

Sacred Temporality, Homecoming, and Religious Magical Realism in Danarto's Indonesian Fiction *Lailatul Qadar*

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Abstract

This article examines how Danarto's short story *Lailatul Qadar* transforms the culturally familiar experience of *mudik* (homecoming) into a religiously charged magical realist narrative. The study asks how the story constructs an empirically recognisable social world, how it introduces irreducible supernatural phenomena without collapsing into fantasy, and how its narrative form turns late-Ramadan mobility into a site of ontological uncertainty. This study adopts a qualitative textual case study grounded in close reading, document analysis, Wendy B. Faris's theory of magical realism, and Gérard Genette's narratology. The analysis focuses on five dimensions: the phenomenal world, irreducible magical elements, unsettling doubts, the merging of realms, and disruptions of time, space, and identity, while also tracing focalization, voice, temporal sequencing, and symbolic imagery. The findings show that Danarto does not merely append miracle to realism; he narratively fuses everyday piety, transport infrastructures, family intimacy, and sacred temporality into what this article terms religious remystification. *Mudik* appears not only as social mobility but as a threshold through which divine presence, angelic mediation, and spiritual testing become narratively legible. The article argues that *Lailatul Qadar* expands the discussion of magical realism in Indonesian literature by showing that its enchantment may emerge from Islamic sacred time rather than from folklore alone. It also demonstrates that intrinsic elements become analytically productive when read as narrative devices that organize religious ambiguity rather than as isolated formal components.

Keywords: Danarto; *Lailatul Qadar*; magical realism; sacred temporality; homecoming.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana cerpen Danarto *Lailatul Qadar* mengubah pengalaman mudik yang sangat akrab dalam kehidupan sosial Indonesia menjadi narasi realisme magis yang berdaya religius. Penelitian ini menguji bagaimana cerpen tersebut membangun dunia sosial yang empiris dan dikenali pembaca, bagaimana ia menghadirkan gejala supranatural yang tak-tereduksi tanpa jatuh menjadi fantasi murni, dan bagaimana bentuk naratifnya menjadikan mobilitas akhir Ramadan sebagai ruang ketidakpastian ontologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus tekstual kualitatif yang bertumpu pada pembacaan intens (*close reading*), analisis dokumen, teori realisme magis Wendy B. Faris, dan naratologi Gérard Genette. Analisis diarahkan pada lima dimensi: *phenomenal world*, *irreducible element*, *unsettling doubts*, *merging realms*, serta *disruptions of time, space, and identity*, sembari menelaah unsur-unsur fokusasi, suara naratif, sekuen temporal, dan citraan simbolik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Danarto tidak sekadar menempelkan keajaiban pada realisme, melainkan meleburkan kesalehan sehari-hari, infrastruktur perjalanan, keintiman keluarga, dan temporalitas sakral ke dalam apa yang disebut sebagai remistifikasi religius. Mudik tampil bukan hanya sebagai mobilitas sosial, tetapi juga sebagai ambang pengalaman di mana kehadiran Ilahi, mediasi malaikat, dan ujian spiritual menjadi terbaca secara naratif. Artikel ini berargumen *Lailatul Qadar* memperluas pembahasan realisme magis dalam khazanah sastra Indonesia dengan menunjukkan daya pikat magis dapat lahir dari waktu sakral Islam, bukan semata dari folklor lokal. Selain itu, artikel ini memperlihatkan bahwa unsur intrinsik menjadi produktif secara analitis ketika dibaca sebagai perangkat naratif yang mengorganisasi ambiguitas religius.

Kata kunci: Danarto; *Lailatul Qadar*; realisme magis; temporalitas sakral; mudik.



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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, *mudik* (homecoming) at the end of Ramadan is more than seasonal travel: it is a dense social ritual where kinship, piety, mobility, and emotional belonging converge (Yusuf et al., 2020). Studies on Indonesian Muslim public culture have shown that piety is increasingly negotiated through everyday infrastructures, consumer practices, media circulation, and embodied routines rather than through doctrine alone (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010; Husein & Slama, 2018). *Mudik* belongs to this domain of lived religion because it links spiritual calendrics to transport systems, family obligations, and collective affect. Even public-health research during the pandemic treated *mudik* as a socially decisive form of religious mobility, demonstrating how deeply it is embedded in the Indonesian social imagination (Veruswati et al., 2020). Against this background, Danarto's *Lailatul Qadar* deserves renewed attention because it turns an everyday Muslim journey into a threshold of transcendence. The story matters not merely as representation, but as a literary intervention that reveals how sacred time may be obscured, deferred, and unexpectedly reactivated within the most ordinary social practice of *Mudik*.

Study on Danarto has consistently emphasized his spiritual idiom, symbolic density, and Sufistic tendency to exceed ordinary realism. Existing studies have examined transcendence in selected short stories, semiotic patterns, indigenous spirituality, and the mystical or symbolic architecture of his fiction (Nugraheni et al., 2007; Baihaqi et al., 2018; Sudiby, 2022). Other discussions of magical realism in Indonesian literature have either concentrated on later writers, broader genre history, or comparative frames that do not dwell on Danarto's Ramadan narratives specifically (Sundusiah, 2015; Downes, 2019; Kurniawan et al., 2024). Meanwhile, magical realism as theorized by Wendy B. Faris has been widely used to analyze texts where the phenomenal world coexists with irreducible supernatural events, yet this framework has rarely been brought into direct conversation with Danarto's religious short fiction (Faris, 2004; Warnes, 2005a, 2005b). This research, therefore, is not simply the absence of another reading of Danarto, but the lack of a focused account of how *Lailatul Qadar* narratively fuses Islamic sacred temporality, social realism, and supernatural perception.

