The Co-Existence of Dichotomous Realms: A Study of Ron Arias' " *The Road to Tamazuncahle"*

Mahmoud Ibrahim Ibrahim Radwan(*)

Abstract

The present study examines the way Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale* (1975) appropriates the magical realist mode of storytelling to explore the co-existence of dichotomous realms rooted in the cross-racial encounters of mainstream culture and resistant consciousness. Grasping the prominent tendencies of the dominant culture to suppress the narratives of the marginalized in order to fix the image of the 'subaltern,' Arias seeks to disrupt mainstream binary categories postulated on exclusion and purity. Hence, his dying protagonist Fausto embarks on a mental journey in which irreducible boundaries between the real and the unreal, life and death and past and present are dissolved. Accordingly, logical linearity is broken and he ably deconstructs dominant dichotomous structures of oppressive powers and transcends mortality; thereby, he creates life in its fullest human sense to reflect the native cultural concept of the cycle of life and death, as well as rebirth repeated unendingly and to secure a voice to the marginalized subaltern.

* Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Languages (English Section), Tanta University.

دراسة تحليلية لتزامن العوالم المتصارعة في رواية رون ارياس "الطريق إلى تامزنشيل"

محمود ابراهيم ابراهيم رضوان

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث استخدام رون ارياس لقالب الواقعية السحرية في روايته "الطريق الي تامزنشيل" حيث استكشف وجود عوالم منقسمة تأصلت في الصراع العرقي بين الثقافة المهيمنة والمقاومة. ولإدراكه و فهمه النزعة الجلية في الثقافة المهيمنة و السائدة التي تهدف إلى قمع حكايات المهمشين وقصصهم سعيًا لترسيخ صورة "الآخر."

بحث ارياس عن إمكانية تحطيم نظرية المتناقضات المتصارعة والمفترضة على أساس الاستبعاد و الانتقاء. شرع فاوستو، بطل الرواية المُحتضر، في رحلة خيالية استطاع من خلالها إزاحة الحدود والفواصل بين العوالم المتضادة مثل : الواقعي و الخيالي، الحياة والموت، الماضي والحاضر؛ لذا استطاع ارياس من خلال رحلة بطله الخيالية كسر التسلسل الخيطي المنطقي للأحداث ،وتهشيم التراكيب الثنائية التي ابتدعتها القوى الجائرة، وتجاوز عالم الفناء؛ ولذلك خلق حياة ومكانة إنسانية لم ينلها البطل ، ولا ما يسمى بالتابعين في الحياة الواقعية ؛ ليعكس بذلك مفهوم موروثه الثقافي لدورة الحياة و الموت والانبعاث التي تتكرر بطريقة لا نهائية.

> Some wanted to turn back, but others, who must have been more courageous or curious, determined to see the mysterious place … So they climbed up through the ashes and finally reached the summit in a cloud of heavy smoke. (Lopez de Gomara131)

Introduction

In *Borderlands/ La Frontera,* Gloria Anzaldúa describes the space to which the Chicano/a is allocated as equivocal and unresolved. The inhabitants of such liminal zone are "the prohibited and forbidden" who are situated in "the confines of the 'normal'." They are identified through images depicting malevolence and distortion namely;"the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead"(3-4). In the light of such designation, Chicano/native writers, each in his/her way, invoke the Chicano/a spirit of defiance that grapples with the disenfranchising ramifications of borderlands visited upon the indigenous natives. Strategies of subversion, illustrated in diverse textual forms, offset the warped subaltern image inculcated by the dominant Anglo-American culture.

The present study examines the way Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale* (1975) appropriates the magical realist mode of storytelling to explore the dichotomies of cross-racial encounters of mainstream culture and resistant consciousness. The term "magic realism," coined in 1925 by the German art critic, Franz Roh, denotes crossing, overlapping and effacing borders between paradoxical codes and elements of realism and fantasy. Peter Standish perceives magical realistic narrative as fiction in which the "supernatural, the mythical, or the implausible are assimilated to the cognitive structure of reality without a perceptive break in the narrator's or characters' consciousness" (156–57). In such texts the distinctions between the realistic and nonrealistic events are almost impalpable. Fiction "colors factual reality" and in the process it "exposes some of the mystery, settings and possibilities of the human mind" (Bruce-Novoa 73).

Arias is a Chicano native writer who clings to his Chicano roots and the right to survive on his territory. In his creative output, he endeavors to galvanize a counter-hegemonic spirit of the border-

crossing Chicano community. The notion of 'crossing' here is distinct from that of the immigrants who traverse the ocean with the intention of starting a new life and thus are predisposed to merge into the American society. In case of Chicano communities, border-crossing resists containment, assimilation and inclusion within the sphere of the Anglo-American metropolitan center.

In Chicano/a literature, utilizing the element of magical realist crisscrossing is functional in many respects. Firstly, Chicano/a writers do not only transcend the ethnographic physical margins, but also go beyond the conventional literary narratives to address social and political issues, so it is "suited to exploring… and transgressing…boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic' (Zamora and Faris 5). In adopting such a maneuver, they attempt to give voice to the silent voiceless, and to put an end to the subaltern role that forces them to "retreat into whispers of discomfort, confused historiography, muted social criticism, and silence" (Padilla 47) within the dominant paradigm. Instead of withdrawal into the past, the remembrance of historical heritage motivates them to "confront the unpleasant residue of their own conquest" (47). Also, it is through the narrative strategies of magical realism that writers can best depict "the cross-cultural influences of the indigenous population, the Europeans and the African Caribbean and multi-racial peoples of the Latin Americas, and particularly his Caribbean region, lend an excess and exuberance of detail" (Aldama 34). Authors such as Oscar Acosta, Ana Castillo, Julie Dash, Hanif Kureishi and Salman Rushdie resort to textual strategies employed in magical texts to "tell stories that question … divisions set up between metropolis and country, *mestizo* and pure blood, Western and indigenous, revealing such divisions to be artificial constructs used to control and/or erase the subaltern subject" (Aldama 30).

Secondly, maintaining an intersection of opposing oxymoronic worlds, magical realist texts formulate a new perspective that marks a departure from the Western traditional mode of realism by "challenging its basis of representation from within" (Faris, 1) thereby reaffirming a sense of identity and resisting both linguistic and spatial enclosure in barrios. Argentine-

Brazilian filmmaker Hector Babenco states, "Magical realism taught us we could make art by breaking the rules" (cited in Margolis 52). Commenting on Arias' fantastic narrative, Ramón Saldívar writes that it "seems to depart from the high realism of the corido tradition …. [Arias'] fantasy invests the world of the imagination with the stuff of history and the imagined reality of urban Barrio life" (*Chicano*103).In this way, magic realism represents a "rebellious mimetic force." The artifice of this genre "move(s) its readers and transform(s) perceptions of the world" (Aldama 41).

The magical realistic world involves an encounter between the possible real-world norms and "the impossible, the normal and the paranormal. Another world penetrates or encroaches upon our world … or some representative of our world penetrates an outpost of the other world" (Mchale 75). The narrative sequence of events seem to be anomalous and implausible yet they are accepted as real and factual, and the narrator does not need to justify the prevalence of mystery. Anne Hegerfeldt argues that non-realistic items "cannot be re-contextualized, explained away as dreams, hallucinations, metaphors, or lies." They are "presented in … a matter-of-fact manner … [and] there seems to be no option but to accept them as part of the fictional world" (66). Moreover, the world of magical realism imposes certain restrictions on the narrator who tends to refrain from explaining or justifying the presentation of the impossible as possible. Indeed, the specificity and distinctive approach of magic realism resides in predominance of "a) the ontology of the fictional world, and b) the discourse of the narrator" (Bortolussi 349). The writer creates a possible world paralleling that of the real world inhabited by human beings.

By virtue of the peculiarities of such mode of expression, magic realism becomes an apposite mould in which the native writer can enter the literary mainstream to recreate a true image of his culture and heritage, and dismantle the dialectics of the dichotomous opposites created by the advocates of dominant culture. Thereby, magic realism as a literary practice is closely linked with the perception of the ex-centric marginalized and their resistance of the massive forces of the "imperial centre and its totalizing systems"

(Slemon 10). In Aldama's view, a magical realist novel "function as a form of resistance to dominant, reifying systems" (4). He proceeds further and adds that magical realist texts designate "a rebellious aesthetic that can simultaneously invent racially and culturally hybrid … and hold at bay the readily impulse to eroticize Third world subjectivity" (19-20). Hence, it allows for re-visioning, re-interpreting and re-appropriating of the dominant codes that increasingly threaten to annihilate and choke the imagination of the 'other.'

One of the prominent tendencies of the dominant culture is to suppress the narratives of the marginalized in order to fix the image of the 'subaltern'. Magico-realist authors like Arias and Gracia seek to disrupt mainstream binary categories postulated on exclusion and purity. Thereby, magical realist narrative "recapitulates a process… of psychic liberation from Old World domination and its cognitive codes" (Slemon). In this respect, characters in magic realist narratives constantly question ideologies of divisions that separate metropolitan from rural, and western from indigenous. In striving for liberation from ideological constraints, they seek a habitat that encompasses "mainstream and metropolitan centers" (Aldama 30). In many ways, magical realism necessitates a cultural reorientation in the sense that it is "the first contemporary literary mode to break [and penetrate into] the hegemony of the center" (Edna Aizenberg cited in Faris 41).

In the context of the ordering logic of the dominant U. S. discourse, Chicana/o cultural practices function as "paradoxes" within it (Pérez 19). Counter-practice aesthetics and poetics arise to resist hegemonic structures and "articulate a shared sense of communal reciprocity." It is noteworthy that *rasquache* is one of the mechanisms of resistance that has operated in "profoundly disturbing ways with respect to dominant social and cultural, spatial and ideological topographies of the 'proper' in the United States" (Pérez 19). Tomás Ybarra-Frausto locates liberation in the *rasquache* style. He explains, "To be *rasquache* is to be unfettered and unrestrained, to favor … the sparkling to the muted and subdued (157). He perceives it as a form of "creative adaptation to the constrains of limited means and oppressive circumstances" (Villa,

"Nationalism"48). On another plane, Rafaela G. Castro defines *rasquache* as "a poor people's and working-class people's worldview" (198). As a force of resistance, *rasquachismo* as a style based on Mexican vernacular traditions emerges as a force of "subversion and transcendence of hegemonic and colonial structures as they have played out along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands" (Miner 188). The Anglo-American constructs of racially discriminating borders propagate the unending binary codes between the superior self and the subaltern 'other.' However, the subalterns take it upon themselves to deconstruct racist paradigms, free themselves from the projected image, and re-appropriate communal culture to combat bigotry and prejudice through foregrounding the community's available resources in the face of the constraints of oppressive circumstances.

Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale*is a rebuttal of the fixity of binary paradigms. The textual world deconstructs "being circumscribed to any one particular place or identity" (B. Lewis 130). To this end, *The Road to Tamazunchale* deploys thematic and structural generic features of magic realist narratives such as paratextuality, diversity of voices, rural setting, self- reflexivity, as well as the merging and/or intersection of variant realms of the real and the magical, of death and life. I will proceed to show how Arias' text exploits these textual elements in order to recuperate lost voices pushed to the margin.

1. Paratextuality

In *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Gerard Gennette identifies paratextuality as the liminal devices and conventions "within the book (*peritext*) and outside it (*epitext*), that mediate the book to the reader: titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, and afterwords" (xviii). It is through such codes that the magical world sustains the realistic aspect.

a. Dedication

Texts do not present themselves directly. Arias resorts to one of the formal framing devices providing dedication for his text. He begins with paying homage to his wife, Joan, dedicating his novel to

her in appreciation of her patience and to his grandmother, Julia, for supplying him with the inspiration. Dedication is one of those devices used by the author to establish authentic and reliable configuration of the magical realm he creates within the text. He explains his motivation as follows,

> As near as I can tell, my writing habit began more than a hundred years ago on a cattle ranch in northern Mexico. That was when my grandmother, at seven years of age, wrote three words in a little notebook her mother, Cristina Terrazas, had given her: hoymurio mamaNo capital H, no accent marks, no other details–little Julia Terrazas simply wanted to record that her mother had just died. ("Ron Arias: Notebooks a family obsession")

Arias' notes and dedication are informative since they unveil his deep commitment to his past and his ancestors. They unravel the effort exerted in pursuit of a quest and the motivation needed to secure such a quest. Commenting on the significance of dedications, Aldama argues that the "existence of the dedication is more factual than textual, unless the name of the dedicatee is mentioned in the text itself" (118). It provides a tangible stimulation for persisting in achieving the aspiration.

b. The Title

In Arias' text, the lexical constituents of the title are edifying: "the" signifies a specific entity and that it is just one road, "road" and "Tamazunchale" denote crossing a geographic space. Beneath such a veneer, a world of inappropriateness and incompatibility looms large wherein the marginalized Chicano subaltern attempts to break the codes of dualism imposed by the dominant Anglo-American system. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, there is "Manichean sense of opposition and struggle at the heart of existence, a ceaseless battle between oppositional systems takes place in narration" (xviii). In the context of Chicano reality, the center and the margin are a continuous dialectic; "centrifugal forces … seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces … strive to make things cohere" (Bakhtin, xviii). The dialogic nature results in a wide oscillation between "two alternative poles of … containment/resistance" (443) as Stuart Hall puts it. Each pole works towards the creation of a different fictional world. An interminable

double movement of containment and resistance underscores the borderland as a zone of contact.

c. Epigraphs

It is common to open magic realist novels with epigraphs that prepare the reader for the reliability of the narrative. Arias opens his novel with two highly informative "allographic" epigraphs,to use Gennette's label. Both epigraphs are attributed to an author who is not the author of the work. The first one is extracted from the biography of Cortes, the founder of the Mexican Church, by Francesco Lopez de Gomara: "some wanted to turn back, but others, who must have been more courageous or curious, determined to see the mysterious place." A minute dissection of the words selected in the epigraph divulges Gennette's concept of the epigraph as "a must when the title itself consists of a borrowing, an allusion (157). Two signifying ideas lie beneath this part of the epigraph: first, the crux of the biography revolves around Cortes as a veteran/founder and courageous person; and second, the allusive reference in the "mysterious place" to characterize "Tamazunchale." In his postscript, Arias reveals the literal meaning of Tamazunchale: it is a tropical village in Moctezuma River valley yet it is also a wordplay on "Thomas and Charlie" to mock the Anglo readers. In this respect, Fausto remarks "I told them it was Tamazunchale, but that sounds like Thomas and Charlie. Maybe I should have called it something else. If they ever learn English, they'll think I was making a joke" (123-24). Roland Walter notes that Arias suggests the "notion that some readers might consider the novel 'a joke' as they fail to understand the meaning and function of its magico-realist universe" (56). As far as Arias is concerned, "Tamazunchale" connotes a destination of transcendence of the Barrios to a utopian world where man can attain permanence and "No one dies" (107). It is also a salvation from yoking boundaries of the mortal transient human life that leads to the Utopian town Tamazunchale. Thematically the epigraph comments on the transcendence of the borderland to the Tamazunchale. In this way, the epigraph gives backing to the text especially with the names of the authors quoted. Significantly, Gennette emphasizes that the epigraphs are "signs of culture and a

password of intellectuality" (160).

The second epigraph is taken from a section of Nahuatl's poem by King Nezahualcoyotl. The epigraph underscores the oppositional and dichotomous ambiance of the earthly world of transience and the heavenly world of permanence,

"Must I go like the flowers that die?
Won't anything be left of my name,
Nothing of my life here on earth?
At least flowers …
At least songs. …" (Cited in Arias 25)

Armed with and immersed in his Chicano culture that dominates the whole scene, Arias probes a dichotomy: a Chicano protagonist entangled with his people in imaginary journeys and episodes located in a realistic Chicano setting in the barrio of Los Angeles. Hence, Arias places his devotion to Chicano/a community and culture above all else in an attempt to fend off endeavors at cultural obliteration and hegemonic pressures to be assimilated into the mainstream American community.

2. Rustic Setting

The geographical location and context of Magical realist texts are often rustic in nature. They are remote from the metropolis and the centers of influence and power. Notably, Gabriel García Márquez situates his narratives in fictional town called Macondo on the isolated Caribbean coast of Colombia. Likewise, Toni Morrison sets the events of her novels in pastoral areas and small rural communities. Such settings underscore the emplacement of those who live on the margin and those indigenous people who are culturally and politically disempowered. Commenting on such a specific setting Philip Swanson notes that Márquez "seems to want to reproduce a traditional, popular rural perspective—challenging the hegemony of the alien, dominant, imported culture and reinstating the value of the community's own cultural perspective" (12). He seeks to represent the unrepresented. In discussing the historical roots of the Mexican Americans, David J. Weber illustrates that Mexican Americans living in the southern states had been characterized as "the invisible minority," "a minority nobody knows," or "the forgotten people" (1). The literary records of these

people have been obscured, silenced or forgotten.

In his narrative, Arias undertakes to give voice to the "invisible, forgotten and silent" minority who have largely felt estranged and alienated in their native land. *The Road to Tamazunchale* narrates the story of Don Fausto, an old man who lives in the barrio of Los Angeles, as his confrontation with his own death looms large. He moves back and forth in the binary worlds of life and death, reality and fantasy, and past and present. Rather than succumbing to a desperate state of death-in-life, he sets out for Tamazunchale (death) on a magic-realist a journey in and out of time, space, consciousness accompanied by a host of real and imagined characters.

3. Merging Opposite Realms

Within the sphere of magical realist narrative, the severance of opposing worlds such as magic/real and dead/ living is unworkable. The specificity of this mode of writing in bridging the divides undertakes to counter the binary percepts of the Western rationalist perception that separates material reality and the supernatural. Magic realist novel "remains suspended between the two" and "a complete transference from one mode to the other never takes place" (Slemon11). Amaryll B. Chanady indicates its major preoccupation as "the plot, the masterful account of absolutely absurd events in a perfectly realistic setting" (46).In a similar vein, Zamora and Faris point out the distinctive traits in magical realism. They argue that unlike other modes of fiction, it "facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems" (5-6). Thus, the reader is discouraged from deactivating the fantastic elements of the story. Disregarding the general code of narrative realism, readers peruse the work as being more closely aligned with the fantastic. Significantly, the emphasis on the reconcilability and totality of oppositions on the level of the ambiance of the narrative world operates to dismantle the prevalent Anglo American binary notions of self and other. In this respect, Bakhtin conceptualizes the means of securing the totality of the narrative world of objects and ideas through

social diversity of speech types … and by individual voices that

> flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted gemes, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia … can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). (263)

Such assortment identifies the Chicano authentic experiences in which individuality is undermined whereas the communal constructs are elevated. Zamora underscores such a characteristic by explaining that "magical realism and authors refuse to remain locked into modern categories of individual psychology, insisting instead that the self is actualized by participating in communal and cosmic categories" ("Magical" 544).In fact, diversity and multiplicity are not specific to speech types of individual voices, but it extends to time and events.

On the realist level, Fausto has stopped his work as an encyclopedia salesman for six years after which his preoccupation is depicted in terms of everyday activity; "shuffle[ing] to the window, to the bathroom, down to the kitchen, … resting, listening to the radio, reading, turning thin, impatient, waiting for the end" (29). Fausto's capitulation comes full circle with the narrator's description of his state of death with the "muscles turning to worms, his lungs to leaves and his bones to petrified stone" (29). Goaded by the inevitability of his death and his resignation to surrender, Fausto deliberately removes the skin of his body; an emblematic gesture of his quest for his native identity given his alienation from his American context. Though such scene is grotesquely improbable, Arias presents it as if it were factual. This is evidently portrayed through the narrator's accurate depiction of Fausto "tug[ing] harder, expecting the tissue to tear. The skin … Slowly it began to rip, peeling from the muscle. No blood, the operation would be clean, like slipping off nylon hose" (28). More details delineating Fausto's removal of his skin adds to showing it as an ordinary operation; like removing chicken skin: "It bunched at the knuckles, above the fingernails. Carefully he pulled each fingertip as he would a glove. The rest was simple, and soon his body lay gleaming under the fragile light of the table lamp" (28).Carmella is watching indifferently asking whether Fausto "want[s] some more Kleenex"

(10), as if it is a matter of fact procedure which reinforces the supposition that it is customary and commonplace.

