on the remystification of narrative, grounded in the foundational assumption that literary works constitute a mimesis of social reality.

The analysis and interpretation of magical realism synthesize the investigation to address the research questions or achieve the research objectives, which encompass two key aspects: (1) narrative strategies used to reconstruct the dimension of mystery through the mystical realm, and (2) describing how the process of remystification positions the reader in relation to modern reality.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Structural Analysis of *Mata di Tanah Melus*

The novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* addresses the theme of preserving remote indigenous tribes. The main character is named Matara, who called Mata. Matara is a twelve-year-old girl. Despite her young age, Matara experiences several physical and internal conflicts that provoke deep reflection, particularly when she must accompany her mother on a trip to Tanah Melus.

Mama memberikan selembar uang lima puluh ribu pada paman Tania. Paman Tania mengeluarkan beberapa lembar daun sirih dari kantongnya. Sambil memegang uang dan sirih, paman Tania komat kamit, beberapa kali suaranya terdengar tapi aku tidak mengerti yang terdengar, karena dalam bahasa daerah...

“Sebenarnya bukan di sini pintu masuk untuk upacara. Tapi karena kita kena sial di sini, ya sudah kita buat di sini saja” kata Paman Tania sambil mengajak kami kembali ke jalan. (MdTM: 60-61)

(Mama gave a fifty-thousand rupiah bill to Tania's uncle. Tania's uncle took out several betel leaves from his pocket. Holding the money and betel leaves, Tania's uncle mumbled softly; several times his voice was audible, but I could not understand it because it was in the local language...

“Actually, the entrance for the ceremony isn't here. But since we ran into bad luck here, fine, we'll just do it here,” Tania's uncle said while leading us back to the road.) (MdTM: 60-61)

Matara begins to experience severe physical and internal conflicts when the car taking her to the Fort breaks down in the middle of the road. Their journey comes to a halt, and Matara's mother has to spend extra money to pay for offerings (*sesaji*). Matara's internal conflict arises because, logically, she cannot connect the money paid by her mother with the

car breakdown. Nevertheless, Matara's mother and Matara ultimately come to believe that the ransom money serves to dispel bad luck so that their journey can proceed smoothly.

3.2 Structural Analysis of Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi

The novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* is the second installment in the *Mata* series. This novel revolves around the theme of preserving historical heritage artifacts, centered on the main character, Matara. Matara, who relocates to Ternate with her parents, experiences severe conflict as she must participate in safeguarding Ternate's heritage alongside Molu, a talking cat; Gama, a talking dog; and a spider capable of writing. The most intense conflict occurs when her father is poisoned by the venom of her spider companion, as he serves as the project lead for constructing a hotel at the heritage fort. Matara must convince her father that building a hotel on the fort's ruins will destroy its cultural heritage.

Si laba-laba langsung siaga. Ia kembali mengasah taringnya. Matara kali ini tak mencegagh. Dia berbisik pada di laba-laba "jangan bunuh mereka"

Si laba-laba mengedipkan mata tanda setuju... (MdRPG: 113)

Mobil ambulans dan mobil lainnya meninggalkan benteng. Sisanya, orang-orang dari perusahaan dan polisi, tetap berada di benteng. Salah satu di antara mereka adalah papa Matara yang beberapa bagian tubuhnya masih bengkok akibat gigitan si laba-laba (MdRPG: 116)

(The spider immediately stood on alert, honing its fangs once more. This time, Matara did not intervene. She whispered to the spider, "Don't kill them." The spider blinked in agreement... (MdRPG: 113)

The ambulance and other vehicles departed from the fort. The rest people from the company and the police—remained at the site. Among them was Matara's father, whose body parts were still swollen from the spider's bites. (MdRPG: 116)

Her acquaintance with Molu and the spider enables Matara to save her father from the spider's deadly attack and to preserve the fort. Effective collaboration between Matara's ideas and the spider's abilities successfully safeguards the historical heritage fort. Consequently, Matara's father abandons the plan to construct a hotel on the fort's ruins, which are guarded by the spider.

