

**TOWARDS A TRANSCULTURAL FORMATION: A
POSTCOLONIAL READING OF ISABEL
ALLENDE'S SELECTED TEXTS**

By

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**KE ARAH PEMBENTUKAN TRANSCULTURAL: SATU
PEMBACAAN PASCAKOLONIAL DARIPADA TEKS TERPILIH
KARYA ISABEL ALLENDE**

ABSTRAK

Disertasi ini memberi tumpuan terhadap tiga novel kontemporari karya Isabel Allende, seorang penulis Amerika Latin. Dari perspektif pascapenjajah dan rentas budaya, disertasi ini menganalisis struktur tema dan mod penulisan yang beliau gunakan untuk mencipta atau mencipta semula suatu zon atau ruang yang membolehkan mereka bersuara melalui teks literasi yang telah berakar umbi dalam sosio benua Eropah. peristiwa bersejarah, dan perkara yang diutarakan dalam novel ini berkaitan dengan kesukaran serta percanggahan dengan budaya kontemporari. Menghuraikan konsep kritikal tertentu daripada era pascapenjajah, terutamanya teori Edward Said, Homi Bhabha dan Fernando Ortiz, disertasi ini meneroka proses yang digarap oleh Allende melalui keaburan suara dan cara representasi membentuk model idea beliau dalam kedua-dua mod aksara dan penulisan; gabungan dalam binaan kedua-dua mod aksara dan penulisan; pembentuk diringkaskan dalam kewujudan peranakan Sepanyol atau Portugis, dan kemudiannya dalam pembentukan realisme magik. Berdasarkan fenomena rentas budaya, mereka berkongsi sifat serta menolak perundingan. Disertasi ini menganalisis tiga novel Allende, iaitu The House of the Spirits, Daughter of Fortune, dan Zorro serta meneroka mekanisme yang digunakan untuk melegakan kemarahan wacana penjajah dan menulis semula sejarah dari sudut pandang mereka yang dijajah

dan mencipta semula imej diri. Sejarah yang ditulis dan imej yang dicipta mempunyai atribut rentas budaya di antara pelbagai budaya.

**TOWARDS A TRANSCULTURAL FORMATION: A
POSTCOLONIAL READING OF ISABEL ALLENDE'S SELECTED
TEXTS**

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on three contemporary self-representational novels by the Latin American author, Isabel Allende. From a dual, postcolonial and transcultural perspective, this work analyzes the thematic structures and mode of writing used by the author to create or re-create a zone for silenced and marginalized groups to speak out. The stories are rooted in the South American continent's real socio-historical events, and the complexities and contradictions of the contemporary Latin American cultural context. Elaborating on certain postcolonial concepts, particularly the theories proposed by Homi Bhabha and Frantz Ortiz, the present dissertation identifies the process by which Allende makes opposing voices and methods of representation commingle to form an ideal hybridized model, both in characterization and in writing mode. In other words, the emergence of mestizo and magical realism are equally the results of a cultural syncretism. As transcultural phenomena, they share the feature of a negation of negotiability, since their negotiability is attained only after an introductory phase of negation. The present dissertation analyzes Allende's three novels, The House of the Spirits, Daughter of Fortune, and Zorro, and explores the mechanism by which the author disarms the dominant colonial discourse, through re-writing history from the viewpoint of the colonized and marginalized groups, and re-creating a new image of the self via her unique art of characterization. The history thus newly written and the image

thus created together reflect a transcultural society and a mestizaje identity that both arise from a middle ground of varying cultural trends.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

Isabel Allende is one of Latin America's greatest women writers. Through translation, her work has received international critical acclaim. Her novels have been translated into more than 30 languages. She combines harsh, realistic, and political fiction with the surreal in the tradition of magical realism. Her marked mastery in the writing mode of magical realism has induced some critics to compare her with another Latin American exponent, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Main, 2005). She has written more than 18 novels, though the focus of the present study is on The House of the Spirits (1982), Daughter of Fortune (1999), and Zorro (2005) (Castellucci Cox, 2003).

Her writing technique is exemplary. She mixes both realistic and political fictions with surreal techniques in order to follow the tradition of magical realism. History and culture are two influential factors in her writing mode, and have a substantial impact on the way she deals with her own experiences (Cox, 2003). Through her masterly use of this writing mode, Allende shows that it can be looked upon as a mechanism used by native people to escape from the oppressiveness of Latin-American familial and political structure, and a way to create at least a free and independent, internal place to take refuge to (Colwell, 1990).

