

**Magical Realism as a Representation of
White-collar Characters' Grief:
An Analytical Study of Two Plays, *The Clean House* and
*Marisol***

By

Dr. Reham Mohammed Abu Zaid
Lecturer of English Literature

Abstract

By incorporating the real with the magical or by using what is known as Magical Realism, some modern playwrights have tried to represent the grief of their characters. These characters suffer from bereavement and loss of persons or valuable objects. As a response, they undergo some of (or all) the stages of grief stated by psychologists. Tracing their grief in accordance with the scenes of magical realism is the aim of this research paper. The characters of Lane and Charles in Sarah Ruhl's play, *The Clean House* (2004) are taken as examples. Also, the character of Marisol in Jose Rivera's play entitled with the same name (1992) is inspected. These three characters are white-collar persons.

Key Words:

- Magical Realism
- White-Collar Workers
- Grief:
- Representation
- Modern Drama

Grief, on losing a beloved one or a desirable object, is the most difficult experience that anyone can have. It is the normal emotional response to the loss. "At first grief feels like being lost at sea: no connection to anything" (Kubler-Ross and Kessler 15). Then, the person goes through the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Yet, not everyone "goes through all of them or goes in a prescribed order" (Kubler-Ross and Kessler 7). However, experiencing grief is essential in healing or in the emotional growth of any person.

People from all walks of life and from any culture experience grief, but they have different responses to loss and bereavement. Yet, the five stages (or some of them) that the persons undergo help them to adapt themselves to the loss: "they are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling" (Kubler-Ross and Kessler 7). In her essay, "The 5 Stages of Grief and Loss", Julie Axelrod discusses briefly these five stages as the following: Denial as the first reaction to loss is the refusal to admit this loss. The person doesn't want to believe that the loss is real. Consequently,

denial is "a [common defense mechanism](#) that buffers the immediate shock of the loss". When "reality and its pain re-emerge"; the person is "not ready". The intense emotion is "deflected from our vulnerable core, redirected and expressed instead as Anger, as the second stage. The anger may be aimed at inanimate objects, complete strangers, friends or family" (1).

Thirdly, Bargaining is "the normal reaction to feelings of helplessness and vulnerability". It is "a weaker line of defense to protect us from the painful reality". Fourthly, in the depressive stage, feelings of grief are deepened more and more into the psyche. There are [two types of depression](#) that are associated with mourning. The first one is "a reaction to practical implications relating to the loss. Sadness and regret pre-dominate this type of [depression](#)". The second is "more subtle and, in a sense, perhaps more private". It is "our quiet preparation to separate and to bid our loved one farewell". At last, reaching the stage of Acceptance is "a gift not afforded to everyone". Acceptance or "coping with loss" is "ultimately a deeply personal and singular experience — nobody can help you go through it more easily or understand all the emotions that you're going through" (Axelrod 1). At this stage, the person acknowledges entirely the loss and completes his life.

Grief, as an inevitable and inescapable human feeling, and other human feelings are represented by dramatists all over the ages. Human plights and their psychological problems have been the main subjects of many plays since the ancient times. Building upon the psychological theories, the dramatists deepen the life-like problems which they tackle.

Additionally, "In using the basic concepts and theories of psychology, actors can develop more concrete, logical approaches to characters" (Brown 5). As drama is written to be acted, so it engages the body, the mind, the emotions and the voice of the actors to convey the experience. Stage directions, verbal, non-verbal and literary techniques are woven with the actors' play to represent the intended experience.

As one of the modern dramatic techniques, Magical Realism Movement "has flourished internationally since the early part of the 20th century" (Simpkins 145). Definitely, a brief historical overview to this technique shows that the term 'Magical Realism' was used firstly "in 1925 by a German art critic, Franz Roh, to indicate the demise of Expressionism" mainly in painting (Bowers 13). Afterwards, this term was transferred to Hispanic America in 1927. Then, after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the term "magical realism" has been applied to "a new type of literature known for matter-of-fact portrayal of magical events" (Bowers 18). Magical

Realism became "an important feature" of the 1960s literature of Latin America; "particularly in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* of 1967" (Hart 1).

There in Latin America, magical realism has been perfected, as it flourishes in countries with long histories of both mythology and socio-political turmoil as well as past centuries of colonialism. These circumstances are a fertile soil for enriching this literary trend and providing it by material. Afterwards, by 1990s, it turned to be "the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world" (Bhabha 6). Subsequently, it has spread largely worldwide:

Magical Realism is nowadays a complex, global literary phenomenon and there is little indication that it has run out of steam, despite pronouncements that the term has neither the specificity nor the theoretical foundation to be useful, which underline the gulf between the academy and the praxis of writing more than anything else.

(Hart 6)

It is true that Magical Realism is similar to, and inspired by "Surrealism", but it is different from it; as it focuses on "the actual existence of the magical elements within a mundane world, rather than Surrealism's subconscious reality" (Russell 4). Consequently, in magical realism key events have no logical or psychological explanation. Magical realists always try "to overcome textual limitations" (Simpkins 145). So, in magical realism "the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts". Hence, the magical realist tries "to seize the mystery that breathes behind things" (Carpentier 89). His goal is "to represent the world around us in a new and unfamiliar way" (Magic 2). He tackles realism from a magical perspective far from the conventional boring realism. Magic, here, can mean "anything that defies empiricism, including religious beliefs, superstitions, myths, legends, voodoo or ...the 'uncanny' and 'marvelous' fantastic" (Ouyang 14). Moreover, in Magical Realism:

The principal thing is not the creation of imaginary beings or worlds but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances... The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality or to wound it but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things.

(Leal 119)

In addition to the above general characteristics of magical realism used in any literary genre, there are other distinctive ones used in drama.

Magical realistic plays may include: "non-human characters, timelessness, characters with supernatural powers, other worlds, a sense of mystery, eerie atmospheres, extraordinary events, unable to be explained by rational thought, myths and legends, unusual time shifts, and moments where the unreal becomes real" (Cash 1).

Consequently, the objectives of this research paper are to inspect the use of magical realism as a dramatic technique in modern drama and how it is employed in representing some protagonists' feelings of grief as a reaction to their losses. It tries to trace the five stages of their feelings of grief, analyzing them and their accompanied scenes of magical realism. Two plays are studied as examples: Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House* and Jose Rivera's *Marisol*. The white-collar characters of Lane and Charles in the first play and Marisol in the second one are analyzed. The use of magical realism gives their ordinary realistic stories a new unfamiliar and magical perspective. Here, "Magical realism allows [the] artist ... to inject layers of meaning without being obvious" (Neshat 1). This Research paper attempts to find out these inherent "layers of meaning" in the two chosen example plays.

