Magical Realism Depicted in *A Space For The Unbound* (2023) Game

Ahmad Zidan Rifqi

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya
ahmadzidan.21028@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis penggambaran realisme magis dalam *A Space For The Unbound* (2023), sebuah permainan video yang dikembangkan oleh Mojiken Studio. Penelitian ini mengaplikasikan kerangka teori realisme magis dari Wendy B. Faris, dengan fokus pada lima karakteristik utamanya: elemen yang tidak dapat dijelaskan, dunia fenomenal, keraguan yang mengganggu, percampuran dunia, dan gangguan terhadap waktu, ruang, dan identitas. Studi ini melakukan analisis naratif terhadap permainan, mengungkap bagaimana karakteristik-karakteristik ini membentuk struktur naratif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permainan ini mengintegrasikan elemen-elemen supernatural tidak hanya sebagai perangkat gaya, tetapi juga sebagai alat untuk melibatkan pemain secara emosional dan menantang narasi tradisional. Melalui pengalaman protagonis, Atma dan Raya, permainan ini menggunakan unsur supernatural untuk membahas tema trauma, identitas, dan kesehatan mental dalam konteks budaya yang kaya di pedesaan Indonesia. Analisis ini menunjukkan bahwa *A Space For The Unbound* mengaburkan batasan antara realitas dan hal fantastis, menciptakan pengalaman naratif yang imersif yang melampaui narasi linier tradisional. Penelitian ini menyoroti potensi realisme magis dalam media interaktif, menawarkan wawasan baru tentang kedalaman emosional dan inovasi naratif dalam permainan video.

Kata Kunci: *Realisme Magis, Struktur Naratif, Permainan Video, Spacedive.*

Abstract

This study analyses the depiction of magical realism in *A Space For The Unbound* (2023), a video game developed by Mojiken Studio. The research applies Wendy B. Faris's framework on magical realism, focusing on its five key characteristics: irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruption of time, space, and identity. The study conducts a narrative analysis of the game, revealing how these characteristics shape the narrative structure. The findings suggest that the game integrates supernatural elements not only as a stylistic device but also as a tool to engage players emotionally and challenge conventional storytelling. Through the experiences of the protagonists, Atma and Raya, the game uses the supernatural to address themes of trauma, identity, and mental health within a culturally rich, rural Indonesian context. The analysis shows that *A Space For The Unbound* blurs the boundaries between reality and the fantastical, creating an immersive narrative experience that goes beyond traditional linear storytelling. The research highlights the potential of magical realism in interactive media, offering new insights into the emotional depth and narrative innovation in video games.

Keywords: *Magical Realism, Narrative Structure, Video Games, Spacedive.*

INTRODUCTION

Magical realism is a narrative mode that merges the fantastical with the mundane, presenting supernatural elements as natural parts of everyday life (Bowers, 2004). Originating prominently in Latin American literature through writers like Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende, magical realism has been widely adopted as a means of exploring identity, trauma, and postcolonial resistance (Faris, 2004; Ashcroft et al., 2002). By blending local myths and supernatural occurrences with realistic settings, the genre allows for a critique of dominant ideologies and offers alternative worldviews, especially in postcolonial societies (Huggan, 2002; Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007).

In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, magical realism holds potential as a cultural and political tool to express national identity and historical memory. A recent example is *A Space For The Unbound*, a video game developed by Mojiken Studio, which blends magical elements like time manipulation and mind exploration with real-life themes such as mental health, identity, and loss. Set in 1990s rural Indonesia, the game portrays these supernatural events as integral to the characters' everyday

lives, reflecting the conventions of magical realism (Hatavara et al., 2015). The game has garnered international acclaim, winning awards such as "Best Storytelling" (SEA Game Awards 2020) and "Game of the Year" (Indonesia Game Awards 2023), and has been recognized for raising awareness on mental health through an accessible, culturally relevant medium.

