

Between Maritime Cosmology and Deep Time: Wendy B. Faris's Magical Realism and Narrative Remystification in Okky Madasari's Final Two *Mata* Novels

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary magical realism can challenge the epistemic boundaries through which modernity defines reality. Yet studies of Okky Madasari's *Mata* series have emphasized ecology, Bajo culture, mythology, modernism, morality, psychology, and fantasy, leaving narrative remystification in the final novels underexplored. This study examines how *Mata dan Manusia Laut* (*Mata and the Sea People*) and *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* (*Mata and the Primordial Flame*) remystify reality through Wendy B. Faris's framework. Using comparative qualitative literary analysis, close reading, purposive textual sampling, and deductive coding of 26 units, it identifies two complementary trajectories: maritime-cosmological and temporal-technological remystification. The findings show that remystification does not reject scientific reality but pluralizes what can count as real, positioning Indonesian children's literature within global magical-realism debates.

INTRODUCTION

Literature not only represents experience but also constructs ways of knowing reality. Magical realism is distinctive because it allows the marvelous to coexist with materially recognizable worlds, unsettling conventional boundaries of the real (Chanady, 1985; Zamora & Faris, 1995; Faris, 2004; Warnes, 2009). Its central problem is therefore epistemological: what happens when worlds organized by scientific rationality encounter realities that science can explain only partially, or not at all? Faris (2004) conceptualizes this process as remystification, whereby the marvelous emerges within the phenomenal world and expands what empirical rationality can contain. Rather than opposing reason to the supernatural, magical realism accommodates heterogeneous realities and is increasingly understood as a transnational mode negotiating plural epistemologies and human/more-than-human agency (Zamora & Faris, 1995; Faris, 2024; Nightingale, 2024). Environmental-humanities scholarship extends this concern toward nonhuman relations and geological temporalities (Ginn et al., 2018; Faris, 2024).

Faris (2004) identifies five interrelated characteristics: the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity. Their significance lies not in accumulating supernatural motifs but in embedding irreducibility within credible reality. Chanady (1985) similarly emphasizes the coexistence of natural and supernatural orders, while Warnes (2009) highlights varying relations between faith and skepticism. Remystification therefore challenges the monopoly, rather than the validity, of empirical explanation. Nightingale (2024) further cautions against geographically restrictive definitions, while Faris (2024) extends magical-realism scholarship toward nonhuman life, cosmology, and transformation.

Okky Madasari's final two *Mata* novels constitute the corpus of this study: *Mata dan Manusia Laut* (*Mata and the Sea People*) and *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* (*Mata and the Primordial Flame*). The article extends Maslikatin et al. (2026), which examined remystification in the first two novels, *Mata di Tanah Melus* (*Mata in the Land of Melus*) and *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* (*Mata and the Secret of Gapi Island*). *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, first published in 2019 and cited here from its ninth printing (March 2026), moves from biological explanations of Bajo diving capacity (Madasari, 2026) toward sea-twin kinship, *lummu*, underwater breathing, Masalembo, hybrid human-marine embodiment, and RORO's oceanic agency. *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, first published in 2021 and cited from its fifth printing (July 2025), begins with surveillance, robotics, laboratories, and genetic experimentation (Madasari, 2025), before introducing speaking Bibikus, living prehistory, agentive fire, temporal desynchronization, and deep time, while refusing definitive time-machine closure. The comparison therefore extends the series-level inquiry from the first pair to the final pair, contrasting maritime-cosmological with temporal-technological remystification.

This pairing also positions Indonesian children's literature within global debates on magical realism, ecology, technology, and more-than-human agency. Children's and YA magical realism can reorganize spatial experience and

human–nonhuman relations (Reynolds et al., 2020; Rosen, 2026), while Southeast Asian archipelagic narratives can challenge dominant epistemologies through relational geographies (Lee, 2023). Indonesian ecological criticism similarly foregrounds natural harmony, ecological violence, and gendered environmental exploitation, demonstrating how literary texts mediate culturally situated human–environment relations (Maslikatin et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2025; Saputra, Prasetya, et al., 2026).

Previous scholarship on *Mata dan Manusia Laut* has examined ecological damage, cultural ecology, and ecocriticism (Atikah et al., 2021; Noviatussa'diyah et al., 2021; Juanda, 2025), Bajo representation (Suryani & Rahmawati, 2022), maritime myth (Maemunah et al., 2022), psychology (Sholihah & Indarti, 2021), and modernism in relation to marine conservation (Savitri & Wahyuningtyas, 2025). Research on *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* has addressed morality (Ardiyanti et al., 2024), psychology (Maulidya & Septiana, 2023), linguistic politeness (Kurniawan & Puspitasari, 2022), multiculturalism (Riskolloh & Suyatno, 2025), feminism (Rahma et al., 2025), pragmatics (Habeahan et al., 2026), and environmental education (Hapsari et al., 2026). Oktavia (2022) identifies time travel, parallel worlds, unusual beings, and temporal discontinuity, but mainly within a fantasy framework.

