

Magical Realism in Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*

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Abstract

This study discusses magical realism in Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*. The aims of this study are to find the characteristics of magical realism and to explain the significance of utilizing the magical realism portrayed in the novel. The method applied is descriptive qualitative by presenting dialogues and narration relating to the topics of this study. The results found are that there are five characteristics of magical realism in the novel; 1) the irreducible elements of magic, 2) the phenomenal world, 3) unsettling doubts, 4) merging realms, and 5) the disruption of time. It is also found that the time-travelling and the ghost presented in the novel are significant for utilizing magical realism to explore and understand reality from a different point of view as well as to criticize perceived, knowable reality.

Keywords: *magical realism, ghost, Japan*

Introduction

A novel is an extended work of prose fiction, other than short stories and novella (Abrams & Harpham, 2012, p. 199). A novel has a distinction in its nature that its length and complexity differ from other genres in literature. In novels, the authors propose such stories expressing and reflecting human experiences that are set either in real or imaginative settings (Taylor, 1981, p. 46). In this regard, it is understood that a novel is the work of a skillful author representing certain realities faced by human beings in their narratives.

Before The Coffee Gets Cold is an English-translated novel written by Toshikazu Kawaguchi. It was first published in 2015. Beginning as a play to which then adapted into a novel, *Before The Coffee Gets Cold* has sold over a million copies in its original language, Japanese. The success of Kawaguchi's first novel was then adapted into a movie entitled *Café Funiculi Funicula* as well in 2018. Likewise, in five years, the success of *Before The Coffee Gets Cold* is followed by two sequels, *Before The Coffee Gets Cold: Tales from The Café*, and *Before Your Memory Fades*. Although these three novels share differences in their characters, but the stories aim for the same idea, time-travelling.

"If you could go back, who would you want to meet?" is the first intriguing line in Kawaguchi's novel, *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*. This is fairly expressed by Kawaguchi in terms of the idea of this novel. In fulfilling this idea, he presents a story of a peculiar café followed by its unusual service. The service that this café offers is allowing its customers

to travel the time. By allowing any customer to travel the time, within his narrative, Kawaguchi splits the four time-travellers into four different interconnected stories. Each of the time-travellers meets one another and is united by the shared experience of time-travelling.

Situated in a small street in Tokyo, the interconnection of each chapter is gathered entirely in this café. In each of the chapters, it narrates four different time-travellers. The first chapter is a story of the first time-traveller wishing to tell her true feelings towards her boyfriend for the last time. The second time-traveller, which is depicted in the second chapter, is a story of a nurse, whose husband, a regular customer in this café, has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and wishing to meet and ask him about a letter he has written for her. The next chapter is a story of a bar owner, who is a regular customer as well, wishing to ask for an apology to her deceased sister. The fourth and the last chapter is a story of a wife of this café's owner, who was born with a heart defect, wishing to talk to her future daughter for the first and the last time. Additionally, for the time-travellers to succeed in travelling the time, they are obligated to the service this café offers, which is to drink a coffee served to them. The coffee served comes with a requirement that anyone wishing to experience this peculiar service has to drink that coffee before it goes cold.

Before The Coffee Gets Cold has been reviewed by a couple of authors. One of the reviews stated that this novel is categorized into a genre of fantasy or science fiction (Kelly, 2020, n.d.). However, considering the peculiar service that this café gives and time-travelling events that take place in present-day Tokyo, the researcher hypothesizes that *Before The Coffee Gets Cold* is neither of that genre, but a novel of magical realism.

In 1923, the term magical realism was first introduced to describe a new, neo-realistic, style in German painting by the art critic, Franz Roh, to which later the term restated in Roh's book entitled *Nach-expressionismus, magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* in 1925 (Bowers, 2004; Faris, 2004,). In the stage of its development, magical realism has three pivotal periods; the first period was set in the 1920s, Germany; the second period was in the 1940s, Central America; and the last period was begun in 1955, Latin America, spreading across the globe until now (Bowers, 2004, p. 7). Additionally, magical realism as the literary genre is spread globally by the success of Latin-American authors, such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Garcia Marquez, *The Kingdom of This World* by Alejo Carpentier, *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laure Esquivel, and many more. However, magical realism is now deliberately being "written by authors from innumerable countries of origin and thus is not the sole property of Latin Americans," (Sasser, 2014, p.1).

