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A Feminist Perspective: Reversal of Gender Role in Isabel Allende's *Daughter of Fortune* and the *House of the Spirits*

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ABSTRACT

This study argues for a third wave feminist interpretation of *Daughter of Fortune* and *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende as two significant texts that take multiple feminist perspectives into consideration and oppose certain patriarchal systems. As will be argued, the problems faced by the female characters that relate to their personal feminism cannot be explored sufficiently by assuming that they are tossing aside their liberties. Rather, the characters and their stories are best examined by exploring how each woman can work through her problems in ways that allow her to maintain her feminist position.

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Introduction

In her most influential book, *The Second Sex* (1949), de Beauvoir argued that women have been defined by men and that if they attempt to break with this, they risk alienating themselves. Specifically, following Hegel, de Beauvoir maintained that “otherness is a fundamental category of human thought”. Women are defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute; she is the “Other.” Simone de Beauvoir links woman’s identity as other and her fundamental alienation to her body—especially her reproductive capacity. Childbearing, childbirth, and menstruation are draining physical events that tie women to their bodies and to immanence. The male, however, is not tied down by such inherently physical events (Donovan 2000, p. 137).

For century after century, men’s voices continued to articulate and determine the social and cultural roles as well as personal significance of women. Mary Wollstonecraft in her book titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* believes that women along with men should have a voice in the public arena. (Wollstonecraft 1989a, p. 49) As she maintains: “women must stand up for their rights and not allow their male dominated society to define what it means to be a women; they must take the lead and articulate who they are and what role they will play within the society. They must also reject the patriarchal assumption that women are inferior to men. (p. 49)

There is a principle of individuality in the philosophical basis of the feminist perspective that appears in Wollstonecraft’s thoughts. Accordingly, all individuals have equal moral values without any race, color, belief, and religion or gender discrimination. Individuals are distinguished from

each other in points of their personalities, abilities or diligence. So, rights and freedoms related to social and political spheres are valid for all individuals. Any discrimination in these issues – whether in favor of women or men- should be avoided.

The characteristics attributed to women and the educational systems based on these characteristics make the women weak and increase their ignorance. Women are obliged to behave in accordance with the prejudices of the society and men, that prevents women from become aware of their own situation, too. Wollstonecraft (1989a, p. 124) asserts that “Pleasure is the business of a woman’s life, according to the present modification of society, and while it continues to be so, little can be expected from such weak beings. Inheriting, in a lineal descent from the first fair defect in nature, the sovereignty of beauty, they have, to maintain their power, resigned their natural rights, which the exercise of reason, might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labor to attain the sober pleasures that arise from equality. Exalted by their inferiority (this sounds like a contradiction) they constantly demand homage as women, though experience should teach them that the man who pride themselves upon paying this arbitrary insolent respect to the sex, with the most scrupulous exactness, are most inclined to tyrannize over, and despise the very weakness they cherish”.

It is claimed that every feminist has her own notion of feminism, probably as a result of the societal thought they lived in. According to these concepts, feminism consists of different waves: First Wave, Second Wave and Third Wave. Each wave has its own view on the concept of feminism and different feminists represent them differently through their

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writings. At first, the dominant subject dealt with by the feminist writers was the rights of women, and then, in the second wave, it turned out to be about how an ideal woman should be. Finally, most of the feminist works in the third wave have emphasized the difference between men and women discussing the issue of gender and sex. Such issues have always been reflected in the literary works such as novels and plays written by eminent feminist novelists and playwrights.

The Concept of Third Wave Feminism

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. While women made significant gains during the second wave of feminism, equality was still a distant dream. Race and Class became important issues for reflection and action within the movement – a movement that had been dominated by white, middle-class women. This wave of feminism is not stimulated by one or two key struggles, such as the right to vote or reproductive choice, as was the case in both the first and second waves. Even the term feminist is not universally adopted but often rejected by new activists. While the movement seems less galvanized in this current wave there is no doubt that the fight for women's equality is far from over. Mobilizing and organizing across age, race, class and differences in women remains the main challenge in continuing the fight for equality for women.

A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. Third-wave feminists often focus on "micro-politics" and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females. The third wave has its origins in the mid-1980s. Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave sought to negotiate a space within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities.

Third-wave feminism also contains internal debates between various feminists such as the psychologist Carol Gilligan, who believes that there are important differences between the sexes, and those who believe that there are no inherent differences between the sexes and contend that gender roles are due to social conditioning. These concepts are further discussed in Chapter Three.