Although the act is awkwardly unreasonable and irrational, the reader is ready to embrace it as believable given the "authorial reticence" vis a vis "deliberate withholding of information and explanations about the disconcerting fictitious world" (13) as Chanady puts it. This narrative point of view relies upon an "absence of obvious judgments about the veracity of the events and the authenticity of the world view expressed by characters in the text" (28). The narrator does not comment on events in relation to its accuracy or credibility, and let the reader follow the developments of extraordinary and unreal events as if they were ordinary and mundane. Chanady argues that authorial reticence "serves the purpose mainly of preventing the reader from questioning the narrated events, as no attention is drawn to the strangeness of the world view" (160). Hence, unnatural occurrences are naturalized by little commentary and through reducing the distance between the narrator and the setting he is describing. In this manner, the divides between the real and unreal are dissolved, and the reader will "follow the example of the narrator in accepting both realistic and magical perspectives of reality on the same level" (Bowers 3); no matter how disparate these perspectives are.

Conspicuously, in magical realist texts "the novel marshals fantasy" with the purpose of exploring and understanding "alternatives to the contemporary world" (Saldívar, "Historical" 577). Fautso's magical journey is an attempt to secure an alternate world rather than that of physical death. Hence, he attempts to cross the barriers of the real world of capitulation and resignation to another imaginary world where he metamorphoses into another process of defiance and creation of life in death. This is blatantly stated in the authorial declaration of Fausto's rejuvenated noncompliant stance: "No! he shouted. It can't happen, it won't happen! As long as I breath, it won't happen" (29). Nonconformity is boosted by "the song of life …. the faint, soft sound of a flute" (29). The flute is a symbol of the new life the Mexicans are longing for in the United States. Thus, Arias "extends the critique of American

cultural hegemony expressed in the corridor to the realm of the symbolic" (Saldívar, *Chicano* 103).

On the magical level, Arias' text creates a gloomy atmosphere of terror, darkness, cloud forest and nightfall which foreshadows the inevitability of Fausto's real death. His physical and psychological state sustains the idea: he seems helpless and at the brink of full resignation, "I must have fainted" (36) and also regrets leaving home and longing for "his armchair, his bed, his dinner… his books and the quiet company of his parakeet" (35). However, he still commits to his quest for life-in-death. Passing a cloudy forest, Fausto and Ana "emerged into the fading light of nightfall … [seeing] Human figures, alpacas and sheep beneath the glacier basins" (36). Consequently, hope is revived and Fausto struggles forward onto the hard snow to catch the long procession of torchlight. Reaching the group in the distance, Fausto knows that they are mourners who "tore the air with shouts and beat the ground" (37). Time goes back and Fausto lies down on a crude platform in the center: emblematic of the fact that they mourn for him. Too tired and exhausted, he accepts their grief, yet he asks "why me" (37).

The first chapter closes with the melancholic tone of flute sound which symbolizes the image of life-in-death, "It's beautiful … I can't think of anything more beautiful" (37). The flute sound empowers and strengthens Fausto to resume his journey. At this point, Fausto almost commands the situation and creates a new intrepid expectant stance towards death rather than that of the submissive fearsome one with which Arias opens the novel. Arias reallocates the scene back to the realistic level of the plot with Fausto lying in bed and calling for Carmela whereupon Ana answers.

Besides blurring the divides between realistic and magical spheres, another marking characteristic of the magic realist mode arises: it is the dislocation and disruption of time space continuum. Nonlinear and fragmentary episodes permeate such texts: the dichotomies of past and present are dissolved. In his "On the Marvelous Real in America," Alego Carpentier, the Cuban writer, argues that the fantastic in Latin American nature and culture is not to be discovered by "subverting or transcending reality with … manufactured combinations of images. Rather, the fantastic inheres

in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous mixtures exist" (75).Such adjacency creates a type of simultaneity that "suspends a linear conception of time to allow a coexistence of temporalities," and "offers a vision of time in which the past does not arrange itself into a pattern where memories melt into a line" (Benito, Manzanas and Simal 50).

The Road to Tamazuncahle moves between past and present and forward and backward in a random sequence, in the rhythm of life and death cycle, and a never-ending recurrence of rebirth and memory. The text intertwines fragments of voices of dead and living people, thereby transmitting random conversations. This is manifest in the third person voice shifting between "Now, years later" (29). Carmela's voice emerges from the past, six years ago, advising Fausto to stop working but the injunction appears to be part of the present events. Obviously, the first chapter reveals how the magical realist framework entails a non-linear plot in order to allow a shuffle of "time-space relationships …chronology of the narrative, topographical juxtapositions, the stretching and shrinking of narrative time, and the extension or restriction of locale" (Pfister 5). Events lose its sequential and spatial arrangement.

Going forth and back in setting seems to be normal; thereupon, the reader accepts the anomalous as if it were normal and commonplace since the confines are abolished. Defining magical realism, Angel Flores remarks that it is "an art of surprises" in which "time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as a part of reality." Therefore, "the reader is thrown into a timeless flux and/or the unconceivable, (is) freighted with dramatic suspense" (191). Flores adds further that plots in magic realist narratives are thus, "logically conceived, either well-rounded or projected against an infinite perspective (191).The intertwinement of the realist and the magical unfolds two levels of the plot: Fausto's death and his magical journey in his inner consciousness. In view of that, Arias, through Fausto's imaginary journey, creates "a world of view characterized by a time-space continuum and the blending of the mytho-magical and factual categories of reality" (51).

Fausto's arbitrary movement in sequentially fragmented pattern reverberates with his spatial paranormal and rambling crossings from one locale to the next in an endless cycle. In the second chapter, his first destination is Peru. He is armed with a buckler and a sword that he "could barely lift."They are important tools for the new mission in the quest for cold to find snow, waterfalls and the river (life). The heaviness of the sword is a symbol of the difficulty he encounters in dodging his real conditions. Yet, he is stimulated by his youthful vigor to start his imaginary journey to confront his cultural roots and identity which epitomizes his life -in - death. In the barrios, he feels alienated and estranged from his indigenous Mexican heritage: "Pure Indio … hairless face… more Indio than a Tarahumara" (31). Walter depicts Faustoas "the symbol of the modern Chicano mestizo heritage: Spanish, Mexican and Indian" (28). In an attempt to commit to his heritage and to confront alienation, Arias relocates the scene from Fausto's inner consciousness, his thinking about "Cuzco, Navel of the world, the very soul of Inca greatness and power," (31) to his actual state of resignation and terror of death. Then, he juxtaposes the sixteenth century with its viceroy, soldiers and horses, with modern vehicles such as buses, airplanes, cars and trains. The incompatibility between the two worlds highlights the loss of time linearity during the magic realist journey: past, present and future are woven into an implausible whole and characters communicate between the now and the past intermingling events in random sequence.

Arias adopts such a tactic to delve deeper into the Chicano identity and cultural heritage which culminates in FAUSTO? envisaging himself as an invigorated conqueror and ruler in whose throat "Excitement rose" (31). He determined to enter Cuzco "grandly, mounted, leading an army of foot soldiers" (33) after accepting an invitation of the viceroy to help fight 'rebellious' Indians. Yet, he oscillates between his commitment to his indigenous heritage and the lure of being Americanized. His vacillation is clearly evident in alternating between the Spanish world that "wasn't the best," (31) and the Americanized one which is obvious in "calling for a taxi," to go to "a clean hotel" (33) where he can have a typical North American meal. In reality, he is indecisive, so the

narrator remarks

> What would happen of him?... Worse how could he explain his mission to the viceroy if he himself didn't know? A man at arms…. He had no army, no weapons. Who would believe him?... he might be a pilgrim … a courtier? A merchant? An emissary from Panama?... But the truth was even flimisier. (34)

Perceptibly, limits between the real and the imaginary, and the impossible and possible are blurred: "vision and fantasy, hallucination and dream are celebrated. Everything imaginable and even the impossible are possible" (53) as Eliud Martínez puts it. Fausto feels confused, lost and purposeless. For that reason, he attempts to visualize his inner being with the help of a guide to recommence his journey. He mistakes his niece Carmella for a prostitute named Ana "My name's not Carmela, it's Ana" (35), yet he insists that she is Carmella. Characters are fused. This incident adds to the magical realist tendency towards the dissolution of boundaries. Ana guides Fausto to a vision of his death in a journey saturated with obstacles: "the jungle heat tightened around his neck and chest. The air turned dark and he glimpsed a vague, motionless figure…. If it were death, he would impale the monster to the hilt. But with what? (35-36). Here, Arias shifts the focus to Fausto's real and actual weak and feeble condition and his fear of death; "the monster" from which there is no elopement. Although, this scene is purely imaginative, the narrator tries to enlarge the realistic zone to stir the reader's acceptance as if it is ordinary. Luis Leal maintains that "in magical realism key events have no logical or psychological explanation. The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as the realist did) or to wound it (as the Surrealists did) but to seize the mystery behind things" (123).Moreover, "non-actual occurrences, fictional states of affairs" are presented in a way that dissimulates their fictionality" (Ronen 31).

The setting of the next four chapters moves from the sixteenth century Peru and comes back again to the present East of Los Angeles barrio where Fausto is lying in bed and Carmela calls him to dinner. Carmella asks Fausto, "Why are you playing dead?" (38). The question is highly emblematical since it affirms Fausto's transcendence of the physical state of death. Thus, Fausto again

departs from the present moment and space, and goes back to the magical funeral he experiences in the Peru journey saying, "I thought I was dead" (38). Next, he reminisces about his dead wife Eva, who suddenly enters the scene "raising herself from the chair, she approached her husband … and forgave him with a kiss. Now go to bed. He heard her say." (39).As a result, a set of associations is created between the land of the dead and that of the living wherein a cyclic appearance-disappearance and reappearance pervades the whole narrative. Hence, "fluid boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead are traced only to be crossed" (Mchale 22). In this manner, characterization and setting are delineated in an unconventional way in magic realist texts.

Despite his physically dying state, Fausto is determined to "see the river … to find a little waterfall" (38). The river and waterfall with their natural ambiance mirror the uncontaminated innocence of the pastoral world that Fausto pursues as versus the unpleasantness of the oppressive world he lives in. In his study of *The Road to Tamazunchale*, Marvin A. Lewis observes that "The snow cloud can be seen as a purifying element in the dirty Los Angeles environment" (51).

In the Los Angles journey, Fausto does not arm himself with a sword and a buckler as he did in Peru. He arms himself with a hoe for a staff and his wife's cape that she used to wear on cold nights and that would fit anyone. He apologizes saying: "Eva… I need your cape. I'll put it back when I'm done" (40). In this journey, the character of Mario is introduced as a *pachuco* whom Fausto meets on a bus he catches to find snow and water in Los Angles. Many humorous scenes permeate the Los Angeles journey since such a device maintains Fausto's re-appropriation and parodic revision of the western traditional conceptualization of death. He clings to his adamant determination to attain survival-in-death and to conquer physical worldly death. Like John Donne in his "Death Be Not Proud," Arias conceives that death is not so mighty or powerful; that it can be conquered through the immortalization of the soul. Accordingly, man can be resurrected spiritually through the faculty of imagination and fantasy. Hence, death acquires a new dimension that is totally different from its traditional one as an end which

denotes transience and stillness.