Despite several studies analyzing the game's aesthetic (Wiwoho et al., 2023), cultural identity (Tanudjaja & Kusumohendrarto, 2023), nostalgia (Utomo et al., 2022), and mental illness (Lubis, 2024), little attention has been paid to how magical realism specifically shapes the game's narrative structure. This study, therefore, aims to identify the elements of magical realism in *A Space For The Unbound* and examine their influence on its storytelling approach.

The research is guided by two questions: (1) What elements of magical realism are depicted in *A Space For The Unbound*? and (2) How do these elements influence the game's narrative structure? Using Wendy B. Faris's (2004) framework featuring key traits such as irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and the disruption of time, space, and identity. This study explores how magical realism functions within an interactive medium. Unlike traditional literature or film, video games allow players to actively engage with the narrative, offering a unique form of immersion that transforms the consumption of magical realism from passive observation to participatory experience.

By bridging literary theory with digital game analysis, this study expands the discourse of English literature into contemporary media. It highlights how magical realism, when adapted into video games, can deepen narrative complexity and create emotionally resonant, culturally grounded storytelling experiences. This exploration contributes to a broader understanding of how literary techniques evolve across media and affirms the value of games as legitimate forms of narrative art.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the presence of magical realism and its influence to the narrative structure of *A Space For The Unbound*. By focusing on key moments in the game, including character interactions and thematic elements, the study aims to uncover how these magical realism features shape the storytelling experience.

The primary data source is the game itself, with a focus on key scenes, dialogues, and visual elements that highlight magical realism. Secondary sources, such as scholarly articles on magical realism, particularly Wendy

B. Faris's work, will provide the theoretical framework for analysis.

Data collection involves close observation of the gameplay, identifying significant narrative moments that showcase magical realism. Transcripts of dialogues and relevant screenshots will also be used as supporting evidence.

Analysis will be conducted using qualitative techniques, categorizing instances of magical realism based on Faris's framework. This will allow for a detailed understanding of the magical realism and how it contributes to the narrative structure in *A Space For The Unbound*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section explores the depiction of magical realism and its influence on the narrative structure in *A Space For The Unbound*, a game developed by Mojiken Studio, focusing on how the game integrates the five key elements of magical realism such as irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruption of time, space, and identity into its storytelling. By analyzing these elements, the research reveals how the blending of the fantastical and the ordinary creates a unique narrative experience that mirrors emotional and psychological journeys.

1. Magical Realism Depicted in *A Space For The Unbound*

Faris (2004) outlines five key components of magical realism: irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and the disruption of time, space, and identity. This study will analyze these elements using the TEEL (Topic Sentence, Explanation, Evidence, Link) method to identify and explore how magical realism is represented in *A Space For The Unbound*.

Irreducible Elements

Irreducible elements are defined as magical or supernatural occurrences that cannot be explained through logic, science, or rational thought. Within the narrative, these events are treated as ordinary, and both the characters and the storyworld accept them as a natural part of reality (Faris, 2004). In *A Space For The Unbound*, one such phenomenon is the "Spacedive," in which a character enters another person's mind. The character Atma, one of the protagonists, is the only individual capable of performing this act. This "Spacedive" phenomenon serves as an example of an irreducible element, as it defies logical explanation. According to Faris's (2004) framework, such occurrences are accepted as normal within the game's universe, further demonstrating the presence of irreducible

elements in the narrative structure. The following evidence highlights this concept within the game.

Figure 1. Introduction of Magic Red Book (00:05:53)

Figure 2. Atma dives into other's mind (00:06:26)

Nirmala: "Hey, maybe it's time to use the Magic Red Book. The book which contains the spell to dive into people's heart and rid them of their inner turnmoil."

In *A Space For The Unbound*, Atma, portrayed as the boy in the white shirt, possesses a unique ability to enter the minds of others using an object known as the magic red book (see Figure 1). This book plays a crucial role throughout the game, allowing Atma to access and explore the thoughts and emotions of those around him. By doing so, he aids others in confronting and resolving their internal conflicts. The magic red book serves as a bridge between the physical and psychological realms, exemplifying an irreducible element in magical realism. It introduces supernatural occurrences that are accepted as normal within the narrative, despite their illogical nature (Faris, 2004).