The first play of the two chosen example plays is the winner of the 2004 [Susan Smith Blackburn Prize](#) and the finalist for the 2005 [Pulitzer Prize for Drama](#), Ruhl's play, *The Clean House*. It tells in two Acts the story of the couple Lane and Charles. They are surgeons in their fifties. They have been in love with each other long time ago. But suddenly, Lane discovers that Charles loves another woman, Ana. The latter is one of his patients. She is in her sixties and has cancer breast. Lane is stunned and grieves. Charles tries to medicate Ana, but in vain. She dies. Her death causes grief to Charles. The technique of magical realism represents these two protagonists' psychological disturbances, caused by grief, and imparts it a deep magical perspective.

Generally, Ruhl uses the technique of Magical Realism throughout her play, *The Clean*, as she blends the natural elements with the supernatural ones. The unbelievable becomes ordinary and believable. On having an overview, the audience can see that the characters existing in other characters' imagination can also be seen on the stage by others as in one tableau. Dead people can appear alive in flashback scenes. There are some "shifts in the narrative's time sequence" (Witte 6), there are abrupt shifts from the present to the past. Events from the past may be acted as in the present. Alive characters may act the roles of the deceased ones, as when Charles and Ana play the role of Matilde's dead father and mother. Different places can be juxtaposed at the same time. Dissimilar things and

places are transformed into others; that are completely incompatible with them. The supposed sea of Ana's balcony is Lane's living room. The bad apples, thrown in the sea by Ana and Matilde, fall in Lane's living room while she looks at them sadly. Lane's balcony is turned into an apple farm. The dead parents of Matilde appear dancing and laughing on the stage. The Scene of Lane and Virginia's childhood appears on the stage when they remember themselves on their quarrelling. It snows inside Lane's living room when Charles is in Alaska cutting a yew tree in such a snowy weather. Dead Ana plays the role of Matilde's dead mother at the end of the play, while Charles appears as her father. Past events are interwoven with the present ones. Lane's living room is an operating room in which Charles and Ana re-act how they have met for the first time in the hospital, and how Charles did a surgical operation for Ana. The couch turns into a hospital bed table.

Thus Ruhl mixes creatively fantastical events with real ones in a conventional realistic social context. She creates from an ordinary conventional story that takes place on an ordinary setting a magical realistic play using the main elements of magical realism. She incorporates "fantastic elements in the story, whether through time or place, or in the characters themselves" (Witte 5).

Let's focus the analysis on the characters of the two protagonists, Lane and Charles to have a more concentrated inspection of Ruhl's play, *The Clean*. The heroine, Lane, is a clever doctor. All the play revolves around her relationships with other characters. She is in her early fifties. She is dressed in white. Her living room, in which the events occur, has white furniture, as if she is always 'sterilized', inside and outside her house. She refuses to clean her house herself: "I didn't go to medical school to clean my own house" (I.2.10). She and her husband, Charles (the hero), love each other; he says: "I've been faithful to my wife. We fell in love when we were twenty-two. We had plans" (II.3.53). The couple has no children. Charles is a very handsome professional surgeon in his fifties. Lane's sister Virginia says about him: "When he and Lane first met, I thought: Lane gets the best of everything. A surgeon. With a specialty. He's – charismatic" (I.10.27). Thus, the couple is successful happy white-collar doctors. Yet, they are too busy to meet each other at home; Lane tells Virginia when the latter asks about him: "we hardly see each other" (I.11.29).

Suddenly, the events reach their climax quickly; Lane is shocked on discovering that Charles loves one of his patients. This patient is called Ana. She is an Argentinean poor widow. She has breast cancer. She is sixty-seven years old. Yet, she is charismatic and attractive. She is a 'static character' in the play; she doesn't undergo any change in her personality over the course of the events. She can be "anyone's soul mate".

Additionally, she is "a woman with compassion" (II.9.83). As a result, Lane grieves so much. She confesses her denial of the matter completely, she says:

I've never been jealous, I've never been suspicious. I've never thought any other woman was my equal. I'm the best doctor. I'm the smartest, the most well-loved by my patients. I'm athletic. I have poise. I've aged well. I can talk to *anyone* and be on equal footing. How, I thought, could he even *look* at anyone else? It would be absurd.

(I.13.40)

Lane's shock is a point of reversal of her fortune and of her marital life. However, she refuses to admit her loss. She denies that Charles can be in love with another woman. It is unbelievable for her. She can't recognize the reasons. She enumerates her excellent qualities; that according to them she could never be jealous of any woman or could consider any woman is equal for her. Perhaps, her far extent pride illustrates her 'hubris' and hints for an excuse for Charles' attraction to another inferior woman. However, she may say these words out of her heart break and grief.

Lane undergoes denial as the first stage of her grief. But, she moves quickly to the second stage that is anger. Lane bursts in great anger, when she comes home. She tells her sister, Virginia and her Brazilian maid, Matilde: "I'm going in the other room to shoot myself". (I.13.36). Then she hurts her left hand with a can opener. When Charles wants to "examine the bandage on" her "wrist, she pulls her hand away" (II.5.58). She utters short impressive angry sentences in a sharp tone.

Moreover, Lane's anger is directed to herself and the people around her. She fires Matilde on knowing that she has agreed with Virginia that the latter will clean Lane's house instead of Matilde every day. Virginia is a 'flat character'; she has an uncomplicated personality. She is a stereotype of a housewife. She likes cleaning very much; as it gives her the feeling that she achieves a valuable thing. She is the opposite of Lane. She also likes cooking and other house works. She is older than Lane. On seeing Lane in this state, she warns her that: "You're not capable of making a rational decision" (I.13.42).

In a magical realistic scene, Lane imagines her husband and his beloved kissing each other. The scene is supposed to be in Lane's imagination, but Matilde and the audience see it. Even Matilde comes on the stage while they are still standing and sees them and asks: "Who are they?" Lane answers: "My husband and the woman he loves. Don't worry. It's only my imagination". Matilde comments: "They look happy" (I.14.47). Lane cries

then laughs and keeps crying and laughing for some time. She looks as if she had hysteria. However, the audience can sympathize with her; as this scene expresses her deep painful suffering and her inner psychological instability.