The first humorous experience emerges as Mario enters a liquor store to buy a quart of milk whereas Fausto stands in the doorway, keeping the entrance bell ringing to distract the store keeper. Mario, acting in a strange way, tells the store keeper: "Doctors says a few more days, and that's it. No more vida for my dad," and that he has "a catchy disease namely cholera."Then, they go away without paying. The second humorous experience occurs when the two see a herd of alpacas blocking a funeral procession. They try to free the way, so they become a target for the police accusation. Without being asked, the officer orders Fausto to get in the car. Yet, again, Fausto imagines his death and burial; he hides in the coffin of the deceased and escapes in this way. The scene ends in Fausto's pushing up on the casket lid and climbing out and walking away. Arias makes the best use of Fausto's humorous experiences with Mario to intensify the intersecting boundaries of the real and the unreal, and of life and death in a way that makes the implausible, the fantastic and the incredible seem reasonable, conceivable and credible. Besides, neither the author nor the narrator explains such incongruity, so the reader and the characters accept nothing as extraordinary.

Disruption of time space continuum and linearity is heightened in the fourth chapter in which Fausto initiates a new journey to the Elysian Park and where the character of Marcelino, the Peruvian shepherd, is introduced. Arias' choice of Elysian is highly allegorical. In Greek mythology, Elysian is referred to in the following quote: "on the western margin of the earth, by the stream of Ocean, lay a happy place named Elysian Plain, whither mortals favoured by the gods were transported without tasting of death to enjoy an immortality of bliss" (Bulfinch 2). The choice implies an attempt to transcend the dystopian melancholic present world to that utopian blissful hereafter where the oppressed marginalized can be freed from the fetters of the dominant Anglo- American paradigms. Its depiction in such a way is indicative of what Frausto identifies as *rasquache* sensibility, since Arias appropriates "the Los Angeles River 'dead-end' zone for the snow carnival and the abandoned

theater for the play" (Villa, "Nationalism" 48).Thomas Bulfinch presents an illustrative portrait: "Turn from these melancholy regions and seek the city of the blessed. They passed through a middle tract of darkness, and came upon Elysian fields, the groves where the happy reside." He elaborates further on the picturesque beauty of the Elysian scenery: "The region has a sun and stars of its own. The inhabitants were enjoying themselves in various ways, some in sports on the grassy turf, in games of strength or skill, others dancing or singing" (179). Accordingly, the Elysian park epitomizes Arais' prospects of the Chicano's happy and delightful future life.

In this episode, a dialogue between Fausto and Mario is interrupted by his reminiscence of and recollections of another episode that concerns his neighbor, Tiburrcio, who was mistakenly arrested in "an Eastside roundup of Mexican illegals" (50). This recollection is unequivocally momentous since it sheds light on Chicano social history and present reality: despite being Native to that region, Anglo- Americans consider Mexicans strangers and expel them if they dare to cross the borders. Fausto identifies with Tiburrcio's suffering and simulate the scene as he is inside the tall chained-fence with him and remembers his words "Remember you could be here too" (50). In fact, Fausto's message is that Chicano's should not conform to the oppressive system of racism and prejudice in the United States.

In point of fact, the total fusion of reality and fantasy in the Elysian Park episode renders the sudden appearance of Marcelino a mundane occurrence for both the reader and the other characters. Besides, the narrator's omniscient introduction of Marcelino's character adds to its consideration as commonplace: "He had wandered … drifted over the mountain pass and forgetting how late it was had descended into a valley of blinding lights… (and) flat fields" (51). The exhaustive realistic description of Marcelino accentuates the credibility of the implausible and extraordinary in this situation and eliminates any doubts that may arise in the reader's mind.

Indeed, the confluence of Marcelino and Fausto reflects an ambiance of estrangement and alienation that exemplifies Chicano reality. On the one hand, Marcelino sees Fausto as a stranger due to

his inability to speak in English and his resort to Spanish to explain "about the pinon shell that once slipped between a bridge wire and his molar" (51). On the other hand, Fausto calms Marcelino down when horror haunts him as a result of the sound of the car, and tells him: "Don't be afraid … I know how you feel" (51). Accordingly, mutual thoughtfulness and empathy arise between the two strangers who are rooted in the same culture.

On leaving the Elysian Park, Fausto undergoes a process of metamorphosis and from his new stance he is capable of portending prospects about the Chicano's future. He evolves from a docile follower to Ana and Mario into a defiant leader who can ably protect his people. A case in point is his success in stepping between Mario and a muscle man to make Mario feel secure and safe. Such defiance is intensified in the new locale to which Arias shifts the whole scene: it is Fausto's house where Carmella is sitting and Fausto resenting the doctor's advices. Such rejuvenation, with the noncompliance and insubordination it entailed, continues in the next chapter.

Again the dichotomous nature of the magical realist world is dissolved in chapter five which opens with a comprehensive and detailed description of a magical incident contextualized within commonplace everyday incidents;

> The next morning the cloud of snow gathered itself beyond Pacoima and slowly blew eastward. By morning it had reached the Glendale Boulevard bridge and for a while hovered over the rush-hour traffic. Cars, trucks and buses stopped. Suddenly a woman wearing a purple jump suit and straw pith-helmet propped her scooter against the curb and began throwing snowballs at anyone within range. Soon everyone was flinging snowballs. Then the cloud moved on, occasionally following the course of the LA River. (57)

Such painstaking account of time and location gives reliability to the magical. Moreover, it emphasizes the element of intersection and crisscrossing with directing the cloud of snow eastward, reaching the Glendale Bridge, and then moving on following a certain course. The narrator goes further to strengthen such a realistic framework by illustrating Fausto's defiant and sprightly movement raising "his arms to embrace the air and shuffled around the kitchen, keeping time with the Mexican Polka" (57).

Carmella had not seen him in years in such an energetic state. However, the narrator mixes such rejuvenating symptoms with aging ones that reflect his real condition through the selection of words and expressions such as "shuffle," "frail body," "dropped onto the chair to catch hisbreath" (57) after the polka, and depicting him as he "bent down and fidgeted with the laces" and Carmela commenting, "I'll tie them for you" (58). Nevertheless, he is prompted again once he hears the announcer briefly mentioning the snow cloud. He tells Carmela to accompany him in a journey through the barrio, saying "Let's go find it," to witness the incident.

In his quest to find "snow and the river," Fausto's role as a commander of his people is intensified. The narrator states, "the neighbors followed him out of the yard. In the street more joined the group" (59). Thus, new Chicano characters are introduced into the scene such as Mrs. Renteria and Cuca, the fortune teller. He responds to Renteria question about the snow as follows: "I wouldn't worry about it. A little snow won't hurt your clothes" (58) and the damaged flowers will grow again. Fausto's response asserts the symbolic significance of the "snow" as a purifying element. More is added to such implication with the introduction of Cuca who "had been respected for her healing, but now her clients often brought her impossible requests, like raising the dead or making an Iris bloom in winter" (58). Exposing Cuca's supernatural capabilities within a realistic environment demonstrates the elimination of borders between the real and the fantastic.

4. Metafictionality: Self- Reflexivity and the 'Intradiegetic' Narration

In postmodern writing, metafiction emerges as a prominent narrative mode. In his theoretical deliberations, Mark Currie identifies it as "a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and which takes the border itself as a subject" (2). Eradication of confines between incongruent realms such as the real/the imaginary, life/death and present/past spreads out to entail one of the central features of postmodern writing namely; self-reflexivity through which the divide between art and reality is obliterated. Magic realist style within the postmodern mould

maintains a new relationship between the reader and the artistic process. It is an interaction that is marked by the collapse of Brecht's 'fourth wall' as the audience immerses in fictional reality, and identification arises between the spectator and the actors.

Interweaving art and reality is a conspicuous element in chapter six wherein more fragmentary scenes and episodes are added to test the reader's ability to follow the random sequence of the plot. The setting is realistically presented, Fausto lies in bed suffering fatigue and exhaustion; while Carmela is in the bathroom and her friend Jess, the symbol of Americanized Chicano, is in the living room watching television. On watching the Monster Mulhoon, the Giant of the Ozarks, on T. V., Jess "saw the flying kick coming, heard the crack, and his spine broke like a saltine cracker. He fell to the carpet and waited helplessly for another Mulhoon trick" (63). During such an implausible scene, all boundaries between the performers and the audience are obliterated. Thus, the reader becomes indecisive about the actual doer of such activities. Is it Jess or Mulhoon: "Rolling on his side, he socked the armchair cushion, ducked under the hairy eye-gouge and whipped the Giant on the ear" (63). Confusion about the referentiality of the actions propels the reader to be aware of the role of the narrator.

Subsequently, the narrator shifts the whole scene to the factual dying state of Fausto where "the fog rippled through the streets like an unbreaking wave, caressing houses and trees, pigeons and drunks, with the same wet chill that began to crawl over Fausto's hands, dipping into the joints, swirling about each knuckle as if pain were a gift" (64). Such graphic description reflects Fausto's actual dying state. He himself alludes to his condition: "I won't stay here, Marcelino. This is the worst place in the world to die. Anyplace but here"(64).He turns down Marcelino's proposal to go back to Peru which Fausto considers impossible since his energy is gone and he shriveled up like a peanut."Frustrated, Fausto remarks "May be, I'll live another day" (65). Hope of perpetuating such life -in -death state dissipates as Marcelino notices Fausto's corporeal and spiritual deterioration. Physically and "in the darkness Marcelino sees the silhouette of the old man's chest rise and fall. Now and then Fausto

would cough something into a wad of Kleenex and drop back onto his pillow" (65). Physiologically, Fausto feels that it is the end for the aging man yet thinks, "Maybe I'll live another day" (65).