Allende's artistry changes her into an exorcist of death – the death of her nation under authoritarian, controlling powers. She delves into the past in order to find an escape route for her nation from the prison in which it finds itself, and to force the evil

spirit to leave the country. The glorious and unique characters of Allende's fiction, with their enthusiasm for freedom and independence, make her fiction one of the most significant representations of the Latin American spirit rising against its various oppressors (Zapata, 2002).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The last quarter of twentieth century was a unique age of various '*post-*' movements in cultural and literary criticism. Their increasing emergence cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the previous categories, and caused them to be viewed as obsolete tools for measuring the cultural and literary realms. Under the weight of the post-critiques, the assumed hegemony of western thought has been de-stabilized and forced to re-think itself. However, some of the post- thinkers realize that the pre-post categories cannot be simply wiped out. In fact, postcolonial thinkers such as Homi Bhabha point to the transitivity of cultural approaches, and in this way issue a number of controversial challenges. As a matter of fact, the inventive method of in-betweenness and liminality in dealing with contemporary cultures strongly correlates with their corollary openness. To me, it is the in-between analysis of colonial methods and discourses that has opened a way towards postcolonial thinking.

The existence of opposing forces is the prevailing image of postcolonial literary texts that motivates their entry into the process of hybridization. The colonial subjects appropriate the principles of colonizers and create a new object which does not belong to either side of the binary opposition, neither the colonizer nor the colonized. They do it not just for a simple mimicry of those in power, rather they do it in order to form a new

subversive medium for self-representation. Consequently, a postcolonial text is actually a transcultural whole heading toward a negotiable, non-negating aim that paves the way for a dialogue among contradictory voices.

As a politically exiled woman writer, Isabel Allende has often been analyzed within the framework of feminism or a socio-political approach. Throughout my investigation of Allende's fictions I have come across many critics of Allende with feminist and gender-related critical stances, notably, Patricia Hart (1989), Ksenija Bilbija (1990), Isabel Maldonado Domenech (1990), Jaime Pablo Gomez (1993), Monita A. M. Mascitti-Meuter (1993), Alison Primoza (1999), Martha Lorena Rubi (2002), Susan A. McNelley (2002), Annika Linda Hannan (2003), Nadia Dolores Avendano (2003), Oriana Reyes (2005), Jeanine Luciana Lino Costa (2006), Marina Delgado (2010), Helene Carol Weldt-Basson (2010), and Laura Catherine Reinhold (2011). Each of these critics puts emphasis on certain particular facets of Allende's artistry: the characterization of female characters, the image of women in the novels, the dominance of magic realism among her various writing modes, her favorite literary genres of *bildungsroman* and autobiography, and the conduciveness of her fiction to the application of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic text.

Apart from scholars with a feminist inclination, there are some other critics who explore Allende more fully from quite different perspectives. They seek to distance themselves from gender issues and focus more on the condition of contemporary human subjects of either sex in postcolonial societies. Critics such as Monita A. M. Mascitti-Meuter (1993), for instance, call it a fallacy to categorize Allende's novels as purely feminist texts.

There is still another group of critics who focus on the formative condition of Allende's novels against the backdrop of Chile's 1973 military coup d'état, an event which was truly a turning point in the social and political, as well as literary atmosphere of the country. These critics foreground the socio-political conditions of the country as portrayed by Allende and indicate how such conditions influence her artistic endeavours. They include critics such as Giti Chandra (2001), Celia Correias de Zapata and Margaret Sayers (2002), Linda Gould Levine (2002), Raquel Benatar and Patricia Petersen (2003), Mary Main (2005), Tim McNeese (2006), Myriam Martel (2003), Amoia and Knapp (2004), Shelli Rottschafer (2005), Natalya Selister (2005), Sonia Hidalgo-Nunez (2007), and Joan Axelrod-Contrada (2010).

Apart from the above-mentioned critics and scholars, there exists a group who concentrate more on Isabel Allende's literary techniques and modes of writing. Critics such as Rosanne D. Brunton (1990), Karen M. Holloway (1998), Aranazazu Borrachero (2000), Margaret A. Morales McKale (2002), Jennifer Clare Rodgers (2002), Jane Classen Simon (2003), Ann Marie Wellington (2003), Alison Hatjakes (2008), and Larry Rohter (2009) belong to this category.