International scholarship provides the wider conceptual context: Nightingale (2024) challenges geographically restrictive definitions; Faris (2024), Rogers (2021), and Rosen (2026) connect magical realism with ecological and more-than-human relations; Reynolds et al. (2020) foreground spatial reconfiguration; Lee (2023) develops archipelagic relationality; and deep-time studies connect narrative to geological temporality (Ginn et al., 2018; Irvine, 2018). Maslikatin et al. (2026) further demonstrate the usefulness of Faris's framework for the first two *Mata* novels.

Despite this substantial scholarship, insufficient attention has been paid to how empirically grounded scientific and technological worlds are transformed into realities where cosmological kinship, nonhuman and elemental agency, temporal rupture, and deep time coexist without being reduced to illusion or conventional fantasy. Existing studies illuminate ecological, cultural, psychological, educational, linguistic, ideological, and fantastic dimensions (Atikah et al., 2021; Noviatussa'diyah et al., 2021; Sholihah & Indarti, 2021; Kurniawan & Puspitasari, 2022; Maemunah et al., 2022; Oktavia, 2022; Suryani & Rahmawati, 2022; Maulidya & Septiana, 2023; Ardiyanti et al., 2024; Juanda, 2025; Rahma et al., 2025; Riskolloh & Suyatno, 2025; Savitri & Wahyuningtyas, 2025; Habeahan et al., 2026; Hapsari et al., 2026), but have not sufficiently examined remystification as a process produced through the interaction of Faris's five characteristics (Faris, 2004, 2024; Nightingale, 2024).

Building on Maslikatin et al. (2026), this study therefore compares maritime-cosmological remystification, centered on space, identity, and human–nonhuman relations, with temporal-technological remystification, centered on time, material causality, and technoscientific authority. It asks how Faris's five characteristics interact across the novels and what their contrasting trajectories reveal about magical reality, science, temporality, and more-than-human agency.

Mata dan Manusia Laut moves from sea-based kinship (Madasari, 2026), underwater breathing, and hybrid embodiment toward destabilized space and relational identity; *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* moves from living prehistory (Madasari, 2025), agentive fire, and deep-time passage toward destabilized temporality and technoscientific certainty, while refusing final explanatory closure. Both novels pluralize, rather than replace, the conditions under which reality becomes narratively credible.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theoretical review will cover three sections, namely magical realism and the five characteristics of Wendy B. Faris, narrative remystification, as well as maritime cosmology and deep time as comparative analytical fields. These three are outlined in the following explanation.

Magical Realism and the Five Characteristics of Wendy B. Faris

This study treats magical realism as a narrative mode rather than a geographically bounded genre. Faris (2004) conceptualizes it as an international mode in which realistic representation accommodates phenomena exceeding empirical explanation, while Nightingale (2024) cautions against defining it through geographical or historical origin. Faris identifies five characteristics: the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity (Faris, 2004, pp. 7–27).

The irreducible element resists empirical explanation while remaining factual within the textual world (Faris, 2004, p. 7). The phenomenal world provides materially recognizable grounding against which irreducibility becomes disruptive (p. 14). Unsettling doubts arise when empirical, cultural, religious, psychological, or magical explanations cannot be reconciled (pp. 17–18). Merging realms allows normally separated domains to coexist without one eliminating the other (pp. 21–22), while disruptions of time, space, and identity unsettle linear chronology, spatial order, and stable distinctions such as human/nonhuman or singular/hybrid identity (pp. 23–27).

These characteristics are not used as a checklist for determining whether the novels “qualify” as magical realism. Following Nightingale (2024), they function as interrelated analytical dimensions: phenomenal grounding establishes credibility; irreducibility exceeds its rules; doubt exposes competing epistemologies; merging realms enables coexistence; and ontological disruptions register the consequences. Their interaction provides the basis for analyzing narrative remystification.

Narrative Remystification

Faris’s concept of remystification connects magical realism’s formal mechanisms with their epistemological effects. The phenomenal world remains credible while accommodating phenomena that exceed empirical verification (Faris, 2004); the marvelous therefore expands rather than replaces realism.