Figure 2 captures the first instance of Atma using his "Spacedive" ability to enter another person's mind, marking a pivotal moment in the game. The first individual Atma assists is Nirmala, a young girl dressed in a yellow shirt, who harbors aspirations of becoming a writer. However, Nirmala is paralyzed by the fear of judgment, fearing that her story will be deemed poor or that she will be viewed as strange or inferior. Through the "Spacedive," Atma helps Nirmala confront her anxiety, empowering her to continue her writing journey and overcome her feelings of inadequacy. This interaction underscores the

therapeutic nature of the narrative, where the protagonist uses his supernatural ability to guide others through their psychological struggles. By employing a magical tool to address personal fears and emotional challenges, *A Space For The Unbound* seamlessly blends the magical and the real, creating a narrative space in which the fantastical is not only accepted but essential for resolving human dilemmas (Brian McHale, 2016).

The Phenomenal World

Magical realism is a genre that anchors its narrative in a richly detailed and realistic setting, often drawing from everyday life. This emphasis on the ordinary and the familiar creates a striking contrast with the magical elements, making the supernatural appear more natural and seamlessly integrated into the fabric of reality.

As Faris (2004) notes, magical realism typically occurs in a setting grounded in realism, where extraordinary events are woven into the everyday life of the characters. This integration makes the magical elements of the narrative feel natural and widely accepted within the world. In *A Space For The Unbound*, the game vividly recreates a rural Indonesian setting from the late 90s, presenting detailed depictions of daily scenes and elements that were integral to life at the time. This setting effectively blends the real and the magical, enhancing the game's immersive experience.

Figure 3. A glimpse of Pos Kamling (00:18:59)

Figure 4. A glimpse of Angkot (02:47:16)

In Figure 3, the game incorporates familiar local elements, such as the security post (Pos Kamling), small community checkpoints commonly found in rural villages. These security posts played a crucial role in maintaining the safety of the community, and their inclusion in the game emphasizes the close-knit nature of rural life, where security was managed collectively. By positioning these security posts against the backdrop of more fantastical events, the game creates a connection between everyday life and the extraordinary. The Pos Kamling symbolizes how communities once banded together to maintain safety, and its presence in the game makes the world feel more relatable. This contrast between the ordinary and the magical adds a distinctive layer to the game, encouraging players to reflect on the importance of community and teamwork, even within a fantastical context. Through this simple yet impactful addition, the game underscores Indonesian traditions while enhancing the player's immersion in the story.

Another notable feature is the angkot (see Figure 4), a primary mode of transportation for rural Indonesians during this period. The angkot, with its vibrant colors and lively yet familiar atmosphere, serves as a symbol of the busy, interconnected nature of village life. These everyday elements of rural Indonesia can be categorized as part of the phenomenal world, an essential component of magical realism. The angkot embodies the daily hustle and bustle of village life, where public transportation is vital for connecting people within their community and to the outside world. It highlights the communal and dynamic aspects of village life, where everyone shares a space, despite the apparent disorder. Through this depiction, the game captures the essence of rural Indonesia, showcasing its lively, tight-knit communities, and further enriching the phenomenal world element within the narrative.

Figure 5. A glimpse of tire repairing stall (02:30:37)

Figure 6. Atma talking to the delinquents (01:17:23)

Delinquents: "What date does **Indonesia** celebrate *Independence Day?*"
Atma: "Huh What a silly question. Even a grade schooler can answer that."
Delinquents: "There is nothing silly about this country, bro! This is a test of patriotism!"