Part of the literary genre, the narrative of magical realism depicts a juxtaposition of two ideas, magical and realism. According to Bowers (2004), magic is "any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science" (p.19). This idea of magic in magical realism refers to the inclusion of "ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents, and strange atmosphere." (Bowers, 2004, p.19). On the other hand, realism in literature is defined by Grants (1970,

cited in Bowers) as “a creation which, working with the raw materials of life, absolves these by the intercession of the imagination from mere factuality and translates them to a higher order” (p.21). These two ideas are significant to understand on how “magical realism work” as it is both presenting a “realistic context for the magical events of the fiction” (Bowers, 2004, p. 21).

Magical realism has been considered as well as one of the most important modes of expression used worldwide (Faris, 2004, p.1). Similarly, Ouyang (2005) stated that magical realism “is everywhere. It is in Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Italian, Japanese” (p.15). The significance of this mode can be seen in what is presented in the narrative. It is as expressed in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Marquez, which he explored many aspects such as “nature of reality”, or “effect of colonialism” (Thamarana, 2015, p. 265). Besides “nature of reality” and “effect of colonialism”, Thamarana further added that “magical realism has many central ideas” and two of them are “critique of rationality and progress”, and “doubting about reality” (2015, p. 265). While in Japanese literature, there are a few prominent authors who have known using magical realism in their writings, namely Yasunari Kawabata, Osamu Dazai, Haruki Murakami, and Banana Yoshimoto.

Regarding the aforementioned Japanese authors, there have been found several articles discussing the topic of magical realism with different approaches and objects. The first study is entitled *Dreaming in Isolation: Magical Realism in Japanese Literature*. By using the works of Murakami and Yoshimoto as the objects for her study, Mayer (2018) focused her analysis entirely on how those two authors make use of magical realism effectively. The next article is published under the title of *The House of The Japanese Spirits: Orientalism and Magical Realism in Isabel Allende's El amante japonés* in which Carlsen (2018), by using both theories of magical realism and orientalism, analyzed how “the novel presents Japanese Americans in a positive light, yet resorts to various stereotypes in its portrayal”, as well as the mystical beliefs presented within the story. The third research is entitled *Magical Realism in Riggs' Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children*. Wati and Ayu (2019) focused their study on revealing the presence of magical realism experienced by the main character, Jacob Portman, in this young adult novel. Following that, the research entitled *Magical Realism in Audrey Niffenegger's The Time Traveler's Wife* is written by Asmida. Asmida (2020) focused her research on exploring the characteristics of magical realism in *The Time Traveler's Wife*, and the cultural history within the text. The last one is research entitled *Magical Realism in Neil Gaiman's The Ocean At The End of The Lane Novel*. Hasanah, Kuncara, and Astuti (2021) focused their study on discussing the characteristics of magical realism, the literary techniques used, and the role of magical realism portrayed in their selected novel.

Based on the background mentioned above, therefore, the purposes of this study are to find and analyze the characteristics of magical realism and to describe the significance of utilizing magical realism in presenting the story of the selected novel.

Methodology

This study used the method of descriptive qualitative with several phases of research. First, the researcher thoroughly read the novel, *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*. In the second step, in order to find the characteristics of magical realism, the researcher had done close reading and used the theory of magical realism by Wendy B. Faris. Then, the researcher identified, collected, and classified the data based on the theory of magical realism. In the four-step, the researcher, at last, analyzed and displayed the data to provide an explanation on both the characteristics of magical realism found in the selected novel and the significance of magical realism utilized in the story.

Finding and Discussion

Characteristics of Magical Realism

In *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and The Remystification of Narrative*, Faris proposed five characteristics that help the investigation of the work of magical realism. Those five characteristics of magical realism are listed as in the following:

The Irreducible Elements of Magic

David Young and Keith Hollman (cited in Faris 2004, p.7) stated that things that can be explained, "logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief," are certainly not part of the irreducible element. Similarly, Faris elaborated that the irreducible elements are irrational events or things that happen in terms of text (Faris, 2004, p.7). The first example is shown by Remedios the Beauty in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. She is portrayed as having been able to ascend to heaven. Whilst in *Perfume*, the irreducible element of magic is demonstrated by the main protagonist's unusual ability, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, that he could create a perfume by only smelling the scents of the body of virgins (Faris, 2004, p. 8). Both of the aforementioned characters show that the element of magic done by them simply cannot be understood. Thus, this explains that the irreducible element is the assimilation of realistic and unrealistic things happening as one in a text.