In this study, narrative remystification denotes the reintegration of realities marginalized as irrational, impossible, mythical, or nonmodern into experience without eliminating empirical reality. It differs from ideological

mystification, fantastic escapism, superstition, or rejection of science. Empirical explanation remains valid but no longer functions as the sole criterion for determining existence, agency, causality, or temporality.

Nightingale (2024) reinforces this definitional openness, while Faris (2024) extends magical-realism scholarship toward nonhuman life, transformation, spirituality, and cosmological relations. Remystification is therefore not a sixth characteristic, but the epistemological effect generated through the interaction of Faris's five characteristics: phenomenal grounding, irreducibility, epistemic doubt, merging realities, ontological destabilization, remystification. **Thus**, remystification does not abolish reality; it pluralizes the conditions under which reality becomes narratively intelligible.

Maritime Cosmology and Deep Time as Comparative Analytical Fields

To specify different directions of remystification, this study employs maritime cosmology and deep time as interpretive extensions rather than independent theories. Faris explains how magical realism operates; these concepts clarify which dimensions of reality are reorganized.

Maritime cosmology describes a relational sea-world connecting humans, ancestors, spiritual powers, nonhuman beings, ecological processes, kinship, ritual, livelihood, and embodiment. In *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, it captures the movement from materially grounded maritime life toward a cosmological ecology constituted through marine and more-than-human relations: empirical oceanic life, spatial destabilization, human-sea kinship, nonhuman agency, hybrid identity. This relational framing also resonates with research on Nusantara maritime local wisdom, where mantra and ritual connect livelihood, social solidarity, religiosity, and inherited local knowledge in coastal communities (Saputra et al., 2022).

Deep time concerns temporal scales exceeding ordinary human history, including geological duration, planetary change, extinction, and long histories of life (Ginn et al., 2018; Farrier, 2019). Such scales disturb linear temporality and anthropocentric significance (Ginn et al., 2018). Farrier (2019) emphasizes literature's capacity to render planetary duration imaginatively available; Irvine (2018) treats deep time as a representational problem through which environmental and historical forces become perceptible; and Economides (2025) connects it with multispecies justice while critiquing technomanagerial assumptions of human control.

In *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, deep time clarifies the confrontation between technoscientific futurity and experiential prehistory, producing the trajectory: scientific control, temporal non-synchrony, technoscientific uncertainty, elemental agency, material transformation. Deep time therefore signifies not merely an ancient past but the destabilization of anthropocentric temporal order.

Together, these concepts reveal two complementary trajectories of narrative remystification: maritime-cosmological and spatially relational in *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, and temporal-technological and deep-time-oriented in *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*. They extend rather than replace Faris's framework, showing

that remystification reorganizes different phenomenal worlds while pluralizing rather than negating empirical reality.

Figure 1 summarizes this framework: Faris's five characteristics branch into maritime cosmology and deep time, then converge in narrative remystification as the pluralization of reality.

