

Models of the Fantastic in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*

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ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates how specific forms of magical realism in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* are integral parts of subversive poetics in early postmodernism. It examines the author's implied polyphonic voice to explore magical realism's mixture of reality and fantasy. It identifies allegory as authorial critical tool conveying his response to modernism's sense of collective reality because postmodern subversive poetics is inherently experimentation with the depiction of reality. Postmodernism ascribes reality to unique meanings of fragmentation i.e., individuals perceive reality differently. The study applies Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony and carnivalesque to elaborate interpretations of constructing magical realism. It focuses on the plot as contexts of absolute epistemological uncertainty that metaphorically dramatises the subtle relation between culture and ideology. It highlights aspects seldom remarked on by postmodern scholars; the "indirect" or "allegorical" fiction that often constitutes the only available form of oppositional discourse providing one with highlighting socially familiarised patterns.

Keywords: Allegory, Carnavalesque, Magical Realism, Polyphony, Postmodernism.

Introduction

This article focuses on the representation of reality in Flann (1967) novel *The Third Policeman* (1967) as a postmodern allegory. The main frameworks will comprise magical realism, carnivalesque, and polyphony as models of the fantastic. The fantastic is the extreme incarnation of postmodernism conceptualisation of truth per se. In this regard, the novel incorporates elements of magical realism which make the novel a distinctive experimental fiction embodying the spirit of postmodern subversive style. Fictional subversion is nonetheless the reactionary characteristic to postmodern fiction which opposes modern united fictional construction. Polyphony, on the other hand, is the author's abstract voice which exposes modernism's collective conceptualisation of reality

Accordingly, I will provide an overview on the postmodern background for the aforementioned models before embarking on a textual analysis of O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*. By the 1950s, modernism narratological cliché has been subject to experimentation in postmodern era. Postmodernism echoes new radical thoughts ensuing modernism. That is, modernism perspective on the "narratable" world is now to be substituted by contemporary plurality and relativism. In a general sense, modern collective discourse falls into fragmentation and skepticism prevailing cultural certainties of the time. Consequently, one distinctive feature of postmodern contexts comes into being, namely truth. As a result of cultural fragmentation, truth no longer exists. It is replaced by plurality, namely relative truths (Boldea, 2015, pp.5-6).

Cultural fragmentation has adapted the perception of truths due to the cultural plurality and changes in postmodern societies. Therefore, postmodernism formulates an enhancement of metanarrative since it admits to develop in "the face of humankind's great questions" (McHale, 2015, p.195). Brian McHale's discussion of mankind's extreme investigation of surrounding entities encompasses the individuals' conceptualisation of their life, and how it constantly changes. Hence, postmodern narrative ironically ignores the existence of metaphysical reality in favor of the grand narratives of progress and explanation within postmodern contexts (Latham, 2015, p. 23). On that account, the

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postmodern philosophical trend circulates congenitally around the historical aspect of narrative (Constable, 2015, p. 31). Thus, the historical perspective on reality contradicts the traditional refusal of metaphysics in all its peculiarities (p.32).

Postmodernism has a perennial conceptualisation of reality. It is a continual argumentation about its definition. During the 1960s onward, there has been much interest in the definition of a comprehensive postmodern terminology. Yet, critics agree on realistic narrative as a "sequential dramatic coherence is of a sort that could 'really' happen" in postmodern literary texts (Rossi, 2015, p.73). Nevertheless, realistic narrative in postmodern fiction formulates a technical construction of the text in order to represent reality relatively; perceived by individuals according to their judgment of the world outside the text. This means, the text functions as the fictional means which directs the reader to assess reality according to his perception (p.73).

Before I embark on reviewing the main studies on the selected novel, I will briefly explain the concepts of polyphony and carnivalesque. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Bakhtin (1981) focuses on "various forms and degrees" of the dialogic relationships in discourse. He basically uses the word "dialogism" or "heteroglossia" interchangeably with "polyphony." Bakhtin argues that utterances in literary discourses are directed towards some objects:

Discourse lives, as it were, beyond itself, in a living impulse toward the object; if we detach ourselves completely from this impulse all we have left is the naked corpse of the word, from which we can learn nothing at all about the social situation or the fate of a given word in life.... The whole matter consists in the fact that there may be, between "languages," highly specific dialogic relations; no matter how these languages are conceived, they may all be taken as particular points of view on the world. (pp.292-93)

Bakhtin (1981) also introduces the term "heteroglossia" which means the "coexistence" of a number of discourses in one "linguistic code." In this sense, heteroglossia is the same as dialogism. Accordingly, the authorial voice is represented in the author's commitment to the text. This is obvious through the author's utilisation of textual devices that pertain to his/her monologic mode. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin (2001) discusses the importance of language to heteroglossia and contends:

From this point of view, literary language itself is only one of these heterolog languages-and in its turn is also stratified into languages (generic, period-bound and others). And this stratification and heteroglossia, once realized, is not only a static invariant of linguistic life, but also what insures its dynamics: stratification and heteroglossia widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing. (p.1199)

Consequently, the multivoiced attributes of fiction propound various ideological perspectives to intervene the novel. In the same manner, Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is sometimes referred to as "polyphony." Polyphony or dialogism, according to Bakhtin, implicates the process by which the novel's meaning is obtained out of interactions among the characters and the author; and between the reader and the novel. These dialogic components are in turn affected by the context in which they are positioned, namely by the political or social powers affecting them. This is Bakhtin's conceptualisation of meaning gained from such literary texts as those of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels:

It is constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other; this interaction provides no support for the viewer who would objectify an entire event according to some ordinary monologic category (thematically, lyrically or cognitively) - and this consequently makes the viewer also a participant. (p.18)

In his explanations of the literary discourses, Bakhtin discusses the concept of carnivalesque. The concept of

carnavalesque relates to literary discourse. Bakhtin is considered the progenitor of the concept. Like the concept of polyphony, the concept of carnivalesque implies some notions about the fictional speech and its implicit literary authorial nuances. Though Bakhtin alludes to the concept in his early works, he uses it as a concept in his book *Rabelais and His World* which was first published in 1941. He argues that the concept has some affinity to social carnivals when people used to celebrate their cultural occasions. What exactly attracted Bakhtin's attention is the way people used to communicate with each other. In this respect, speech is the key factor of the concept of carnivalesque.