Figure 7. A glimpse of grocery store (01:05:56)

Store Owner: "I'll even give you a discount! Only 1,500 **rupiah** for my buddy"

In Figure 5, the game introduces a tire repairing stall, a common sight in both rural and urban areas throughout Indonesia. These stalls, typically run by local families or small businesses, offer affordable services for vehicle repairs, from motorbikes to cars. While seemingly simple, these tire stalls are integral to the daily lives of many Indonesians, embodying the resourcefulness and practicality characteristic of rural communities.

Figure 6 depicts a conversation between Atma and a group of delinquents, further reinforcing the game's Indonesian setting. The delinquents ask Atma, "What date does Indonesia celebrate Independence Day?" Atma humorously responds, "Huh, what a silly question. Even a grade schooler can answer that." However, the delinquents retort, "There is nothing silly about this country, bro! This is a test of patriotism!" This dialogue not only reflects the local context and the delinquents' perspective but also underscores the importance of Indonesia's Independence Day, a national event celebrated on August 17th each year. The conversation highlights the characters' deep

connection to national identity and the value they place on patriotism, even in a playful or confrontational manner.

In Figure 7, Atma is shown in a situation where he must buy cigarettes for the delinquents blocking his path, with the cost being 1,500 rupiah, a typical small transaction in Indonesia. This amount, although modest, serves as a subtle reference to the local economy and daily transactions in Indonesia, where cash is commonly used for small purchases. The inclusion of "rupiah" emphasizes the game's deep connection to the real-world economic context of Indonesia, where the rupiah is the official currency. This detail not only enhances the authenticity of the setting but also provides players with a grounded and relatable economic framework within the game.

A Space For The Unbound is unmistakably set in Indonesia, with its detailed portrayal of rural life, local customs, and cultural elements. The game incorporates Indonesian landmarks, traditional vehicles like angkot (public minivans), and references to the national currency, the rupiah, as well as key national events like Independence Day. These elements work together to firmly root the story within the cultural and historical context of Indonesia, enriching the player's experience by creating a deeply authentic atmosphere.

Unsettling Doubts

Unsettling doubts arise when readers are unsure whether the magical events within a narrative are real or imagined. This tension between rational and supernatural explanations creates ambiguity, allowing for multiple interpretations of the story. As Faris (2004) explains, magical realism often thrives on this ambiguity, presenting supernatural elements in a way that neither fully explains nor completely dismisses them, thus opening the door for open-ended interpretations (Geneviève, 2022). This uncertainty creates a complex experience for the audience, where the boundaries between reality and the magical are intentionally blurred, challenging the reader's perception of what is possible within the world of the narrative.

Figure 8. Atma returns to the classroom (03:42:28)

Atma: *"How did I end up here, at this desk, in this classroom... for the third time?"*

In Figure 8, Atma is depicted experiencing confusion due to a recurring event. Each time Raya's power weakens, Atma unexpectedly loses consciousness and finds himself back in the classroom, the first place he wakes up. This strange occurrence prompts numerous questions, especially since it happens repeatedly without a clear explanation. Many players are left uncertain, wondering if Atma's return to the classroom is a supernatural event or merely a product of his imagination. The lack of a logical or rational explanation for these events creates a sense of confusion, as the game offers no definitive answer. This ambiguity, whether the experience is magical or psychological, exemplifies a key feature of magical realism, where reality and the supernatural blend in ways that leave the audience grappling with uncertainty. The resulting tension between the rational and the magical enhances the feeling that the event is illogical and unexplained, reinforcing the element of unsettling doubts.

Merging Realms

Merging realms is a key element of magical realism that effectively dissolves the boundaries between different worlds, such as the natural and supernatural, the living and the dead, or the physical and the spiritual. These realms coexist and intersect effortlessly, creating a fluid and dynamic narrative space where extraordinary events are treated as ordinary. This fusion challenges the traditional separation between reality and fantasy, compelling both characters and the audience to reconsider their perception of reality. The blending of these realms not only enhances the storytelling but also provides new avenues to explore complex human experiences, emotions, and cultural beliefs. In *A Space For The Unbound*, the merging of realms is a central theme, as supernatural events are seamlessly integrated into the daily lives of the characters. This blending of worlds can be clearly observed in the following examples.