Though the whole atmosphere is gloomy and dark, Fausto still clings to hope, "for a touch of youth… A few… a few days" (66).Seeing Fausto in such a resigned and succumbing situation, Mareclino recounts a story that may liven up Fausto's spirits and advises him to try the magical remedy of his uncle Celso in an attempt to "put new life back in the old skeleton" (66). He illustrates the work of that remedy as follows,

> Celso started with a bag of stones all about the same size. You take the stones and make a little pile. You make it as high as you can, until you are sure no more stones can be put on top without falling. Then … you place one more stone on top. If it stays and does not fall, you will be as strong as that last stone. Nothing can make you fall." (66-67)

The story is suggestive in two ways. It underscores the inevitability of death as an actual end of all human life since the pile of stone, symbol of life, will collapse sooner or later. Nevertheless, the emphasis is redirected from death itself to how man dies; happy or miserable. Paradoxically, Marcelino explains that his uncle died a happy man, "the birds had already taken his eyes, but you could still see the smile" (67). Moreover, it is a story that concretizes Gerard Genette's concept of the 'intradiegetic narrational level' in which characters tell stories to other characters who, thus, become narratees. According to Genette, the 'intradiegetic narrational level' includes the "telling of stories;" and thus, some characters become narrators whereas others become narratees. In this respect, Monika Fludernik remarks that "beneath the level of communication between narrator and narratee, another, intradiegetic level of communication exists, that of the communication between characters" (28). Given this mode of narration, the characters interact on various planes and endow the text multiple significance.

At any rate, Marcelino's story succeeds in stimulating Fausto to continue on with his journey. On the way to the Elysian Park, Fausto and Marcelino deliberate upon the madness and craziness of the first Europeans in the Americas. They invent ludicrous accounts about the indigenous inhabitants of the continents to justify their

colonization and occupation. The natives are depicted as "giants with huge feet" tails and living in trees (68). In an attempt to debunk such an image, Marcileno regards those stories as "crazy men's stories" told by crazy people. Hence, Arias grapples with the fallacious official documentation of demonized images constructed by the Anglo-Americans to justify their colonization of other people's lands. He excavates the American *conquistador* history and picks bits of truths about the agony of the native indigenous Americans to evoke resistance history and bring to the attention the counter-hegemonic maneuvers. The panoramic view of the oppressed people sprawls with the depiction of "blacks faces with scars, mullatos, women selling their daughter for money, from Colombia… Trindad …. Snata Marts" (69).To make the scene more compelling and persuasive, Arias draws parallelism between a group of shirtless blacks followed by a white man on a horseback. The contrasting positions foreground the historical humiliation and degradation of the natives. As a leader, Fausto thinks of something that may mitigate the mortification of the oppressed, so he asks Marcelino to "play something with [his] flute… it might impress them" (69).

Empathy with the subservient and subjugated subjects reaches its apogee in the next scene in which one more example of the intertwining of art and reality occupies center stage in the narrative. Fausto and Marcelino find themselves in a movies studio where they are taken to be actors in a movie scene which turns out to be emblematic and demonstrative. It refers to uprising and rebellion since one of the actors tells them "go wait in that building. When the revolution is over, you can come out" (70). Fausto believes in the reality of the unreal. He is convinced that "outside the revolution had started" and advises Marcelino to "stay close" and warns him saying: "whatever you do, don't get yourself killed" (71). Then the narrator presents a matter of fact description of the fight:

> The fight had started, already sweeping men and horses into a blind frenzy which could only end in victory or defeat. The rebels were falling, blood spurted on the clean sand, the plaza was lost, they were surrounded, and the voice above kept yelling, "Cut! Cut! Cut!"….
>
> "Stay down!" gurgled a man with a lance in his stomach; the

> blood spilled from his mouth. "You're dead," he said, slumping to the ground. (71)

A close look at the constituent components of this cinematic scene renders impalpable the confines separating reality and illusion. The narrator envisages a real battle which can end only in defeat or victory, and where the antagonists pretend yelling and killing spilling blood everywhere. Marelino asks, "Were those men dead … the one on the ground?" Fausto replies "No, they just look dead" (72) and the blood is just dye. Such an emphasis on the pretense of death highlights the defiant mode and the persistent quest for transcendence of the world of physical death in life to that of life in death. Fausto observes, "Everything, they do everything we do … even fight" (72). The only difference he brings to attention between them and the actors is that "We can leave the movie, and [the actors] can't." The actors are trapped whereas Fausto and Marcelino manage to escape the snaring trap. Symbolically, such success signifies his freedom from and triumph over the state of acquiescence and surrender to death. Thereupon, he reflects on his chances of survival wishing to have a new brain and new eyes; thus, he builds the pile of stones, and states "Maybe I'll be lucky" (73). It is a luck that may be in the form of having "a new whole body" (72) and "could see the world as it should be, if only for a few months, a few days" (73).Additionally, he would be able to see not only the visible but also the invisible. Fausto aspires to fulfill his "desires, intentions … in his belief world" since he cannot do that in "actual world as a reference world" (Ronen 67).

Eliminating the borders between art and reality continues in the following chapter with the discovery of an unknown dead wetback. With the introduction of wetbacks, Arias captures an important aspect of Chicano reality: "illegal" crossing of borders and deportation once a person reached the United States. Mrs. Noriega's grandchildren discovered the wetback dead in the dry riverbed. His name is anonymous "his name wasn't David yet; that would come later when the others found out" (74). Being anonymous is substantially figurative given that it shows how the wetbacks are objectified, trivialized and rendered invisible. Yet, the dead corpse retains its name within the Chicano community as David. The

realistic context of David's episode is his death by drowning. However, his story acquires a new dimension on the magical level when he is resurrected after his death. The story of his death by water is an absurd premise since there is no river where he dies. One of the boys asked:"How could he drown?... there's no water" (74). Nevertheless, it is accepted by the characters without doubt as a real fact because the narrator unravels cogently a portrayal of the corpse: "David's brow was smooth…his hair was uncombed and mixed with sand; his dark skin glistened, clean and wet; and the rest of him, torn shirt and patched trousers, clean and also wet" (74). In a figurine image depiction, the narrator explains

> David was certainly the best looking young man they had ever seen … No one seemed to have the slightest shame before this perfect shape of a man; it was as if a stature had been placed among them, and they stared freely at whatever they admired most. Some of the men envied the wide chest , the angular jaw, and the hair, thick and wavy; the women for the most part gazed at the full, parted lips, the sunbaked arms, the long strong legs and of course the dark, soft mound with its finger of life flopped over, head to the sky. (75)

The statue image reflects the transcendence of reality through artistic intertextuality: David's fascinating beauty acclaimed by Mrs. Renteria evokes the character of Emily in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily". Here, Fausto's role as leader is maintained as he calls upon the women by crying out who "needed a man so much that she would accept a dead man? "Speak up! Which of you can give this man your entire love, the soul of everything you are? Which of you, if not the senora here who has no one?" (77). Both Renteria and Emily are necrophiliac and sexually attracted to dead bodies. The former is attracted to David whereas the latter is attracted to Homer Barron, a foreman from the north. The narrator elaborates on Renteria's Necrophilia as follows,

> Mrs. Renteria had bathed and shaved David, clipped his hair and lightly powdered his cheeks. He wore new clothes (Mario's contribution) and sat quietly in a waxed and polished leather recliner. The neighbors filed by, each shaking the manicured hand, each with a word of greeting or a good-natured joke about the first night in bed. And almost everyone returned for a second, third and

> fourth look at this treasure of manhood which might not survive another day of summer heat. (77)

The way Renteria has dealt with David's corpse makes the Chicanos who come later treat it as if it were animate and breathing. The magical events acquire a factual dimension when Renteria and David emerge as real couples. The reliability of the episode increases with the narrator's portrayal of a warm afternoon between David and Mrs. Renteria during which David "would take her out, arm in arm far away to the south … fed her candies, gave her flowers and eventually spoke of eternity … At night she would come to him dressed as a dream, a spring of jasmine in her hair, then lay by his side until dawn …whisper and touch. (78)

As a matter of fact, the naturalization of the oxymoronic nature of David's death-rebirth cyclic episode in the Chicano community imagination is a working example of magical realism: a logical development of an absurd premise through a matter of fact description. Thus, the reaction of the characters, especially toward David's reversion to death, showing no signs of surprise and accept the imaginative as real. The narrator comments on Fausto's response: "On the third day Fausto knew the honeymoon was over" (78). Then, Mrs. Renteria states, "He died this morning… an hour ago" (78). The realistic framework is strengthened through depicting the disgusting odor of David's corpse which makes Fausto enjoins Mrs. Renteria to take the corpse away from her affirming that it "will get the best burial possible" (78). The narrator illustrates that Davis was not buried, and that he left Elysian Park better than when he had arrived. The reason for such an eccentric treatment of the cadaver is provided by Fausto as he tells Marcelino that "a man so perfect should not be buried." These words reveal Arias' hope for a human treatment of his community instead of dying as neglected animals. They also aver the belief in perpetuity and permanence of the soul; "the body goes, but the soul …" (78) which implies hope and satisfaction in death. Substantially, boundaries between dialectic dichotomies such as life/death, past/present and normal/ paranormal are dissolved. Nevertheless, their elements coexist as complementary and correlated parts of the whole.

5. Identity: Alienation versus Allegiance

In his quest for identity, Fausto journeys into several flashbacks which are generally functional within magic realist textual realms. Flashbacks add to the dislocation of time- space continuum: they disrupt the conventional sequence of events with a beginning, middle and an end. Besides, native writers resort to flashbacks to underscore their alienation, their commitment to their roots of origin and their resistance to assimilation. The sense of estrangement, disconnection and separation is highlighted in Eva's words when she visits Mexico as an American tourist; she remarks, "Mexico was for the Mexicans" (82).

The clutching of Fausto to his roots in contrast to Eva's detachment acquires more prominence in chapter eight where he, as a commander, is determined to help the wetbacks cross the northern border to the United States. Introspectively, Fausto conceives David's episode as a working example of the Chicano experience as illegal immigrants in the United States. He demonstrates "majados like David would continue coming and going- dead, half dead or alive – despite what anyone thought they should do. Thousands, hundreds of thousands, were waiting for a taste, a glimpse, of paradise. Or just a job" (80).The narrator observes that the wetbacks need someone like Fausto to tell them about survival and death in the United States, someone "who could also bring them across in style. No more hiding, no more climbing the hills like wild dogs" (80). Besides, "the operation would be decent, respectable, the plan quiet simple" (80). Fausto's words refute the fetichization and objectification enforced upon the colonized by their persecutors.