There are, however, some others who seek purely postcolonial concepts in the body of Allende's texts. Rosanne D. Brunton (1990), Dolores Gail Tayko (1994), Deborah Nahamah Cohn (1996), Lara Cassandra Merlin (1998), Pilar Alvarez (2000), Mary Swift Metherd (2000), Karen Castellucci Cox (2003), Omaira Abdel-Fattah (2004), Karen Wooley Martin (2006), Suzanna Engman (2008), Ana Margarita Bausset (2008), Dorothy Louise Kuykenda (2009), Karen Wooley Martin (2010), Alex Conrad

Holland (2011), and Claudia Salazar (2012), are all among this last group. Theirs occupy a wide spectrum of thematic as well as stylistic structures, as rendered in Allende's texts. Allende's recurrent thematic structures of home, ghost, and exile, alongside such stylistic devices as magic realism, are considered by these critics as undeniable signs of postcolonial inclination which form the prevailing ambience of her novels.

However, the bulk of critical studies of Allende's fiction, even those that concentrate on her literary techniques, modes of writing, or postcolonial themes, have been mostly concerned with feminist issues. In other words, they can be categorized as interdisciplinary approaches, seeking to examine how a certain literary tool or cultural concept has been dealt with in the hands of a woman writer, particularly in her portrayal of female characters. Given this scenario, my study aims to investigate the thematic structures, writing modes, and stylistic strategies and techniques used by the postcolonial novelist, Isabel Allende, that make a hybrid whole out of the apparently feminine and politically historical parts of her literary accomplishments. This is, therefore, a relatively under-explored terrain. My critical focus with her novels is on the way she approaches her themes. Through the writing mode and thematic structures of her novels, she seems to reverse the colonial process referred to by Edward Said as the domestication of the exotic: however, by reversing the process she does not end at the exoticism of the domestic. Her method and writing strategy do not suggest a negating model, but a negotiable formation that is hybridized in nature. Her literary endeavour in fact culminates in a transcultural site within which various opposing voices enter a dialogue.

As a Latin American postcolonial writer, Allende has discovered a unique literary approach for dealing with cultural issues. By appropriating already abrogated colonial tools, she and her literary characters pass through the phase of inversion, and by presenting their active agency, enter the realm of subversion. Their approaches smack neither of acculturation nor deculturation, but rather, transculturation. Allende's three novels as a hybrid whole are of mestizaje identity. They reconcile the opposing voices, and by passing through an initial stage of negation, enter a consequent phase of negotiation.

1.3 Objectives

Through reading and analyzing Isabel Allende's three novels, namely The House of the Spirits, Daughter of Fortune, and Zorro, I seek to meet the following objectives:

1) I seek to demonstrate that Isabel Allende's specific literary mode of magical realism and her assiduous way of characterization serve as a counter-discursive strategy, through which she reverses the Saidian concept of the domestication of the exotic. However, I also aim to illustrate that her counter-discursive strategy is not of an inversive nature, and does not lead her literary structures towards the exoticism of the domestic.

2) For the next step, I aim to demonstrate that through her counter-discursive strategies, Allende initiates a process of hybridization, both in her writing mode and her characterization. In other words, her masterly use of magical realism and the creation of a new character type, the mestizo, are examples of hybrid formative structures.

3) I also seek to illustrate a transcultural ambience in Isabel Allende's three selected novels. Her hybridized writing mode and character type manage to create a cultural zone in which opposing voices come together and enter into a dialogue. That zone is created neither through acculturation nor deculturation, but rather paves the way for transculturation.

At the very end of this part, it is worth mentioning that I try to arrive at the aforementioned objectives through a close analysis of Allende's writing techniques and thematic features, as evidenced in her three novels, The House of the Spirits, Daughter of Fortune, and Zorro. Through her writing techniques and her formation of a unique character-type, she in turn borrows the favourite tools of colonial discourse, localizes them, and appropriates them. In this way, she bestows upon her literary texts the attribute of transcultural negotiability.

