Magical Realism in Aḥmad Saʻdāwiy's
Frankenstein fī Bagdād

Mahmudah
Universitas Gadjah Mada
Email: mahmudah.arb@ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the use of magic realism as a literary device in the Iraqi novel Frankenstein fī Bagdād written by Aḥmad Saʻdāwiy. The novel is set in the period of inter-ethnic conflict which arose after the American invasion of 2003. Hādī, the main character of the novel, 'creates a monster' namely Syismah from the corpses of the many bomb victims in Baghdad. The writer combines setting of the novel with belief of the Iraq people, horoscope practice, and magic, in mystical and illogical atmosphere. Given its magic realist qualities, the analysis draws on the approach of Wendy B. Faris. The article identifies five key elements from magic realism present in the novel, and discusses the relationship between these elements in order to better understand the social, ideological, and political context of the novel. The analysis shows that there are relationships between two worlds: death and life, human and ghost, physical and metaphysical, natural and supernatural.

Keywords: *Aḥmad Saʻdāwiy, Frankenstein fī Bagdād, Iraq, magical realism*

INTRODUCTION

Novel *Frankenstein fī Bagdād* reminds us about Marry Shelly's *Frankenstein* published in 1818. Both novels have similarity in describing a main character of *Frankenstein fī Bagdād*-an unordinary person, who collects second-hand goods. Hādī Al-ʻAttāk found dead bodies as the victim of bomb explosions and united them by sewing a nose he found. That creature then was called Syismah, and lived in revenge by propagating issue around Baghdad. Meanwhile, *Frankenstein* is owned by Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who is ambitious in making a perfect creature created from combine the supernatural and modern technology in which collecting thunder as the strength of his creature. However, that creature turned to strike his founder and to spread terror. *Frankenstein fī Bagdād* is a depiction of community reality of Iraq in 2000's while

Frankenstein is a reflection of Europian in 19 century. It can be depicted that Saʻdāwiy, a novel writer shown the relationship of both novels by citing a statement of Frankenstein Marry Shelly, a short story of Santo Mar Girgis then called Santo George, and a statement of *Syismah*- Frankenstein in this novel's cover of *Frankenstein fī Bagdād.*

Frankenstein fī Bagdād is a novel written by Iraq writer, Aḥmad Saʻdāwiy who won "International Prize for Arabic Fiction" in 2012. Before, in 2010 Aḥmad Saʻdāwiy was chosen in "Beirut39", an Arabian productive writer under 39 years old. This novel depicts the Iraq modern situation in instability after the government collapsed, the government of Ṣaddām Ḥusain which was under the United Stated of America's brigades and its group coalition. This situation was fully chaotic resulting in the inability of new the government in controlling the opposite groups

in Iraq. Everyday there were bomb explosions that caused civilian casualties. Aḥmad Saʿdāwiy described the situation fearfully that is full of horror situation originated from local Iraq community. This horror is shown by body parts of the bomb explosion's victim scattered on the street, mysterious serial murders, magical practices, astronomy rituals, as well as live corpses who were avenging their deaths. The ghosts who lived with people and Santo were able to communicate with humans in a world shown in this novel.

Based on the incidents and situations shown, the novel can be categorized as a magic-genre-realism. Faris (2001, p 1) states that magical realism is an instance of a view based on the post-modernism spirit to find life phenomena which all the time is organized by modernism. Briefly, Faris (2004, p. 1) added that magical realism is collected from reality and fantasy. Therefore, there is the magical realism characterized by two figures, which are categorized by two factors, which are (1) based on rationalism and (2) based on supernatural proves.

At first, magical realism was a term in the early 20th century to describe the new neo-realistic style in German paintings and was applied into fiction of Latin America and in the present day became the most important modern international trend (Faris 2004, p. 1). The leading figure is Franz Roh (1925) from Germany that is the first person to use the term to critique arts. Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927), one of literati from Latin America, is considered as the leading scholar of magical realism in the *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). It is also asserted by Aschcroft (2000, p. 119) that the term 'magic realism' had been used in a less specific way to refer to the inclusion of any mythic or legendary material from local written or oral cultural traditions in contemporary narrative.