In one of the flashbacks, Fausto finds himself lying in bed and staring at the cracks in the ceiling. He reckons that they delineate "a map whose surface was covered with vague designs, tiny ridges, plains, valleys, mountains, coastlines" (80). Imagining himself a guide, Fausto orders his captains "to sail to Mexico's western ports and fill the holds with all the hungry, desperate men willing to ship out with only a promise in return" (80). Yet, his illusory excursion is suddenly interrupted by his dead wife whose appearance evokes the sense of the magical atmosphere. Both seem to be healthy and converse with each other. Moreover, Fausto is invigorated to

galvanize the force of life much more than before. Eva asks him "Why don't you stay home and rest like Carmella says?"? He replies, "Eva, there's too much to do. And why should I rest? That's all I've done for the last six years" (81).

Another flash from the past reverts to Mexico thus interrupting Fausto's presence on the magical level: Arias shifts the setting to Mexico where Fausto stands in front of hundreds of Mexicans explaining his ingenious plan guiding them across the borders. He assumes sovereignty, "All of you listen to me! … Do as I say and I'll take you across" (83-84). Seeing the United States is conditional on obeying him to dress up in new uniforms and get inebriated with Tequila; otherwise, he cautions that he would leave them behind. At the onset of their trip, Eva suddenly re-appears and in a further flashback, Fausto recalls the day she caught him in bed with another woman. Justifying his amoral behavior, Fausto cajoles her: "She's really you… I just changed your nose a little and [gave] you bigger hips" (84). However, she casts doubt on his pretense of conjuring a beautiful duplicate, and seems just as suspicious of his intentions to help the wetbacks.

In fact, flashbacks and retrospections serve to accentuate the occult nature of characterization in magical realist texts: alive or dead. At all times, they inexplicably come in and out of the plot on both levels; realistically and imaginatively. More evidence of this in addition to the aforementioned ones is the disappearance of Eva accompanied by the re-introduction of Marcelino whom the men follow lured by the "lively sound" (5) of his flute; the symbol of a new life.

During his excursion with Marcelino between Leucadia and Oceanside, Fausto provides a realistic description of the features of the geographical location in veritable environmental details; "Between endless rows of skated tomatoes, hundreds of other illegals waved their short-handled hoes… In seconds the newcomers had torn off their uniforms and were rushing across the highway…Finally, one of the men left the field and returned to the highway" (86). The newcomers of wetbacks find out that there are not enough jobs for all of them. Accordingly, in his attempt to resolve the problem Fausto offers an odd solution through a

simulation of death. He orders the wetbacks: "When we get to where we're going, all of you must pretend you're dead" (87). Walter advocates that such a pretense is functional in two ways. Primarily, "it describes social reality, that is, the manipulated, exploited wetback who is being denied his personality and is degraded to an object used by others as they wish" (43). It is preposterous that the wetback "others" acquire their human entity in death. Fausto explains, "Some of [Anglo-Americans] will put you in their beds, maybe you'll hang on a wall, or maybe they'll put you in a museum" (87). Furthermore, "It transmits the perception of death which Arias exposes through Fausto's magical journey, namely, that nobody really dies but only 'pretends' to be 'dead'" (42). Therefore, Arias gives a new dimension to death that makes it not as end in itself, but a beginning of a new undying and unending state of life.

In another flashback that reinforces his dedication to his heritage, Fausto recalls the story of a Mexican legend. It is the love story of the two volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztlazihuatl. Also, Cuca recounts two informative stories based on her personal experiences. Arias indicates that "whenever Cuca loosened up, no one, except maybe Fausto, could tell a better story" (114). These stories reveal an essential feature of Chicano culture namely; the extent to which it is immersed in myths, legends and folklore. Making the best use of the resources Chicano heritage, Arias "moves beyond retelling folk culture, using 'magical realism' to create a richly inventive universe pregnant with Chicano associations. Ultima is still a healing figure, using traditional lore on the side of good" (Fischer 221). Recounting such native stories asserts an inherent attribute ingrained in Chicano identity as storyteller.

In fact, the intervention of tales in the narrative disrupts the chronological sequence and breaks the cycle of conformity to the long-established conventional mode of narrative texts. Genaro Padilla writes, "Should a native … wish to write about native culture during the first half of the twentieth century, she or he would be coerced … into composing text – ethnographic, fictive, or autobiographic – determined by the overwhelming nonnative discursive world through which one moved" (47). Such stories

resurrect the communal spirit and the feeling of shared cultural values of the ancestors to be handed down to future generations.

Quite the reverse of Fausto, Eva lacks devotion to traditional inheritance. She is assimilated in the American culture, has lost all connections to Chicano identity and cultural legacy. Her Americanization comes full circle in her inquisitive query:"Why was[Fausto] trying to save the world … trying to bring over all these mejicanos" who are "Low-class nothings pura gentuza! … maleducados … campesinos …" (89). She goes further and adds: "Why won't you stay in bed and die like everyone else? No you have to go off to Peru and God knows where else" (89). Eva is unable to comprehend the main reason beneath Fausto's embarking on helping the mejicanos which he, in fact, clarifies in one sentence; "Because … I feel sorry for them" (90).

In another flashback, Fausto recollects how he has reacted the same way in a similar episode in which he has lent a hand to a needy farmer; how he goes to the farmer's wife and gives her ten pesos and justifies his deed, in the same way he does for helping the mejicanos, "I felt sorry for him" (93). In an attempt to incite in Eva a sense of belonging and affiliation, Fausto reminisces about his past experiences and how they got married. He reminds her that he was not that "big thing" when they first saw each other: he had been street sweeper. Yet, Eva used to say, "It doesn't matter that you're a small man. Speak like a big man" (90).The narrator draws a comparison between Eva and Fausto's contrastive lifestyle before marriage. Eva is depicted as a conceited Americanized young girl lavishing in luxury. As she and her father "had driven by while he was scraping horse manure from the road. A young girl, seated stiffly in the back seat, she had waved to him" (90). On the other hand, Fausto is portrayed as an underprivileged street sweeper. The narrator adds to the sharpness of their divergent milieu; she taught him the most important lessons mainly; "his bearing, his speech and his manners" (90). Arias endeavor to debunk the binary superior/inferior pattern enforced by the dominant culture to belittle the marginalized simple- minded. Fausto, is nevertheless is held in respect; his aptitudes are acknowledged: "She would even had taught him to read, but he already knew" (90). Arias makes clear that he

was not illiterate; Fausto was familiar with the cultured lifestyle with which she sought to acquaint him.

With the departure of Eva, the chain of events goes back again to the lifelike level in chapter ten. Carmela returned from the drive- in theatre finding her uncle in bed "burning with fever … fully dressed with one moist hand on his staff" (95). The word "fever" crystallizes the nature of Fausto's journey as dreamlike and imaginative since it mirrors a hallucinatory state of mind in which reality and actuality are rendered impalpable. Carmella's reaction is at variance with her apathetic attitude toward her uncle's removal of his skin at the beginning of the novel. Seeing Fausto burning fever, she "covered him with the bedspread and rushed out of the house" (95). Calling Cuca, the fortune teller, she sought to find him a cure. The latter tries to calm Carmela down telling her that Fausto "won't die … at least now" (95).

However, Fausto begins momentarily to succumb again to the inevitability of death. He informs Cuca, "It won't work," but she retorts, "I know, but it makes Carmela feels better" (95). Evidently, Cuca's way of curing Fausto adds to the humorous approach to and the deconstruction of the conventional view of death. She engages Fausto in a conversation to let him escape his dying state in order to resume the journey of life in death. He urges her: "If you see my wife, tell her I'm on my way" (96) and she responds, "Not so quick … Take your time … what's your hurry?" (96).When he inquires if it is true that there would be time, Cuca admonishes: "It all depends on what you're thinking. The mind usually controls these things" (96).Her words are revealing since they assert the grave import of the faculty of mind's eye in securing the capacity for transcendence and intransience. As a consequence, Fausto maintains his firm grip on the hope of realizing life in death.

Marcelino's sudden appearance in the scene gives renewed vigor to Fausto's expectations and desires. He instills fearlessness and valor; "Have you forgotten…. Nothing can make you fall … the Mexicans are waiting …. Think of what you could show them … a man with all your knowledge" (96). In a compliant tone, Fausto responds: "Tell them to go back. It's no use. I can't help anyone…

not like this" (96).However, Marcelino is not disheartened and does not give up to Fausto's surrender to despair. Marcelino insists on creating a momentum using his influence on him. He is relentless in his persuasion carrying on with his supplication that the Mexicans waiting in the river dying of hunger and cold, don't even have clothes; "They're going to say you were a coward. They'll say you made it all up. You never went to Peru, you never led an army, you never explored the jungle, you never did what you said you did. They'll say you abandoned your men, you escaped" (97). Marcelino's distinct meaningful speech is an occasion for conveying a pitiful portrait of the Chicano's painful state and their unremitting need for a guide who can secure them a humane life. Such utterances renew Fausto's vigor and dynamism and stimulate his confidence and hope. In this respect, he imparts a message of rebellion against the conventional notion of death. Subsequently, he bursts out radiated and invites Marcelino to a new exploratory trip saying: "I'll show you who's a coward… Come on, we've got things to do" (97). Fausto, the figure of the communal leader, is determined to bring to a completion a denouement that renders such an imaginary journey meaningful and rewarding.

In fact, Arias is keen on giving a consequential closure to Fasuto's seemingly absurd imaginary journeys. Thus, he reintroduces Eva again and drives her to prepare Fausto for his last quest; she dresses him in his ironed trousers to look neat. To Fausto's anticipated question:"What would you do without me?" Eva responds by tying "his cape, as if it were the last knot" and saying, "I'll be waiting for you" (98). Grasping Eva's message, Fausto declaims his written mission,

> I, Don Fausto Tejada, a respectful servant and emissary of Nuestra Ciudad la Reina de los Angeles, hereby undertake this journey, fitter for bodies less blasted with misfortune, for men of greater ability, so that if your Grace wills it, I may be allowed to search this land … not in quest of riches but of the true seed and pulse of life. (98)

For the first time, Fausto proclaims to himself his name openly and fully. He tends to assert his own individual identity that is interspersed and cannot be separated from his communal one with a vision to "be cast into the arms of a thousand starving men" (98). His

role is that of a rescuer of those in hardship persecuted by the unjust exercise of authority, and a guide for those maltreated and abused thus leading them in the road towards a peaceful state of life-in-death; wherein humans are uninhibited by the manacles of biased dichotomous codes that discriminate against them on grounds of their origin. Believing in the faculty of imagination as the only means through which he can realize such a utopian world, Fasuto asks Marcelino to "play something," so he can think and see things that everyday people cannot see or understand. He remarks "It's not everyday people can hear language like that. Well, maybe some other time" (98).

