

**HISTORY AND MAGIC INTERWOVEN: THE TAPESTRY OF MAGICAL
REALISM IN LOUIS DE BERNIERES' THE WAR OF DON EMMANUEL
NETHER PARTS**

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on how history and magic are interwoven: the tapestry of magical realism in Louis de Bernieres's "The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts". This novel is a striking example of how magical realism intertwined with historical events to create a unique narrative form. Magical realism is a powerful lens through which the tumultuous history of an unnamed Latin American country is explored. The narrative intertwines fantastical elements with realities, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. This technique allows readers to delve into the political turmoil, social injustices, and cultural complexities. This paper keenly analyzes characters, narrative techniques, and the interplay of the real and supernatural. By interconnecting magical realism to make readers understand the events that took in the past. The study contributes to the discussion of the role of magical realism in depicting history and readers' impression of reality through magical realism in the war of Don Emmanuel nether parts.

Keywords: Magical realism, history, political violence, corruption, and social upheaval.

Introduction:

Louis de Bernières is a highly acclaimed contemporary British novelist, playwright, and poet. Born in London in 1954, he enlisted in the military at 18 but left after just four months at Sandhurst. After graduating from the Victoria University of Manchester, he pursued a postgraduate degree in education at Leicester Polytechnic and later earned his MA from the University of London. Before his career as a writer, he worked in various professions, including landscape gardening, motorcycle messenger, and car mechanic. His first three novels, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* (1990), *Senor Vivo and the Coca Lord* (1991), and *The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman* (1992), each of which was heavily influenced by South American literature, particularly magical realism, were written while he was also teaching English in Colombia. He is one of the most profiled British contemporary writers and has earned numerous national and international awards. Currently, he resides in Norfolk, England (British Council).

The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts is a novel that is set in an unknown Latin American country. "The characters, who are involved in political intrigue, assassinations, kidnaps and utopianism, are largely ciphers, but the exuberant nature of the narrative, and its frequent switches between the comic and the serious, show that this early work had a maturity unexpected in a first novel" (Spence). It revolves around the series of incidents when Dona Constanza frightens local farmers in an attempt to divert a river to provide water for her swimming pool. From these trivial incidents, the novel presents serious political issues with a blending of magical events. The novel incorporates cardinal magical realist elements, including a plague of cats, the resurrection of the dead, characters with supernatural powers, and environmental magical events. These elements are used to illustrate the political crisis in the country through the characters' interactions. The comic and the serious amalgamation of the stories show the maturity of the novelist's artistic merit. De Bernières continued with the same tone for his next two novels in the trilogy. Nick Rernison believes that the Berniers' trilogy is constructed in a way that though his incidents and actions are foregrounded beneath them, the conflicts between good and evil glisten, and finally the force of goodness wins. Louis de Bernières utilizes the techniques of magical realism to depict the history and the events that shattered the life of Colombia.

"Magical Realism is identified as a narrative mode because it is a discourse style that infiltrates realistic genres with an associated capacity to redirect textual interpretation" (Hammer, 2006). Magical realism, as a literary mode, serves as a powerful vehicle for exploring historical narratives, particularly in post-colonial and

Latin American contexts. Magical realism is a literary style that blends realistic descriptions of everyday life with magical elements. Louis de Bernieres' *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* is heavily influenced by this style, which adds to the vivid and immersive quality of his storytelling. Magical realism allows de Bernieres to explore complex themes and emotions in a unique and captivating way. This paper analyzes characters, narrative techniques, and the interplay of the real and supernatural. By interconnecting magical realism to make readers understand the events that took in the past. The study contributes to the discussion of the role of magical realism in depicting history and readers' impression of reality through magical realism in the war of Don Emmanuel nether parts.

Literature Review:

Once, in his work "*On the Marvelous Real in America*", Carpentier sought to establish that magical realism was a purely Latin American literary genre. However, subsequent developments in the genre have proven him incorrect. Today, magical realism is a technique employed by writers across the world, with each adding their own cultural and social nuances. Erik Camayd-Freixas has even declared that magical realism is one of the most compelling techniques of fiction writing in the world (583). As a result, there is a vast array of literature, research papers, and articles on the subject, each approaching it from a unique perspective. Due to the diverse vein of the literary schools, movements, and techniques encapsulated within the mode, it is dealt with from different angles and perspectives. Each critic tries to approach the mode from one of the sides of the spectrum. *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004) by Wendy B. Faris is one of the most cited books in the field, and it also provides a valuable dictionary of terminologies in the subject. It investigates magical realism as the most important trend in contemporary international fiction, defines its characteristics and narrative techniques, and suggests a new theory to explain its significance.

