

Construction, Deconstruction, and the Question of Authorship in Magical Realist Narratives

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Received: Sep 15, 2023

Accepted: Nov 25, 2023

Published: December 24, 2023

Abstract

Colonial discourse in particular has constructed fixed frames and grids in which to place and separate individuals according to their class, race, gender, culture, nationality and ethnic models of unified and stereotypical representation of otherness and difference which postcolonial writers challenge. Writers from across the globe have adopted and adapted magical realism to fit their own cultures and within their own frame of reference. As a dominant literary mode, it can be considered as a decolonizing agent in a postmodern context. What the narrative mode offers is a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy, expressed in contemporary fiction. Specifically, this paper argues how magical realism is positioned in relation to the two contrasting operations of construction and deconstruction. What is its capacity to effect either or both of these outcomes? A prominent view has developed which understands the mode as one that structures an exclusively deconstructive narratology. I explore the narratives of Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirit*, Tony Morrison's *Beloved* and Hashem Garaibeh's *The Cat Who Taught Me How To Fly* that reiterate realist narrative conventions subversively to critique the effects of colonialism as a decolonizing device in the contemporary literary scholarship. This study utilizes the ideas from Stephen Slemon's "resistance to colonialism," Theo D'haen's "decenter privileged centers," Wendy B. Faris's "Questioning the colonial subjugation," and Christopher Warnes's "deconstructive notions of subjectivity" and "recover and affirm identities." Thus, the narratives in opposition to the notion of absolute history emphasizes the possibility of simultaneous existence of multiple truths and plural meanings.

Key words: *colonialism, postmodernism, magical realism, decolonizing agency, subjectivity, multiplicity*

Defining Magical Realist Mode

The particularist view of magic realism, which perceives the mode as necessitating specific thematic and extratextual deployments, is showcased in a

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critical discourse concerning the functionality of magic realism. Beyond insights drawn from the mode's historical applications, this dual capacity becomes apparent when particular (though predominant) thematic and political deployments are discerned from the minimal aesthetic requirements of magical realism. This distinction necessitates an understanding of the fundamental characteristics that constitute the mode. Once this clarity is achieved, magical realism can be disentangled from its historical and thematic usage, allowing for broader and fresh consideration

In making this distinction between aesthetics and particular deployments, I am, on the one hand, picking up and continuing an old critical argument, a "secular schism in Magical-Realist scholarship" that has never been resolved since Roh and Carpentier (Camayd-Freixas, 2004, p. 584). This is a debate over whether the mode should be defined formally or thematically, or, as Aldama (2009) describes it, a debate between magical realism as an aesthetic or an "ethnopoetics," or socioanthropological artifact (p. 9). In their anthology Zamora and Faris (1995) comment on the divergent views among two of the mode's founders: "Roh's emphasis is on aesthetic expression, Carpentier's on cultural and geographical identity," the latter being reflected in primitivist thematics such as Afro-Cuban voodoo (p. 7). Significantly, Camayd-Freixas (2004) observes, Zamora and Faris formulate magical realism as a conversation which should include both Roh and Carpentier, aesthetics and thematics, as is implicit in their inclusion of both in their anthology and is explicit in the view they espouse here: "Despite their different perspectives, Roh and Carpentier share the conviction that magical realism defines a revisionary position with respect to the generic practices of their times and media; each engages the concept to discuss what he considers an antidote to existing and exhausted forms of expression" (p. 7).

While I agree that magical realism includes both thematic and aesthetic aspects, this is true only in a specific sense. A robust understanding of magical realism requires both a close-up view in which one perceives the numerous different applications (i.e. the postcolonial), including how these specific usages have adapted the mode, and a bird's-eye view, a panoramic perspective of the magical realist timeline in its entirety, including an understanding of why and how magical realism as a theoretical term has attracted myriad usages.

As examples of the mode continue to proliferate, the need to separate aesthetics from thematics has become (again) compelling. This debate, then, is also recent, pressing afresh the necessity of reviving-and working towards resolving-it. This

is an issue underlying, I suggest, contemporary critics' advocating expansions in our understanding of the mode. Faris, Ouyang, and Christopher Warnes have each pointed to areas of exclusion within magical realist criticism wherein the mode's constructive capacities are overlooked, as I will describe in more detail later.