People's speech was described as "folk humor" as they exchanged certain wisdom ideas about their socio-cultural traditions (Bakhtin, 1941, p.15). Being so, people's discourse conveys the authentic meanings about their conventional heritage. As such, the function of speech is of paramount importance since it carries out the stereotypical semantic peculiarities of any society's language. On that account, the concept of carnivalesque is associated with speech and discourse. It is the ideological premise of any language. For this reason, Bakhtin (1941) explicates the function of carnivalesque speech in literary genre, especially the novel. Therefore, the concept became a kind of "speech genre" with humorous insights (p.14).

The literary characteristics of humor "are linked to carnivalesque forms and symbols" employed by the author to comment on the reality of society (Bakhtin, 1941, p.15). Furthermore, Bakhtin (1941) contends that the concept of carnivalesque "is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life" (p.15). Accordingly, the concept is a humorous comment on the reality of society projected by the author into his/her text in a "serious tone" (p.58).

Literature Review

There have been a number of studies that approach O'Brien's novel *The Third Policeman* from different critical perspectives. In "Flann O'Brien's Creative Loophole" (2015), Germán Asensio studies the structural elements of the novel and contends that the novel's exquisite structural peculiarities render it specific artistic traits, which make O'Brien an erudite writer (p.1). Therefore, the novel exemplifies O'Brien's writing creativity since it abounds with stereotypical structural cohesion (p.8). To elaborate this, Asensio applies the concept of humor to explore O'Brien's creativity though the novel was not acclaimed as a creative work in the early critical receptions (p.8). This study focuses on some structural elements, such as the polyphonic discourse. However, it will concentrate on the O'Brien's implied voice in the text rather than his creative writing style.

In *How the Irish Ended History* (2010), Andrew McFeaters applies new historicism to identify the preservation of history in *The Third Policeman*. McFeaters (2010) maintains that the novel is a "reaction to the ideological pressures and limits of Irish nationalist forces" (p.vii). Such reaction entails O'Brien's aim to "marry cultural representation with experimental writing" that leads to a tremendous historical result, that is, "the end of history" (p.vii). McFeaters partially explores the postmodern appropriation of reality in order to examine the novel's portrayal of "corrupt reality with alternative histories that recover the heretical thinking of the nonlinear [narrative]" (p.vii). McFeaters's focus on the role of the novel to expose the defects of postmodern reality is different from this study's focus. This study will examine the fragmentation of reality in a postmodern world that is allegorically depicted in the novel. Such fragmentation was overlooked in McFeaters's discussion.

Dina McPherson (2014), in *A Journey is an Hallucination: Flann O'Brien's The Third Policeman* (2014), argues that the novel has some unrealistic events that reflect the traumatic characteristics of its characters. Accordingly, McPherson (2014) applies trauma to analyse the causes of hallucinations as mere indicators of the characters' trauma. Such trauma makes the characters live in fantasies (p.2). As such, the events are mere "fantasies" because they are told from the traumatic persons' perspectives (p.8). McPherson's treatment of unrealistic events, however, will not be examined from a traumatic perspective in this study. Instead, they will be examined by appropriating magical realism as a mode of presenting the unreal events as parallels to the author's real perception of the world.

In *Self-Evident Shams* (1995), Chris Yurkoski applies metafiction to analyse the fictional self-reflective qualities of

O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*. The metafictional features of the novel refer to its status as a fictional text. For this reason, Yurkoski (1995) applies metafiction to "explode traditional modes of representation in general, and the conventional comic vision in particular" (p.ii). These modes indicate the novel's experimentation with literary modes, such as the omniscient narrative point of view (p.1). The novel is experimental, states Yurkoski, because it contains "internal disruptions at the levels of language, narration and story that threaten the possibility of closure and stability both for the characters specifically and for the meaning-establishing task of language in general, the comic pattern is also famous for the employment of happy endings that attempt to erase all earlier disruptions" (p.1). On that account, the novel is considered as "a battleground on which traditional literary formats and comfortable readerly expectations are blown apart" (p.1). This study, however, will not only focus on the experimentation, but also on the authorial polyphonic voice which comments on reality in an allegorical fictional manner.

Philip Coulter also approaches the artistic features of O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* in *The Artist and the Critic* (1971). Coulter (1971) contends that the novel contains some narrative elements, such as surrealism, that exemplify the author's own experience reflected in the story (p.5). Therefore, the novel is about some autobiographical episodes of the author's life (p.5). These episodes refer to the author's erudite utilization of narrative devices in his plot (p.6). Notwithstanding, this study will not primarily focus on the narrative characteristics of the plot. It will focus on the author's implied voice articulated by the characters' explicit voices in the course of the magical realist events.