3.3 Magical Realism Analysis of Mata di Tanah Melus

The analysis of magical realism in this study aims to describe the narrative strategies used to reconstruct the dimension of mystery through the mystical realm and to depict how this remystification process positions the reader in relation to modern reality. Magical realism applies a blending of reality and fantasy that blurs the boundaries between the two. Supernatural aspects, which are illogical in real life, are treated as normal components of ordinary existence. According to Faris (2004: 7), magical realism is manifested through five primary characteristics: the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and the disruption of time, space, and identity.

The irreducible element in the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* manifests as phenomena that defy rational explanation, such as belief in myths, magical events, *slametan* traditions, and magical creatures integrated into the narrative. This becomes apparent early on when Matara listens to her grandmother's stories about magical occurrences that leave her in awe.

Gadis kecil itu yg biasa dipanggil Mar oleh keluarganya diam-diam mengintip keluar dari jendela kamarnya, di saat yang lain berusaha kuar menutup matanya. Mar ingin melihat seperti apa raksasa yang sedang menelan matahari. Lewat lubang kecil jendela kamarnya, ia melihat bayangan besar- besar sekali- ukuran besar yang tidak mampu ditangkap oleh matanya dan tak terbayang akal nya. Lalu ia melihat matahari yang bulat, sedikit demi sedikit terkikis seperti apel yang digigit, hingga perlahan semuanya habis (MdTM: 9-10)

(The little girl, usually called Mar by her family, secretly peeked out from her bedroom window while others tried hard to close their eyes. Mar wanted to see what the giant swallowing the sun looked like. Through a small hole in her bedroom window, she saw immense shadows—a massive size beyond the grasp of her eyes and unimaginable to her mind. Then she saw the round sun gradually eroded, like an apple being bitten into, until slowly everything was consumed. (MdTM: 9-10)

The story of the solar eclipse witnessed by Mar in her grandmother's tale represents a captivating magical occurrence received by Matara. A total solar eclipse always astonishes the world as a rare phenomenon. Here, the marvel in depicted as a giant consuming an object. The sun, long considered the primary light source illuminating the earth, is swallowed

whole by a giant. For a young child like Mar and Matara, this constitutes a wondrous event that cannot be reduced by human reason.

The merging of the mystical and reality is also experienced by Matara and her mother when they encounter misfortunes as their car breaks down, unable to ascend an incline. Tania's uncle, who accompanies them, insists on conducting a ritual.

"Biarkan dia urus dia punya mobil" kata paman Tania "Kita harus tetap lanjutkan upacara kita. Ini kita punya mobil tak bisa naik karena kita belum permisi sama penjaga Lakmanen"

"Lakmanen?"

"Ini daerah punya nama Lakmanen. Kita harus permisi kl mau naik ke sini" (MdTM:59)

("Let him handle his car," Tania's uncle said. "We must continue our ceremony. Our car can't go up because he haven't asked permission from the guardian of Lakmanen.")

"Lakmanen?"

"This area is called Lakmanen. We must ask permission if we want to go up here." (MdTM: 59))

Tania's uncle connects the car breakdown to bad luck caused by failing to seek permission to cross the territory. Through modern logic, there is no connection between a mechanical failure and seeking permission from supernatural guardians; yet, Matara's mother accepts this explanation without question. Tania's uncle, acting as a shaman, leads Matara's mother in performing the ritual. The belief that this ritual will dispel bad luck and ensure safe passage is something modern society would deem irrational. Nonetheless, Matara's mother complies with an act that cannot be reduced by logic.

Kunjungan Matara dengan mamanya ke Tanah Melus membawa pengalaman

Mama memberikan selebar uang lima puluh ribu pada paman Tania. Paman Tania mengeluarkan beberapa lembar daun sirih dari kantongnya. Sambil memegang uang dan sirih, paman Tania komat kamit, beberapa kali suaranya terdengar tapi aku tidak mengerti yang terdengar, karena dalam bahasa daerah...

"Sebenarnya bukan di sini pintu masuk untuk upacara. Tapi karena kita kena sial di sini, ya sudah kita buat di sini saja" kata Paman Tania sambil mengajak kami kembali ke jalan (MdTM:60-61)

(Matara's journey with her mother to Tanah Melus further involves an instance where her mother hands a fifty-thousand rupiah bill to Tania's uncle. Tania's uncle takes several betel leaves from his pocket. Holding the money and leaves, he mutters incantations—his voice audible at times, though unintelligible as it is spoken in a local dialect...