This article addresses that gap by asking three interrelated questions. First, how does *Lailatul Qadar* construct a phenomenal social world through *mudik*, Ramadan, and the recognisable routines of Muslim family life? Second, how are magical elements introduced



as irreducible experiences rather than as detachable fantasy motifs? Third, how do narrative devices such as focalization, temporal sequencing, imagery, and symbolic patterning generate ontological ambiguity while preserving a distinctly religious horizon? To answer these questions, the study reads the short story as a qualitative textual case situated at the intersection of magical realism and narratology. Faris's categories are used to identify the story's magical realist operations, while Genette's account of narrative voice, order, duration, and focalization clarifies how intrinsic elements work as formal devices rather than as isolated checklist items (Genette, 1980; Steinby, 2016). The objective is not to classify the text mechanically, but to explain how Danarto's narrative form makes sacred experience legible from within everyday mobility.

The article advances the provisional argument that Danarto's story produces a specifically religious magical realism in which miracle is neither external to social reality nor reducible to private mysticism. Instead, sacred temporality enters the narrative through congestion, departure, longing for home, and the moral pressure surrounding the last nights of Ramadan. This matters theoretically because magical realism is often discussed through postcolonial historiography, myth, or secular enchantment, whereas *Lailatul Qadar* suggests that Islamic devotional time can itself generate the conditions of narrative enchantment (Slemon, 1988; Spindler, 1993; Al-Hajaj, 2020). It also matters methodologically because the study shows that theme, plot, setting, characterization, and imagery become most analytically useful when treated as narrative mechanisms organizing uncertainty, revelation, and symbolic intensification. If this argument holds, then Danarto's short story does more than depict a religious journey: it remystifies Indonesian Muslim everyday life and expands the interpretive vocabulary available for discussing magical realism in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Danarto and religious narrative should not be understood simply as the presence of Islamic themes in fiction. In Indonesian literary criticism, Danarto's religiousness is more productively described as a narrative mode in which spirituality, symbolic excess, and metaphysical perception reorganize the logic of everyday events. Earlier scholarship has variously defined this mode through semiotics, transcendental literature, Sufistic interiority, and the fusion of Javanese cosmology with Islamic ethics (Nugraheni et al., 2007; Baihaqi et al., 2018; Sudiby, 2022). Such variation matters because "religious narrative" may refer, in a narrow sense, to doctrinal content, but in a broader and more useful sense it

refers to the formal shaping of experience through revelation, ethical testing, and encounters with the unseen. Sundusiah (2015) argues that Danarto's realism is never merely mimetic because it is constantly disturbed by the sacred. Thus, in this article, Danarto's religious narrative is defined as a literary configuration where ordinary life is re-read through transcendence, symbolic density, and spiritually charged uncertainty rather than through explicit sermonizing alone.

Danarto's religious narrative can be categorized through at least four interrelated aspects. The first is sacred referentiality: recurring signs drawn from prayer, fasting, Ramadan, angels, destiny, and divine mercy. The second is symbolic intensification: concrete objects or events become spiritually overdetermined rather than remaining purely descriptive. The third is ontological porosity: boundaries between visible and invisible realms remain permeable. The fourth is ethical testing: characters are not simply developed psychologically, but placed within situations where worldly desire and spiritual discernment confront one another. These aspects recur across Danarto criticism, although researchers often privilege one at the expense of the others (Gumono, 2017; Sudiby, 2022). For the present study, those aspects are treated as indicators that help distinguish religious narration from moral didacticism. A text may mention religion without becoming a religious narrative in Danarto's sense; it becomes one when narration itself is shaped by sacred temporality, symbolic resonance, and a reality structure that refuses strict separation between empirical experience and metaphysical intervention.

Magical realism, especially in Wendy B. Faris's formulation, refers to narrative worlds where extraordinary events appear within otherwise realistic settings and are not fully neutralized by rational explanation. This definition differs from neighboring concepts such as fantasy, allegory, or the marvelous. Fantasy often builds a separate world with its own explicit rules, whereas magical realism preserves a recognizable phenomenal world and inserts the inexplicable into it as if both belonged together (Faris, 2004; Warnes, 2005a). Postcolonial critics such as Slemon (1988) have emphasized magical realism's political capacity to unsettle dominant epistemologies, while later scholars have extended the concept to faith, mysticism, ecology, and global literary circulation (Luffin, 2018; Terian, 2021; Joseph, 2024). The definitional debate is therefore not whether magical realism contains magic, but how the magic functions. In this study, Faris is preferred because her

framework is sufficiently formal and flexible to account for a text like *Lailatul Qadar*, where the supernatural is neither a folkloric residue nor a purely secular strategy of estrangement.

Faris's model can be operationalized through five interdependent indicators. The first is the irreducible element: an event or image that resists naturalistic explanation. The second is the phenomenal world: a detailed realist environment that makes the extraordinary legible precisely because the ordinary is credible. The third is unsettling doubt: readers hesitate between rational and supernatural interpretations. The fourth is the merging of realms: the visible and invisible coexist without stable partition. The fifth is disruption of time, space, and identity: linear chronology, ordinary perception, or fixed subject positions are disturbed (Faris, 2004). Subsequent scholarship has refined these indicators by showing that magical realism may naturalize the supernatural through vagueness, narrative restraint, or sensory overload rather than overt spectacle (Warnes, 2005b; Arva, 2008; Hart & Hart, 2021). These refinements are important for the present article because Danarto's text does not rely on world-building excess. Its magical realism emerges through fleeting light, altered perception, moral tension, and sacred timing within a socially realistic *mudik* narrative.

Narrative form and intrinsic elements are approached here through Gérard Genette's narratology, which shifts attention from what a story contains to how it is told. In many Indonesian literary classrooms, intrinsic elements are taught as separate items (theme, plot, setting, characterization, point of view, and style) yet Genette demonstrates that these elements become analytically significant only when their relations are examined through order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice (Genette, 1980). Later narratological discussions have shown that focalization, temporal arrangement, and narratorial positioning shape not only aesthetic form but also epistemic access and affective alignment (Edmiston, 1989; Bundgaard, 2010; Akimoto, 2019). This distinction is crucial for a text like *Lailatul Qadar*. If intrinsic elements are treated as static components, the story becomes a descriptive inventory. If they are read as narrative operations, one can see how plot becomes a threshold journey, setting becomes sacredly charged space, and point of view becomes a mechanism for distributing uncertainty between the ordinary and the miraculous.