Third wave feminism is a movement which began to come out late 1980s and has been keeping its existence until present time. Although it is generally confused to be the continuation of the second wave, it can actually be accepted as a separate and unique movement with its different subjects: women of color, sex and gender, masculinity and femininity etc. The black women's involvement in the feminist movement with the white feminists, especially in America, has taken the overall concept of feminism one step further within the third wave. In addition to the black women issue, third wave feminists have been trying to uncover the gender roles and defining the terms sex and gender which will be covered later in this thesis.

Those who define themselves as third-wave feminists tend to be more global and multicultural, and include elements from many different movements such as anti-racism, womanism, and transgender politics. They combat issues such as women's greater influence in politics, and stereotypes about the media portrayals of women. Feminists and scholars disagree on definitions of third wave feminism. Some use the term to label any kind of feminist activism from the 90s to today while others use the term for specific ideologies,

especially those that disagree with tenets of second wave feminism. Many third wave feminists believe that everyone can define feminism for themselves. Some are labeled third wave feminists by others while they refuse to use the label "feminist" for themselves.

The term "third wave," was coined by a group of feminists who were the members of activist network called "The Third Wave" (Orr, 1997, p. 30). The vision of this feminist group was to become a national network for young feminists and to bring them together without regarding any cultural or economic background. Moreover, they aimed to build a strong relationship between young women and older feminists.

It is important to highlight the fact that this third wave feminist group put an emphasis on a feminist movement that aimed to organize all the women around the world; any women of color, religion, race or language. Actually, this is what makes third wave a complicated and confusing movement because the variety of women from different background creates different voices for different feminist aims and causes.

Sex and Gender Concepts in Third Wave Feminism

The concept of sex-gender and woman-man has always been questioned since the Second Wave occurred when feminists began to highlight their roles, as women, in the society. Now, modern women tend to accept masculine qualities and pride themselves on thinking, taking action, working, and creating on the same terms as man. (Walters, 2005, p. 35)

As mentioned before, third wave feminism is a complex, as well as a multi-perspective movement dealing with various issues such as the nature of woman, her relationship with man and the concept of woman and man itself. That third wave has become a movement of complexities is due to the fact that some group of feminists have argued about the stereotyped woman and man while, paradoxically, fighting for their rights and equality with men, whereas other groups assert that women are more than they are and, even, they are superior to men and do not need them. That is, for the sake of their own cause, each group has been trying to shape the concept of woman from their own perspective. To achieve this, they have used media and more specifically social media, as Riot Grrrl did. This situation has led third wave feminists and feminist psychologists to define the concepts such as sex and gender, femininity and masculinity and man and woman. Before going through the concepts of masculinity and femininity, it is essential to know more about the concepts of gender and sex and what they mean.

There have been many definitions of sex by many feminists and psychologists. The term *sex* is considered to be a biological criterion for classification of male or female based on the different inborn biological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, sex organs, and etc. (Muehlenhard & Zoe, 2011, p. 796) That is, when sex is mentioned, what comes to the mind is the physical differences between man and woman relating to the hormones released especially in puberty, the time that man develops muscles and gains more hair and height and that woman gains more fatty tissue, broader hips and develops breasts. (Montague, 2010, p. 290)

Gender, in contrast to sex, is social and questions how the individual, woman or man, acts. (Petersen & Muehlenhard, 2011; Montague, 2010) According to Haslanger (2000b), gender refers to the social categories of male and female and these categories are distinguished from one another by a set of

psychological features and role attributions that society has assigned to the biological category of sex. (Muehlenhard & Zoe, 2011, p. 798)

Unlike sex, gender becomes complicated when it is to be defined in terms of the social norms that woman or man lives in. Because sex is something that individuals inherit but gender is developed as individuals are socialized and develop behaviors and attitudes that their society and culture assert appropriate for them. (Montague, 2010, p. 290) That is to say, while sex refers to male and female, gender is more mentioned to be about masculinity and femininity of which qualities are labeled by cultural aspects. (Montague, 2010; Muehlenhard & Zoe, 2011) As Muehlenhard and Zoe maintain, distinguishing sex from gender is important to recognize that "biology is not destiny" (p. 793). Woman and her femininity, in other words, her gender roles, have always been shaped and defined by the opposite sex in patriarchal society.

The terms 'sex' and 'gender' mean different things to different feminist theorists and neither are easy or straightforward to characterize. Sketching out some feminist history of the terms provides a helpful starting point.