One of the works that discusses the narrative discourse of magical realism by using Arabic literary works was written by Suyoufi (2009), "Magical Realism in Ghadah al-Samman's *The Square Moon*". This work focuses on the use of magical realism as a means of investigating reality in an anthology of short stories entitled *Al-Qamar al-Murabba'*. Suyoufi believes that although al-Samman demonstrates a new perspective that

considers reality through extraordinary events or objects, her main objective is actually to criticize modern Arab society, especially the problems caused by cultural, social, and economic situation. From the perspectives of both postmodern and postcolonial Soyoufi's study demonstrates themes that include supernatural objects or events, exile, identity, and gender. Another work that exemplifies the discussion of magical realism in Arabic literature is the work of Cooke (2010), "Magical Realism in Libya", that discusses *Nazif al-Hajar* written by Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī. Cooke's discussion focuses on the metamorphosis of and equating men and animals.

Some studies in Indonesia have utilized Wendy Faris' narrative discourse of magical realism to analyze literary works, both novels and poems. Some of these studies are published in *Poetika*, *Jurnal Ilmu Sastra* (Journal of Literature) Volume II No. 1, April 2014 (Ed. Pujiharto). Four of the six articles in the journal discuss the narrative discourse. It is evident that this discourse is applied in both novels and poems and not only to works written in the country where the theory was formulated, but also to Indonesian literary works.

Among the studies found can be seen that the theory of magical realism of narrative is not only applied in novel but also in short story collections, in drama, in literature from the origin of the theory, and in both local or international literature. Therefore, the implementation of magical realism of narrative theory towards novel of *Frankenstein fī Bagdād* is hoped to include various characteristics of magical novel especially the literature from Iraq.

Furthermore, Faris (2004, p. 7) describes the characteristics of magical novel. It has irreducible elements that cannot be explained in natural law as formulated in western empiric discourse based on logic, knowledge, or inherited belief. The second characteristic is its phenomenal world (Faris 2004, p. 14), that is a description that tells a long story or gives depiction about the belief that support of phenomenal world, or it can be described as realism in magical realism. The objects are sounds, things, and places found in the novel identified as real object of the novel. The third is unsettling doubts (Faris 2014, p. 17), that is the doubt in contradiction of deciding that an incident is magical or real. The fourth is merging realms

(Faris 2004, p. 21) where there is a relationship of unity of two worlds which is not fully mixed but is connected one and another, and appears 'in-between' space or an uncertainty space. The fifth is disruption of time, space, and identity (Faris 2004, p. 23), that is a merger of two worlds that cause a disorder of idea that is recognized by community of time, space, and identity.

In its application, the five elements cannot be applied by separately, but they are intertwined. Irreducible elements are used to mention the category of magical data and phenomenal worlds to mention the category of real data. The relation between the two of these elements then gave rise to the merging realms, two poles that is mutually overlapped, namely magical elements and real elements, which created a hybrid world called merging realms, and on one side is a form of liminal over interactions between magical and real data that stirred the doubt, called unsettling doubts. Afterwards, a category is built based on a special function as deconstructive magical elements toward modern values of the time, space, and the identity that is called the disruptions of time, space, and identity.

Based on the above explanation, the focus of this article is discovering the five elements of magical realism in the novel and identifying their relations with the context as the background of the creation. Data collection method is conducted by finding various textual elements of the novel, such as words, punctuations, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, event series as the primary data, and finding texts related to the context and the novel as well as studies, journals, books, on-line and print media that are able to explain social condition and situation, ideology, and politics in the novel.