For analytical purposes, Genette's framework is translated into four working dimensions. Voice identifies who speaks and from what narrative position; focalization

clarifies who perceives and how knowledge is limited or expanded; temporality tracks order, duration, and rhythm; and descriptive-symbolic patterning registers the recurrence of images that exceed mere ornament. These dimensions do not replace intrinsic elements but reorganize them into a more rigorous account of narrative production. Recent qualitative literary studies have similarly argued that close reading gains explanatory force when textual features are clustered into recurrent functions rather than listed taxonomically (Pamungkas et al., 2023; Wijaya & Lestari, 2024; Ayuningtyas & Pamungkas, 2024). By combining Danarto's religious narrative, Faris's magical realism, and Genette's narratology, this article builds a three-layer framework: sacred content, magical realist ontology, and narrative form. That synthesis allows the study to show not only that miracle appears in the story, but how narrative design makes such miracle plausible, ambiguous, and spiritually consequential.

The material object of this study is Danarto's short story *Lailatul Qadar*, collected in *Kurma: Kumpulan Cerpen Puasa-Lebaran Kompas* (Nurhan, 2002). The text was selected because it condenses several analytically significant elements within a compact narrative event: Ramadan observance, the culturally recognizable practice of mudik, family travel, and sudden supernatural manifestation. As a unit of analysis, the story is treated not merely as a verbal artifact but as a structured site where sacred time, mobility, and perception intersect. The immediate research corpus consists of the short story as reproduced in the uploaded journal draft, along with its quoted passages, narrative sequences, and symbolic motifs. This bounded focus is methodologically appropriate because qualitative literary inquiry often proceeds through small but dense cases capable of revealing broader cultural logics without sacrificing textual specificity (Bowen, 2009; Tracy, 2010). In that sense, *Lailatul Qadar* functions as a critical case for examining how Indonesian religious fiction mobilizes magical realism through ordinary social situations rather than through epic scope or extensive mythic exposition.

The research design is qualitative and interpretive, combining textual case study with document analysis. A case study design is suitable because the aim is not statistical generalization but analytical explanation of how a specific literary text organizes meaning, ambiguity, and symbolic force. Document analysis is equally relevant because the primary data are textual documents: the short story itself, the uploaded draft, and scholarly discussions surrounding Danarto, magical realism, and Indonesian Muslim public culture

(Bowen, 2009; Bengtsson, 2016). The study does not adopt grounded theory, since its purpose is not to generate theory inductively from multiple cases, nor does it require mixed methods because the research question concerns narrative form and hermeneutic interpretation rather than measurement. Instead, it uses what Ayre and McCaffery (2022) describe as a qualitative analytic procedure that balances systematic coding with interpretive depth. This design allows the article to remain closely accountable to the literary text while still engaging broader theoretical debates on enchantment, piety, and narrativity.

The study draws on three categories of information sources. The first and primary source is the literary text of *Lailatul Qadar*, including plot movement, descriptive passages, dialogue, symbolic imagery, and short quoted fragments reproduced in the uploaded draft. Because the draft reproduces excerpts without page numbers, quotations in the analysis are cited to Danarto (2002) without pagination and are treated as documentary textual evidence. The second category comprises theoretical sources on magical realism and narratology, particularly Faris (2004), Genette (1980), and later journal-based refinements concerning vagueness, ontology, and focalization (Warnes, 2005a, 2005b; Arva, 2008; Hart & Hart, 2021). The third category consists of contextual scholarship on Indonesian piety, mobility, and religious publics, which helps situate mudik and Ramadan as lived social realities rather than merely decorative backdrops (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010; Lengauer, 2018). These layered sources permit triangulation between textual detail, conceptual vocabulary, and socio-cultural context, thereby strengthening interpretive credibility.

Data collection proceeded through iterative desk review and close reading. First, the short story text was read closely to recover its main claims, textual evidence, and reproduced excerpts from the short story. Second, the story fragments were segmented into units corresponding to setting, movement, supernatural imagery, moral commentary, and narrative voice. Third, a desk review of literature was conducted to identify discussions of Danarto, magical realism, narratology, Indonesian piety, and qualitative textual method. This procedure follows document-based qualitative research in which data collection involves selecting, extracting, comparing, and contextualizing textual materials rather than eliciting responses from living participants (Bowen, 2009; Bengtsson, 2016). To avoid a purely impressionistic reading, excerpt selection was guided by relevance to the research questions and by recurrence across the story's five analytic domains. The result is a compact



but traceable corpus in which each quoted fragment is linked to an explicit thematic and narratological function within the larger argument.

Data analysis was conducted in five stages. First, the text was reduced into coded clusters: phenomenal world, irreducible magical elements, magical ambiguity, sacred time versus social mobility, and religious remystification. Second, these clusters were displayed in analytic matrices that paired short textual excerpts with narrative cues and interpretive functions. Third, each cluster was read through Faris's magical realist indicators to identify where the story naturalizes or intensifies the supernatural. Fourth, Genette's categories of voice, focalization, and temporality were used to clarify how intrinsic elements become narrative mechanisms. Fifth, interpretations were verified through repeated comparison between primary excerpts and secondary scholarship, in line with trustworthiness criteria for qualitative analysis (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Tracy, 2010). The method therefore combines qualitative content organization with interpretive literary analysis, resembling what Vaismoradi et al. (2013) describe as a movement from descriptive coding to thematic explanation. This sequence enables the study to move beyond summary toward a theoretically accountable reading of Danarto's religious magical realism.

