

# Postcolonial Discourse Reflected Through Magical Realism in Tess Uriza Holthe's *When the Elephants Dance*

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## Abstract

This article aims to show the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines through the utilization of magical realism in the novel *When the Elephants Dance* (2002) by Tess Uriza Holthe. *When the Elephants Dance* is intrinsically structured into four main sections which describe the events leading up to Japan's surrender. Inside these four sections, the story is integrated with five sub-stories from accompanying characters which are *A Cure for Happiness*, *Mang Minno*, *Ghost Children*, *The Twilight People*, and *The Portrait of an Aristocrat*. These sub-stories act as one of the highlights of the novel since they are utilized by the characters as a way to retain their sanity and cope with the tragic experiences of living in the middle of a war. The characters' coping mechanism of telling their life stories that are filled with Filipino mythology reflects the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines prior to and during World War II. With the research limitation of analyzing the story of *Mang Minno*, this research will use the theory of magical realism by Wendy B. Faris to see the presence of magical realism, as well as the utilization of New Historicism as a bridge to analyze the postcolonial discourse. The results show that by integrating magical realism and history, Holthe was successful in depicting historical events that occurred in the Philippines under the fictional aspect of the novel. Holthe used magical realism to conceal the postcolonial discourse of alterity and emphasize the magnificence of Catholicism in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** *magical realism, postcolonial discourse, new historicism*

## Introduction

The term "magical realism" was first coined by Franz Roh to describe a novel painting aesthetic that emerged in Germany. The theory of magical realism in literature was later systematically developed by Wendy B. Faris in "Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction" as well as "Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative". According to Wendy B. Faris, "magical realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed" (Faris, 1995, p. 163). Although magical realism stories act as though removed from our world, they nonetheless contain "the shadow of the real world" (Yuan, 2022, p. 19) which is particularly apparent in Tess Uriza Holthe's story of *When the Elephants Dance* (2002).

Tess Uriza Holthe's *When the Elephants Dance* (2002) is a historical fiction novel that is set within the final week of World War II. In the context of history, the Philippines, particularly the area encircling Manila, became a battleground for both the Japanese and

the Americans throughout World War II. The clash between the two countries began back in December 1941 when the Philippines were still under the rule of American occupation. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and took the momentum to order an offensive on the Philippines, starting the Japanese occupation, and causing the American government to collapse under the back-to-back damage. This devastated the Philippines as it was subjected to numerous cataclysmic occurrences because America and Japan provided no regard or protection for the general populace. The Philippines, while still in postcolonial times, experienced the exploitation of labor for land development plans and fortifications, shortage of food and life necessities, the destruction of homes, as well as wartime violence towards its people. Though filled with tragedy, this era of Filipino history began to influence the contemporary literary works of Filipino authors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly in postcolonial fiction.

*When the Elephants Dance* is intrinsically structured into four main sections, each told from the perspective of Alejandro, Isabelle, and Domingo, which describe the events leading up to Japan's surrender. Inside these four sections, the story is also integrated with five sub-stories from other accompanying characters which are *A Cure for Happiness*, *Mang Minno*, *Ghost Children*, *The Twilight People*, and *The Portrait of an Aristocrat*. These sub-stories act as one of the highlights of the novel since they are utilized by the characters as a way to retain their sanity and cope with the tragic experiences of living in the middle of a war. They describe tales from the youthful days of the characters while, peculiarly, also containing magical elements, characters, and objects. These are no ordinary stories because the existence of the magical and the mystical are integrated and considered real and normalized, corresponding with the postcolonial concept of *magical realism*. However, the writer will establish a research limitation to only one of the stories, the story of *Mang Minno*, given that it holds the most evidence of postcolonial discourse. Before that, to obtain the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines, the writer will first utilize the theory of magical realism by Wendy B. Faris. The writer continued by using the theoretical analysis of *New Historicism* by Gallagher & Greenblatt to identify the present postcolonial discourse. Holthe utilized magical realism as a way to conceal the postcolonial discourse which is why the sub-story of *Mang Minno* was analyzed through new historicism.