Figure 9. A glimpse of inside Erik's mind (03:31:10)

Figure 10. Erik monster-form emerges to the real world
(03:37:13)

Atma: *"(Nirmala did something to Erik in the Spacedive, and now he's a weredog out here!)"*

Figure 9 captures a pivotal moment when Atma uses his "Spacedive" ability to enter Erik's mind, where he encounters a monstrous, wolf-like version of Erik. This creature symbolizes Erik's unresolved trauma, acting as an obstacle that prevents him from moving forward in life. Through his intervention, Atma encourages Erik to confront this inner demon, helping him face his fears and traumatic memories. Atma's role in assisting Erik to overcome the monster represents the healing process from past emotional wounds. Interestingly, Nirmala, the young girl in the yellow shirt introduced earlier in the story, also demonstrates the ability to enter Erik's mind. This development underscores Nirmala's growing power over others' thoughts and highlights the potential dangers of such abilities.

In Figure 10, after Atma successfully defeats the monstrous werewolf, Nirmala takes a more disturbing approach. She transforms Erik back into his monstrous form and allows it to materialize in the real world, in the classroom. This shift marks a crucial turning point, as Nirmala begins to use her newfound power not only to manipulate others' minds but also to alter the reality they inhabit. By bringing Erik's monstrous form into the physical world, Nirmala destabilizes the environment, causing glitches and creating a sense of instability. This event can be interpreted as an example of merging realms, where the supernatural and the real world collide, blurring the boundaries between the two and further emphasizing the integration of the magical into everyday life.

Disruption of Time, Space, & Identity

As Faris (2004) explains, in magical realism, disruptions in time, space, and identity are essential elements that challenge traditional representations of reality. Time in magical realism is often fluid and non-linear, creating a subjective, cyclical experience that blurs the distinctions between past, present, and future.

Similarly, space is disrupted, with physical boundaries becoming unclear or fragmented, allowing for surreal environments where the real and the imagined coexist. Identity, too, is constantly shifting, as characters undergo transformations or face contradictions in their sense of self, often reflecting deeper cultural or psychological conflicts. These disruptions challenge realistic portrayals of the world and encourage a more profound exploration of alternative experiences and perspectives.

- Disruption of Time & Space
  In magical realism, time is often depicted as non-linear and fluid, creating a more subjective and at times cyclical experience of events. This disruption departs from traditional, chronological storytelling, where events unfold in a clear, sequential order. Instead, the past, present, and future may blend or intersect, emphasizing the subjective nature of time and the way memory, experience, and anticipation intertwine.
  The narrative structure in magical realism can shift between timelines or even create timeless spaces where events are not fixed to any specific moment. Similarly, space in magical realism is often portrayed as distorted, fragmented, or ambiguous. The physical environment may change or defy logical boundaries, enabling surreal landscapes or unexpected connections between different realms.
  This disruption of space challenges conventional notions of geography, architecture, and location, facilitating fluid movement between different settings, including the merging of the real and the fantastical. The blurred boundaries between reality and imagination highlight the genre's ability to seamlessly blend the ordinary with the extraordinary. The following evidence illustrates this concept.

Figure 11. Introduction of the Magic Wand (06:04:49)

Marin: *"But this Magic Wand can open a rift in **time**, allowing you to dive into the memory of a specific place."*

Figure 12. Atma opening a portal to the past using the magic wand (06:14:42)

Figure 13. Atma goes back to the past (06:14:50)

In Figure 11, Atma is given a tool called the magic wand, which enables him to create a portal for time travel to a specific moment in the past. This event can be seen as both a disruption of time and space, as Atma must first use the wand to open a crack in the fabric of time before he can jump through and begin the time travel process.

