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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGES
STUDIES, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND
LITERATURE**

Magical Realism in Alemayehu Wassie's Trilogy

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June, 2020

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

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By

Hailu Abebe

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Dedication

I am dedicating this thesis to my beloved father (hopefully in heaven) who induced the love of education since my childhood and consigned me to continue my academic career as much as I can. I also want to remember our eldest brother Abebaw Abebe whose life was cut short. They have meant and continue to mean so much to me even if they are no longer of this world, their memories and advice as well as encouragements still echoed in my mind and continue to regulate my life in the future too. May your souls rest in peace forever.

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Abstract

Among the prominent literary styles, magical realism, which was first applied in the art (painting) in the 1920s and later on applied in literature has been given less attention by literary scholars at Addis Ababa University. Basically, magical realism combines realism and the magic (or fantastic) in a way that the magical elements and miracles rise naturally from the reality portrayed. The literary works of many prominent Ethiopian writers have been studied on various topics. However, there is no study in approaching novels from a magical realist perspective.

It is not common approaching Ethiopian novels in a magical realist perspective, and this is what makes this study different from others. In addition to this, as far as the researcher is concerned, no research has been conducted on the selected novels in other literary perspectives as well. As a result, this study is designed to fill the gap by investigating the magical realist elements/aspects used by Alemayehu Wassie through magical realism analysis on the selected novels. Thus, this study helps anyone wants to understand the application of Magical Realism characteristics or elements and theories in analyzing literary works.

Based on a review of literature on theory of magical realism, Alemayehu Wassie's Trilogy namely Emegua, Zigora and Merbebit have been analyzed. Critical reading is used to analysis of each novel based on the elements of magical realism as discussed in the theoretical framework. Extracts that are taken from each novel have been used to analyze the aspects of magical realism in the selected novels. The conceptual translation is given for each extract following the original version which is used in the analysis. Finally, the analyses of the study have shown that most of the elements of magical realism have been reflected in each novel.

Magical realism studies have been conducted on different literary works, but it is confirmed that this study is distinguished since it focused on the reflection of magical realism elements in the selected novels namely: Emegua, Zigora, and Merbebit.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Basically, art is a means by which human beings use their creative skill and ability to express their feelings, belief, and thoughts as well as their imaginations in different ways. Among these ways, literature is one of them. As Selden R., et al, (2005) explain a work of art of any period achieves this quality by expressing a high level of social awareness, revealing a sense of true social conditions and feelings of a particular epoch (p.85). Thus, through literature, writers disclose the social, economic, political, and other fetters of the society in the past, present, or future. Nowadays, it is becoming a common trend to write about supernatural realities and rational views.

Even though the way of writing about reality is presented in different ways, it was not a new trend to depict reality. Trivedi (2013) explains the idea of portraying real action as:

Art was first discussed by Aristotle who claimed that the act of imitating life, or mimesis, is a natural instinct of humans. Aristotle explains the ancient Greek belief that witnessing art is an essential way to learn about the universal truth of life. For this, the art itself must appear to be real to the reader or viewer in depicting something that exists. Aristotle claimed that it's better to convince the reader of the realism of something impossible rather than to be unconvincing about something that is true (p. 390).

Among the best methods of portraying reality, magical realism is becoming a common style of fiction that contains magical elements as well as a writing style that paints a realistic view of the modern world even though it is difficult to clearly label it either in the modernism or postmodernism genre. On this issue, Aldea (2011) states that it remains unclear how magical realism can be satisfactorily described as a particularly postmodern genre (p. 10). Certainly, efforts to bring into line magical realism with postmodernism, although interesting, have failed to define the genre. On the other hand, Faris (2004) argues that in articulating the position of magical realism as growing out of modernism into postmodernism, it is useful to consider Brian McHale's (cited in Faris, 2004, p. 30) idea that modernism is epistemological, concerned with questions of knowledge, while postmodernism is ontological, concerned with questions of being (p. 30).

On the other hand, Ates (2013) tries to clarify the confusion between magic realism and postmodernism is mainly based on some similarities both terms have as it is stated below:

The recognition of both magic realism and postmodernism in the realms of art and literature traces to the 1960s and the appearance of postmodernism in daily life appears in the 1980s. Common to both terms is their application to parody, their ability to transgress borders, and the similarities of their characters. Characters in magic realist texts do not care whether the occurrences they witness are supernatural. The characters of postmodern texts neither care if what is told is true nor question it, accepting everything as it is. (p. 21)

Postmodernism, as many critics agree, emerged in the 1930s in Latin America with Federico de Onis and was rediscovered and reused in both Europe and America with its inclusion of different meanings and different areas in the 40s and 50s (Ates, 2013, p. 22). Moreover, in the early period, “magic realism” and “postmodernism” were limited to North- and South American prose, but then they spread to other literary fields and geographical areas (Ibid, 2013, p. 22). This shows that the magical realism came from art. Additionally, Aljohani (2016) posits that magical realism is a literary trend in postmodernism, in which magical elements are introduced into a realistic atmosphere to have a deeper understanding of reality (p. 74). Moreover, Bowers (2004) argues about magical realism writers claiming that the style of their writing is often considered to be postmodern due to the narrative techniques they employed in which they play with the expectations of the reader, particularly concerning time and the structure of the plots (p. 32).

Many scholars define magical realism differently. For example, Simhachalam (2014) defines the term ‘magic realism’ as a style of writing or technique that includes magical as well as supernatural events narrated realistically without any doubt about the improbability of the events. Simhachalam clarifies that magical realism writing questions the nature of reality and draws attention to the act of creation by using a new combination of fact and fancy (263). As we can understand, the combination of the real and the fantastic is what makes magical realism differ from other genres.

Moreover, Kembrytè (2018) and many others agree that the term “magical realism” firstly was introduced in painting and later it appeared in the literature. Nowadays, people introduced this term in lives quite widely – magical realism is used everywhere, even in cinema (p. 5). While the beginning is in painting, the destination is stretched in different arts. According to Roh (cited in Kembrytè, 2018), magic realism is “a way to uncover the mystery hidden in everyday reality”(p.5). Even though it was introduced first in painting, as mentioned above, it was moved to literature as

well as other forms like film, and nowadays; it is a worldwide and popular writing trend. Similarly, Ulfa (2017) also agrees that the term “magical realism” has been a huge topic both in art and literature since Franz Roh (cited in Ulfa 2017:1) first introduced the term to explain the birth of post-Expressionism which then became popular in Latin America especially after the publication of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1967 (p. 1).

Even though, it was first applied in painting. later, the term was applied in fiction too. As a narrative strategy, Melakneh (2008) says the term ‘Magical Realism’ was applied in literature by Venezuela essayist and critic Arturo Uslar Pietri in 1960s first even though it came into vogue after Nobel Prize winner Miguel Anger Asturias used the expression to define the style of his novels (p.84). On the other hand, in the Encyclopedia, Britannica explains that:

A chiefly Latin-American narrative strategy that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction. Although this strategy is known in the literature of many cultures in many ages, the term magic realism is a relatively recent designation, first applied in the 1940s by Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier, who recognized this characteristic in much Latin-American literature. Some scholars have posited that magic realism is a natural outcome of postcolonial writing, which must make sense of at least two separate realities—the reality of the conquerors as well as that of the conquered.

(<https://mn01910242.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/842/Magical%20Realism%20definitions.pdf>)

As we can understand, comparing with other writing styles, magical realism was introduced before some decades. Trivedi (2013) states that magic realism in literature appeared first in the early 1970s in Canada, West Africa, and the United States and now spans many locations across the globe. Trivedi briefs the spread of the genre saying that notable locations of magical realism are Canada, the Caribbean, West Africa, India, U.S.A., and England (p. 392). Currently, magical realism is becoming common writing all over the world including Ethiopia.

Schiffer (2015) explains that in literature, “magical realism” was first used to describe a genre of fiction that originated in Latin America, and is still commonly used to refer to writers like Alejo Carpentier, Jorge Luis Borges, and Gabriel García Márquez (p. 3). Nowadays, however, the writing style blowouts all over the world including Ethiopia.

Moreover, Simhachalam (2014) clarifies, Magic Realism has many central ideas like ‘significance of magic and myth’, ‘critique of rationality and progress’, ‘doubting about reality, ‘exploration of identity’ along with some exceptional presentation styles. Simhachalam illustrates that most of the

magic realist texts have the great capabilities of myth and magic to create a version of reality that distinguishes itself from what is normally supposed as a “real life” (265).

As Luis Leal (cited in Warnes, 2005) explains, magical realism does not call for the creation of imaginary worlds but rather displays an attitude in which ‘the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, human acts (p. 4). This shows that magical realism writers depict in the way that extraordinary events get equal acceptance as ordinary events in their writing. Additionally, they use real settings instead of creating another world in their novel. In short, magical realism is a contemporary writing trend that paints a realistic view of the modern world which also augments magical elements. Faris (2004) explains its popularity saying that as we have been observing, contemporary magical realism has developed as a narrative mode that produces fictions in diverse cultural traditions, its continuing popularity ensuring those productions a growing international audience (p. 33).

Even though many critiques and scholars have done on magic realism, there is no much research that has been conducted in investigating magic realism’s function as well as its characteristics or elements, especially in Ethiopian literature. This circumstance has directed the researcher to the statement of the problem of this study which is to investigate how magic realism is used to accept paradoxical events as normal phenomena in everyday life as they are depicted in Alemayehu Wassie’s trilogy.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The prominent literary works of many Ethiopian writers’ literary works have been studied on various topics, even though the selected novels have not been studied yet as far as the researcher’s knowledge is concerned. There are many reasons that the researcher was interested to conduct research on Alemayehu Wassie’s trilogy which portrays magical realistic elements. One of these reasons was approaching novels in magical realism elements is not a common phenomenon in Ethiopia. Most of the critics focus on other trends, and these novels are not yet investigated by other researchers. Currently, Alemayehu Wassie is one of the greatest novelists among famous Ethiopian writers who contributed valuable literary works that got acceptance by the readers. He stands adamantly to write and express the truth about different critical issues such as supernatural realities, rational views, Western views and beliefs towards Ethiopia, and exposing or showing the

realities of the society through his work of arts. He is one of the prominent contemporary Ethiopian literary figures.

Everyone who studies or writes about magical realism doesn't scape without mentioning Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* novel as an example for the genre. At the same time, Alemayehu Wassie's trilogy is the most accurate example of magical realism novels that were written recently. His literary works are well known by most of the people especially those who read the novels clearly understand that they are a reflection of the thoughts and elements of magical realism that paints a realistic view of the modern world.

However, it will be great to analyze the ideology of the author as well as the ideology of the time in which the novels were written and the relation of the content of the novels with the supernatural realities, rational views, cultural aspects, socio-economic and political realities, etc. that were exposed, in addition to the themes and other aspects of literary critics to study the influence of the magical realism interpretation of the novels.

Hence, in this thesis, the researcher attempts to study how different Magical Realism elements are employed by Alemayehu Wassie in his trilogy: *Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*. The selected novels under the study are not yet studied from magical realism aspects.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate the magical realist elements/aspects used by Alemayehu Wassie through a textual analysis of the selected novels.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

To achieve this general objective, the analysis is intended to:

- Investigate how the literary works reflect (intentionally or not) the elements of magical realism.
- Identify Alemayehu Wessie's authorial ideology (Magical Realism) as it is reflected in his literary works.
- Examine the supernatural realities and rational views portrayed in the novels.

- Compare the similarities between the settings in the selected novels and the real-world setting.

1.4. Research Questions

Equivalent to the objectives of the research, this study answers the following questions:

1. What are the magical realist elements employed by the writer in his novels?
2. What is the authorial ideology of the writer?
3. What are the supernatural realities or extraordinary events portrayed in the novels?
4. Is there any similarity between the setting in the novels and the real world?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Hopefully, this study mainly helps:

- Anyone who wants to understand the application of Magical Realism characteristics or elements and theories in analyzing literary works.
- The critics in explaining the ideological orientation of the writer by analyzing the Magical Realism elements presented in the novels.
- The other important purpose of the study is to pave the way for other researchers who plan to conduct a literary research ideological investigation of literary works of the author (Alemayehu Wessie) or related novels as a reference.

1.6. Methods and Procedures of the Study

The writer applied textual analysis method so that the objectives of the study can be achieved. As the analysis of this study focuses on Alemayehu Wassie's Trilogy, critical reading is utilized to analyze the novels: *Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*. To do this, the researcher goes through different relevant sources to the topic under discussion from libraries. The available sources are works of different prominent scholars and researches in the area of Magical Realism. The novels are analyzed based on the theoretical framework given in chapter three. And also, the researcher takes sample extracts from the novels under discussion which are relevant to analyze the novels. Sample extracts are used from the novels for interpretation to show how magical realism is reflected in the selected novels.

Since the study needs data, the writer collected both primary and secondary data. The primary data are the selected novels of Alemayehu Wessie, and the secondary resources are reference books on magical realism and using magical realism as a theoretical framework, research papers conducted before on magical realism, and other materials.

1.7. The Scope of the Study

The study includes the three novels of Alemayehu Wessie and the scope of this study is limited to examining Alemayehu Wessie's trilogy namely *Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit* from Magical realists' principles of literary criticism. The novels are trilogy since, the main character and one of the minor characters portrayed in all novels, the recurring themes, narrative style, and the setting are similar. Curiosity is one of the interesting themes which is common in all novels. In addition to this, the story in the second novel ends in the third novel. Moreover, as far as the researcher's concern is to make textual analysis only using magical realism, other aspects such as elements of the novels, thematic analysis, and other issues are not treated here.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, methodology, significance of the study, the scope of the study, notes on the author, and organization of the study. Chapter two treats review of related literature. and the theoretical framework which contains the important points like concepts of Magical Realism, a brief history of Magical Realism, elements of magical realism, and characteristics of magical realism are discussed in detail. Chapter three deals with the analysis of Magical Realism characteristics as reflected in the trilogy (*Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*). The last chapter contains a summary and the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Review of Related Literature

Currently, magical realism is one of the contemporary literary genres which attracts scholars and researchers. Basically, the number of magical realist texts as well as writers are very few comparing with other modes of writings in general. When we come to Ethiopian writers, it seems the concept is at the beginning stage. As a new literary movement, relatively, there is no much study conducted in magical realism concepts. As far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned, there is no magical realist study using Ethiopian writers in general and that of Alemayehu Wassie's trilogy in particular. Moreover, the selected novels are not yet studied, as far as the researcher's knowledge, on other literary theories and topics too.

However, some studies have been conducted by Ethiopians and others using magical realism. For example, Wadinga Wandama (2016) wrote an article on "*Prospects of Studying Magical Realism in Nigerian Literature*"; the writer tried to find out some of the reasons why magical realism is an interesting topic in literary studies today. Some of the important features of magical realism in world literature have been discussed. It was concluded that in Nigerian literature, some magic realist writers employed magical realism elements.

On the other hand, the MA thesis conducted by Mezegebu (2012) on "*A Comparative Study of Magical Realism in One Hundred Years of Solitude and The Famished Road*", is one of them. She analyzed the characteristics of magical realism in the two novels. She compared and contrasted the elements of magical realism employed in the two novels to show the similarities and differences between them. It was concluded that the novels reflect most of the elements of magical realism.

In 2012, Lobodziec wrote an article on "*Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical realism in Beloved revisited*"; the writer attempted to estimate the extent to which Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is representative of magical realism. Finally, the writer concluded that even though the analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in terms of magical realism is more problematic than it appears, at first sight, certain tenets of magical realism theory appear quite applicable in analyzing Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Moreover, Melakneh (2008) conducted his doctoral study on “Post-Colonialism and Mainstream Anglophone African Novel [Ca. 1970-2000]: A Comparative Approach”; he discussed some important points like the emergence of magical realism and three thematic and technical features (the first is authorial reticence, hybridity and prevalence of folklore) that characterize magical realism. In addition to this, literary techniques of magical realism have been discussed. In the analysis part, the researcher analyzed some magical realism texts written by African writers.

The MA thesis conducted by Mzali (2003) on “*Approaching the Real Through Magical Realism: Magical Realism in Contemporary Indian Literature in English*” is another important related research that was conducted from a magical realism perspective. The researcher investigated three Indian magical realist texts written in English. The researcher analyzed Narayan, R. as a magical realist writer, magic realism as political commentary in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame* and *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, and strategic exoticism through magical realism in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*. At last, Mzali found out that the appellation of the mode is somewhat misleading in the sense that the magic in the magic realism is not introduced as miraculous rather normalized and integrated with the reality as described in the narratives.

Even though many research works are not conducted in the concepts of magical realism like other modes, some researches are conducted and articles are written on magical realism. On *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, *Midnight’s Children* by Salman Rushdie (Bowers, 2004:46), *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri, *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende (Lavanya and Rao, 2018:15), and some others well-known magical realism texts have been studied and analyzed by many researchers and critics.

Moreover, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy (Bowers, 2004, p. 46), Alejo Carpentier, Robert Kroetsch, Jack Hodgins (Hazelton, cited in Guest, 2006, p. 63), Günter Grass, Amos Tutuola (Lavanya & Rao, 2018, p. 15) and so on are magical realism writers in different parts of the world. Most of the critics and researchers analyzed their work and many articles have been written on thematic and technical features of magical realism. Others compared and contrasted the similarities and differences between novels. This thesis is different from the others since it focuses on the reflection of magical realism elements in the selected novels namely: *Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

In this part of the study, the researcher tries to review different magical realism theories and concepts written by different scholars, critics, and researchers. As a result, various scholars' concepts related to magical realism and related issues are presented in detail so that the research relies on a clear theoretical background.