The sex and gender issue and the consequences of rejecting or accepting doing gender is well-pictured in the two plays *The House of the Spirits* and *Daughter of Fortune* by Isabel Allende in which the female protagonists make attempts in different ways to adapt themselves to male dominant society and their survival in that community. As Ackerman states in the article *Discovering Stories that Need to be Told*, "Allende's novels often tell about love, adventure, memory and history which are filled with the strong female characters who search for love and want to find their own identities that are restricted by the societies" (Ackerman, 2010, p. 17). This indicates that Allende is a feminist who has enthusiasm and devotion to the women's freedom. Such enthusiasm and devotion can be seen in most of her novels, including *The House of the Spirits* and *Daughter of Fortune*, both of which will be analyzed in this study.

On the basis of the above-mentioned concept, it can be claimed that the contemporary period has witnessed many female writers who have produced important works dealing with feminism. Female writers, especially the playwrights, in their works, focus on the struggles of women in patriarchal society. However, with the advent of the Third Wave Feminist Movement, female writers began to take the readers' attention to the masculine qualities of women in contemporary period discussing the gender roles of women in society. Accordingly, this thesis will put an attempt to analyze two feminist plays; namely, *Daughter of Fortune* and *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende, the novels that manifest the reversal of gender role in the Third Wave Feminist Movement.

This thesis deals with these novels in terms of how feminine qualities have turned out to be masculine qualities in third wave feminism. Accordingly, the researcher carried out an investigation to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways has the gender role been reversed in the *Daughter of Fortune*?
2. In what ways has the gender role been reversed in *the House of the Spirits*?
3. To what extent is the role played by the main characters in these novels in agreement with the normative values of their society?

Analysis of Isabel Allende's *Daughter of Fortune*

Isabel Allende is one of the most important socialists and feminist writers whose name is highly praised with her

significant play *Daughter of Fortune*. What makes this novel significant among its contemporary writings is that it pictures the gender roles women adopt; some of them obey and adopt the role that they are assigned by the patriarchal society they live in while some others, like Eliza, the protagonist of the novel, reject the traditional feminine roles and adopt masculine qualities to be a successful woman. However, it should be considered that this adoption of masculine qualities brings many problems to many women's life, like Eliza's. The problems, as a result, lead us to question traditional and adopted gender roles of both sexes, male and female, within the third wave feminism.

Daughter of Fortune is a novel that was published in 1999, and was chosen as Oprah's Book Club selection in February 2000. This novel tells about a woman named Eliza Sommers who was adopted and raised by a family in Valparaiso, Chile. She was a woman who struggled to get her freedom since she was imposed by patriarchal dominations in her social life. The story took place during the California Gold Rush in 1849. Generally, *Daughter of Fortune* shows the efforts of a woman who faced a rude and chaotic world in California and finally discovered the freedom of life. Eliza's character reflects a woman who will not follow the convention and willing to follow her heart.

Eliza Sommers, the main character, is a perfect example of a woman who does not let herself be limited by society's standards. Eliza is raised by Miss Rose and her brother Jeremy, left in their care by the two siblings' older brother, John. Even though Eliza is raised in a family where social class is everything, she is ready to take risks that could even bring shame upon her family. When she meets Joaquin Andieta, she instantly falls in love. She begins to sneak him into her house, so that they can share night after night together in one of the remote rooms of her family's estate. Not once does Eliza worry about her consequences, and the reputation she would give her family if she was ever caught. This can be seen from the following excerpt:

"Eliza Sommers saw Joaquin Andieta for the first time one Friday in the May of 1848 when he came to the house" (p. 79).

Eliza is a very talented girl. She has a good sense of smell and a good memory. She uses her first skill to recognize smell of various herbs, spices, and other ingredients without seeing the object itself. Eliza is a very good cook too. In her early life at the Sommers' house, her cook ability is only to serve the guests or simply exchanging the main dishes and dessert; and in the next few years, during her adventures in San Francisco, her cooking passion become one of her income.

"With her prodigious nose, she was able to identify herbs, spices and other ingredients with her eyes closed.... She had a rare culinary gift; at seven, without turning a hair... ." (p. 12)

"Eliza organized a business in empanadas, delicious meat pies, which she sold at the price of gold..., first to Chilean and then to North Americans, who quickly became addicted to them.... Eliza's pastries and cookies enjoyed the same success as the empanadas..., she put out a sign offering breakfast, and men would stand in line... ." (p. 244)

There is also a rebellious side in Eliza. The rebellious side of Eliza is showed when Eliza falls in love to Joaquin. Miss Rose and Mama Fresia believed that they had a relationship behind them. She ignored Miss Rose prohibition and Mama Fresia advice. They met secretly once in a week and finally

she lost her honor as woman. Knowing that she is pregnant, she escaped to San Francisco trying to find Joaquin.