The term new historicism was first coined by Stephen Greenblatt who stated that a single theory can only be applied to a small number of texts and would be based on a limited perspective (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000). New Historicism rejects the idea that there is only one correct interpretation of a literary work. History is viewed as having a heavy relation to civilization and culture. According to Gallagher & Greenblatt (2000), art and society are interdependent and will always have an impact on each other. To investigate, discuss, and explore the postcolonial discourse, this research will make use of the theoretical analysis of *New Historicism*. Rather than being the primary focus of the study, *New Historicism* will instead serve as a bridge in analyzing the postcolonial discourse of the story itself.

Through the existence of magical occurrences in *Mang Minno*, it is hoped that this research will be able to identify the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines that is present in the story, with the research limitation of the *Mang Minno* sub-story.

Regarding past research on magical realism, numerous scholars have applied this theory. Agung Wiranata Kusuma wrote "JK Rowling's *The Tales of Beedle The Bard: A Magical Realism Analysis*," Christopher Warnes wrote "The Hermeneutics of Vagueness: *Magical Realism in current literary critical discourse*," and many others. Many researchers have also utilized postcolonial discourse in their writing. Albert Tallapessy wrote "Postcolonial Discourse in Coogler's *Black Panther: A Multimodal Critical Discourse*

Analysis,” Francine E. Darroch wrote “A Postcolonial Feminist Discourse Analysis of Urban Aboriginal Women’s Description of Pregnancy-Related Weight Gain and Physical Activity,” and more. These previous studies helped the present writer with understanding both magical realism and postcolonial discourse. However, none of the magical realism and postcolonial discourse research have ever been applied to *When the Elephants Dance*. In regards to previous studies about Holthe’s *When the Elephants Dance*, the present writer was able to find one past study by other researchers which is Debora Tisoy Pacio’s thesis titled “Magical Orality in Tess Uriza Holthe’s *When the Elephants Dance*”. Although this research likewise makes use of Faris’ theory of magical realism, it was conducted using a quantitative method with no correlation with the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines. Aside from the aforementioned study, previous research about Holthe’s *When the Elephants Dance* has yet to be found by the writer.

## Method

Since this research intends to investigate the postcolonial discourse through magical realism in the short story, this study was conducted using a qualitative method. Utilizing the qualitative method enables the present authors to interpret texts to understand beliefs, experiences, behaviors, and interactions in the analysis (Ary et al., 2010).

In this study, the sub-story of Mang Minno, contained in the novel *When the Elephants Dance* by Tess Uriza Holthe, was used as the object of the study and the source of data. The reason of choosing the short story as the object and source of data is because Mang Minno holds the most evidence of postcolonialism. The sub-story of Mang Minno will be analyzed in parts of contained words, phrases, and sentences.

In addition, the data analysis technique used in this study was descriptive technique analysis where the data of this study were analyzed into sentences and paragraphs. The research starts by doing a close reading of the sub-story, followed by understanding the concept of magical realism and postcolonial discourse, identifying the texts using Faris’ theory of magical realism, and analyzing each category of magical realism to identify the present postcolonial discourse by utilizing new historicism. The present writer analyses the words, phrases, and sentences from the story of Mang Minno that are connected to the postcolonial discourse and magical realism by reading, identifying, categorizing, and interpreting the data. The instrument development of this study is by using a checklist with the items of the five magical realism characteristics and the points of postcolonial discourse.

## Findings and Discussion

### Magical Realism Occurrences in *Mang Minno*

Mang Minno is a story narrated by Roman Flores which focuses on the tales of his younger days. Due to his father’s success in the village’s fish market, Roman hails from a wealthy household. They were respected members of the upper class, however, Roman was always invisible to his father, regardless of what he did. His mother has a fragile and evasive personality which results in her being unable to offer any sort of consolation regarding the circumstance. One day, Roman came across local stories of Mang Minno, an elderly fisherman in the Philippines’ Bohol province, who was said to carry a powerful amulet. Roman was finally able to meet Mang Minno and persuaded him to assist him in improving his fishing skills to please his father. Roman quickly realizes, nevertheless, that

he is getting embroiled in something much eviler. As the plot develops, Mang Minno is revealed to be an evil force.