The Phenomenal World

The phenomenal world is the second characteristic of magical realism proposed by Faris. It is stated that detailed descriptions of a strong presence of the phenomenal world are what distinguishes magical realism from fantasy or allegory. The descriptions of realistic descriptions are created to resemble the real world in their readers' lives. On the other hand, the entanglement of detailed descriptions of "intriguing magical details" is to represent both worlds into one fictional text (Farris, 2004, p. 14). Faris (2004) further added that a sense of the phenomenal world can be illustrated in two ways; events and phenomena. The event of a strong presence of the phenomenal world is what happens in *Ironweed*, where Francis Phelan has a conversation with the dead in realistic settings, in 1938 in Albany, New York. On the other hand, the phenomenon is illustrated

by the ability of Grenouille's nose in *Perfume*, he was narrated to be born in an actual location, which was in Paris (p. 14-15).

Unsettling Doubts

The third characteristic is unsettling doubts. Faris (2004) stated that "before categorizing the irreducible element as irreducible, the reader may hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events" (p.17). Faris named these experiences as unsettling doubts. To give an illustration, in *The Tin Drum*, the character, Oskar Matzerath, has stopped growing as his initial plan, but after getting hit with a rock on his head, he begins to physically age (Faris, 2004, p. 18). This characteristic allows the readers to question their belief systems since the belief system of each of them may differ. It depends as well on one's culture. In other words, irrational events in the text may be hesitantly accepted by those readers who believe solely in knowable things.

Merging Realms

Merging realms is the fourth characteristic proposed. Faris stated that there are "intersections of two worlds", as "ghost and texts, or people and words that seem ghostly... or two worlds of life and death" as to define this characteristic. To give an illustration, one of the main characters in *The House of the Spirit*, Clara, who is described to be able to communicate with the spirit "during her lifetime". After her death, it is also narrated that Clara "appeared as she had been" to her husband (Faris, 2004, p.22). That is to say that boundaries of fact and fiction are blurred in magical realist narrative. This merging realms simply mean that the worlds of the real and unreal are combined into one in the work of magical realism (Faris, 2004, p.22-23).

Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity

The last characteristic is disruptions of time, space, and identity. In this last characteristic, Faris stated that "these fictions disturb received ideas about time, space, and identity" (Faris, 2004, p.25). In a simpler way, this characteristic exists to disrupt the concepts of time and space, or even someone's identity. There are no such things as one exact concept of time and space in magical realism.

To give a clear idea of this characteristic, there are a few illustrations to be considered. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* there is disrupted time where "rain, and insomnia plague" abolishing "the past and the meaning of words" of the native of Macondo, whereas Grenouille could smell the scent of "virgins across town" is asserted as the disruption of space (Faris, 2004, p.23). Disruption of identity, on the other hand, is narrated by Saleem Sinai as both the narrator and main protagonist in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, who is described to have questioned his own identity multiple times "with midnight's children inside his head" (Faris, 2004, p.25).

Characteristics of Magical Realism in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*

This section is also a major part of the research articles and is also usually the longest part of an article. Discussion of the research presented in this section are the result. The process of data analysis such as statistical calculations or other processes for the achievement of its research. Please present the discussion narratively.

The Irreducible Elements of Magic

The first characteristic of magical realism is the irreducible elements. In *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*, this characteristic is signified by several objects, one entity, and a set of rules. These objects are the café, a particular seat set inside the café, and a cup of coffee. These objects and the entity are associated with each other due to the set of rules made inside the café. Apart from the rules made, each of the three objects and the entity have magical forces that cannot be explained by the laws of the universe. Therefore, the evidence of these three objects, one entity, and the set of rules will be explained by the researcher as systematically.

