



Representation of Javanese Beliefs in the Film *Sumala* (2024): Magical Realism

¹*Anindya Oktaviona Ervinawati, ¹Hasan Suaedi, ¹Dzarna Dzarna

¹ Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Muhammadiyah Jember. Jl. Karimata No. 49, Jember, East Java, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author Email: oktavionaanindya@gmail.com

Received: October 2025; Revised: November 2025; Accepted: November 2025; Published: December 2025

Abstract

The phenomenon of the representation of local beliefs in modern Indonesian films shows a tendency to combine traditional elements with contemporary storytelling styles, but studies that specifically examine this combination through the perspective of magical realism are still limited. This study aims to reveal how the film *Sumala* (2024) represents Javanese beliefs through three main elements of magical realism according to Wendy B. Faris, namely the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity. The study uses a qualitative descriptive method with data sources in the form of scenes, Dialogues, and visual symbols in the film. Data are analyzed through a process of reduction, classification, interpretation, and drawing conclusions based on the theory of magical realism and the concept of Javanese beliefs. The results show that *Sumala* presents magical objects, spiritual rituals, and human interactions with spirits as magical elements that are naturally accepted in the story world. This representation illustrates the Javanese view of life that emphasizes the balance between the rough universe and the subtle universe as an important part of the cosmological order. This study concludes that the magical elements in *Sumala* not only function as narrative aesthetics but also play an important role in preserving Javanese spiritual and cultural values. This finding has implications for strengthening film and cultural studies, particularly regarding the representation of local wisdom in modern Indonesian cinema.

Keywords : Magical realism; Javanese beliefs; Local wisdom; *Sumala* film; Spirituality

How to Cite: Ervinawati, A.O., Suaedi, H., & Dzarna, D. (2025). Representation of Javanese Beliefs in the Film *Sumala* (2024): Magical Realism. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 5(4), 1064-1076. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/w2e3ep60>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/w2e3ep60>

Copyright© 2025, Ervinawati et al.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) License.



INTRODUCTION

Literature and film are two forms of art that have the ability to represent the social and cultural realities of a society. According to Dzarna (2016), literature is an art form that contains elements of beauty and humanitarian values. Kasmawati (2022) adds that literature arises from the process of human expression and creation, encompassing feelings, spirits, beliefs, and convictions. Literary works do not emerge from emptiness but are the result of the author's interaction with their social environment and life experiences (Riani et al., 2022). Generally, literary works consist of two main elements: intrinsic elements that come from within the text, and extrinsic elements influenced by social and cultural factors outside the work.

In line with the function of literature as a medium for representing the realities of human life, film also plays a similar role in conveying ideas, values, and worldviews.

According to Majid (2020), film is a social phenomenon that can be interpreted in various ways. Each film contains diverse messages that are understood differently by its audience. Nadhira (2022) explain that film is a social phenomenon open to various interpretations, containing messages that can be subjectively interpreted. Film serves not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a means of education and freedom of expression. According to Dzarna & Oktarini (2023), the rapid development of technology can drive advancements in the film industry, where many people now utilize this technology as a means to produce films. This development makes films more accessible and easier to produce, thus potentially becoming an effective medium for cultural communication. According to Pamungkas et al. (2024), film can also serve as a medium for the socialization and promotion of culture that is persuasive in nature. Additionally, film can be viewed as a realistic reflection of social life that authentically presents the values of society.

In the realm of Indonesian culture, literary works and films function not only as entertainment but also as media for expressing local wisdom and the worldviews of society. According to Suaedi (2021), local wisdom is formed through the relationships and interactions of people with their environment. One theme that frequently appears is local belief, particularly the beliefs of the Javanese people, which are rich in symbolism, spirituality, and mystical traditions. According to Silaban et al. (2024), one interesting aspect of the Javanese belief system is the variety of prohibitions, taboos, and interpretations of various natural phenomena, which are considered to carry specific meanings or messages. This shows that the Javanese people have their own perspective on nature and reality, which is viewed not only physically but also spiritually and symbolically. According to Fanisia et al. (2022), beliefs related to mystical and supernatural matters are an integral part of Javanese life.

The combination of these two elements gives rise to the concept of magical realism, a storytelling style that balances real and magical elements without creating conflict in the narrative. Magical realism is a narrative style that harmoniously integrates real and magical elements into a single narrative world. According to Fitria (2024), realism focuses on a perspective based on reality as it is, while the magical element relates to supernatural matters often regarded as part of mystical beliefs. Nursalim & Rahim (2025) add that magical realism presents supernatural elements that are absurd yet accepted as normal, especially in works of art.