"Go and change you dress...." she added sharply. Eliza, did not move, locked to Joaquin Andieta's eyes,....until Miss Rose took her by one arm and led her inside...."I told you child; any man, as miserable a man as he may be, can do whatever he wants with you," the Indian reminded her that night...."I don't know what you're talking about, Mama Fresia," Eliza replied. (pp. 81-82)

Eliza is assertive, aggressive and stubborn. When Eliza is playing card and domino with Michael Steward, she refuses assertively to pretend to lose. When she knew that she was pregnant she insisted to go to follow Joaquin.

"I am going to marry him."..... "I will have to find him." (p. 128)

"If you don't help me, I'll do it alone."... "I am going to tell Miss Rose everything!"... "If you do, I'll kill myself,....." the girl returned with fierce determination. (p. 142)

Eliza is a brave woman; she traveled by herself to California, even though she knew that it was not a place for a lady like her. In fact, when Tao did not want to accompany Eliza to find Joaquin, she went alone.

"To look for Joaquin." "I have no interest in finding him. I'm staying."..... "Very well. I will go" (p. 245)

"...I have to go to California," she explained.... "Why? that's no place for women, only bandits."... he had never seen a woman capable of such extremes in real life,....(p. 147)

When Tao lets her continue alone, Eliza discovers much about her own strengths and the powers and limitations of being a woman. She dresses like a boy to avoid trouble, and soon finds herself more than capable of doing the work of a man when she is given the chance. As the months go by, she begins to wonder about the depth of her love for Joaquín as his memory grows gradually fainter in her mind.

"As for Eliza, she knew that she was at a definitive fork in her road and that direction she chose would determine the rest of her life...Not only she was tired of looking for him, but deep down she did not want to find him" (p. 370).

Eliza's character is classified as round and dynamic character. It changes as the story flows. In the beginning of the story, it is told that Eliza is a brave, strong, tough and independent woman. However, at some point, Eliza feels hopeless as she miscarriages the baby and she becomes very ill. Tao, a Chinese traditional healer man, who helped her smuggle into the ship off to California, encourages her to be strong. He also takes care of Eliza. The journey to San Francisco seemed endless, and Eliza battles against madness. She also feels lost and desperate when she has to find Joaquin in San Francisco.

"Am I going to die, Tao?".... "I can't move, I can't survive this voyage, Tao, I would rather die," Eliza sobbed,.... "Be brave girl....and you have not come this far to die in mid-journey." (pp. 208-209)

For a time that seemed endless, Eliza fought her way through delirium,... (p. 210)

"How am I going to find Joaquin in all this uproar?" Eliza asked, feeling lost and helpless..... "I'm not planning to leave you, Tao." (p. 225)

Soon after Eliza's lover leaves for California in search of gold, Eliza discovers that she is pregnant. Rather than sit and await his return as many women of this time would have, Eliza makes the decision to follow after him, and begins to

search for passage to California. Without a word to her family, Eliza is snuck onto a ship that is set to sail, and departs in search of her lover. This is one of Eliza's many decisions that makes her the strong willed woman that she becomes in her journey. When Eliza arrives in California, she immediately begins to make a life for herself. Disguising herself as a man, Eliza opens a new world of opportunities. She manages to escape the life of sex that many women were drawn to base on the money men paid just to see a woman.

It is apparent that Eliza is determined to find her Joaquin as she begins to ask everywhere if anyone has heard of him. However as Joaquin's presence begins to fade, Eliza realizes that her search is beginning to lose its purpose. She begins to help her friend, Tao Chi'en with his medicinal practices, an opportunity that would have been very rare for women of her time. When Eliza leaves the place she and Tao call home, she still has no trouble finding work. She finds ways to make money like writing letters, cooking food, and playing piano. Some of her small odd jobs were things that only a man would typically have been able to do, however, because Eliza was disguised as a boy, she was able to be paid the wage of a male. In her travels, Eliza never loses faith in herself and always finds a way to make it. In a bitter world where men are the governing sex, Eliza proves that females are capable of anything.