2.2.1. Concepts of Magical Realism

In addition to its newly introduced literary movement and its source, the term magical realism has, to somewhat, ambiguous and confusing meaning and implication. As Lavanya and Rao (2018) postulate the terms, 'magic realism' and 'magical realism' are often confused and used interchangeably by both critics and by readers (p. 6). On the same issue, Bowers (2004) agrees that 'magic realism' or 'magical realism' are terms which many people have heard and yet very few readers have a clear idea of what they may include and imply (p. 2). Bowers believes that much of the confusion concerning their meaning has occurred due to the conflation of criticism on 'magic realist' art and literature and that of 'magical realist' fiction. Even though both of them have many features in common, the two terms refer to subtly different characteristics and influences (Ibid, 2004, p. 2). As a result, it is better to make this confusion clear first before proceeding to the other issues.

According to Lavanya and Rao (2018), distinguish the two terms as 'Magic realism' has its origins in art, and 'magical realism' refers specifically to a mode of fiction; as such they have different characteristics and influences (p. 6). So, when we say magic realism, we are talking about art(painting); on the other hand, we use magical realism for writing (fiction).

What makes both, the painting and the fiction common is the magic. Even though, the magic denotes different meaning in the painting and literature as it is explained below:

In magic realist painting, 'magic' refers to the mystery of life. In magical realist writing, 'magic' refers to extraordinary occurrences, particularly anything spiritual or unaccountable by science, for example, ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents, strange atmosphere. Magical realism is a narrative mode whereby such magical occurrences are depicted in a realistic narrative (Lavanya & Rao, 2018, p. 8).

Essentially, magical realism in literature is a very prominent writing trend. Asayesh (2017) agrees on this point saying that magical realism first became well known throughout Latin America in the 1960s and became globally recognized from 1980 onwards (p. 1). This shows the movement of magical realism is a very recent phenomenon in which scholars and researchers work hard for further clarifications.

Among the definitions of magical realism, Faris, (2004) defines the term “magical realism” combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them (p. 1). Additionally, Zamora (cited in Begum, 2014) says that magic realism combines realism and the magic (or fantastic) in a way that the magical elements and miracles rise naturally from the reality portrayed (p. 13). According to the above definitions, magical realism is a recently developed writing style that embraces extraordinary events (fantastic) is portrayed in the way that the reader accepts as ordinary happenings.

Furthermore, Khatib (2009) explains that magic realist writers apply different rules to the world of fiction, but still realistically represent them. They make the reader believe in the story as a matter-of-fact. In magical realist writers’ stories, the strangeness becomes familiar; the magical becomes real and the dead become alive (p. 4). In addition to this, Bowers (2004) also agrees with the above explanation that ‘Magical realism’, which of all the terms has had the most critical consideration, relies most of all upon the matter-of-fact, realist tone of its narrative when presenting magical happenings (p. 3). For this reason, it is often considered to be related to, or even a version of literary realism

Magical realism has different features than other modes of writings. Extraordinary happenings are presented as ordinary or regular realities. As Moore states that literary mode rather than a distinguishable genre, magical realism is characterized by two conflicting perspectives, one based on a so-called rational view of reality and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality.(<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/21/magical-realism/>)

In addition to this, one of the unique features of magical realism is its reliance upon the reader to follow the example of the narrator in accepting both realistic and magical perspectives of reality on the same level. It relies upon the full acceptance of the genuineness of the fiction during the

reading experience, no matter how different this perspective may be to the reader's non-reading opinions and judgments (Bowers, 2004, p. 3-4).

Moreover, Kembrytè (2018) explains that in magic realist works, magic is not described as magic in its literal meaning; it is believed to be true, for the characters of the magic realist stories; it is the only reality they know (p. 10). Accordingly, remarkable things in magical realism are not revealed as a dream or an imagination. Thus, that would take the readers further from the real world, the world we live in, into the space of pure fantasy. This shows that magic is considered as an ordinary event in our day to day life. Additionally, Lavanya and Rao (2018) state that magical realist text typically contains an element of magic, something that cannot be explained by the laws of the universe as we know them (p. 8). Moreover, these magical events happen, are seen by one or more characters, and cannot be explained in terms of cause and effect. Reactions to these events by ordinary people, however; are familiar and disturbing, thus; serving as a critique of human nature (Ibid, 2018, p. 8).

According to Andrews (cited in Wandama, 2016), magic realist writers typically presume that readers have faith and believe in the existence of some kind of spiritual plane. Superstition is treated as part of daily life and brings another dimension to the narratives being relayed (p. 3). Moreover, Andrews adds that special value is placed on the retention of oral traditions within these texts. As briefed above, oral traditions are incorporated in magical realist texts. Thus, magic realists contest the notion of history as a linear and logical phenomenon from a wide variety of perspectives by including superstition, folklore, and the voices of the otherwise neglected members of the population. On the other hand, African writings are fundamentally rich in such issues as Oha (2014) says that most African novels have elements of religion and politics in them. The reasons are not far-fetched. There was resistance because there was a structure on the ground. Africans have strong religious and political structures that worked for the people (p. 117). In short, as briefed above, it is very easy for African writers to inculcate fantasy events and folklore in their magical realism texts since they have the trend to include them in addition to the readers' acceptance of some extraordinary events as normal in their daily life. Moreover, such events have great acceptance in Ethiopia too.

Zamora and Faris (cited in Bowers 2004) explain that magical realism's distinguishing feature from other literary realism is that it fuses the two opposing aspects of the oxymoron (the magical

and the realist) to form one new perspective. They clarify that because it breaks down the distinction between the usually opposing terms of the magical and the realist, magical realism is often considered to be a disruptive narrative mode (p. 3). For this reason, it is considered that “magical realism is a mode suited to exploring...and transgressing...boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic” (Bowers, 2004, p. 3)

In addition to the above explanation, Bowers (2004) points out that the key to understanding how magical realism works is to understand how the narrative is constructed to provide a realistic context for the magical events of the fiction (p. 21). This shows that the way how stories are developed in magical realist texts is different from other genres. Magical realism, therefore, relies upon realism but only so that it can stretch what is acceptable as real to its limits. It is therefore related to realism but is a narrative mode distinct from it (Ibid, 2004, p. 21). In short, the magical realism portrays extraordinary events in the way that the reader accepts as an ordinary.

As it is discussed so far, magical realism as a prominent genre, scholars claim about some issues like its source. Among these, Faris (2004) argues that the concept of magic realism raises many problems, both theoretical and historical’ as they reason out as follow:

From its beginning, since magical realism came from art (painting), Faris explains that throughout its history, and erosion of clear distinctions plagues the term magical realism itself, which is flawed for many reasons. It began in art history, having been coined, to repeat, by Franz Roh in 1925 to describe European painting’s movement back toward realism after expressionism, but also virtually simultaneously used by Bontempelli to describe both painting and literature in 1926 (p. 39).

This shows that still, the concept of magical realism needs further study to conceptualize or theorize the genre on an inflexible base. Even though magical realism was developed in such difficult conditions, on the other hand, Faris mentions also three reasons for its persistence.

First, and most importantly, the term persists because it is useful as a description of a worldwide trend...A second, and contrasting, the reason for the seductive persistence of the term magical realism is that it suggests ways in which this genre can be related to and traced back to earlier modes of fiction, which also contain combinations of realism and fantasy...Finally, like the fiction, it labels, the combination of materialism and mystery in the term magical realism may appeal to us because it suggests a possible approach to the realm of the spirit in western critical discourse (Faris, 2004, p. 39-40)”.

In general, Faris (2004) explains that because realism attempts to create an accurate picture of the world as it is experienced by ordinary human consciousness. Moreover, Faris briefs that readers of realistic fiction are most familiar with focalizations that seem to be grounded in empirical evidence, the quantity of sensory data enhancing the reader’s confidence that this representation is

accurate and causing the reader to invest the narrative's picture of the world with authority (p. 44). As a result, magical realism texts invite the reader to accept unusual events as usual events.

2.2.2. A Brief History of Magical Realism

Since magical realism was not started by its own, since it came from art, its historical background is one of the scholars' argumentative point as Faris (2004) states that throughout its history, and erosion of clear distinctions plagues the term magical realism itself, which is flawed for many reasons (p. 39). As stated above, magical realism through its historical background passed through different challenges.

Bowers (2004) explains that the idea of portraying real actions in art was first discussed by Aristotle who claimed that the act of imitating life, or mimesis, is an instinct of humans. Even though it was started since then, its approach or method of depicting the reality has been changed gradually (p. 20). "However, twentieth-century theories of realism in literature [...] emphasize the involvement of the imaginative process in literature..." (ibid, 2004, p. 21). Among these literary modes, magical realism can be mentioned as an example of contemporary writing styles.

Most critics agree that the term "magical realism" was first introduced by Franz Roh, a German art critic, who considered magical realism as an art category. To him, it was a way of representing and responding to reality and pictorially depicting the enigmas of reality. In Latin America in the 1940s, magical realism was a way to express the realistic American mentality and create an autonomous style of literature.

(<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/21/magical-realism/>)

On the other hand, Roh (cited in Ulfa, 2017) in his essay *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerie (Post-Expressionism, Magical Realism)* defines:

Magical realism as a concept of "the magic of being, of the discovery that things "already have their own faces". In addition to this, he believes that magical realism explains any miracle or 'magical' events happen in this world through dynamic molecules, in reality, means that something 'magical' is a part of the real-world or vice versa. He explains that to understand magical realism, one must believe in the magical element or the extraordinary consciously to discover its meaning in life (p. 2).

As it is explained previously, even if magical realism was applied first in the art (painting), later on, the term was applied to literature. Its beginning is clarified by many critics. Currently, magical

realism is becoming a contemporary writing mode all over the world, essentially, as the Columbia Encyclopedia (cited in Guest, 2006) illustrates the significant magical realism movements in the Latin America as follow:

Magical realism is a primarily Latin American literary movement that arose in the 1960s. The term has been attributed to the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, who first applied it to Latin American fiction in 1949. Works of magic realism mingle realistic portrayals of ordinary events and characters with elements of fantasy and myth, creating a rich, frequently disquieting world that is at once familiar and dreamlike. The movement's best-known proponent is the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, who has used the technique many times, most famously in his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Other magic realist writers include Guatemala's Miguel Ángel Asturias, Argentina's Julio Cortázar, and Mexico's Carlos Fuentes. Non-Latin American writers whose fiction often employs magic realism include Italo Calvino and Salman Rushdie (p. 48).

It is very common as Bowers (2004) explains that all magic(al) realist writers have their influences; some from contemporary writers, some stretching back to the origins of the term, and some from before the term was coined (p. 17). According to Trivedi's (2013) explanation, magical realism has three periods:

The first period of magic realism is set in Germany in the 1920s, the second period in Central America in the 1940s, and the third period beginning in 1955 in Latin America continues internationally to this day. All these periods are linked by literary and artistic figures whose work spread the influence of magic realism around Europe, from Latin America to the rest of the world. The term magic realism was first used by the German art critic Franz Roh to refer a painterly style also known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (p. 390).

We can comprehend from the above explanations that magical realism is a newly introduced writing style that went through some steps. Although the magical realism has gone through many and often radical changes of meaning, the resilience of the terms lies in their usefulness to describe a particular attitude to non-scientific and non-pragmatic beliefs in a world which is universally influenced by science and pragmatism (Bowers, 2004, p. 4).

In general, since magical realism attempts to create an accurate picture of the world as it is experienced by ordinary human consciousness, readers of realistic fiction are most familiar with focalizations that seem to be grounded in empirical evidence, the quantity of sensory data enhancing the reader's confidence that this representation is accurate and causing the reader to invest the narrative's picture of the world with authority (Ibid, 2004, p. 44).

2.2.3. Critical Views in Magical Realism

As a prominent literary movement, magical realism needs more study to clarify some confusion on the theoretical background. For instance, one of the argumentative points is that there is no clear demarcation for its writing techniques whether it is postcolonial or postmodernist perspective. One of the problems to level magical realism as one of the perspectives is its characteristics as Khatib (2009) puts the argumentative points as follow:

Defining magic realism is problematic as defining its characteristics. There are no perfect characteristics that best define the magic realism. Theorists and magic realists have their views about magic realism. It only can be seen as collective characteristics that come from different perspectives since both postmodern and postcolonial claimed that magic realism as a technique of writing in their era (p. 13).

As briefed above, the characteristics of magical realism are found in postmodern and postcolonial writing techniques; and this is the reason why some critics label magical realism as a technique of writing in the postcolonial or the postmodern periods. In addition to this, Aldea (2011) also agrees on this idea and suggests the reason how magical realism is related with postcolonialism and postmodernism stating the fact that magical realism can be concerned with different cultural versions of reality potentially allows it to deal with questions of cultural hegemony and its role in colonization. This characteristic of magical realism relates it with postcolonialism since it attempts to explore the politically subversive power of exposing the relativity of cultural hegemony (p. 3). However, many critics also link magical realism with postmodernism, referring to some specific textual characteristics that allow the genre to raise questions about the nature of reality and fiction (Ibid, 2011, p. 4). As a result, it is difficult to conclude that magical realism lies only in a postmodern or a postcolonial perspective.

One of the important issues that magical realism texts may lie either in postcolonial or postmodernism theory is the issue of culture. Culture has its value in labeling magical realism texts briefed below as Zamora and Faris (cited in Bowers, 2004) point out that:

Texts labeled magical realist draw upon cultural systems that are no less ‘real’ than those upon which traditional literary realism draws—often non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation. Their primary narrative investment may be in myths, legends, ritual—that is in collective (sometimes oral and performative, as well as written) practices that bind communities together (p. 84-85).

As we can understand from the above explanations, magical realism texts comprise culture and history. As Bowers (2004) explains that many magical realist works include historical references, not only to situate their texts in a particular context but also to bring into question already existing historical assumptions. Bowers clarifies that postmodernist thinking about history usually emphasizes the lack of absolute historical truth and casts doubt over the existence of fact by indicating its link with narrative and stories (p. 72-73).

As the same time, Bowers (2004) briefs the inclusion of culture in magical realism texts saying that:

The critics of magical realism often express their understanding of the concept in terms of cultural conflict between the dominant ruling classes and those who have been denied power. The vocabulary of 'otherness' is frequently employed to refer to those who have been denied power. In colonial terms, it is understood that it is the political power to govern oneself but also the power to define the world around you that has been denied the 'others' (p. 65).

Moreover, Faris (2004) says that the unmediated way in which these different realities are presented means that magical realism also blurs the boundary between fact and fiction, another characteristic that locates magical realism within postmodernism (p. 22). However, Faris has a postcolonial slant claiming that magical realism has become so important as a mode of expression worldwide, especially in postcolonial cultures, because it has provided the literary ground for significant cultural work; within its texts, marginal voices, submerged traditions, and emergent literature have developed and created masterpieces (2004:1).

Contrary to those who relate magical realism with postmodernism, McHale, (2013) argues that magical realism is not associated with postmodernism. The writer claims that;

The Boom in Latin American literature, associated with magical realism, actually predates the onset of postmodernism itself, or at any rate, predates the use of the term in anything like its late-twentieth-century sense. Moreover, the bi-cultural experience that seemed to be a special formative factor in the magical realists' world-straddling careers and ontological poetics turns out to be typical of the postcolonial condition, and not special at all. All postcolonial cultures are by definition bi-cultural or pluricultural, ... In this reversed perspective, it is the pluricultural postcolonial experience that appears genuinely global, not postmodernism, which settles into a narrower, more provincial niche (p. 361-362).

However, as Bowers (2004) suggests the majority of magical realist writing can be described as postcolonial. That is to say, much of it is set in a postcolonial context and written from a postcolonial perspective that challenges the assumptions of an authoritative colonialist attitude (p.

90). Notwithstanding the above explanation, since Ethiopian writers' colonial attitude differ from others, magical realist texts contain many literary techniques that have been linked to the strands of postcolonialism. It has been observed that magical realist texts have literary techniques that characterize these creative works. Thus, the basic characteristics that magical realist texts contain are outlined by Zamora and Faris (1995). They observed that magical realist texts have literary techniques that characterize these creative works (p.167-177) as outlined below:

- The texts contain a fantastical element that can't be explained according to our knowledge of the world, but the magical things do happen. The characters mostly accept these things without questioning.
- In texts, magical realist events exist in the gap between two worlds-the the real and the magic. These two worlds are often represented by the worlds of the dead and the living, the Western and the indigenous, the civilized and the savage. Hence, in almost all magical realist texts, the reader finds the appearance of the ghosts and the living in contact with them.
- In texts, magic realist events hold subjective exaggeration, ambiguous reality, history, supernaturalism, myth, and time. These ideas are eventually taken the rugged method of the reality of human existence and its happenings in fixed limits of past into present and present into the future.
- The texts contain plots that involve issues of the border dispute, mixing, and change. Magical realists deliberately construct such plots to portray a strong and actual reality than conventional realist techniques would illustrate.
- Magical realist texts contain detailed descriptions that reveal the presence of the phenomenal world. This is the realism in magical realism. The magical realist images created in the description tend to reveal the psychological, social, political, and emotional motivations.
- Magical realist texts incorporate cyclical repetitions of time, space, and identity. In the course of the story of the texts, these events frequently appeared as a cyclic recurrence instead of the linear progression of events.
- Magical realist texts incorporate folkloric details. The prevalence of folkloric details in presenting the fantastic and fabulous events in magical realist texts is one of the main characteristics of these texts. This is mainly because magical realism is the mingling and

juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths, fairy stories and legends (Cuddon, 1998, p. 488).

- In texts, magical realists use fantastic elements to decentre the assumptions of mainstream culture and politics. Mostly, the elements are inherently political for it challenges assumptions of order, unlike realism which presents its version of the world as uniquely objective whereas magical realism offers too static and exclusive vision of reality (p. 167-177).