The film *Sumala* (2024) is an interesting work to study as it presents representations of Javanese beliefs in a modern context. According to Ningsi et al. (2023), the purpose of making the film is not merely to provide entertainment but also to convey various other aspects such as information, education, and to have a persuasive function to influence or convince its audience. Thus, the film serves not only as a medium of visual entertainment but also as a means of cultural communication that can awaken social and spiritual awareness in society. *Sumala* does not merely utilize mystical elements as an entertainment attraction or horror factor; rather, it positions them as part of the belief system that is alive and believed by the Javanese people. According to through its visual presentation, the film not only offers well-known mystical stories but also serves as a means to preserve and reintroduce values and worldviews related to belief in the supernatural within local culture. The blend of the real and spiritual worlds in *Sumala* reflects the characteristics of magic realism, showcasing wonder as a natural part of the life of Javanese society, which believes in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms. Consequently, this film not only acts as an artistic reflection of traditional beliefs but also serves as a medium that reinforces the cultural identity and spirituality of the Javanese people amidst the currents of modernity.

To understand the representation of Javanese beliefs in *Sumala*, the approach of magical realism as articulated by Wendy B. Faris (2004: 7) becomes relevant. In her work

Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative, Faris identifies five main elements of magical realism: (1) the irreducible element, (2) the phenomenal world, (3) merging realms, (4) unsettling doubts, and (5) disruptions of time, space, and identity. These five elements help reveal how magical elements in the film can represent the worldview and belief system of the Javanese people.

Several previous studies have also used the theory of magical realism to examine Indonesian literature and film. For instance, the study by Liani et al. (2024) titled “Magical Realism in the Novel *Srimenanti* by Joko Pinurbo” reveals that the magical elements in the work serve as reflections of spirituality and social criticism. Inzaghi et al. (2024) in their study titled “Representation of Local Mythology in the Film *Jagat Arwah* through a Magical Realism Approach” highlight the combination of real and supernatural elements as the foundation of local mythology in Indonesian cinema. Pamungkas et al. (2022) in their work titled “Magical Realism in the Novel *Sang Nyai 3* by Budi Sardjono” show that the elements of magical realism are used to present Javanese traditional values intertwined with spirituality and local beliefs. Another study by Ulhaq (2023) titled “Magical Realism as a Representation of Critique of Conditions in *Manusia Kelelawar* by Damhuri Muhammad” emphasizes that magical elements can serve as a form of social criticism of the disparities in modern societal realities. Febryani et al. (2024) in their journal titled “Elements of Magical Realism in the Novel *Funiculi Funicula* by Toshikazu Kawaguchi” identify the blend of time, space, and magical events as a means of reflection on life, regret, and second chances for humanity.

Unlike previous studies that focused on other novels or films and did not specifically examine *Sumala*, particularly as a contemporary horror film post-2020 that showcases Javanese spiritual identity through modern cinema, there is a clear research gap. Moreover, there has not been a study analyzing how Faris's elements of magic realism specifically function in constructing the representation of Javanese beliefs in the film *Sumala* (2024). Based on this gap, this research aims to uncover the representation of Javanese beliefs in the film *Sumala* through an analysis of three main elements of magic realism according to Faris: the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity.

This research is important as it can broaden the understanding of the relationship between film, local culture, and contemporary literary theory. Additionally, this study contributes to the efforts of preserving local wisdom values through the analysis of film works rooted in Javanese culture. Through the approach of magical realism, this research also affirms that the magical elements in local culture are not merely forms of superstition but rather a unique way for society to interpret reality that transcends the boundaries of modern rationality.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method grounded in the theory of magic realism proposed by Wendy B. Faris (2004). This method was chosen because the research focuses on explaining and interpreting meanings rather than on numerical calculations or statistical testing. According to Siswantoro (2020: 56), the descriptive method aims to factually and systematically describe the research object based on the realities that occur. Therefore, this research focuses on describing the elements of magical realism in the film *Sumala* and linking them to the representation of Javanese beliefs that reflect local wisdom.

The data for this study consists of dialogues, narratives, scenes, settings, and symbols that contain elements of magic realism in *Sumala*. The primary data source is the film *Sumala* (2024), produced by Hitmaker Studios and directed by Rizal Mantovani, while secondary data sources are derived from books, journal articles, and previous

research discussing Wendy B. Faris's theory of magic realism (2004) as well as cultural studies and beliefs of the Javanese community. To clarify the research flow, analysis is conducted using a visual documentation approach through the observation of scenes, which are then coded based on the elements of the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity.

The primary instrument of the study is the researcher themselves (human instrument), who plays a role in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. In practice, the research goes through several stages. First, the researcher watches the film in its entirety to understand the storyline and cultural context. Second, the researcher identifies segments of the film that show the combination of magical and realistic elements. Third, every scene containing magical elements is classified according to the three elements of magic realism based on Wendy B. Faris: the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity. The researcher focuses on these three elements as they are most dominant in representing Javanese beliefs reflected in the film *Sumala*. Fourth, the researcher connects the findings to the values and beliefs of local wisdom contained within them.