Lane bursts again into anger when Virginia and Matilde feel sympathetic with Charles and Ana shouting: "Poor Charles? Poor Ana. Poor me! Poor sounds funny if you say it lots of times in a row: poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, poor. Doesn't it sound funny?" (II.7.77). Lane undergoes other bursts of anger (e.g. II.9.82) and loses her "composure" (II.9.83). This burst accompanied a scene of magical realism. When Charles and Ana go swimming in the supposed sea in front of Ana's flat which is Lane's living room at the same time, Lane "comes across Charles' sweater, she breathes it in" and "sits with it in her hands" (II.8.81). The playwright, Ruhl, in these highly sensitive and highly touching actions of non-verbal communication conveys Lane's deep distress and loss in a moving way. The audience feels regretful and sympathetic with Lane. Then she bursts into anger on seeing her sister comes in vacuuming her living room. She yells in a sharp tone and a high pitch saying:

I DON'T WANT ANYTHING IN MY HOUSE TO BE CLEAN EVER AGAIN! I WANT THERE TO BE DIRT AND PIGS IN THE CORNER. MAYBE SOME COW MANURE SOME PIG DIRTY SHITY COWS AND SOME SHITY COW SHIT LOTS OF IT AND LOTS OF DIRTY FUCKING SOCKS – AND NONE OF THEM MATCH – NONE OF THEM – BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT – THAT IS HOW I FEEL.

(II.9.82)

The act of cleaning Lane's house becomes symbolic in describing her inner feelings. For her it is far more important to deal with her inner disorder than that of her house. Cleaning her house has become valueless. Her psyche is full of disorder and chaos. She feels angry, confused, sad and depressed. Her diction and her gestures convey her agony and distress. On noticing the characters' speeches in the play in the different situations and moods, one can find that Ruhl uses the voice and the vocal techniques perfectly.

Lane becomes depressed, when Charles comes with Ana to her house to introduce Ana to her (II.5. 56 - 70). He confronts her that their marriage has dissolved; because he now has found his "soul mate" or his "bashert" according to the Jewish law, he says to Lane: "In Jewish law you are legally obliged to break off relations with your wife or husband if you find what is called your *bashert*" (II.5.60). No wonder that Ana herself is Jewish. Now, Charles believes in the Jewish beliefs for the sake of Ana.

So, they don't feel "guilty" and Lane should accept it as he thinks. They decide to live together.

Furthermore, Charles tells Lane that they are going to pick apples after leaving her. The act of apple-picking is symbolic in a way which reminds the audience about "Adam and Eve's sin". Charles and Ana "have sinned" and they "go to pick apples" (Clean 2). Lane can't believe what she hears. How can Charles go to pick apples? She wonders shouting: "You must be insane! Apple picking! My God! I'M SORRY! But – apple picking? This is not a foreign film! ... "(II.5.68). Charles doesn't care. He leaves with Ana and Matilde. Lane says to Virginia: "I want to be alone" (II.5.69). Depression and loneliness "frequently co-occur", they are "correlated" (Weeks 1). Notably, Lane is in her fifties and "menopausal" (I.10.26). She is liable to depression easily. One of the accompanied psychological symptoms of menopause is "depression" (Ludden 1). Hence, this cause also doubles her depression.

A magical realistic scene represents Lane's depression (as a stage of her grief). Her living room is turned to be the sea, on which the balcony of Ana is supposed to overlook. Ana and Matilde, then Charles, stand in Ana's balcony surrounded by apples. They eat apples in the balcony and throw the imperfect ones or the core of the perfect ones in Lane's living room, and Lane looks at them helplessly. This act of throwing is also turned to be symbolic. It stands for their intrusion in her life. Additionally, biting and throwing the bad apples or the core of the good ones figure their violation of her marital life and her house as well as stripping her to the core.

Out of her helplessness, Lane agrees to let Matilde works as a part-time maid for cleaning Ana's house. Ana not only has taken Lane's husband, but also her maid and acquired her sister's admiration and sympathy. Lane comments on this situation saying: "My God! You can't just walk into my home and take everything away from me" (II.5.64). Lane, here, mentions the word "home" not "house" as she has done before; in order to refer implicitly to the emotional connotations of the word, not the "house" as a building.

A magical realistic scene, Act II, Scene 6, traces Lane's bargain with Charles and Ana. When Matilde returns to Lane's house, Charles and Ana are in the background dancing (II.7). Lane tries to know the details of their life from Matilde. She keeps asking Matilde about them. There is a shift in the magical realistic technique between Ana's balcony and Lane's living room with the escalation of the events. Charles and Ana appear in the balcony repeatedly which is the background of Lane's living room. Two different places are juxtaposed together on the stage at the same time.

Sorrowfully, Lane sees them together and her heart breaks. She comments sadly: "Do they seem like they are very much in love?" and Matilde agrees saying: "yes" (II.7.75).

However, before the end of the play, Lane reaches the stage of acceptance as the last stage of her grief. She accepts the loss. She recognizes that she has lost her husband forever. Additionally, she confesses that Ana has zest for life and has characteristics which she never has and Charles loves Ana in a way that he never loves her. She cries saying to Ana:

Okay! I hate you!

You – glow – with some kind of – thing – I can't *acquire* that – this thing – sort of – glows off you – like a veil – in reverse –you're like *anyone's* soul mate – because you have that – thing – you have a balcony – I don't have a balcony – Charles looks at you – he glows, too – you're glowworms – he never looked at me like that.

(II.10.91)

Lane has experienced a state of emotional growth. Her diction reflects her confession with defeat and her acceptance to the loss of her husband. She realizes that Ana is better than her; she has qualities that Lane never has. She is fascinating and high-spirited. She matches anyone and can be the "soul mate" of anyone. Lane perceives that when Charles has met her, he has looked to her "with *admiration*". But when he has met Ana, he has looked to her "with love" (II.10.92). And there is a great difference between these two looks.

Consequently, Lane reaches the last stage of her grief, which is acceptance. She now accepts her loss of her husband. She now recognizes also her husband's love and preference to Ana. Out of Lane's acceptance of the loss and her self-adaptation, she decides to take Ana to live with her in her house as Ana is in a critical case of her disease. Lane wants to look after Ana and asked Virginia and Matilde to do the same when Lane is out in her work. Thus, Lane not only copes with the existence of Ana in her marital life, but also she consents to be responsible for her. She has overcome her loss. As a result, all of Ana's possessions are moved into Lane's living room symbolizing Lane's complete acceptance of Ana and all her belongings. Ana has few pieces of furniture and an old fish in a bowl. She also brings with her a bag of clothes and some bags of apples (hinting to their symbolic meaning as discussed before). All of these things are put in Lane's living room.