As stated above, when we see Ethiopian literature from the perspective of magical realism, even if the aforementioned characteristics are also features of the selected literary works, they don't reflect the thematic concepts of the effects of colonization as other African literary works do. As Bowers (2004) posits, postcolonialism, like postmodernism, is a complex term that is still being debated and transformed. Essentially, it refers to the political and social attitude that opposes colonial power, recognizes the effects of colonialism on other nations, and refers specifically to nations that have gained independence from the rule of another imperial state (p. 91). This is what makes us think of the peculiar characteristic of Ethiopian literature. According to the above explanation, we have to consider that this definition may not work particularly for this study since the selected novels are from Ethiopia where colonialism was not imposed to the country as Melakneh (2012) states that the treatment of the theme of protest against colonialism in Ethiopian literature is not as strident as is the case with the rest of Black African literature (p. 106). Because the political history of Ethiopia differs from much of the rest of Africa. A brief summary of the country's exceptional status must underscore its political sovereignty. Thus, it might not be fully applicable to discuss issues of the effects of colonization where Ethiopia was not colonized.

The reason why Ethiopian literature should not be treated in this theory is that postcolonial criticism aims at focusing on colonization as Young (cited in Habib, 2005) explains below:

Postcolonial criticism has embraced several aims: most fundamentally, to reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonized peoples and the colonizing powers; to analyze the process of decolonization; and above all, to participate in the goals of political liberation, which includes equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities (p. 739).

To conclude, even though magical realism links with both postcolonial and postmodern perspectives, on the other hand, the majority of the critics agree that magical realism links with postmodernism. As Faris (2004) says magical realism occupies a pivotal position, both reflecting the cultural moment of postcolonialism and achieving substantial work within it. Besides, because of its discursive heterogeneity, magical realism has also contributed to the growth of a postmodern literary sensibility (p. 1-2). As a result, Bowers (2004) argues that critics considering magical realist fiction have found that it is possible to interpret this narrative mode through various critical and theoretical perspectives. Moreover, the flexibility of the mode resides in the fact that it is not a genre belonging to one particular era, and, therefore; it is not related to a particular critical approach (p. 63). Thus, magical realism is not belonging to only postcolonial or postmodernism. According to the above explanation and history of the country (Ethiopia), the postcolonial perspective may not fully be employed in Ethiopian literature.

2.2.4. Magical Realism Comparison with Other Genres of Realism

Even though magical realism has its characteristics and distinguishing features from other related genres, it is much better to make it clear so that there will not be any ambiguity. As Ates (2013) explains magic realist writers retell some historical events by changing and exaggerating them to demonstrate that history is just an accumulation of stories that are reconstructed by the one who writes it (p. 117). On the other hand, despite the similarities it shares with other genres, magic realism is a completely independent one that skillfully embraces some features of them in its narrative (Ibid, 2013, p. 117). As a result, the following discussion tries to show what makes magical realism differ from other related genres of realism.

2.2.4.1. Realism

Among the genres that are related with magical realism, realism is one of them. Lavanya and Rao (2018) explain that realism in art was first defined by Aristotle as mimesis— art as an imitation of life. However, 20th-century theories of realism in literature see it not as mimesis; realism is achieved not by imitation but by creation, through imagination, so that it is the reader who constructs reality out of the text, not the text reflecting the author's depiction of reality (p. 8-9). Even though the idea of depicting reality was started previously, before the emergency of magical

realism, they have different approaches too since the former is by imitation and the latter is by creation. Moreover, Watt (cited in Bowers, 2004) says that by accepting that there is a reliable link between our senses and the world in which we live, realism assumes that 'the external world is real, and that our senses give us a true report of it'(p. 20).

Suma (2018) explains that realism is an attempt to create a depiction of actual life; a novel does not simply rely on what it presents but how it presents it. In this way, a realist narrative acts as a framework by which the reader constructs a world using the raw materials of life (p. 384). Moreover, Suma clarifies that understanding both realism and magical realism within the realm of a narrative mode is key to understanding both terms. Magical realism "...relies upon the presentation of real, imagined, or magical elements as if they were real. It relies upon realism, but only so that it can stretch what is acceptable as real to its limits" (Ibid, 2018, p. 384)

Finally, comparing and contrasting with magical realism, Suma (2018) explains that realism pertains to the terms "history," "mimetic," "familiarization," "empiricism/logic," "narration," "closure-ridden/reductive naturalism," and "rationalization/cause and effect." On the other hand, magic realism encompasses the terms "myth/legend," "fantastic/supplementation," "defamiliarization," "mysticism/magic," "meta-narration," "open-ended/expansive romanticism," and "imagination/negative capability" (p. 384)

2.2.4.2. Surrealism

Surrealism is another realism genre that has a related concept with magical realism. According to Bowers's (2004) definition surrealism is an artistic movement that lasted from 1919 to 1939 that attempted to find ways to explore human psychology and to express the sub-conscious and unconscious (p. 128).

As it was said that magical realism is related to some other genres, Bowers (2004) says Surrealism is another genre that is related to magical realism, as is indicated in its name, and it is often confused with magic(al) realism (p. 21). Even if surrealism is related to magical realism, Bowers (2004) claims that although there are debates about what surrealism means, it is often confused with magical realism as it explores the non-pragmatic, non-realist aspects of human existence (p. 22).

On the other hand, Breton (cited in Durix, 1998) points out that surrealism is intimately linked with colored people, first of all, because it has always been on their side against any kind of imperialism and white robbers, and also because the most profound affinities exist between so-called 'primitive' thinking and surrealist thinking in that they both aim at getting rid of the hegemony of consciousness, of everyday preoccupations, to reach for the conquest of enlightening emotions (p. 109). Moreover, Durix (1998) also agrees that surrealism over-idealized the potentialities of what they considered as the more authentic perceptions of 'primitive' societies which had not become entrapped in the degenerate rituals of modern Europe (109).

As for realism genres, both of them have some similarities as Wandama (2016) states that magical realism is a literary mode which shares some similarity with surrealism such as the emphasis on the importance of the subconscious mind to release its perceptions and power to the visual realm (p. 4). Their similarity is also supported by other writers. In the article "*Prospects of Studying Magical realism in Nigerian Literature*", Widdifield (2015) explains their similarities as follows:

Both magical realism and surrealism seek to express an alternative reality and both play with irrational narrative and illogical imagery to express aspects of reality that fail to fit neatly into the supposedly empirical world that Realism tried to represent. The genres often diverge in their philosophies regarding the figurative location of this alternative reality and the best way to access it—surrealism, as its prefix suggests, connotes a reality that exists above and outside of our own, while magical realism looks for mystery and magic within the already existing reality—but in attempting to access this alternative reality, they share a similar goal. Thus, putting them in conversation certainly helps to better understand the subtleties of each (p. 2).

In addition to the above explanations, Bowers (2004) also adds another similarity saying that both surrealist and magic(al) realist writing and art could be called revolutionary in their attitudes since surrealists attempted to write against realist literature that reflected and reinforced what they considered to be bourgeois society's idea of itself, and magic (al) realism holds immense political possibilities in its disruption of categories (p. 22).

Moreover, Bowers (cited in, Wandama, 2016) also explains the similarities of these two genres as whilst both magic realism and surrealism in their most limited definitions are movements of literature and art that developed in the first part of the twentieth century; both terms have a life beyond this period as more generally applied notions (p. 4-5). As briefed above, both genres have some sort of similarities.

Having some sort of similarities doesn't mean that the two genres don't have differences. As he mentioned their similarities, Bowers (2004) differentiates these genres as surrealism is most distinct from magical realism since the aspects that it explores are associated not with material reality but with the imagination and the mind, and in particular it attempts to express the 'inner life' and psychology of humans through art (p. 22). This difference is more clearly explained as Suma (2018) distinguishes the genres stating that surrealism "is most distanced from magical realism [in that] the aspects that it explores are associated not with material reality but with the imagination and the mind, and in particular it attempts to express the 'inner life' and psychology of humans through art." It seeks to express the sub-conscious, unconscious, repressed, and inexpressible (p. 384). Magical realism, on the other hand, rarely presents the extraordinary in the form of a dream or a psychological experience.

In addition to this, Dar (2017) briefs that both surrealism and magic realism use a mixture of realism and fantastic elements. At the same time, they are distinguished in the content itself. The objective of the Magic Realist is to bring us a fresh presentation of the everyday world we live in. On the other hand, surrealism takes us to another world, one which is unreal and exists only in our minds. It presents the impossible, using both traditional and experimental artistic techniques, often shocking us (p. 94). In short, magical realism events are portrayed in the real world while surrealism is portrayed in the imagination world.

Most importantly, Chanady (cited in Lavanya and Rao, 2018) says that in contrast to the fantastic, the supernatural in magical realism does not disconcert the reader, and this is the fundamental difference between the two modes. The same phenomena that are portrayed as problematic by the author of a fantastic narrative are presented matter-of-factly by the magical realist (p. 10). Furthermore, one of the other differences is that magic realism tries to see reality from a different perspective; it creates new realities, while surrealism destroys reality. Whereas magic realism presents possible elements, surrealism is based on impossibility (Ates, 2013, p. 15).

2.2.4.3. Fantasy

Among the related genres, it is very important that, as Widdifield (2015) states, magical realism must also be distinguished from the fantasy genre, which, once again, is set in a world separate from our own, typically with its author-created mythos (p. 9). As Todorov (cited in Bowers, 2004) defines, fantastic literature as a piece of narrative in which there is a constant faltering between

belief and non-belief in the supernatural or extraordinary event presented (p. 24). Moreover, for Todorov, the fantastic relies upon the reader's hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations for the fictional events in the text. Moreover, Bowers (2004) briefs that the fantastic is a genre of art and literature in which there is a constant faltering between belief and non-belief in the supernatural or extraordinary events presented (p. 126).

In addition to this, Chanady (cited in Kembrytè, 2018) judges the fantastic, at least in Western rational paradigms, appears as “something terrifying and logically impossible, a threat to reason and personal safety, an intrusion from another world” (p. 11). From the above definition, we can understand that the genres have some sort of similarity, to distinguish the two modes, Ulfa (2017) suggests that because magical realism and fantasy literature appear to have very similar style and substance, this definition clears out any confusion about the meaning of the two: magical realism is a realism and not a fantasy, it is the emergent of the magical element of fantasy in our real world and see it as a part of reality (p. 2).

On the other hand, Chanady (cited in Bowers, 2004) pinpoints the difference between the fantastic and the magical realist. In contrast to the fantastic, the supernatural in magical realism does not disconcert the reader, and this is the fundamental difference between the two modes. The same phenomena that are portrayed as problematic by the author of a fantastic narrative are presented matter-of-factly by the magical realist (p. 25). In other words, Degirmenci (2016) explains the main difference in employing the supernatural elements in these genres is the fact that while in magical realism the supernatural is possible in our contemporary world and accepted as a mundane part of reality, in fantasy fiction the supernatural is trapped in completely make-belief worlds with no reference to our world (p. 64).

Furthermore, Degirmenci (2016) concludes that it can be suggested that the nature of supernatural elements in magical realist fiction and fantasy fiction is different due to different treatment of the setting in these fictional worlds, in terms of both time and location. He adds that whereas the writers of fantasy fiction typically locate the story in a different world than our own and usually in a premodern temporal setting, magical realist writers mostly set their stories in our contemporary world and time (p. 69). In short, we can understand from the above clarifications that while in fantasy events and settings are portrayed in the imaged world, magical realism ones are found in the real world.

In the same way, Dar (2017) agrees with the above explanation saying that in magical realism the world appears much like our own, but also includes an element of the extraordinary. Fantasy is very different. While magical realism situates readers in a predominantly realistic world, fantasy takes place in an unreal world with unreal characters. Fantasy creates different places and species, ones that exist outside of our world (p. 94). While magical realism stays grounded in our reality, fantasy breaks free of it. Generally, both genres differ in their setting as well as extraordinary events.

2.2.4.4. Animist Realism

One of the major genres which are related to magical realism is Animist Realism. Discussing magical realism, Harry Garuba (cited in Issifou, 2012) introduced the concept of animist realism, which for him offers much more margin of maneuver than magical realism. For Garuba, magical realism is a subgenre of animist realism; as he notes, “many of the literary techniques of the artists who have been labeled magical realist writers derive their warrant from traditional animist cultures” (p. 27).

In addition to this, Gikandi (2003) agrees that it is important to stress the necessity of being quite specific in these definitions, given that the destabilization of the hierarchy between “magic” and “science” occurs quite broadly in African fiction (p. 461). The writer clarifies that magical realists may be distinguished from more culturally nationalistic writers, who employ myth and legend, deities and spirits, rituals, proverbs, and injunctions, within projects of nation-building. For this reason, Harry Garuba has coined the term “animist realism” to signify a tendency in African fiction that is broader than magical realism (Ibid, 2003, p. 461).

On the other hand, Christopher Warnes (cited in Issifou, 2012) argues that for Garuba does not acknowledge the possibility that magical realism might have other, alternative intellectual genealogies that do not include animism (p. 27). He says “Animism provides a possible base for what I am calling faith-based strands of magical realism. But it does not explain irreverent magical realism, as I am defining it, which has a different genealogy that includes rationalism, skepticism, idealism, and postmodernism” (p. 27).

2.2.4.5. Science Fiction

One of the most recognized genre which is connected with magical realism is science fiction. According to Bowers's (2004) clarification, one of the characteristics of science fiction that distinguishes it from magical realism is its requirement of a rational, physical explanation for any unusual occurrence (p. 28). Rogers (2002) explains the similarities and the differences with an example as follow:

Science fiction and fantasy are always speculative. They are always positing that some aspect of objective reality was different. ...Magical realism is not speculative and does not conduct thought experiments. Instead, it tells its stories from the perspective of people who live in our world and experience a different reality from the one we call objective. If there is a ghost in a story of magical realism, the ghost is not a fantasy element but a manifestation of the reality of people who believe in and have "real" experiences of ghosts. Magical realist fiction depicts the real world of people whose reality is different from ours. It's not a thought experiment. It's not speculation. Magical realism endeavors to show us the world through other eyes" (p. 8).

From the above explanation, we may find some sort of similar events, but the way how they are presented plus their acceptance is different. Moreover, Bowers (2004) states that the science fiction narrative's distinct difference from magical realism is that it is set in a world different from any known reality and its realism resides in the fact that we can recognize it as a possibility for our future (p. 28). Unlike magical realism, it does not have a realistic setting that is recognizable about any past or present reality.

Additionally, as Lavanya and Rao (2018) list, one of the most important differences is to see science fiction as an imagined world, an imagined future world based on current scientific knowledge. Its charm is ultimately that of imagining possible worlds or scenarios. Magic realism, on the other hand, posits magical events as real (p. 11). In other words, when scientific fiction narrates an imaginary situation, most of the time the future, magical realism presents incidents that comprise fantastic and real together so that the reader accepts as if they are actual.

2.2.4.6. Marvelous Realism

According to the definition of Bowers (2004), marvelous realism is a term similar to magical realism but used in reference specifically to Latin American. It is translated from the Spanish term *lo realismo maravilloso* that was coined in Latin America in the 1940s to refer to narrative art that

presents the mystical and magical elements as an integral part of everyday reality in Latin America (p. 127).

Like other genres, marvelous realism is a related genre with magical realism which has a clear difference as Lavanya and Rao (2018) state that magic realism is a term used to describe art forms, particularly painting, reaching for a new clarity of reality, whereas marvelous realism refers to a concept representing the mixture of differing worldviews and approaches to reality (p. 15). On the other hand, Alonso (2012) argues that it could, therefore; be pointed out that magical realist texts and marvelous realist ones make use of fantastic elements as part of the narration (p. 62).

Even though the two genres use fantastic elements, it doesn't mean that they can get the same acknowledgment. Alonso (2012) explains the main difference between the two genres saying that while in a magical realist text the fantastic element is accepted and understood by the characters as being something from their everyday reality, in a marvelous realist one, this fantastic element is perceived with surprise and astonishment (p. 62). So, fantastic elements in magical realism are believed as ordinary events, on the other hand, in marvelous realism these fantastic elements generate wonder in the reader's mind.

On the other hand, Alonso (2012) explains that it is suggested that marvelous realism helps writers who have had similar experiences of the diaspora to find a balance between two cultures and two different systems of belief: one based on faith and the other on rationalism (p. 59). In addition to this, the writer adds that if skepticism and rationalism are two of the main elements that characterize marvelous realist literature, it seems clear that this technique serves as a tool to narrate the traumatic experiences of a community (Alonso, 2012, p. 69).

2.2.4.7. Allegory

Bowers (2004) defines Allegory as a narrative that has two levels of meaning—the one of the plots, and the other of a covert alternative meaning. In allegorical writing, the plot tends to be subsumed by the importance of the alternative meaning (p. 125).

The other realism genre that confuses people with magical realism is an allegory, but the plot is their main difference. Concerning this, Lavanya and Rao (2018) say that an allegorical work is one that has at least two levels of meaning. At one level the narrative makes sense as a plot. At another,

the plot has an alternative meaning (philosophically more profound than the plot) or reference to another simultaneous structure of ideas and events (p. 11).

Furthermore, in allegorical writing, the plot is less important than the alternative meaning. They agree that this is similar to a fable in which a story is told mainly for its moral, with the autonomy of the content of the narrative simply dismissed. As a result, this makes it difficult to incorporate allegory into magical realist writing where the reader is expected to accept the reality of the magical events. Allegory necessarily undermines the claim on the realism of the narrative (Lavanya & Rao, 2018, p. 11).