For now, it is enough to note that these exclusions indicate that the critical registers available to us for engaging with magical realism are too narrow, and this problem stems in part from a narrow, particularist view of the mode, one which has married thematics and extratextual issues with aesthetics.

Untangling these issues requires a new look at magic realism and some of its most basic presumptions. What are the implications of magical realism? What might it mean for a narrative to be written in this modality? How do we as readers and critics interpret its conspicuous magic? What is the potential range of narrative magic's functionality? This study re-poses and responds to these questions lying at the heart of magical realist hermeneutics with a view to re-evaluating limited critical paradigms. Ouyang and Warnes have recently objected to what they contend is the predominant critical rubric for magical realist texts for the way it equates the mode with a deconstructive narratology, a framework that lacks the theoretical space for a corresponding understanding of how the mode might also be used to construct. Ouyang asks: "Is magical realism deconstructive only or is it constructive as well?" (18). Warnes has posed a similar point, criticizing "the ways magical realism is so often automatically seen to deconstruct notions of subjectivity, history, nationhood, reality, without any sense of how it can also construct these notions" (7). From where might this idea come? Is deconstruction a function inherent to the mode's aesthetic DNA, or is this an issue of critical hermeneutics?

One can link this notion with significant deployments in the mode's historical development. Magic realism is closely allied with postmodernist politics of resistance. This is apparent in Stephen Slemon's observation of magical realism's social signification: "[...] a structure of perception-if only in literary critical registers-dogs the practice of magical realist writing, that is, the perception that magic realism, as a socially symbolic contract, carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial center and to its totalizing systems of generic classification" (Slemon, 2003, p. 408). Within both the postcolonialist and postmodernist strains, this resistance is often understood as taking the following approach: the non- or supra-rational is deployed to destabilize perceived hegemonic Western epistemology and empire. According to this, the mode is a defensive strategy defined negatively by what it is positioned against—anti-Western epistemology, antirealism, and anti-hegemony.

Its line of attack is destabilization so that, confusingly, according to Ouyang (2016), all texts which express “resistance to, subversion and reconfiguration of what may be termed ‘modern Western epistemology’, whether in the form of empiricism or empire, are uncovered, discussed and packaged as magical realism” (p. 16). This defensive strategy, when taken as magical realism’s only one, contrasts with and obscures an offensive strategy, ways by which the mode creates, builds, and constructs; though, it is not that magical realist literature has not functioned constructively or that significant critical research has not, at times, drawn attention to this, as will be looked at now.

I will organize the tracing of magical realism’s dual capacities, deconstruction and construction, through a third, related element, authorship, a topic which in itself has been a significant thread of debate running throughout the mode’s critical history. While numerous critics have traced the genealogy of the term magical realism, an illuminating project, by following the evolving perception of authorship, or who qualifies as an authentic magical realist storyteller, one is able to isolate precise points where magical realism has been married to specific deconstructive templates. This is true precisely because the intimate relationship between the mode and extratextual, political factors have often delimited potential authorship. By using authorship as a guiding rubric, it should be noted, I do not always follow a temporal progression, but an expansion, or widening, in what begins as a very restricted group identity. Moreover, these are not completely isolated categories; they overlap at certain points so that some authors might be situated within more than one phase. All three of the contemporaneous authors analyzed in this paper, Allende, Morrison, and Garaibeh can be situated within this category.

Role of Authorship in the Narratives

After one has assessed that a text meets the minimal modal criteria and might, therefore, usefully be analyzed within the magical realist framework, a second layer of meaning is determined through interrogating the way that the co-existing codes of magic and realism interact with each other and with the other narrative elements. Based on my survey of numerous magical realist critics, this might take on any one or a combination of three *modus operandi*: subversion, suspension, and summation. First, magic works to subvert realism and its representative worldview. Second, magic and realism are suspended between each other disjunctively. Third, magic functions towards reality/realism: it adds to it. One can determine which one(s) of these are at play in a text by interrogating the narrative with questions such as how does the magic function in relation to its realist counterpart, and vice versa? How

do the two codes correspond with the text's other narrative elements, aspects such as characterization and narration, as well as in relation to the entire narrative web? Concerning the text's production, how is the narrative and its author responding to the historical milieu? This range of possibilities represented in these (at least) three modes of operation not only offers greater precision when critically positioning a magical realist text, but it also suggests the broad potential of the mode, the diverse ways in which the codes of magic and realism might be made to interact.