An additional symbolic sign of Lane's acceptance is that when Virginia makes ice cream, Lane eats with Ana (*after a moment of hesitation*) from the same container, and also do Virginia and Matilde (II.12.99). After that,

when Ana becomes feverish, Lane fetches a blanket and sits alone "guarding" her while she is sleeping. In the stage directions, Ruhl describes that: "*Lane sits on the floor and watches Ana sleep. She guards her the way a dog would guard a rival dog, if her rival were sick*" (II.12.103). The way of Lane's sitting on the floor and the simile of this deep stage directions show her suspense, her professional conscience and her acceptance of her loss. She has become adapted and given up resistance.

Concerning Charles, he is described as "a compassionate surgeon. He is childlike underneath his white coat". Additionally, he is "in his fifties". All these characteristics beside what has been explained about him in the above paragraphs help the audience to make out his nature and realize his actions. Charles' sudden involvement with Ana can be explained partly by his 'midlife crisis' or his "andropause" (Wilbur 1). He also goes with her to pick apples, a sign of a strange change in his behavior as Lane has noticed.

Act II opens with a magical realistic scene in the same white living room, of Act I, of Lane and Charles' house. Now, this room is turned to an operating room in a hospital where Charles performs a surgery for Ana. While a medieval love song about being medically cured by love is sung by the two actors playing the roles of Charles and Ana. Thus, two different places (the living room and the operating room) are juxtaposed together at the same time. Past memories are reacted on the stage instead of the characters' minds. When Charles ends the surgery, he takes off Ana's sheets and she stands and they kiss. Hence, a scene of a surgical operation is turned to be a love tango scene of singing and dancing. Ana comments that she feels as if Charles has left "his soul" inside her (II.2.52). They re-act how they have met for the first time.

Wonderfully, Charles loves Ana suddenly, quickly and deeply. Her love changes his life and his characteristics greatly. Charles confesses his love to Ana saying that: "When I met Ana, I knew: I loved her to the point of invention" (II.3.53). He keeps repeating her name: "Ana, Ana, Ana, Ana...your name goes backwards and forwards...I love you..." (II.4.56). He acknowledges to Lane, Virginia and Matilde saying: "*Ana has been in my genetic code*" (II.5.62). Matilde tells Lane that: "Charles doesn't go to work. He cancels half his patients. He wants to spend all his time with Ana" (II.7.76). It becomes a complicated case of love. Dr. Charles with all his good qualities loves a poor ill Argentinean Jewish widow; older than him. His behavior differs completely. He even changes his religious beliefs for her, ignores his work and cares less for his patients! So, the shock of Ana's impending death or her loss will be devastating.

In consequence, Charles denies completely the expectation that Ana is dying, he rejects this idea saying: "No. You're not going to die. I won't let you die" (II.4.55). He is shocked on knowing that her disease is fatal and her case is critical. He undergoes denial as the first stage of his grief. But, quickly he moves to the second stage. He bursts into fits of anger. He "yells and throws things at the wall" when Ana has refused to "take any medicine" or to go again to the hospital (II.7.76). Lane wonders and objects on hearing this from Matilde, she says: "Charles never yells" (II.7.76). Yet, Matilde assures that he has done. His anger is directed to inanimate objects. He breaks all the condiments and spices; one of them is yellow. He and Ana are covered with yellow spice. At the same moment, when Matilde tells this to Lane, a magical realistic scene accompanies Charles' anger. "*A spice jar goes flying from the balcony. A cloud of yellow spice lands in Lane's living room*"; as described in the stage directions (II.7.76).

Therefore, Charles decides to defy and defeat Ana's disease; or to make a bargain. In a situational irony, or in a discrepancy between what is expected and what is fulfilled, Charles travels to Alaska "to chop down a yew tree for Ana" thinking that he can "invent a new medicine" for her (II.9.86). He wants to plant it in her yard so she can smell it. How can a professional surgeon like him thinking in that way, even if he is motivated by his love, by his feelings of helplessness and by trying to find a way of bargaining? In the background of the stage, in a magical realistic scene, Charles appears looking for the tree in a freezing wind, while Matilde narrates to Virginia and Lane in the latter's living room. The playwright mixes the real settings of Lane's living room and Ana's balcony with the magical realistic scenes of Charles' search for the yew tree and chopping it in Alaska. He appears wearing "a heavy parka" and carrying "a pick axe" and walking in a snowy weather to look for a yew tree (II.9.88) and (II.10.93).

Traditionally, the yew tree as an evergreen long-lived tree symbolizes "immortality, renewal, regeneration, rebirth, everlasting life, transformation, protection against evil...". Yet, medically, its "leaves and bark contain small amounts of an anti-cancer agent Taxol that inhibits cancer cell growth" (Peace 2), as discovered by the scientists nowadays. Charles may have these conceptions in his mind when he has decided to cut down a yew tree for Ana. He doesn't confess the reality that Ana's case is critical, although deeply inside himself he knows well this fact. He realizes that this way can't cure her. However, out of his helplessness, escapism and bargaining, he tries to convince himself and the others that he can find a remedy and there is a hope.

On cutting down the yew tree, Charles thinks that he has achieved his aim or 'his bargain', he sends Ana a telegram. He tells her happily that he

has cut down the tree, but wants to learn how to fly a plane, because he can't get on a plane with the tree. He wants her to wait for him (II.12.98). In a magical realistic scene, he appears again in the background of Lane's living room, although he is supposed to be in Alaska. It snows inside the room as in Alaska. As soon as Ana reads the telegram, he exits. The playwright represents Charles' stage of bargaining with some touching magical realistic scenes. The audience feels pity for helpless sad Charles. Yet, all his trials of bargaining fail.