Accordingly, *Daughter of Fortune* by Isabel Allende represents the independent women of mid-19th century America, making a life for themselves in a harsh environment where men are the dominating force. Few women of the 1800's were able to live the way they wanted, but women like Eliza, Miss Rose, and Joe Bonecrusher proved that it was possible. In a rapidly changing world, women were granted more rights, thanks to the efforts of determined women such as these three. They have no fear of taking risks, and let nothing get in their way. Their fortitude shows a strength that existed in many women of their age, but was rarely acted upon. With the courage of these three characters, and others like them, men were shown that the world has plenty of room for both genders to thrive.

One of Allende's main themes in this play is that of patriarchy, which makes reference to a society in which men make all the rules, thus having authority over women and children. The word patriarchy is formed from the Greek words for father and ruling, so patriarchy refers to rule of a family or organization set by the father or a suitable adult male. Accordingly, patriarchy can be considered as a system of male domination to women in every aspect of life. Men dominate in all things and dominate decision and social role of women where they do not have their own opinions. Women are not allowed to make decision for the future of their life without interference from men, including finding a partner for their future husband. In earlier times, those who had their own mind and were independent were considered as people who break the values and norms of the society in which they live. According to Tong, society has the false belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men; it excludes women from the academy and forum as well as the market place (Tong, 1998, p. 2).

Patriarchal elements can be traced out throughout the novel *Daughter of Fortune*. Allende sets the patriarchy theme up in the first part of the story by demonstrating Jeremy's control of the Sommers household. She also emphasizes it with the creation of Agustíndel Valle and his ruthless behavior toward the people who work for him and toward his daughter,

Pauline, who tries to defy him. Allende does this with a purpose. In both cases, with Jeremy and Agustín, the women eventually get their way. No matter how strict the men are, the women do what they have to do in order to pursue their own interests.

In the first chapter of the novel, women are referred to usually only when they are sexually important. For example, somewhere in chapter one, girls are depicted as some beautiful characters from whom as soon as possible you have to seek satisfaction;

“Girls were roses, and their seasons were short as the flowers. Plucked they must be before nightfall; for the day was brief and the day was all.” (p. 12)

In parts two and three, Eliza, the main female character of the play, is also portrayed as a female who lives in a society of patriarchal values and conventions. But she thinks women should obtain their true identity through hard attempt and tedious discipline while the reason of bearing such hardship is being accepted by men and the patriarchal society since these are the factors which have gained the title of values by such a society.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that one of the most important concepts in *Daughter of Fortune* is bisexuality. The main character of the novel experiences different eras, situations, people and even different sexes. When Eliza is a man the reader can see and feel feminine characteristics in him although masculinity and patriarchy are more powerful because of the force of the society and the emphasis it has on gender roles. This is the case when Eliza is a woman too; although she has both feminine and masculine aspects within herself because of being introduced as a female character she is expected to act womanly by the society. Therefore, based on what Butler, De Beauvoir and other feminists believe we are not basically men or women; we are told and expected to play the role of these genders. In *Daughter of Fortune*, we are faced with a character that changes from one sex to the other but is still the same character with the same interests and feelings. The only thing which radically changes is the view of the society and the expectations which it imposes on the character and makes her to act as a man or a woman. Here, the character must act according to the socially accepted norms although she may not be really interested in them; as a result sometimes she has to wear a mask.

Analysis of Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*

The House of the Spirits is a family saga that follows four generations of a Chilean family and their involvement with the turbulent political events of the 1970s, but focuses primarily on the lives of two women in the clan, Clara del Valle and Alba de Satigny, and the connection between them. This is a play making readers confused with its disordered chronology of the events. Moreover, the subjects and themes make it difficult for the readers to understand the play. Despite these complications and difficulties in understanding, the novel has been an extraordinary play to illustrate the extraordinary life of female characters which is full of misery/cheer, happiness/unhappiness, poverty/wealth, love/hate, and health/illness.

The House of the Spirits charts the rise and fall of the Trueba family in an unnamed Latin American country, probably Chile. The novel spans the 1920s through the 1970s, as the country moves through enormous sociopolitical changes that culminate in a devastating dictatorship while the family undergoes cultural, financial and emotional upheavals. The

novel is told from the point of view of Alba, the youngest of three generations of women. Her memories, frightening and amusing, lyrical and romantic, light up the stage as she relates her family's history and ultimately finds the strength to tell her own story.

The women in the novel do not explicitly condemn gender inequality because they show their strength and power as women without having to say it aloud. Allende is a masterful writer and she understands that a simple impassioned speech by a woman character about gender inequality is not enough to pull an audience into understanding a woman's plight. In *The House of the Spirits*, Allende highlights the lives of four women of the same family: Rosa, Clara, Blanca, and Alba. These women suffer from rough marriages, lost loves, and have troubles with the government. Yet, throughout the novel they are strong and proud women who take charge of their lives and live them as they choose.