The House of the Spirits abounds in magical elements, and those associated with magical powers are predominantly female characters. One of the most striking magical elements is Rosa the Beautiful's green hair—a distinctive feature that sets her apart. When the novel begins, Severo del Valle, Clara and Rosa's father, attends Sunday mass with his wife and eleven children, despite being an atheist and a mason. During the sermon by Father Restrepo, Nivea del Valle is captivated by Rosa's ethereal beauty. Rosa is described as if she were "made of a different material from the rest of the human race" with her green hair and yellow eyes (Allende, 1985, p. 4). Her birth is met with awe, and the midwife exclaims that she is "the most beautiful creature to be born on earth since the days of the original sin" (ibid.), resembling a flawless porcelain doll. Rosa's untimely death serves as an early indication of the novel's underlying theme of political violence.

Furthermore, Rosa's death signifies the first time in the novel that a family member pays the penalty for another. Rosa dies as a result of drinking the poisonous liquor sent to her father as a gift from his political rivals. Allende's criticism against political corruption and the hypocrisy of politicians is apparent from the very beginning of the novel. The supernatural elements in the novel are mostly associated with Clara, the protagonist who has had supernatural powers since childhood. Clara is a clairvoyant; she can foresee events, although she cannot change them, as in the case of Rosa's death. She predicts that someone in the family will die by mistake, but nobody takes notice of her warning. The next day, Rosa dies after consuming the poisonous drink intended for her father. Shocked by her sister's death and afraid of making further predictions, Clara remains mute for nine years. The family becomes accustomed to the youngest daughter's prophecies. She announces earthquakes in advance, which proves useful in their catastrophe-prone country. It allows them to secure valuable items and keep their slippers within reach in case they need to flee in the middle of the night (Allende, 1985, p. 8). Not only can Clara predict the future, but she can also move objects without touching them, interpret dreams, discern people's intentions, play the piano with her mind, and communicate with spirits.

Though Nana, the nanny of Clara, believes that her supernatural powers will fade away with menstruation, Clara's abilities actually intensify. After nine years of complete silence, she speaks for the first time to announce her impending marriage. When her father inquires about the groom's identity, Clara reveals that she will marry her deceased sister's fiancé, Esteban Trueba. Two months later, Esteban Trueba approaches the family seeking an eligible daughter to wed. Upon marrying Esteban, Clara becomes even more immersed in the spiritual realm, neglecting domestic responsibilities. She leaves everything in the hands of Nana and other servants, focusing on her psychic experiments (Allende, 1985, p. 135). Contrary to Nana's prediction, Clara's psychic abilities strengthen with marriage.

During her pregnancies, Clara foretells the gender of her children. Esteban desires a son to continue his bloodline, but Clara declares, "It's a little girl, and her name is Blanca" (ibid., p. 100). When she becomes pregnant with twins, Jaime and Nicolás, Esteban expresses his wish for a son. However, Clara announces, "It's not one, it's two," and specifies that the twins will be named Jaime and Nicolás, respectively (ibid., p. 115). According to Foreman (2003), "Allende locates Clara as the site of naming; and this wrests Adamic power from her husband, Trueba" (p. 291). Although some people do not take notice of Clara's powers of clairvoyance, those who heed her abilities benefit from them. For instance, during her childhood, she assists her uncle Marcos in fortune-telling. Marcos believes that Clara's clairvoyance will be a valuable source of income and an opportunity to improve his own clairvoyance. To turn clairvoyance into a profitable business, he purchases a crystal ball in the Persian bazaar, insisting that it has magic powers and originates from the East (although it is later found to be part of a buoy from a fishing boat). He sets it down on a background of black velvet and announces that he can tell people's fortunes, cure the evil eye, and enhance the quality of dreams, all for the modest sum of five centavos (Allende, 1985, p. 16). Marcos' fortune-telling business thrives, and people form long queues in front of his house. Thanks to Clara, he can interpret the dreams of his customers and guide them in locating lost objects.