Sorrowfully, Ana's condition becomes worse. She can't bear the pain. She asks Matilde to kill her with a joke. Since the play is trilingual (English, Portuguese and Spanish), Matilde always tells her jokes in Portuguese. She doesn't translate them. Although Matilda's joking in the play is intended to impart some sort of comic relief, it is now used as a killing weapon. Matilda's mother dies laughing because of a joke, and also does Ana. Even the comic relief in the play isn't related to light-hearted scenes that lessen the tension of the action all the time, but related also to sad ones that increase the grief of the characters. Matilde's father and mother were the funniest couple in Brazil. But, her mother died laughing because of his jokes; her father couldn't live without her, he shot himself. In spite of her depression, Matilde searches all the play for the perfect joke.

Nevertheless, Matilde reluctantly agrees to fulfill Ana's request. Ana stands up, as she wants to die standing. She listens to Matilde's joke. No one of the audience can hear the joke; as if Ruhl has wanted them to know its effect only. Ana falls down laughing and dies. There may be an autobiographical hint in this scene. The playwright herself explains that the most effective experience on her life has been the "battle of her father with cancer" and his death because of it, when she was twenty. She loved him so much. They were "very close". He "died like a prince". Ruhl also comments: "I don't know if that was educational, but it was influential – in the moral and spiritual sense" (Dias 5). However, "he made jokes up until the last minute" (Renner 6). So, jokes may be related to grief and loss in Ruhl's mind, as shown in this play.

Lane and Virginia come into the living room. Lane inspects Ana diagnosing her death. She washes Ana's dead body with the help of Virginia. This shows Lane's tolerance and humanity. It also indicates that she has completely overcome her grief. She not only took care of Ana when the latter was ill, but also she washed Ana's body when she died. Finally, Charles comes carrying the yew tree, he is "sweating and breathing heavily" as he "has carried his tree great distances". But it is too late; Ana

has died. He "collapses over her body" (II.13.107-109). He falls in a complete depression and nervous breakdown, as a fourth stage of his grief.

Consequently, the events of Ruhl's play, *The Clean*, prove that it is "a ritual for grief and loss that allows the audience to participate, but within Ruhl's characteristic mood of lightness and humor that leads to acceptance" (Gale 4). Both the two protagonists of the play grieve and suffer from the loss of beloved ones; "so it's true, when all is said and done, grief is the price we pay for love" (Bucchianeri 1). Ruhl depicts their grief cleverly with magical realistic scenes.

Ruhl's play, *The Clean*, ends with a magical realistic scene of Charles and Ana become Matilde's father and mother during Matilde's recitation to the audience of the day of her birth which breaks the fourth wall. Maybe recalling this birth imparts a symbolic message of a suggested new hope to the audience. Other hints of hope can be made out when Lane kisses Charles' forehead when he knows that Ana has died. This may indicate Lane's forgiveness and sympathy for Charles. Moreover, Charles hands the yew tree to Lane. This symbolizes his acceptance to the loss of Ana and his bargain with Lane. In the preceding scenes, the yew tree was a symbol of his bargain to prevent Ana's death. But, now, it is a symbol of his bargain to make reconciliation with Lane as he has accepted Ana's death.

This final magical realistic scene of the appearance of the dead characters, Matilde's father and mother (played by Charles and dead Ana) and a flashback of happy memories of Matilde's birth coincide with the last stage of each character's grief; that is 'acceptance'. They cope with their losses, although Lane has cured and coped with the loss before and faster than Charles. It is apparent that psychologically she is stronger than him and has a more stable personality than his. The play ends symbolically with Matilde's words; she says: "I think maybe heaven is a sea of untranslatable jokes. Only everyone is laughing" (II.14.109). We sometimes can't make out our destinies, but we have nothing to do except accepting them.

Thus, as a result of using the technique of magical realism, Ruhl represents creatively the stages of the grief of her two white-collar characters, Lane and Charles. She incorporates the magical into the real and the unbelievable into the believable. Accordingly, the same technique is used by other playwrights as, for example, Jose Rivera. He employs magical realism to represent the stages of grief of his white-collar title-character Marisol in his 1993-Obie Award winner play entitled with the same name of its protagonist.

The protagonist or the title-character of Jose Rivera's play, *Marisol*, is an attractive Puerto Rican white-collar woman called Marisol Perez. The plot is centered on her and revolves around her feelings and her relationship with the world around her. Additionally, it derives the

audience step by step into the details of Marisol's life. She works as a copy editor for a Manhattan publisher of science books. She is twenty six. Furthermore, the audience knows early in the play, from its exposition, that she lives alone and in a complete solitude in an apartment in Bronx in New York City (NE of Manhattan), in a very poor filthy dangerous suburb. She is subject to many attacks. So, the setting is a 'real-world locale', on which a series of magical realistic scenes take place. Moreover, the events happen symbolically in an apocalyptic way at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Marisol appears in the beginning of the play as coming back to her apartment from her work in a subway car guarded by an Angel. She commutes daily to her work from her apartment. She is attacked by a man with a golf club. But, fortunately, she is rescued by the Angel and can escape. Later at night, some drunken people of her neighbors want also to attack her in her apartment. She becomes terrified, but is rescued by her guardian Angel as usual. The playwright chooses these events to begin the play or to be 'the point of attack' of the plot to refer to the danger and loneliness from which Marisol suffers. Strangely, the Angel is "a young black woman" wearing modern clothes: "ripped jeans, sneakers, and black T-shirt". She has "crude silver wings" hung "limply from the back" of her "diamond-stunned black leather jacket", as described in stage directions (I.1.550). The appearance of a supernatural being as the Angel in a human-like shape wearing modern clothes is too odd to be believed. It grants mystery and magic to the ordinary details of Marisol's life.

Then, the Angel visits Marisol late at night. They speak together in a dream-like conversation. The Angel tells Marisol that she will not guard her anymore because she will join other Angels in a universal revolution. They will "take off their wings of peace and wear wings of war. Then we are going to spread blood and vigor across the sky and reawaken the dwindling stars!" (I.4.554). There will be a war in heaven; whereas, Marisol will stay without protection. Marisol refuses this loss severely. She becomes very angry, her anger is directed to the Angel, she "lashes out, trying to hit the Angel, she spits at the Angel. The Angel grabs Marisol's hands". Marisol shouts: "What's going to happen to me without you? ... *I'm gonna be meat!* I'M GONNA BE FOOD!!" (I.4.555). Marisol becomes terrified by the idea of losing her guardian Angel in such a dangerous world around her. Out of her anger and shock, she loses control on herself. She shouts and yells raving at the Angel. She thinks that she will be eaten as food.