"Actually, the entrance for the ceremony isn't here. But since we ran into bad luck here, fine, we'll just do it here," Tania's uncle said while leading us back to the road. (MdTM: 60-61))

The ceremony functions as an irreducible element. Believing that disturbing spirit cause trouble due to a lack of permission defies rational reduction. Although Matara's mother is initially skeptical, she does not protest and follows Tania's uncle's instructions. The anxiety that the car will remain immobilized and ruin their journey compels her to obey and set aside her logic, ultimately trusting that money and betel leaves can ward off ill fortune.

"Inilah benteng tujuh lapis itu," kata Paman Tania dengan suara pelan...

Ada tiga meriam tua terongkok di situ. Aku mendekatinya dan mengelusnya

"Itu meriam peninggalan Portugis," Kata Paman Tania

"Tapi ini benteng sudah ada jauh seblum zaman Portugis. Dulu leluhur bangun ini dibantu roh halus." (MdTM:67)

("This is the seven-tiered fort," Tania's uncle said softly...

Three old cannons lay there. I approached and stroked them.

“Those are cannons left behind by the Portuguese,” Tania’s uncle said.

“But this fort existed long before the Portuguese era. In the past, our ancestors built this with the help of spirits.” (MdTM: 67))

The construction of a fort during the Portuguese are with the aid of spirits represents an irreducible element. Modern logic cannot accept that spirits performed human physical labor. In modern society, ancestral feats described in lore—such as the construction of Borobudur and Prambanan temples assisted by supernatural beings—are ultimately accepted as phenomenal events. Borobudur’s inclusion among the wonders of the world, along with its 8th century construction (circa 825 CE), causes modern reasoning to acknowledge supernatural intervention.

The irreducible element appears when Atok addresses a crocodile as *Bei Nei*. Atok believes the Crocodile God protects the Melus people. Matara, unfamiliar with the Crocodile God, treats it as ordinary and attempts to believe in it.

Samar-samar aku melihat seorang manusia berjalan di kejauhan.... semakin leki-laki itu mendekat, sementara Atok hanya diam... Ia bukan manusia. Ia buaya. Ia manusia yang separoh tubuhnya buaya. Ia buaya yang separuh tubuhnya manusia....

Manusia buaya itu berbicara ke Atok.

Atok berulang kali berseru, “Bei Nei”

“Bei Nei mengizinkan kita pergi,” Bisik Atok padaku. Kami berjalan melewati barisan buaya dan manusia buaya itu. Aku tak berani melihatnya. Aku terus menatap ke depan dan berjalan mengikuti langkah Atok. (MdTM: 155-156)

(Faintly, I saw a human walking in the distance... as the man drew closer, while Atok remained silent... He was not human. He was a crocodile. He was a human with half his body being a crocodile. He was a crocodile with half his body being human...

The crocodile-man spoke to Atok.

Atok repeatedly exclaimed, “Bei Nei!”

“Bei Nei has allowed us to leave,” Atok whispered to me. We walked past the line of crocodiles and crocodile-men. I didn’t dare look at them. I kept staring straight ahead and followed Atok’s steps. (MdTM: 155-156))

In reality, humans fear crocodiles due to the danger of attack. Matara shares this fear upon encountering them. However, Atok, as a Melus youth who believes in the Crocodile God, views crocodiles as protectors. Trusting in this magical power is a defining feature of magical realism. The narrative naturalizes the magical into an accepted reality. Atok knows that *Bei Nei* protects them and grants them permission to leave the lake.

The phenomenal world in *Mata di Tanah Melus* is exemplified by the solar eclipse event.

Mar dituntun keluar dengan meloncat jendela...

Mar merinding takut. Tapi ia tak bisa berteriak. Suaranya tertahan di kerongkongan. Ia tak punya pilihan selain terus berjalan mengikuti langkah orang yang menuntunnya...

Mar tak bisa melihat semua yang ada di hadapannya. Sudah jelas ia sudah tidak berada di kamarnya, juga bukan sekitar rumahnya atau di tempat-tempat lain di wilayah desanya. Mar berada di tempat asing. Tempat yang tak pernah ia lihat dan datangi sebelumnya. Padang rumput luas yang hijau terbentang di hadapannya. Manusia-manusia bertubuh sangat besar berjalan mondar mandir di sekelilingnya. Mereka adalah raksasa Para penelan matahari. (MdTM: 10-11)

(Mar was guided out by jumping through the window...