RESULT

Danarto begins by grounding *Lailatul Qadar* in a world that feels immediately familiar to readers of Indonesian Muslim life: the late-Ramadan atmosphere of prayer, packing, travel preparation, crowded transport routes, and the emotional pull of returning home. The narrative does not rush toward the miraculous. Instead, it patiently constructs the ordinary social texture of mudik as an embodied practice shaped by family obligation, public congestion, religious routine, and geographic memory. Through this realist grounding, homecoming appears not merely as movement from one place to another, but as a culturally saturated experience in which devotion, fatigue, longing, and social pressure coexist. The story's early scenes therefore establish a phenomenological density that is crucial for the larger narrative design. By situating sacred time within the infrastructure of everyday mobility, Danarto shows that Ramadan is lived not only in prayer and contemplation, but also in queues, roads, departures, and reunions that define the moral and affective landscape of Muslim social life.

Textual fragment	Narrative marker	Analytic function
<i>"Setelah salat Ashar ... berkemas-kemas untuk mudik ke Jawa Tengah"</i>	Departure within Ramadan routine	Builds an empirically credible world of family travel and prayer time
<i>"Antrean panjang pemburu karcis ... tidak menghiraukan lagi hikmah puasa"</i>	Transport congestion and moral distraction	Shows mudik as a pressured social practice that strains devotional attention
<i>"alun-alun selatan Yogyakarta ... disambut orangtuanya"</i>	Arrival, kinship, place memory	Anchors homecoming in concrete geography and familial recognition

Table 1. Phenomenal World: Mudik, Ramadan, and Everyday Social Reality

Table 1 clusters the story's realist signs into three recurrent nodes: departure from urban Jakarta, the social ordeal of securing transport, and arrival in Yogyakarta as familial destination. The first node appears in the line, *"Setelah salat Ashar ... berkemas-kemas untuk mudik ke Jawa Tengah"*, which anchors the narrative in a recognisable Muslim daily rhythm. The second node condenses mass mobility into the snippet, *"Antrean panjang pemburu karcis ... tidak menghiraukan lagi hikmah puasa"* linking *Mudik* to bodily strain and moral distraction. The third node appears when the family reaches *"alun-alun selatan Yogyakarta"* and is welcomed by parents, restoring kinship and place memory (Danarto, 2002). The texts show that the story first builds an empirically credible world through prayer time, ticket lines, named urban spaces, family preparation, and hometown orientation. Before any miraculous sign enters the plot, the narrative asks readers to recognize mudik not as abstraction, but as a socially saturated practice embedded in late-Ramadan routine, fatigue, longing, and public infrastructure.

The pattern emerging from Table 1 is one of progressive social thickening. The story moves from domestic preparation to collective congestion and finally to intimate arrival, thereby mapping mudik as a sequence of embodied transitions rather than a simple change of location. Spatially, the narrative travels from mosque and city station zones to highways and the remembered hometown; temporally, it aligns these movements with the final phase of Ramadan. Such patterning corresponds to Faris's phenomenal world because the text accumulates ordinary details that would be legible to Indonesian readers without explanatory gloss (Faris, 2004). The language of queues, tickets, roads, and family reception also prevents the story from floating into generalized spirituality. Instead, religiosity is grounded in habit and infrastructure. This realist density resembles what studies of Indonesian public Islam identify as lived piety: devotion materialized through routines,



movement, and social obligations rather than detached inner belief alone (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). *Mudik* is therefore described as both mobility system and affective religious landscape.

This pattern occurs because Danarto treats *Mudik* as a cultural form capable of carrying more than logistical meaning. The realist *mudik* frame is not incidental background; it is the necessary narrative condition that later allows supernatural interruption to appear credible rather than arbitrary. In magical realist terms, the stronger the phenomenal world, the sharper the force of the irreducible element that disturbs it (Faris, 2004; Warnes, 2005a). At the same time, the queues and transport pressure carry an ethical implication: social urgency threatens to displace spiritual attentiveness during a sacred temporal window. The line about people who “*tidak menghiraukan lagi hikmah puasa*” indicates that the story is already diagnosing a tension between devotional ideal and collective habit (Danarto, 2002). Read this way, the phenomenal world is not neutral realism but moralized realism. It interprets late-Ramadan mobility as a field where piety becomes strained, distracted, and socially mediated. Danarto’s realism is culturally precise precisely so that transcendence can emerge from within ordinary Muslim social life.

Textual fragment	Sensory anomaly	Analytic function
“ <i>berkelebat dengan kecepatan cahaya</i> ”	Impossible speed and radiance	Marks the entry of an irreducible magical sign
“ <i>tak mengenal bayangan, tak mengenal gelap</i> ”	Suspended logic of shadow and darkness	Disrupts naturalistic perception without explanatory closure
“ <i>pepohonan ... seperti pohon-pohon neon yang cemerlang</i> ”	Landscape transfiguration	Merges the road environment with sacred luminosity

Table 2. Irreducible Magical Elements in a Religious Narrative

Three fragments are especially salient: “*berkelebat dengan kecepatan cahaya*”, “*tak mengenal bayangan, tak mengenal gelap*”, and “*pepohonan ... seperti pohon-pohon neon yang cemerlang*” (Danarto, 2002). Each fragment records an occurrence that exceeds empirical plausibility while remaining embedded in the journey narrative. The first suggests a luminous presence moving faster than ordinary bodily motion; the second suspends the normal logic of shadow and darkness; the third transforms roadside trees into an unreal source of radiance. Restated as data, these snippets show that the magical in *Lailatul Qadar* is sensory before it becomes doctrinal. Readers encounter brightness, speed, altered vision,



and environmental transfiguration rather than a rationally explained miracle. The supernatural is thus registered through what the characters perceive on the road. The text does not separate religious meaning from sensory anomaly; instead, it allows the magical to appear as a perceptual intensification of the travel environment itself. Their effect is cumulative rather than isolated.