1.4 Significance of the Study

As far as I have investigated, the majority of scholarly works conducted on Isabel Allende are from standpoints of feminism or other issues related to gender studies. Being a female writer living the prime of her life in a country with a patriarchal governing system, and later under an unwanted exile and sense of displacement, makes her an apt subject for feminist or other gender-oriented studies. She chooses her protagonists often from among female characters whose private and social sufferings reflect her own versatile experiences as a woman in an oppressed totalitarian social system. Therefore, she is often considered to be part of the Latin American feminist awakening in literature. Following the election of Chile's first socialist president,

Salvador Allende (Isabel's uncle), and the subsequent 1973 coup in Chile during which he was assassinated and replaced by Augusto Pinochet, Isabel Allende lived abroad, for many of those years in California. As she has been a politically exiled person, and as her novels are mostly set against a real historical background, many other critics have focused on the historical and political significance of her works and approached them from this angle.

By avoiding such gender-based or historical and political approaches, however, the reader soon realizes the depth of Allende's artistry. In her writing, she deals with politics, history, and social institutions in which both genders are involved. Both the form and content of her novels are exemplary, as they explore the furthest extremes of human experience. Her figuratively layered literary style and method of rendering the contemporary turmoil of Latin American societies as a microcosm of the South American continent, and the underlying tendency of her double-narrative tone to make an equation between the opposing voices of male/female, oppressor/oppressed, or colonizer/colonized, clearly show that her novels are apt subjects for postcolonial analysis.

However, most of the time her novels are not analyzed from this perspective, and studies are restricted to the previously mentioned approaches, meaning that Allende is mainly enclosed within the dialectics of these critical discourses. This study attempts to analyze her novels from the standpoint of postcolonial literary theory. I seek to approach her work from a less gender-based or politically-focused historical perspective.

Another significance of this study is related to the selected literary corpus. My study sheds light on the nature of Allende's Daughter of Fortune. The novel has often been examined as part of a trilogy, and not as a distinctly authentic work of art with an independent artistic identity and value of its own. I, however, regard it as a complete epic novel with specific stylistic and thematic features. The last point is related to the novel Zorro. Having been published in 2005, Zorro has not yet received any notable critical acclaim, in so far as my investigation shows. I therefore estimate my thesis to be among the first, if not *the* first, critical study of this novel.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Before proceeding with the main discussion, it is necessary to highlight some of the limitations the present study faces from the perspective of theory and application. As the title suggests, the present study is a postcolonial study, and the following are some points of theoretical limitation. In the first instance, I focus more on postcolonial ideas with the centrality of Edward Said's domestication of the exotic, and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity and its related issues. In the second instance, I bring to the fore the idea of transculturation proposed by Latin American postcolonial theorists, Fernando Ortiz and Angel Rama. I select a Latin American theorist because the literary corpus of the present study is written by a Latin American writer. The combination of the two sets of theories, Bhabha's hybridity in general and Ortiz's transculturation in particular, provides an apt theoretical framework for dealing with Isabel Allende's fictional world and the cultural issues which her literary texts explore.

Later, I am going to apply this theoretical framework to Allende's three selected works of fiction, namely The House of the Spirits (1982), Daughter of Fortune (1999), and Zorro (2005). I have not selected the three mentioned novels at random: rather, the selection is based according to a planned scheme. What is important here is the development of Allende's writing skills and her literary maturation. The three selected novels represent, therefore, the whole spectrum of her writing career, as The House of the Spirits, Allende's first novel, shows the author at the beginning of her literary career, Daughter of Fortune reveals her at the middle of her career, and Zorro, one of her most recent accomplishments, presents the reader with a more or less up-to-date sample of her writing.

1.6. **Definition of Key Terms**

Domestication of the exotic: this is a "mental operation", believed by Said to be undertaken by Western Orientalists in approaching the Orient. Various modes of confrontation between the West and the Orient, such as "the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation", all provide "lenses through which the Orient is experienced" (1978, p. 58). In encountering new or previously unexperienced phenomena, however, man's mind regards them as menacing categories, thus, s/he adopts conservative and defensive strategies towards them. To avoid this, man tries to observe new phenomena, not as unprecedentedly novel, but rather as a version of something he has already known. For Said, such a mental mechanism is a way to reduce and control "what seems to be a threat to some established view of things", to impose familiar values, and ultimately to reduce the mental pressure through accepting things as

either “original” or “repetitious” (1978, p. 59). The new unknown things are, therefore, introduced as mere imitations of the known original ones. Therefore, the non-European parts of the world have been recreated and represented as “domestic subjects of Euroimperialism” by Europeans (Pratt, 1992, p. 4).

