A Feminist Reading of

*The House of the Spirits,*

*Song of Solomon,*

and

*One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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Introduction

The main purpose for choosing this subject is a true interest in feminism in literature as well as magic realism on my behalf. The volumes and authors dealt with as primary sources are: Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits* (1986), Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* (1987), and Gabriel García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1972). The main reason for choosing these volumes is due to earlier studies of world literature, which has formed an interest in out-of-the-ordinary, strong females in fiction.

A feminist approach will be used when analysing how women are portrayed in these books and a comparison of the women as far as it is possible will be sought for. A number of secondary sources have been used, for example: Peter Barry’s *Beginning theory: an introduction to literary and cultural theory* and Anny Brooksbank Jones and Catherine Davies *Latin American Women’s Writing: Feminist Readings in Theory and Crisis*. Some of the women in these novels are decisive and add an interesting twist to their families. An investigation on how feminist ideals are part of the books compared will also be taken into consideration. Generations and families is something which combines the novels and will be looked at. In these similarities there are also trails of differences which will be taken into consideration in this essay. The issue of genealogy, and naming family members as well as remembrance is important in all three volumes. There is also a strong influence of how women were looked upon during the early 1900s in North and South America. Two of the authors of the chosen primary sources have received the Nobel Price in Literature; Gabriel García Márquez, in 1982, and Toni Morrison, in 1993. The third one, Isabel Allende, received the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize in 1998. My method is a close reading of the three books in which I will compare the female characters. My thesis statement is as follows: a comparison of portrayals of women in three magic realism volumes viewed from a feminist approach.

Theoretical background on feminism

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 these volumes, 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. Several women in these novels 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.

Feminism is a political attitude and movement that calls for the status, rights and desires of women to be taken into consideration in all aspects of life. It came to prominence at the end of the eighteenth century, again in the mid-nineteenth century and gained in popularity and force towards the end of the twentieth century. In literary criticism, feminism is an approach to reading and criticism that focuses on the experiences of women in fiction, attitudes towards women in fiction, the status of women’s writing and differing approaches, methods and language use adopted by women writers in comparison to those of men. (Bowers 130)

Maggie Ann Bowers makes a point here by referring to the past as well as the present. What the future brings is yet to be experienced. Furthermore, Barry states that in the 1980s, feminist criticism became diverse and turned its focus on the study of female experiences contrasting the former male focus (Barry 117). This is dealt with in the volumes in this text and will be focused on henceforth. The intention is to use a feminist approach and compare these three novels; there will also be comments on the feeling of being different.

Moreover, Barry points out that the Anglo-American feminists have an interest in traditional concepts like theme, motif and characters. They treat literature as representation of women’s lives and experiences; therefore close reading is essential to them. This kind of feminist criticism puts emphasis on the use of diaries and memoirs, as well as social history, when analysing the texts. Examples of Anglo-American feminist critics are: Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Patricia Stubbs (Barry 119). The “second wave” Anglo-American Feminism was manifested by theories borrowing from philosophy, politics and psychoanalysis, that aimed to challenge patriarchal values and constructs that oppressed women. In this second period, Anglo-American feminist criticism is dedicated to the analysis of female characters in fiction, and it is stated that gender identity is socially constructed and can be challenged and transformed. The Anglo-American feminist concept is the point of view that will be used in this essay in order to analyse the women in these three novels.

Yet, Wendy B. Faris argues that magic realism is in no way a feminist genre. However, several authors, for example Allende, Morrison, and García Márquez have used magic realism in their novels. There seems to be a certain focus on the experiences, and problems of women
in these novels, nevertheless, there is no single definable feminist ideology that unites them (Faris 172).

All in all the feminist criticism that is primal in this essay is examining representations of women in literature written by both men and women. They also examine power relations in texts, in order to break them down (Barry 128).

Theoretical background on magic realism

According to Bowers, magic realism can be defined as “…a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy, expressed in many postcolonial and non-Western works of contemporary fiction…” (Bowers unpaged). Furthermore, in magic realism, “magic” seems to refer to the mystery of life. It is also suggested by Suárez-Murias in Faris that what is central to magic realism is “the validity of interior worlds of faith which blossom in everyday realities and coexist with other available realities” (Zamora 296). Faris states that although the narrative mode of magic realism belongs to both men and women, a female spirit can be found in many novels, regardless of whether the author is male or female. Furthermore she suggests that “magical realism has affinities with and exemplifies certain aspects of the experience of women that have been delineated by certain strains of feminist thought” (Faris 170-171). The representative way of speaking amongst women can be related to the maternal and the spiritual, rather than to the paternal and the rational society. These novels are in no way science fiction volumes primarily dealing with the unreal or aliens; they are simply novels dealing with everyday life in everyday families, yet with a spark of spiritualism and supernaturalism. This juxtaposition of contradictory worlds is central to the feminism in magic realism.