Clara's supernatural powers are desired by Uncle Marcos, as he believes that her insights lead to accurate outcomes for his customers. Another man who seeks to possess Clara's magical abilities is Esteban Trueba. After Esteban impulsively slaps her, Clara refuses to speak to him. Her messages are conveyed through their granddaughter, Alba. However, when Esteban enters politics and inquires whether he will succeed, Clara's perpetual silence is nearly broken. She becomes a mentor for Esteban, who consistently considers her predictions before making political decisions. "I suppose you know what's tormenting me," Esteban Trueba finally

says. Clara nods. “Do you think I’m going to win?” Clara nods again, and Trueba feels completely relieved, as if she had given him a written guarantee. He laughs joyously, then stands up, places his hands on her shoulders, and kisses her forehead (Allende, 1985, p. 225). Esteban’s unwavering trust in Clara’s magical abilities leads him to consult her on every political matter, taking precautions accordingly.

Clara’s supernatural powers serve as a source of relief for her loved ones, particularly Esteban, Blanca, and Alba. When Esteban discovers that Blanca is pregnant with the revolutionary Pedro Tercero’s child, he becomes furious and falsely claims to have killed Pedro Tercero. Despite not having harmed his daughter’s lover, Esteban lies to Blanca in an attempt to make her forget Pedro. As Blanca sheds tears, Clara consoles her: “Stop crying, child,” she advises. “Too many tears will hurt the baby and make it unhappy.” Blanca responds with another sob. “Pedro Tercero is alive,” Clara adds. Blanca swallows her hiccups and blows her nose. “How do you know, Mama?” she asks. “Because I dreamt it,” Clara replies.

Morrison also creates a link between public and personal memories through the character of *Beloved*. Sethe says to Denver, “Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my *re-memory*. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it’s not . . . even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there,” living, breathing, eating. When Denver asks Sethe if other people can see it, Sethe replies: “Oh yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it’s you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It’s a *rememory* that belongs to somebody else” (Morrison, 1987, p. 36). In accepting this shared history and pain, Sethe sets the basis for *Beloved*’s appearance in physical shape in the novel. Sethe’s struggle to live with her painful memories is also seen in her community. *Beloved*’s return represents not just Sethe’s past, but also the community’s past. It symbolizes Ella’s child, the runaway captive from Deer Creek, and above all, the Middle Passage. This communal reclaiming happens when *Beloved* returns to 124 Bluestone Road. For the people in this community, *Beloved*’s presence can be read as the spiritual claim of an inherited past. Their memories of slavery are buried, repressed, or deliberately exorcised.

Beloved’s entrance into this world brings not only the river spirits but also other disturbed spirits, described as “the people of the broken necks, of fire-cooked blood, and black girls who had lost their ribbons” (Morrison, 1987, p. 181). In their search for *Beloved*, Sethe and Denver also find their own people. *Beloved*’s stories and actions symbolize all the children taken away from their mothers and

oppressed within white culture. She embodies history by resurrecting one of its anonymous victims. Thus, Beloved serves not only as a manifestation of Sethe's guilt but also as a bridge connecting the individual to the community. In other words, Beloved represents the link between personal and communal history. These intertwined histories find expression in Beloved's physical form, allowing for the healing of certain wounds. In the novel's final section, Beloved, who has revealed her malevolent nature, is exorcised by the women of the community: "So thirty women made up that company and walked slowly, slowly toward 124" (p. 257). Sethe is overwhelmed by painful memories, rendering her silent. The community members recognize Sethe's anguish in Beloved's presence. They see:

Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child, for other than those times when Beloved needed her, Sethe confined herself to a corner chair. The bigger Beloved got, the smaller Sethe became; the brighter Beloved's eyes, the more those eyes that used never to look away became slits of sleeplessness. Sethe no longer combed her hair or splashed her face with water. She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur. (250)

As P. Gabrielle Foreman argues, "Beloved's most basic premise lies in the magical: it is the community's shared belief in magic that enables them to save Sethe from Beloved's negative effects" (Foreman, 2003, p. 299). Beloved's appearance allows the community to witness the pain Sethe is experiencing: "the singing women recognized Sethe at once and surprised themselves by their absence of fear when they saw what stood next to her. The devil-child" (Morrison, 1987, p. 261). They confront not only Sethe's past but also their own past: "when they caught up with each other, all thirty, and arrived at 124, the first thing they saw was not Denver sitting on the steps, but themselves. Younger, stronger, even as little girls lying in the grass asleep" (p. 258). Consequently, their images of a younger self, influenced by Beloved's presence, allow them to recognize a spirituality shattered by the experiences of slavery. In this way, they are able to evoke their dismembered selves created during slavery.