Additionally, *Patriarchy and Power in Magical Realism* (2017) by Maryam Ebadi Asayesh presents a comprehensive chronological development of the mode and is a valuable resource for the present study as it is one of the rare works to consider writers from both the East and West. *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* (1985) by Amaryll B. Chanady sheds light on the concept of magical realism and fantastic literature.

Traumatic Experience and Repressed Memory in Magical Realist Novels:

Speaking the Unspeakable (2020) by Md Abu Shahid Abdullah examines the

intimate bond between the literary representation of historical trauma and the alternative narrative form of magical realism, and the writer accentuates the importance of memory, empathy, and imagination.

The cultural aspect of magical realism and the form's resistance to Western European notions of the "real" are crucial to understanding its roots in the realities of Latin America, the Caribbean, and indigenous communities of North, Central, and South America (→ Indigeneity, 1/31).

The Historical Fabric of Novel:

The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts blends historical events with rich storytelling and magical realism, the novel paints vivid pictures of the cultural, political, and social landscapes of the region during the mid-20th century.

The novel reflects the tumultuous political history of Latin America, especially during the time of military dictatorship and civil wars. While the author not directly retell specific events, it draws a broader context of conflict and struggle for power that characterized many countries in the region during the 20th century. The novel is deeply rooted in Colombia's history especially, *la violencia* (1948–1958) and military repression, guerrilla warfare (FARC, ELN) and paramilitary massacres, foreign exploitation and US intervention, and indigenous and Afro-Colombia resistance.

La Violencia (1948–1958). In the novel the government of President Veracruz enforces authoritarian rule, silences dissent and uses the army and secret police to suppress opposition. There are arbitrary arrests, torture, disappearances, and massacres of civilians suspected of supporting rebels.

"la violencia, during this period, which had lasted ten years, two factions of the oligarchy had conducted an unprecedentedly bloody campaign of violence against each other in which perhaps three hundred thousand souls perished at the hands of jagonucos and guerrillas, both of whom accrued so much money that it amounted to a redistribution of wealth that almost significant"¹⁶.

In history la violencia was a civil war between the liberal and conservative parties, leading to brutal state-sponsored violence. The military and paramilitary forces carried out mass killings, particularly in rural areas where resistance was suspected.

The Role of Magic Realism:

Several irreducible occurrences influence the magical aspect of WDENP. The irreducible elements are added by manipulating the first ten chapters to create a large, realistic arena. Throughout the book, certain chapters are purposefully written to support the reader's acceptance of the events. For instance, there are explicit magical incidents in chapters 10, 11, 14, 17, and 20, but not in chapters 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, or 19. Beginning with chapter 29, practically every chapter is intended to be both realistic and magically realistic. Thus, a wide range of irreducible elements—from cultural beliefs and superstitions to magical incidents—are incorporated by de Bernieres. While the varieties are diverse, the spirits (Parlanchina and Federico), the plague of cats and laughing, revived humans (the Spanish soldiers and their slaves), sorcery, mirror spirits, and so on.

These different kinds of components add to the novel's intricate fabric. To determine the anniversary date, the people want to know the date of their community's founding, which is the first obvious irreducible aspect. According to the narrator, the date was determined by consulting Nostradamus's prophecies. A blue butterfly under "the pueblo was thus honored and declared twenty-one years old" after a magical ceremony (68). The novelist skillfully combines both magical and actual happenings inseparably after this denotation.

In an unavoidable event, Parlanchina dies after running after her cat and stepping on a mine that Aurelio calls "sudden-death-by-thunder." Then, Aurelio leaned over and whispered her true name in her ear. Parlanchina was lying with her eyes wide open, shocked at her death, as he stood up (100). After dying, Parlanchina becomes into a spirit and uses her father, Aurelio, to speak with the living. Essentially, Parlanchina oscillates between the two worlds, much like a shaman. One night, Federico has a dream about the beautiful wild girl who lives in the forest. She has enormous brown eyes and waist-length black hair (179). When he goes to look for her in the bush, a large cat—possibly a tiger—tragically kills him. He passes away as though he had entered a different reality through a dream. He discovers after his death that Parlanchina is the girl of his fantasies.