In general, we have seen that magical realism is a genre that is related to others even though it has its distinctive characteristics. To differentiate magical realism from other realism genres, we have to see the most distinguishing feature of this genre is that it never escapes reality by assuring that no matter how fantastic the incidents may seem; they happen in a world with which the reader is familiar (Ates 2013, p. 116). Thus, magical realism is depicted realistically. Moreover, Bowers (2004) focuses on two points: realistic setting and events. The writer believes that not only must the narrator propose real and magical happenings with the same matter-of-fact manner in a recognizably realistic setting, but the magical things must be accepted as a part of material reality, whether seen or unseen (p. 29). In short, the realistic setting and events, as well as the presentation of extraordinary events in the way that the reader accepts them as ordinary, makes magical realism different from other realism genres. In general, the fundamental difference remains that fantastic elements, incorporated into a realistic framework, are constitutive of magic realist fiction.

2.2.5. Elements of Magical Realism

As it has been discussed before, magical realism is a mode of writing which presents realist events in the real-world setting. As Durix (1998) explains that much use has been made of the term 'magic realism' to refer to texts which introduce an important 'imaginary' dimension into 'realistic' evocations of the world (p. 79). As a result, magical realism texts have some characteristics which distinguish them from other related genres. Moreover, Khatib (2009) clarifies that magic realist stories from around the world can vary greatly in tone, context, and content (p. 11). However, they share some common elements. Elements of the magical and the mundane are interwoven seamlessly, making it impossible to determine where reality ends and the extraordinary begins.

As a new literary genre, different magical realism scholars and writers list magical realism elements to distinguish the genre from other modes of writings. For example, Faris (2004) says “As a basis for investigating the nature and cultural work of magical realism, I suggest five primary characteristics of the mode” (p. 7). Others like Melakneh (2008), in his doctoral study, he explains three thematic and technical features that characterize magical realism in creative writing (p. 85).

Even though different writers mention different characteristics of magical realism differently, some have similar ideas. What makes them common is that they distinguish magical realism texts different from others. Dar (2017) states that magical realism is an aesthetic style or a genre of fiction in which magical elements are blended seamlessly with a realistic atmosphere, usually to produce a deeper understanding of reality (p. 91). As a result, some of the common characteristics of magical realism are explained below.

2.2.5.1. Fantastical Element

One of the most common characteristics of magical realism is the fantastical elements. According to Dar’s (2017:94) explanation, magical realism is a mode of narrative where reality mingles with fantasy. Characters might be capable of magical feats that defy logic, or stumble upon fantastical occurrences that are unexplained. Stephen M. and Wen-chin O. (2005) explain that novels reflect the magical-realist style, in that fantastic occurrences are narrated, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if they were commonplace events. In other words, within the ontological parameters of the text, magical things really do happen (p. 182).

Moreover, Todorov (Durix, 1998:79) lists three conditional requirements of fantastic. According to him:

The fantastic requires the fulfilment of three conditions. First the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second this hesitation may also be experienced by a character... the hesitation is represented; it becomes as one of the themes of the work.... Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations'.

Additionally, Faris (2004:162) says that magical realism’s fantastic elements are not all appealing, the social and political atrocities it chronicles are untamable, and these texts usually portray them as horrifying.

2.2.5.2. Irreducible Element

Among the five characteristics that are mentioned by Faris, the first is the irreducible element. As David Young and Keith Hollaman (cited in Faris 2004) describe, the “irreducible element” is something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in the Western empirically based discourse, that is, according to “logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief”(p. 7). Moreover, Ulfa (2017) says that an important aspect of the irreducible element in magical realism is that it appears as a companion for the main character, as it often acts as a psychologist to help in solving their problems in life (p. 5). This idea is supported by Mahfudz (cited in Ulfa, 2017) saying that an irreducible element should be sensed by other characters without any question or judgment, therefore; creating a discrepancy between the theory and the result of the discussion (p. 4). According to magical realism, this character is a real creature.

According to Amaryll Chanady (cited in Faris, 2004), “while the implied author is educated according to our conventional norms of reason and logic, and can, therefore, recognize the supernatural as contrary to the laws of nature, he tries to accept the world view of culture to describe it” (p. 8). In addition to this, Faris (2004) explains that these irreducible elements are well assimilated into the realistic textual environment, rarely causing any comment by narrators or characters, who model such acceptance for their readers (p. 8). Additionally, the readers accept as they are true since the author doesn’t include any personal opinion. Paradoxically, though, because they also nevertheless frequently surprise those readers and their realistic expectations, they also say, in almost existential fashion, “I EKsist,” “I stick out” (Ibid, 2004, p. 8). Moreover, the narrator’s presentation of the irreducible element on the same narrative plane as other, commonplace, happenings means that in the terms of the text, magical things “really” do happen (Faris, 2004, p. 8).

This characteristic of magical realism is more similar with the fantastic elements as (Faris, 2004) states that more generally the irreducible elements in magical realism resemble the fantastic scenarios in dreams or hallucinations or reveries (p. 102). As a result, magical realism texts should be analyzed in one of the elements, either fantastic or irreducible.

2.2.5.2. The Phenomenal World

According to Faris (2004), the second characteristic of magical realism is that its descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world. This is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory (p. 14).

It appears in different ways, as it is explained by Faris (2004), that realistic descriptions create a fictional world that resembles the one; we live in, often by extensive use of detail. Events apparently happen in the real life. In one way, this attention to sensory detail continues and renews the realistic tradition. In the other way, in addition to including magical events or phenomena, magical realist fiction includes intriguing magical details (p. 14). Because these magical details represent a clear departure from realism, the detail is freed from a traditionally mimetic role to a greater extent than it has been before.

Roland Barthes (cited in Faris, 2004) claims that realism endows details with an “*effet de réel*” (reality effect), which conveys not any particular information but rather the idea that this story is real (p. 14).

2.2.5.3. Plenitude

One of the important characteristics of magical realism is plenitude which shows the presence of abundance details of events or issues. The term plenitude is defined as an ample amount quantity; an abundance, the condition of being full, ample, or complete.

(<https://www.yourdictionary.com/plenitude>)

Thus, the author of magical realism text presents the main issue in a very complete manner so the readers have full details about it.

On the other hand, according to Salmi (2018) plenitude is the desire to show the richness and openness of the past, in such a way that the reader will perceive it as a complete, and thus credible, description (p. 183). Therefore, the magical realism writers provide plenty of details and lack of emptiness on some important issues that the reader gets ample details and see it as complete.

2.2.5.4. Real-World Setting

Another characteristic of magical realism is that events are portrayed in a real-world setting instead of a fictional world. According to Degirmenci (2016), magical realist texts naturalize the supernatural simply by not drawing any attention to it as something out of the ordinary. Nor do the characters feel the need to hide things that seem extraordinary to the rational eye (p. 66). Thus, there is no need for a different world with a new set of rules so that extraordinary things can happen. In magical realism, it already happens in our contemporary world and time.

Furthermore, Ulfa (2017) agrees that it is the evidence of reality, a setting of the world we live as an ordinary human being based on the idea of empirical logic. This aspect is important in magical realism because it sets the story in realism state, not making it a fantasy. In addition to this, its presence needs to be strong to remind the readers that the story happens in real life (p. 6).

In short, magical realism writers do not create fictional worlds rather they use the real world's setting in their writing which the reader can know in the real world.

2.2.5.5. Defamiliarization

Another device used by magical realists is defamiliarization. As Sokolsky (cited in Dar, 2017) wrote: "The technique of art is to make objects, unfamiliar, to make forms difficult, and to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important" (p. 95).

Moreover, Lavanya and Rao (2018) explain that the weaving together of magical events in a realistic narrative creates the impression that the magic grows out of the real. Wonders are recounted in a matter of fact manner and accepted in the way that a child would, thus achieving a kind of defamiliarization (p. 12).

2.2.5.6. Metafiction

According to Bowers's (2004) definition, Meta-fiction is a form of fiction that includes the contemplation of aspects of literature and fiction such as a novel about writing a novel. These texts are often considered to be self-reflexive (p. 127).

Patricia Waugh also provides a comprehensive definition by describing metafiction as

Fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. Metafictional works, she suggests, are those which "explore a theory of writing fiction through the practice of writing fiction". Mark Currie highlights current metafiction's self-critical tendency by depicting it as "a borderline discourse, a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, which takes the border as its subject". Yet, he too encompasses works that are marginally metafictional by proposing that, "to see the dramatized narrator or novelist as metanarrative devices is to interpret a substantial proportion of fiction as meta-fiction.

(<https://www.geneseo.edu/~johannes/Metafiction.html>)

In addition to the above explanation, the following clarification makes the occurrence of metafiction stories:

Metafiction occurs in fictional stories when the story examines the elements of fiction itself. For example, a story that explores how stories are made by commenting on character types, how plots are formed, or other aspects of storytelling is engaged in an example of metafiction. Metafiction can be playful or dramatic, but it always forces the reader to think about the nature of storytelling itself and how fictional stories are made.

(<https://study.com/academy/lesson/metafiction-definition-examples.html>)

In general, with its multiple realities and specific reference to the reader's world, metafiction explores the impact fiction has on reality, the reality on fiction, and the reader's role in between; as such, it is well suited for drawing attention to social or political criticism.

2.2.5.7. Sense of Mystery

As Ates (2013) says that "... in magic realism 'magic' refers to the mystery of life: in marvelous and magical realism 'magic' refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science" (p. 13)

On the other hand, among the characteristics of magical realism, as Zamora and Faris (cited in Lobodziec, 2012) explain, sense of mystery is the particular method of incorporating the supernatural, which is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence which is accepted by the reader. "Magic is no longer quixotic madness, but normative and normalizing. It is a simple matter of the most complicated sort" (p. 109).

Furthermore, Ates (2013) Magic realism has a way of normalizing supernatural or unreal things through unsurprised characters or some supposedly natural or real things that are difficult to believe when one thinks carefully (p. 106). So, we can understand, from the above explanation,

that magical realism texts consist of supernatural events which can't be proofed by scientific experiment.

2.2.5.8. Authorial Reticence

Among the characteristics in magical realism, Faris (2004) states that “authorial reticence . . . naturalizes the supernatural” so that it “does not disconcert the reader” (p. 20). Because the fantastic encodes hesitation, Chanady (cited in Faris, 2004) argues, it presents antinomy, “the simultaneous presence of two conflicting codes in the text,” as unresolved. In contrast, because the magical realist narrator accepts the antinomy and promotes the same acceptance in the reader, the antinomy is resolved (p. 20).

Dar (2017) explains that authorial reticence refers to the lack of clear opinions about the accuracy of events and the credibility of the world views expressed by the characters in the text. This technique promotes acceptance in magical realism (p. 95). Dar clarifies that in magical realism, the simple act of explaining the supernatural would eradicate its position of equality regarding a person's conventional view of reality. Because it would then be less valid, the supernatural world would be discarded as false testimony (Ibid, 2017, p. 95). Melakneh (2008) also agrees that among the characteristics of magical realism, the first is authorial reticence, which is an absence of clear opinions about the accuracy of events and the credibility of the world views held by the characters (p. 85).

Moreover, Wandama (2016) states that authorial reticence refers to the author's lack of explanation for magical events that occur in magical realists' texts. “The author does not explain or surprise over these events. This deliberate withholding of explanation for magical events is typical in magical realist texts, giving them an aura of truthfulness that the narrator presumes should be accepted as natural by the reader” (p. 9). In the same way, Suma (2018) agrees that authorial reticence refers to the lack of clear opinions about the accuracy of events and the credibility of the world views expressed by the characters in the text (p. 382). This technique encourages acceptance in magical realism. Moreover, in magical realism, the simple act of explaining the supernatural would eradicate its position of equality regarding a person's conventional view of reality. Because it would then be less valid, the supernatural world would be discarded as false testimony (Ibid, 2018, p. 382). Thus, the author doesn't give personal opinion rather tell the reader only what happens.

2.2.5.9. Hybridity

Cooper (cited in Schiffer, 2015) defines hybridity as the celebration of 'mongrelism' as opposed to ethnic certainties, which was a fundamental aspect of magical realist writing. In other words, there is "a syncretism between paradoxical dimensions of life and death, historical reality and magic, science and religion, characterizes the plots, themes, and narrative structures of magical realist novels" (p. 6). In short, there is a reconciliation or fusion of opposite dimensions. In addition to this, the plots of these fictions deal with issues of borders, change, mixing, and syncretizing. And they do so, and this point is critical, to expose what they see as a more deep and true reality than conventional realist techniques would bring to view (Ibid, 2015, p. 6).

Moreover, Dar (2017) explains that magical realists incorporate many techniques that have been linked to postcolonialism, with hybridity being a primary feature. Specifically, magical realism is illustrated in the inharmonious arenas of such opposites as urban and rural and Western and indigenous (p. 95). Moreover, Dar illustrates that the plots of magical realist works involve issues of borders, mixing, and change. Authors establish these plots to reveal a crucial purpose of magical realism: a more deep and true reality than conventional realist techniques would illustrate (Ibid, 2017, p. 95). Thus, magical realist texts consist of two opposite extents.

2.2.5.10. Political Critique

According to Chanady (cited in Kembrytè, 2018), magic realism usually serves a higher purpose: "magical realism is not just for one's aesthetic pleasure, it plays a more crucial role in building allegories about our world and criticizing the society, as well as building collective imagery of the oppressed and marginal cultures"(p. 11). Magical realist texts incorporate political critics.

Faris (2004) explains that regardless of their specific political agendas, magical realist texts are often written in the context of cultural crises, almost as if their magic is invoked when recourse to other, rational, methods have failed (p. 83). Moreover, Aljohani (2016) clarifies that magical realism contains an implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite (p. 74).

Additionally, Lavanya and Rao (2018) explain that magical realism is a means of resisting monologic political and cultural structures in their erasure of boundaries and therefore very useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and women (p. 12). This shows that magical realism writers criticize the political system as well as the intellectuals in their writings.

2.2.5.11. The Disruptions of Space, Time, and Identity

Concerning this magical characteristic, Lavanya and Rao (2018) clarify that magical realist texts typically question received ideas about time, space, and identity mainly due to their non-linearity of the narrative, oral story-telling style, reliance on myths, and folktales (p. 12). The writers add that events in the novels also mirror such aspects, for instance, people who live beyond the normal life span, or rains that continue for years together are examples of this characteristic.

According to Ulfa (2017), the idea of space and time disruption happens in the story setting while disruption of identity happens inside a character (p. 8). Furthermore, Fredric Jameson (cited in Faris, 2004) sets out the project of realism, one thing it achieves is “the emergence of a new space and a new temporality” because realism’s spatial homogeneity abolishes the older forms of sacred space (p. 23). Likewise, the newly measuring clock and measurable routine replace “older forms of ritual, sacred, or cyclical time.” Moreover, Faris (2004) clarifies that magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space but our sense of identity as well (p. 25). Moreover, the multivocal nature of the narrative and the cultural hybridity that characterize magical realism extends to its characters, which tend toward a radical multiplicity (Ibid, 2004, p. 25).

On the other hand, Rose (cited in Guest 2006) states that place is one kind of embodiment of being, and the encounters of living things happen in places. “There is a kind of contemporaneous time, the time of living things that unfolds in real and located (not geometric or imagined) places” (p. 37). Guest clarifies that as well there is the accumulation of history/memory in place. The place becomes complex in its specific gravity; it is and refers to itself and it holds and refers to relationships (Guest, 2006, p.37). In general, magical realist texts are also characterized by the disruption of time, space, and identity.

2.2.5.12. Unsettling Doubts

As a characteristic of magical realism, Ulfa (2017) explains the feeling of *unsettling* is based on one’s cultural perspectives. Readers who are familiar with non-logical ideas or concepts will be more aware of “the magical” appears in the story, compared to those who are not familiar with such cultures (p. 6).

According to Faris (2004), the third quality of magical realism is that before categorizing the irreducible element as irreducible, the reader may hesitate between two contradictory

understandings of events, and hence, experience some unsettling doubts (p. 17). Furthermore, Faris explains that the question of belief is central here, this hesitation frequently stemming from the implicit clash of cultural systems within the narrative, which moves toward belief in extrasensory phenomena but narrates from the post-Enlightenment perspective and in the realistic mode that traditionally excludes them (Ibid, 2004, p. 17).

Finally, concerning this characteristic, Faris (2004) explains that:

Magical realist scenes may seem dreamlike, but they are not dreams, and the text may both tempt us to co-opt them by categorizing them as dreams and forbid that co-option. Magical realist narratives almost seem to bring up the possibility of interpreting what they chronicle as a dream to forestall that interpretation, after having first aired it as a possibility. That strategy, while allaying the reader's doubts, also calls them into being, causing the reader to hesitate (p. 18).

Moreover, hesitation may obscure the irreducible element, which consequently is not always so easily perceived as such. The contemporary Western reader's primary doubt is most often between understanding an event as a character's dream or hallucination and, alternatively, understanding it as a miracle (Ibid, 2004, p. 18).

2.2.5.13. Merging Realms

The other characteristic of the magical realism is merging realms as Faris (2004) says that we experience the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds, another aspect of magical realism (p. 21). On the other hand, Lavanya and Rao (2018) explain the result is the merging or fusion of irreconcilable worlds or realms – the world of the ordinary or the mundane and the world of the magical suggesting a plurality of worlds (p. 12).

Additionally, Faris (2004) clarifies that the magical realist vision thus exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions (p. 22). Moreover, Faris clarifies that ghosts and texts, or people and words that seem ghostly, inhabit these two-sided mirrors, many times situated between the two worlds of life and death; they enlarge that space of intersection where several magically real fictions exist (Ibid, 2004, p. 22).

2.2.5.14. Prevalence of Folklore

It is difficult to have a common definition of folklore as Melakneh (2005) says the concept of folklore is so controversial that it becomes imperative to establish an operational definition (p. 10). Among the various definition given by the scholars, two of them presented below.