The analysis is conducted by identifying the existence of five magical realism elements in the novel and determining relations of the elements and seeking the social context, ideology, and politics in novel.

MAGICAL ELEMENTS IN *FRANKENSTEIN FI BAGDAD*

Irreducible Elements

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, the elements called irreducible elements are the

magical data of the novel. Characterized magic means that it cannot be explained by natural law as formulated in the western empiricism discourse based on logic, known knowledge, or inherited belief. However, in this context all the events must be accepted as real phenomena which are logical.

Among the events that could be categorized in this element are the figures purified in Christian faith, namely Santo George. The figure mentioned in the novel is in the form of picture displayed on the wall which usually has conversations with Elissa, a widow who is expecting the return of her child, Dāniyāl who has lost since 20 years ago in the war of Iraq-Iran. Kuncahyono (2004, p. 216) states that the war lasted over eight years (August1980-September 1988) and it had killed 300,000 Iranian soldiers and 250,000 of the Iraqi forces were either killed or injured, hundreds of thousands of people were been injured, and millions of others were displaced. Santo is worshipped by Elissa because he is considered as an answer of her hope that Dāniyāl would return. Elissa believes that St. George can be based on the hagiography – a story of saints – for example, Giles (2006, p. 10) in *Knight, Martyr, Patron Saint, and St. George the Dragonslayer*. Santo is depicted in "*As Christian martyr, St George was said to have been tortured to death (several times!), only to be resurrected by God, and his story is often linked with concepts of renewal, re-birth, and revival*". On the novel's cover, Saʻdāwiy (2012) wrote the history of Santo, a king who tortured to death and his flesh was scattered out of the city but Jesus collected his flesh and resurrected him so that he could return and to the city.

The attitude of Elissa cannot be separated from popular belief that are contrasted with confidence in the context of Arabian perspective of Barakat (2012, p. 170). It refers to a religious orientation that personifies sacral strength, emphasizes on the spiritual experience of the power of sacred religious orientation, shows the relationship between her and her God, symbolizes the religious text. This group contains farmers, woman, and the other intimidated groups and they usually called as "georgic" a group which believes in Santo George. Muḥammad Al-Marzūqi (in Barakat 2012, p. 1723) mentions that they tell story about any kinds of help they get from *auliy*ā`*, a holy man,* santo when they were looking

for lost camels, avenging the intimidated people, and setting a person free from a prison.

In the novel, Elissa is described as a woman that diligently goes to church and worships Saint George and hopes to get his help, even cutting out the part of the face of the saint that she said to be very handsome when he eventually decided to leave Baghdad. Santo George in a painting depicts a shining knight of the Greek war, riding a horse, as well as carrying a spear piercing dragon. This can be understood that Elissa only wants the peace that is symbolized by countenance, not the fight which symbolizes the war, a horse, a spear, and the dragon.

With her belief, Elissa hopes that her lost child can be returned as happened to Santo George. Elissa has a conversation with Santo even when she gets mad since her wish cannot be realized. The following is a dialog between Elissa and Santo George.

<div dir="rtl">

أنت متعجلة يا إيليشوا . . . قلت لك سيحقق
لك الرب هدأة الروح أو نهاية العذاب.. أو
تسمعين خبراً يبهجك. (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 23)

</div>

'Are you in a hurry, Elissa.. I have told you that God would give you peaceful soul and good news.'

Besides having dialog with Elissa, Santo threatened Dāniyāl who revived that he would kill him if he hurt Elissa.

<div dir="rtl">

إنها امرأة عجوز منكوبة.. إذا قمت بإيذائها أو
جعلتها تحزن.. أقسم أنني سأغرز رمحي هذا في
حلقك. (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 66)

</div>

'You have to be careful. She is a poor woman.. If you hurt her or make her sad, I swear I will thrust a spear through your neck.'