The playwright uses a highly professional magical scene, in which 'the miraculous' appears ordinary, in order to represent Marisol's first stage of

grief; that is the appearance of the Angel in a human-like shape and her long speech with Marisol. Additionally, how can an angel wage a war or make a revolution? The 'unbelievable' becomes believable and acceptable.

Hence, Marisol's grief is caused by the loss of her guardian Angel. She will lose safety and protection. She bursts into fits of anger and hysteria. She and her Angel are aware that she will face much trouble. Her protecting Angel tries to warn her not to be fragile anymore and to learn how to protect herself. Their dialogue increases the emotional tension and the suspense of the audience; they say the following:

MARISOL: I'm going to be alone?

ANGEL: And that's what you have to do, Marisol. You have to fight. You can't *endure* anymore. You can't trust luck or prayer or mercy or other people. When I drop my wings, all hell's going to break loose and soon you're not going to recognize the world – so get yourself some *power*, Marisol, whatever you do.

(I.4.555)

Marisol tries to convince her guardian Angel not to leave her, but in vain. Even her good-luck charms would be useless, as the Angel warns her. She always keeps these charms under her bed, in spite of her education, her job and her social position. These charms are: "crucifix, horseshoe, rabbit's foot, prayer cards, Milagros, medicine bundles, statuettes of Buddha and others", she also has a knife under her pillow (I.3.551). These superstitious charms are tools of magical realistic technique.

There are some autobiographical hints in the play. Like Rivera, Marisol is a Puerto Rican immigrant to the United States. Like him, she is a devoted Catholic. Rivera comments on his play saying that: "Marisol is, like me, a consummate assimilationist. I live with a constant sense of melancholy for what I have denied" (Fricker 1). Marisol denies her loss. She refuses to admit that what has happened is real. She considers it just a dream or a nightmare, it is nonsense. But, deeply inside her, she is afraid. Her anger precedes her denial, as two stages of her grief. To adopt a kind of escapism, she "tries to smile, to shake off her fear" (I.5.555). In the next morning, when she goes to her work, Marisol appears "shaken by the night's strange visions, is dazed, unhappy" (I.5.555). She is "fighting tears" (I.5.556). Her co-worker and friend, June, finds her 'definitely not herself today' (I.5.556). Marisol complains fearfully: "Every person on the subway this morning gave me the shivers. They all looked so hungry" (I.5.556). Because of her panic, she began to believe her inner abnormal thoughts that she will be "food". Clearly, the experience of Marisol seems cathartic to the audience. Without her guardian Angel, she is too weak to defend herself in such a dangerous place. She is afraid, anxious and depressed.

On seeing her afraid, anxious and depressed, June offers Marisol to come and live with her in her apartment. As a weak way of defense against the around horrible reality, helpless Marisol accepts the bargain. Fragile Marisol moves quickly to stages of depression and bargaining of her grief. At the same moment, Marisol is "frozen by the vision" of her guardian "Angel far above" her, "cleaning an Uzi submachine gun, humming quietly. Marisol isn't sure she's really seeing what she's seeing" (I.5.557). This magic realistic scene refers to the Angel's complete abdication of her protection for Marisol, as she is now busy in another matter. Her responsibilities towards Marisol will be taken by June, who also loves Marisol so much and saves her sometimes, but appears as her foil. Marisol is pacified by her bargain with June in order to have protection and safety: "I'm gonna go home and pack right now. We have to be fast. This town knows when you're alone. That's when it sends out the ghouls and the death squads" (I.6.561). Marisol's diction mirrors deeply her inner feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness and depression.

But, on Marisol and June's arrival to the latter's flat, Lenny, June's brother, an unemployed failing abnormal sculptor, flirts Marisol and quarrels with June. She expels him from the flat. After a period of time, the three persons are on the stage in a magical realistic scene in which three different places are juxtaposed at the same time. Marisol goes to pack her belongings from her apartment in Bronx. June is at her apartment in Brooklyn and thinks of Lenny. Lenny appears in a far away street upstage in a bad condition. He is very cold and hungry, and wears filthy clothes holding his golf club. He raises it, suddenly. Then, at the same moment, June is frozen in panic as he wants to hit her with the golf club!

Then, Lenny appears in the following scene holding a bloody golf club and kicks the door of Marisol's apartment open. He confesses that he has hit June in order to be the 'protector' and the 'guardian Angel' of Marisol because he loves her so much. He offers her a new bargain, he says:

I want to offer you a deal. (*Beat*) You controlled your life until now. But your life's in shambles! Ruins! So I'm gonna let you give *me* control over your life. That means I'll do everything for you. I'll take responsibility. I'll get a job and make money. I'll name our children. Okay? And what you get in return is my *protection*. I can *protect you like June did*. I can *keep out* the criminals and *carry the knife* for you. I can be *your guardian angel*, Marisol.

(I.8.562)

Marisol refuses Lenny's bargain. She wants to search for June. Lenny prevents her and tries to rape her. She hits him with his golf club. He falls down. She doesn't know whether he has died or not. She runs away from her apartment in panic. There, in the street, it snows. There is complete darkness, since the moon has disappeared nine months ago. Marisol appears afraid and "extremely cold. She shivers. She kneels on the ground, alone, not knowing what to do or where to go" (I.9.563). There is "blood on her clothes". The complete darkness and coldness add a mysterious atmosphere. They also symbolize Marisol's sadness, depression and fear. She hasn't protection and safety. The world around her becomes mysterious. The future turns vague. The matters reach a far point of complications deepening Marisol's grief and increasing the tension and the suspense of the audience.

Suddenly, the Angel appears "over Marisol's head, against the brick wall". She wears military clothes, straps the Uzi to her back and looks like "a soldier about to go into battle". On seeing her, Marisol gasps. There is "blood coming down" the Angel's back, as she has taken off "her silver wings of peace". They fall down in the street, where Marisol picks them up wondering: "War?" But, the wings dissolve in her hands. The symbolism of this magical scene presents the last stage of Marisol's grief; that is acceptance. She now accepts her loss of her protecting Angel and of anyone (a friend, a family member ... etc). She also accepts and adapts herself to loneliness, homelessness and lack of protection. She is ready to protect herself. She accepts war against any enemy. She overcomes her fragility and her internal conflicts and ready also to surpass any external ones. Consequently, Marisol appears in Act II holding up the golf club and is "ready to defend herself" (564). This is a turning point in her character and in her relationship with the world around her.