The first irreducible element of magic is a café, *Funiculi Funicula*. In the story, this café is known as part of urban legend and for its ability to “transport people back to the past” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.9). The unique ability of this café is first recognized by the first time-traveller, Fumiko Kiyokawa, while she was watching a TV show. “And like a bolt of lightning striking inside her head, she remembered the café. ‘*The café that transports you back in time*’” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.9). The status of this café is also emphasized by the answer of the waitress of this café, Kazu Tokita, given to Fumiko in the first chapter. “You can go back. It’s true...you can go back” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.12). Besides Fumiko, there are two other characters highlighting the service of this café. One is expressed by Kohtake in the second chapter of the novel. “She had heard the rumour about returning to the past” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.83). The other one is done by Hirai in chapter three. “She was asking to go back and meet her” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.136). All of these characters hinted at the odds of this café that is in fact able transporting the people to the past.

Besides travelling to past, the café offers the customers as well to travel to the future. “Yes, of course you can go to the future” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.169). This is Kazu’s answer to Fumiko that can be found in the chapter four. However, in order to transport any person to the past or to the future, this café would need the other two supported objects; one specific seat and a cup of coffee.

Inside the café, it has only three seats at the counter and three two-seater tables (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.6). However, there is only one specific two-seater table that will carry on the service of this café. Time travelling would happen, only if any person sat on this particular seat. “There’s only one seat that allows you to go back in time, OK? And, while in the past, you can’t move from that seat,” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.15). Whilst the story proceeds, there is another evidence of the seat as a magical element. In the

following is a dialogue between Fumiko and Kazu found in the first chapter strengthening that there is one seat only that will allow the time-travelling to happen inside the café:

‘It is only possible to go back in time when seated at a particular seat in this café,’ she proclaimed. Fumiko reacted instantly.

‘Which one? Where should I sit?’ she looked around the café so rapidly she almost made a whooshing sound as she turned her head from side to side.

Ignoring her reaction, Kazu turned her head and looked fixedly at the woman in the white dress.

Fumiko followed her constant gaze.

‘That seat,’ Kazu said quietly.

‘That one? The one the woman’s sitting in?’ Fumiko whispered across the counter while keeping her eyes glued on the woman in the dress.

‘Yes,’ Kazu answered simply. (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.23).

The third irreducible element of magic is a cup of coffee. A cup of coffee mentioned in this story is the usual brewed coffee. This one cup of coffee must be served on the table of one specific seat as mentioned above for the customers to travel the time.

Kazu continued her explanation without showing the slightest interest in how Fumiko was feeling. ‘In a moment, I am going to pour you a cup of coffee,’ she said as she set a cup in front of Fumiko.

‘Coffee? Why coffee?’

‘Your time in the past will begin from the time the coffee is poured...’ Kazu said, ignoring the question from Fumiko, who was nevertheless reassured by the news it would be happening soon. ‘And you must return before the coffee goes cold.’ (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.42)

The foregoing dialogue is when Kazu told Fumiko about the time in the past Fumiko would have in the course of her departure to the past. The amount of time given to any person who sits on that particular seat would depend on the temperature of the coffee itself. Another piece of evidence that strengthens the quotation above is found in the chapter three where Hirai was given coffee thermometer. “This sounds an alarm just before the coffee gets cold” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.142). That is to say, the coffee needs to stay in a hot temperature during the transition to the past. In addition, the statement made by Kazu also briefly implies that there is a rule; one must drink the coffee before it gets cold.

As the mention of one should drink the coffee before it goes cold, it prompts that there are certain rules set by the café. In the very beginning of the story, it has not been clearly stated yet what rules to be followed by anyone in order to travel the time to the past or to the future. However, as the story deepens in the first chapter of the novel, the rules are at last listed.

The first rule – the only people one may meet while back in the past are those who have visited the café....

The second rule – no matter how hard one tries while back in the past, one cannot change the present....

The third rule – in order to return to the past, you have to sit in that seat and that seat alone.... This was the seat occupied by the woman in the dress.

The fourth rule – While back in the past, you must stay in the seat and never move from it....

The fifth rule – There is a time limit.... (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.37-38)

These five rules quoted above show that the rules arranged are integrating with the other three objects stated beforehand; the café, the seat, and the coffee. The first, third, and fourth rule imply that the café and the specific seat inside the café are the only possible place to advance one's journey to travel the time. Furthermore, the second rule implies that the present life of the one who has experienced these magical events would not be impacted. The fifth rule likewise implies the connection between limitation of time with the coffee, which has been stated earlier. Taking this into account, there is one detail left prior to complete the integration of these objects, and the rules. It is the entity.