In order to identify the postcolonial discourse of the story, the writer first utilized the theory of magical realism because the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines is disguised under the magical events, characters, and objects by Holthe. Faris stated that magical realism intertwines verisimilitude and the extraordinary in such a way that magical components arise naturally out of the portrayed reality (Faris, 1995, p. 163). It may also be described as a literary idea that includes a circumstance in which elements of the natural and the supernatural seamlessly coexist to tell a single, cohesive tale. Simply described, it is the insertion of magical aspects into everyday circumstances and their normalization. The combination of the realms of myths, legends, and history indicates that both historical events and tales are crucial components in shaping the collective memory, particularly in the Philippines (Luburić-Cvijanović, 2020, p. 81).

Faris's magical realism has five characteristics; irreducible elements, a phenomenal world, unsettling doubt, merging realms, and disruption of time, space, and identity (Faris, 2004, p. 167). Here, the writer presents how magical realism is portrayed in the story of *Mang Minno* which will later be used to reveal the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines.

### **Irreducible Elements**

According to Faris, the first criterion of magical realism is the existence of an "irreducible element of magic" (Faris, 2004, p. 167) which explained that a story can be said to have magical realism if it has a supernatural or magical aspect that cannot be explained by the typical notions of natural law (p. 167). Chanady stated that a character's "dreams and myths are so real to them" (2019, p. 128) resulting in readers not questioning the reliability of the character's narration because our "criteria of logic and perception [do] not apply to the society depicted in the novel" (p. 128). The initial encounter between Roman and Mang Minno is a perfect example of this irreducible element of magic. Roman struggled in the moments before their first encounter given that he had to decide whether to follow his interest in Mang Minno or not. This is because Roman has heard a lot of unfavorable allegations about Mang Minno, with the most severe one being that "he uses black magic" (Holthe, 2002, p. 97). However, Roman pushed aside his fear and decided to enter the forest in search of the rumored old fisherman.

"That was when I saw the shadows in the murky water, dark ink taking form around my feet. Fish all around me, weaving in between my feet... They gathered around and watched me expectantly, a swirl of metallic colors... A group of twelve, in particular, hovered near me," (p. 76).

In this section of the story, two instances of magic's irreducible constituents are demonstrated. First, it is beyond the conventional understanding of natural law that murky water from the sea began to form in the middle of a forest in a matter of minutes. Second, the behavior of the fish is significantly out of the ordinary since they are shown to have intelligence under Mang Minno's control. Another instance of this occurs shortly after Roman was successful in persuading Mang Minno to serve as his mentor. Mang Minno showed Roman the *anting-anting*, a magical amulet constructed from a large fish bone that was "thick and smooth," and had "the texture of ivory". This amulet could be blown like a whistle to call fish.

“The fishes had voices. They sang and called out in a million different tunes. They faced us, rows of them, listening, waiting for his instructions,” (p. 82)

This paragraph depicts what happens when the *anting-anting*, which serves as a magical artifact, is used. The fish complied with Mang Minno’s instructions, began to make noises, and even demonstrated additional intelligence by acting in ways that are outside the laws of nature, solidifying the existence of an irreducible element in Mang Minno’s story.

### **A Strong Presence of the Phenomenal World**

In regards to the second criterion of magical realism, Faris stated that the literary story must have a strong presence of the phenomenal world, seen through the descriptive details of the story (Faris, 2004, p. 169). The phrase *magical realism* alludes to the notion that, even though the story is described through a description that emphasizes regular phenomena, the realistic happenings or *realism* are subsequently amended by the existence of the wondrous or the *magical*. Magical realism is able to provide “a view of life that exudes a sense of energy and vitality in a world that promises not only joy but a fair share of misery as well” (Danow, 2014, p. 67).

“I put the morsel in my mouth; the taste was fresh; the sweetness took your breath away. I swallowed. “This is good,” ... Then, suddenly, my mouth began to burn, worse than the time I had eaten an entire bag of chili peppers. My eyes watered, and I looked around in a panic,” (Holthe, 2002, p. 86).

Roman was at a party when he walked to the buffet table, and by chance, the fish that was served there was the ones that Roman had caught with Mang Minno’s assistance. Compliments were thrown around the party about how amazing the fish tasted and Roman was able to taste it himself. It was tasty, sweet, and good which highlighted the normality of the situation. Roman’s reaction, though, was by no means typical after he swallowed the fish. No one at the gathering who consumed the fish reacted in this way.