Data collection techniques are carried out through three main methods: film, text observation, documentation, and literature review. Film observation is conducted in five cycles, starting with an overall viewing to understand the storyline and cultural context, the initial identification of scenes that potentially contain elements of magic realism, verification of scene details through dialogue, visuals, and symbols, adjustments and refinements of initial codes based on Faris's theory, and final data locking to ensure consistency. Data determination 1–10 is based on the suitability of scenes with the three elements of magic realism: the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity, selecting scenes that contain magical indicators, interactions between humans and spirits, disruptions in time or space, and relevant Javanese cultural symbols. Documentation is performed by recording dialogue quotes, visual descriptions, and time markers for scene occurrences. Meanwhile, the literature review is utilized to strengthen the theoretical foundation and deepen the understanding of concepts supporting the analysis.

Data analysis is conducted in four stages: data reduction, classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is performed by selecting scenes relevant to the three elements of magic realism and coding them into units of analysis based on visual patterns, dialogue, and cultural symbols. This stage aligns with Rijali (2018) view that data reduction is the process of simplifying data collection results by grouping them into specific concepts or themes. The classification stage involves grouping scenes according to the categories of the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity based on Faris's theory. Subsequently, the interpretation stage entails interpreting the symbolic meanings of the magical elements found and linking them to the values of Javanese beliefs reflected in the film. The final stage is drawing conclusions based on the integration of visual findings and Javanese cultural concepts. By employing this method, the study aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of the application of magic realism elements in the film *Sumala*, while also demonstrating how the film functions as a medium for cultural representation encompassing the spiritual, social, and local wisdom values of the Javanese community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the Content of the Film *Sumala* (2024)

The film *Sumala* is an Indonesian cinematic work that highlights the blend between the realities of Javanese life and the supernatural dimension rooted in traditional belief systems. Set in a remote village in Central Java in 1947, the film tells the story of a married

couple, Soedjiman and Sulastri, who face social pressure due to their lack of children. In desperation, Sulastri makes a pact with a supernatural force to obtain a child, which then triggers a series of mystical events and terror that disturb the lives of the villagers. The story of *Sumala* not only focuses on horror elements but also reflects the community's belief in spiritual powers that are thought to influence the course of human life.

Narratively, *Sumala* presents a balance between the real world and the magical world without a clear boundary between the two. Supernatural elements such as the magical pact, the birth of mysterious twin children, and disturbances by spirits are depicted as a natural part of the characters' lives. This portrayal illustrates the Javanese perspective that perceives the spiritual world as something that coexists with human life. This understanding aligns with the concept of magical realism, where magical elements are not presented as extraordinary but rather harmoniously integrated with everyday reality.

In addition to featuring horror elements, *Sumala* also represents a strong system of traditional beliefs among rural communities. Rituals, shamanic symbols, and the emergence of supernatural entities depict the spiritual depth that shapes local cultural identity. In this context, *Sumala* reflects how belief values and local wisdom are inherited and reinterpreted through the medium of cinema. This film serves not only as entertainment but also as a cultural reflection that portrays the interconnectedness of humans with the metaphysical world. Within the framework of Wendy B. Faris's theory of magic realism, *Sumala* showcases three main aspects: the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity.

The Irreducible Element

In the framework of Wendy B. Faris's theory of magical realism, the irreducible element refers to the presence of magical or supernatural elements that cannot be explained through logic or science but are still regarded as real by the characters in the story. This element demonstrates the existence of a magical dimension that naturally blends with human life, presenting situations where the impossible seems possible without provoking astonishment. This element can manifest in the form of magical objects, supernatural beings, or magical sounds that naturally occur within reality, reinforcing the impression that the real world and the supernatural world coexist without clear boundaries.

Overall, findings from Data 1–4 indicate that the irreducible element in the film *Sumala* emerges through three main forms: magical objects (such as jugs and kris weapons), ritual practices, offerings, and supernatural beings. These three forms present themselves as supernatural elements that cannot be logically explained but are fully accepted by the characters as part of their reality. This pattern shows that the film presents a magical world intertwined with the everyday lives of village residents, while also affirming the continuity of Javanese beliefs regarding the relationship between humans, spirits, and cosmic balance.

Scenes and Dialogueues (Duration 17:53 – 18:23)

This scene depicts a house located in the middle of a forest, described as silent and tense. Mbok Tukinah begins to chant a mantra in Old Javanese loudly, causing the walls of the house to vibrate as if responding to the echo of her words. She then pours blood into a small jar, cuts a piece of raw meat, and adds burnt paper containing the mantra into the jar.

Dialogueue:

Mbok Tukinah: “*Unite him with you. Grant him strength, connect him to you.*”

In Data 1, the magical object in the form of a *small jar containing blood, a piece of raw meat, and the ashes of a burnt mantra* represents the irreducible element, depicting the presence of magical objects that cannot be logically explained but are accepted as reality

within the story. These objects reflect the Javanese belief in the power of talismanic items, such as charms or heirlooms. According to Rosul (2024), in the Javanese view, such items are not merely ordinary objects but symbols of protection and spiritual power that integrate into their daily lives. The elements of blood and the mantra used in this ritual reinforce the belief in a direct connection between humans and supernatural forces. Blood symbolizes life (*urip*), acting as a medium for life energy, while the mantra serves as a catalyst for the supernatural power residing within the objects. According to Fita & Pamungkas (2023), the Javanese believe that supernatural beings hold positions that can be interacted with or collaborated with for specific purposes. Thus, the jar in this scene functions not only as a mystical symbol but also as a manifestation of Javanese beliefs in the balance between the physical and spiritual realms, as well as the interconnectedness of humans with the supernatural.