In the interview, "The Arab Legacy Is Replete with Magical Realism," Gharaibeh (n.d.) suggests that the Arab culture and the Islamic religion are full of issues related to flight. He writes that:

Our collective imagination has different examples of flying. People envision the spirit as a bird that flies to the sky when someone dies. The wings of Angel Gabriel

extend from the East to the West. In our culture, we also have the stories of Alburag and The Night Journey and Ascension, [The religious belief that] a child is a bird in heaven, the story of the dervish who flies from al-Sham to Mecca and arrived before Pilgrims, Abbas ibn Firnas, flying in the stories of Sindbad and The Arabian Nights. (para. 2)

Gharaibeh (n.d.) asserts the significance of flying in the Arab culture, as he believes that human flying is synchronized with human walking, none begins before the other, and each has its own significance. So, while flying is associated with the traditions and myths of the African-American and the Caribbean people, in *The Cat Who Taught Me How to Fly*, flying is associated with the Arab legacy. Unlike Morrison's and Schwarz-Bart's protagonists, Gharaibeh's protagonist is psychologically free, but it is only his captive body that is imprisoned. In fact, it is his psychological freedom that causes his imprisonment. Furthermore, unlike many Arabic prison novels which concentrate on reflecting the physical agony of the prisoner, Gharaibeh's novel negotiates the psychological part. Some examples include, Mustafa Khalifa's prison novel *The Shell* (٧٠٠٨), and the prison novels written by the Jordanian novelist and poet Ayman Otom which reveal the harsh ways of the physical torture that is practiced in prison.

The Cat Who Taught Me How to Fly reveals the inner turmoil of tormented bodies and their transformation over time, culminating in flight. Gharaibeh's focus on the psychological aspect of the protagonist connects spiritual growth to flying as a magical realist symbol. Lovalerie King (2003) argues that "the question of whether those who take flight to escape oppression survive in a physical sense is less important than the fact that they are no longer oppressed" (p. 122). Emad, the novel's protagonist, faces arrest due to his political orientation and affiliation with the Jordanian Communist Party. His situation mirrors that of political prisoners from various parties, including the National, Islamic, Marxist, and Liberal factions. These prisoners are incarcerated simply for embracing specific ideologies.

Similarly, Emad bravely speaks his own truth. Despite being tempted to sign a condemnation of his party in exchange for a reduced prison sentence, he refuses. Emad cannot bear the idea of gaining freedom through a compromise that would betray his party and comrades (Gharaibeh, n.d., p. 32). The paper that the jailors want Emad to sign has the following written on it: "I, the undersigned, denounce the destructive Communist Party, and announce my loyalty and devotion to His Majesty the King and to his wise government" (Gharaibeh, n.d., p. 7). Each time Emad thinks about the paper, he becomes reluctant whether to confirm the condemnation

and gain his freedom or not. He really wants to get his freedom, but at the same time, he does not want to get it through an authoritative power. Hence, whenever Emad decides to denounce the Communist Party, his mind shifts unconsciously to fantasies related to birds and human flying.

Sometimes Emad draws a bird, other times he imagines or dreams that he is a bird attempting to fly, or that he possesses wings and can soar independently. Slemon (1993) suggests the following:

In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the “other” (p. 409).

This tension is evident throughout the novel. For instance, Emad, addressing himself, contemplates: “Confess! Denounce!” (p. 8). However, he also experiences moments when he feels like a free bird soaring above Yarmouk University (p. 18). Later, he declares: “Damn the Party, damn the government... I will confess, denounce, and—” (p. 31). Subsequently, he sketches “the bird and the cage... he pushed the bird’s head out of the cage, his wings stretched, tearing the wires” (p. 33).