The Fantastic

The Third Policeman (1967) is one of the earliest postmodern novels. It is set in Ireland and narrated by an anonymous narrator. The narrator is obsessed with a philosopher called de Selby. The narrator is also obsessed with publishing a book, and he murders a man in order to convince de Selby to help him publish the book. Then, the narrator befriends a vicious man. This man kills the narrator and, after a short while, the man dies and both of them meet in the afterlife. The narrator's bizarre death-experience makes him struggle to come back to life. He could not return to life and the plot proceeds telling events in a fantastic mode.

The novel's fantasy begins as the narrator tells his anonymous birth: "I was born a long time ago. My father was a strong farmer and my mother owned a public house" (p.1). Moreover, the narrator remembers his domestic life. All the events he remembers are previously experienced before death. When he dies, he recalls his domestic life in fantastic imagination because of the impossibility of returning back to life:

We all lived in the public house but it was not a strong house at all and was closed most of the day because my father was out at work on the farm and my mother was always in the kitchen and for some reason the customers never came until it was nearly bed-time; and well after it at Christmas-time and on other unusual days like that. (p.1)

The fantastic implication of returning back to life occurs to a whimsical person, such as the narrator. In *Contemporary Fiction and the End of the Novel: Creature, Affect, Form* (2015), Pieter Vermeulen argues that the fantastic is a literary mode used to trigger a sense of abnormal events in stories. By the same token, the fantastic is "a literary mode that, like no other, is based on an exposure of the intrinsic process of the fictive" (p.66). Being that so, the fantastic exposes the "intrinsic" fabric of the narrative structure (p.66). The implication of fantastic includes events in terms of weird phenomenon or occurrences in the fictional world. Such juxtaposition is the mimetic quality of fictional texts which incorporate fictional events with abnormal incidents: "(t)he juxtaposition of mimesis and the marvellous that structures the discussion about the fantastic mode indeed echoes the timeless argument about the nature of the relation between the fictive and reality" (p.66). Additionally, fantastic events relate "to some previous or succeeding ideas" within the same text (Quinto, 2015, p.106).

Here, the "marvellous" mimesis of fictional events comprises a structural mode by which the events abnormality is

presented. In *The Third Policeman*, the narrator's death experience is a highly obtrusive exemplification of this abnormality. The narrator remembers his previous life but in retrospect. He is not still alive, but he recalls that life after death. He remembers how he went to school and interacted with other people: "After a few days I was brought away myself on an outside car and sent to a strange school. It was a boarding school filled with people I did not know, some young and some older" (p.8). But the genuine connection between his death experience and real life is his relationship with the philosopher de Selby: "My life at this school does not matter except for one thing. It was here that I first came to know something of de Selby" (p.9). In addition, the narrator remembers his past life as it really was; especially his killing of a man which he describes as a cardinal sin: "It was for him that I committed my greatest sin" (p.9). What so weird, here, is that he recalls this sin while he is dead. This is the essence of the novel's fantastic abnormality.

The narrator's fantastic life is the embodiment of fictive notion of abnormality. This is because "the fictive is usually taken to be an antonym to fact, and has often enough been associated with irrelevant escapism or even with harmful lies" (Vermeulen, 2015, p.66). Furthermore, the fictive notion of fantasy is not "a stable element but a process, a dynamic sum of acts which link the real to the imaginary" (p.66). It is a dynamic textual technicality which "includes elements of the real this transposition of the real into (literary) signs necessarily involves a creative re-imagination and therefore always activates the imaginary" (p.66). The literary feature of fantasy constitutively involves the real as well as the imaginary. Both the imaginary and the real are necessary for the fictive to exist, since the former would be evanescent, formless and without intentionality without the material basis of the later" (p.68). Such "fictivity" "refers to the meaning extension of a lexical item rather than expressing any restriction on usage" (Vrbinc, 2015, p.113).

Here, the imaginary characteristic of fantasy is a perennial token of unreal events. The narrator's life, for example, corresponds to the fact that he is no longer in real life. He is in a fantastic new life beginning after his death. When he dies, he could not perceive the reality of things surrounding him: "I looked carefully around me. Brown bogs and black bogs were arranged neatly on each side of the road with rectangular boxes carved out of them here and there, each with a filling of yellow-brown brown-yellow water" (p.86). He also does not properly recognise the people around him: "Far away near the sky tiny people were stooped at their turf work, cutting out precisely-shaped sods with their patent spades and building them into a tall memorial twice the height of a horse and cart" (p.86).

The misrepresentation of real events is a pertinent peculiarity of fantasy which is "the process" of fictional "subject formation" (Joodaki et al., 2015, p.166). It fuses the improbable events or situation into an eccentric conceptualisation or identifying of other things. This is the fictive trait of fantasy (Vermeulen, 2015, p.65). Additionally, the fictive characteristics of fantasy is "is a double crossing of boundaries, an act of both dual countering and fusion, in which elements of the real are turned into signs whose meaning is no longer entirely determined by a clear referent" (p.68). Fantasy does not take reality into account because "the real would be restricted in its determinacy and unable to develop complexity of meaning without the explosive force of the imaginary" (p.68). In essence, reality is a synthesis of fantasy and its fictive model; whereby "the determinacy of the real is broken up by the indeterminacy of the imaginary and its meanings become derestricted" (p.68).

The fictional indeterminacy is a conspicuous indication of the fantastic in *The Third Policeman*. The narrator is not sure of his new life. He is not aware of what happens around him. Everything seems impossible or strange in different manners. He does not recognise the sounds of people as he used to hear them before: "Sounds came from them to the Sergeant and myself, delivered to our ears without charge by the west wind, sounds of laughing and whistling and bits of verses from the old bog-songs" (p.86). He even couldnot make sense of the house which he previously visited or lived in: "a house stood attended by three trees and surrounded by the happiness of a coterie of fowls, all of them picking and rooting and disputating loudly in the unrelenting manufacture of their eggs" (p.86).