This concept mirrors the idea of opening a dimension in Indonesian storytelling. The evidence supporting this can be seen in Figures 12 and 13, where Atma uses this power to retrieve the Magic Red Book, which had been erased by his girlfriend, Raya. These scenes exemplify how time and space are fluidly manipulated in the narrative.

- Disruption of Identity
  In magical realism, identity is often fluid and contested. Characters may undergo transformations or experience contradictions in their sense of self, leading them to question their roles in society and their personal identities. These disruptions often mirror broader cultural, political, or psychological tensions. Individuals in magical realist works may exist in multiple states or display dual identities, further blurring the lines between reality and the fantastical. This fluidity in identity challenges traditional notions of self, reflecting deeper existential questions. The evidence for this can be observed in the examples provided below.

Figure 14. Atma begins to doubt his existence (07:57:59)

Atma: "But... if the Erik, Lulu, and Marin that I met aren't real... Then what does that make me?"

In Figure 14, Nirmala (the girl in the yellow hat) reveals to Atma that the people he has encountered are not real. This revelation causes Atma to question his own existence, especially as he wonders why he is the only one capable of entering people's minds. As the story progresses, it is ultimately revealed that Atma lives in a made-up world, with Raya, Atma's girlfriend, being the only real person responsible for creating this world. This discovery challenges Atma's sense of self and reality, further exploring themes of identity.

Figure 15. Raya splits her other half (07:48:46)

Nirmala: "It's me, I'm you. Don't push me away."

The following scene reveals that Raya and Nirmala are, in fact, the same person. Raya harbors disdain for Nirmala, seeing her as the source of her suffering. Nirmala, often viewed as strange by others, is relentlessly mocked and ridiculed. As a result, Raya decides to split her personality and adopt a new identity as Raya. Nirmala, who is later revealed to be Raya, is depicted as a child who regularly faces bullying from her peers and harsh criticism from her father for being different. Despite these challenges, she has a strong passion for art and storytelling, though she struggles academically.

2. Magical Realism Influence to The Narrative Structure

Magical realism influences the narrative structure in *A Space For The Unbound* by transforming the story into an emotional journey rather than a linear progression. Rather than following a traditional beginning-to-end plot, the game utilizes magical elements, such as the ability to "Spacedive" into people's minds, to fragment the story, allowing for time shifts and transitions between different realities. This approach mirrors how memories and emotions operate, often unclear, repetitive, and deeply personal, thereby enhancing the narrative's complexity and emotional depth.
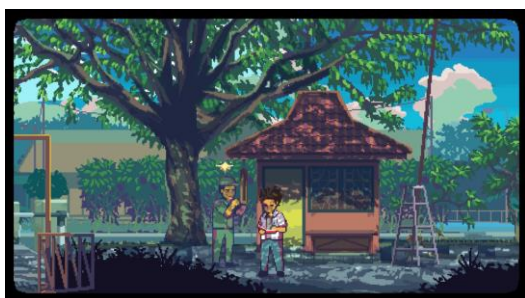

Figure 16. Atma uses his "Spacedive" ability (00:19:47)

Figure 17. The world inside security guard's mind (00:21:11)

The "Spacedive" serves as a key example of how this narrative technique functions. When Atma enters someone's mind, the world around him transforms: rooms shift, objects float, and time warps. These moments are not just magical for visual effect; they fundamentally alter the way the story is told. By delving into the thoughts and emotions of other characters, the game pauses the main plot to focus on emotional truths. This approach shifts the narrative's emphasis from mere events to a deeper understanding of the characters' feelings, creating a story that is more about emotional exploration than a straightforward sequence of actions.

Figure 18. Atma waking up in classroom (00:28:38)

As the story progresses, the world becomes increasingly unstable, particularly as Raya's mental state begins to deteriorate. Her emotions start to influence the environment and the direction of the narrative. At times, scenes repeat, such as when Atma repeatedly finds himself in the same classroom. These loops demonstrate that the story doesn't follow a linear path; instead, it circles back, revealing new insights with each repetition. This structure reflects how the game portrays trauma—not as a straightforward sequence of events, but as something disordered and difficult to escape.