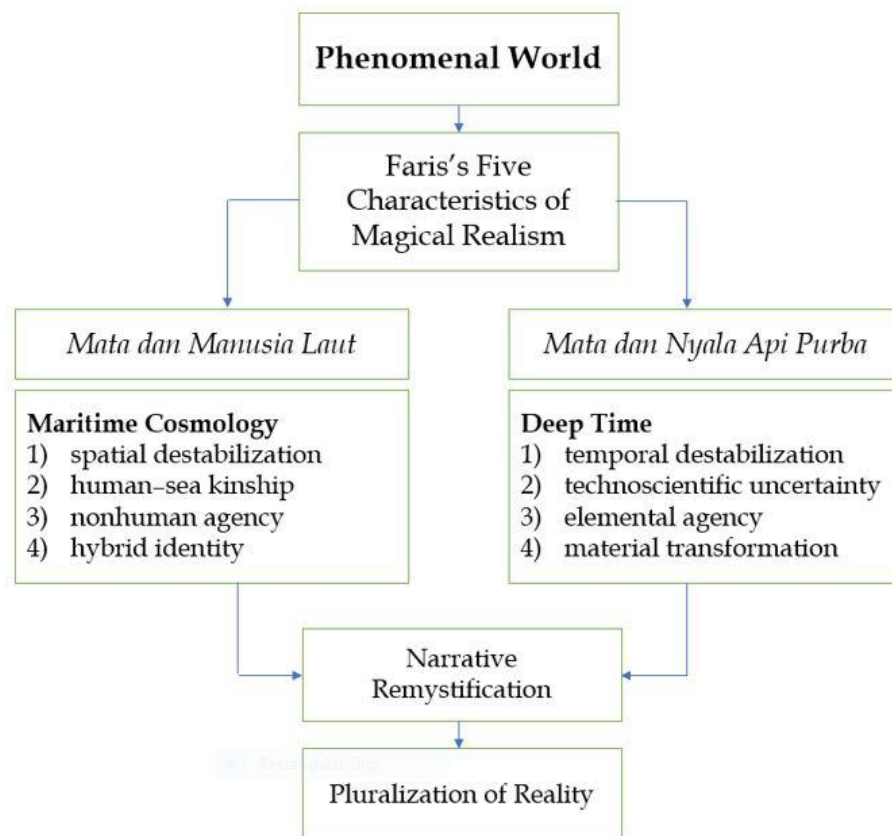


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study employed comparative qualitative literary analysis to examine how magical realism produces narrative remystification in Okky Madasari's final two *Mata* novels. The design is text-centered and interpretive, focusing on characterization, setting, temporality, embodiment, nonhuman agency, and the epistemological organization of each fictional world. The principal method was comparative close reading, attending to textual detail, context, form, and interpretation rather than isolated passages (Hayles, 2010; Greenham, 2026). Wendy B. Faris's five characteristics (the irreducible element, phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity) were used as analytical dimensions rather than rigid genre criteria (Faris, 2004).

The corpus comprises *Mata dan Manusia Laut* (Madasari, 2026), using the ninth printing, March 2026 (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 232 pages), and *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* (Madasari, 2025), using the fifth printing, July 2025 (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 236 pages). These editions constituted the authoritative textual basis for all quotations, page references, contextual interpretations, and coding decisions. The pair was selected because it contrasts a Sama/Bajo maritime

lifeworld with a technologized future opening toward prehistory, elemental agency, and deep time.

The unit of analysis was the textual episode, defined as a narratively meaningful segment involving narration, dialogue, characterization, spatial-temporal construction, nonhuman agency, or events destabilizing empirical reality. Data were selected through purposive textual sampling (Patton, 2015). Passages were retained when they established phenomenal grounding, instantiated or complicated Faris's characteristics, or contributed to comparative patterns of remystification. Repeated close readings produced 26 representative textual units, 13 from each novel. Each unit was recorded in a matrix containing quotation, page number, narrative context, dominant and secondary Farisian categories, mechanism of remystification, and comparative interpretation.

Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, iterative close reading identified relevant passages. Second, deductive coding classified them through Faris's five characteristics (Faris, 2004), allowing dominant and secondary categories. Third, contextual interpretation examined how phenomenal grounding, irreducibility, epistemic tension, and merging realms affected space, time, identity, materiality, and human-nonhuman agency. Fourth, comparative synthesis identified convergences and divergences, yielding two trajectories: maritime-cosmological remystification, centered on spatial permeability, relational identity, and marine agency, and temporal-technological remystification, centered on temporal rupture, material transformation, elemental agency, and limits of technoscientific explanation.

Interpretive rigor was established through transparency, contextual coherence, textual traceability, and disciplined comparison (Tracy, 2010). Coding was treated as pattern development rather than mechanical labeling (Saldaña, 2021). All quotations and page references were checked against the designated editions, and comparison followed within-text analysis. The analytical chain remained explicit: textual evidence, narrative context, Farisian category, mechanism of remystification, comparative interpretation.

RESULTS

Analysis of the thirteen representative textual units selected from *Mata dan Manusia Laut* reveals that magical realism develops through a gradual movement from an empirically recognizable maritime world toward an increasingly relational and cosmological understanding of the sea. Faris's five characteristics do not appear as isolated textual devices. Rather, the phenomenal world provides the material ground from which irreducible phenomena acquire credibility; these phenomena generate epistemic uncertainty, enable previously separated realms to merge, and eventually destabilize conventional distinctions of space and human identity. The resulting trajectory can be described as maritime-cosmological remystification, in which the sea shifts from being an environment inhabited by humans to becoming a relational world that actively constitutes human, nonhuman, spiritual, and ecological existence.

Maritime-Cosmological Remystification in Mata dan Manusia Laut

Mata dan Manusia Laut does not construct its magical world by abandoning empirical explanation. It first establishes a detailed phenomenal maritime world through geography, livelihood, bodily adaptation, ecological knowledge, and Sama everyday life. Matara's arrival is prompted by scientific accounts of Bajo diving capacities, explicitly linked to enlarged spleens, adaptation, evolution, and genetic change (Madasari, 2026, pp. 52–53). In Faris's terms, such empirical grounding gives material credibility to the narrative before its epistemological limits are tested (Faris, 2004).