Mar shivered in fear. But she couldn’t scream; her voice was trapped in her throat. She had no choice but to keep walking, following the steps of the person guiding her...

Mar could not see everything in front of her. Clearly, she was no longer in her room, nor around her house or anywhere in her village. Mar was in a strange place—a place she had never seen or visited before. A vast green grassland stretched

before her. Enormous human figures walked back and forth around her. They were—giants—the sun swallows. (MdTM: 10-11))

Logically, a total solar eclipse occurs when the moon completely blocks the sun, aligning the sun, moon, and earth. The moon's dark shadow (*umbar*) falls on the earth's surface, turning day into night. The progression of the umbra occurs gradually, making the sun appear to be swallowed by darkness. In the story, this gradual loss of light is framed as a giant (*buto*) consuming the sun, echoing traditional cultural interpretations.

The narrative strategy of reconstructing the dimension of mystery through the mustical world is executed through unsettling doubts. In *Mata di Tanah Melus*, this begins the grandmother's tales to Matara, which Matara initially doubts despite remaining fascinated by her storytelling style.

Bisa jadi karena ada bagian yang nenek lupa atau barangkali karena semua cerita khayalan belaka. Tapi bagiku semuanya adalah nyata. Dan akupun tetap menikmati setiap kali cerita itu dituturkan ulang dengan rasa yang sama seperti saat pertama kali aku mendengarnya. Cerita itu tentang anak perempuan yang hilang pada suatu siang saat gerhana matahari (MdTM:8)

(It could be because there were parts grandmother forgot, or perhaps because the stories were mere fantasy. But to me, everything felt real. And I still enjoyed every retelling with the same feeling as when I first heard it. The story was about a little girl who went missing one afternoon during a solar eclipse. (MdTM: 8)

When listen to her grandmother's repeated tales, Matara initially harbors doubt. However, her awe at the narrative causes that doubt to vanish, allowing her to accept the story without hesitation and enjoy its retellings.

During her adventure with Atok, Matara lands in a realm ruled by the Butterfly Queen, encountering events that upend her worldview. The narrative strategy reconstructs mystery by presenting humans with butterfly wings. As a Jakarta native accustomed to a modern metropolis, Matara initially feels her world turned upside down. The butterfly-human reveals that she too was once stranded there like Matara and Atok. Matara's worldview is further challenged when she is served animal food.

Ratu kupu-kupu menyajikan makanan di atas meja..."Ini makanan paling enak yang tidak akan pernah kalian dapatkan di tempat lain" kata ratu kupu-kupu sambil menyodorkan piring kecil untukku. Ia menuangkan madu, menaruh helai-helai bunga, rumput, benang sari, bunga matahari ke piringku dan piring Atok. Aku ragu-ragu untuk menyentuh makanan di piringku....

Kini aku mengunyah semua dengan rakus. Rumput, bunga matahari, berbagai biji yang aku tidak tahu namanya. Aku menyendok madu dan menjilatnya tanpa sisa. Aku tak bisa menahan diri untuk tidak menambah lagi... Ratu kupu-kupu tertawa pelan dan berkata" sudah aku bilang ini makanan terenak dari semua makanan yang pernah kalian makan" (MdTM:129)

(The Butterfly Queen served food on the table...

"This is the most delicious food you will never find anywhere else," the Butterfly Queen said while handing a small plate to me. She poured honey, placed flower petals, grass, stamens, and sunflowers onto my plate and Atok's plate. I hesitated to touch the food on my plate....

Now I chewed everything ravenously: grass, sunflowers, and various seeds whose names I didn't know. I scooped up the honey and licked it clean. I couldn't resist taking second helpings... The Butterfly Queen laughed softly and said, "I told you, this is the most delicious food you have ever eaten." (MdTM: 129))

The food served by the Butterfly Queen disrupts Matara's logical reasoning. Aware that it is not human food, she doubts what she sees. Yet, the Butterfly Queen reassures her that it is the most delicious food she will ever taste. Suspicion, doubt, and hunger prompt Matara's logic to yield and try it. Just as promised, Matara consumes it all and asks for more. Unsettling doubts are thus transformed into acceptable occurrences within the narrative.