Hybridity: Hybridity, as a postcolonial term, denotes the state of blending and amalgamation of two cultures. When two cultures meet, the newly created culture affects and changes each of the commingled cultures. As such, it is located in a liminal, in-between site, called the third space of enunciation (Bressler, 2010).

Transculturation: This is a term coined by Fernando Ortiz and later introduced into the literary realm by Angel Rama. Transculturation becomes truly essential to the understanding of an American continental specificity. It is through transculturation that a cultural hybridity which is made out of constructions, negotiations, and re-appropriations of identity as well as of new cultural synthesis, becomes a central element in the developing imaginary of the Americas. In this context, identity is therefore an aspect of a plurality which is typical of the continental cultural uniqueness.

Magical realism: It is a literary mode rather than a distinguishable genre. Actually, magical realism aims to seize the paradox of the union of opposites. For instance, it challenges dichotomous categories such as life and death and the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present. The main characteristic of magical realism is two conflicting perspectives, one based on a rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality.

Mestizo or the mestizaje identity: In the context of Latin America, mestizo denotes a person of mixed race, especially one who has Spanish and American-Indian parentage. Mestizaje refers to the racial and/or cultural mixing of Amerindians with Europeans.

1.7. Plan and Organization of the Study

The present study consists of seven chapters. Following the introductory chapter, I provide a review of the related literature, or the scholarly works conducted on Allende from different critical perspectives. In Chapter Three, I provide the reader with the brief socio-political and historical contexts within which Allende's selected texts have been formed. Chapter Four includes the theoretical framework and methodology of the study. Chapters Five and Six form the analytical part of the study, in which I undertake a reading of Allende's novels. It is worth mentioning that Chapter Five is totally devoted to analysis of The House of the Spirits, while Chapter Six pays critical attention to Daughter of Fortune and Zorro. Finally, in Chapter Seven I seek to conclude the whole discussion presented in the body of the present study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Up to the fifteenth century and before the arrival of the Spanish, the bulk of Chile's population were indigenous Araucanians, and the country was ruled by the Incas. In the following century, however, a group of Spanish Conquistadors invaded the country in search of gold and silver. Contrary to their expectation, the land was absent of extensive gold resources, yet its great potential for agriculture persuaded the Europeans to continue their occupation of the land, and in due course changed Chile into part of the Viceroyalty of Peru, a Spanish colonial administrative district containing most of Spanish-ruled South America, governed from the capital of Lima. Chile's declaration of independence from Spanish rule dates back to the first decades of the nineteenth century. The devolvement of Spanish direct political and military control over the indigenous people of Chile, however, did not mark not the end of colonization. Rather, it ended up in an indirect form of colonial power - imperialism (Bodmer, 1992).

This recent point is a matter of great controversy for most Chilean writers, including Isabel Allende. Her novels are imbued with deep postcolonial themes, concepts, and feelings. The issues and crises of identity have truly turned out to be her favourite themes. Although Allende's works have been well received by the critics, I should point to the fact that certain thematic structures of her novels make the readers interpret the aforementioned issues and crises mostly within the framework of feminism, thus reducing complex novels to the simple struggle of an oppressed woman in a

patriarchal familial and social world (Castellucci Cox, 2003). Throughout my investigation of Allende's fiction I have come across many critics of Allende with feminist and gender-related critical stances. A great host of others focus on Allende's political and historical themes. They foreground the socio-political conditions of the country as portrayed by Allende, and propose how such conditions exert an influence on her artistic inclinations.

There exists another group of critics who concentrate more on Isabel Allende's writing mode of magical realism. Their studies can often be categorized as gender studies or historical approaches to the novels. However, the crux of the present study is the use of magical realism, and the subjects which are treated within or by this genre.

Last but not least, are those critics whose studies are more closely related to mine, which identify postcolonial concepts and themes within the body of Allende's work. In their examination of Allende's fiction, these critics analyze a wide spectrum of thematic as well as stylistic structures that carry both direct and indirect references to the issues of post-colonialism, and by so doing introduce Allende to the global circle of criticism as a controversial postcolonial writer. Allende's recurrent thematic structures of home, ghost, and exile, viewed alongside such stylistic devices as magical realism, are considered by these critics as undeniable signs of postcolonial inclination which are worthy of critical attention.