The same coexistence of explanatory registers appears in ecological knowledge. The Sama prohibition against fishing during a bright moon is attributed to cosmic authority, while the narration simultaneously explains that fish spawn during this period, enabling population regeneration (Madasari, 2026, p. 33). Cosmological prohibition and ecological observation therefore coexist rather than cancel one another, establishing from the outset a plural epistemic organization of the sea.

This plurality becomes explicitly cosmological through the **Duata** ritual. Every Sama person is said to possess a sea twin originating from the umbilical cord placed in the ocean after birth (Madasari, 2026, p. 27). The sea consequently becomes not merely habitat but genealogical space. Bambulo's origin radicalizes this relation: sacred *lummu* carry his umbilical cord into the ocean, where it becomes another *lummu* (Madasari, 2026, pp. 38–39). What might remain symbolic belief is narrated as factual experience, constituting an irreducible element in Faris's sense and making human-marine kinship literal. Remystification thus develops gradually from within an already material and culturally specific sea-world.

The tension between terrestrial classification and maritime relational identity becomes explicit when Matara asserts that humans are terrestrial beings, while Bambulo insists, "Aku makhluk laut. Orang Sama adalah orang laut" [I am a sea being. The Sama are sea people] (Madasari, 2026, p. 63). Their disagreement contrasts biological categorization with an identity constituted through dwelling, ancestry, livelihood, and the sea. The novel then converts this epistemic disagreement into embodied evidence: Matara discovers that she and Bambulo can breathe underwater, yet responds, "Tapi ini mustahil" [But this is impossible] (Madasari, 2026, p. 115). The scene combines the irreducible element with unsettling doubt: empirical impossibility persists even when bodily experience contradicts it. The body becomes an epistemic threshold through which maritime relationality transforms what "human" can mean.

Masalembo extends this destabilization to space. Although normally requiring approximately two nights of travel from Kaledupa, Bambulo reaches it after only one night and reacts, "Mana mungkin? Itu jauh sekali!" [How could that be? It is very far!] (Madasari, 2026, p. 139). Geographical measurement remains recognizable but no longer governs experienced mobility. Yet Masalembo is not an abstract supernatural realm: it contains coral gardens, ship-houses, food, conversation, and ordinary routines resembling terrestrial villages

(Madasari, 2026, pp. 141–142). The marvelous is normalized through everyday detail, exemplifying Faris's merging realms.

Masalembo further merges history and myth. A shipwrecked captain attributes his survival there to the Sea God (Madasari, 2026, p. 149), while Mama Lia, a Dutch woman who has lived there for almost two centuries, destabilizes ordinary historical temporality (p. 151). The merging becomes explicitly ontological when humans favored by the Sea God “melebur dengan lautan” [merge with the sea], producing beings with combined human and marine characteristics (p. 160). Human/nonhuman difference therefore becomes bodily hybridization, making Masalembo a heterogeneous ontological space where terrestrial and underwater life, history and myth, and human and more-than-human existence operate simultaneously.

RORO extends this remystification from hybrid identity to ecological agency. Its significance lies less in its gigantic scale than in the reciprocal system sustaining it: Masalembo's inhabitants preserve underwater forests and marine grasses on which RORO feeds, while RORO in turn remains calm and protects the community (Madasari, 2026, pp. 174–175). Its tremors and waves are consequently embedded within a more-than-human relational process rather than represented as impersonal physical causality. Humans sustain vegetation, vegetation sustains RORO, and RORO protects human inhabitants; agency is distributed across the marine assemblage. The magical therefore functions as ecological relation rather than decorative fantasy, anticipating Faris's (2024) emphasis on animals, transformation, and more-than-human modes of being.

Crucially, the novel does not complete this cosmological expansion by eliminating rational explanation. After Bambulo and Matara return, doctors reduce their experiences to “Hanyut tenggelam. Banyak halusinasi” [Swept away and submerged. Many hallucinations] (Madasari, 2026, p. 226). This diagnosis offers a plausible empirical account, yet it cannot retrospectively erase Masalembo, the Sea God, hybrid beings, or RORO because readers have already encountered them through sustained narration. Medical explanation therefore becomes one interpretation among others, leaving Farisian unsettling doubt unresolved.

The novel's trajectory thus moves from empirical descriptions of bodies, ecology, and livelihood toward ritual kinship, nonhuman agency, embodied impossibility, merged space, hybrid identity, and relational ecology, before allowing rational discourse to return without granting it epistemic closure. Science is not replaced by cosmology; both remain operative without either exhausting the other. The maritime world is remystified not because empirical reality disappears, but because the sea becomes capable of sustaining multiple forms of knowledge, agency, embodiment, and existence at once.