Folklore is the generic term to designate the customs. Beliefs traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, songs, etc...In short, the accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people, tied together not only by physical bonds but also emotional ones, which color their everyday expression, giving it unity and individual distinction” (Maria Leach, cited in Melakneh, 2005, p. 10-11).

Folklore is that part of the people's culture which is preserved, consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs and practices, customs and observances of general currency, in myths, legends, and tales of common acceptance and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual. Because, it is a repository or popular traditions, and an integral element of the popular “climate”, folklore serves as a constant source and frame of reference for more formal literature and art, but it is distinct therefrom in that it is essentially of the people, by the people and for the people” (Theodore H. Gaster, cited in Melakneh, 2005, p. 11).

Even though folklore has different definitions as well as forms, as defined above, it is a very common element or characteristic in African literature. According to Melakneh (2008), unlike their European counterparts, African novelists, justifiably incorporate folkloristic details like proverbs and mythological stories in their modern narratives. African literary works are rich in traditional stories, and one cannot study African works of literature without studying the particular cultures and cultures upon which African writes draw for their ideological and formal elements (p. 87). As a result, magical realism texts, especially Africans’, comprise the prevalence of folklore. At the same time, Amouzou (2007) agrees that the creative African writer must make sure that s/he presents her/his community to both itself and others. It should be a community that discusses its experiences with itself, commenting, for entertainment and enlightenment, upon the world in which it finds itself. Furthermore, the writer must be concerned with the artistic tradition of his people, their present. but also, their future (p. 329).

Cooper (cited in Alonso, 2012) says “as a matter of fact, writers of magical realism use folklore to “demonstrate, capture and celebrate ways of being and of seeing that are uncontaminated by European domination” (p. 62).

Additionally, Amouzou (2007) argues that some African pioneer writers are accused of primitivism and their works are considered problematic. Because, in their literary work, they present inhuman

affairs, supernatural beings, and occurrences which the European academics officially regard as superstitions worthy of belief only among the primitives and infantile minds (p. 331).

Generally, many elements of magical realism have been discussed though the majority of the elements such as fantastic element, the phenomenal world, real-world setting, plenitude, sense of mystery, authorial reticence, hybridity, the disruptions of space, time, and identity, political critique, merging realms, and prevalence of folklore are the subjects of this study in particular.

Chapter Three

Critical Analysis of the Selected Novels

Knowing that magical realist elements are reflected in the selected novels, the researcher has tried to analyze the novels accordingly. In most cases, there are plenty of examples that show the reflection of magical realism elements; however, the researcher has taken some relevant extracts to show some samples. Basically, the extracts are presented in the written language (Amharic) first and then the contextual meanings have followed and then the researcher analyzed them with text-based interpretations in most cases.

3.1. Magical Realism in the Selected Novels

3.1.1. Fantastic Element

As one of the major characteristics of magical realism, the fantastic element is reflected in the novels where the narrator tells us stories that can't be explained by the law of the universe. Some events can't be explained by logic. To show this, there are many examples of the fantastic element in *Emegua* such as the corpse stays without being destroyed. After death, the corpses of the monks who look after the Holy Cup moved to the other cave. But no one takes them. In addition to this, the corpses stay safe without being decayed. After the corpses moved to the other cave, they stay on the ground rather than in the grave. While they stay on the ground, they look like fresh dead bodies even though it is after decades. While the narrator doesn't tell the reader about what is happening, there is no comment, suggestion, or justification on them. No logic in the universe justifies that corpses move from one place to another without any transport agent, at the same time, without any artificial method, corpses never stay safe. We can understand these from one of the monastery's fathers who tells to Sisay as follow:

“ይኸውልሀ የመድሀኒት ሰው ተክምር ብዙ ነው። ሰው ሞቶ ሳይፈረስ ሳይበላሽ በቃልኪዳኑ እንዲህ ይኖራል።”
(እመን 7. 133)

“Look, the miracle of the Savior is too much. A corpse stays like this according to his covenant, without being decayed and destroyed”. (*Emegua* p. 133).

It is astonishing to find such wonderful events that the corpses stay safe without being butrefied. In addition to this, the way how the corpses come to the cave is another phenomenon that can't be explained by the law of nature. We can understand this from the following statement:

“... አልፎ አልፎ ትልቅ ነጭ ገዴ አሞራ መጥቶ ያርፋል። ገበሬዎችም ያዩታል። በበነጋው መጥተን ስናይ አዲስ አስክሬን እናገኛለን” ነበር ያሉን።” (እመጓ ፲. 134)

“... Occasionally, a large white Eagle comes and rests. Farmers see it too. When we come the next morning, we will find a new corpse.” (*Emegua* p. 134)

Another important example of this characteristic in *Emegua* is the event that happened when Sisay finds out the place where the Holy Cup found. Sisay looks for the Holy Cup for a long time using the clue that he finds out from one of the corpses in the cave. Finally, he finds out the exact location where it is found. Sisay struggles a lot to get into the locked cave. After he gets in, he tries to remove the curtain and see the Holy Cup. At this time, a sparkling light hits him and blacks out himself. Sisay remembers this incident as follow:

“... ያማረውን ሀምራዊ መጋረጃ ጫፍን በእጄ አጥብቄ ይገዛ ከታች ወደላይ ከቀኝ ወደ ግራ በፍጥነት ገለጥ ሳደርገው ድንገት ምንነቱን ያላወቅኩት የብርሀን ጎርፍ ከአስደንጋጭ መብረቃዊ ሀይል ጋር ተጠምሮ ወደ ላይ አንስቶ ማዶ ካለው የዋሻ ቋጥኝ ጋር አላተመኝ። ድንጋጤ እና ከባድ ህመም ተዳምረው ወዲያው ራሴን አሳቱኝ።” (እመጓ ፲. 203)

“... I held the edge of the beautiful purple curtain with my hand and swiftly slid it from bottom to top, right to left, and suddenly the light-flooded with the shock of a lightning bolt picked me upward and hit me with a rocky cave just beyond. Shock and severe pain, I quickly blacked out myself.” (*Emegua* p. 203)

As we can see from the above examples also, the effect of the light, as well as the source of the light, can't be logically explained. No explanation or justification is given by the narrator is given about the power of the light which comes out from the curtain when Sisay touches it as well as why Sisay blacks out when the light hits him. In short, *Emegua* is accompanied by fantastic element that cannot be explained according to the law of the universe.

The fantastic element is also reflected in *Zigora*. Many examples show this characteristic. Among these examples, the invisibility of the tree is the first one. One of the trees that Sisay looks for it,

to take the herb, it disappeared when he comes back after having lunch. As soon as Sisay knows that the tree is the one that he looks for it, he wants to have some leaves from it. But the monk told him that he will have it after lunch. When Sisay comes back from lunch, he couldn't see the tree. When he asks the monk surprisingly, he is told that this happens so that he can see the miracle. Such events can happen in the power of the supernatural and they can't be governed with universal laws as we can see from the following extract:

“ጠዋት ጥላው ከድንጋዩ ላይ አርፎ ያየሁት ዛፍ በቦታው አልነበረም።” (ዝጎራ ፯. 148)

“The tree I had seen in the morning that the shadow resting on the rock was not there.” (*Zigora* p. 148)

“አይዘህ የእኔ ልጅ እንደታዘዝከው ትወስዳለህ። ብቻ ይህን ድንቅ ነገር እንድታይ ብዬ ነው” አሉ። (ዝጎራ ፯. 148)

“Take heart, my son, you will take as you are commanded. I just want you to see this wonderful thing” he said. (*Zigora* p. 148)

As we can see from the conversation between the monk and the Sisay, the tree was invisible that Sisay had seen before some minutes, and the monk explained this miracle happens for a reason to show for him.

Another example from this novel is the scene of the syncope of the two characters. While Sisay and Melkamu are doing their job in the jungle, they lose their consciousness in a different time that they can't know the reason. First, it happens with Melkamu while he pulls meter in the process of measuring, he reaches around one of the big trees, he blacks out for sometimes, and wakes up after a while. We can see these from the following extracts:

“ሜትሩን እየተተኩ ያንን ትልቅ ዛፍ እንዳለፍኩ አንድ ረጅም ሸበት የወረሳቸው መነኩሴ ከፊቴ ቆሞና ድንገት በያዙት ምርኩዝ ትከሻዬን ሲነኩኝ ግንዱን ተደግፌ ሸርተት ብዬ እንደወደኩ አስታውሳለሁ” አለኝ። (ዝጎራ ፯. 215)

“As I pulled the meter and passed the big tree, I remember that I was leaning against the trunk when a long-haired monk stood before me and suddenly grabbed my shoulder,” he said. (*Zigora* p. 215)

On the other hand, Sisay also blocks out himself when he tries to check the invisible things in the jungle using the instrument that he got from abroad. Sisay sets up the instrument in the way he can

see the invisible things as he was told. In the beginning, he tries to see something which seems cotton, but after a while, the instrument switched off and became dysfunctional. Sisay is surprised and when he wanders around, something touches around his shoulder. After that, Sisay blacks out as the following extract shows:

“... ድንገት ብድግ አልኩና ወደፊት በወኔ ልራሞድ ስል ... ከኋላዬ ከትከሻዬ ላይ የሆነ ነገር ... ነካ አደረገኝ። ዘወር ብዬ ለማየት ስሞክር ሰማይ ምድር ዘረብኝና ሞሬት ላይ ዝልፍልፍ ብዬ ወደቅኩ።” (ዝጎራ 7. 280)

“... Suddenly, I jumped up and started walking enthusiastically. . . from behind, something on my shoulder. . . touched me. As I tried to look around, the sky turned around, and I fell to the ground.” (Zigora p. 280)

In addition to these, Sisay blacks out for the second time when the monks reveal the secret of the jungle. After he brings the three herbs, the monks tell him everything. Then, Sisay blacks out for a while as the extract below shows:

“... ይዘውት የነበረውን ምርኩዛቸውን ጣል ሲያደርጉብኝ በቀስታ ልቤን ጉትት አድርጎ ሲወስደኝና ራሴን ለመሳት ሲከፈለኝ ታወቀኝ። ... ምን ያህል ሰዓት እንደቆየሁ አላቅም። ደስ የሚል የሰላም እንቅልፍ ወስዶት እንደቆየ ሰው ከድካምና ከቁስል ጥዝጣዜ ስሜት ነፃ ሆኜ ተነሳሁ።” (ዝጎራ 7. 319)

“... When they dropped his stick at me, I slowly recognized my heart and made me want to faint . . . I don't know how long I have been staying. I woke up from a feeling of exhaustion and pain as someone who had been enjoying a peaceful sleep.” (Zigora p. 319)

There is no justification given for the above incidents given by the narrator as well as the law of the universe can't explain how the incidents happen. Moreover, the above extracts are narrated in the way that readers accept even though such things rarely happen or may not happen in their life at all.

Merbebit is also full of events that cannot be explained according to the laws of the universe such as what Sisay does mainly using the enchantment. While Sisay is taking the box to give for the monks, in the middle of his journey, the tire of his car blows out. Sisay can't replace the backup tire since it has blown out before. Thus, Sisay sends the backup tire with another car so that they fix and send it back for him. While Sisay waits for the tire, he wants to try the enchantment of the way that it is explained how to use it. At the same time, Sisay sees a fallen tree and he decides to

check with it first. Sisay reads the magic words 49 times, then spirit appears physically and Sisay orders it to pick up the fallen tree and to restore the blown tire as the following extracts taken from the novel show:

“... ድጋሙን ሲጨርስ ከመቅጽበት የንፋሱም የድንጋዩም ግጭት ድምጽ አስፈሪ ንውጥውጥ ፈጠረ። ተከድኖ የነበረው ሳጥኑ ተከፈተና እንደጢስ ቡንን ብሎ ወደላይ ወጣና የሰው አምሳል ያለው ግዙፍ አካል ከፊቱ ቆመ።” (መርበብት 7. 292)

“... Suddenly, when enchantment was over, the sound of a thunderstorm sounded like a whirlwind. The box was opened and it jumped up like smoke, and a huge human-like figure stood in front of him.” (*Merbebit* p. 292)

“እስኪ በደግ ነገር ልፈትነው” አለ።:-

“ያንን የወደቀ ዛፍ አንሳና ትከለው! ስሩንም አፈር አልብሰው!” አለው።

“ከመቅጽበት ቀጭን በትር ከመሬት አንስቶ እንደማቆም ያክል ያንን ግብዳ ባለግርማ ዛፍ አንስቶ ተከለው።

“የነፈሰውን የመኪና ጎማ እንደነበር አድርግልኝ” አለው።

“ከመቅጽበት <ቱ . . ስስስ . . > የሚል ድምጽ ተሰማ። ሲሳይ አሻግሮ ሲመለከት የነፈሰው ጎማ በአዩር ተሞልቷል።” (መርበብት 7. 303)

"Let me try it with kindness," he said:

“Take that fallen tree and plant it! And cover the steam with soil!” he told him.

“From that moment, he planted that giant tree, as if to plant a stick at the ground,” he said.

"Restore the tire that leaked."

“From the instant it was, a voice <Tu... sss... > was heard. As Sisay looked up, the leaking tire was filled with air.” (*Merbebit* p. 303)

As we can see from the above extracts, Sisay does things such as ordering the spirit to pick up the fallen tree as well as to restore the tire as its functional position and the spirit does it. These events show how the fantastic element of magical realism reflected. Such events get acceptance by the readers as well as by the narrator even though they cannot be explained or justified according to

the laws of the universe. It is not common to do so in the real world, but the reader is unsure that such things can be done by the ghost since there is no validation given by the narrator. On the other hand, the narrator encourages the readers to accept the phenomenon as it is real. In general, all the events that were mentioned above can't be explained by the laws of the universe and the reader accepts as if they happen.

3.1.2. The Phenomenal World

Places where events happened, the story atmospheres, and most of the events in all novels (*Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*) are very common that we can experience in our real life or day to day activities. All the descriptions are realistic which looks like the real world, the one we live in. The events and the atmospheres in the novels are no strange or unknown rather they are very familiar which happens in our day to day life.

For instance, in *Emegua*, we can see the description of the International Horticulture Exhibition which was inaugurated in Ernest Memory Convention Center exhibitions for four days. Sisay goes there to participate there, and such events are very common in the real world as the extract below shows:

“ለአራት ቀን የሚቆየው አለማ አቀፍ የሆርቲካልቸር ኤግዚቢሽን በከተማዋ ሸርነስት ሜሞሪያል ኮንቬንሽን ሴንተር ተጀምሯል።” (እመጋ ፲. 16)

“The four-day International Horticulture Exhibition was inaugurated by the city's Ernest Memory Convention Center.” (*Emegua* p. 16)

Another example of this characteristic is the social celebrations such as birthday and wedding celebrations. When Sisay used to work in the place where he was assigned first, he has a strong relationship with the community besides his professional activities. The wedding and parties are some of the real events or happenings that are celebrated in the real world that we live in. This is shown in the extract below:

“ሌላው የመዝናኛችን እና የደስታችን ምንጭ ደግሞ ሰርግ እና ድግስ ነበር።” (እመጋ ፲. 88)

“Another source of our entertainment and happiness was weddings and parties.” (*Emegua* p. 88)

Moreover, the airport atmosphere can be the other important example which can be mentioned for this characteristic. As one of the latest modes of transportation, airports and the services are the most common events that happen in the real world we live in as well as narrated in the novels too. We can see this when Sisay goes to the airport as the extract below shows:

“በሌ አለም አቀፍ አይሮፕላን ማረፊያ ስደርስ ከምሽቱ አንድ ሰዓት ተኩል ሆኖ ነበር።” (እመጓ ፲. 5)

“By the time I arrived at Bole International Airport, it had been an hour and a half.” (*Emegua* p. 5)

The above events in *Emegua* show that the narrated incidents also happen in the real world we live in. We can find another description in *Zigora* too while Sisay attends the seminar. In the real world, attending a seminar and present researches on some important issues is a very common phenomenon in our daily life either nationally or internationally. We can find the same event in *Emegua* as the following extract shows:

“... ፈረንሳይ ውስጥ በሜዲትራኒያን ባህር ዳርቻ በተመሰረተችው እና በበርካታ ዩኒቨርሲቲዎችና የምርምር ተቋሞች ከምትታወቀው ሞንቴፕላየር ከተማ በሚካሄደው የብዝሃ ህይወት ጥናታዊ ጉባኤ ላይ ለመሳተፍ እና በዚያውም የምርምር ስራዬን ለማቅረብ ተጋብዜ ኔጄ ነበር።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 187)

“... I was invited and went to present my research as well as to attend a biodiversity seminar held in Montpellier city, which was established around the Mediterranean coast and well-known by many of its universities and research institutions in France.” (*Zigora* p. 187)

As explained above, it is very familiar to attend as well as attend seminars. There is also another usual experience in *Zigora* that many researchers from various countries and universities conduct an ecological study in Ethiopia. Even though this is mentioned in the novel, such events are not strange rather they happen in our real lives too. As the extract below shows, Sisay and other ecologists gathered for their study in Ethiopian forests.

“በኢትዮጵያ ኦሮሞክስ ተዋህዶ አብያተ ክርስቲያናት እና ገዳማት ለዘመናት ተጠብቀው በቆዩት ቅሪት የተፈጥሮ ደኖች ላይ ለምናደርገው ሥነ ምህዳራዊ ጥናት ከተለያዩ ሀገሮች እና ዩኒቨርሲቲዎች የጋበዘናቸው ልምድ ያላቸው ተመራማሪዎች ተገኝተዋል።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 195)

Experienced researchers from various countries and universities have been invited to the ecological study of the residual and reserved natural forests of Ethiopia orthodox churches and monasteries have arrived. (*Zigora* p. 195)

As stated before, such activities are common in the real world we live in. Moreover, other atmospheres like the office of the laboratory (*Zigora* p. 240), the monk working place, and his daily activities like praying, preparing food, and so on (*Zigora* p. 284) are all pieces of evidence to set the reader on the ground.