*The House of the Spirits* and feminism

Allende’s *The House of the Spirits* follows the stories of three generations of women and their loved ones. There is a presence of strong women in this novel where Clara, Blanca and Alba are the three protagonists. 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 9 years after the death of her sister Rosa (Allende 54). This can be seen as an evidence of involuntary female sacrifice for the benefit of a man.
There are detailed descriptions of women giving birth as well as women exposed to physical and sexual violence. Blanca becomes pregnant with Pedro Tercero’s child and is forced by her father to marry count Jean de Satigny. They move up North and settle in an old house which the count fills with a wide range of furniture and servants (Allende 287). Blanca gives birth to a girl who enters the world feet first, which is considered fortunate (Allende 301). “… Nívea … was considered the first feminist in the country. Her enemies said of her that if she had lost her head during her lifetime there was no reason why she should find it in death” (Allende 146). Nívea, Clara’s mother, was decapitated in a car accident and her head was never officially found. However, Clara found it and stored it secretly in her basement. Apart from Nívea’s obligation to female suffrage, these women rarely denounce gender inequality. Nonetheless are they marked by it. The women’s restrained methods of teaching literacy and fundamental healthcare, setting courses in pottery and refusing to speak are far more effective in challenging an enduring change.

Bowers refers to Patricia Hart and states that the clairvoyant skills, as well as telepathy, in *The House of the Spirits* are only associated with the female characters of the story. Hart identifies it as feminist criticism of patriarchal control over the life of the women in the novel and calls it “magical feminism” (Bowers 73). Furthermore, Bowers claims that Allende uses magic realism in her novel in order to allow the possibility of numerous truths existing simultaneously (Bowers 71). As stated in Faris, the females in the novel challenge patriarchal despotism and social-sexual prejudices amongst other things. In contrast to Morrison, where myths and historical references do exist side by side throughout the novel, the magic in Allende’s world is swept away by the political disaster she describes (Forman in Zamora 294-295). As stated in Faris, Allende tends to use the matriarch and grandmother, Clara, but also her granddaughter Alba, as a feminist nouveau; hence, by doing that, Allende embodies the emergence of a feminist text containing numerous voices, which conveys hope of an adapted community (Faris 173).

In the essay “The Wandering Text Situating the Narratives of Isabel Allende” by Susan Frenk, it is stated that Allende’s narrative authorises female readers and enables them to respond through various forms of resistance and rebellion (Brooksbank unpaged). Moreover, Frenk mentions that the power of motherhood in *The House of the Spirits* provides a manner of empowerment of women’s bodies and psyches which the men can not control (Brooksbank 68). Still she states that “… the question of the integrity of the body extends from the bodies of the disappeared…It links domestic violence and state violence through the deconstruction of relations of gender and sexuality” (Brooksbank 69). In *The House of the Spirits*, bodily
integrity and discursive power is investigated through contrasting female and male narrative voices (Brooksbank 72). Faris points out that it is likely that the female tone of the characters in magic realism novels are healing, whilst the male tone tends to be visionary (Faris 187). According to Elaine Showalter in Faris, the female voice is double since it determines the dominant approach as well as the muted, here referring to the male and the female voice (Faris 173). One scene that Frenk declares as significant in Allende’s novel is the autopsy and rape of Rosa, which eventually leads to the symbolic silence of Clara (Brooksbank 80).

In *The House of the Spirits* the house is a place of feminine struggle against the patriarchal Esteban Trueba. Clara is trying to keep the house open to outside influences with the help from the highly spiritual Mora sisters, who spend their time worrying about person’s destinies and the future, and many more. Clara uses her magic to resist being controlled and mastered by her husband, and her daughter Blanca, as well as her granddaughter Alba, will continue to have a matrilineal existence of magic (Faris 183).

**Genealogy in The House of the Spirits**

There is a focus on genealogy in this novel as well as there is an importance regarding the family name. The naming of family members determines the class position of each person, no matter if it is a man or a woman. “Not a girl passed from puberty to adulthood that he (patrón Esteban Trueba) did not subject to the woods, the riverbank, or the wrought iron bed” (Allende 81). In this novel there are proofs of lineages which are crossed repeatedly, nevertheless, the importance seems to be lying in the family name each of the characters carry. Whenever a child is born, the question of last name is raised. Sometimes there is a revolt when a female child wishes to carry another name than that of her fathers’. Ultimately, the promiscuous living of the patriarch, patrón Esteban Trueba, repels upon him and one of his bastard sons ruins the Trueba family. “Dying is like being born: just a change, Clara had said” (Allende 332). Generally speaking, the family is essential in this Latin American novel.