The fictional abnormality of events is the fantastic token of unreality; whereby the fantastic "task complexity includes a series of features for designing tasks that can be manipulated" (Masrom et al., 2015, p.34). It conveys a latent sense of unusual happenings which exemplify the "textual" fabrication of reality into imagination. The reality and imagination occurs "on a continuum of textual manifestations reaching from mimesis to the "marvellous," the

fantastic is situated in the very middle and thus occupies within the fictive a position analogous to that of the fictive itself, which negotiates between the real and the imaginary" (Vermeulen, 2015, p.68). Similarly, the fantastic mimesis distinctiveness is a "combination of the mimetic and the marvellous stance, the literary mode of the fantastic can accordingly be understood as a sort of *miseen abyme* [reality surroundings] of the fictive as such" (p.68).

In *The Third Policeman*, the fantastic emerges out of marvelous situations which position a mysterious event with quasi-real happenings. The narrator goes outside on the streets to meet real people and places, such as councils which he once visited: "You would have bicycles wanting votes and they would get seats on the County Council and make the roads far worse than they are for their own ulterior motivation" (p.90). Moreover, he longs to study and read about religion. He learned the love of these things from a person whom he knows well named Sergeant: "the severe shock which I encountered soon after re-entry to the barrack with the Sergeant set me thinking afterwards of the immense consolations which philosophy and religion can offer in adversity" (p.92).

The "marvellous" feature of the fantastic is the supernatural phenomenon in the fictional text (Tobin, 2015, p.232). In addition, the fact that the supernatural involved in fantastic events is compelling because the "characteristic of the fantastic is that it *hints* at a supernatural explanation without actually confirming that the supernatural has been involved in the events and experiences described" (p.232). The supernatural thus "constitutes one of the more recent movements away from a view associating the novel with classic realism" (p.232). It provides "a genuine example of the fantastic, a novel or short story must retain a sense of ambiguity to the end, never allowing the reader finally to establish that the depicted events can only be accounted for by natural or, alternatively, by supernatural explanations" (p.232).

The supernatural comes out of the narrator's experience in *The Third Policeman*. He does not cope with the real events as in his usual life as before. Thus, he wanders the streets and does not recognise the things which he encounters. He finds them as "all-illusory," and does not relate to his real previous life: "Holding that the usual processes of living were illusory, it is natural that he did not pay much attention to life's adversities and he does not in fact offer much suggestion as to how they should be met" (p.92). After a long walk, he remembers a "young" man who is one of those people who commits murders and threatens people: "Thus the young man who had come fearing the possibility of a bad thing left the house completely convinced of the worst and cheerfully contemplating suicide" (p.93). The narrator also remembers some things about geography. But when he knows that, he recognises that he is "on the earth," and he could not decide where to go. The places are idiosyncratic and do not lead to any place. This is the surreal picture of the supernatural depicted in the novel. The narrator, for example, is bewildered and does not know where he is. He tries to go to other places, but does not know the directions: "Standing at a point on the postulated spherical earth, he says, one appears to have four main directions in which to move, viz., north, south, east and west" (p.93).

The supernatural corresponds to the fantastic in its appropriation of strange events with reality. Specifying the genre and subgenre "and specifying the background of the writer in terms of the demographic factors" (Parkinson, 2015, p.92). When an author divides his/her fictional physical paragraphs, he or she "has intentions regarding the organisation of the text" (p.97). This is the textual construction of fantasy "worlds" which may be seen to hamper internal coherence in composition, and "the notion of ontology can address and account for the existence of these worlds as well as the ontological indeterminacy, confusion, and ruptures among them" (Madahiian, 2015, p.226). The fictional ontology is the polyphonic feature fantasy, whereby the carnivalesque plays an integral role in defining the magical real elements of fantasy.

Polyphony and Carnavalesque

The notion of polyphony is inherent in the narrator's voice that carries out the author's voice. The narrator, for example considers the world as fallacy: "there is a further similar fallacy inherent here and that there is in fact only one possible direction properly so-called, because if one leaves any point on the globe, moving and continuing to move in any

‘ direction ‘, one ultimately reaches the point of departure again” (p.94). Fallacy, in essence, is the description of postmodern relative truth. It is the self-reflexive peculiarity of postmodern fiction because it is a “parodic deformation of a literary text. Textual defamiliarisation is a radical means of literary experimentation. Furthermore, it is a process of deviation or the “transformation” of well established, formative literature in the progressive development of literary genres” (Abu Jweid, 2015, p.73). This is true in *The Third Policeman* since the narrator “attributes the idea that the earth is spherical to the fact that human beings are continually moving in only one known direction (though convinced that they are free to move in any direction) and that this one direction is really around the circular circumference of an earth which is in fact sausage-shaped” (p.94). In this manner, the “earth” is abnormal according to the narrator because he is dead.

In addition, the polyphonic novel presents “the fantastic” to a kind of literature, to a literary genre. When we examine works of literature from the perspective of genre, we engage in a very particular enterprise: we discover a principle operative in a number of texts rather than what is specific about each of them” (Dulk, 2015, p.3). Correspondingly, polyphony constitutes “the relation between the hero of the work and ourselves or the laws of nature, and are five in number: the hero is by *nature* superior to the reader *and* to the laws of nature; this genre is called *myth* (p.11). By the same token, the fictional “hero is by *degree* superior to the reader *and* to the laws of nature; this genre [the fantastic] is that of *legend or fairy tale* the hero is by *degree* superior to the reader but not to the laws of nature (p.11).