Another narrative strategy to rebuild mystery is the merging of realms, which occurs frequently in *Mata di Tanah Melus*. Matara and Atok's journey causes them to experience reality and magic simultaneously.

Aku dan Atok sama-sama ragu untuk melangkah masuk. Tapi kupu-kupu itu terus bergerak mendorong kami. Sebagian kupu-kupu itu kini mendorong pintu pagar dengan sayap-sayap mereka. (MdTM: 124)

Ada yang keluar dari rumah itu. Manusia. Ya manusia seperti aku dan Atok. Ia semakin mendekat... kini aku tahu. Ia bukan perempuan seperti aku, bukan perempuan seperti mama...

Perempuan itu bersayap seperti kupu-kupu. Kupu-kupu yang mengepung kami, kini berkumpul mengitari perempuan itu. Ia kini serupa ratu kupu-kupu. Apakah ia manusia atau kupu-kupu?

Dia menatapku dan Atok secara tajam

"Mau apa kalian?"

"Kami tersesat" Jawabku cepat

"Anak kecil tersesat ke sini?" Ratu kupu-kupu tertawa

"Siapa yang mengirim kalian? Siapa yang mengirim kalian ke sini? (MdTM:125)

...

Ia menyentuh pipiku, lalu menariknya dengan gemas. Kini ia menatap tajam ke Atok

"Kalian dari mana?" Tanyanya ke Atok

"Melus"

"Melus" Ratu kupu-kupu mengulangnya dengan nada tak percaya

...

Dan kini Ratu kupu-kupu melihat ke arahku dan bertanya

"Kamu dari mana?"

"Jakarta" jawabku

"Jakarta. Apa itu?" tanyanya heran

"Jakarta Indonesia" (MdTM:126)

(Atok and I both hesitated to step inside. But the butterflies kept pushing us. Some of them were now pushing the gate open with their wings. (MdTM: 124)

Someone came out of the house. A human. Yes, a human like Atok and me. She drew closer... now I knew. She was not a girl like me, nor a woman like Mama...

The woman had wings like a butterfly... The butterflies surrounding us now gathered around her. She resembled a butterfly queen. Was she human or a butterfly?

She stared sharply at Atok and me.

"What do you want?"

"We're lost," I answered quickly.

"Little children lost here?" The Butterfly Queen laughed.

"Who sent you? Who sent you here?" (MdTM: 125)

...

She touched my cheek and pinched it playfully. Then she stared sharply at Atok.

"Where are you from?" she asked Atok.

"Melus."

"Melus?" The Butterfly Queen repeated in disbelief.

...

And then the Butterfly Queen looked at me and asked,

"Where are you from?"

"Jakarta," I replied.

"Jakarta? What is that?" she asked in surprise.

"Jakarta, Indonesia." (MdTM: 126)

The butterfly realm merges with human reality, as the butterfly takes the form of a beautiful woman with wings capable of flight. This represents merging realms. The Butterfly Queen commands not only butterflies but also cacti that behave like humans. Matara's modern logic initially struggles with this, but the merging becomes a reality she must accept. A similar merging occurs when Matara eats the food she initially considered fit only for animals, finding it genuinely delicious and real. This synthesis leads Matara to perceive the encounter not as artificial magic, but as tangible reality.

The disruption of time, space, and identity in magical realism occurs when conventional dimensions are scrambled, yet treated as normal and unexamined within the text.

Ratu kupu-kupu terisak

"Kenapa menangis?" tanyaku

"Aku ingat ayah dan ibuku. Ingat seluruh keluargaku

"Di mana mereka?"

"Entahlah.. sudah terlalu lama kami berpisah"

Berapa lama?"

"Kalian tak akan percaya."

"Tak ada yang tak mungkin di kerajaan Kupu-kupu" kataku sambil tersenyum.

Ratu kupu-kupu ikut tersenyum sambil berkata " Lebih dari seratus tahun"

Sekarang aku ternganga. Mata Atok melotot. Kami tak percaya tapi harus percaya. (MsdTM:136)

(The Butterfly Queen sobbed.