The descriptive pattern in Table 2 is one of luminous escalation. Each fragment involves light, but the light behaves unnaturally: it flashes, abolishes darkness, and converts trees into glowing forms. These signs do not create an alternative world; they invade the existing road scene and momentarily re-code it. The story therefore follows a common magical realist procedure: extraordinary events are narrated in the same tonal register as ordinary surroundings, without a decisive switch into fantasy mode (Spindler, 1993; Warnes, 2005b). The magical is not comic or grotesque here; it carries a sacred aura consistent with the title's invocation of *Lailatul Qadar*. The imagery also merges visual and metaphysical registers, since the road becomes simultaneously transport corridor and revelation corridor. Comparable studies have noted that magical realism often relies on matter becoming more than matter; landscape, light, weather, or animals become carriers of ontological surplus (Arva, 2008; Joseph, 2024). Danarto's road imagery fits that pattern through illumination, acceleration, and environmental enchantment.

These luminous patterns occur because the story needs a mode of miracle that is compatible with everyday Muslim consciousness. Rather than presenting a doctrinal exposition of divine intervention, Danarto renders the supernatural as fleeting perceptual evidence—intense enough to disturb realism, restrained enough to preserve ambiguity. This is why the magical elements are irreducible: they cannot be explained away by traffic conditions or ordinary weather, yet the story never halts to codify them into a stable theology. Such restraint aligns with Faris's irreducible element and with critical accounts of magical realism that emphasize vagueness as a way of preserving interpretive pressure (Faris, 2004; Warnes, 2005b). In an Islamic context, moreover, light is not a neutral aesthetic choice; it resonates with revelation, mercy, and divine nearness. The conclusion from this cluster is that Danarto's magical elements are religiously charged not because the narrator names them as miracles, but because the text lets sacred possibility inhabit sensory perception without dissolving its mystery.

Device	Textual cue	Analytic function
Omniscient narration	Commentary on queues, travel, and sacred sequence	Keeps moral framing strong while withholding full explanation
Journey plotting	Departure, delay, acceleration, arrival	Turns travel into a threshold passage rather than a simple route
Symbolic repetition	Light, sacred timing, fasting, Eid	Builds uncertainty and symbolic intensification across scenes

Table 3. Narrative Devices and the Production of Magical Ambiguity

The first device is omniscient narration, which moves smoothly between public scenes and evaluative commentary. The second is journey plotting, where departure, delay, acceleration, and arrival structure the story as a threshold passage. The third is symbolic repetition, especially the recurrence of light, sacred timing, and morally weighted observation. These devices can be tracked through short fragments such as *“berkelebat dengan kecepatan cahaya,”* the social commentary on people *“berburu karcis,”* and the theological assertion that *“Puasa-Lailatul Qadar-Idul Fitri adalah satu kesatuan”* (Danarto, 2002). Restated analytically, the data suggest that ambiguity does not arise from one spectacular event alone, but from the interaction of voice, plot, and symbolism. The narrator neither fully naturalizes nor fully explains the supernatural. Instead, the story distributes knowledge unevenly, allowing readers to inhabit a position between observational realism and religious wonder as the journey unfolds, deepens, and gathers symbolic weight.

Omniscient narration supplies broad access to context and moral commentary, yet it does not grant absolute epistemic certainty about the luminous events. Journey plotting keeps the reader in motion, which means miraculous perception is experienced under conditions of transition rather than stable contemplation. Symbolic repetition further amplifies uncertainty because light, sacred time, and ethical language recur across otherwise realistic scenes. In Genette’s terms, voice and focalization are coordinated so that narrative authority remains high while perceptual certainty remains partial (Genette, 1980; Edmiston, 1989). This asymmetry is crucial: if the narrator explained everything, ambiguity would collapse; if the narrator withdrew entirely, the sacred horizon would weaken. Recent studies on magical realism similarly show that uncertainty is often produced through controlled narratorial restraint rather than through maximal opacity (Hart & Hart, 2021; Al-Hajaj, 2020). Danarto’s technique therefore rests on calibrated disclosure: enough explanation to preserve coherence, enough withholding to sustain wonder.

The reason this pattern emerges is that magical ambiguity must be narratively manufactured. It is not an automatic effect of supernatural content. Danarto uses intrinsic elements as operations: plot becomes pilgrimage-like passage, setting becomes perceptually unstable roadway, and omniscient narration becomes a mediator between sociological realism and theological excess. This confirms the value of reading intrinsic elements through narratology rather than as a descriptive checklist. Genette's framework clarifies that the story's magic depends on how narrative voice regulates access, how temporal pacing delays interpretive closure, and how repeated images convert ordinary movement into symbolic passage (Genette, 1980; Akimoto, 2019). Theological statements, meanwhile, do not cancel ambiguity; they frame it. When the story declares fasting, Lailatul Qadar, and Eid as inseparable, it interprets the journey without explaining every sign. The conclusion is that Danarto's magical realism is formally produced. Ambiguity is the outcome of narrational design, not merely the presence of inexplicable imagery. Form and meaning therefore remain inseparable.

Textual fragment	Temporal tension	Analytic function
<i>"Puasa-Lailatul Qadar-Idul Fitri adalah satu kesatuan"</i>	Sacred sequence	Defines the theological order that should shape late Ramadan
<i>"waktu Lailatul Qadar mau dibagi-bagikan dari langit"</i>	Heightened devotional window	Frames late Ramadan as a time of descending grace
<i>"sibuk ... berburu karcis untuk mudik"</i>	Social urgency of departure	Shows how mobility competes with sacred concentration

Table 4. Sacred Time versus Social Mobility

Table 4 concentrates on the story's most explicit articulation of sacred temporal conflict. Three fragments are central: *"Puasa-Lailatul Qadar-Idul Fitri adalah satu kesatuan"*, *"waktu Lailatul Qadar mau dibagi-bagikan dari langit"*, and the criticism that people are *"sibuk merusak puasa dengan berburu karcis untuk mudik"* (Danarto, 2002). These lines restate the plot's deeper tension: the final nights of Ramadan should culminate in heightened devotion, yet social energy is redirected toward transport, departure, and arrival. The data therefore show that mudik is not merely represented as family tradition or nostalgic return. It is explicitly measured against sacred time by the moral voice of Kiai Zarkasi. The story contrasts two calendars operating at once: the transcendental calendar of divine grace and the social calendar of Eid homecoming. Their coexistence generates conflict, but not simple



opposition, because the same journey that risks spiritual distraction also becomes the site where the sacred manifests. The tension is narratively sustained, not resolved.