The fantastic characteristics in *The Third Policeman* incarnate the strange sounds around the narrator: “After that he was gone. Sounds came to us of coarse scraping on the gravel, a sign that the Inspector favoured the old-fashioned method of mounting from the back-step” (p.97). The narrator tries to take off his clothes, but he could not because he is “imprisoned” by death: “he took off his cap and went over to a chair and sat on it, easing himself on his broad pneumatic seat. He took a red cloth from his fob and decanted the globes of perspiration from his expansive countenance and opened the buttons of his tunic as if to let out on wing the trouble that was imprisoned there” (p.97).

In the long run, polyphonic fantasy is appropriated in the sense of carnivalesque. The carnivalesque presents strange events in a pageant panorama. The fictional discourse is the medium by which the carnivalesque is conveyed. As such, polyphonic discourse is “practised through discourse production” by the author (Nordin, 2015, p.137). Bakhtin emphasises that discourse is the literary agent which corresponds to the author’s voice in the text (Renfrew, 2015, p.36). In this sense, *The Third Policeman*’s narrator carries out the O’Brien’s fictional perspective of the fantastic events.

In *The Third Policeman*, the narrator is the main representation of the author’s voice. The narrator, for example, could hear his brain and his physical organs which is a whimsical truth: “I could almost hear my brain rattling in my head when I gave a shake as if it was drying up into a wrinkled pea” (p.73). Perceiving abnormal things, the narrator recounts the world as distorted and meaningless. This is the very notion of postmodern fragmentation because “there is a relevant affiliation between the author and the text” (Abu Jweid, 2015, p.138).

The carnivalesque is also an indication of “polyphonic authorial voice” (Stam, 2015, p.72). It is the subversive postmodern fictional style (Gregory, 2015, p.106). In *The Third Policeman*, the “illusion” of life is the carnivalesque identification of his celebratory and abnormal presence in life: “(p)ossibly it was an illusion due to an altered position between my two sittings but this was quite unlikely because the chair was small and would not permit of much variation of seat if there was any question of studying comfort. My surprise began to mount to astonishment” (p.167). The carnivalesque, hence, augments the sense of magical real events in literary texts.

Magical Realism

Magical realism comprises the core conceptualisation of fantastic elements. Jeronimo Arellano (2015), in *Magical Realism and the History of Emotions*, argues that magical realism texts function as a “corrective” mode of the “political” and “cultural” agitation; Arellano also claims that “in magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption: magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize

accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation" (p.3). Arellano further contends that "in the magical realist texts... the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence-admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism" (p.3).

In *The Third Policeman*, the magical real events occur when the narrator takes up a carpenter job after his death: "It is a very intricate piece of wood-working, you would want to be a first-class carpenter to make a good job of the handlebars to say nothing of the pedals and the back-step" (p.105). Additionally, he works persistently without real presence and interaction with the real world: "He got up and went to the dresser and took out his patent music-box which made sounds too esoterically rarefied to be audible to anybody but himself. He then sat back again in his chair, put his hands through the hand straps and began to entertain himself with the music" (p.105).

Magical realism also compromises between "real and unreal supernatural events" (Arellano, 2015, p.5). The real and unreal are relative in *The Third Policeman*. The narrator's physical abnormality is the ramification of magical real insights in the novel. His facial expressions and whimsical perception of other entities are compelling nuances of the combination of the real and the unreal: "What he was playing could be roughly inferred from his face. It had a happy broad coarse satisfaction on it, a sign that he was occupied with loud obstreperous barn-songs and gusty shanties of the sea and burly roaring marching-songs" (p.105). Furthermore, the narrator does not go along with the surroundings as unusual: "the silence in the room was so unusually quiet that the beginning of it seemed rather loud when the utter stillness of the end of it had been encountered" (p.105).

Taner Can (2015), in *Magical Realism in Postcolonial British Fiction*, explores the "paradoxical" nature of magical realism and argues that magical realism forms a "metaphorical" approach for unifying contradictions. Can further claims that "magical realism aspires" with greater or "lesser efforts, to represent the paradox of the "unity of opposites;" it opposes polarities such as history versus magic" (p.28). Additionally, magical realism has an allegorical meaning to some extent because in magical realism, reality is perceived independently of the text (Delogu, 2015, p.65).

To connect the allegorical meaning to *The Third Policeman*, the narrator perceives reality as eerie: "how long this eeriness lasted or how long we were listening intently to nothing is unknown. My own eyes got tired with inactivity and closed down like a public house at ten o'clock" (p.106). Life's eeriness is the culmination of allegorical relative reality in postmodern textuality. The narrator, in addition, does observe his abnormal behavior because he perceives things strangely: "he put these things into different parts of the mangle and when he had them all satisfactorily adjusted, the mangle looked more like a rough scientific instrument than a machine for wringing out a day's washing" (p.106).

Allegory and magical realism can explore thematic issues in postmodern texts. Consequently, magical realism exposes the fictional subversion which makes life more "complex"; Isabel MacCaffrey (2015) states that "allegory" serves as a medium of exposing subversive texts in magical realism. It carries out the "bizarre" situation and "behaviors" which "destruct" the common sense of reality (p.14).

The Third Policeman is a destructive postmodern text in which the events are somehow eerie. The narrator does not have a measurement of time because he is dead: "the time of the day was now a dark time, the sun being about to vanish completely in the red west and withdraw all the light" (p.106). He also does not know the usual day time which distracts his work habits: "When he had nearly finished this work the room was almost black, and sharp blue sparks would fly sometimes from the upside-down of his hand when it was at work" (p.106). This fictional deviation is a postmodern technical narrative.