On the earlier statement of the specific seat within the café, it mentions a bit of someone, in the story, who sits in that seat. This someone is, at first, described as “a woman in a dress” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.6). Near the end of the first chapter of the novel, this entity is described as a ghost. “Because that woman... is a ghost,” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.24). Strengthened by the third rules stated above, “This was the seat occupied by the woman in the dress...” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.38).

‘You just have to wait,’ Kazu said, as if she could hear Fumiko’s thoughts.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Everyday, there is just one moment when she goes to the toilet.’

‘A ghost needs to go to the toilet?’

‘While she’s gone, you can sit there.’ (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.30).

A dialogue above explains when it would be possible for the time-traveller to sit in that seat. The seat would be available for use when the ghost heads to the toilet.

The connection that the three objects, the ghost and a set of rules stated above shows that the time-travelling will happen if any time-travellers are to meet these required irreducible elements.

The Phenomenal World

The phenomenal world is the second characteristic of magical realism. To consider a novel is a magical realist fiction, it is stated by Faris (1995) that there should be a representation of realistic description of things, setting, or event. In other words, in terms of text, it is the realism in magical realism (p.169).

In *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*, it has been mentioned several times by the author regarding the place or location this story takes place. First it is described as “a basement café” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.6). The café is further detailed. “The café has no air conditioning. It opened in 1874, more than a hundred and forty years ago. Back then, people still used oil lamps for light.” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.57).

Another piece of evidence that strengthens this characteristic is when the author proceeds detailing the arrival of coffee for the first time in Japan. “Coffee was introduced to Japan in the Edo period, around the late seventeenth century.” (Kawaguchi, 2019,

p.57). In the history of Japan, The Edo Period or Tokugawa Period is actual history. Taking these two evidences as a realistic description of the café itself, the author informs the readers of the café's geographical space.

The hottest temperature ever recorded in Japan was 41 degrees Celsius at Ekawasaki in Kochi Prefecture. It is difficult to imagine a ceiling fan being at all useful in such heat. But even in the height of summer, this café is always pleasantly cool (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.58).

The quotation above is the last piece of evidence of the location in the story. Ekawasaki is a small village in Kochi Prefecture, Japan. Additionally, Faris (2004) asserted that "magical realist fiction includes intriguing magical details. Because these magical details represent a clear departure from realism" (p.15). The magical detail here lies in the temperature inside the café being unaffected by the temperature of the weather. Additionally, it is intended by the author to present such magical details. Therefore, this second characteristic is vital to be given and intended to convince the idea that supernatural events or phenomena do happen in the real world.

Unsettling Doubts

The third characteristic of magical realism categorized by Faris is unsettling doubts. It is a characteristic where the magical events evoke hesitation in the readers (Faris, 2004, p.17). However, the hesitation is not merely ensuing from the reader, but from a character in the story as well.

The first hesitation is depicted in the first chapter. Earlier, it has been explained by the researcher concerning the irreducible elements of magic in text. Hesitation, for the most part, is shown by Fumiko, but it is shown by other characters as well. At first, Fumiko asked Kazu why the present would remain the same even though she had travelled to the past. Kazu then replied to her, saying, "because that's the rule" (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.13). The occurrence of Fumiko's hesitation is due to her empiric understanding of time-travelling.

This had been the standard state of affairs in most time-travel stories that Fumiko knew, so she believed in the rule: If you change the past, you do change the present. On the basis, she wanted to return to the past and have the chance to do it afresh. Alas, it was a dream that was not to be (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.13).

The second hesitation depicted is when Fumiko asked Kazu about "Coffee? Why coffee?" to which Kazu responded saying that's all part of the rules.

Thirdly is the hesitation towards to the existence of the ghost inside the café. It was shown by Fumiko. Fumiko's initial disbelief was depicted when she stated that she could see the ghost. However, knowing that the ghost was visible, Fumiko's latter response was to make contact with her. This reaction was then responded by Kazu, saying, "You can touch her."

Fumiko placed her hand on the woman's shoulder as if to confirm that she could be touched. Without a doubt, she could feel the woman's shoulder and the material of the dress covering her soft skin. She couldn't believe that this was a ghost. (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.25)

Above is the quotation describing that after the first touch Fumiko made, she tried for a second time because the ghost, at that moment, gave no reaction to her at all.