Scenes and Dialogueues (Duration 1:17:24 - 1:18:07)

This scene shows Soedjiman arriving at Pak Kusno's house at night. In a dimly lit room, Pak Kusno hands a kris to Soedjiman while explaining its spiritual significance. The kris is believed to weaken *Sumala*, the supernatural entity that possesses Kumala.

Dialogueue:

Pak Kusno: *"Use my keris if he resists. This will weaken him. Bring him here; I will prepare the ritual to expel Sumala from Kumala's body. But if it's too late, you will have to stab him right in the heart. The child of a demon must not live in this world."*

In Data 2, the scene where Pak Kusno hands the *kris* to Soedjiman while explaining its spiritual function reinforces the position of the *kris* as an irreducible element, an object with supernatural power and meaning that transcends its material function. In this scene, the kris is treated not merely as a weapon but as a ritual tool and a conduit for spiritual energy believed to weaken the supernatural entity (*Sumala*). According to Nur (2020), the sacred value of a kris is believed to arise from the belief that the object contains magical power. In Javanese tradition, a kris is often seen as a heirloom containing "isi" or spiritual energy accumulated through lineage, rituals, and the installation of pamor or mantras. The Javanese believe that a kris possesses supernatural power and is a dwelling place for spirits or supernatural beings (Kusumatatwa et al., 2021). Therefore, the transfer of the kris by the elder character Pak Kusno also signifies the transfer of mystical knowledge to Soedjiman as the heir to the act of salvation. The use of the kris to weaken or, if necessary, destroy the entity illustrates the belief that talismanic objects can serve as mediators between the human world and the spiritual realm, acting as tools to restore balance when the boundaries between the two worlds are disturbed. Thus, the kris in this scene serves a dual function, as both a symbol of spiritual authority and a magical object with real influence in the film, representing how Javanese beliefs interpret objects as entities imbued with spiritual significance that can alter the relationship between humans, spirits, and nature.

Scenes and Dialogueues (Duration 1:48:14 – 1:48:31)

In the film's final scene, the atmosphere of a morning forest is depicted as the villagers perform a ritual with offerings to ensure that the spirit of *Sumala* does not disturb them. All the villagers are confident and without doubt that the ritual will be able to stop the spirit's disturbances.

In Data 3, the villagers' ritual scene in the middle of the forest, showcasing *offerings* as

the focal point of spiritual activity, represents the irreducible element because it presents magical practices that cannot be explained rationally but are naturally accepted by the characters as part of their lives. In the context of Javanese beliefs, offerings hold deep meaning as symbols of tribute and respect to the spirits or supernatural forces that guard the place, known as *dhanyang*, with the aim of maintaining balance between the human and spirit worlds. The belief that disturbances from supernatural beings can be halted through offerings illustrates the Javanese perspective that views the universe as an order that must be preserved in harmony through spiritual actions. The elements within the offerings, such as flowers, incense, food, and candles, are not merely symbolic objects but are considered to possess spiritual energy that can calm or satisfy supernatural beings to prevent them from disturbing humans. This is further emphasized by Aprilia (2022), who states that offerings are believed to play a role in soothing spirits and repelling the presence of evil spirits or negative energy that may disrupt human tranquility. Hisbullah et al. (2024) explain that offerings refer to various forms of tributes intended for supernatural beings believed to possess power or are worthy of respect. This belief illustrates the reciprocal relationship between humans and spirits, where humans offer respect while spirits maintain the tranquility of the region.

Scenes and Dialogueues (Duration 23:34 – 23:38)

This scene shows Sulastri struggling to give birth to her child amidst a storm. In pain and tension, exactly at midnight, she sees the shadowy figure of a demon sitting in front of her. The figure lacks a clear form but feels real and evokes deep fear.

In Data 4, the scene where Sulastri gives birth in the midst of a storm at midnight and sees the shadowy figure of a demon in front of her represents a strong representation of the irreducible element in magical realism. The presence of the supernatural being is not explained rationally but is accepted as part of the story's reality. In Javanese belief, the appearance of supernatural beings during childbirth carries profound spiritual meaning, as birth is seen as a state that opens the boundary between the human world and the spirit world. The appearance of the demon before Sulastri signifies a disruption of nature due to the magical pact she made with the supernatural being or a practice known in Javanese tradition as *pesugihan*, which is a form of spiritual partnership that demands specific rewards or sacrifices (*tumbal*). According to Anggraini & Raharjo (2022), the offering of a *tumbal* is part of the pact in *pesugihan* practices, whereby once the agreement is made, the ritual performer must adhere to the established rules to achieve the desired outcomes or wishes. Thus, this scene not only presents an unexplained magical element but also represents Javanese beliefs about the connection between humans and the spirit world, as well as the spiritual consequences that arise when harmony between the two is violated.