Sacred temporality is compressed into the late-Ramadan promise of Lailatul Qadar, while social temporality expands through queues, tickets, road movement, and family expectation. The story repeatedly stages these time-scales as overlapping rather than sequential. Characters do not first complete devotion and then begin travel; they travel within devotion's most charged interval. This overlap is important because it converts mudik into a chronotope of strain. Social obligation is not outside religion, yet it competes with contemplative intensity. Studies of Indonesian piety have shown that religious life is often negotiated through precisely such worldly mediations—commerce, media, mobility, and civic routines shape how devotion is practiced and perceived (Chaplin, 2018; Lengauer, 2018; Alam et al., 2023). Danarto translates that sociological reality into narrative structure. The result is a plot where time itself becomes contested terrain, and where late-Ramadan movement exposes the fragility of devotional concentration under modern collective pressure.

This temporal collision occurs because Danarto is not idealizing piety from a distance; he is dramatizing its vulnerability within social life. Kiai Zarkasi's formulation does not reject mudik outright, but it insists that sacred sequence matters. Fasting, the descent of grace, and Eid celebration belong together, and disrupting that sequence has spiritual consequences. Yet the narrative's deeper subtlety lies in refusing a simple moral binary. Satoto is not cast as villain, and the family journey is not stripped of emotional legitimacy. Instead, the story suggests that divine signs may appear within compromised conditions of distracted piety. That possibility gives the text its magical realist force. Sacred time is not preserved by separating it from society; it interrupts society from within. Comparative work on faith-inflected magical realism notes that the supernatural often becomes legible when practical rationalities seem most dominant (Warnes, 2005a; Al-Hajaj, 2020). Danarto thus uses mudik to reveal sacred temporality not as retreat from social life, but as a pressure exerted upon ordinary circumstances.

Cluster	Representative cue	Interpretive implication
Realist infrastructure	Mosque, tickets, roads, parents' home	Ordinary Muslim life remains intact as the story's base world

Magical interruption	Flashes of light, glowing trees, altered darkness	The sacred becomes perceptible within mundane travel
Ethical recollection	“ <i>memelihara dan menyelamatkan puasanya</i> ”	Miracle is folded back into moral awareness and religious discipline

Table 5. Danarto’s Magical Realism as Religious Remystification

Table 5 aligns five strands: realist *mudik* infrastructure, luminous supernatural signs, narratorial ambiguity, sacred temporal conflict, and the closing emphasis on preserving the fast. A key fragment is the statement that Satoto’s family “*sungguh-sungguh memelihara dan menyelamatkan puasanya*”, which follows the story’s atmospheric intensifications and ethical commentary (Danarto, 2002). Restated as data, the story does not end by dissolving miracle into private fantasy, nor by converting it into doctrinal certainty. Instead, it folds magical experience back into religious self-care and moral awareness. The road, the family, the fast, and the extraordinary signs are all retained within one narrative frame. This is why the results point toward remystification rather than simple moralization. The text re-infuses ordinary Muslim life with wonder while refusing to detach that wonder from ethical discipline, sacred temporality, and the cultural familiarity of *Mudik*. Remystification, then, is also a form of ethical recollection.

The pattern represented in Table 5 is integrative. Earlier tables isolated different functions, but the final synthesis shows that Danarto keeps realism, miracle, and devotion in active relation throughout the story. Social details never disappear after the magical scenes; conversely, sacred language is already present before the strongest luminous signs emerge. The narrative therefore neither abandons realism nor merely decorates it with marvel. Instead, it creates a layered ontology where social reality becomes more permeable to transcendence. This pattern closely resembles Faris’s account of merging realms and disrupted boundaries, yet in Danarto the merger is specifically Islamic in tonal register and ethical orientation (Faris, 2004). Comparable magical realist studies often emphasize history, colonial trauma, or mythic residue as the force destabilizing realism (Slemon, 1988; Luffin, 2018; Terian, 2021). Here, however, the destabilizing force is sacred time itself. The result is a story that remakes *mudik* into a revelatory corridor in which worldly travel becomes spiritually legible without ceasing to be socially ordinary.

The interpretive consequence of this final pattern is that Danarto's magical realism works as religious remystification: it restores the capacity of everyday Muslim life to disclose transcendence. This restoration is not nostalgic in a simple sense, because the story fully registers modern crowding, transport systems, fatigue, and practical compromise. Nor is it merely allegorical, because the luminous events remain affectively and sensorially vivid. What the narrative ultimately tests is whether a modern social ritual such as *mudik* can still host revelation. The answer offered by the story is provisional but affirmative. Through narrative restraint, symbolic light, and temporal pressure, Danarto shows that the sacred is not lost in ordinary life; it is obscured, contested, and then suddenly perceptible. That conclusion expands current discussion of Indonesian magical realism, which has often foregrounded myth, folklore, or postcolonial estrangement over Islamic sacred temporality (Sundusiah, 2015; Downes, 2019; Kurniawan et al., 2024). *Lailatul Qadar* thus turns *Mudik* into an event of narrative revelation.