Notably, Act II is not divided into scenes. It opens in a strange different street. The scenery is fearful. The lights show in this scenery "a new reality", as written in the stage directions. Marisol becomes aware of this difference and strangeness around her. She remembers the Angel's words that when she drops her wings, Marisol won't know the world around her. She sees now the dreadful reality of the world. She can't recognize the place around her: "it's impossible to find anything familiar in this radically altered landscape" (II.564), as if the fearful future, which the Angel has predicted, takes place. The city has turned into an unrecognizable 'waste land'. Everything becomes strange: the people, the street, the buildings, and the natural phenomena: the Sun rises from the North and sets in the South, the Water is no longer seeks its level, food and milk are salty, the moon has disappeared, there is a complete darkness and the night in which Marisol wanders in the street is very long. This may remind the audience of T.S.

Eliot's famous poem, "The Waste Land" referring to the infertility and the moral decay of the world at the turn of the century, as the playwright wants to show. It may also account for the need to raise a revolution as the Angel has wanted in order to have a new regime and reformations.

At that night, Marisol passes through some experiences with the homeless people in the street in a series of magical realistic scenes till she reaches a stage of complete acceptance of her loss and overcomes it. These experiences depend on real autobiographical incidents that are "the experiences of Rivera's homeless uncle" (Troutman 2). Rivera uses 'coincidence' as an element of magical realism and weaves these experiences till the end of the play. These experiences are very significant in a way that they constitute the steps of the change of Marisol's character and the end of her grief.

The first person whom Marisol meets by chance is a Woman with Furs. This Woman has been a rich lawyer but imprisoned and tortured by the police, because she has exceeded the limit of her credit card. Marisol asks her to go together to the South in order to have "Protection" (565). The Woman refuses to go with Marisol and wants to attack and to imprison her. Her violence and abnormal behavior foreshadow her later action at the end of the play.

Suddenly, Marisol is saved by a Man with a Scar Tissue sitting on a wheelchair. This Man has been an air-traffic controller, but burnt completely by a Nazi Skinhead. Now he is "looking for" his "lost skin" in the streets "it was once very pretty" as he tells Marisol (568). Both he and the Woman tell Marisol about a vision of the revolutionary war of Angels. Apparently, Rivera deepens this magical realistic element in the play. He convinces the audience that this unbelievable war of Angels is a believable thing. All the characters in the play see it clearly; it is not a delusion in Marisol's mind.

Then, a Nazi Skinhead enters on the stage running after a homeless person. Then he burns him alive. Marisol tries to save the homeless, but the Man with Scar Tissue prevents her. Marisol asks him to stay with her "to protect each other". But, he refuses saying: "There is no Protection" (569) and he escapes. Hopeless Marisol realizes that she will not find 'protection' with anyone. On walking sad and hungry; Marisol tries to eat from a trash bin. All of a sudden, a voice like that of Lenny prevents her.

Shockingly, Marisol finds Lenny alive. He has transformed into "nine-month pregnant". The playwright adds an abnormal phenomenon which is a pregnant man to the magical realistic scenes of the play. Lenny gives Marisol an apple, but she finds it salty as all the kinds of the food.

Thereafter, Lenny gives birth to a stillborn baby. Lenny claims that this baby is theirs, both he and Marisol. They go to bury him in a public graveyard for homeless children, where they meet June. June has become a Nazi Skinhead. She has turned to a fanatic person. She has burnt many people and buildings. Step by step, Marisol tries to tame her. June remembers both Marisol and Lenny. The three become very happy.

Abruptly, a loud machine-gunfire in the air is heard. Marisol "hits the ground and covers June and Lenny with her body saying: "June, Lenny... don't you guys worry ... I have a clear vision for us. *I know what I want to do*" (II.573). At this moment, Marisol becomes a 'protector'. As a 'round dynamic' character, her characteristics have changed and developed. She not only has accepted and coped with the loss, but also has overcome her grief strongly. She has reached to a state of accommodation and emotional growth. She no longer needs 'protection' of anyone nor afraid of anything. She can 'protect' and defend herself and others.

Unexpectedly, the Woman with Furs appears carrying an Uzi and shoots Marisol to death. June and Lenny kneel where Marisol has fallen. May be this Woman with Furs is considered as a 'Deus Ex Machina', by whom the play reaches its denouement. Yet, the excessive inexplicable violence of this Woman as that of any one of the Skinhead may be considered a product of cruelty, harshness and wrongness by which they were treated. Furthermore, Rivera depends on 'the coincidence' as "an important element of magical realism" (Witte 7). He "ties up" all the characters and all the events. Apparently, events of "the past influence those of the present and the future" (Witte 7). The end of the play "could seem anticlimactic, a too-short conclusion after pages of building tension" (Turner 62). This is may be because the playwright wants to employ the element of the surprise in order to transfer the expectations of the audience to another domain. Marisol has many good qualities and has undergone a lot of experiences till she reaches perfection; which is a celestial stage. She deserves to be a celestial creature, or an Angel.

Accordingly, the play, *Marisol*, ends with a magical realistic scene in which Marisol stands beside her corpse in a celestial light watching the invisible war of Angels. The audience hears only an "indecipherable sounds" of this war (II.574). The Angel appears wearing filthy clothes of war and has "huge magnificent wings of war" carrying an Uzi machine gun. A far away small moon is apparent at last; after a long period of disappearance. It coincides with the new position of Marisol and also gives hope that reformations will come true. The war reaches its climax, a great noise is heard. Then, the Angel comes beside Marisol, wingless, unarmed and holding the gold crown in her hands. She kisses Marisol and crowns her. Marisol says: "Oh God, What light, What possibilities, What hope. All

the characters on the stage "disappear in the wild light of the new millennium", and then there is complete darkness on the stage (II.574).