Magical realism is sometimes attributed to the emergence of postmodernism. In *Magical realism: Theory, history, community*, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (1995) situate magical realism "mode with regard to postmodernism" (p.191). They (1995) further explicate their arguments about magical realism's utilization of literary techniques that are typical to postmodern fictional patterns: "magic realist program by way of the very same techniques usually singled out as marking postmodernism" (p.194). Such techniques reinforce the apparent magical realism that makes postmodernism's fiction different from high modern exhausted literature through experimentation. In this sense,

this experimentation is “an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism we call magic realism” (p.194). Being so, magical realism represents a linking phase between modernism and postmodernism concerning the innovative aspects of literature; Zamora and Faris (1995) contend that “a consensus is emerging in which a hierarchal relation is established between postmodernism and magic realism, whereby the latter comes to denote a particular strain of the contemporary movement covered by the former” (p.194). Yet, postmodernism’s literary experimentation via magical realism employs fantasy. Zamora and Faris (1995) tend to describe this fantasy as the fantastic or unrealistic events in magical real works; and magical realism becomes “an act of recuperation can only happen by magic or fantastic or unrealistic means” (p.17).

In O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman*, the fantastic model appeals to the sense of death and its relative matters depicted in the plot. The relationship between the narrator and Dinvey deteriorates. Dinvey tells the narrator about the place of the mysterious box hidden in Mathers’s house. The narrator is asked to fetch the box. However, when the narrator reaches Mathers’s house, something unusual occurs. To the narrator’s bewilderment, he does not know that he lives in reality or a dream. He is caught in a surrealistic world that makes him lose his sense: “It was as if the daylight had changed with unnatural suddenness, as if the temperature of the evening had altered greatly in an instant or as if the air had become twice as rare or twice as dense as it had been in the winking of an eye; perhaps all of these and other things happened together for all my senses were bewildered all at once and could give me no explanation” (p.23). The box “was gone” (p.23); and he feels that a supernatural, like a ghost, had stolen it. This situation is blatant example of how magical realism uses fantasy to describe real events. Though the narrator lives in reality, he is immediately transported to unreality or imaginative world. This is due to the fact that magical realism contradicts with the laws of rationality; Zamora and Faris (1995) claim that “the fantastic, in the restricted sense of textually explicit antinomy between the laws of reason and supernatural beliefs” (p.132). Moreover, magical realism oppositional attitudes towards rationality and reason is an aspect literary discourse that exemplifies the reality of a certain culture, whereby in “fantastic fictions, the premise of a frequently exaggerated rationalist discourse affirming hegemonic paradigms” (p.132). The narrator, or the protagonist, embodies this situation. His realistic relationship with Dinvey throws him into magical and mysterious world that does not accept the laws of rationality and reason.

The protagonist, then, feels that he is surrounded by ghosts in the house. He hears some terrifying cough: “I heard a cough behind me, soft and natural yet more disturbing than any sound that could ever come upon the human ear” (p.23). He thinks that he is attacked by a ghost. In addition, he thinks he lives in an unrealistic world. He feels as if he lives between the planets where he could be the destruction of the universe. Consequently, all these feelings are created by the sense of magical realism’s appropriation of the realistic and the unrealistic together through the fantastic:

That I did not die of fright was due, I think, to two things, the fact that my senses were already disarranged and able to interpret to me only gradually what they had perceived and also the fact that the utterance of the cough seemed to bring with it some more awful alteration in everything, just as if it had held the universe standstill for an instant, suspending the planets in their courses, halting the sun and holding in mid-air any falling thing the earth was pulling towards it. (p.23)

The protagonist fear plights and its realistic and the unrealistic fantasy “are demonstrated by the description of apparently supernatural events and constant reference to the fear of the protagonist in the face of the inexplicable” (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p.132). Moreover, Zamora and Faris (1995) discuss the irrationality of magical realism. They (1995) focus on the position of the protagonist who exemplifies such irrationality in magical realism works. However, they accentuate the fantastic as the underlying model of irrationality: “although this type of fantastic narrative is highly contradictory – affirming and challenging rational models – its main emphasis is on the rationalizing activity of a subject searching for cognitive mastery of the unknown and recompilation of experience” (p.132). As such, they (1995) claim that magical realism, in postmodernism, is considered as “aesthetic consciousness and as including thematic content”

(p.132).aestheticism and thematic matters represent the nexus of fantasy which “captures the mystery of reality” (p.132). In doing so, postmodern writers, like O'Brien, provide precise and meticulous “apprehension of reality in general” (p.132).

O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* perceives the sense of reality in the light of postmodernism. The protagonist's interactions with other characters incarnate postmodernism concept of fragmentation. The protagonist used to be a friend of Dinvey. However, their relationship breaks down. As a result, Dinvey sends him to a mysterious house where he meets mysterious and irrational things. He is frightened by ghosts and mysterious voices whose sources are unknown. The box also disappears though he is sure that the box is in Mathers's house. In a striking way, Mathers, who seems to be dead, appears like a ghost. The protagonist gets perplexed to see Mathers coming from the hereafter. In addition, he hears another voice, but this voice is his. He hears his voice speaking to him. Because he is deeply frightened, he calls his voice Joe: “For convenience I called him Joe” (p.25). The protagonist finds himself caught in a strange place with a ghost coming from death and a voice that resembles his own voice. He feels that he is not alone: “I felt a little reassured to know that I was not altogether alone” (p.25). Mathers's ghost provides help for the protagonist. The ghost tells him to go to the police barracks and ask help for finding the box. He goes to the barracks. He meets a one-legged bandit called Martin Finnucane on the way. Martin threatens the protagonist. However, they become friends. When he reaches the barracks, he sees it like paintings: “It looked as if it were painted like an advertisement on a board on the roadside and indeed very poorly painted. It looked completely false and unconvincing” (p.52).