The novel opens with Clara as a young girl, writing in her first journal about the arrival of a new pet, an enormous dog that she names Barrabas. Clara continues to write in journals the rest of her life, and fifty years later, her husband Esteban and her granddaughter Alba refer to these journals as they piece together the story of their family.

The novel begins with Clara's childish scribbles, and ends the same way. Clara is the alpha and the omega of *The House of the Spirits* – the glue that holds the Trueba family together, and the life force of the big house on the corner and of the novel as a whole. Clara is barely aware of the material world. She is most interested in communicating with spirits and only pays attention to mundane details such as domestic chores in times of extreme necessity. Clara is often described as floating through the world. At times, this refers to her literally levitating, at others it shows the way she is able to ignore much of what she does not want to deal with. Clara's temper is extremely calm. She inspires great respect and devotion in all those who meet her, from Esteban to his sister Ferula to his foreman Pedro Segundo. Although she can see it in advance, Clara never fights her destiny. She is not, however, passive. When she faces a situation that she does not like, she proceeds to change it in quiet, subtle ways such as adding little rooms to the big house on the corner bit by bit until it is completely transformed. Clara's character changes gradually as she grows from a young girl to an old woman.

Alba is another important figure in the novel. She is defined primarily through the affects she has on those around her and through her reactions to their actions. It is in fact in reaction to her detention, torture, and rape at the hands of Esteban Garcia that she convinces her grandfather to help her write the story of their family in order to, as she puts it, "reclaim the past and overcome terrors of my own." In fact, Alba brings about the story's resolution – it is her act of forgiveness towards her torturers that lets the novel end on a hopeful note. Alba opens up the possibility of a break in the pattern of violence that has hounded her family for generations.

And finally, Blanca, another female character, is very close to her mother and very distant from her father. She is raised by Clara and Ferula together and quickly devises illnesses that make her return home when she is sent away to school. Unlike her mother, Blanca is quite practical. After her divorce from Jean de Satigny, Blanca runs the big house on the corner. Like both of her parents, she is incredibly stubborn. Even when she runs his house, she never asks for a cent from her father, instead supporting herself through her ceramics.

Blanca's character is defined primarily by her love for Pedro Tercero. However, she is not simply attached to him. In fact, for most of the novel she is separated from Pedro Tercero as much by her own choice as by outside circumstances. It is precisely the idea of her love for Pedro Tercero that defines Blanca a relationship that is less actual than the two may have.

The *House of the Spirits* is a reflection of not just the story of three generations of women but it also tells the history of many Latin American Countries throughout the 20th Century. Feminism is, and can be, defined in various manners. However, the most important concern is that women in fact are equal to men. This equality is portrayed in different ways in *The House of the Spirits*, and sometimes the women even seem stronger than their male family members. However, the women, no matter how strong they are, tend to be subordinate to the men surrounding them. The female characters in this novel are oppressed by their husbands and their natural opponents are consequently the patriarchy. There are some women that will be dealt with in this essay that are trained to become persons who are pretty and withdrawn trying to keep up a good façade towards the rest of the society. Yet, there are others who are considered as unacceptable in society and not acknowledged by their families.

Clara is able to withstand her husband's violent mood swings and raise children that do not turn out to be like him. She defies her husband by refusing to speak with him after he hits her and she moves away from Tres Marias. She accepts the fact that they are married but that does not mean she does not have a voice. She leads a very independent life in the big house on the corner, having people over and overseeing the house without Esteban. Even when Esteban rants and rails against her, she refuses to name her children after him. Esteban knows that he cannot control Clara even if he wants to. This is a perfect example of how a main central character asserts her control over her choices, despite the wishes of a man.

It is quite simple to apply the idea of feminist theory and reversal of gender role to Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*. Women throughout generations have been repressed and are slowly beginning to change their thoughts and actions. The older generation of women in Allende's *The House of the Spirits* is dependent on the men in their lives for everything from political to economic issues. This point of view lays a foundation for the growth of an enlightened generation. This enlightened generation of women is stronger and less accepting the societal norms. This fact can be traced in the following excerpt:

"She had already made up her mind to marry without love" (Allende, 1982, p. 90).