Wendy B. Faris (2004) suggests that magical realism alters our perception of time, space, and identity. In *A Space For The Unbound*, this concept is illustrated through the shifting identities of Atma and Raya, whose selves are influenced by the magical events surrounding them. Magical realism allows the characters' emotions to come across as genuine, even when the world around them defies logic or natural laws.

In short, magical realism disrupts the narrative structure in *A Space For The Unbound* by transforming the story into an emotional experience. It breaks up the conventional plot, using magical elements to delve into the characters' inner worlds and to show that trauma and healing are not linear processes. Magical realism doesn't just introduce fantastical events into the story—it reshapes how the story is constructed and experienced, providing a unique way of exploring deep emotional truths.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that in *A Space For The Unbound*, the use of magical realism profoundly influences the narrative structure, challenging traditional storytelling conventions and immersing players in an experience that blurs the lines between reality and fantasy. By incorporating key elements of magical realism, such as irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity, the game creates a multifaceted narrative that mirrors the psychological and emotional journeys of its protagonists, Atma and Raya. Through these elements, players are invited into a world where the supernatural is not only accepted but essential for resolving human dilemmas, highlighting the genre's unique capacity to blend the magical with the everyday.

The concept of "Spacedive" serves as the most prominent irreducible element within the game. This magical phenomenon allows Atma to enter the minds of others and help them confront their inner struggles. The Magic Red Book, as a tool for accessing the mind, plays a central role in the healing process, forging a connection between the psychological and supernatural realms. As players navigate these interactions, they witness how the supernatural isn't just a fantastical element but a crucial force for personal growth, emphasizing magical realism's power to address real-world emotional issues.

Additionally, the game's setting in rural Indonesia during the late 90s offers a deeply authentic representation of the phenomenal world. Everyday life is portrayed through elements such as the angkot and tire-repair stalls, adding a layer of realism that anchors the fantastical elements in the ordinary. This juxtaposition makes the magical occurrences feel natural within the narrative, enriching the immersive experience. The incorporation of local customs and cultural references enhances the emotional connection to the setting, making the surreal events more relatable and grounded in the player's own reality.

The element of unsettling doubts, particularly exemplified by Atma's repeated confusion over his return to the classroom, further complicates the distinction between reality and illusion. The narrative leaves room for interpretation, forcing players to contend with ambiguity and uncertainty. This uncertainty deepens the engagement, as the boundary between rational explanations and supernatural occurrences becomes increasingly blurred.

In the merging of realms, *A Space For The Unbound* disrupts the clear separation between the physical and the psychological. Erik's transformation into a monstrous figure within his mind and its subsequent manifestation in the real world demonstrates how the supernatural and the real collide, creating a dynamic and fluid narrative. This intersection challenges conventional perceptions of reality, providing a complex exploration of human emotion, trauma, and identity.

Finally, the disruptions of time, space, and identity amplify the game's emotional resonance. Through repetitive scenes and fragmented timelines, *A Space For The Unbound* reflects the disorientation experienced by its characters. Atma's questioning of his own existence—particularly when it is revealed that his world is an illusion created by Raya's fractured mind—underscores the fluidity of identity within magical realism. These narrative disruptions invite players to reflect on their perceptions of self and reality, deepening their engagement with the story.

In conclusion, *A Space For The Unbound* employs magical realism not just as a stylistic tool, but as a means

of exploring complex human experiences. By disrupting linear storytelling and intertwining the supernatural with the real, the game crafts an emotionally impactful narrative that stays with players long after they have finished. Through its thoughtful integration of magical realism, the game provides a unique platform to explore mental health themes, including trauma, healing, and self-discovery—issues that remain underrepresented in Indonesian media. This makes *A Space For The Unbound* an exemplary case of how video games can leverage magical realism to create meaningful and thought-provoking experiences.