This incident is categorized as an irreducible element that leads to the appearance of Syismah Sa'dāwiy who explained that Syismah means "*allażī lā a'rifu, au lā atażakkaru, mā huwa ismuhu*", "the one who cannot be mentioned and who does not have a name". Syismah was a revived corpse that consists of a corpse that had incomplete body sewed with another corpse and it was created by Hādī, a second-hand stuff seller. However, the corpse stored in the bedroom suddenly lost. The corpse was a victim of bomb explosion occurred

in front of a hotel. Afterwards, the revived corpse that was later named Syismah visited Hādī and terrorized around Baghdad.

<div dir="rtl">

لقد اختفت الجثة. الجثة المتفسخة التي أكملها
نهار البارحة. لا يمكن لها أن تتلاشى هكذا
أو تطير في العاصفة. قلّب الأغراض كلها، ثمّ
شكّ في نفسه، فدخل إلى غرفته و بحث فيها،
أعاد البحث من جديد و ضربات قلبه تزداد
و تجاهل الآلام التي تصل في عظامه. دخل في
مرحلة الرعب، فأين يا ترى ذهبت هذه الجثة.
(Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 42)

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'The corpse has been lost; a rotten corpse that was refined yesterday afternoon. He might have been lost or flown by the thunderstorm. He turned his stuffs in his house upside down to look for it. He was very cautious entering his bedroom to look for it. He then searched for it with his heart beating fast, and then he started to ignore his pain in his bones. He was even in the feeling of fear wondering where was corpse was.'

The other incident was the dialog of two young men above their grave. One of them finally found a corpse in Hādī's bedroom and borrowed a corpse without soul as a home for himself. This corpse was Dāniyāl's corpse that later terrorized Baghdad. That is how Syismah or Frankenstein in Baghdad.

<div dir="rtl">

مسّ بيده الهيولنية هذا الجسد الشاحب ورأى
نفسه تغطس معها. غرقت ذراعه كلها ثم رأسه
و بقية جسده، و أحسّ بثقل وهمود يعتريه.
تلبس الجثة كلها، فعلى الأغلب، كما تيقن
في تلك اللحظة أن هذا الجسد لا روح له،
تماما كما هو الأمر معه: روح لا جسد له.
(Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 48)

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'Dāniyāl touched the pale body by his strong hands and borrowing them. All his arms then united with the soul continued by the head and the rest of the body. Then, he felt heavy in a peaceful moment. He uses all the body of the corpse. Then, he believes that the corpse did not have a soul like him, a soul that did not have corpse.'

Phenomenal World

Meanwhile, the real data is classified into phenomenal world in the view of Faris containing

all the real object of the novel. These data were real in the novel describing Baghdad as more social, the life of community with the logic found in the real world that he believed. In this case, these are sounds like the sound of Elissa's cat, Nābū, the sound of bomb explosions, cars' horn, etc. The following is one of the dialogues that show it.

مسحت على عيني فشعرت بأن عيني اليمنى
قد غدت تشبه العجين. سحبتها ببطء فأتت
بيدي. سقطت كلها كتلة داكنة فرميتها جانبا،
وخشيت أن أكرر الأمر مع عيني اليسرى
فأفقد بصري تماما. جلست بجوار الحائط
أستمع لأصوات الإطلاقات النارية. كانت هذه
الأصوات تأتي من كل مكان، وخشيت أن
أكون جالسا في منتصف المعركة الحامية لهذه
الليلة دون أن أدري. (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 175)

'I touch my eyes and feel that my right eye is the same as a dough and then fall down to the ground. I worry the same will happen to my left eye then I will be blind. I sit down against the wall hearing the sound of bombs. The sounds are from all places. I am afraid sitting in the middle of a war at night and I do not know exactly what happened.'

The objects are house, car, bus, fire fighter car, candle, food, telephone, cell-phone, laptop, digital camera, antique things, painting, and American tank.