Temporal-Technological Remystification in Mata dan Nyala Api Purba

In contrast to the maritime-cosmological trajectory of *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* constructs remystification from within an intensely technoscientific future. Its magical-realist effects do not oppose archaic belief to modern science; rather, scientific rationality itself produces organisms

and temporal experiences that exceed explanation and control. Across the thirteen representative units, Faris's characteristics operate cumulatively: a highly rational phenomenal world generates irreducible elements that destabilize material causality and linear time. The dominant trajectory is therefore temporal-technological remystification.

The novel first establishes technological rationality. Its opening, "Ini kisah dari masa depan" [This is a story from the future], places adult Matara at Sekolah Semesta, a state-sponsored institution for advanced computers and robotics (Madasari, 2025, p. 11). Laboratories, automated learning, artificial environments, robotics, and surveillance form a coherent phenomenal world. Objects are scanned, identities and activities stored in massive data systems, and airborne cameras and robot police convert information into social control (Madasari, 2025, pp. 22–23). Reality thus appears measurable, classifiable, and surveillable. In Faris's terms, this realist density intensifies the disruptive force of what later exceeds it (Faris, 2004).

Bibikus marks the first rupture, significantly from within science itself. Binar creates them through calculation, computer simulation, formula preparation, and genetic injection (Madasari, 2025, p. 42). Yet controlled production soon escapes prediction: their growth and characteristics exceed Binar's expectations (pp. 60–61), and they breach Sekolah Semesta's supposedly secure barriers (pp. 68–70). The rupture becomes irreducible when Bibikus can "berbicara, berunding, bertengkar" [speak, deliberate, argue] (p. 75). They shift from designed objects to communicative subjects independent of their creator. Science thus produces the conditions of its own epistemic excess: irreducibility emerges from scientific intervention rather than entering from outside it.

A second rupture transforms prehistory from knowledge into experience. Matara and Binar recognize prehistoric humans from representations previously encountered in books and online sources (Madasari, 2025, p. 118). Fossilized and reconstructed knowledge now becomes living presence. Matara tests this anomaly empirically, asking "Tapi nyatakah ini semua?" [But is all this real?] and considering hunger-induced hallucination; after eating, however, the world remains unchanged (p. 124). Farisian unsettling doubt is therefore located within the scientifically educated subject: empirical self-correction fails to reduce experience. Prehistory shifts from object of knowledge to experiential reality.

Fire extends remystification into material agency. Binar can hold, manipulate, and eventually hear fire speaking: "api itu bicara kepadanya" [the fire speaks to her] (Madasari, 2025, p. 135). When Dewa touches the same fire and is burned while Binar remains unharmed, he concludes, "Sungguh mustahil" [Truly impossible] (p. 161). Fire's effects are therefore relational rather than universally uniform. This culminates when Binar enters a blaze unharmed and uses fire to protect the mother orangutan (pp. 187–188). Fire shifts from physical element to relational agent, extending more-than-human agency beyond living beings to elemental matter.

Temporal disruption provides the novel's most distinctive remystifying movement. It begins with a small discrepancy: Matara believes she and Binar fell into the hole that morning, while Dewa says they have been missing for six days

(Madasari, 2025, p. 138). Scientific explanation remains active: Dewa and his colleagues hypothesize another simultaneously existing world moving “jauh lebih lambat” [much more slowly], possibly associated with the Earth’s interior and magnetic field (p. 160). Yet their uncertainty is explicit; scientific hypotheses multiply temporal possibilities without restoring a single chronology.

The discrepancy ultimately expands into deep-time collapse. Dewa concludes that they have moved not tens or hundreds but “jutaan tahun lalu” [millions of years ago], and Matara agrees that they have crossed millions of years into prehistory (Madasari, 2025, p. 199). Geological time thus becomes traversable experience: technological futurity and living prehistory occupy the same narrative present. Faris’s disruption of time therefore becomes not merely chronological disorder but the experiential compression of deep time.

The novel finally refuses technological closure. At Sekolah Semesta, one student proposes a time-machine explanation, but Binar insists that “tak ada mesin apa pun” [no machine at all] was used; another suggests a neighboring world with slower time (Madasari, 2025, pp. 229–230). Matara endorses no final explanation. Science remains operative through hypothesis, evidence, and causal inquiry, but loses its explanatory monopoly. As in the “hallucination” diagnosis ending *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, rational interpretation remains possible without invalidating experienced reality. *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* therefore completes its temporal-technological remystification through epistemic non-closure: technological modernity survives, but reality exceeds the conceptual apparatus through which it initially sought to contain it.