2.2 Critical Inquiries into Allende's Novels

As previously mentioned, the bulk of critical work on Allende falls into different categories. In the following sections, I mention each of those critics and their respective critical inquiries in detail. It is important that I have placed them in to two main groups: the first consists of those critics who have examined Allende's fiction from postcolonial perspectives, and the second discusses those whose criticism is inclined to non-postcolonial approaches. Therefore, there are two subcategories under this heading and each subcategory in turn is ordered chronologically for clearer categorization, hence ease of comprehension.

2.2.1 Isabel Allende and Post-colonialism

In dealing with Latin American women writers such as Isabel Allende, and the impact of military dictatorship in their fiction, Jaime Pablo Gomez (1993) identifies a new literary model and defines it as "the novel of the dictatorship". For him, the canonical "novel of the dictator" differs completely from the novel of the dictatorship. Their points of differentiation fall in to the following categories, as Gomez defines them. First of all the novel of the dictator is constructed around the central figure of the tyrant, while in the novel of the dictatorship the female narrator and her concept of life is deemed the most significant. By tracing the historical and socio-economic roots of people's oppression, the novel of the dictatorship does not aim at representing the political vision of the dictatorship: instead it aims at recreating the experiences and lives of those who live under tyranny. This is actually the second point of differentiation

between the two writing models. The last, equally important point is that in the novel of the dictatorship written by a woman writer, the focal points are the physical and psychological impact of the dictatorship on those individuals whose gender, class, and ideology have marginalized them and made them the victims of persecution and repression. Isabel Allende, among her fellow Latin American women writers, experiments with the canonical forms to make them apt mediums for expressing marginalized voices, particularly those of women.

The Burden of the Past: Visions and Revisions of History in Latin America and the United States South (1996), written by Deborah Nahamah Cohn, is a critical survey examining how Isabel Allende and certain other literary writers from the Southern United States and Latin America deconstruct the dominant version of history. Focusing on Allende's The House of the Spirits, Cohn examines the writer's attempt to bring to the world's attention the hitherto silenced voice of marginalized people such as women, and make them speak out. Giving a voice to these muted characters provides an apt opportunity for narrating the historical events from the viewpoint of a marginalized group, and by creating a counterpoint to the peripheral stand.

In Isabel Allende: A Critical Companion (2003), Karen Castellucci Cox goes beyond the mere biographical accounts of Allende's life and career and provides the reader with astute critical analysis. In Cox's opinion, the magic and mysticism of Latin American writers prior to Allende, and her own journalistic style of writing, have had a drastic influence on her portrayal of the harshly real socio-political contexts of Chile which serve as the background to her novels. For Cox, Allende's distinctive writing

style correlates politically and socially brutal incidents such as terrorism, coup d'état, torture, and bloodshed, with the patriarchal male-based cultural web dominating the country, within which the voices of the marginal groups such as women, immigrants, and indigenous natives are suppressed. As a result, Allende takes on the responsibility to focus on the margins of those central events in order to let the marginalized speak and give them the opportunity to tell their own stories. Her style is unique because she attempts to view history and historical events from quite a new perspective: history in Allende's fiction is narrated not by those in its centre, but rather by those on the periphery. In this regard, Allende herself asserts that “when we read a history we read the dates, the battles, the generals, the political events, but this is not the narrative of what really happens to people, especially to women and children, as it is always about men” (Cox, 2003: 26). Similar to Cox, some other writers such as, Lynn Patin Colwell in Isabel Allende: A Voice Across the Silences (1990) and Anne Elizabeth Myer in Isabel Allende: Writing the Voices of the Unheard in the House of the Spirits (1995), focus their critical attention on the same thematic issues just mentioned.

While Gomez seeks to explore how the canonical tools have been turned into a means of self-expression for marginalized female characters, Cohn analyzes the process of deconstructing history by female characters, and Cox attempts to provide a new version of history that is narrated by those on the periphery, I aim to broaden the spectrum and investigate if such canonical media have the potentiality to serve as a counter-discourse by the colonized people, regardless of gender. Also, I focus on how history has been re-written, though not specifically from the points of view of women,

but more broadly from the point of view of the once-colonized nation still oppressed by both the apparent and hidden colonial forces.