وقفت سيارة دفع رباعي رصاصية اللون،
فنهض أغلب العمال الجالسين على الرصيف،
وحين اقترب بعضهم منها انفجرت بقوة.
(Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 28)

'A car.. its color looks like the buckshot color stooped, and the workers who sit down on the pedestrian stand up. When some of them get closer, the car exploded.'

As for the objects that are included in the place is the city of Baghdad, churches, streets, government offices, coffee shops, a police station, the office of editor of the magazine, alleys and ghettos in Baghdad, apartments, hospitals, and places of shaving.

ستقول جارات العجوز إيليشوا في زقاق ٧؛ أنها
غادرت حتى البتاوين، ذاهبة إلى الصلاة في كنيسة
مارعوديشو قرب الجامعة التكنولوجية، كما تفعل

صباح كل أحد. (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 11)

'All the neighbour of Elissa in 7 corridor said that Elissa left for Batawin village to pray in a church of Margodis near University of Technology, as she likes to do every Sunday.'

This kind of thing cannot be denied because a work surely contains certain elements that are the objective facts that are generally in the form of people's names, names of places, historic events, monuments, etc. (Ratna 2010, p. 307).

Merging Realms

The magical and real data are together merging to *merging realms,* and the merger of two opposite worlds are intervened and perforated each other, and deconstructed the modern western view in seeing both worlds that are in common seen as separated worlds. Ratna (2010, pp. 244-245) mentions that deconstruction in the contemporary theory means demolition, stripping, ignorance, and other terms related to improving the original meaning. Fernandez (1990, pp. 191-193) said that the view and the mindset of modern western is influenced by the idea of Descartes' *ego cogito*, a subjective method by Immanuel Kant, as well as the phenomenology. Edmund Husserl then created the rational, analytical, and complex mindset.

The view and mindset are deconstructed by finding the magical data in the novel when those items are associated with the real data. It can be formulated that there is a relationship between two worlds as the following, (1) the world of life and death, (2) the world of the ghost and human, (3) the physical and metaphysical world, and (4) the natural and supernatural world.

The World of Life and Death

The interaction between both worlds is the entrance of death world into live world where the death world covered up the life world and the death world penetrates the live world. This case is the opposite of the lived world and does not penetrate the death world. The interaction between both worlds can be seen from the incident when Elissa revived Dāniyāl form his death (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 24) since she believed that her son does not die.

She believed that Dāniyāl had not returned so it made her wait for twenty years. Besides, it can be seen from the dialog of two souls that one of them returned in the universe and found a complete corpse of Hādī's creation (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 48). Between life world and death world, there is no distance and logical.

The World of Human and Ghost

In this novel, interactions between humans and ghost are mixed. Ghost world entered and penetrate the world of human beings. In western mindset, both worlds are extremely separated and the ghost life was even non sense. In other words, human world has never penetrated to ghost world. Several incidents were categorized into this group where Elissa lived with revived Dāniyāl who never ate and drank, and less spoke (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 71), while Elissa never knew Dāniyāl's real identity. Dāniyāl was considered as a lost son for twenty years which in reality it was Jaʿfar's corpse which was occupied by Dāniyāl soul created by Hādī (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 48). Elissa never knew who Dāniyāl really was.

Meanwhile, the other incident was that Hādī lived with "Syismah", a lived corpse – Dāniyāl who murdered many people in Baghdad (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 98). Syismah avenged for his death and by blamed Hādī who made Jaʿfar die (Saʿdāwiy 2012, pp. 141-143).

The Physical and Metaphysical World

The physical world is related to the phenomenal concrete objects and associated with religious metaphysics stemming from the belief of Christianity. In this context, it is determined by the powerful mind and attitude of Elissa who believed in Santo George. Santo was described in the novel as a handsome man in a Roman soldier uniform riding a horse and bringing a spear. He became the intermediary of physical world of Elissa with the religious metaphysics in which she believes in Jesus (Saʿdāwiy 2012, pp. 13-14, p. 24). Even before she moved to live with her daughter, she cut the face of Santo and brought it (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 295). Thus, the interaction between two worlds was mediated by Santo George.