The first major implication of the phenomenal-world findings is that *mudik* in Danarto's story functions as more than setting. It organizes the social intelligibility of the narrative. Because the text begins with prayer time, ticket scarcity, roads, and kinship expectation, readers enter familiar cultural terrain before confronting luminous anomalies. This prevents transcendence from appearing detached from lived Muslim experience. The dysfunction it exposes is equally important. The same infrastructure that enables familial return also intensifies distraction, competition, and the thinning of contemplative attention during late Ramadan. The story therefore does not romanticize *Mudik*. It shows that practices widely regarded as meaningful may also obscure sacred possibility. This implication resonates with scholarship on Indonesian piety that treats devotion as embedded in material and public life, where ethical aspiration is constantly mediated by practical routines (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010; Alam et al., 2023).

Why does the phenomenal world carry such interpretive weight? Because magical realism requires a robust realist substrate to generate tension. Faris's model makes this formally clear, but Danarto adds a specifically Indonesian layer by rooting the phenomenal world in *mudik's* social density (Faris, 2004). The underlying structure is double: realist detail stabilizes the story's world, while moral commentary destabilizes its apparent neutrality. The queue, the road, and the family itinerary are not mere circumstances; they are pressures acting upon the characters' spiritual horizon. This is why the story can treat



Mudik as both legitimate and spiritually risky. The structure resembles what scholars of public Islam describe as the negotiation of piety through circulation, mediation, and everyday social obligation rather than purely private devotion (Lengauer, 2018; Husein & Slama, 2018). Danarto turns *mudik* into the material base from which enchantment, conflict, and revelation become thinkable.

The irreducible magical elements have a second major implication: they relocate miracle from distant myth to the sensory field of ordinary travel. Their function is not only aesthetic surprise but theological displacement. Light that outruns normal perception and landscapes that glow unnaturally interrupt the assumption that the road belongs only to fatigue, logistics, and public movement. The narrative thereby reopens perception to sacred excess. Yet the same mechanism has a potential dysfunction. Because the supernatural is rendered in fleeting and ambiguous images, it resists doctrinal closure and may be dismissed by readers seeking explicit confirmation. Danarto nonetheless appears to embrace that risk. His strategy suggests that religious fiction can sustain wonder precisely by refusing over-explanation. This aligns with scholarship arguing that magical realism creates a form of interpretive hospitality in which faith, doubt, and perception are held in productive tension (Warnes, 2005b; Arva, 2008; Hart & Hart, 2021).

The preference for luminous and environmental signs over overtly spectacular miracles appears closely tied to the story's symbolic economy. In Islamic devotional imagination, light already carries strong spiritual resonance, while roads, trees, and the surrounding landscape belong organically to the travel setting established by the narrative. By allowing transcendence to emerge through the transformation of familiar surroundings rather than through the intrusion of wholly alien objects, Danarto sustains continuity between the realist world and the miraculous dimension. The supernatural, therefore, does not arrive as an external rupture but as an intensification of elements already embedded in ordinary experience. This narrative restraint is aesthetically significant. An explicit apparition would close interpretive space too quickly, whereas luminous perception preserves a productive tension between sensory impression and revelation. Studies of magical realism in postcolonial and religious literary contexts likewise suggest that environmental transformation often serves to naturalize the extraordinary without dissolving the realist frame altogether (Luffin, 2018; Joseph, 2024; Al-Hajaj, 2020). Danarto's radiant road scenes



participate in this broader pattern while remaining firmly rooted in the experiential world of Ramadan travel.

The findings on narrative devices indicate that magical ambiguity in the story should be understood as a formal accomplishment rather than as a secondary thematic residue. This is significant because more conventional draft-style readings of intrinsic elements often treat plot, setting, and point of view as discrete components that can be discussed in isolation. By contrast, the present study shows that their force lies in their interrelation. Omniscient narration, threshold-based plotting, and symbolic repetition work together to structure uncertainty and revelation within the same narrative field. Their role is therefore generative: they produce a mode of reading in which the miraculous remains credible without ever becoming fully normalized. The more pressing limitation lies not in the text itself, but in critical habits that reduce intrinsic elements to a static inventory. Such an approach obscures the fact that narrativity is precisely what gives spiritual experience its literary force. Danarto's story makes clear that formal arrangement is not subordinate to meaning, but the very medium through which meaning becomes experientially accessible. This perspective offers a stronger basis for Indonesian literary analysis by treating form as dynamic mediation rather than as a checklist inherited from school formalism (Genette, 1980; Akimoto, 2019).

Narrational design is especially crucial in a religious magical realist text because sacred experience in literature seldom becomes convincing when presented merely as a declarative claim. Its persuasive force depends on tempo, the distribution of knowledge, and the careful management of focalization. In Danarto's story, the omniscient narrator possesses enough authority to establish the ethical and spiritual stakes of the narrative, yet remains sufficiently restrained to prevent mystery from being fully dissolved. What emerges, then, is a structure of measured disclosure: narrative authority provides coherence, while perceptual limitation sustains ambiguity. This balance recalls Genette's distinction between voice and mood, in which the question of who speaks cannot be simply reduced to who perceives without weakening the complexity of narration (Genette, 1980; Edmiston, 1989). Readers are therefore not merely informed that a sacred event takes place; they are drawn into the uncertainty through which such an event becomes experientially meaningful. The religious power of the story thus rests on narratological control, since form does not simply contain the miracle but makes it narratively plausible and affectively persuasive.

The sacred-time findings imply that Danarto is engaging a wider question about modern Muslim life: what happens when devotional chronology collides with mass social mobility? The function of this tension is diagnostic. It reveals that piety can be sincere yet compromised, and that socially valued practices may redirect attention away from the very sacred moments they claim to honor. *Mudik* becomes a test case for this contradiction. The story's important implication is that sacred temporality remains active even when crowded by worldly urgency. The dysfunction lies not in mobility itself but in the compression of religious meaning into logistics and celebration. This reading aligns with scholarship on piety as socially mediated practice rather than static interior virtue (Chaplin, 2018; Millie & Baulch, 2024). Danarto's fiction thus offers a literary account of how modern collective routines can both veil and transmit sacred intensity.