The concept of feminism can also be traced in *The House of the Spirits* from another point of view. The novel follows the stories of three generations of women and their loved ones. There is a presence of strong women in this novel such as Clara, Blanca and Alba. They all do their very best to stand up for their rights in a society filled with dominant patriarchs. Clara's sister, Rosa, is mermaid-like and is poisoned to death by something that her father was supposed to have drunk. Clara is a somewhat different woman who can predict earthquakes and deaths, and she does not speak for nine years after the death of her sister Rosa (p. 54). This can be seen as an evidence of involuntary female sacrifice for the benefit of a man.

Each generation of Trueba women is stronger, in unique ways, than the last. Clara is very independent, but Blanca is

self-sacrificing. Blanca defies her father and continues to see Pedro Tercero throughout the novel. When she realizes that her husband *Jean de Satigny*, whom she does not love and therefore never allows their marriage to be consummated, is performing sexual acts with the servants, she leaves the house to live with her mother and father, no matter what society may say of her. She takes control of her own life and makes her own decisions for the most part.

Generally, *The House of the Spirits* can be regarded as a woman-centered novel as the protagonists of the novel are all women who work in different and subtle ways to assert their rights. All of the women are strong women who do not bow to mistreatment. They choose subtle responses to the situations instead of outright revolt. This very method of resistance can be seen as particularly feminine. If violence and activity are male traits, while gentleness and passivity are female ones, *The House of the Spirits* shows that this does not mean that men accomplish things and change things while women do not. On the contrary, the women in this novel affect more long-lasting and drastic changes than do any of the men. While the men lead revolutions that topple governments those revolutions are themselves quickly toppled. The women's subtler methods of teaching literacy and basic healthcare, setting curses, and refusing to speak are far more effective in exacting permanent change.

The masculine traits of women in *The House of the Spirits* are presented in a more positive manner because Allende is attempting to show readers how gender inequality affected women without making their characteristics seem equal to the violence that the men in this book demonstrate. By creating male characters that are more representative of violence and action, she shows feminism in a more positive light. The rape of Pancha by Esteban and the rape of Alba by the members of the Conservative party are examples of how an attitude of gender inequality can foster violence. A disposition of patience and gentleness are seen in a more favorable light in comparison to the male characteristics.

Conclusion

This study dwelled on feminism within the historical context referring to its development through different concepts and points of view with a focus on masculine qualities women adopted in third wave feminism through the analysis of two novels; i.e., *The House of the Spirit* and *Daughter of Fortune* by Isabel Allende. Just as the various concepts and definitions were raised by different feminist groups, the two plays analyzed in this thesis show differences in the way the characters adopt masculine qualities. With the development in communication technologies, women have been characterized with different aspects pulling them away from their doing gender. On TVs, people have begun to see female characters who are as powerful and as tough as men both physically and emotionally. Moreover, some feminist groups, such as Riot Grrls, have begun to instill their masculine ideas in and against male dominant societies around the world. This caused feminist writers to cover the issue of women's masculinity and its consequences.

Allende reflects this idea of masculinity of women in her plays *Daughter of Fortune* and *The House of the Spirits*. These two plays take the readers to a journey of the female characters who bring a different perspective to the concept of feminism criticizing the doing gender of a female in society. Moreover, these plays show the consequences of adopting the masculine qualities and lead the reader to ask whether these masculine qualities are a real solution to have a status and

have success in society as well as in the world of business. If the analysis of both plays is considered in this thesis, the different ways to adopt masculine qualities are detected.

In *The House of the Spirits*, Allende make an attempt to draw the readers' attention to the power of women and how they use their masculine personality traits in order to reach their desires and guarantee their survival in a male dominated society. The protagonists of the play are all women who work in different and subtle ways to assert their rights. Allende identifies the women's viewpoint as the voice of emotion—the voice of the soul that is telling the underlying story.

Clara, Blanca and Alba are all strong women who do not bow to mistreatment; they resist male dominance in gentle, feminine ways, such as Clara's refusal to speak after Esteban's physical tantrum. By their quiet manner, they affect more change than the men do. In addition, the women's names are all synonyms for clarity and light. "Nivea means a snow white color; Clara is clearness and translucence; Blanca, the prototype of white and Alba, the dawn and break of daylight." Allende's statement about women that "Women are really thick; they are the daughters of rigidity; They need a man to feel secure but they don't realize the one thing they should be afraid of is men; They don't know how to run their lives; They have to sacrifice themselves for the sake of someone else" (Allende 189) appropriately concluded her analysis of feminine authority. It can be said that Clara and the rest of women taking part in the novel are of existence because they were able to confront the male perspective and way of life. They are the complications that provide the challenges the patriarch must face and conquer, such as Ferula and Clara, who constantly keep Esteban running. They expressed their power to defy and manipulate Esteban, from his childhood into his successful years as a political powerhouse, as best they can; Ferula through her power of motherly love, and Clara using her command of the spirits.