Elissa was also blessed and saved from a bomb explosion; even she made her environment safe too (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 15). Although several people, especially Hādī, Farju Ad-Dalāl, Abū Zaidūn really hated Elissa, many people believed that Elissa was *mubārakah* 'a blessed woman' (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 15).

Meanwhile, Hādī with the help of modern camera and digital recorder as a mediator of Syismah and Maḥmūd Sawādiy, a journalist (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 141, p. 145). Syismah is mysterious; his crime was real but his existence was unknown by many people. Based on the recording, Maḥmūd Sawādiy wrote a story in a magazine and many people in Baghdad found the story frightening. Syismah was captured and told every secret story about him and declared that he was *al-ʿadālah al-waḥīdah,* 'the one and only justice in Iraq' (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 149) and commanded by the father of the universe. Thus, both interactions are mediated by Hādī using modern technology.

The Natural and Supernatural World

Natural world sees phenomena as something real, natural, mixed with supernatural that western logic is included to the non scientific discourse and illogical. The interaction between the worlds was seen in penetrating natural world into supernatural world, for example it could be seen in the figure of ʿAmīd Surūr, the director of *Dā`irah al-Mutābaʿah wa at-Taʿqīb,* who believed in *munajjimūn,* 'a fortuneteller' in achieving his career (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 125) and predicted the future of politician as well as the hunt for Syismah as he considered Syismah as a big criminal. Every fortune teller used cards, sand, and certain gemstones to look for information and predict the existence of Syismah who became a state enemy (Saʿdāwiy 2012, p. 149). Supernatural world believed that Elissa was the black wizard while her cat ʿNābū' was the soul of died people. Besides, it seemed the helper of Syismah; Sāḥir 'a wizard', As-Safsaṭā`i 'the man who lost his mind' and Majnūnūn 'crazy people' who practiced magic to support the duty of Syismah. They were the figures told by Syismah to Hādī in the recording.

Unsettling Doubts

Another point of discussion is the merging realms unsettling that gives rise to doubts, namely crack the doubts of understanding of an event, whether this was an event magical or a real ordinary phenomenon. Narrative magical realism often gives rise to this kind of pattern so that it put the reader in a situation which perplexes in event that is being read.

Some events that can be exemplified of the situation is such a dialogue Elissa that sometimes only murmured or spoke the language of Suryani that is not clear, or quietly whispered that is not explained by the writer. This can be seen in a murmuring Elissa when, the reader is placed in a situation of uncertainty, whether Elissa talking to herself, the cat Nābū, or Saint George, or "Dāniyāl".

The following doubt was the mental of Elissa. All the people doubt Dāniyāl's existence and they considered that Elissa was a crazy poor woman who missed her son so much. However, they saw a young man went out from her house. They did not believe that the guy was Dāniyāl; but they still denied his existence.

The following doubt was the story of Syismah delivered by Syismah in the recording of that Hādī made. The readers are in doubt of the real story of Syismah since no one in the novel mentioned that they knew the truth. Syismah's story about his followers; Sāḥir, As-Safsaṭā`i, and Majnūnūn as well as the youth who supported and praised Syismah who became the one who served justice.

Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity

The five elements of magical realism are the disruptions of time, space, and identity. Among the incidents including the category of time disorder was a desire to bring back Dāniyāl from the war of Iraq-Iran lasting for twenty years, but it did not experience changes in his physical state, appearance, or clothes. This disorder brought a question for people around Elissa about the truth of the return of Dāniyāl.

A disorder of the space that can be identified in the novel is also seen in the event that occurred at Syismah's house where he did not die easily when the Iraq police shot the house with many bullets and also when Hādī was helped after he was tortured by the police due to charges of aggravated of terror in downtown Baghdad.