Though Fausto laments the fact that ordinary people cannot have the same experience he has, he hoped one day they will acquire it in order catch a glimpse of what he sees and experiences. The 'wetbacks' cannot see the same way Fausto does; they are unable to penetrate into the truth beneath their harsh environment; it is the attempt of the Anglo-American world to expunge their identity and the legacy of their ancestors. Nevertheless, he regards his own imaginary journey as the momentum that may galvanize them into effective action. It is his aspiration that the voyage of suffering and pain emerges as a communal counter hegemony that would create the only resolve to Chicano alienation and estrangement.

More practical instances propound the prominence allotted to the value of collectivity. On crossing a road with a truckload of encyclopedias, the road disappeared and ended in nowhere, so Fausto started kicking the sand. Other people arrived and toed the same line. The entire crowd spent a whole afternoon kicking the sand to see the way to Indio, the nearest village. However, all efforts are in vain and resulted only in aggravating the problem and with Fausto having holes in the toes of his shoes. The problem is more irksome with the awareness that "the only shoestore open (is) sold out of his size" (98).

As the matter stands, the narrator perseveres in highlighting the communal and collective spirit that permeates the whole barrio instigating the support of the hungry wetbacks. Prominent obliging barrio women such as Mrs. Renteria and Cuca serve them as fast as

they could finish the baking and shaping the dough into football size loaves whipping up enough eggs and milk to satisfy an army. As a result, "Nothing that could be eaten was left in the house, not in the houses for two blocks around" (99). When Fausto proposes letting them inside Mrs. Renteria's house, she refused because she has no more rooms in the house. Mrs. Noreigaon the other hand, suggests their taking refuge in the church where they can pray God to help them. Given that all the considered plansare unfeasible, Fausto suggests that the solution is to go to a closed empty theatre called "Lose Felis Theatre" to show them a play. Mario tells Fausto what the show should be entitled, yet Fausto replies: "I don't know, make something up' (100). Then Mario suggests "Vida y muete."Mrs. Renteria says "that's too depressing. You need something that will make them happy" (100).Thereupon, all march to the theatre to see the show that represents the last and pivotal stage in Fausto's magical-realist journey. The play is entitled, in a metafictional mode, after the novel "The Road to Tamazunchale." It is a drama enacted by all characters where the real intertwines with the magical.

The insertion of the play within the narrative is substantially functional. On the one hand, Arias manipulates such strategy to comment on the novel as a literary work. This intention is tangible in the resort to similar captions. On the other hand, intertwining a dramatic performance within a fictional world is in keeping with the overall technique in which boundaries are blurred. In this respect, the inter-generic approach handles play and narrative writing as cognate genres. The unbounded textual space allows for the movement beyond the confines of rigid patterns and propagates new avenues for envisioning the self and the milieu. Such tendency for open-endedness privileges individual creativity and fertility over the authoritarian and doctrinaire.

Furthermore, Martin-Rodrlguez comments: "The fact that the actors in the drama play themselves (except for the character who plays Fausto) implies a duplication of their literariness… [and] the mere existence of the play produces a mirror-like image of the author-text-audience relation in which all three elements are now fictional" (197). Fausto is sitting in the audience and his role is allotted to Robert, Smaldino's eldest son. However, Carmela acts as

an usherette, Mrs. Renteria plays as Mrs. Renteria, Smaldino is dressed as Smaldino, and Cuca is the director of the show. Even the dead characters in the narrative, like David and Eva, reappear in the play.

In addition, the same tactics of fusing reality and imagination are adopted in the play as in introducing one of the wetbacks as coming from Tamazunchale to induce in the reader the sense that it is a real place and indicating a devotion and commitment to one's roots and heritage. Though this wetback has never seen the show that carries the name of his native town, Tamazunchale, he considers it "a great honor, something he would tell his father and mother [about]" (102). Nonetheless, such words provoke the inquisitiveness and curiosity of the reader to know what is the mystery beneath the "honorable" story of Tamazunchale. It is through Tiburcio that Arias probes the significance of Tamazunchale,

> You see, whenever things go bad, whenever we don't like someone, whoever it is … our sons, our wife, our compadres or comrades … we simply send them to Tamazunchale. We've never really seen this place, but it sounds better than saying the other, if you know what I mean. Uh, before I go any further, is there anyone here from Tamazunchale? (102)

Tiburcio's words affirm the communal quest for both life and identity. Arias resumes, through Tiburcio, in a third person narrative mode, reminding the audience that they are all on the same road to Tamazunchale. The following comment reverberates with nuances: "they were all either coming from or going to Tamazunchale" (103); such is the final destination of the magico-realist journey. Realistically, everyone is on the road to Tamazunchale which is a real "tropical village in Moctezuma River valley on C. N. 85" (126). This is demystified and elucidated by Arias in postscript to the novel; his paratextual device. On the magical level, it symbolizes the life-death cycle. Eventually, the road to Tamazunchale comes to imply an obliteration of dichotomies since its trajectory is cyclical not linear; it has neither beginning nor end. Illuminating such interpretation embedded in "Tamazunchale," the narrator goes further to give more specific details about the show and the bus which serves as its setting. As soon as the characters are seated in the

bus, the journey begins. When Fausto's dead wife appears on the stage, Fausto shouts her name in a way that naturalizes her appearance as a live spectacle with a living actor.

Moreover, the whole journey is composed of a series of humorous incidents. The heat of the engine rising in the seats of those in the rear is followed by sun heat "burning the roof of the bus" releasing "the familiar odor of gassy meals … on the people toward the front" (104). Eva was the first to complain and leave the bus. Fausto couldn't blame her given that even he, from where he was seated among the audience, could smell the bomb.

More jocose scenes follow: the bus lurches forward and "a bag bugling with fish topple(s) from the overhead rack and a young mother shrieks hysterically" while her baby sucks "on the head of a mackerel," a fish heaves at Smaldino but hit the driver so Smaldino jumps to the ground. Another passenger is thrown off the bus, and Cuco shouts, "Get him off the stage … he's ruining everything" (104).The entire episode emerges as a counter hegemonic act: only the Chicanos are the ones that still cling to performances native to their community, and thus construct a buffer zone to protect against the absorption in the dominant culture. They are the only ones allowed, accepted and included in the bus, shunning the Americanized figures with the implication that the latter are traitors betraying their heritage and thus excluded.

Arias' same tactics of normalizing magical incidents persist: the passengers act like they are tired: yawning and hungry. However, the recollection of Mrs. Renteria and David's episode shifts the whole scene to the magical realm. In such a dramatic spectacle, Mrs. Renteria is obliged to leave given David's death as he re-emerges moaning under his jacket. The bus driver, in a gesture of kindness, offers his pants to dead man, "to keep him warm" (105). Mrs. Noriega figures in the scene announcing that she was leaving, since they have gone far enough and she would walk the rest of the way. In a pathetic tone, she states "I promised [God] I would walk and a promise to God … is more sacred than the promises we make to the saints," and poses a question, "How many of you have made promises" (105) to which the driver replies, "I promised to drive the bus to Tamazunchale" (105).

Since the road near its end, all leave the bus and continue the journey to Tamazunchale their own way since they are free to choose how to get there. The driver, as they come near into view of the town, stopped the bus and said he could go no further. The old man, who symbolizes Fausto in the show, is determined to see Tamazunchale, the place everyone talked about. He comments "Tamazunchale is our home. Once we're there, we're free, we can be everything and everyone. If you want you can even be nothing" (108). In Tamazunchale, like any other place, a few things are different: "If you see a bird, you can talk to it, and it'll talk back. If you want something, it's yours. If you want to be an apple, think about it and you might be hanging from a tree or you might be held in someone's hand, maybe your own" (107). In Tamazunchale, man can be "a flower, sun, stars"and no one dies. Yet some people are only pretending like in the movies: "They usually see how stupid it is to die, so they come out of the earth and do something else" (108). Accordingly, Tamazuncahle looms large as a Utopian town where dichotomies, conformity and transience have no place, only freedom and immortality triumph.

Fausto pulls off what he pursues: it is the stage of reconciliation in which he understands how to lead life in death as a guide and a leader to his people. The final magical event of the play spotlights such leadership as the Tamazunchale boy directing few others leaving the theatre seats empty, and the whole column led by the old man and the girl "quickly formed and wound up into the sky…. Fausto could see … some of the majados were dipping to the right or to the left, but most continued forward, and eventually all were lost… gone between the horizon and the stars" (108). Fausto is the only character who remains seated "clapping and clapping until his hands were sore" (108). In this episode, utopian elements predominate: seeing that the journey as a whole is not only a transcendence of the boundaries separating opposites, but also an ascension, above the realistic earthly level of coercion and oppression, to the permanent heavenly world.

In this way, Tamazunchale acquires a new import beyond its real one as a village in an actual geographical location. It stands for a

mythological space beyond life that "suggests a different way of life, one that is actively created by a mankind in brotherhood. Underlying Fausto's journey towards death is "the author's belief that human beings should not accept a prescribed way of and/or outlook on life, but should create one that combines their individual needs with those of the community they live in" (Walter 50). Those suggestions are reflected in almost all the characters of the narrative except those alienated who cannot grasp the essence of collective spirit such as Jess and Eva.

In chapter twelve, the setting comes full circle; it ends where it began in Fausto's bedroom where he is really dying. This reflects the cyclic nature and the break of linearity in both time and space. However, Fausto is not rebellious but feels reconciled and satisfied with such a closure in a celebrated cheerful communal atmosphere. Mrs. Renteria "had left [a pineapple upside-down cake and a bag of avocados] for Fausto … 'in case he was hungry'" (116).Tiburcio moves the cake beneath his nose "to let him smell it" (116) since it is his favourite. Smaldino wonders: "why don't we play little music" (116) since he always likes music. Cuca states, "I didn't come to cure him. All I can do is talk to him and be here when he dies" (116).Carmella as well wants to buy some drinks. What Fausto has tried to achieve during the journey is to create such a collective spirit that defies fragmentation and assimilation and he almost succeeded in doing so.