"Why are you crying?" I asked.

"I remember my mother and father. I remember my whole family."

"Where are they?"

"I don't know... we've been separated for too long."

"How long?"

"You won't believe it."

“Nothing is impossible in the Butterfly Kingdom,” I said with a smile.

The Butterfly Queen smiled back and said, “More than a hundred years.”

Now my mouth hung open. Atok’s eyes widened. We couldn’t believe it, yet we had to. (MdTM: 136))

The Butterfly Queen cries upon remembering her family, having been stranded just like Matara. The disruption of time integrated into the narrative manifests in her separation from her family for over a century. Such duration is impossible in empirical reality, yet accepted within magical realism. Matara regards it is ordinary and refrains from questioning how a human could live for hundreds of years.

“Aku harus mencari mamaku Tok”, kataku setelah ia selesai berenang

“Kita harus pulang dulu ke kampung Melus” kata Atok

“kita harus minta izin pada Ema Naim dan Maun Iso”

“Kalau tidak diizinkan?”

“Kita harus menurut”

“Tok!”

“Memang harus seperti itu. Kita harus diberi perlindungan sehingga bisa pulang dengan selamat. Kita harus menurut apa kata Ema Naim. (MdTM:164)

...

Mama lalu berseru pada semua orang di sekitar api unggun. “Ini anakku. Anakku sudah ketemu”

Ada delapan laki-laki dewasa di situ. Mereka mengingatkanku pada para pemburu buaya...

“Mereka teman baru mama” kata mama menarikku mendekati mereka. “Paman-paman ini yang menemani dan membantu mama mencarimu”...

“Kita ikut paman-paman ini Mata.” Kata mama

“Kita akan mencari jejak-jejak orang Melus. Kita akan mencari pusaka, kita akan punya pengalaman luar biasa, Mama akan mendapatkan bahan untuk buku baru Mama”

Aku memandang mama tanpa berkedip. Setelah semua yang kualami, apa yang diucapkan mama terdengar menakutkan. Aku menoleh ke Atok, ia terlihat tegang dan ketakutan. (MdTM: 166-167)

(“I have to find my mama, Tok,” I said after he finished swimming.

“We must go back to Melus village first,” Atok said.

“We have to ask permission from Ema Naim and Maun Iso.”

“What if they don’t allow us?”

“We must obey.”

“Tok!”

“That’s just how it is. We must be granted protection so we can return safely. We must follow what Ema Naim says.” (MdTM: 164)

...

Mama then shouted to everyone around the campfire, “This is my child! I found my child!”

Eight adult men were there. The reminded me of the crocodile hunters...

"They're Mama's new friends," Mama said, pulling me closer to them.

"These uncles accompanied and helped Mama look for you..."

"We're coming with these uncles, Mata," Mama said. "We're going to track the Melus people. We'll search for heritage artifacts, we'll have an incredible experience, and Mama will gather material for my new book."

I stared at Mama without blinking. After everything I had experienced, what Mama said sounded terrifying. I turned to Atok; he looked tense and frightened. (MdTM: 166-167))

3.4 Magical Realism Analysis of Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi

The analysis of magical realism in Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi aims to describe the narrative strategies used to reconstruct the dimension of mystery through the mystical world and to examine how this remystification process positions the reader in relation to modern reality.

The irreducible element in Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi manifest as phenomena that defy rational explanation, such as belief in myths, slametan tradions, faith in magical animals, and supernatural events.

"Hussh... hussh... Pergi!"

Si kucing menggeleng

"Pergiiii!" Kini Matara mengayunkan kayu yang ia pungut dari jalanan

"Aku mau ikut kamj. Aku mau jadi temanmu" kata si kucing

"Kamu bisa bicara?" Matara bertanya setengah berteriak. (MdRPG:53)

("Hussh... hush... Go away!")

The cat shook its head.

"Go awayyyyy!" Matara swung a stick she picked up from the street.

"I want to come with you. I want to be your friend," said the cat.

"You can talk?" Matara asked, half-screaming. (MdRPG: 53))

The first irrational event occurs when Matara meets Molu, a talking cat. While tales of humans communicating with the animals exist in traditional narratives—such as King Solomon talking to animals—Matara hearing a cat speak like a human defies empirical logic. This occurrence is eventually treated as ordinary after Matara befriends Molu.