Meanwhile, the identity disorder in the novel can seen in the complex depiction of Syismah. No one knew the identity of Dāniyāl except Hādī and Elissa. Those two people did not realize too that they both knew about it since their knowledge and ability were different. Hādī knew that Syismah was Ja'far's corpse which was occupied by a soul while Elissa knew Syismah called Dania was her son returned-soul with the body completely in different face. Hādī knew that Syismah was the cause of the terror in Baghdad and who was hunted by Iraqi government while Elissa did not know about it at first. In couple of days, Elissa heard the rumor and her attitudes changed.

In addition, the recording of Maḥmūd Sawādiy showed that there was identity disorder of Syismah. In doing the task Syismah was helped by many figures in crime. On the other hand, there were some people who praised him and the rest hated him. Therefore, the existence could not be known by this interpretation so there was a prediction of Syismah identity. By the group community for example in Ṣadr he was considered as *Wahhābiy, in A'zamiyyah* as Syi'ah supporters that backed government it was considered as a foreign power, while America considered it as an intelligent who wanted to destroy Iraq.

Meanwhile, the figure of Hādī was only the mediator of what is called creator of Syismah (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 121), Hādī is Syismah's father (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 156). The identity disorder in the end of the novel shows that Hādī was a victim of bomb explosion hospitalized in hospital. When he looked down to the window, he saw his face on the mirror then changed into Syimsah's face and was hunted by the police in Baghdad. Syismah changed into Hādī's face then Hādī was considered as an irresponsible person and considered to be responsible to solve the problem (Sa'dāwiy 2012, p. 349). Hādī did not do anything when police announced him as the criminal.

FRANKENSTEIN FI BAGDAD IN CONTEXT

The discussion based on the magical realism of narrative discourse considers the

importance of understanding the context of novel as a background of human creation. The context of novel "*Frankenstein fī Bagdād*" are classified into several points determined in the novel – social context, ideology, and politics.

Social Context

Iraq is one of the largest oil-producer countries in the world. Many people mentioned that the United States invaded Iraq because the US's real motivation was to control Iraqi oil with the pretext of toppling Ṣaddām's authoritarian power and liberate the people of Iraq. Therefore, it is seen that in the post invasion, United States companies went to Iraq to reconstruct Iraq's oil infrastructure. It also angered the people of Iraq, represented by groups of armed resistance.

The turmoil has caused many people died horribly. Lots of them died because of the bomb explosions or other types of violence. Many of the dead bodies did not have complete body or even had mixed with the destroyed materials around them. Therefore, for the family, the souls were the corpses which they did not bury. In this context, it is the families that have various social backgrounds. For instance, Elissa who embraced Christianity lost her son and hoped for the son to return although the corpse had been buried. The background of this belief followed relied on Santo George and she proved that it was a possibility that her son could be returned. Meanwhile, Hādī had lost his best friend cause of a bomb explosion made his corpse separated and mixed with the meat of a horse that he was riding. Therefore, Syismah was the mixture of died people, revived, and seen as a symbol of Iraq people who never got opportunities to gather with the corpse of their family members.

Syismah was assisted by three groups of people that are mentioned in the novel, namely *Sāḥir* "wizard" was represented by ʿAmīd Surūr, soldiers who believe in divination and magic, As-Safsaṭāʾi 'a man who lost in mind' that was represented by Bāhir As-Saʿīdiy, a smart guy that corrupts, and Majnūnūn 'crazy people' that was represented by Elissa, a woman who was considered 'crazy' mostly by people in her environment, Hādī Al-ʿAttāk, a drunk man who worked by selling and buying second-hand goods,

and Farju Ad-Dalāl, a greedy entrepreneur of the rental house. Therefore, Syismah can be viewed as the representative of all community groups of Baghdad of various social strata.