Merging Realms

Merging realms is a primary characteristic of magical realism that shows the blending of the real world and the supernatural world without clear boundaries between them. In this context, magical elements are not treated as strange or foreign but are accepted as a natural part of everyday reality. The realistic world and the magical world blend harmoniously, so that supernatural events are regarded as normal by the characters.

The findings in Data 5–7 indicate that the merging realms element emerges through three dominant forms: a pact relationship between humans and supernatural powers, the appearance of spirits through symbolic media (mirrors), and possession that causes supernatural spirits to take over human bodies. These three forms demonstrate that the boundaries between the rough universe (human world) and the *alus* universe (spirit world) are no longer rigid, but fluid and interpenetrating. The apparent pattern indicates that the film *Sumala* presents the supernatural world as an inherent part of Javanese cultural reality, which its characters accept without excessive surprise.

Scenes and Dialogueues (Duration 15:02 – 15:24)

The dim and quiet atmosphere enhances the mystical impression as Sulastri comes to see Mbok Tukinah for help. In their conversation, Mbok Tukinah admits to possessing black magic and warns Sulastri that the ritual to be performed will bind her to her “master,” the supernatural force that is the source of her knowledge.

Dialogueue:

Mbok Tukinah: *“My knowledge is different, it's dark magic, and you must perform the ritual. This is not a game; you will be bound to my master.”*

In Data 5, the conversation scene between Sulastri and Mbok Tukinah in the dimly lit house with a quiet atmosphere clearly represents merging realms, as it showcases the meeting point between the human world and the spirit world that is no longer sharply separated. Mbok Tukinah's admission of having black magic and being *bound to my master* illustrates how humans can establish direct connections with supernatural forces through specific spiritual practices. In Javanese beliefs, this event reflects a spiritual worldview where the relationship between humans and supernatural beings is considered natural and is part of the belief that the spiritual world coexists with the human world. The existence of her master as the source of knowledge signifies a spiritual pact, often associated in Javanese tradition with practices of black magic or *ngelmu peteng*, which is spiritual knowledge obtained through specific sacrifices. The ritual requested by Mbok Tukinah from Sulastri marks the process of opening the gateway between *jagad kasar* (the physical world) and *jagad alus* (the spiritual world), where supernatural forces begin to enter the human realm.

Scenes and Dialogues (Duration 44:35 – 44:45)

A tense scene occurs in the dining room at night as Sulastri tries to calm Kumala, who is losing control. In the mirror's reflection, a supernatural being can be seen standing behind Kumala, although it is not visible to the other characters.

Dialogue:

Sulastri: *“Don't, Kumala... enough!”*

In Data 6, the scene in the dining room at night where Sulastri attempts to calm Kumala, who is starting to lose control, while the reflection in the mirror reveals a supernatural being standing behind her daughter, serves as a concrete depiction of merging realms between the real world and the supernatural. The mirror acts as a symbolic medium connecting the two, showing the presence of a supernatural being that is not visibly apparent but felt as real by Sulastri. In Javanese beliefs, mirrors are often viewed as intermediary objects between the visible and invisible realms because they are believed to reflect not only physical shadows but also energies or supernatural forms. The presence of the supernatural being behind Kumala illustrates that human identity can be penetrated by spiritual forces, depicting a condition when a spirit inhabits a human body (possession), a phenomenon common in Javanese mystical tradition. This scene emphasizes the Javanese belief that the boundary between humans and supernatural beings is fluid and can be breached when spiritual balance is disturbed.

Scenes and Dialogues (Duration 1:44:56 – 1:45:18)

The scene in the field at night, when *Sumala*, having taken over Kumala's body, confronts Soedjiman. In the dark atmosphere, *Sumala* speaks in a calm yet threatening tone, revealing that Kumala's body now fully belongs to her.

Dialogue:

Sumala: *“Since Kumala's body became mine, my teeth have become fangs, my eyes have turned*

white, and my heart is no longer here, but here.”

In Data 7, the scene in the field at night where *Sumala* speaks through Kumala's body and states, “*Since Kumala's body became mine, my teeth have become fangs, my eyes have turned white, and my heart is no longer here, but here*” is a strong representation of merging realms, as it shows a tangible blending between the human world and the supernatural world. Kumala's body serves as a vessel inhabited by the supernatural power of *Sumala*, indicating the absence of a boundary between the human and supernatural realms. In Javanese beliefs, such phenomena are often associated with possession or the inhabitation of a spirit, which is a state when a foreign spirit enters a human body and takes over consciousness. The physical changes mentioned teeth becoming fangs, eyes turning white, and the heart relocating symbolize that the human body has transformed into a medium between the two dimensions of the real world and the spirit world. In Javanese spiritual tradition, the body is considered a space that can be entered by subtle energies from both ancestors and supernatural beings, depending on a person's physical or spiritual condition.

Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity

Disruptions of time, space, and identity represent a characteristic of magical realism that indicates irregularities in the flow of time, spatial boundaries, and the identities of characters. In works of magical realism, time often does not proceed in a linear manner, space can change without logical reasons, and character identities frequently shift between the real and supernatural worlds.