The hesitation given by Fumiko underlines what Faris claimed that the story directs the attention of its reader to doubt the event, since the belief or knowledge of the reader is varied. One may find these elements of magic is rather hard to accept, while the others welcome these despite the indistinct explanation it gives. In Fumiko's situation, the hesitation about the irreducible elements of magic in this story is, although distressed her, it is described that "she accepted it" (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.38)

Merging Realms

The fourth one is merging realms. In merging realms, the confrontation of two world is caused by "real-world norms (the laws of nature), and supernatural norms" (Faris, 2004, p.21). The real-world norms are things formed on scientific knowledge, while supernatural norms are things that opposed the laws of nature. Simply put, magical realist text combines the magical and the material (Faris, 2004, p.21).

The contact made by Fumiko with the ghost is the first evidence, to begin with. After having touched the ghost purposely more than once, she asked her consistently to vacate the seat. Losing patience at this moment, Fumiko's then grabbed the hand of this ghost. She even dragged the ghost insistently out of the seat, despite being warned by Kazu, saying, "Stop! You mustn't do that!" (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.27). The reaction of Fumiko caused an occurrence.

And then it happened... The woman in the dress's eyes widened and she glared at her fiercely.

She felt as if the weight of her body had increased many times over. It felt as if dozens of heavy blankets had fallen over her. The light in the café dimmed to the brightness of candlelight. An unworldly wailing began to reverberate through the café.

She was paralyzed. Unable to move a muscle, she dropped to her knees and then fell to a crawling position.

'Ugh! What's happening? What's happening?

She had absolutely no idea what was happening. Kazu, in a smug, told-you-so kind of way, simply say, 'She cursed you.' (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.27).

Other than Fumiko, who experienced this supranatural encountered, it is also experienced by Hirai. In the story, Hirai had this encounter when she was insisting to use the seat to travel to the past to meet her deceased sister. Similar to Fumiko's position of losing patience, she was as well cursed by the ghost. This happened when she pulled "the ghost's arm by force" to vacate the seat, in spite of the warning given to her. The merging of realms is shown in succeeding excerpt:

But, at that moment, the woman in the dress's eyes opened wide, and she glared at Hirai. Instantly, she was overwhelmed by the sensation that she was becoming heavier, many times over. It felt as if the earth's gravity had begun multiplying. The café's lighting suddenly seemed reduced to candlelight, flickering in the wind, and an eerie ghostly wailing began reverberating throughout the café, with no sign of where it was coming from. Unable to move a muscle, she fell to her knees. (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.137)

The cursed is part of the third rule of the café. "If you try to sit there by force, you get cursed" (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.38). The woman or the ghost which inhabited the seat adds that the merging realms in the café is due to the curse put to the time-travellers.

From two quotations above, it is informed that a magical event occurred in real world, in which is the café. The occurrence is being witnessed as well by another character, as for Fumiko's was witnessed by Kazu and for Hirai was witnessed by Kei, Kazu and Kohtake. This indicates that what happens to Fumiko and Hirai is real, although it still cannot be understood by logical knowledge.

Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity

The last characteristic is disruptions of time, space, and identity within the story. However, in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*, it is found only disruptions of time. As the result, this section will only discuss all the disruptions of time found in the selected novel.

All of the four characters in the novel has experienced the event of time-travelling. Three of them travelled to the past, while the last character experienced time-travelling to the future. The three characters who visited the past were Fumiko, Kohtake, and Hirai. The character who visited the future was Kei. All of these characters' experiences of visiting the past and the future as well as the returning time to the present will be explained orderly.

The event of disruption of time was first experienced by Fumiko. After succeeding on asking Kazu to assist her to visit the past, she was at last described to experience this event. As she wished to meet and to tell her boyfriend about her feeling, Fumiko "really had returned to the past." (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.49). Another proof of her visiting the past can be seen also when Fumiko described the shocking look on Goro's face, "she understood the puzzlement on his face. There was no doubt that she had returned to a week ago." (Kawaguchi, 2009, p.49). The shocking look shown by Goro was due to location of seat that was different to the actual seat Fumiko was sitting on a week ago, as in the following quotation:

But just one thing was wrong – the seat in which Fumiko sat.