SUGGESTION

Future research could explore the broader use of magical realism in the gaming industry, investigating its integration into different genres and themes. By moving beyond traditional fantasy and surrealism, researchers can examine how this narrative technique influences game design elements such as emotional engagement, mechanics, and player interaction.

This research could examine how non-linear storytelling, the manipulation of time and space, and the merging of reality with fantasy affect player immersion in the game world. Specifically, it would focus on how these narrative forms alter player engagement, decision-making, and character development, offering deeper insights into the cognitive and emotional effects of gameplay.

Additionally, understanding how these narrative disruptions affect player decisions and game outcomes could guide future video game development, particularly in creating experiences that emphasize emotional depth and interactive complexity, shaping the future of narrative-driven games.

REFERENCES

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2002). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures, 2nd Edition*.

Bowers, M. A. (2004). *MAGIC(AL) REALISM*.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brian McHale. (2016). *The Cambridge History of Postmodern Literature* (B. McHale & L. Platt, Eds.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CHO9781316492697

Faris, W. B. (2004). *Ordinary Enchantments Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*.

Garver, S., Adamo-Villani, N., & Dib, H. (2018). The Impact of Visual Style on User Experience in Games. *EAI Endorsed Transactions on Game-Based Learning*,

4(15), 153535. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.5-1-2018.153535

Geneviève, E. (2022). *An Infinite Succession of Steps: Magical Realism's Prehistory*.

Hatavara, M., Hyvärinen, M., Mäkelä, M., & Mäyrä, F. (2015). *Narrative Theory, Literature, and New Media* (M. Hatavara, M. Hyvärinen, M. Mäkelä, & F. Mäyrä, Eds.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722313

Huggan, Graham. (2002). *The Postcolonial Exotic : Marketing the Margins*. Taylor and Francis.

Juul, Jesper. (2005). *Half-real : video games between real rules and fictional worlds*. MIT Press.

Lubis, I. (2024). *REPRESENTASI MENTAL ILLNESS DALAM PERMAINAN VIDEO "A SPACE FOR THE UNBOUND."* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385138946

Masterclass. (2021). *Learn about narrative arcs: Definition, examples, and how to create a narrative arc in your writing - 2025*. MasterClass. https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-are-the-elements-of-a-narrative-arc-and-how-do-you-create-one-in-writing

Rave, M. E. B. (2003). *DigitalCommons@UMaine Magical Realism and Latin America*. http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etdhttp://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/481

Rukundwa, L. S., & Van Aarde, A. G. (2007). The formation of postcolonial theory. In *HTS* (Vol. 63, Issue 3).

Tanudjaja, A., & Kusumohendrarto, R. H. (2023). IDENTITAS BUDAYA INDONESIA DALAM GIM DIGITAL "SPACE FOR THE UNBOUND." *Jurnal Citrakara*, *5*(1), 50–59.

Utomo, P. R., Hutama, K., Yan, Y., Seni, S. J., & Sunarya, Y. Y. (2022). IMERSI DAN NOSTALGIA DALAM GAME *A SPACE FOR THE UNBOUND*. In *& Reka Rancang* (Vol. 5, Issue 1).

Vault, A. (2023, January 30). *A Space For The Unbound | Complete Gameplay Walkthrough - Full Game | No Commentary*. YouTube. https://youtu.be/MnD3-Y9Bmz0?si=595-wLIMYAKdj1Km

Veale, K. (2015). Affect, Responsibility, and How Modes of Engagement Shape the Experience of Videogames. *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.26503/todigra.v2i1.44

Wiwoho, H., Qursheva, M., Wijaya, A., Azkar, M., & Rizky, A. H. (2023). CITRA DALAM VIDEO GAME *A SPACE FOR THE UNBOUND* TAHUN 2023. In *Seminar Nasional Desain dan Media*. https://www.togeproductions.com,

Zamora, L. Parkinson., & Faris, W. B. . (1995). *Magical realism : theory, history, community*. Duke University Press.