The findings in Data 8–10 show that the film *Sumala* displays the fractures of time, space, and identity through two main patterns: (1) time that does not run linearly and has a certain spiritual meaning, especially at dusk and midnight and (2) the identity of the characters that is broken due to the entry of spirits into the human body. These two patterns show that *Sumala* places the human world and the spirit world in a mutually influencing relationship, where changes in time, space, and identity are signs of disruption of the cosmic balance according to Javanese beliefs.

Scenes and Dialogues (Duration 1:47:53 – 1:48:10)

In the morning at Abdi's house, all the villagers gather with anxious expressions. Pak Sabdo sits in the middle of the crowd, looking at each villager who is bowed down in fear.

Dialogue:

Pak Sabdo: “*No one could defeat Kumala after she was possessed by Sumala. Since then, she has never been found. That is why I always remind you that after maghrib, you must be at home. Never go out, or Sumala will kill you... especially the children who wander at night.*”

In Data 8, the morning scene at Abdi's house, when Pak Sabdo warns the villagers about the danger posed by Kumala, who has been fully possessed by *Sumala*, clearly shows elements of disruptions of time, space, and identity in the theory of magical realism. Pak Sabdo's dialogue, “*That is why I always remind you that after maghrib, you must be at home. Never go out, or Sumala will kill you... especially the children who wander at night*” indicates a disruption of time, where the boundaries between the past and present, between the human world and the spirit world, seem to merge. The past event of *Sumala*'s disappearance continues to haunt the villagers' lives into the present, signifying that time in this film is cyclical and relives. In Javanese beliefs, time and space hold spiritual meanings that can “open” at certain moments, one of which is just before maghrib, considered a vulnerable time (*wanci wingit*), when supernatural energies become active and spirits begin to roam. Pak Sabdo's warning to the villagers reflects traditional beliefs that going outside during these times could invite disturbances from supernatural beings, especially towards children, who are thought to still possess weak spiritual auras.

Scenes and Dialogues (Duration 1:16:11 – 1:16:38)

In the dark night atmosphere with incense smoke rising, Pak Kusno warns Soedjiman about the impending danger.

Dialogue:

Pak Kusno: *"This midnight will be very dangerous, exactly when Kumala turns ten, he will be fully possessed by Sumala. Day will become like night, there will be no difference."*

In Data 9, the scene of the conversation between Pak Kusno and Soedjiman at night, surrounded by darkness and rising incense smoke, illustrates a disruption of time in the theory of magical realism. Pak Kusno's words, *"This midnight will be very dangerous, exactly when Kumala turns ten, he will be fully possessed by Sumala. Day will become like night, there will be no difference"* indicate that time in this film does not flow as usual. In Javanese beliefs, time is not only understood as a sequence of hours or days but also possesses spiritual meanings that can influence the relationship between humans and the supernatural. The statement that *day will be like night* depicts the disappearance of the boundary between light and dark, indicating a disturbance in the balance of nature and the entry of supernatural powers into the human world. The Javanese believe that midnight is a time filled with mystical energy, referred to as *wanci wingit*, when spirits are more easily able to interact with humans. Therefore, Pak Kusno's warning is not merely advice but reflects traditional beliefs that at certain times, the realms of humans and spirits can intersect.

Scenes and Dialogues (Duration 1:20:36 - 1:21:40)

The scene takes place in Soedjiman's house at night. In a dark and tense atmosphere, Kumala, who has been possessed by the spirit of *Sumala*, chases Sukir up to the upper floor while wielding a sword. Kumala's face is expressionless, and coldly throws the sword, piercing Sukir's chest.

Dialogue:

Sukir: *"Mercy... mercy..."*

Kumala/ Sumala: *"Eh, be quiet, I will slit your throat! Slowly now... so the pain isn't too much."*

In Data 10, the scene in Soedjiman's house, showing Kumala fully possessed by the spirit of *Sumala*, represents a concrete example of disruptions of identity in the theory of magical realism. In this scene, Kumala's body becomes a vessel for two opposing souls: Kumala's humanity and the evil power of *Sumala*. As Kumala loses control over herself and transforms into an emotionless figure attacking Sukir, an identity shift occurs, marking the loss of the boundary between humans and supernatural beings. This phenomenon aligns with Javanese beliefs about *kerauhan* or possession, a state when a human body is overtaken by a stronger supernatural spirit. According to Praditha (2021), possession occurs when a spirit or supernatural entity enters someone's body and takes control, causing the person to exhibit changes in speech, behavior, and traits resembling the personality of the possessing entity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the film *Sumala* (2024), it was concluded that the film *Sumala* represents the Javanese belief system through a magical realism storytelling style, according to Faris, namely the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity. The results of the analysis of ten main data show that the irreducible element appears through magical objects, rituals, offerings, and supernatural beings that have spiritual powers; merging realms are seen through human encounters with spirits, the appearance of spirits through symbolic media, and the phenomenon of possession; and disruptions of time, space, and identity are seen from the cracks in the