Post-colonialist and feminist, as well as historical and biographical approaches, inform the study accomplished by Dolores Gail Tayko (1994). Through these conceptual standpoints, Tayko scrutinizes the theme of exile and how postcolonial studies creates a space for the exiled authors whose political views or actions are considered undesirable to their home governments. In her study of Doris Lessing's and Isabel Allende's works, exile becomes a variation of the geographic resettlement as well as the cultural, linguistic, and psychological displacement of indigenes under colonization. For Tayko, Allende's The House of the Spirits and Eva Luna are "narratives of exile" recalling Allende's self-imposed exile from Chile after the 1973 Chilean Coup. In light of the above-mentioned theories, she considers that the very act of writing plays an important role in these authors' exilic experiences. She argues that writing exile brings about critical self-consciousness, or in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words, a "decolonizing of the mind" (1997). Through the protagonists' critique of the cultural and political forces that colonize people and their imaginations, the process of decolonization takes place. Allende and Lessing, in Tayko's opinion, undertake to define their own gender identities through their protagonist-writers' personal narratives. The very process of writing provides them with a new home where they define their gender identity and, consequently, criticize the political and social conditions that created their respective exilic identities. For these authors, writing has actually become a site where they inscribe their difference as exiles, and challenge the ways of thinking that restrict the imagination.

As the theme of decolonization of the mind is significant in Tayko's study, the related theme of transculturation is my focal point. Furthermore, in her analysis, Tayko has identified Allende with her fictional characters and tries to show how her real exilic life gives her an apt medium for self-expression, whilst I conversely try to detach my study from Allende's real life condition and focus instead on an allegoric reading of her selected novels.

The reconfiguration of the body through the practices of witchcraft in order to undo the authority of imperial ideology, is the substantial assumption in research conducted by Lara Cassandra Merlin (1998). In her view, the Western body is organized by the fantasy of lack that attempts to defend the subject against the threat of loss: it is for this reason that the Western body withholds itself from any relation with the inappropriate other. Besides this, the concept of lack and scarcity provides a socio-political structure for the postcolonial era. This structure comprises multinational capitalism, the culture of consumption, and hierarchical power structures. The strategy of postcolonial women writers, including Isabel Allende, in opposing such social, political, and cultural conditions, is to highlight and reinforce the power of magic through their writing. They employ magic because they want to alter the natural qualities of the Western response to alterity. Through their reimagining of the body, a space will be erected to enable human relations to be conceptualised differently. Indeed, the West has dismembered the body, yet through the use of magic the above writers try to re-member the dismembered body. In Merlin's opinion, the West's dismembering of the body is the natural result of the ideology of castration through which the concept of lack becomes the Western model of subjectivity. The postcolonial women writers she

refers to in her study include Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, and a host of others.

Although Merlin enters the realm of magic and magicality in order to approach and investigate postcolonial issues, she is more concerned with the idea of witchcraft for undermining the western hegemonic ideology. My concern in the present study is somehow related to the idea of magicality, but I seek to approach it from within Allende's writing structure and how she commingles realism and magic for constructing an apt medium for the postcolonial writer's and her characters' self-expression - i.e. magical realism.

The main subject of Pilar Alvarez' comparative study (2000) revolves around the notion of the house as a metaphor for national identity and history. It is actually an archetype used most often in Chilean literature since the nineteenth century. By looking at the literary works of four Chilean writers, Isabel Allende, Jose Donoso, Diamela Eltit, and Antonio Skarmeta, she examines how these writers deconstruct the monolithic concept of nationalism by radically questioning the imagination of the house. The allegorical reading of historical events in their works negates the authenticity of the archetypal house, thereby delegitimizing the patriarchal paradigm underlying its structure and opening up spaces for the voices of the marginalized to be heard. Alvarez's choice of Allende's The House of the Spirits and Daughter of Fortune and the way she analyses them, reveals Allende's talent for breaking the generic and territorial stereotypes crystallized in the notion of the house, and placing women at the pinnacle of history.

In her study, Alvarez's treatment of history is allegoric, but what differentiates her study from mine is the fact that she tries to deconstruct the patriarchal structure of a society and give rise to the feminine voice. My aim is to delegitimize the colonial paradigm ruling the narration of history, and substitute it with a transcultural point of view in which all voices from the opposing spectrum get a chance to narrate the history.

Mary Swift Metherd makes a substantial distinction between contemporary comparative scholarship in the Americas, i.e. the United States and Latin America, and her own study (2000). She accuses previous scholarly works of a discriminative view of US and Latin American authors and texts. For her, those scholars consider the US and Latin American culture as mutually separate cultures. The scope of such studies is limited to inter-American authors of both the US and Latin America, such as William Faulkner, Walt Whitman, Octavio Paz, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who write about national culture and address a single audience. Despite the great critical acclaim they receive, they still stick to their national concerns and view their American counterpart as the other.