Due to the story context of how the fish was captured, it can be said that Roman’s burning reaction was a result of his connection with Mang Minno and his black magic. The covenant between the two characters showcases an unrealistic component of Roman’s character as a human, presenting the notion of magic in the novel as well as connecting him to the phenomenal world (Munawar et al., 2020, p. 184).

### **The Unsettling Doubt**

Faris continued with the third magical realism criteria of “two contradictory understandings of events” (Faris, 2004, p. 171) or also commonly referred to as the unsettling doubt. The characteristic of unsettling doubt in magical realism causes readers to hesitate between two conflicting interpretations of reality – their own and the story. A sense of hesitation is produced when the reader’s personal experience, culture, or religious views conflict with the existence of magical realism in the literary narrative. Simply put by Hosseinpour, “as a result, the doubts generated in the mind of the readers remain unresolved” (2016, p. 94).

“Are you truly the Jonah in the Bible, who was caught inside the whale? ... No, I am not Jonah. But I know of him. I am not allowed to walk his waters.” (Holthe, 2002, p. 81).

According to Mang Minno’s declaration of knowing Jonah, the biblical character is still alive and well today despite the fact that his story takes place in biblical times. The occurrence described above causes readers to hesitate between their own understanding of the biblical tale of Jonah, who lived during biblical times, and the claims of Mang Minno which stated that he still roams the earth, proving the presence of the unsettling doubt.

### **Merging Realms**

The fourth characteristic of magical realism discusses the “closeness or near-merging of two realms” (Faris, 2004, p. 172) where the two components of magic and the real are mixed and linked. Ishlahiyah stated that “the reader will be able to feel the closeness or near merging of two realms, two worlds” (2018, p. 17) which is further elaborated by Mahfuzh as “a space of the in-between or a space of uncertainty” (2017, p. 19). In the story of Mang Minno, the village’s forest can be viewed as the location where the realm’s fusion takes place.

“The only way I can describe it is it was as if the forest had become flooded by the ocean, the same forest, only filled with water. I could feel my feet solidly on the ground, but when I looked down, I could not see past the murky waters (Holthe, 2002, p. 76) ... The water rushed around my feet as if from a newly opened dam (p. 94) ... Roman, there’s a tidal wave coming... Roman, do you not see the water?” (p. 101)

The realism is represented by the setting of the forest whilst the magic is represented by the sudden flood that rushes on the forest floor whenever Mang Minno emerges. As stated by Prasetyohadi, it “blurs the border of magical and reality that the discourse of [the] merging realms questioned each other” (2018, p. 74).

It is a form of magic that cannot be explained, and yet it still preserves realism because the magical act happens in the real world, therefore there is no natural explanation for how the woodland could be flooded at Mang Minno’s command. The combination of the real (the forest) and the magical (Mang Minno’s black magic) create an overlap of the two realms and prove the magical realism criteria of the merging of realms.

### **Disruption of Time, Space, and Identity**

And lastly, Faris stated the fifth criterion of magical realism as disruptions of “time, space, and identity” (Faris, 2004, p. 173) which happens when magic challenges the conventional notions of time, location, and identity. “Time may be non-linear, space may be ambiguous, and identity may be fractured” (Mishra & Mishra, 2014, p. 300). Roman was on the verge of succeeding Mang Minno at the story’s climax when he performed a rite on a cliff. However, Mang Minno did not seem to tell Roman anything about what would occur if he were to acquire the power of black magic.

“The water split open and formed an arc around the cliff. It rose over the large rock, and we were again submerged to our waists. I saw a large mass looming beyond the horizon, a hundred meters away (Holthe, 2002, p. 103) ... I watched the dark mass in the water, transfixed by the sight. The ocean broke open, the way it did for the cargo ships in Manila Bay. I saw the speed at which it was approaching; there was no way we could outrun it, whatever it was. I pictured a thousand man-eating fishes” (p. 104)

The disruption of space is best illustrated by the quotations above. The three characters of Roman, his brother, and Mang Minno were standing on top of a rock when they noticed the sea splitting up and a dark figure speeding toward them. The dark mass of Mang Minno’s “Master” was able to tear apart the sea, which disrupts the spatial reality of the Philippines. The magical being had the power to alter the physical state of the village’s ocean, aka the real.