Put it all together, it can be concluded that the evolution of feminism is represented through the successive generations within *The House of the Spirits*. A major part of understanding feminism and its role in any work of literature, art or life, is to recognize the way the world typically understands things and how feminism challenges that way of thinking. People understand everything in binaries: good/bad, high/low, male/female, etc. It is nearly impossible to understand anything without knowing its opposite. Feminism is a challenge to this binary code of conceptualization. Allende takes her readers into the binary and breaks it apart. She uses her characters to show the extremes of the binary. As her characters grow and become more rounded the more complex our understanding is of their roles, especially as those roles relate to their gender.

The first character, Clara, would represent the typical women who are subjected to a male-dominated society. In Clara, however, there arises a spark. She knows what is expected of her and goes into a loveless marriage while simultaneously rebelling against the whole system. She chooses to stop talking to Esteban after he hits her. She is showing that she will not speak unless spoken to and it is not her place to question her husband but, at the same time, she rebels against him by giving him the silent treatment and locking him out of her room. She is using herself to actively refute Esteban but not as an active feminist.

The next character is Blanca, the daughter of Clara and Esteban, who takes one step further toward independence as a woman. She falls in love with Pedro who is of a lower class

than herself and an active socialist. She cannot marry him due to these reasons and her father beats her when he finds out about the relationship. When she becomes pregnant by Pedro she is forced into marrying the peculiar Count who does not love Blanca and has no interest in her. When her daughter is to be born, Blanca escapes from the Count where she never returns, and thus, raises her daughter on her own.

Her daughter, Alba, then is predicted to lead a different life in which she behaves as she likes, not based upon the principles of men. Even Esteban allows her to speak her mind freely although he does not take it into consideration. This evolution toward independence and feminism was created by Allende to show the evolution taking place across Latin America, more specifically in Chile. The characters could have been based upon real people who had similar experiences as they fought for their rights.

The novel *Daughter of Fortune*, on the other hand, tells about a woman named Eliza Sommers who first lived in Chile under patriarchal dominations which limited her social life. However, when Eliza eventually went to California and undergone a lot of new experiences, she realized that woman can also gain freedom in life. As an independent woman, Eliza is free to make a decision about her life. She finally wore her gown back with no fear. When she wears her gown back, she actually chooses not to wear the corset as it is a symbol of her captivity, in patriarchy system or in Victorian Era. She does not want to go back to Chile, because she knew that she will not get the freedom, the equal right that she has gained in California. In fact she already has a plan to open her own French Restaurant. She wants to start her new life in San Francisco. Conclusively, her experiences led Eliza to build up her awareness of feminist thoughts.

With a closer look at the flow of the events taking place within the story, one can claim that there are two main points that Allende tries to share in this novel. The first main point is Allende's positive descriptions of woman, and the second main point is her thoughts about woman's competencies. These points are shown through the female protagonist, Eliza Sommers. Through the analysis, it was found that Allende provides the reader with at least three positive descriptions of women through her main character Eliza: a typical woman must be respected as a strong person, as a smart person, and as an independent person. Despite the cultural stereotype stating that women are inferior compared to men in terms of intellectuality, physical power and mentality, Allende shows that women can also perform the same capability as men and also show that both of women and men are actually equal in quality. Furthermore, Allende also shares her thoughts about women's competencies in the novel. She reveals competencies and capabilities of the main character in several aspects; i.e., in travelling, cooking, playing piano and writing. Despite the society's tendency to take for granted these competencies of women, Allende believes that these competencies are useful and profitable for women. The experiences that women have undergone could help them to realize their capabilities and to build up their awareness of their own power.

Feminism is reflected in Eliza's character as she is presented the equal right as men in having a career and earning money by herself. As an independent woman, Eliza uses her skill in cooking, her hobbies in reading and writing, and her ability to play piano. The cooking itself showed Eliza the femininity ideology that is formed by the society since one of the feminine roles of a woman is cooking.

Cooking is in domestic realm. However, Eliza tried to bring it out on the public realm, and she indeed made it. The miners enjoyed her cook, and she got money by cooking. Writing letter is the main and only medium of communication between the miners and their families. It exhibited the Eliza's role to enter into the public realm allowing her to have a relation with the miners and gain their trust. She also used her ability in playing piano by which she could earn money and make her end's meets. Taken together, all these abilities were of great help to Eliza making her an independent woman.

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