A week ago, she had been sitting facing Goro. Now, however, she was in the seat of the woman in the dress. She was still facing Goro, but they were now one table apart. He's so far away. He's puzzled look was completely justified (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.49).

The text above elaborates that Fumiko, while in the past, sat on the seat of the ghost, while Goro was sitting at a different table, which was the one seat they were on. Furthermore, Fumiko was aware of the other rule saying, regardless of the circumstances she "must stay in the seat". This then answered the "puzzled" look given by Goro (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.49).

Additionally, it evidently shows Fumiko's return to the present time from travelling the past. At that time, she realized that "the coffee cup in front of her was

empty”, and when Kazu started asking about the experience of her travelling to the past. It is assured when she, “finally felt sure that she had travelled the time” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.55).

The second character who travelled to the past was Kohtake. Kohtake is described as wishing to meet her husband, Fusagi, and ask him to hand her the letter he had written for her before he got diagnosed with Alzheimer's. First, it is needed to see Kohtake's journey to the past.

But something was different. Kazu had vanished. Kei was nowhere to be seen either. Kohtake tried to calm herself, but she was unable to stop her heart from beating faster and faster. She was again look around the café.

‘There's no one here,’ she muttered. (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.91)

By the time Kohtake arrived in the past, the first thing she noticed was some things were somewhat different as in the aforesaid excerpt. On the other hand, during Kohtake's present time in the café, there were Kei and Kazu, the one who assisted her and the one who “set the empty coffee cup in front of Kohtake” as well as reminded her to “drink the coffee before it goes cold.” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.88).

Additionally, the second thing realized by Kohtake was there was a man, Fusagi. He was standing in front of her and asking why she was behaving rather strangely at that time. “You're acting a bit strange today.” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.95). This implies that the time of their meeting was not the present time, it was “three years ago” instead (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.95). The last evidence demonstrated was in her return to the present time, she was holding a letter and asked by Kei what was the letter about. For that reason, “she handed Kazu the letter” and Kazu “began to read out loud” the letter in front of Kohtake and Kei (Kawaguchi, 2019, p. 104)

It is Hirai as the third character who travelled to the past. Hirai's desire was to ask her deceased sister for an apology for the last time. Hirai had been avoiding her sister, Kumi, anytime she visited the café. The reason for it was because she thought she had to return to home and help Kumi managing their family's business. Knowing her relationship with her sister was finished, Hirai asked Kazu assisting her to travel to the past. Similar to the aforementioned characters, Hirai “had returned to that day – the day when Kumi was still alive” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.146). The success of visiting the past to meet Kumi is shown in the succeeding excerpt:

‘Big Sis?’

Hearing that voice, Hirai's heart skipped a beat. It was Kumi's voice, a voice she'd thought she would never hear again. She slowly opened her eyes to see her sister at the entrance looking back at her.

‘Hi there...’ Hirai lifted her hand, waved and smiled as widely as she could. (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.150).

Kumi's first visit, before her “traffic accident”, was “three days ago” to meet Hirai” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.125). The accident occurred on her way back home from the café. On the other hand, to prove Hirai had actually visited the past can also be seen on her

returning to the present time and surrounded by the other characters in the story. “Kazu, Nagare, Kohtake, and Kei were there too. Hirai had returned to the present – the present without Kumi”, a three day after Kumi’s death (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.162)

The last character who travelled the time is Kei. Kei was pregnant when experiencing this event of time travelling. Knowing that she might not have a chance to meet her future daughter due to her health, she made a plea to Kazu as well. Yet this time was to visit the future. In addition, this time of travelling the time, there was an involvement and help by the *woman* or the ghost in the story.

After given the chance to visit the future, Kazu further asked Kei “how many years? And what month, date, and time?” she intended for (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.187). Kei responded by saying the time would be on “27 August, at three in the afternoon.” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.190). The request Kei asked had successfully happened. “Thanks to Kazu, she had arrived – ten years in the future” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.193).

The concept of time is based on the scientific view, as it is understood as a sequence of events from the past to the present and the present to the future. However, the success of all these characters in travelling the time both to the past and to the future is a sign proving that, in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*, the disruptions of time are experienced by all of them. In other words, this disruption of time found in the story is disordered and opposed to the laws of the universe.