She responds to Aurelio's question about whether she caused Federico's death by saying, "Gwubba," to which he accuses her: "did you lead him to death, because you love him? 'No, Papacito,' she said. 'I tried to prevent him. But some things one cannot prevent. He came to his death because he loved me'" (182). In this magical incident, Aurelio takes on a shamanic role as someone who can transcend

between the two worlds. He possesses the potential to perceive the two ends of existence's spectrum, much like a magical realist writer who can play on the cords of magic and reality.

Characters As Embodiments of History and Magic:

Louis de Berniere embeds some characters with history and the some characters interwoven with magic. As his novel relates the events with history, Don Emmanuel is a landowner who resists the elite's predatory behavior. Unlike corrupt authorities and military commanders, he respects indigenous people and peasants. He becomes a symbol of resistance to political tyranny, similar to historical revolutionary figures from Latin America. His viewpoint reflects previous anti-authoritarian movements, particularly against colonial and neo-colonial forces. His character resembles historical and cultural heroes, where he appears both as a traditional and visionary leader. are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of his country. The legacy of Spanish colonialism, which left a profound impact on Latin American society, is reflected in his character's reverence for tradition and his position as a landowner. His hierarchical structure shaped the lives of both the elite and the peasantry.

"Don Emmanuel had become a local legend both on account of his delight in healthy dissolution, his choice of peasants as his natural friends, and his prodigious social concern. He had built the village school and employed Professor Luis to teach not only knowledge but wisdom to the raggedy children; he paid a quarter more than any other patron in the whole department, and he adopted a method of making breezeblocks in a wooden lattice so that he could build a little house for each of his employees"²⁹.

This book line states that Don Emmanuel gives importance to education as the country undergoes several wars and struggles his education made him socially concerned about the children in the village does he gives the education to make the children understand that the things happening in the society are not safe for their future. The character Don Emmanuel resembles the historical figure from Colombia Jorge Eliecer Gaitan. He was a charismatic leader of the liberal party in Colombia, known for his advocacy for social justice and landform. Gaitan was deeply connected to the common people and worked tirelessly to improve their lives. Don Emmanuel's character is a rich tapestry from Latin America's historical, cultural, and social threads. His experience and actions are deeply rooted in the complexities and contradictions of a region that has endured colonization and cultural fusion.

The novel delves into mystical aspects, blending historical and cultural elements with magical realism. Remedios had brought several mystical characters in the novel in as Remedios character deep connection to the supernatural. She embodies the mystical tradition and spiritual practices of her culture. Her life is intertwined with the natural world, and she often communicates with spirits and forces of nature. Remedios is deeply connected to the supernatural, Remedios personifies magical realism. Her interactions with spirit and nature are portrayed as a natural part of her existence, blurring the line between reality and myth. The chapter "Remedios and the Pistacos" seamlessly blends the mystical supernatural with the ordinary, creating a world where "Remedios, when she was a little child with a round belly-carming her nickname 'Barrigona' and two little black plaits and big round eyes, was already a materialist. She did not believe in god, or spirits, or pistacos. When she grew older she still did not believe in god, or spirits, or pistacos. But she knew for certain that the pistacos were real, and that their existence was not a superstition, for she had seen them with her own eyes."³²

As pistacos are mythical creatures rooted in Andean folklore. Their presence in the chapter adds a layer of magical realism, as they are depicted as real threats to the community. This integration of myth into the fabric of everyday life exemplifies the genre.