All these incidents foreshadow Emad’s own flight. His psychological tension is evident. Whenever he contemplates signing the condemnation and submitting to the jailer’s authority, thoughts of flying take various forms in his mind, empowering him to resist signing. It is possible to suggest that Emad’s flying mirrors an aesthetic mimicry of Icarus’s flight. Both Emad and Icarus seek to escape incarceration and tyrannical oppression through flight. However, while Emad is physically and spiritually empowered, Icarus’s over-ambition leads to his demise. In Greek mythology, Icarus and his father, Daedalus, are imprisoned in a tower by Minos, the son of Zeus. To escape, Daedalus constructs wings from feathers and wax. He warns Icarus not to fly too low, risking drowning in the sea, or too high, risking the sun melting his wings. Icarus’s hubris drives him to fly too high, resulting in his death. In contrast, Emad becomes a wiser man who believes in himself, aided by *The Cat*, a fellow prisoner.

The character of *The Cat* is symbolic; it embodies multiple visions of reality. While in real life, The Cat was an infamous thief living in an Amman alley, in *The Cat Who Taught Me How to Fly*, The Cat becomes a heroic figure who inspires Emad and

imparts the knowledge of flight. The novel takes its name from this transformative feline. Gharaibeh suggests that “the symbolism of the character of The Cat comes from the fact that angels and demons are two sides of the same coin” (n.d.). Despite The Cat’s voicelessness in reality and society’s perception of him as a malevolent thief, Gharaibeh deconstructs this narrative to allow The Cat to share the honorable aspects of his story. Emad’s spiritual awakening leads him to recognize that his desire to fly transcends mere escape; it signifies resistance, self-identification, and advocacy for all imprisoned individuals who cannot voice their own experiences. The Cat imparts this wisdom to Emad: “[t]he origin of man is not a monkey. It is the soul with two wings; when you discover your soul, its wings will grow!” (p. 33). From this saying onward, Emad starts giving the idea of flying serious consideration. His mind shifts from imagining liberated birds to envisioning and dreaming of his own wings. Hence, whenever Emad contemplates surrendering, he imagines and dreams that he possesses wings, capable of flight like a bird. He reflects, “[He] thought about getting two wings to fly away from the pungent smell lingering in this gloomy prison” (Gharaibeh, n.d., p. 87). The narrator further describes Emad’s dream: “He slept a little, dreamed that he was a bird in a jasmine bush, and then saw himself standing at the prison’s wall, with his arms wide open... and heard the Cat calling ‘Fly, soar...’” (p. 87). This tension persists throughout the novel. Slemon (1993) argues that in magical realist works, “a complete transference from one mode to the other never takes place, and the novel remains suspended between the two” (p. 11). However, this tension remains unresolved until flight becomes a reality.

At the end of the novel, Emad’s flying is described in a dramatic scene:

He bent to the front, and then stood straight. He felt the feathers cover his head, shoulders, and stretch to his hips... He spread his arms wide, exposed his body to the jasmine in the sky, filled his lungs with the wet air, tiptoed... fluttered his wings, and flew! (Gharaibeh, n.d., pp. 144-145)

In this way, the narrative illustrates how the protagonist challenges the assumptions of authoritative power and gains his freedom through flight. As the novel nears its conclusion, the process of flying, considered a magical realist symbol, releases the tension between the imprisoned individual and the jailers. At this pivotal moment, the tension between the magical and the real intensifies, as flying becomes an alternative to the harsh reality of imprisonment.

To conclude, flying in this section is a magical realist symbol that attempts to release

the tension Emad goes through in the course of the novel. The tension is gradually improved not only through the idea of resistance that is dominant in the narrative, but also through combining history and fiction through the character of The Cat, as well as blurring the role of the author with that of the narrator to expose the complexity of such tensions. Thus, flying in this novel is a magical realist symbol that releases several kinds of tension in the narrative, and eventually helps Emad to realize his ultimate purpose: freedom.

Finally, magical realism, as a discursive heterogeneity, successfully captures reality in alternate ways and from multiple perspectives—embracing both the known and unknown, visible and invisible. Through focal shifts, word plays, repetition, and the organic mingling of the real and the fantastic, magical realism aims to privilege marginalized narrative traditions. With imaginative efflorescence, reliance on orality, and an authorial reticence accompanied by ironic distance, it gives voice to the silenced ‘other,’ renders the invisible visible, offers alternate representations of history, and transgresses ontological asymmetrical boundaries, thereby opening up a decolonized space.

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