The tension between sacred time and social mobility becomes narratively powerful because both are structured by timing, sequence, and anticipation. Ramadan heightens spiritual expectation through its movement toward revelation and Eid, while *mudik* follows a different temporal logic shaped by ticket availability, traffic flows, and narrow departure opportunities. Their intersection produces a layered temporality that Danarto uses to considerable effect. This structure is voiced clearly through Kiai Zarkasi, who frames fasting, Lailatul Qadar, and Eid as a meaningful sequence whose order carries spiritual significance. Yet the story does not resolve this tension by simply condemning travel or restoring an ideal devotional schedule. Instead, sacred interruption takes place within that disrupted sequence itself. The narrative thus suggests that divine nearness may become even more striking when practical rationality dominates everyday arrangements. Studies of Indonesian public religion similarly indicate that piety is often intensified, rather than diminished, through its entanglement with circulation, mediation, and the pressures of worldly life (Hasan, 2009; Beta, 2019; Jones, 2024).

The final implication concerns religious remystification. Danarto's magical realism does not simply preserve mystery as a residual element of belief; rather, it restores mystery to domains that modern social life often treats as routine and self-explanatory. Roads, queues, vehicles, and family schedules are reimagined as sites capable of carrying revelation. This move broadens the theoretical horizon of magical realism in Indonesian literary studies. Much existing criticism has foregrounded myth, folklore, or postcolonial estrangement, whereas Lailatul Qadar suggests that Islamic sacred temporality can itself become a source



of enchantment. To be sure, such remystification could easily be read as conservatism or as a nostalgic return to premodern sensibilities. Yet the story resists that reduction because it remains attentive to crowding, fatigue, compromise, and the pressures of collective mobility. Wonder does not emerge outside modernity, but from within its very constraints. Danarto's achievement, then, lies neither in escapism nor in moral didacticism, but in showing that transcendence remains narratively imaginable within the ordinary conditions of Muslim social life (Sundusiah, 2015; Downes, 2019).

Remystification proves effective in this story because realism, ambiguity, and ethical seriousness are held in careful balance rather than allowed to override one another. Were realism to dominate completely, the narrative would read as mere social documentation; were the miraculous to take over, it would drift toward fantasy; and were ethical instruction to become too explicit, the text would risk collapsing into allegory. Danarto avoids these reductions by sustaining a productive tension among all three dimensions. The road remains materially recognizable, the luminous signs resist definitive explanation, and the obligation of fasting retains its moral force. This equilibrium helps account for the story's interpretive richness. It also points to the need to recognize religious magical realism as a distinctive mode within Indonesian literary studies, one in which sacred temporality, rather than mythic memory alone, reshapes the phenomenal world. Comparative scholarship has increasingly drawn attention to diverse forms of enchantment across global literatures (Terian, 2021; Joseph, 2024). Lailatul Qadar contributes to that conversation by showing how an Islamic experience of time can simultaneously produce narrative ambiguity, aesthetic intensity, and spiritual insight.

CONCLUSION

Danarto's *Lailatul Qadar* derives its distinctive power from the fusion of sacred temporality, homecoming, and magical realist narration. The most important finding is that the story's miracle does not arrive from outside social reality; it emerges within the culturally familiar world of *mudik*, Ramadan routine, and familial obligation. By first constructing a credible phenomenal world and then interrupting it with irreducible luminous signs, the text turns late-Ramadan mobility into a threshold of revelation. The lesson of the research, therefore, is not simply that Danarto writes spiritual fiction, but that he remystifies ordinary Muslim life through narrative form. *Mudik* becomes at once



transport, moral trial, and spiritual passage. This insight matters for literary study because it clarifies that religious enchantment in Indonesian fiction may arise from Islamic sacred time itself, not only from mythic residues or folkloric motifs. The story teaches that transcendence remains narratively available within crowded, compromised, and socially mediated everyday life.

The significance of this study resides in the way it repositions the reading of Danarto within a broader theoretical and analytical horizon. By placing his work in dialogue with Wendy B. Faris's account of magical realism and with narratological approaches to literary form, the article demonstrates that questions of religious meaning, ontology, and narrative technique are most fruitful when examined in relation to one another rather than in isolation. It also advances a more robust analytical procedure by moving beyond static intrinsic-element description toward a relational reading of plot, setting, voice, focalization, and imagery as formal operations through which ambiguity and revelation are jointly produced. Equally important, the study directs sustained attention to a short story that has remained relatively marginal in comparison with Danarto's more frequently cited works. In doing so, it broadens current discussions of magical realism in Indonesian literature by foregrounding Islamic sacred temporality as a generative narrative principle, while also illustrating how close reading can be rendered more systematic through matrices, coding clusters, and document-based qualitative procedures (Bowen, 2009; Nowell et al., 2017). The article thus offers not only an interpretive intervention, but also a methodological framework that may support more rigorous future analyses of religious literary texts.

This study nevertheless has several limitations. It is based on a single short story and therefore cannot claim to represent the full range of Danarto's aesthetics or the broader field of Indonesian religious fiction. Its primary textual evidence also relies on excerpts reproduced in the uploaded draft, which did not provide page numbers for quoted passages. In addition, the analysis privileges Faris and Genette, meaning that other possible lenses - such as affect theory, phenomenology of religion, mobility studies, or ecocriticism - remain underexplored. These limitations indicate fruitful directions for further research. Future studies should compare several Danarto stories across periods, examine how Ramadan and Eid temporality function in other Indonesian authors, and investigate whether religious magical realism also appears in film, digital fiction, or popular Islamic prose. Such research would help determine whether the remystification identified here is an individual stylistic



feature or part of a wider transformation in contemporary Indonesian literary representations of piety, movement, and transcendence.

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