The same experiences are found in *Merbebit* too. Mr. Roberto's invitation as well as the airport's atmosphere. Sisay is invited for vacation and visitation to Italy. When he arrives at the airport, the way how the pilot thanks the passengers for choosing the airline is shown in the extract below:

“ከአፍታ ቆይታ በኋላ ከአውሮፕላኗ በረራ ክፍል ካፒቴን በአሊታሊያ አየር መንገድ ንብረት በሆነው አውሮፕላን በመብረራቸው ተሳፋሪዎቹን አመስግነው . . .” (መርበብት 7. 21)

“After a moment, the captain thanked the passengers for flying with the plane, which is owned by Alitalia Airlines. . .” (*Merbebit* p. 21)

As stated above, the atmosphere in the airport is depicted in the novels frequently and the events happened in the real world. As the previous explanation in *Emegua* shows, there is also a research conference in *Merbebit* that Sisay participated in. The following extract tells that Sisay participated in the research conference organized by the university.

“እንዳጋጠሟ ሆኖ ባህርዳር ዩኒቨርስቲ አለምዓቀፍ የምርምር ጉባኤ አዘጋጅቶ ስለነበር የዚሁ አካል የሆነ የአንድ ቀን የመስክ ጉብኝት ላይ እንዲሳተፍ ግብዣ ደረሰው::” (መርበብት 7. 167)

“Unfortunately, Bahir Dar University organized an international research conference as part of its one-day field trip.” (*Merbebit* p. 167).

Thus, it is a familiar event to organize as well as to participate in such an organized international research conference in our day to day lives as it is depicted in the novel. Moreover, the way how Sisay is served as a guest in the rural part (*Merbebit* p. 241) is another setting that is very familiar in our society.

All the aforementioned examples are the atmospheres and events which resemble the real world we live in and happen in our daily life apparently that set the story in realism state. The events, as explained above, are activities that the reader can have the experience or understand easily since they happen in the real world too.

3.1.3. Real-World Setting

As it was explained in the previous chapter, magical realism texts are characterized by a real-world setting. Events, in all novels, happen in our real world and time. The settings in all the novels are very specific and known. The historical, geographical, and cultural context of the stories and the events are real. All the places and the time which are mentioned in the stories are found in the actual or real-world rather than fictional worlds.

As it was explained in the analysis of the previous element, the places in *Emegua*, for example, Bole International Airport, and Ernest Memory Convention Center are the real-world settings. In addition to these, there are many places in *Emegua* where some important events happened and they are found in the real world. Among these places, the following are mentioned in the extracts below:

“ኒዉ ኦርሊያንስ በሲሲፒ ወንዝ ዳርቻ የተመሰረተች ከተማ ስትሆን . . .” (እመዓ 7. 15)

“New Orleans as a city founded on the banks of the Mississippi River. . .” (*Emegua* p. 15)

“ጎጃም ደብረ ማርቆስ ለአራት አመታት ያክል ኖሬያለሁ።” (እመዓ 7. 29)

“I have been in Gojjam Debre Markos for four years.” (*Emegua* p. 29)

“ደብረ አሮንን ከአስራ ስድስት አመት በፊት ሄጄ አይቆዋለሁ።” (እመዓ 7. 61)

“I went and saw Debre Aron sixteen years ago.” (*Emegua* p. 61)

“. . . ደብረ-ብርሀን ቅድስት ስላሴ ቤተክርስቲያን በር ላይ አወረደን።” (እመዓ 7. 140)

“. . . Debre Birhan dropped us into the door of the Holy Trinity Church.” (*Emegua* p. 140)

All the above mentioned and other places like Washington DC (*Emegua* p. 10), and *Emegua Meniz* are some real-world settings that the author used in the development of the stories. All these places are found both in the novel as well as in the real world.

In line with the above explanation, the author also used the real-world setting in *Zigora*. The places where events developed in the real-world setting. As it was explained in the previous analysis, Bahir Dar University is one of the real-world setting examples. Moreover, there are many places where some important incidents happened. The following extracts indicate places where the author used a real-world setting in *Zigora*:

“አቡዳቢ ከዱባይ ወደ 150 ኪሎ ሜትር ገደማ ትርቃለች።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 37)

“Abu Dhabi is about 150 kilometers from Dubai.” (*Zigora* p. 37)

“ማህበረ ስላሴ ገዳምን የመጀመሪያ የጉዞ መዳረሻዬ እንዲሆን ወሰንኩ።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 56)

“I decided to make the Mahbere Selassie monastery my first travel destination.” (*Zigora* p. 56)

“ከጎንደር ከተማ በጠዋት ቀደም ብዬ ጉዞ ጀመርኩ።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 117)

“I started the journey early in the morning from Gondar town.” (*Zigora* p. 117)

“የአክሱም ጽዮን ግቢ በምሽት ድባብ እየተዋጠ ነው።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 138)

“The courtyard of Axum Tsion is wrapped up by evening atmosphere.” (*Zigora* p. 138)

“አባታችን! ደብረታቦር ከተማ እየደረስን ነው።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 181)

“Our Father! We are arriving in the city of Debre Tabor.” (*Zigora* p. 181)

Additionally, there are many other places like Debrelibanos, Zequala, Debre Bizen, Ramana Rama, Mihure Eyesus, Hayik Estifanos, Abba Georgios Zegasicha Tedibabe Mariam, or Mertolemariam, Axum Tsion, Arda Giorgis (*Zigora* p. 39), Mahbere Selassie monastery (*Zigora* p. 56), and others that they are very well-known places in the real world mentioned in *Zigara*.

The third novel, *Merbebit* is also set in the real-world setting that all of the places in the novel are very familiar to the reader. The author used the same way as the previous analysis. Events set in both local areas and out of the country, but all are in the real-world setting. We can see this from the following extracts:

“ሲሲሊ የጣሊያን አንድ ግዛት ስትሆን ዙሪያዋን በሜዲትራኒያን ባህር የተከበበች ትልቅ ደሴት ናት።”
(መርበብት ፲. 19)

“Sicily is part of Italy, a large island surrounded by the Mediterranean.” (*Merbebit* p. 19)

“... ስገምት አድዋ አካባቢ ሙሄድ እንዳለብኝ አመንኩ” አላት (መርበብት ፲. 127)

“... When I guessed, I believed I had to go to Adwa.” (*Merbebit* p. 127)

“በአፍሪካ አህጉር በካልሃሪ በረሀ አቅራቢያ . . .” (መርበብት ፲. 273)

“Near the Calhori desert in the African continent. . .” (*Merbebit* p. 273)

As stated above, events in *Merbebit* are depicted in the real-world setting where the reader can experience or know in the real world. In addition to the above examples, places like Sicily (*Merbebit* p. 19), Bahrdar Airport (*Merbebit* p. 117), Adwa (*Merbebit* p. 127), Axum (*Merbebit* p. 153), Lake Tana (*Merbebit* p. 178), African continent (*Merbebit* p. 273), Dega Damot (*Merbebit* p. 239), and other places are illustrations of the real-world setting that are found both in the novel and in the real world.

In general, in all the novels, the aforementioned places are found in the real world that the author used instead of creating a fictional world in the development of the story. There are many places that events happen in the novels, as mentioned above for each novel, are also found in the real world too which makes magical realism text differ from other modes of writing. The settings are portrayed or depicted as quite realistic.

3.1.4. Plenitude

As it is explained previously, plenitude means being fullness or an abundance of details about events or things. In this case, the issue is explained frequently or raised from the beginning to the end. In addition to this, the case is known by most of the characters. For example, *Emegua* is plenty of detail about the search of the Holy Cup that reappears throughout the novel. Starting from the beginning till the end of the novel, the idea of searching the Holy Cup is the main issue for Sisay and other characters around him too. Sisay is considered as an example for the generation who want to look for the Holy Cup. One of the monks who understood his characteristic says:

“... አንተ ደግሞ ሁሉን የማወቅ ጉጉት እና ወረት የሚንጠው የዚህ ትውልድ ናሙና ነህና ትጠራና ትማር ዘንድ ይገባ ነበር” አሉኝ።” (እመጓ ፲. 162)

“... You are the specimen of this generation that curiosity and fad churn you, and you should be called and taught” he said.” (*Emegua* p. 162)

Thus, *Emegua* is a novel that is rich with the description of searching the Holy Cup from the beginning to the end.

On the other hand, in *Zigora*, the herbs and their secret are widely illustrated in different ways. As the story begins, Sisay's search for the herbs from different places and the monk's instruction are all around the issue of the herbs. The secret of the jungle is a puzzle and the issue of all ecologists. Sisay tries to know the secret starting from the time he receives the vellum. In short, the secret of the forest is explained as we can understand from the following conversation:

“አባ ምን ተአምር እና ሚስጥር ነው ከዚህ ደን ውስጥ ያለው?” አልኳቸው።

“እንዲህ በቀላሉ የምትረዳውና የምትመረምረው ነገር እንዳልሆነ የተረዳህ ይመስለኛል።” አሉ። (ዝጎራ ፲. 281)

“Father, what miracle and secret are there in this forest?” I asked him.

“I think you understand that it's not something you can easily understand and analyze.” (*Zigora* p. 281)

Thus, Sisay is told that it is a secret, a secret that he can't investigate and understand easily. *Zigora* is full of details about the secret of the herbs and the forest. Most of the characters in the novel strive to help Sisay, directly or indirectly, so that he can understand the secret of the forest as he was curious to know.

On the other hand, in *Merbebit* the secret of the box and Sisay's curiosity to use the enchantment is abundantly depicted. After Sisay received the map and its description to look for the secret box, he is very eager to know about it. Even if it is explained for him, Sisay wants to try to see it practically. After he is told that it is not an important thing, he pleads to check it as we can see in the following extract:

“... ድጋሙን ይግመው ጠርተውት ቢያሳዩኝ?” አለ (መርበብት ፲. 279)

“... Should you use the enchantment and show me?” he said (*Merbebit* p. 279)

As stated above, starting from the opening to closing, the events and stories of *Merbebit* revolve around the secret box and the enchantment. There are plenty of descriptions for this as it is explained above.

One of the most important issues that stand out in *Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit* curiosity which is abundantly discussed. In *Emegua*, Sisay is very eager to see the Holy Cup. In *Zigora*, he is also

keen to know the secret of the forest and the herbs. On the other hand, one can easily see how he is curious to know the secret of the enchantment.

3.1.5. Sense of Mystery

A sense of mystery is one of the basic characteristics of magical realism which is demonstrated in various ways. Many magical events happened in the novels which are not simple or obvious incidents, but at the same time accepted as they are real. The fantastic events are presented realistically so that they look like real. In *Emegua*, for example, the mystery of corpses which never get destroyed or decayed can be mentioned. It is very mysterious to see the corpses without being demolished or rotten. The mysteriousness of this is indicated in the extract below as one of the characters says:

“...ሰው ሞቶ ሳይፈረስ ሳይበላሽ በቃልኪዳኑ እንዲህ ይኖራል።” (እመጋ ፡ 133)

“A corpse stays like this according to his covenant, without being decayed and destroyed.”

(*Emegua* p. 133)

According to the above extract, it is very difficult to understand that the corpses stay safe for long. This is a mystery for Sisay as well as for the monks who told the story for him too.

In *Zigora*, on the other hand, all the ecologists were surprised when they conducted their study in one of the forests. All of them were so surprised when the GPS and the compass were dysfunctional after several attempts. As Professor Harold says “This place is weird! I think we better leave now” (*Zigora* p. 217), they cannot get the reason why the devices stopped working and what makes the place different from other places (study sites). They cannot understand the mystery of the forest even if they use different technological instruments. Moreover, the forest is a mystery for Sisay too. As it is explained in the previous analysis, Sisay is told that the place (the forest) is mysterious that he can't easily investigate and understand.

Merbebit reveals this characteristic in the way. The box is very mysterious for Sisay. After he finds out with the help of the map and its description, he couldn't know what is inside even though he tries different mechanisms. Lastly, it is explained by Liketebebit Asteraeye and agrees to give the enchantment book and the herbs to spiritual fathers though it is still mysterious for him. Even if he asks Liketebebit Asteraeye to show him so that he can understand the mystery, he gets refusal with advice to do not try it as we can understand from the extract below:

“እንዲያው መቼም ማየት ከሁሉም ይበልጣልና ዘወር ወዳለ ስፍራ ሄደን ጠርተው ቢያሳዩ?” አለ። መርበብት 7. 279)

"If we had to go to a place to look around and then you use the enchantment since it would be best for all to see?" he said. (*Merbebit* p. 279)

In his way to the monastery, Sisay wants to know the mystery of the enchantment book. Then, he commands the spirit to restore the blown tire and to pick up the fallen tree by using the enchantment. It is difficult to believe, in fact, the way how Sisay orders the spirit or ghost to do those activities. He had never seen such a miracle before.

Even though he gets refusal first, he tries the magic by himself. As explained in the previous chapter, in magical realism, ‘magic’ refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science. Thus, the case of the mystery corpses and the activities of the spirit can’t be proved by rational science. In general, the novels demonstrate the mysteries in different ways as explained above. As magical realism texts, all of the chosen novels are accompanied by a sense of mystery.

3.1.6. Authorial Reticence

This characteristic, as defined in the previous chapter, it is “. . . the lack of clear opinions about the accuracy of events and the credibility of the world views expressed by the characters in the text.” Even though many events happen in *Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*, there is nowhere the narrator explains or reason outs why certain phenomena are happening. In other words, the narrator simply narrates the events in a straight forward manner without adding any opinion about the accuracy of the events.

As it is discussed in the previous elements, the narrator tells us the corpses stay safe without being destroyed or decayed in *Emegua*. Moreover, the way how they come to the cave is another unexplained issue. However, the author doesn’t try to give any justification about how the corpses come to the cave as well as how they stay safe without being demolished.

As it is described before, the incident of the invisibility of the trees in *Zigora* is another example of the characteristic of magical realism. When Sisay finds out the second herb, he wants to take some leaves from the tree, but the monk tells him that he will take later on. Sisay couldn’t get the tree when he comes back from lunch. However, the author doesn’t give any personal opinion or

reasoning rather he accepts the extraordinary event so that the reader also accepts it without question.

The same thing happened in *Merbebit* too. The author tells the reader about some extraordinary events like restoring the blown tire and picking up the fallen tree. After using the enchantment, the narrator tells the reader that the tire is restored and the fallen tree stands as their previous normal positions. But, the narrator does not explain these events instead the author tells us what happened without including his opinion.

As shown above, many fantastic events or magics happened in all novels, but the author doesn't mention any scientific or personal reason to prove or disprove the events. In short, the author narrates only what happens rather why and how it happens. There is no justification as well as personal opinion or suggestion about the incidents.

3.1.7. Hybridity

In the selected novels (*Emegua*, *Zigora*, and *Merbebit*), this characteristic takes, social, political, generation gap, religious, and science forms. In the selected novels, hybridity is presented in opposite margins.

As briefed in the synopsis, *Emegua* is a novel that focuses on searching for the Holy Cup where Sisay looks for it instead of accepting his ancestors' word faithfully like the monk who believes that the Holy Cup is found in *Emegua* without seeing it in his necked eye. Sisay wants to see the Holy Cup with his necked eye to believe that it is found here in *Emegua* instead of following the footsteps of his fathers who accepted without seeing it like the monk. The monks believe that there are many heritages that they accept from forefathers without any question. On the other side, nowadays, people don't accept what they are told from their forefathers' words simply without any proof. This paradoxical religious belief and generation gap stated in the following extract:

“... ሚስጢር ለመካፈል ቅርስ ለመረከብ የሚያስችል ስብዕና አልገነባችሁም። . . . እኛ አባቶቻችንን እናምናለን በእነርሱም ደስ ይለናል። የነገሩንን ተቀብለን ቃል ኪዳናቸውን ጠብቀን እንኖራለን።” (እመጋ ፲. 164)

“. . . You didn't build a personality to capture a legacy and to share a secret. . . We believe our ancestors and we rejoice in them. We accept what they have said, and we will keep their covenants.” (*Emegua* p. 164)

“አባቶቻችንን አምነን፣ ሀገራችን የበረከት ምድር መሆኗን ተረድተን፣ የጌታችንን የፀጋ ስጦታ ተቀብለን በእምነት እንኖራለን።” (እመጓ ፲. 165)

"Believing our forefathers, we understand that our country is a land of blessing, receiving the gift of the Lord and living by faith." (*Emegua* p. 165)

Thus, in the above extract, there is a generation gap concerning accepting the ancestor's belief and capturing the legacy without questioning as the monks do; on the other hand, Sisay wants to see everything instead of accepting without questioning. In short, this shows the hybridity of this generation (who believe seeing is believing) and the previous one (who accept and believe the ancestors' words without questioning).