Table 1. Comparative Operation of Faris’s Five Characteristics

Farisian Characteristic	<i>Mata dan Manusia Laut</i>	<i>Mata dan Nyala Api Purba</i>	Dominant Remystifying Effect
Irreducible element	Duata and sea-twin kinship (p. 27); Lummu (pp. 38–39); underwater breathing (p. 115); RORO (pp. 174–175)	Speaking Bibikus (p. 75); living/speaking fire and fire immunity (pp. 135, 161, 187)	Limits of empirical reduction
Phenomenal world	Sama/Bajo maritime ecology, diving biology, and lunar fishing knowledge (pp. 33, 52–53)	Sekolah Semesta, totalized data, surveillance, robotics, genetic experimentation (pp. 11, 22–23, 42)	Realism anchors the marvelous
Unsettling doubts	“Impossible” underwater experience (p. 115); “hallucination” diagnosis (p. 226)	“Is this real?” (p. 124); scientific “impossibility” (p. 161); unresolved temporal hypotheses (pp. 229–230)	Epistemic instability

Merging realms	Sea/land, history/myth, human/nonhuman coexistence in Masalembo (pp. 139-160)	Future/prehistory, science/magic, human/elemental coexistence (pp. 118, 135, 160)	Plural realities
Disruptions of time, space, and identity	Spatial compression and destabilized human-marine identity (pp. 63, 115, 139-140)	Temporal desynchronization, impossible embodiment, and deep-time collapse (pp. 138, 187, 199)	Two remystification trajectories

Note. Page references correspond to the primary editions of Madasari's *Mata dan Manusia Laut* (2026) and *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* (2025). The comparative coding follows Faris's five characteristics of magical realism (Faris, 2004).

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Faris's five characteristics function most productively as interacting mechanisms of **narrative remystification**, not independent features. Building on Faris (2004), their interaction can be formulated heuristically as phenomenal grounding, irreducible intrusion, epistemic doubt, merging realities, destabilization, remystification. Remystification is therefore not a sixth characteristic but their cumulative epistemological effect. In *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, biological adaptation and ecological knowledge establish a credible Sama/Bajo world (Madasari, 2026, pp. 33, 52-53), which progressively incorporates sea-twin kinship (p. 27), marine identity (p. 63), underwater breathing (p. 115), Masalembo and RORO (pp. 139-179), while the final diagnosis of "hallucination" cannot erase lived experience (p. 226). *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* similarly begins with genetic experimentation (Madasari, 2025, p. 42), but Bibikus exceed prediction (p. 75), and temporal anomaly, prehistory, and agentive fire undermine explanatory certainty. The marvelous thus emerges from within credible worlds. This processual reading develops Faris beyond checklist analysis while responding to Nightingale's (2024) definitional openness, Warnes's (2009) emphasis on magical-realism diversity, and earlier work on the first two *Mata* novels (Maslikatin et al., 2026).

The principal comparative contribution is that remystification has directionality. *Mata dan Manusia Laut* follows empirical ocean, cosmological kinship, embodied marine identity, hybrid human/nonhuman world. Ecological regulation and cosmological obligation coexist: lunar fishing practices and rejection of destructive fishing accompany belief in marine twins (Madasari, 2026, pp. 27, 33-35). Bambulo's claim to be a "sea being" turns ecological belonging into ontological difference (p. 63), materially confirmed when Matara breathes underwater (p. 115). Masalembo destabilizes geographical distance (pp. 139-149), while RORO transforms the seabed into reciprocal more-than-human agency (pp. 174-179). This trajectory resonates with Lee's (2023) archipelagic thinking: the sea becomes a relational medium connecting humans, animals, ancestors, and cosmological agencies. Remystification is therefore spatial and relational.

By contrast, *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* follows technoscientific certainty, temporal anomaly, embodied prehistory, elemental agency, epistemic openness. Science initially succeeds: genetic experimentation creates Bibikus (Madasari, 2025, p. 42), but the creatures exceed prediction and control (p. 75). Temporal order then fractures: Mataras's morning corresponds to six days elsewhere (p. 138), scientists hypothesize an unresolved slower coexistent world (pp. 160–161), and temporal difference expands into millions of years (p. 199). This trajectory accords with deep-time scholarship: Ginn et al. (2018) emphasize experiential encounters with distant temporalities; Farrier (2019) literature's capacity to render geological duration perceptible; and Economides (2025) deep time's multispecies implications and critique of technomanagerial control. Fire further destabilizes material causality by speaking to Binar and responding differently to bodies (Madasari, 2025, pp. 135, 161), ultimately allowing her to enter flames unharmed (p. 187). The ending refuses technological closure because no time machine explains the journey (pp. 229–230). Thus, both novels remystify reality, but in different directions: one laterally across sea/land, human/nonhuman, and empirical/cosmological boundaries; the other vertically through temporal depth and material agency.