maghrib time, mystical nights, and the loss of character identity due to the dominance of *Sumala*'s spirit. These findings indicate that the magical element in *Sumala* is not only a horror aesthetic, but also visualizes Javanese cosmology and becomes a means of preserving local wisdom. The limitations of this research, which only examines one film and one theoretical framework, open up opportunities for further research to conduct comparative studies, interdisciplinary approaches, or audience reception analysis.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the analysis from the film *Sumala* (2024), it can be concluded that the film represents the belief system of the Javanese community through a magical realism storytelling style that harmoniously blends the real and supernatural worlds. Magical elements such as talismanic objects, supernatural beings, and spiritual rituals not only function as aesthetic components but also reflect the worldview of the Javanese people, who consider the balance between jagad kasar (the human world) and jagad alus (the spirit world) an essential part of life. Through three main elements of Wendy B. Faris's theory namely, the irreducible element, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity the film illustrates the close relationship between humans and spiritual forces, while also showing the consequences when spiritual balance is disturbed. Thus, *Sumala* is not merely a horror film but a reflective medium that preserves the values of belief and local wisdom of the Javanese community amidst modernization, affirming that magical elements are an integral part of Javanese spirituality and cultural identity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express his gratitude to the supervisor who has provided guidance, direction and support in the process of preparing this research. Thanks are also expressed to the family who always provided prayers and motivation during the research process. In addition, the author would like to thank colleagues who helped with data collection and discussions during this research.

REFERENCES

- Anggraini, A. D., & Raharjo, R. P. (2022). Mysticism in a collection of stories. *Basastra: Journal of Language, Literature, and Education*, 10(2), 537–552. <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/Basastra/article/view/60774>
- Aprilia, D. (2022). Public perception of ritual offerings. *TANDA: Journal of Cultural, Language, and Literary Studies* (e-ISSN: 2797-0477), 2(5), 8–13. <https://aksiologi.org/index.php/tanda/article/view/1848>
- Dzarna, & Oktarini, W. (2023). Hegemony in the Madurese short movie (Critical discourse analysis on political language in Indonesia). *KEMBARA: Journal of Language, Literature, and Education*, 9(2), 562–580. <https://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/kembara/article/view/24589>
- Dzarna. (2016). The meaning of diction in the poetry collection *Doa Untuk Anak Cucu* by WS Rendra. *Belajar Bahasa: Scientific Journal of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program*, 1(2), 226–236. <https://jurnal.unmuhjember.ac.id/index.php/BB/article/view/399>
- Fanisia, L., Fathurrozi, M. A., Yudistian, P. A., & Damariswara, R. (2022). Javanese beliefs in the novel *KKN di Desa Penari* by Simpleman: A symbolic study by Clifford Geertz. *Bahtera Indonesia: Journal of Indonesian Language and Literature Research*, 7(2), 456–466. <https://bahteraindonesia.unwir.ac.id/index.php/BI/article/view/280>
- Faris, W. B. (2004). *Ordinary enchantments: Magical realism and the remystification of narrative*. Vanderbilt University Press.