The protagonist's strange perception of the barracks indicates that fact that he is still under the effect of magical realism fantasy. In this regard, Zamora and Faris (1995) argues that magical realism is “a strategy which reveals the unseen fantastic element behind writing and its magical ability to create a reality” (p.149). This ability comprises magical realism's adaption of real events to unreal events where the possible fact alters to be impossible for aesthetic consideration in literary works; and the fantastic offers a literary signification: “the magic realist's predilection toward the unreal may also reveal an awareness of the impossibility of successful signification” (p.154). The significance of fantasy, according to Zamora and Faris (1995), is to maintain literary text's lack of imagination: “magic realism courts the inevitable problem of signification by offering the impression of success, a supplemental diversion which appears to bypass the limitations of the realistic text, evading its failures through the incorporation of imagination” (p.154). In O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, fantastic imagination is enhanced by death-in-life experience. The protagonist interacts with several characters, such as Divney, Mathers and Martin Finnucane. These characters have profound influence of the protagonist's life. They take him from his realistic life to unrealistic and fantastic world. In the barracks, he fined two policemen: Sergeant Pluck and Policeman MacCruiskeen, who mutter in noon-sense comic words. In the barracks, he is introduced to a very strange and fantastic world.

The policemen seem to be insane. The protagonist finds scientific theories about the universe and other strange things that should not be in a real police station. Therefore, it makes him mentally and spiritually uncomfortable. He discovers that Mathers is dead; and she is mutilated and eviscerated in a mysterious ditch somewhere in the barracks. The narrator accuses Martin Finnucane of the crime. Yet, he, later, accuses his previous voice “Joe” of the crime. This indicates the protagonist mental discomfort since he lives in a magical and fantastic world. Sergeant Pluck tries to know the name and identity of the narrator. But he is nameless. Therefore, he decides to accuse the narrator of the crime and hang him. In this way, the policeman can get rid of the narrator without any legal responsibility: “The particular death you die is not even a death (which is an inferior phenomenon at the best) only an insanitary abstraction in the backyard, a piece of negative nullity neutralised and rendered void by asphyxiation and the fracture of the spinal string” (p.102). This fantastic experience is a way of losing the characters identity through magical realism (Abu Jweid, 2016, p.529). The protagonist's loss of his name represents his loss of identity. In the long run, such loss leads to his death. Zamora and Faris (1995) describe this experience as a supplementation of magical realism in terms of fantasy because the “supplementation of realism is far less preferable than working from an entirely fantastic base” (p.155). The protagonist's life becomes a mixture of realism and fantasy where he socially interacts with people the life of here

and now and the hereafter; and this relates to Zamora's and Faris's (1995) argument that "magical realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed" (p.164).

The protagonist, who loses his identity in realistic and unrealistic worlds, does not cope with the common logic of reality; or as Zamora and Faris (1995) put it simply: "in the light of reversals of logic and irreducible elements of magic, the real as we know it may be made to seem amazing or even ridiculous" (p.168). The logic of magical realism could not be reduced due to the inherent discrepancy between reality and fantasy in postmodern literary works; and the "irreducible magic often means disruption of the ordinary logic of cause and effect" (p.168). The protagonist of O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* elucidates this logic to a great extent. He is the stereotypical manifestation of the contradiction between postmodern logical reality and fantastic unreality. However, he plays an allegorical and a functional role. He represents the postmodern sense of fragmentation or loss of communication since he loses the understanding of other people, like MacCruiskeen. He only lives in a fantastic world and does strange things. The conversation below illuminates this postmodern fragmentation through magical realism fantasy:

MacCruiskeen frowned vacantly. 'It is one of the most compressed and intricate pancakes I have ever known,' he said.

He put the blanket back over the mangle and pushed it to one side and then lit a lamp on the wall by pressing some knob in the darkness. The light was bright but wavery and uncertain and would be far from satisfactory for reading with. He sat back in his chair as if waiting to be questioned and complimented on the strange things he had been doing.

'What is your private opinion of all that?' he asked.

'What were you doing?' I inquired.'

Stretching the light.'

'I do not understand your meaning.'

'I will tell you the size of it,' he said, 'and indicate roughly the shape of it. It is no harm if you know unusual things because you will be a dead man in two days and you will be held incognito and incommunicate in the meantime. Did you ever hear tell of omnium?' (p.109)

Fabulation Narrative Technique

Fabulation narrative is a technical mode in postmodern literature. In *Aestheticism: Postmodernism and Displacement* (2015), Nadia Anwar discusses the crucial difficult challenge which is faced by readers of postmodern fabulation writings. The difficulty lies in the postmodern writing as "narrative" representations; "the difficulty, for the reader, of postmodernist writing, is not so much a matter of obscurity (which might be cleared up) as of uncertainty, which is endemic, and manifests itself on the level of narrative rather than style" (p.256). Here, fabulation narrative texts are vital for understanding postmodern narrative. Such kind of narrative takes place in telling the story of the narrator in *The Third Policeman*. The narrator's life goes on in fragmented episodes expressed in "next" phrases: "What happened next is astonishing. I could see the dim contours of MacCruiskeen in attendance at the mangle. He made adjustments with his cunning fingers, stooping for a minute to work at the lower-down inventions on the iron work" (p.107).