Discussion and Interpretation:

Louis de Bernieres' *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts*, history, and magic are interwoven together through the narrative style of magical realism. This literary approach allows for a sea, less blending of the fantastical with the mundane, creating a rich tapestry that reflects the complexities of Latin American culture and history. The novel draws heavily on the history of Latin America, particularly the impact of Spanish colonialism. Political unrest against a backdrop of political instability, the novel mirrors the tumultuous political landscape of many Latin American countries. The fictional government's corruption and the revolutionary movements echo real historical events, emphasizing themes of resistance and social justice. Magical realism in the novel is characterized by the natural incorporation of supernatural elements into everyday life. Characters like Remedios, who possess mystical abilities, and events such as the appearance of pistacos are presented as ordinary occurrences. The inclusion of indigenous myths and legends, such as the pistacos, highlights the cultural heritage and spiritual beliefs of the region. These elements serve to enrich the narrative and provide deeper insights into the characters worldwide.

The characters embodied in the novel such as Don Emmanuel and Remedios set an example for history and magical realism in the novel. Don Emmanuel as a central figure, embodies the tension between tradition and modernization.

His role as a landowner and protector of his community reflects the historical significance, while his resistance to oppressive forces symbolizes the struggle for justice and autonomy. Remedios' mystical abilities and connection to the supernatural underscore the novel's magical realism. Remedios represents the cultural syncretism of Latin America, where indigenous spirituality coexists with other belief systems. The interplay of history and magic in the novel serves to highlight the importance of cultural identity and heritage. Characters' connection to their land, traditions, and myths is central to their sense of self and community.

The narrative style of magical blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy, creating a cohesive and immersive world. This approach allows the novel to address serious social and political issues while maintaining a sense of wonder and enchantment. The matter-of-fact treatment of magical events reinforces their normalcy within the story's context. This narrative technique challenges readers' perceptions of reality and encourages them to embrace the mystical aspects of the characters' lives.

“Readers are encouraged to engage with the text on multiple levels, interpreting the magical as a reflection of their realities” (Rahmani & Nayel, 2024).

Magical realism in the war of Don Emmanuel's nether parts profoundly transforms how readers perceive the realities depicted in the novel. By blending the fantastical elements into realities.

Redefining reality, magical realism integrates supernatural elements into the character's everyday lives, making the fantastical seem ordinary. This technique encourages readers to suspend their disbelief and accept the surreal aspects of the story as natural. Critiquing social and political issues. The fantastical elements can serve as powerful metaphors for real-world problems, allowing de Bernieres to address these issues in a nuanced and imagination way.

The character of Don Emmanuel, who can turn bullets into flowers with a single word, symbolizes the power of love and resistance against oppression. This magical twist on historical events invites readers to reflect on the potential for positive change in the face of adversity.

Through the use of magical realism, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* reshapes the reader's perceptions of reality. The seamless blending of history and magic not only enriches the narratives but also invites readers to view the world through a more imaginative and expansive lens. By challenging the boundaries of reality and embracing the fantastical elements, Louis de Bernières offers unique and thought-provoking perspectives on human experience.

Conclusion:

Louis de Bernières' *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* is a vivid and intricate tapestry that weaves together history, politics, culture, and magical realism. The novel transcends the conventional boundaries between reality and fantasy, offering a narrative space where the ordinary is infused with the extraordinary. Through this fluid blending, de Bernières not only crafts an engaging and imaginative story but also presents a profound reflection on Latin America's historical struggles, cultural identity, and social complexity.

By embedding mythical elements such as supernatural beings and miraculous occurrences within real-life political and social frameworks, the author challenges readers to reconsider their perceptions of truth and fiction. The fantastical events are not mere embellishments but serve as powerful metaphors that illuminate the deeper truths about human experience, resilience, and resistance against oppression.

The novel's strength lies in its ability to entertain while simultaneously provoking critical thought. Characters like Don Emmanuel and Remedios symbolize larger socio-political ideals—justice, reform, spiritual resilience, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Their journeys offer insights into the post-colonial condition, highlighting the persistent tension between modernization and tradition, between the collective past and an uncertain future.

Through the lens of magical realism, de Bernières invites readers into a world that is both surreal and strikingly familiar. He redefines the boundaries of the novelistic form, merging the fantastical with the political, the mystical with the historical. In doing so, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* becomes more than just a story—it becomes a lens through which the complexities of Latin American life can be better understood and appreciated.

Ultimately, de Bernières offers an enchanting yet thought-provoking vision that captivates the imagination while encouraging a deeper engagement with themes of memory, identity, and justice. His narrative leaves a lasting impression, reminding

us that even in the most magical tales, there lies a mirror reflecting the human condition.

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