Chapter thirteen announces Fausto's death with a corroboration that this is not an end but a beginning of a new phase in which he has moved beyond life to realize is release from his earthly ephemeral life to the heavenly undying life. The chapter opens with an ironical narrative scene where "there was no funeral, no burial. Instead, Fausto insisted they take him to the beach so he could look at the sea and the women in bikinis for a while. Evangelina, as a last gesture, had promised he could do anything as long as it wasn't indecent" (119). Then, unexpectedly, Fausto decides to go to a bookstore "where nobody sells books"(119) to show that he is still hopeful and optimistic. He entertains the idea of opening a little shop and purchasing books, diaries, journals, crates, encyclopedias in five languages, a set of Chinese classics, a few

novels by a promising Bulgarian author, a collection of Japanese prints, an early cosmography of the known and unknown worlds. The choice of these items is significant though such an odd collection seems bizarre. In fact, Fausto seeks to satisfy the diverse requests of his customers, and tries to end his journey enriching it and widening its scope to include other experiences. Such related intra-textual ensemble "lend authenticity to events that appear to be absurd and totally unbelievable on the extra-textual level" (Walter 54).

Consequently, Fausto transcends the specificity of the actual personal terrain and attains that vast imaginary universal one wherein dichotomies vanish and dissipate. Commenting on the interplay between the factual and the imaginary, Fluck states:

> The stronger the promise of self-empowerment by means of fiction, the greater the sensitivity to historical, social, and cultural sources of coercion; the greater the sensitivity, the broader and more comprehensive the definition of what constitutes coercion; the broader the definition, the greater the retreat of the imaginary to that which cannot be controlled and domesticated by the social or linguistic system. (444)

Fausto is determined to empower himself to be able to counter hegemonic and coercive practices of the dominant culture. Thus, he makes possible the imaginary world where he attains what he longs for, yet such an imaginary world is not conceived as "opposed to realism but as a part of the same interplay… Both seemingly contradictory sides collapse under the oxymoron of "magical realism" (Benito, Manzanas and Simal 38). Intersection is the foremost criterion that typifies the magical realist mode and possible world theory rooted in the philosophical logic. Recently, it has been used to explicate the notion of fictional worlds, endorsing the concept that such crossing points "open a new scenario that includes not only fictional worlds analogous or similar to the actual world, but also the most fantastic worlds, far removed from or contradictory to reality" (Benito, Manzanas and Simal 29).

As a matter of fact, the quintessence of chapter thirteen is the indication of how Tamazunchale is the crucible where different realms merge and all barriers melt; whereupon, man attains freedom.

Fausto at the end of the novel is not that one with whom the novel opens. He is more fulfilled now and regards the end as a beginning of a new life whereby he is determined to be more vigorous crying out: "I want to have everything" (119). Other characters' attitudes show no sign of surprise towards the rebirth of Fausto. Additionally, they act normally and talk to him as if nothing odd has happened and participate in Fausto's life-after-death. Indeed, in the world of magic realism "the narrator speaks of the surreal so naturally it becomes real" (Geetha 345).

Arias closes the novel with factual scenes to authenticate the non-actual ones. He gets the whole Chicano wetbacks to the actual setting of the Elysian Parkin Los Angeles where he traces in a comprehensive realistic account, a procession that follows "the Santa Monica Freeway as far as Vermont… through downtown Los Angeles, past Bullocks, Clifton's, the Million Dollar Theatre… and finally along the North Broadway, over the river and tracks, Crossing Daly and stopping at the Cuatro Milpas take out and restaurant" (121). The narrator proceeds further on the factual level in which wetbacks stop at a restaurant to have food. The setting is diametrically opposite to magical scenes. However, new magical occurrences are introduced in the form of metamorphoses: Mrs. Noriega transforms into "a string of beads with a tiny silver cross dangling from her mouth" (122). A pigeon is transformed into a hawk. Mrs. Noreiga changes into a grasshopper, and "Cuca trotted around like a fox" (123). Fausto watched the transformation of his fellow citizens, "Now a stroke, now a bear, one minute a horse, the next minute the rider, one moment a dog's howl, the next moment the rustle of wind through the highest trees" (123). Such intermittent metamorphosis into birds, animals and plants means as Catherine Rodgers formulates it:"the tale opens a space of the in-between ["l'entre-deux"], a space of uncertainty. The narrator [himself] is captive between two worlds, the human, [the plant] and the animal, not belonging really to one or the other" (cited in Faris 21). Fausto is the only one who remains unchanged. His remark, "It was all game, free and forever" (123) underlines the drift of the entire novel. The cycle of intersection and dissolution between the two oxymoronic worlds come full circle with the possibility of the impossible and

unfeasible.

Finally, Fausto arrives at Tamazunchale, which is realistically situated in the Elysian Park in Los Angeles. Yet, on the magical level, Fausto reappropraites the setting of the city within the pastoral milieu of purity and absolute freedom. The narrator explicates: "Except for the cars, the park was deserted. The streets were gone, some trees had shriveled, others had grown. Squirrels poked their heads out of the leaves on the ground, a bank of snow lay gleaming on the ridge below the blue, richly blue sky" (122). Hence, he blurs the nature/ city dichotomy: the physical and real setting is Los Angeles city, whereas Fausto's mental journey recurs to the natural unspoiled world of the country where he can lead life in death.

Raúl Homero Villa argues that Arias utilizes magical realist mode to "draw parodic attention to the Chicano community's social geographic location in Los Angeles" and "[to] …imaginatively contest the debilitating impacts of hegemonic urban development upon the barrios] ("Marvelous" 77).

The novel ends with a revealing dialogue between Fausto and Eva. Embracing incompatible approaches towards the concept of death, Eva cautions Fausto, "you didn't take your pills" (123) and proceeds saying: "it's too late for that now" hence enunciating Fausto's real death. Yet, Fausto still commits to his trajectory of transcendence of real death. He observes: "I'm still alive, remember … Why did you say it was too late" (123). His emphasis on being alive supplemented by the word 'remember' underlines Arias' adamant belief in memory and imagination as tools of transcendence and permanence: who imagines and has a strong memory to remember can create, so he never dies. That is why, as long as Fausto "manages to keep the narration going he will live" (Martin-Rodrlguez 197).

To point out such projection, Fausto asks about Marcelino and the wetbacks: "Where's Marecelino, I'll find Marcelino," and "You remember those mojados I brought over" (123). Eva replies that Marecelino "could go home" and the wetbacks that she "remember[s]" are "probably here too" (123).The recurrent use of 'remember' is revealing since it affirms that "there was nothing to be

ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory, and solemnity" (154) as put by Frantz Fanon. Therefore, "The claim to a national culture in the past … rehabilitate (s) that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture" (Fanon 154). Moreover, in defending the past, the natives can "move away from unqualified assimilation of the occupying power's culture" (Parry44). Accordingly, Fausto's rehearsal to past occurrences and events is an approach that he adopts from the very beginning of the novel. Every so often, he resorts to flashbacks and delve deeper down to propel his memory. Through such an act, he will be able to erect the Chicano's future he dreams of: a future that is not swamped in the quagmires of the dominant culture and that is devoid of dichotomies of dialectic opposites that choke the natives' imaginative and creative aptitude.

The dialogue between Eva and Fausto ends with an insistence on wiping out the divisive codes separating real life and death through the power of imagination. Eva remarks: "Look at the sky and imagine yourself on a cloud, soft cloud … no noise, not even the sound of your heart, nothing to bother you" (124). Reasonably, they are dead, yet, imaginatively, alive. Fausto asks: "How long do we have?" and Eva replies "As long as you want" (124). Subsequently, they float away; "the two rose and gilded across the park and out over the sea" (124). Meanwhile, the Chicano wetbacks community waves goodbye. Moreover, Jess swears that "he saw something in the sky: "a Frisbee … No it looked like somebody was up there" (124). What Jess sees is an allusion to Fausto's role as a guide to the heavenly world of permanence. The reaction of Fausto, Eva and the Chicano community show no signs of bewilderment in addition to the authorial reticence aggrandize the naturalization of non-actual events. Finally resolved on settling his wavering condition, Fausto is definitely convinced of the closure of his imaginative journey to Tamazunchale. He comes by life in death through obliteration of the perimeters between binary paradigms and reiterates that Marcelino's music is crucial as a symbol of life "All I can hear is the music. You know, I think Marcelino left his music. Would you like to dance?" (124)

The closure of the novel is saturated with a bulk of exemplary magical realist events through which Fausto, once more, avows his contentment of the outcome of his journey and firm

challenge of death. He turns on a TV set and Marcelino vanishes into it. Then a little girl trips over the cord and switches it off. However, Fausto switches back the TV set and disappears into it. Walter argues that Fausto's transformation assumes a deeper meaning because "the movie he (and the reader) has just finished watching symbolizes his life-before/-in-after-death, a creation of his imagination" and "as in the play within the novel, Fausto is a director, actor and viewer of the movie that he creates his journey to death imaginatively while watching and participating in it realistically" (57). Fausto's defiant stance is emphasized in the intertwinement of the magical and realistic levels of the plot where Carmella pulls him again into the TV set. Another kind of transformation occurs when Carmella chooses Mario over Jess for a boyfriend. In replacing Jess by Mario, Carmella accentuates her sense of belonging and commitment to the Chicano roots and declares her antagonism toward the American culture.

Conclusion

In a concluding scene, Fausto returns to earth to turn on the TV set thereby underscoring the running motif of the cyclic nature of his mental journey. Dwelling in the TV will make him a breathing and permanent element in the memory of Carmela, Mario and Marcelino who vanish also into the TV as well to lead another utopian life. In view of that, Arias' characters, as diverse representatives of the Chicano community, transcend the realm of mortality and create life in its fullest human sense and thus reflect the native cultural concept of the cycle of life and death, as well as rebirth, repeated unendingly. Fausto's last words solidify the everlasting nature he acquires through his mental journey in which he shapes and creates reality as he aspire it to be remarking:"Just so you'll know I'm still around" (125). Accordingly, **Arias' *The Road to Tamazuncahle*** emerges as an example of how in adopting the magical realism mode, the act of writing "becomes an act of survival and liberation, rescuing fragments of the Chicano culture from oblivion, shedding light on history, tradition, and reality, and thereby asserting the vitality of this culture" (Walter 135-36). In Fausto's magical realist journey, irreducible elements are reconciled and the borders between dialectic realms are obliterated. Fulfilling his aspiration for life in death epitomizes the indigenous set of values connected with the ancient longing to triumph over death. Thus, the narrative persistently grapples with the dominant binary structures of oppressive powers as it ruthlessly bares and questions their underpinning values and assumptions. Hence, it secures for the silent marginalized subalterns a permanence of voice in a world that is devoid of dialectic dichotomies.

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