Postmodern fabulation narrative is "it's a critical commonplace that for the Realist the movement of narration has its analogy, *par excellence*, in the movement of the perceiving eye" (Donnellan, 2015, p.81). Furthermore, postmodern narrative carries out the "fabrication" of fictional discourse. It embodies the sense of reality in the texts where the fictional events appear eccentric. In like manner, postmodern narrative "has always been taken to operate by the fabrication of images. The image, that very axis upon which poetics sentimentally turned, may conceivably have always been the totality wrong object of attention when the mind sought to grapple with the nature of narrative, a mode of discourse whose whole essence was the progressive disclosure of movement, of action, of change" (p.242).

The sense of narrative change exemplifies the narrator's changing positions in *The Third Policeman*. The narrator changes according to the events which portray his interaction with other people, like Martin Finnucane: "I did so at once, asking Martin Finnucane to come and save me in the nick of time from being strangled to death on the scaffold and telling him he would have to hurry. I did not know whether he could come as he had promised he would but in my present danger anything was worth trying" (p.150). Moreover, the narrator leads a normal life but in death. He goes to sleep and works like normal persons: "Then I went back to bed to try to forget my anxiety. I said a prayer that neither of the other brothers was out on the family bicycle because it would be wanted to bring my message quickly to the captain of the one-legged men. Then I felt a hope kindling fitfully within me and I fell asleep Again" (p.150). This death-in-life experience typifies postmodern subversive narrative.

Bartosz Kuźniarz in *Farewell to Postmodernism* (2015), theorises that "the historical narrative does not, as narrative, dispel false beliefs about the past, human life, the nature of the community, and so on; what it does is test the capacity of a culture's fictions to endow real events with the kinds of meaning that literature displays to consciousness through its fashioning of patterns as "imaginary" events" (p.45). Accordingly, narrative texts are the conclusive term for the "imaginary" episodes in "conscious" or quasi-real events. Such quasi-real events comply with the narrator's fabrication and outlandish life in *The Third Policeman*. The narrator's thoughts change persistently because he sure if he still alive or not: "when I awoke again two thoughts came into my head so closely together that they seemed to be stuck to one another; I could not be sure which came first and it was hard to separate them and examine them singly. One was a happy thought about the weather, the sudden brightness of the day that had been vexed earlier" (p.151).

Gloria Fiero (2015) focuses on the historical features of fabrication self-reflexive fiction. In *Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Global Perspective*, Fiero (2015) contends that "postmodernism can be regarded as a mode of cultural awareness informed by the conviction that everything *is*, in fact, *cultural*; that is, nothing in life-nationalism, value systems, identity, history, even reality-is natural or given" (p.4). Additionally, Fiero incorporates the historical features of fictional "self-reflexivity with the cultural reality outside the text" (p.5). Additionally, the emergence of this metafictional quality is a "rhetoric" device taken into consideration in the "rhetorical thrust of postmodern social theory, taken as a whole, is that to live in postmodernity is to find oneself divorced from those aspects of life which are regarded as authentic, genuine, *real*" (p.5).

The fabrication authentic aspects of life disappear in *The Third Policeman*. It is the genuine postmodern artifice used by O'Brien to depict the relative sense of truth. The narrator, for example, perceives the normal things, such as tables, as wild: "He broke off his utterance in the middle of the last short word of it and stood peering with a wild eye at the table. I had finished eating and had pushed away my empty bowl" (p.156). This is the very feature of postmodern narrative deviation which depict the normal things as nonsense, fabricated, and unusual.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the models of the fantastic in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* (1967). The study mainly focuses on the fantastic, magical realism and allegory as models of the fantastic. The fantastic comprises elements of supernatural which are pertinent to postmodern poetics of subversion. These models correspond to the fact that postmodern has a reactionary response to the sense of collective realism dominating modern literature which is rarely explored in previous studies on the novel. Therefore, they have been studied from a postmodern perspective emphasizing the relative perception of reality by using different concepts.

The study also accentuates the fantastic as an integral element of fictional abnormality in *The Third Policeman*. This abnormality demonstrates the magical real peculiarity of the novel has hardly been discussed in existing scholarship on the novel. The study has revealed that magical realism is the narrator's whimsical perception of reality and, at the same time, his abnormal behavior is depicted in this way in the novel. Both the narrator's distorted perception of reality and his unusual behaviors are appropriated within the postmodern allegorical response to modernist collective vision of reality.

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أنماط الخيال في رواية فلان اوبرين الشرطي الثالث

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتوضيح الأشكال النوعية لنظرية الواقعية السحرية بوصفها جزءاً من الأدبيات الهدامة في عصر ما بعد الحداثة في رواية فلان اوبرين الشرطي الثالث، وتتناول الدراسة الصوت الضمني للمؤلف للكشف عن قدرة الواقعية السحرية على الخلط بين الواقع ونقيضه الخيال، وتتمحور الدراسة حول استخدام المؤلف الاستعارة بوصفه وسيلة نقدية للتعبير عن ردة فعله تجاه الموروث الدلالي لمفهوم الواقع في حقبة الحداثة؛ لأن الأدبيات الهدامة لحقبة ما بعد الحداثة تمثل التجريب في الأساليب الأدبية التي تمثل الواقع الأدبي، وتستخدم مفهومي: تعدد الأصوات السردية و "المشهد الكرنفالي" لتفسير سياق "عدم اليقين" المعرفي الذي يجسد الثقافة والايديولوجية، إذ يمثل الخطاب الأدبي الأنماط المألوفة اجتماعياً.

الكلمات الدالة: الاستعارة، الواقعية السحرية، تعدد الأصوات السردية، ما بعد الحداثة.

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