On the other hand, *Zigora* is set in different monasteries where there is a mixture of visibility and invisibility (religion Vs Science) things. The narrator tells us that there are invisible things in the forest, and he tries to see it with a scientific instrument, but he couldn't make it. In science people believe that even if there are invisible things, they can be seen using different instruments as the following extract proves this:

“ከሰው የማየት ገደብ ውጭ የሆኑ ሞገዶችን ሊያሳይ የሚችል ወይም የድምፅ ሞገድ በመጠቀም እይታን የሚያመጣ መሳሪያ ወይም መነፅር ብታገኝ በተወሰነ ደረጃም ቢሆን የማየት እድል ሊኖርህ ይችላል።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 253)

"If you find a device or goggles that can show waves that are beyond the limits of human sight or use sound waves, you might have a chance to see them." (*Zigora* p. 253)

On the contrary, in the eye of a religious belief, people may be given the power of being invisible for the others but they can see everything. As it is believed in religion, which the novel is set, some saints are gifted to be invisible for others. The extract below shows this:

“ተሰጥሞ ብርሃን፡- ይህ ደግሞ የእግዚአብሔር የባህሪ ገንዘብ በሆነው በሚያስደንቀው ብርሃን ውስጥ መዋኘት ነው። ይህም እነርሱ በዚህ ብርሃን ውስጥ እያሉ ሌላ ለዚህ መዓረግ ያልበቃ ሊያዩው የማይችሉው ብርሃን ነው።” (ዝጎራ 7. 258)

“Gifted Light: This is engrossing in the dazzling light, which is God's attribute of characteristic. As a result, while they are in this light, they cannot see that is not sufficient for this dignity.” (*Zigora* p. 258)

As stated above, the extracts show the other example of the paradoxical dimensions of science and religion in the novel, *Zigora*. The matter of visibility and invisibility in the eyes of science and religion are too opposite that the former believes that everything can be seen while the latter believes that some gifted people cannot be visible. There are people who are gifted from the Almighty God that they can be imperceptible

In addition to the above hybridity examples, the scene (in *Merbebit*) set in Sicily shows honesty and greediness of the father (Mr. Stephen) who is governed by law, feels responsible, never participates in any illegal activity; and his daughter (Natalia), on the other hand, who is acting the opposite. The father's honesty and the greediness of the daughter are explicitly seen in the following extracts respectively:

“አባቷ ሚስተር እስጢፋኖ እንደብዙዎቹ ሲሲሊያውያን ቱጃሮች የማፍያ ስራ ውስጥ እጃቸውን አያስገቡም። ለሀብትና ለዝና ብዙ አይስገበገቡም።” (16)

“Her father, Mr. Stephen, is not involved in the mafia work, like many rich Sicilian people. He does not greed much for wealth and fame.” (*Merbebit* p. 16)

“ናታሊያ በበኩሏ . . . ሞራልና ህግ የሚገዛት አይነት ሰው አልነበረችም። አባቷ እንዳያውቁበት እየተጠነቀቀች በእጇ የገባውን ንፁህ ኩባንያ ከህግ በላይ ለማድረግና ትርፍ ለማጋበስ የሲሲሊያውያንን መንገድ ጀምራለች።” (መርበብት 7. 17)

“Natalia for her part. . . She was not the kind of person who is ruled morally. She began the Sicilian way of getting the law firm of her own to make more than the law and to make profits.” (*Merbebit* p. 17)

As shown above, both of them have opposite personalities, attitudes, and beliefs. In addition to honesty and greediness, when Mr. Stephen decides to give the secret box map and description for Sisay, Natalia was against that idea claiming that it should be for Italian. Both of them show the opposite manner. In short, they have an inharmonious position and belief.

Generally, in the selected novels, we find opposite dimensions like generation gap, science versus religion, good and bad attitude of the father and the daughter in addition to honesty and greedy, and so on. We find many paradoxical incidents which show the characteristic of magical realist texts.

3.1.8. The Disruptions of Space, Time and Identity

The idea of space, time, and identity disruption is the other characteristic that the magical realist texts incorporate. For example, when Sisay tells us that his friend is not always available in the holidays, we can sense that there is a disruption of time in *Zigora*. As we can see in the extract below:

“... በሰንበት ቀንና በዐበይት በዐላት አግኝቶኛል አላውቅም፤” (ዝጎራ ፲. 27)

“... I have never met him on Sundays and major Holidays;” (*Zigora* p. 27)

When the narrator tells us that Dr. Kibre Beal is not available on those days, our usual sense of time is surprised. As stated in the above extract, our usual sense of time gets interrupted. This is an example of time disruption.

On the other hand, our sense of space is disrupted when the narrator tells us that corpses come from the place where the Holy Cup is found to the other cave, but not known how it could happen. As briefed in the previous analysis, whenever monks who look after the Holy Cup die, their corpses are found in another cave as the extract below shows:

“... በበነጋው መጥተን ስናይ አዲስ አስክሬን እናገኛለን” ነበር ያሉን። (ዝጎራ ፲. 134)

“... When we come the next morning, we will find a new corpse.” (*Zigora* p. 134).

So, there is a disruption of the sense of place here which is the other example of magical realist text.

Magical realism disrupts not only our senses of time and space but also our sense of identity as well. Dr. Kibire Beal, Sisay's best friend, has a different personality or identity than what Sisay knows. When Dr. Kibire Beal is with Sisay and Shiferaw, he acts like them, but when he is in the monastery, he has another identity even his name is not Dr. Kibire Beal rather Abba Meaza Kidusan who is the member of the monastery monks. As we can see from the following extract, Sisay finds out Dr. Kibire Beal (Abba Meaza Kikusan) in very different personalities that he knows and surprisingly says:

“አላስተዋልሁህም ደግሞም ራሴን ማመን አልቻልኩም እንጂ ማህበረ ስላሴ ገዳምን በአቋራጭ ቀድመህ ደርሰህ ከመናኞቹ ቤት አይቼህ ነበር።” (ዝጎራ ፯. 311)

“I did not notice you and I could not believe myself, but you had already arrived before me at the convent and I saw you from the houses.” (*Zigora* p. 311)

As stated in the extract, Dr. Kibre Beal has different personalities or identities while he is in the town and the monastery. Furthermore, in the course of looking for the three herbs, Sisay used to ask Dr. Kibire Beal, as a friend, to help him, but he pretends as if he doesn't know as well as doesn't want to interfere on someone's research. Finally, he is the one who is responsible to reveal the secret as shown below:

“... ወንድምህ አባ መአዛ ቅዱሳን ወደፊት ይነግርህልኛል በልብህ ጠብቀው!” (ዝጎራ ፯. 319)

“... so, your brother Abba Meaza Kidusan will tell you in the future, keep it in your heart!” (*Zigora* p. 319)

As briefed above, the personal multiplicity of Dr. Kibre Beal or/and Abba Meaza Kidusan is an example of the disruption of identity. In general, the disruption of space, time, and identity are reflected in *Zigora* as they are explained above.

3.1.9. Political Critique

Like other writing modes, magical realism doesn't give focus on aesthetic pleasure only rather it plays a vital role in showing the weaknesses of the society. The author criticizes some of the important social, economic, and political snags or hitches. The author criticizes based on evidence from his experience or the realistic context.

Zigora is set at a time when Ethiopia is in the transformational period where policies used to be directly copied from others without any amendment to harmonize with the country's situation. The author criticized this as the following extract can help us to understand the situation:

“ዋናው ችግራችን ግን የራሳችን የስራ ስልት፣ የእኛ የሆነ የስራ ቀመር፣ ከማንነታችን የሚመነጭ የእድገት እና ብልፅግና እሳቤ ሳናዳብር ሁሉንም ከውጭ ለመቅዳት እና ለመኮረጅ መሞከራችን . . . ከውጭ የተቀዳውም እኮ በአግባቡ አይታወቅም።” አለና አስከትሎ “ከገና ዛፍ እስከ ኢንጅነሪንግ፣ ከወይዘሮች የቁንጅና ውድድር እስከ እርሻ መካከይኮን ከእንግሊዝ የገበታ ስርዓት እስከ ጃፓን ካይዘን ፍልስፍና ሁሉንም ሳንመርጥ እንደወረደ መቅዳት ሆነ እንጂ።” (ዝጎራ ፲. 68)

“But our main problem is that we try to copy and ape everything from the outside without thinking about our work style, our work ethic, our sense of growth and prosperity. . . It is not even known properly what is copied outside source.” he said, and adds “From Christmas tree to engineering; From grapevine beauty to agriculture, from the English eating habit to the Japanese Kaizen philosophy, it was like copying everything.” (*Zigora* p. 68)

As stated above, the author criticized the way how things are copied from abroad and implemented without considering the situation. The author blames the way how things are imitated and implemented instead of designing our systems.

On the other hand, *Merbebit* is set in the time when Ethiopia is about to transfer from a transformational period to a synergy philosophy. The narrator tells us instead of copying the policies directly from others, the policies will be designed by the country itself.

“ለሀገራዊ ችግር ሀገርኛ ቀመር፣ ሀገርኛ ስልት፣ ሀገራዊ መፍትሔ አላቸው። . . . እቅዳቸው ጥንቁቅ አፈጻጸማቸው ፈጣን ነው። ትውልድ እንደ ጅረት የሚቀበበለው እንጂ ዛሬ ታይቶ ነገ የሚጠፋ ተግባር አይኾንም።” (መርበብ ፲. 207)

“They have a national formula, a national strategy, a national solution to a national problem. . . Their plan is careful and their performance is fast. The generation embraces it as a stream, not a task to be seen today.” (*Merbebit* p. 207)

From the above extract, we can understand that there is a pragmatic change from copying the policies to design the policies. On the other hand, the author criticizes the elites and the leaders who failed to accomplish their responsibility. He emphasizes that since people couldn't get good leaders who organize professionals to design plans and support them. And this was the reason that the country is under poverty as we can see from the extract below:

“ሕዝቡ ለግሞ ሳይሆን የስራ እቅድ እና ስልት የሚነድፍ ባለሙያ፣ ያንንም የሚያስተባብር እውነተኛ እና ጠንካራ አመራር ማጣት ይመስለኛል” አለ። (መርቦብት 7. 56)

"I think there is a lack of real and strong leadership who coordinates those professionals who set the agenda and strategy, not the people's supine," he said. (*Merbebit* p. 56)

In addition to this, in *Merbebit*, the narrator criticizes the ruling political parties as well as the opponent ones. He explains that the members of the ruling party don't understand the policies of the government. He claims that their level of understanding, as well as their performance, should be measured. On the other hand, the opposition parties are organized for the sake of opposing. They don't alternative policies that are better than the government. The narrator observes these when the youngsters discuss as quoted below:

“ገዥውን ፓርቲ ተመልከት። አንድ ፖሊሲ የሚከተሉ የአንድ ፓርቲ አባላት ቢሆኑም እንኳን ፖሊሲውን የመረዳት ልኩ እና የማስፈጸም አቅሙ ከአባላቱ መካከል በውድድር መፈተሽ ነበረበት።” (መርቦብት 7. 200)

“Look at the ruling party. Even if they are members of a party who follow an identical policy, its ability to understand and enforce the policy must be rigorously tested among its members.” (*Merbebit* p. 200)

“ተቃዋሚ ተብለው በፓርቲ የተደራጁ ፖለቲከኞችንም ተመልከት። ከጉባዔያቸው ማግስት ተከፋፈሉ ተጠሉ ሲባል ነው የምንሰማው። ተቃዋሚ ፓርቲዎች ከጥንካሬያቸው ይልቅ ቁጥራቸው እየበዛ እንኳን ዝርዝር የፖሊሲ አማራጮቻቸውን ስማቸውንም ለማወቅ ችግር ሆኗል።” (መርቦብት 7. 201)

See also, party-organized politicians. We hear that they are disbanded the day after their conference. Instead of their strength, it has become difficult to know the details of their policy options and their names, even with the growing number of opposition parties. (*Merbebit* p. 201)

As briefed above, the author criticized both the ruling party as well as the opponents about their policies and performance. While the ruling party has poor performance, the opposition parties don't have also strong policies and unity to show the weakness of the ruling party.

The other important point is the impact of war. The impact of war, either for the winner or the loser, is criticized. The author disparaged the war between brothers who are from the same country. The following extracts below show this issue:

“ባለቤታቸውን በህመም ሁለቱን ልጆቻቸውን ደግሞ በጦርነት ተነጥቀው ያለደጋፊ ቀርተው. . .” (ዝጎራ 7. 130)

“She lost her husband in illness and her two children in war; left without any supporter. . .” (*Zigora*, p. 130)

“... የአንድ እናት ልጆች የሆኑ የህውሃት እና የደርግ ሰራዊት ተፋልመውበታል። በጦርነቱ ህውሃት የደርግን ሰራዊት 801ኛ ኮር ሙሉ በሙሉ የደመሰሰበት እና ከሁሉም ወገን በርካታ ኢትዮጵያውያን የተሰውበት እና ብዙ ሀብት የወደመበት ሆኖ አልፏል። . . . የእርስ በእርስ ጦርነት መራራ ሀገራዊ መዘዝ ከማምጣቱም በላይ ለአንዳንድ ግለሰቦች በተለይ ለእንስቶች ውስጣዊ ህመም እና የስነልቦና ጠባሳ ጥሎ ያልፋል» አሉ። (ዝጎራ 7. 152)

“... The armies of the TPLF and Derg, children of a mother, fought here. In the course of the war, the 801st core of the Derg army was destroyed and many Ethiopians on the other side were lost and many resources were lost. . . The civil war has not only brought bitter national consequences but also has left some people suffering, especially for females, for internal pain and psychological scars. (*Zigora* p. 152)

As shown above, the author criticizes many issues that are observed in the real context too. The hitches or snags of the political system, the intellectuals, and other social and economic affairs criticized with evidence. For example, it is very true and everyone can understand the effects of the war and the cause for poverty. Moreover, our work culture, as well as time management, justice, politicized marriage system, unfair distribution of resources, the infrastructure, educational system, and other weaknesses like poor management of natural resources, have been criticized by the narrator.

3.1.10. Merging Realms

Merging realms is another feature of magical realism which is reflected in the selected novels too. This characteristic shows the two worlds. For example, spiritual life and corporeal life. In *Zigora*, as the narrator tells us about Dr. Kibire Beal’s life weaves a web of connections between the spiritual experience and the corporeal life. The novel tells us that Dr. Kibire Beal is a well-known academician who attended his education up to the Ph.D. level as we can see in the extract below:

“ዶ/ር ክብረበዓል እስካሁን በስራ እና በትምህርት አጋጣሚ ከማውቃቸው ሰዎች ለየት ያለ ስብዕና ያለው ሰው ነው። . . . ከባህር ዳር ዩኒቨርስቲ በባዮሎጂ ትምህርት የመጀመሪያ ዲግሪውን ካገኘ በኋላ ለድህረ ምረቃ ትምህርት ወደ አሜሪካ ተጉዞ አክላሆማ ስቴት ዩኒቨርስቲ የማስተርስ እና የፐሎኒዮር ዲግሪውን በማዕረግ ተቀብሏል።” (ዝጎራ 7. 25)

“Dr. Kibire Beal is a person with a personality that is unique to people among men whom I have known at work and in education. . . . After earning his undergraduate degree in Biology from Bahir Dar University, he traveled to the United States to pursue a post-graduate degree at Oklahoma State University and received his master's degree and Ph.D. with honor.” (*Zigora* p. 25)

As stated above, the reader knows in the world that he serves his country according to his educational background. On the other hand, at the end of the story, the novel tells us that there is an astonishing event that happens, and Sisay explains this as:

“ከቤተክርስቲያን አቅጣጫ ነጭጭ የለበሱ መነኮሳት ሲመጡ ተመለከትኩና ልቤ ወከክ አለ። እየቀረቡኝ ሲመጡና መልካቸውን ማስተዋል ስጀምር በአድናቆት አፊን ከፍቼ ቀረሁ።” (ዝጎራ 7. 311)

“I saw white monks coming from the direction of the church and my heart sank. As they approached and I began to notice their faces, I opened my mouth with awe.” (*Zigora* p. 311)

Among these monastery monks who are intellectual and also spiritually gifted to do things (beyond this world's) which can't be done by ordinary people, Dr. Kibire Beal is one of them who is living in the other world too. The narrator notices the double-sided life of his friend at the end of the story.

Even in his spiritual life, his name is not Dr. Dibre Beal rather Abba Meaza Kidusan. When Sisay consults him, Dr. Kibre Beal pretends as if he doesn't know about it. As the narrator tells us also, he is the one who will disclose the secret of the three herbs that Sisay brought from different places.

“ለምን እያቼን እንድታመጣ እንደፈለክ ብርቱ ሚስጥር ነውና ወንድምህ አባ መአዛ ቅዱሳን ወደፊት ይነግርሁልና በልብህ ጠብቀው!” (ዝጎራ 7. 319)

“It is a strong secret as to why we want you to bring the herbs, so your brother Abba Meaza Kidusan will tell you in the future, keep it in your heart!” (*Zigora* p. 319)

Thus, as briefed in the above extracts, Dr. Kibire Beal's worldly life and Abba Meaza Kidusan's spiritual life is a good example of merging realms in the selected novels. In general, we experience the closeness or near-merging of two worlds: spiritual and worldly lives.

3.1.11. Prevalence of Folklore

As it is said in the previous chapter, it is very true that “One cannot study African works of literature without studying the particular cultures and cultures upon which African writers draw for their ideological and formal elements. As a result, magical realism texts include the prevalence of folklore”. There are indeed plenty of folklore examples in the selected novels which prove the above explanation. In all selected novels, there are many folklores as shown below for each novel.

In *Emegua*, for instance, the narrator tells us about the myth that the Holy Cup is found in Menzi *Emegua* that Sisay seeks for it. It is told that the Holy Cup is found there and people believe it. As the following extracts help to understand this:

“አንተ ቅዱስ ፅዋ የምትለውን እኛ የቅዱስ ኪዳን ቅርስ እንለዋለን። እንደገመትከው በመድሃኒዓለም ፍቃድ በዚህ በመንዝ ይኖራል . . .” አሉኝ። (እመጋ ፲. 114)

“What you call the Holy Cup, we call it the heritage of the covenant. As you can imagine, with the permission of the Saviour, it is found here in Meniz . . .” he said. (*Emegua* p. 114)

In addition to its presence in *Emegua*, the way how it comes to have a different mythological story. Among these, one is that the Holy Cup was brought by the Ethiopian eunuch as the following extract shows:

“...ይህንን የከበረ ቅዱስ ቅርስ ለህዝብህ የእምነት ውጤት የፀጋ ምልክት የሆዱ ኪዳን ምስክር ይህን ዘንድ ወደ ሀገርህ ይዘህ እንድትሄድ የእግዚአብሔር ፍቃድ ሆኗል!” (እመጋ ፲. 155)

“... It is God's will for you to take this Holly Heritage to your country home with you as a testimony to the New Testament as a sign of grace for the faith of your people!” (*Emegua* p. 155)

As stated above, there is a story which is told about how the Holy Cup, that Jesus Christ used on the last dinner with Apostles, went from Israel to Hebron first and then how it came from Hebron to Ethiopia. Based on that story, people believe that the Holy Cup is now found in *Emegua* Kola.