Ideological Context

Ideologically, Iraqi community embraces Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The Moslem community consists of Syiʾah, Sunni, and Kurdi. However Sunni is outnumbered by Syiʾah. Kurdi's domination was strengthened by the fact that people in the government were Kurdi people. After Ṣaddām Ḥusain collapsed Iraq disintegrated. Syiʾah as the minor community that was intimidated in Saddam Husain government started to dominate the parliament while Kurdi people did not accept this domination and suspected that Syiʾah would change Iraq into a country similar to Islamic Republic of Iran. Meanwhile, the Sunni also felt uncomfortable with the political situation. This situation led the war between Iraqi communities causing disadvantages for Iraq itself.

The ideological difference has caused many victims. The victims of this context are very subjective as it depends on whose perspectives. The victims were not fully victimized. Sometimes, the victims were also the perpetrators. When one group became the victim of violence, they must be the one involved in the previous incident. Syismah contained a corpse whose ideologies are the opposite of each other and they avenge each other. This caused Syismah to look like as a complex human. In other words, Syismah was considered as himself that owned '*al-mihnah al-jalīlah* 'precious responsibility' as the savior of those who wanted to take revenge. However, Syismah had a personal standard that is enforced justice since what is considered fair for one group might be different to another. Thus, Syismah represents all groups in Iraq involved in the civil war that was considered a crisis of humanity.

Political Context

Iraq is a stubborn country. Although it launched a military action against Iran (1980) and Kuwait (1990) made the world angry, Iraq was still political unrest. There were a lot of efforts both from Iraq people and foreign power to kill

Ṣaddām Ḥusain. The war with Iran heightened the conflict between Syi'ah and Sunni in Iraq. This had contributed to the breaking of the war between Arab and Persia (Kuncahyono 2004, p. 215).

In December 2003 in *Operation Red Dawn,* American troops caught Ṣaddām Ḥusain near Tikrit village (Marine Corps Institute no date, p. 75). The coalition army invading Iraq was led by America. The existence of coalition army in Iraq could not solve the problems between armed groups in Iraq although they had held an election after Ṣaddām collapsed. The government resulted from the election was considered a puppet government. It caused a big problem that many of the Iraqi people were not willing to recognize this new government. In addition, the existence of a military wing worsened the situation.

Thus, Syismah is considered as a symbol of fear that the Iraqi people faced a difficult situation. In this situation no one seemed to have control over Iraq including government, Ṣaddām Ḥusain, and the coalition forces. There were many Iraqis who 'worshipped' the militant groups and the people even sought refuge for themselves and their families in these groups. In this novel these people are represented by the youth who revered and worshipped Syismah.

CONCLUSION

The five magical elements that can be found in this novel with high levels especially merging realms that is a fusion of irreducible elements and phenomenal worlds that brings the relationship between two worlds as follows: (1) the world of life and death, (2) the world of human and ghost, (3) the physic and metaphysic world, and (4) the natural and supernatural world. In the meantime, merging realms give rise to unsettling doubts reflected in the dialogue between Elissa and Santo George, Elissa's personality, and the figure of Syismah. Disruptions in the elements of time, space, this identity and the identity of interruptions are most dominant and prominent, namely Syismah's identity.

In this case, the novel is categorized into several points dominated by the social context, ideology, and politic. Social context of the novel comes from the figure of Syismah considered as a soul that found another corpse as the symbol of

Iraqi individual person who imagine the merger of soul of family member with the body. While the ideological context is the contrast of the ethnic groups after Ṣaddām Ḥusain's government overthrown. They are Syi'ah, Sunni, and Kurdi. Syismah represents all the groups in Iraq who kill each other and this is considered as a serious humanity crisis. Syismah is the representation of a complex human being. While in the political context Syismah can be called as a symbol of Iraq's power to face the difficult situation both in Ṣaddām Ḥusain era and in the when the coalition army was present. In addition, many of Iraqi people supported the militant groups and they sought protection for themselves and family in these armed groups.

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