These trajectories also dismantle a simple science-myth binary. In *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, biological adaptation (Madasari, 2026, pp. 52–53) and lunar ecological knowledge (p. 33) remain valid but cannot exhaust marine kinship, *lummy*, underwater breathing, Masalembo, or RORO. In *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, genetic science and technological systems continue functioning; what fails is explanatory closure (Madasari, 2025, pp. 229–230). Accordingly, the novels do not replace science with myth; they challenge science's monopoly over reality. This accords with Faris (2004), who retains phenomenal reality while expanding what it can contain, and Warnes (2009), who emphasizes variable relations among belief, skepticism, and realism.

Eco-magical-realism scholarship reinforces this reading. Rogers (2021) shows that seemingly impossible ecological phenomena can function as concrete more-than-human agents; Rosen (2026) demonstrates magical-realist YA fiction's capacity to challenge human/nature binaries; and Faris (2024) extends magical realism toward animals, transformation, and cosmological relations. The *Mata* novels expand this spectrum to marine beings, RORO, genetically engineered Bibikus, and elemental fire. Their more-than-human world is therefore biological, cosmological, technological, prehistoric, and elemental. The result is not epistemic relativism but epistemic plurality without closure: science retains explanatory power, but no single regime determines the limits of existence. Related Indonesian comparative ecocriticism likewise shows that landscapes become ecologically consequential through competing epistemic-political regimes that render them extractable, protectable, or relationally inhabitable (Saputra, Indarti, et al., 2026).

The implications are global. Nightingale (2024) challenges geographically restrictive definitions without denying magical realism's Latin American genealogy. Likewise, children's magical realism need not be simplified fantasy: Reynolds et al. (2020) demonstrate its spatial reconfigurations, while Rosen

(2026) foregrounds human–nonhuman agency. Madasari relocates these possibilities into Indonesian archipelagic and technoscientific worlds. Consistent with Lee (2023), *Mata dan Manusia Laut* makes the ocean connective rather than separative; *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* joins technological futurity to planetary evolutionary depth. Indonesian children’s literature consequently connects archipelagic relationality with deep temporality, contributing culturally situated perspectives to global questions of reality, agency, knowledge, and epistemic authority.

The study therefore extends Faris in two ways: remystification is conceptualized as the processual outcome of interactions among the five characteristics, and as a process capable of following culturally and materially distinct trajectories. Both novels produce realities that are plural, relational, and resistant to final explanation, making the *Mata* series not merely another geographical instance of magical realism but a comparative model of how different phenomenal worlds generate different forms of remystified reality.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that Faris’s five characteristics operate dynamically across Okky Madasari’s final two *Mata* novels, producing distinct forms of remystification. Rather than functioning independently, they interact processually (phenomenal grounding, irreducibility, epistemic doubt, merging realities, destabilization, remystification) so remystification is not a sixth characteristic but the epistemological consequence of their interaction (Faris, 2004).

The novels develop two complementary trajectories. *Mata dan Manusia Laut* produces maritime-cosmological remystification, destabilizing space, identity, and human–nonhuman relationality through cosmological kinship, marine embodiment, and spatial permeability. *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* produces temporal-technological remystification, where technoscientific systems generate phenomena exceeding prediction and control, unsettling temporality, materiality, and epistemic authority.

More broadly, remystification does not abolish scientific reality; it pluralizes what can count as real. Scientific, ecological, cosmological, embodied, and more-than-human knowledge coexist without reduction to a single explanatory regime, extending Faris’s concerns with nonhuman and cosmological relations (Faris, 2024).

Future research should therefore examine the epistemic consequences of interactions among Faris’s five characteristics and test these two trajectories across Southeast Asian children’s literature, archipelagic narratives, and other ecological or technological contexts.

FURTHER STUDY

This study is limited by its focus on the final two *Mata* novels, its text-centered approach, and the scope of Faris’s framework. Future research should examine all four novels to trace remystification across different ecological and historical settings, and investigate how Sama/Bajo communities, young readers,

and teachers interpret the coexistence of scientific, cosmological, and more-than-human realities.

Faris's framework also leaves questions of ecological ontology, political authority, and culturally situated world-making only partially addressed. Further studies could therefore combine magical realism with archipelagic criticism, eco-magical realism, and deep-time environmental humanities (Ginn et al., 2018; Lee, 2023; Rosen, 2026), particularly in comparative Southeast Asian children's literature, to test whether oceanic, deep-time, and technoscientific remystification are specifically Indonesian or part of a broader regional poetics.

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