The play leaves the audience with a lasting message of hope; in spite of its terrible cost. It is hope in all fields: personal (*Marisol* becomes a newly crowned angel), social, political and economic (as the old regimes and systems will be replaced by new ones and there will be reformations in the new millennium). There will be no more grief. Rebecca Turner discusses this apocalyptic play, which has arrived "in the midst of" a "climate of uncertainty and millennial anticipation" (16), writing that:

By subverting cultural expectations and fashioning new millennial narratives, Rivera creates a unique form of revolutionary millenarianism encouraging the audience to enact significant, human-driven social change. (3)

Hence, to have a general overview, one can find that Rivera in his magical realistic play, *Marisol*, makes creatively the impossible, the unbelievable and the illogic as possible, believable and logic. He discovers professionally unusual layers of magic under the usual surface of reality mixing fantasy with reality in a traditional tale of an ordinary white-collar girl. In the play, angels wear modern clothes and involve in fighting. They appear in a human-like shape; they may be shown as ordinary people or warriors. They also speak to human beings. Rivera mixes also reality with fantasy when *Marisol* recites the myth of composing the oceans. She says that the oceans had fresh waters, but when the angels were killed in the battle against Satan, they turned into salt and fell in the oceans (I.5.557). Traditionally, salt is a symbol of purification and loyalty. Moreover, it wards off evil and wicked persons. Sinners are changed into pillars of salt. So, when one of *Marisol*'s neighbors wants to shoot her in the first scene of the play, there is a flash of light then silence. After that *Marisol* opens the door and finds only a pillar of salt. But, salty food or drinks are difficult to be eaten or drunk. In *Marisol*'s city the fruits and the food have become salty. Cows also give salty milk. So, the government scientists discover that the "grass was contaminated". They study "plans to develop a new strain of cows that lives by eating Astroturf" (I.5.555). Everything has turned to be abnormal.

Additionally, the moon is related to mystery, death and troubles. There is a poem painted on the wall of the street in the opening scene saying that:

The moon carries the souls of dead
people to heaven
The new moon is dark and heavy
It fills up every month

with new glowing souls
then it carries its silent burden to God.

(I.1.550)

Strangely, the moon has disappeared nine months ago. It has been seen as "hovering over the orbit of Saturn, looking lost" (I.5.555). Fantastically, Pentagon officials "are considering plans to spend billions on a space tug to haul the moon back to earth. The tug would attach a long chain to the moon so it never strays from its beloved earth again". So, the White House needs to raise revenues for "Operation Moon" by "taxing lunatics" (I.5.555). The moon appears again at the end of the play, when Marisol gets rid of her grief and the burden of her human body. She reaches the stage of perfection and becomes an Angel. A new hope of reformation is also imparted in the new millennium. Thus, Rivera succeeds in tying up the believable with the unbelievable and weaving the real with the fantastic.

Additionally, Men can bear and give birth to babies, as does Lenny. the dead are revived. June's brother, Lenny (Leonard), thinks that he has died before then revived; as his heart has "stopped for seven minutes" and his "soul" has gone "at the speed of light". Yet, it has been "intercepted by angels" and he has been "resurrected". He believes that he has returned "to warn the world that big changes are coming, and we have to be ready". He tries to warn people, "but no one listens to" him (I.6.560). Thus, the playwright has created from the character of Lenny "a textbook example of a fatalistic, apocalyptic prophet" (Turner 18).

In doing so, Rivera "has acknowledged the influence of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and magical realism on his writing, and the broad apocalyptic canvas in 'Marisol' has its portion of metaphysical meddling" (Drake 1). Yet, he has employed the elements of the magical realism as a modern dramatic technique perfectly creating an enjoyable play, rich to be studied.

Thus, the two chosen plays for study, *The Clean House* and *Marisol* adopt Magical realism as their techniques to represent the stages of grief of their white-collar characters. Each stage of their grief is depicted cleverly through scenes of magical realism. However, both of these two plays have rich materials for ample studies in other subjects.

Finally, this research paper tried to shed light on magical realism as one of the modern dramatic techniques. It discussed briefly a historical background of its appearance. Also, it gave concise notes about its characteristics. Then, the research paper endeavored to show how this technique is used by some dramatists to incorporate and represent the grief of white-collar characters as an inevitable psychological state and a reaction to loss (of a dear person, an object, an aim ...). So, it attempted to

have a psychological and an analytical approach to example plays in order to deepen their understanding.

Notably, grief has five stages according to the psychological studies and theories: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Each grieving person may suffer from all or some of these stages and / or may undergo them successively or not. White-collar characters are chosen intentionally, as they are cultured educated persons of high positions and respectable jobs in society. Consequently, a sample of three white-collar characters in two modern plays is inspected. The scope of inspection is centered only on two plays for the sake of concentration and because of the limitations of the research paper. But it calls for more new inspections in such studies and subjects related to the use of drama of psychological theories and of modern techniques other than magical realism.

Adding a lot of the details and quotations of the texts of the two plays may be a point of weakness in this research paper. But, it may be excused as they are needed in order to provide documentation of and support for the argument. Also, it aimed to show the magical realistic elements and to follow the series of the actions and consequently the stages of the characters' grief and the changes undergone in their personalities.

Magical realism appeared in the early years of the 20th century in art then in literature. It was developed and flourished greatly by the Latin American writers due to their socio-economic circumstances as well as their political and post-colonial experiences. It weaves reality with fantasy depending on myths and imagination.

The white-collar characters, Lane and Charles, are the heroes of Sarah Ruhl's play, *The Clean House*. They are a couple in their fifties. Both of them are successful doctors. Every one of them grieves because of some reason completely different from the other. Lane grieves because her sudden loss of Charles as a lover and a husband, as she discovers his love for another woman, Ana. This new beloved woman is inferior to Lane as the latter sees. She is a widow in her sixties without a job or a wealth and has fatal cancer breast. Charles' rejection and betrayal to Lane are shocking. She undergoes the five stages of grief as a reaction to this heartbreaking loss. The technique of magical realism accompanies every stage of her grief representing and symbolizing her psychological state and her sad feelings.

At the same time, Charles grieves because of the deterioration of Ana's health and then her death. Ana's suffering and her slow death torments Charles. As a professional doctor, he feels helpless. He undergoes also the

five stages of grief during the course of the last events of the play. Magical realism expresses cleverly his grief.

In the second chosen play, the white-collar title character, Marisol, is the heroine of Jose Rivera's play, *Marisol*. She is a Puerto Rican co-editor in a publishing house in America. Unfortunately, she lives alone in a dangerous suburb. Her guardian Angel abdicates her. She becomes obliged to face life suffering from loneliness, homelessness and lack of protection. She goes through the five stages of grief. These stages are portrayed through a series of magical realism scenes.

Both playwrights, Ruhl and Rivera, have succeeded in creating a willing suspension of disbelief in their audience. They have employed the technique of magical realism professionally, to the extent that they have made the unbelievable, the illogic and the supernatural as believable, logic and ordinary. In doing so, they have represented the grief of their white-collar protagonists creating life-like tableaux glowing with magic and mystery.

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