Metherd's work, on the other hand, deals with intra-American authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Cristina Garcia, Cormac McCarthy, Carlos Fuentes, and Isabel Allende, whose views of the world and society as reflected in their narratives place them on a transnational field of inter-American relations, and consequently challenges the institutional borders of closed cultures. These novels which address dual audiences in two languages are part of a relatively new phenomenon in American culture and society: the shift of power relations through transnational communication. In this

regard, Metherd argues that writers such as Allende provide appropriate answers to this trans-social demand, as they intertwine linguistic and cultural codes and make use of multiple media to speak, reconcile, and unite the US and Latin American audiences, and bring them under the banner of a singular readership rather than placing them in the dichotomy of us and them, self and other.

In her endeavour to apply North American and European theories to the contemporary Latin American literature of female authorship, Martha Lorena Rubi (2002) undertakes a comprehensive review of literary contributions conducted by Hispanic women. Rubi's argument is based on the hypothesis that the new outlook presented in contemporary Latin American literary as well as critical works, has contributed to new arenas of literary criticism and theory. Rubi claims that women-critics of these societies adopted the theoretical ideas of the First World for their own experimental aims, in this way try to improve their own national strategies with regard to women's literary discourse.

She argues that various societies approach feminist thinking from quite different angles that depend on the society's cultural background. In Latin American societies, for instance, feminism is considered mostly as a political option. Viewing feminism from a political perspective in such societies, therefore, necessitates the growth of Latin American feminist literary theories, which in turn are derived from those Latin American literary works that represent a different image of women. The formation of such literary and, consequently, critical works paves the way for a reconsideration of class and sexuality in such societies, and women's willingness for change. Women's

literary theme of willingness is therefore a study Rubi undertakes by selecting Latin American writers, including Allende. Rubi examines the concept of willingness from the respective standpoints of becoming, the public sphere, and gender and nation. She shows the differences between Spanish American women, and the new discourses developed from the literature these women have produced. For Rubi, the lived experiences of these women writers provide valuable material for literary analysis, and, at the same time, the action promoted by their works stimulates women's social consciousness and marks a step forward in improving women's cultural condition in less advanced societies.

Rubi, like other scholars, sidesteps the realm of post-colonialism and adopts a feminist approach. She proposes the idea that in order to truly evaluate and appreciate the literary works of Latin American women writers, the critic must develop a new version of feminist theory that is applicable to their own social context, and not just cling to First World theoretical ideas. My study accords with Rubi on this point, but as her's is gender-oriented and proposes a national model for theoretical strategy, mine is more transcultural and aims to bring various voices together regardless of gender, nationality, or political status.

Shelli Rottschafer (2005) considers the artistic forms of the Southern Cone during the 1970-80s as tools of resistance in the hands of the artists, for opposing the dictatorial, repressive regimes of the region. Although the people who lived in these countries were forced to live in complete ascent with repressive systems of governance, and to adjust their ways of conduct to the ruling principles, resistance has always

existed. Rottschafer claims that resistance can originate from a variety of unexpected sources, the most significant of which is rooted in the artistic structure, because the creative power of art is a form of subversion. In this regard, she analyses The House of the Spirits, in which Isabel Allende narrates the story, both from within and outside, of a family who live under the repressive pressure of an authoritarian system. She depicts women characters who are doubly-repressed victims, trapped in a familial and social prison, taking refuge in a variety of artistic forms in order to resist the authoritarian forces, gain control over their lives, and ultimately define their own identity. Through such artistic accomplishments, female characters inform women of their rights and dispense a political message of denouncement.

Karen Wooley Martin's study (2006) is a spatial reading of Allende's trilogy The House of the Spirits, Daughter of Fortune, and Portrait in Sepia, aimed at identifying the reasons why Isabel Allende is simultaneously perceived as conventional and revolutionary. Through the use of spatial reading, Martin explores the idea that Allende's traditional themes gain their vigour from a destabilization of the centre. Martin explores how the places in her novels subvert the patriarchal principles that have governed politics, sexuality, and ethnicity. Martin's theoretical approach is threefold, constructed around a Foucauldian premise that the history of space is essentially the history of power, Susan Stanford Freidman's cultural geographies of encounter, and Gloria Anzaldua's study of borderlands. She proposes that Allende's stories re-write the centre to give priority to the periphery.