Suara seekor anjing mengagetkan Molu

"Gama"

Molu berdiri dan berlari mendekati Gama. Gama pun berjalan mendekati Molu. Anjing dan kucing itu berpelukan erat.

Molu dan Gama berjalan bersama meninggalkan pelabuhan.

Bagaimana kabar tuanmu di Tolire, Molu? Tanya Gama

"Mereka mati, lalu jadi buaya"

"Mereka pengabdian yang setia" jawab Gama. "Mereka akan menjaga danau itu selamanya" (MdRPG:99-100)

(The sound of a dog startled Molu.

"Gama!"

Molu stood up and ran toward Gama. Gama walked closer to Molu. The dog and cat embraced tightly.

Molu and Gama walked together away from the harbor.

“How is your master in Tolire, Molu?” asked Gama.

“They died, then turned into crocodiles.”

“They were loyal servants,” replied Gama. “They will guard that lake forever.” (MdRPG: 99-100))

Molu the cat and Gama the dog engage in dialogue like humans. Their voices are also audible to humans. Molu is the pet cat of Adao and Faida, while Gama is the Sultan’s loyal pet dog. This mirrors traditional fables or tales from sacred texts—such as the story of Si Kayayan or ants speaking with King Solomon. These events cannot be reduced by logic; however, readers accept and believe them because existing myths and sacred narratives facilitate their acceptance as ordinary occurrences.

“Aku tahu!” Matara tiba-tiba berseru “Aku tahu caranya”

Molu langsung berdiri tegak. Si laba-laba pun langsung siaga san mengasah taringnya.

“Hanya ada satu orang yang bisa menghentikan ini semua” kata Matara

...

“Siapa orang itu Mata?” Molu sudah tak sabar

“Sang Sultan” Jawab Mata dengan yakin

“Hanya Sultan yang bisa menghentikan semuanya (MdRPG:223-224)

Di depan pintu kamar sang Sultan tertegun. Matanya membelalak... lama ia berdiri di situ dan berkali-kali mengeja BENTENG PUSAKA

Ia mengalihkan pandangan ke sekeliling kamarnya. Ia lihat setiap sudutnya. Ia lihat langit-langitnya. Ia bisa melihat sedikit bagian tubuh

(“I know!” Matara suddenly exclaimed. “I know how!”

Molu immediately stood upright. The spider stood on alert, honing its fangs.

“There is only one person who can stop all this,” Matara said.

...

“Who is that person, Mata?” Molu asked impatiently.

“The Sultan,” Mata answered with conviction. “Only the Sultan can stop everything.” (MdRPG: 223-224)

In front of his bedroom door, the Sultan stood stunned. His eyes widened... He stood there for a long time, spelling out “HERITAGE FORT” over and over again.

He shifted his gaze around his room. He looked at every corner. He looked at the ceiling. He could see a small part of the body...)

The narrative strategy of reconstructing the phenomenal world through the mystical realm is achieved by presenting a wondrous phenomenon: the transformation of humans into crocodiles.

Molu meloncat terkejut saat melihat apa yang ada di bibir danau, tepat di depan matanya: dua ekor buaya.

Molu mendekati

“Adao? Faida?”

Dua buaya itu mengedipkan mata. Sorot mata kedua buaya itu tampak berbahagia (MdRPG:95)

(Molu jumped in surprise upon seeing what was the lake’s edge, right before his eyes: two crocodiles.

Molu approached.

“Adao? Faida?”

The two crocodiles blinked. Their eyes beamed with happiness. (MdRPG: 95))

A phenomenal event occurs when Molu sees two crocodiles by the lake and spontaneously calls out the names Adao and Faida, to which the crocodiles respond by blinking. This illustrates that individuals entrusted with a duty carry that trust even beyond death. In folklore, characters frequently transform into animals or emit sweet scents—such as Sri Tanjung in the Banyuwangi legend, who proved his fidelity to her husband through the fragrant scent of her blood. This parallels Adao, a foreigner entrusted by the Sultan to guard the lake. When Adao and Faida perished in a disaster they died fulfilling their devotion to the Sultan’s trust.