- Febryani, A., Trisfayani, T., & Mahsa, M. (2024). Elements of magical realism in *Funiculi Funicula* by Toshikazu Kawaguchi. *Kande: Journal of Indonesian Language and Literature Education*, 4(2), 203. <https://ojs.unimal.ac.id/kande/article/view/13444>
- Fita, S. D., & Pamungkas, O. Y. (2023). Exploration of Javanese cultural values in the story collection *Kisah Tanah Jawa 'Jagat Lelembut'* by Mada Zidan (Mbah Kj) and Bonaventura D. Genta. *RUANG KATA: Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 3(2), 168–182. <https://jurnal.umnu.ac.id/index.php/jrk/article/view/1023>
- Fitria, A. A. (2024). Magical realism in the short story *Kerisku Kasangsaranmu* by Suparto Brata. *Arnawa*, 2(1), 1–12. <https://journal.ugm.ac.id/v3/arnawa/article/view/12513>
- Hisbullah, S., Mahmuddin, R., & Syaripudin, A. (2024). Implementation of Maqasid Syari'ah in food offerings consumption. *AL-FIKRAH: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1(1), 181–200. <https://journal.stiba.ac.id/index.php/fikrah/article/view/1669>
- Inzaghi, M. R., Purnomo, M. H., & Komariya, S. (2024). Magical realism in the film *Jagat Arwah* by Ruben Adrian (A review of the five characteristics of magical realism by Wendy B. Faris). *Wicara: Journal of Literature, Language, and Culture*, 3(1), 82–90. <https://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/wicara/article/view/22621>
- Kasmawati, K. (2022). Literary criticism with a pragmatic approach to the short story “Malaikat Juga Tahu” by Dewi Lestari. *DIKSI: Journal of Educational and Social Studies*, 3(2), 253–261. <https://www.jurnal.bimaberilmu.com/index.php/diksi/article/view/245>
- Kusumatatwa, K., Nagoro, K. S., & Setiadi, A. (2021). Metaphysical aesthetics in the art of Kris as a medium for learning. *Journal of Contemporary Indonesian Art*, 7(2), 74–89. <https://journal.isi.ac.id/index.php/jcia/article/view/5501>
- Liani, D. R., Sutejo, S., & Novitasari, L. (2024). Magical realism in the novel *Srimenanti* by Joko Pinurbo. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 11(2), 108–117. <https://jurnal.stkipgriponorogo.ac.id/index.php/JBS/article/view/439>
- Majid, A. (2020). Social representation in the film *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan* (Semiotic and literary sociology study). *Diskursus: Journal of Indonesian Language Education*, 2(2), 101. <https://journal.lppmunindra.ac.id/index.php/diskursus/article/view/6668v>
- Nadhira, N. A. (2022). Representation of moral values in the film *Bebas* (Sociology of literature study). *DEIKTIS: Journal of Language and Literature Education*, 2(2), 161–169. <https://dmi-journals.org/deiktis/article/view/256>
- Nadirawati, A. S., & Adhisty Dwiriyani Putri. (2025). Representation of mystical culture in the movie *Waktu Magrib: An anthropolinguistic study*. *KOHESI: Journal of Indonesian Language and Literature Education*, 5(2), 28–41. <https://www.jurnal.uniraya.ac.id/index.php/Kohesi/article/view/2928>
- Ningsi, S., Ibrahim, C., Halika, L. O., G Sumule, M., Iba, L., Harianto, E., & W.O, L. (2023). Representation of communication culture between Javanese and European societies in the film *Guru Bangsa Tjokroaminoto*. *Journal of Computer Science and Visual Communication Design*, 8(1), 207–221. <https://journal.unusida.ac.id/index.php/jik/en/article/view/669>
- Nur, A. J. (2020). Exotic Arabic inscription on the Kris *Tangguh Kamardikan*. *Jurnal CMES*, 13(1), 33. <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/cmcs/article/view/44560>
- Nursalim, M. P., & Rahim, W. (2025). Dimensions of magical realism in the novel *Sang Keris* by Panji Sukma. *Pena Literasi*, 8(1), 137–151. <https://jurnal.umj.ac.id/index.php/penaliterasi/article/view/26937>
- Pamungkas, B. A., Dava Patria, T. A., & Asadulloh, H. (2024). Analysis of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap: A Roland Barthes' method approach*. *MediaKom: Scientific Journal of Communication*, 14(1), 17–30.

- <https://ejournal.amikompurwokerto.ac.id/index.php/AGUNA/article/view/2838>
- Pamungkas, O. Y., Zulaikha, S., & Ana Khusnul Khotimah, D. (2022). Magical realism in the novel *Sang Nyai 3* by Budi Sardjono. *Kawruh: Journal of Language Education, Literature and Local Culture*, 4(2), 69. <https://journal.univetbantara.ac.id/index.php/kawruh/article/view/2342>
- Praditha, D. G. E. (2021). The role of traditional villages in minimizing accidents during performances in drought conditions (Trance). *Jurnal Hukum Saraswati*, 132–145. <https://e-journal.unmas.ac.id/index.php/JHS/article/view/1861>
- Riani, R. R., Setiadi, D., & Firdaus, A. (2022). Screen adaptation of *Ananta Prahadi* by Risa Saraswati to *Ananta* by Rizki Balki. *Lingua Rima: Journal of Indonesian Language Education and Literature*, 11(3), 33. <https://jurnal.umt.ac.id/index.php/lgrm/article/view/7193>
- Rijali, A. (2018). Qualitative data analysis. *Alhadharah: Journal of Da'wah Studies*, 17(33), 81–95. <https://jurnal.uin-antasari.ac.id/index.php/alhadharah/article/view/2374>
- Rosul, K. (2024). Representation of Javanese culture in the film *Sewu Dino*. *Jurnal Komunikasi & Budaya*, 119–123. <https://jurnal.umt.ac.id/index.php/cpu/article/view/12394>
- Silaban, A., Nasution, A. R., Simanullang, C., Nasution, D. S. N., Azizah, F., Pakpahan, G. L., Firmansyah, I., Priska, N., & Purnamasari, I. (2024). Analysis of factors influencing traditional beliefs in Javanese society. *RISOMA: Journal of Social Humanities and Education Research*, 2(6), 178–185. <https://journal.appisi.or.id/index.php/risoma/article/view/408>
- Siswantoro. (2020). *Literary research methods: Structural analysis of poetry*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Suaedi, H. (2021). The dimension of local wisdom in the novel *Laskar Pelangi*. *BELAJAR BAHASA: Scientific Journal of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program*, 6(2), 189–198. <https://jurnal.unmuhjember.ac.id/index.php/BB/article/view/4953/0>
- Ulhaq, S. D. (2023). Magical realism as a representation of critique in *Manusia Kelelawar* by Damhuri Muhammad. *Jurnal Ilmiah SEMANTIKA*, 5(1), 49–56. <https://jurnal.umus.ac.id/index.php/semantika/article/view/1170>