The disruption of time and identity is best illustrated by the previous quote about Jonah, the biblical character that is still alive. This is a form of identity disruption because there is nothing that differentiates the present characters and Jonah. As stated by Utari, “there is no [distinction] between the dead people and the people who [are] still alive” (2016, p. 42).

And lastly, this is a form of time disruption because Jonah is still able to roam the earth despite his famous tale happening a long time ago.

### **Postcolonial Discourse Reflected Through Magical Realism**

The idea of new historicism by Catherine Gallagher & Stephen Greenblatt was employed to analyze the postcolonial discourse of Mang Minno because they believe that in order to dissect a piece of writing, that analysis cannot only be done by using a single theory or be based on a limited a perspective (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000). The assumption that there can be just one legitimate reading of a piece of literature is rejected by New Historicism. The notion that literature just reflects history or that history is only used as a backdrop for literary interpretation is likewise rejected. The book’s author’s preconceptions shape history, according to new historicists, and literary critics should take this into consideration while analyzing a particular literary work. It is believed that history has a strong connection to civilization and culture.

To investigate, discuss, and explore the postcolonial discourse, this research will make use of the theoretical analysis of New Historicism as it was conceptualized by Gallagher & Greenblatt. The magical realism aspect of Mang Minno’s tale is very prominent, but the narrative also includes a discussion of the Philippines’ postcolonial period. Through the integration between magical realism and history, Holthe was successful in disguising the historical events under the fictitious aspect of the novel.

### **Alterity**

In postcolonial theory, the term *alterity* is defined as how one group differentiates itself from another in the context of politics, linguistics, culture, and/or religion (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 9). According to Wandama, living in a hybridized culture forces magical realism to confront Western ideologies and create new identities (2017, p. 14). In order to showcase the postcolonial alterity of the story, the present writer will first prove the

culture of the Flores family and see the difference in treatment between the layers of the community, according to the postcolonial discourse of the Philippines.

This discourse of postcolonialism in the Philippines can be seen through the four categories of races in the Philippines which are *peninsulares* (Spanish of pure blood, born in Spain), *insulares* (Spanish of pure blood but born in the Philippines), *mestizos* (mixed blood between Spanish and Filipino), and the natives of the Philippines. These distinctions between the four categories of races align with the concept of alterity due to the fact that there is a differing factor, in this case, race and place of birth, which affects the status of those within the categories in society. In regards to the character of Roman Flores, Roman's behavior and temperament provided evidence that he was a *mestizo*, a person who is a mix of Spanish and Filipino blood. This assumption was made based on the riches and prominence of the Flores family throughout the postcolonial era, as seen from the example passages below.

"The maid called us to dinner and I sat down to eat, mentally scratching my head. She had prepared my favorite dish, luago with manok, the warm rice and chicken stew," (Holthe, 2002, p. 77). "He was dressed in a light gray Western vest with matching trousers... Daniel Romero is going to study in the States, Papa," (p. 77) "The same way I wished to throw my American football against my mother's imported China plates during dinner," (p. 84)

These texts demonstrate that the Flores family could afford servants, import goods, and show a strong interest in education abroad. According to Daniel Goh, "landlords, agro-industrialists, merchants, intelligentsia, and professionals" (2008, p. 268) were unified by their Hispanic background and their increasing interest and inclination towards American education and lifestyle (2008, p. 268). In regards to Roman, his family's success in importing goods indicated that he was living in the elite sector of society. Furthermore, his family's interest in studying abroad aligns with the point of *mestizo's* inclination of furthering their studies outside of the Archipelago, as they have their needs met and can afford the luxury, as opposed to other parts of Filipino society.

Roman is also said to have "soft [arms] from lack of work" (Holthe, 2002, p. 76). Daniel Goh further stated that during this era, the *mestizos* ceased to be a focal point of "resistance against colonialism" (2008, p. 263) and had become "a marker of elite distinction" (2008, p. 263) further solidifying the notion that Roman's family hails from a race that was socially regarded as superior as a result of the enduring consequences of colonialism.

Aligning with the pieces of evidence of Roman being a *mestizo*, the individuals at the fish market are also subject to the aforementioned criteria of showing superiority and alterity towards others. When Roman and the market residents discuss Mang Minno, they all invariably use adjectives that highlight their differences from him. As an illustration, Roman's original assessment of Mang Minno was that he was "dark, like the warlike Igorot tribes of the Cordillera Central" (p. 75). Despite only ever seeing Mang Minno and never having witnessed anything, the people from the fish market constantly had unpleasant things to say about him.