Matara experiences unsettling doubts when Molu discovers the opening where he used to meet Gama, the Sultan’s beloved dog.

“Kenapa benteng-benteng itu hancur, Molu?” Tanya Matara.

Molu tampak bersedih. Ia duduk di atas reruntuhan. Matanya menjadi merah berkaca-kaca.

Ia selalu bersedih mengingat peristiwa itu. Jauh lebih bersedih mengingat Adao, sebab ia tahu Adao dan Faida sudah berbahagia dalam kehidupan baru mereka (MdRPG:104)

(“Why are those forts in ruins, Molu?” Matara asked.

Molu looked sad. He sat on the ruins. His eyes turned red and teary.

He always felt sad remembering that event—far sadder than remembering Adao, for he knew Adao and Faida were happy in their new life. (MdRPG: 104))

Unsettling doubts reactivate human logic. Matara questions why ruined forts are still zealously guarded and preserved. Likewise, Adao and Faida, who were loyal to the Sultan, continue to guard the lake even after death and transformation into crocodiles. These occurrences initially cause Matara to doubt what she witnesses. However, the reality that Gama and the venomous spider defend the fort with all their strength—and that Adao and Faida guard the lake as crocodiles—compels Matara to accept these events as concrete reality rather than mere magic.

Disruptions of time, space, and identity in magical realism scramble conventional dimensions, yet remain unexamined within narrative as they are ultimately treated as normal. In *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*, the blurring of spatial and temporal dimensions occurs when Molu invites Matara to hide in the hole where he and Gama hid hundreds of years ago.

“Lihat! Ini lubang tempat aku bertemu dengan Gama!”

Matara keheranan. Jika bangunan bentengnya saja sudah tinggal puing seperti ini, bagaimana bisa Molu mengenali sebuah lubang yang ia lihat lebih dari lima ratus tahun lalu? Matara masih tak beranjak dari tempat duduknya. Ia malas dibohongi Molu (MdRPG:83)

(“Look! This is the hole where I met Gama!”

Matara was bewildered. If the fort itself was reduced to ruins like this, how could Molu recognize a hole he had seen over five hundred years ago? Matara remained seated, reluctant to be fooled by Molu. (MdRPG: 83))

Matara doubts that a cat could remember something from centuries past, questioning whether Molu is truly hundreds of years old. Although her reason struggles to accept this, she follows Molu into the hole. Matara’s logic questions these chaotic realities: a talking cat, a dog, ancient memories, and a hole discovered five hundred years earlier. Yet, her survival

instinct drives her to enter. Logic is disrupted once more when Matara finds herself unable to squeeze out of the hole, unlike Molu, who can flatten his body.

4 CONCLUSION

The narrative strategies used to reconstruct the dimension of mystery through the mystical world in *Mata di Tanah Melus* and *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*, along with how this remystification process positions readers in relation to modern reality, are summarized as follows.

In *Mata di Tanah Melus*, irreducible elements manifest as phenomena that defy rational explanation, such as belied in myths, magical events, *slametan* traditions, and magical animals integrated into the narrative—exemplified by the ritual performed to ward off misfortune when the car breaks down. The disruption of space and time occurs when Matara and Atok are stranded in the realm of the Butterfly Queen, who has lived for over a hundred years yet interacts with twelve-year-old Matara. This encounter further upends modern logic when Matara is served food typical of animals, yet finds it exceedingly delicious despite her modern sensibilities.

In *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*, the narrative strategy to reconstruct the dimension of mystery through the mystical world takes shapes as Matara befriends Molu the cat, Gama the dog, and a spider—creatures that are also centuries old. This narrative strategy of remystification enables even the protagonist to accept irreducible elements upon entering the mystical realm. The disruption of space and time intersects with unsettling doubts when Matara doubts that a cat could retain memories across centuries, questioning whether Molu is truly hundreds of years old, as living beings typically do not possess such lifespans. Despite her initial skepticism and logical hesitation, Matara follows Molu into the hidden hole. These unsettling doubts ultimately reactivate human reason; Matara questions why ruined forts continue to be zealously guarded and preserved by Gama and the spider, as well as why Adao and Faida, out of devotion to the Sultan, remain guardians of the lake even after transforming into crocodiles.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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