The Significance of Magical Realism in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*

In the preceding section, the researcher has described the characteristics of magical realism found in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*. It shows that this selected novel offers a story of a distinguishing reality, from which it is understood as normal or real life to the reader. Faris claimed that magical events shown “often highlight the central issue in the text” (Faris, 2004, p.9). It is understood that several magical elements happening in a realistic context within the story present the essential issue. In this study, the time-travelling and the representation of a ghost in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold* represent the significance of utilizing magical realism in the selected novel

In *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*, the phenomenon of time-travelling highlights the novel’s questioning of the notion of reality and life. Reality is anything experienced by human beings in life. However, Hegerfeldt (2005), regarding the magical realist fiction, claimed that “reality is not merely a matter of the physical senses and empirical observation, but that other, non-material factors such as language and belief” that needs to be “acknowledged” (p.279). In this story, the life of each of the characters is presented to be experiencing difficulties. In their position to overcome their difficulties, time-travelling is assumed to be a way out of their burdens. However, when all of these characters know that “the present won’t change”, it challenges their beliefs, their realities, and the truth of the time-travelling in the café itself. The two characters in the story are described as having doubts when they know things will remain the same in the

present even though they have been able to travel the time. In contrast, the other two characters have no questions about the time-travelling in the café. In spite of these, the characters are depicted to have successfully travelled the time.

Having succeeded on travelling the time and come back to the present, in the story, neither of their past or future is affected. It is as described by the narrator that the lives of the time-travellers have not changed. As for Fumiko, she initially assumed that she “might be able to set things right.” and “have a conversation” with Goro for the last time as to stop him from going abroad. However, it resulted that Fumiko’s life remained as the same as her first visit to the café with Goro. As for Kohtake’s case, she could not change the fact, in the future, her husband would still lose memory of her and their marriage. It is a different case with Hirai’s life where she could not change what had happened to her relationship with her only sister and for the worst part that she could not stop the death of her sister in a car accident. On the other hand, in Kei’s case, she still could not do anything for the inevitable death of herself, although she had met her daughter, in ten years before her death.

By the aforesaid explanation, it is understood that their decision on trying to redo things by visiting the past or the future resulted nothing on their present life. Furthermore, this puts the use of time-travelling into a question. However, the author of this novel tries to portray one thing, which in terms of text, that the possibility of change would only happen through time-travel. Since they know precisely all the rules and the course of action to be taken, it is the hearts of the time-travellers that have been transformed (Kawaguchi, 2019, p.176)

Lastly, the representation of a ghost is significant in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold*. The ghost is depicted to be having a magical force, as it has shown by the curse done to two of the characters in the story. It is as what Zamora (1995) said that ghost “foreground magical realism most basic’s concern – the nature and the limits of knowable” and as “critique of modernity” (p.498). The status of ghost in text represents as an “assault” to “knowable, predictable, controllable” of received reality (Zamora, 1995, p.498). In similar fashion, Napier (2005) asserted that “the ghost” is described to be a form that is “attached to the past” and “as reminders of a personal past” (p. 95). In this sense, the ghost of which appeared in this selected novel represents *the past* of personal life of the ghost itself. In other words, the ghost is presented to be not only to blur the perceived, knowable reality in *the* story, but served as well to be representation of past, and mythic beliefs in Japanese culture.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis done by the researcher, there are a few statements concluded. First, there have found in *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* the five characteristics of magical realism, that is 1) the irreducible elements of magic that are signified by the café, the seat inside the café, the cup of coffee, the ghost, and the set of rules; 2) the

phenomenal world which can be identified by the use of the real location of the café, or the real period described in the story; 3) unsettling doubts are depicted through the hesitation shown by the character or time-traveller in the story; 4) merging realms are presented through the depiction of the supranatural encounter experienced by the characters, and also the cursed given by the ghost; and 5) disruptions of time that are presented by the experience of all four characters that the three time-travelled to the past and the other time-travelled to the future. Lastly, it is also concluded that the significance of utilizing magical realism is to explore and understand reality from a different point of view. All of the magical phenomena happening in *Before The Coffee Gets Cold* is to alter the characters' perception of reality and through which transform their heart as well. It is concluded as well that it is utilized as to criticize perceived, knowable reality through the life of characters in the story.

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