## **Grandeur of Catholicism**

Given the lingering legacy of colonialism in the Philippines, Holthe chose to use characters and tales from Biblical stories in the Mang Minno narrative to depict the popular practice of Catholicism in the Philippines. Despite being in postcolonial times, the faith is still practiced widely across the nation, with about 81 percent of Filipinos identifying as Catholic.

“I pulled out my Bible from my shoulder bag. Mang Minno had requested that I bring it for the ceremony. It was a gift during my first Communion. It had come along with a set of pewter rosary beads, which I had stuffed into my pocket” (p. 102)

“He was holding a crucifix and saying a different prayer, in the ancient language of the Morro people, the people of the mountains. I turned from one to the other in confusion. Only Grandfather knew such prayers” (p. 103)

Due to the noteworthy influence the Spaniards still have on the Philippines, even in postcolonial times, Holthe uses many references to the Bible, communions, crucifixes, and prayers to demonstrate how important religion is to the Filipino people. Kusuma stated that fiction writers who employ magical realism always utilize an object or item as a magical emblem (2019, p. 103) since it is a visualization technique used according to cultural and philosophical systems of belief. Though it uses an object that can be found in real-life, the incorporation of these objects in magical realism fiction integrates the present culture and religion, fulfilling the writer’s purpose of exposing Filipino history to the readers.

Historically, Sokhoun stated that the social, political, and theological framework of the lives of Filipino indigenous people were drastically altered for the betterment of the country by Spanish monks and Spaniards, but they allowed nothing to prevent them from converting Filipinos to the Catholic faith (2017, p. 157). Spanish Catholicism, according to Bräunlein, was seen as a backward doctrine and was actively used as a crafty tool of “(self-)subjugation, resulting to miseducation, false consciousness, [and] (neo)colonial mentality” (2014, p. 81). According to Sokhun, the Spanish frequently accosted locals while holding a crucifix and a sword to advance their colonization of the Philippines (2017, p. 157).

In the era before the Philippines gained their freedom, the majority of the country’s people had barely managed to fulfill their daily needs and survive the narrative of the war. The United States had tried to provide the needed political assistance for the Filipino people but the issue cannot be resolved as long as the war was still ongoing and causing immense cataclysmic damage. The Catholic Church in that era, however, was one organization that was perfectly positioned to offer assistance. The Church had never given up on the “traditional role it had in identity formation” and persevered and encourage “national unity in the remotest reaches of the Philippine archipelago”, as stated by Shirley (2003, p. 119). However, this fact was exploited by people in political workers who were a part of the Church, and as a result, “their influence on legitimacy curtailed” (p. 119), resulting in their legacy from colonialism coming true in the postcolonial era.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research discovered that Tess Uriza Holthe's short story *Mang Minno* from the novel *When the Elephants Dance* reflects magical realism. First, the irreducible element can be seen by the fact that Mang Minno can engulf the forest floor in murky water and exert control over the thoughts and actions of fish to display intelligence. Second, the strong presence of the phenomenal world can be seen in the event when Roman felt a searing sensation after consuming a piece of normal fish. Third, the magical realism characteristic of unsettling doubt can be seen through the affirmation that Jonah, the biblical character, is still alive in the present day. Fourth, the merging of realms can be seen through Mang Minno's magical power to summon water, whether it is real or just a hallucination, into the forest in an abbreviated period. And lastly, identity and time disruption are caused by the presence of Jonah, causing no distinction between him, a biblical character that is said to be still roaming around the earth, and people who are still alive. Furthermore, the presence of Mang Minno's "Master" disrupted spatial reality.

Concerning the postcolonial discourse, this research has discovered that Holthe used magical realism to conceal the postcolonial discourse of alterity and emphasize the magnificence of Catholicism. Alterity can be seen through how Roman, the people from the market, and high society treat Mang Minno, as well as those who come from a lower class of society. Regarding Catholicism in postcolonial discourse, the religion and its traditions are still very much alive and frequently employed in the lives of the characters, reflecting the actual situation of Catholicism in the Philippines.

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