The other example of folklore in *Emegua* is the story of the worshipping of a dragon that is told to Sisay. before the Birth of Christ, there was a dragon that people believe in it and they used to present offerings for it as shown in the extract below:

“በዘመነ ኦሪት እዚህ አካባቢ የሰይጣን መንፈስ ያደረገው የሚመለከ ዘንዶ ነበር። እናም ህዝቡ ተራ ገብቶ ዘወትር ጊደር እየታረደ፣ ደሙ በገበታ ይደረግና ይቀርብለት ነበር” አሉ። (እመጋ 7. 178)

“Before the birth of Christ, around here, there was a worshipping dragon with the spirit of Satan. And the people went in and kept slaughtering the ox, and the blood was on the table and offered to it.” (*Emegua* p. 178)

As briefed above, the narration of *Emegua* is rich in folklore like the story of the Holy Cup and the worshipping of the dragon.

Zigora is also a novel that incorporates folkloristic details. Among the folklores narrated in the story is Emperor Susinyos’s declaration to make the Catholic religion as a national religion after he accepted it. Following his declaration, many priests and monks resist his decision. Later on, he becomes sick as the extract below shows:

“አፄ ሱስኒዮስ በሚስዮናውያን ግፊት የካቶሊክ እምነትን ተቀበሉ። . . . ምላሳቸው ተጎልጉሎ ወጥቶ እንደውሻ ማለክለክ እጣቸው ሆነ። . . . ሰባት ቀን እየጸለዩ ሲያጠምቋቸው አፄ ሱስኒዮስም ከደዌያቸው ተፈወሱ።” (ዝጎራ 7. 93)

“Emperor Susinyos accepted the Catholic faith under the missionary pressure. . . His tongue slumped and became like a dog panting. . . When they prayed for seven days and baptized him, Emperor Susinyos was cured of his disease.” (*Zigora* p. 93)

The above story is still believed and accepted many Ethiopians. In addition to this, *Zigora's* narrator tells us Emperor Kaleb’s story of changing the soil to gold after he completes the fight in Yemen. The Emperor orders the soldiers to hold the soil as much as they can. Accordingly, some bring little some others bring nothing. When they come back to Ethiopia, the Emperor blesses them and told them that the soil that they bring from Yemen becomes gold as it is explicitly shown in the extract below:

“አፄ ካሌብ የሚባሉ የኢትዮጵያ ንጉስ በየመን የሚገኙ ክርስቲያኖች በአረማውያን ግፍና መከራ እንደበዘባቸው ሲሰሙ ነጋሪት አስጎስመው፣ ጦር አስከትተው ቀይ ባህርን አቋርጠው ዘመቱ . . . ልጆቹ ጦርነቱን በድል አሸንፈናል. . . ሁላችሁም ወደ ሀገራችን ስትመለሱ የቻላችሁትን ያህል አፈር ይዛችሁ እንድትሄዱ ይሁን ብለው አስታወቁ . . . በየመን ሳለን ያዙ ያልኳችሁ አፈር ንፁህ ወርቅ ይሁንላችሁ። . . . አፈር የያዘው ሁሉ መሀረቡን ሲፈታ አፄ ካሌብ እንደተናገሩት ወርቅ ሆኖ ተገኘ።” (ዝጎራ 7. 142-143)

“When Emperor Kaleb of Ethiopia heard that Christians in Yemen were oppressed by pagan oppression, they brought him to the battle, crossed the Red Sea, and attacked them... <My children, we won the war. . . "You all have to go back to our country and get as much soil as you can," he announced. . . The soil I said to you while we were in Yemen, be the pure gold. . . As Emperor Kaleb said, when everyone who has held the soil unties the handkerchief, it became gold.” (*Zigora* p. 142-143)

Moreover, Abraha’s and Atsibiha’s story who heard God’s message from the mouth of the deer and the blessed baking powder and oil jar which never get finished are also the folklores narrated in the novel, *Zigora*.

Merbebit is also a novel that integrates folklore as we can see the story of the offering for the idol. Sisay is told the story by his ant in his childhood. The story tells us how the idol injures people whenever they don’t present the offerings properly. One of these incidents that Sisay’s ant observed is narrated in the novel as follow:

“ታዲያ ሰዎች በግ፣ ዶሮ እና አረቄ ይዘው በየአመቱ እየሄድን ይገብሩለታል። አንድ ጊዜ እኔም ከአማቴ ጋር ሄጄ እኛ በስርዓት አቅርቦን ስናበቃ አንድ ሌላ ሰውዬ አረቄ ይዞ ሄዶ ለካ ዶሮ ረስቶ ኖሯል።” (መርቦብት ፲. 284)

“So, people take sheep, chicken, and alcohol every year and pay it. Once, when I went with my mother-in-law, we ended up in the system, and another man went and forgot about the chicken.” (*Merbebit* p. 284)

As we can see from the above examples, the novels have accompanied many folklores which is the characteristic of the magical realist texts as well as an African writer.

To conclude the analysis of magical realism characteristics as reflected in the selected novels, most of the characteristics are reflected in the novels. Even if the characteristics in the theoretical framework are more, these are the one which is reflected in the novel. Moreover, some of them, for example, authorial reticence and unsettling doubt have the same sense.

Chapter Four

Summary and Conclusion

4.1. Summary

This paper has attempted to deal with how magical realism thoughts and characteristics reflected in Alemayehu's writing through magical realism analysis on the selected novels. An endeavor has been made to provide an overall view of the concept of magical realism and its characteristics.

Even though magical realism has been started in the art (painting) to reflect the reality, later on, the form shifted to literature which comprises the realism and extraordinary occurrences in the way that magical elements are portrayed realistically so that the reader believes in the story as a matter-of-fact. The selected novels have been analysed in magical realism perspectives.

4.2. Conclusion

As shown in the analysis, the selected novels employed most of the characteristics of magical realism: fantastic element, the phenomenal world, real-world setting, plenitude, sense of mystery, authorial reticence, hybridity, the disruptions of space, time and identity, political critique, merging realms and prevalence of folklore. The author skillfully portrays many extraordinary events realistically that the reader accepts them as ordinary events in our life. To do this, the author used a real-world setting that the reader can know them in the real world instead of creating a fictional world. Additionally, the details in the descriptions resemble the phenomenal world we live in. Moreover, the country's political condition and the story has been criticized in different ways. Additionally, the novels are very rich in folklore. The author included the folklores in all novels. Thus, the author is realized that he is a magical realist writer who employed the elements of magical realism in his literary works. In his novels, the author portrays realistic events using real-world settings.

Looking at the meaning of the novels in a postcolonial context, the novels reflected the literary techniques that have been linked to the strands of postcolonialism as discussed in the theoretical framework though the effect of colonization is not reflected because of the political sovereignty of

the country. On the other hand, the western influence is shown, especially in the urban people's lives. But the rural area is not influenced yet.

Alemayehu explicitly deals with the contrary issues of scientific knowledge and religious power. The author with his insightful details tries to show the brutality of war, greediness versus honesty, the sacrifice to get the spiritual blessing, the causes for our poverty, our work culture/ethics, time management, generation gap especially the spiritual life of our fathers and the secularism life of this generation and so on.

In conclusion, this study, *Magical Realism in Alemayehu Wassie's Trilogy*, has found out that most of the elements of magical realism have been reflected. He is a magical realist writer who included supernatural realities in his novels: *Emegua*, *Zigora* and *Merbebit*.

Finally, based on the findings and conclusion, the researcher suggests scholars and researchers in general and Addis Ababa University, in particular, to give more attention to magical realism in addition to this, Ethiopian literary works should be studied in the perspective of magical realism theory too. Moreover, Alemayehu Wassie's trilogy should be analyzed in other literary aspects.

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Appendixes: Synopsis of the Novels

Appendix A: Synopsis of *Emegua*

Sisay always goes to his office in the morning. One day, when he arrives at his office in the morning, as usual, he gets a call phone from someone and receives a message from him saying that: "You are sick come here as soon as possible. The medicine is with us." The message is sent from the monastery monks. A week later Sisay goes to Nada Mariam monastery. After arriving there, Sisay visits the monastery with the help of Abba Merhatsidik. After that, Sisay is informed to return without knowing his purpose on the next day. When Sisay returns, the farmer on his farmland halts him not to go through the field and informs him to find another way. When Sisay looks for another way to pass, he finds two monastery Nuns. They tell him that this is not the way to Debre Aron, and he receives a message for the farmer so that he allows him to pass.

Sisay goes to Debre Aron a month later. As soon as he arrives there, he is welcomed with warm greetings by the monks as usual. After a while, the blind monk, Abba Tewolde Medihin guides him to visit the monastery and tells him the history of the monastery including the life history of Abba Adril who is from Syria. Before he goes back, Abba Tewolde Medihin informs Sisay to pray by feeling or touching all the corners of the coffin of Abba Adril. In doing so, Sisay finds an inscription on a piece of metal at one of the corners. When Sisay copies the article that finds, he realizes that it is written in Geez.

When Sisay seeks for the translation of those words from Geez expert, Abba Ketsela, he notices that two of the words are not from Geez language. In the meantime, Sisay recalls what Abba Tewelde Medihin told him about Abba Adril, and he guesses that the unknown words may be Aramaic, Arabic, or another related language.

Later, when Sisay sets out for the United States to promote the Ethiopian flower production at the International Horticulture Exhibition in New Orleans, his main ambition is to meet Professor David Ramosfield and get the meaning of those words. The meaning of those words is 'the Holy Cup'. After many attempts and hard work, Professor David discovers the meaning of the words from the internet.

After Sisay returns to Ethiopia, wandering where he starts to look for the Holy Cup, one day when he watches TV, he remembers the name of the place where he used to work. Sisay comes back to

this place after 18 years. Sisay meets the ascetic, Emahoy EHITE Mariam, who gives him direction at Nada Mariam. Sisay tells his purpose of coming here and pleads for help, but she tells him that the Holy Cup is seen after by three holy fathers, who are chosen in every ten years based on their monastic life, and no one can enter. However, she sends him with a letter to Abba Akilil who may give him a hint for what he looks for. After arriving there, Abba Akilil suggests him to search for a crate from the ancestral coffin in the cave to find clues about the Holy Cup.

According to the hint, after much effort, Sisay finds a cave where the Holy Cup is found. But he can't open it. After several attempts, Sisay remembers how Abune Endriyas cave is opened and he opens it accordingly. Sisay comes after a lot of hard work and effort, trying to be careful not to be seen by the fathers guarding the Holy Cup. He misses himself as he touches the curtain. When Sisay wakes up two days later, he finds himself at Molale Health Center. When he asks how he comes there, he is told that he blacked out himself. And the fathers had been praying for him and that people from the village carried and bring him here. After a while, Sisay remembers what happens as he opens the curtain in the cave, a flood of light shakes him up and throws him away. He does not want to see the Holy Cup after that; He humbly says that he is not enough for this honor.

Appendix B: Synopsis of *Zigora*

The ecologist Sisay, who travels extensively in monasteries and churches, studies eight different forests in Ethiopian Orthodox churches and monasteries with different scholars from different countries. Later, they can't study the jungle (site 9) and return because the compass and the GPS can't work. They agree to try it by the next day claiming that they are tired. The leader of the monastery recommends that it is good if they do not go in the northern direction of the monastery, but after some discussion, Sisay and others are allowed to study as it is intended.

They face the same problem when they come to work the next day. Then, Dr. Magdilan sees the tree moving, and Melkamu blacks out himself. After that, they suspect that it may be stock of uranium or a metal pile and they agree that, another time, Sisay is given homework to take a soil sample to confirm it in the laboratory. After two years, Sisay checks the sample in a laboratory, but there is no iron or uranium as it is expected. Sisay tries hard to find out the secret but fails to get through it.

One day when Sisay starts his journey to his home, he is given vellum. He is instructed by the monastery fathers to get three herbs (plants) from different places and come back with them without delay. As long as he delays, his age also becomes shorter. But, after he arrives home, Sisay notices that the vellum inscribed in secret. Sisay checks the vellum every day but he can't see anything except one Bible verse which says “And there is no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever. **Revelation 22:5**”

Later on, Sisay goes for a business trip, Mr. Ramzi Anton takes him to Abu Dhabi's museum for visitation. At this time, Sisay gets clarification from the tour guide that the empty paper can be read with a flashlight. Sisay immediately comes back and searches on the internet about how to read encrypted writings. According to the clues Sisay sees, he searches and discovers from the internet and knows that invisible encrypted writings can be readable via lemon. Finally, Sisay gets the names of the herbs.

Accordingly, Sisay makes his first trip to the monastery of the Trinity. Through the help of Abba Kinife Michael, he finds the first herb 'Etse Sina'. The second herb 'Etse Tekihino' is obtained from Abba Pentelion Monastery which is near Axum with the help of Abba Welde Aregawi. Afterward, both of them go to 'Yimrihane Kirstos'. Sisay searches the third herb all day but can't find it. When Abba Aregawi comes and sprinkles the forest with the Holy Water, Sisay gets the third herb, 'Etse Tekihino'. After this, Sisay goes back to the secretive monastery with all the herbs three plants and hands over them to Abba Mezigebe Selassie as he is instructed. The next day, he is appointed to come in the place where he and Melkamu blacked out, where Dr. Magdalene saw the moving tree and the instruments failed to work. When Sisay arrives there, he sees the white-dressed monks, Abba Wolde Aregawi who accompanies him in his quest, Abba Kidane Mariam from Mahibere Selassie Monastery, Abba Birehane Mesikel from Abune Endirias Cave, and more. What surprises and shocks him the most is that of Dr. Kibre Beal, Sisay's close friend and confidant, who left his modern life and joined the monks' life. Sisay asks, why is all this going? After the Fathers advise him, Dr. Kibre Beal promises him to continue their friendship. He promises that he for his country to do more than that. Finally, the monks bless Sisay and put the stick on his shoulder, Sisay blacks out for sometimes. When he wakes up from the lovely anesthesia, he feels good and looks up at the tree that Dr. Magdalene moving. When he turns back after thanking God, he finds a scroll that says, "Do not reveal its name, because this mountain is nothing but prayer and silence."

Appendix C: Synopsis of *Merbebit*

Sisay makes his trip to the Italian coastal city of Sicily in response to an invitation from fellow business owner Mr. Roberto Simone. It is on his last flight that Sisay remembers the city's more sophisticated crimes. After welcoming Sisay, Mr. Roberto guides him in visiting different places. One day, Mr. Roberto would like to introduce Sisay to Mr. Stephen, who had been engaged in the Ethio-Italy war and had been entrusted by a Catholic priest. Mr. Stephen is an investor and owner of a company, and he waits a long time to deliver the trust he received. Although, his daughter Natalia makes several attempts to get the secret box. Sisay, however, uses a very systematic way to bring the secret box to Bahrdar, Ethiopia without snatched by Natalia. Sisay sends the map and its description secretly via mail with his christen name as a sender and his wife's name as a receiver. On the other hand, Natalia tries all means to get the secret box. She orders people to search for it from Sisay's baggage, briefcase, and the post office, but she can't find it. Two weeks after, Sisay arrives Bahrdar, he gets the message from the post office and begins to find the secret box based on the map and the detail that he got from the box.

Sisay starts his search at a place called Frimona, near Adwa, but his plans failed. Although the location of 'Libi Tigray' in Eritrea is similar to where Sisay needs to be, for several reasons he cannot go there. After Sisay comes back from Adwa, he attends a research conference. Sisay finds a clue about the place where he is looking for it. Sisay begins his search for the box around the ancient church, Debre Sina Maryam. Then, he goes to the statue of Mussolini, but he cannot find the signs on the map. Later on, as he examines the Church of St. Mary, which had been destroyed, by the aid of the tour guide, he discovers the sea where the box was buried. He gets it out after much hard work. Even though Sisay finds out the box, he can't open it. Later on, he checks it in X-ray and sees a book on one side and a segment of sugarcane in the other. Since Sisay is unable to open it, he consults his spiritual father. His spiritual father sends him to Liketebebit Asteriyo with a piece of letter. After understanding all that happens, Liketebebit Asteriyo explains to Sisay that the mysterious box contains a book called "Book of Wisdom", which is a book of magic that can summon and command spirits, and he gets advice never to try it instead he should take it to the monastery and gives to the monks.

When Sisay goes to Site 9 to give the box, the tire of his car has blown on the road. He uses the enchantment to raise a fallen tree since he wants to try whether it works really or not. He commands the spirit to restore the tire using the enchantment. Before the monastery, the spirit shouts as humans and everyone gathers. Abba Mezigebe Selassie comes and takes Sisay with him, and the fathers are in prayer when they arrive. In the prayers of the fathers, they caused this evil spirit to descend into the abyss. On the second day, Sisay sees the herbs that he sees in the box with Abba Mezigebe Selassie's prayer book. These are the three herbs he was told to bring from different monasteries. Sisay questions how it happens, but Abba Mezigebe Selassie advises him about the rotation of life. Sisay feels freedom and peace when he returns home.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby do declare that this thesis is my work and it has not been presented before in any of the universities. And also, I assert that all the materials used in the course of this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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