As mentioned earlier, there is a certain focus on writing diaries and memoirs, as well as on social history in the novels chosen in this essay. Clara’s diaries are essential in order to tell the story of the Trueba women. The writing by Clara and Alba indicates how their own family and the families of their loved ones are linked together, piece by piece in a large and intricate family tree with many branches. Allende uses the composition of her novel to put emphasis on the importance of writing. The main narrator of Allende’s novel is Alba, who reads and interprets her Grandmother Clara’s diaries. The diaries reflect a Latin American society during approximately 60 years. In the end of the novel Alba declares that: “…memory is
fragile and the space of a single life so brief, passing so quickly that we never get a chance to see the relationship between events; we cannot gauge the consequences of our acts, and we believe in the fiction of past, present, and future, but it may also be true that everything happens simultaneously…” (Allende 490) The writing in this novel bears witness to how life is lived and functions as a redeemer to those writing. Towards the end of the novel Alba is imprisoned and tortured by her bastard brother and her only way to remain sane is to note down very thing she experiences, both literally and in her mind when neither pen nor paper is available. Alba’s writing is what makes the outlines of the entire novel. “With the passage of time, Alba filled not only one but all her bedroom walls with an immense fresco. In the midst of a Venusian flora and an impossible fauna of invented animals much like those Rosa had embroidered on her tablecloth and Blanca baked in her kiln, she painted all the wishes, memories, sorrows and joys of her childhood”. (Allende 310) Similarities between The House of the Spirits and One Hundred Years of Solitude are, amongst others; repetition of names from generation to generation and the structure around a certain family. Another similarity is that the narrator of both novels creates the narrative from reclaimed books.

**Song of Solomon** and feminism

Ruth Foster Dead gives birth to Milkman Dead, the first black child born in Mercy Hospital. He grows up encouraged by the love of his mother and his aunt, Pilate. His sisters, First Corinthians and Magdalene (called Lena), take care of him during his early days. Eventually, he is adored by his mistress and cousin, Hagar. Milkman does not return their kind-heartedness and grows up cynical, nonetheless privileged. Milkman resembles his father, Macon Dead II, a merciless landlord who pursues only his own increase of wealth.

In Morrison’s novel there are traces of a traditionally male strength that is incorporated in the female voice of for example Pilate (Faris 200). According to Christian, Pilate, the healer of the spirit, represents the tradition that identifies with nature. Her “inheritance” is the bag containing her father’s bones, which by others is considered to enclose gold. Furthermore, the woman is born without a navel; nevertheless she embodies the tradition of her entire family (Christian 55). Bowers refer to Morrison’s authorship when it comes to magic realism as being “… influenced by African American oral culture and mythology adapted from West African culture” (Bowers 58). Furthermore, Bowers states that Morrison uses elements in Song of Solomon that includes women with magical powers born without navels, as well as men that can fly, which gives her novel a touch of African culture (Bowers 58). In Morrison’s
novel there is a significance of oral tradition to the text and her novel presents worlds that are similar to her ancestral Africa. Marva Jannett Furman states that Morrison has a way of portraying the women, compared to the men, in her novel as having an insignificant desire to control their environment (Furman 35). Additionally, Barbara Christian argues that *Song of Solomon* is not merely about Milkman, a lot of focus is put upon the spectacular aunt of his; Pilate. Morrison has a way of building up tension in her novel, creating a central conflict regarding the relationship between the accepted and the accepting (Christian 48).

By the mid-seventies, Afro-American women fiction writers, like …Toni Morrison…, had not only defined their cultural context as a distinctly Afro-American one, but they had also probed many facets of the interrelationship of sexism and racism in their society. Not only had they demonstrated the fact that sexism existed in black communities, but they had also challenged the prevailing definition of woman in American society, especially in relation to motherhood and sexuality. (Christian 180)

Christian argues that the wife and the daughter of Macon Dead endure choked lives. These women are condemned to a life of womanhood stripped of passion. Initially Ruth leads a narrow and passionate life close to her father, who gave her life and then she nurses her son until he is old enough to be in kindergarten. The reason for this prolonged nursing can be connected to an urge for physical contact that she lacks from her husband. Moreover, Christian argues that Ruth is symbolic of the terror that awaits women who symbolise the wealth of their men (Christian 56).

Foreman states that: “Women’s power, even when obscured by the prepubescent gender neutrality of a child, is tolerated by men if it does not impinge on the masculinist [sic!] world of public affairs” (Forman in Zamora 292).

**Genealogy in *Song of Solomon***

All through the novel women are abandoned by men trying desperately to fend for themselves. Furman declares that “… Morrison’s work is not predictable … her characters seldom reinforce the reader’s expectations”. “Neither Pilate nor Reba knew that Hagar was not like them. Not strong enough, as Pilate, nor simple enough, like Reba”. What she was in great need of was for someone “… to give her the strength life demanded of her – and the humor[sic!] with which to live it” (Morrison 307). Morrison has a way of revealing the unspeakable acts ordinary people are capable of committing, for example when Milkman
leaves his cousin Hagar after having had an almost twenty-year-long relationship with her, which ends up in her dying by grief (Furman 5). Hagar tries to kill Milkman after that incident, but is incapable of fulfilling it and she ends up paralysed (Morrison 115-116). Hagar is trying to get back to Milkman, yet it makes you wonder if she really wanted to kill him or if it merely was a cry for help.

Solomon, an ancestor of Milkman’s, abandons his wife Ryna and is considered a hero for escaping slavery, while Ryna’s suffering is regarded as irrational. Even though she is left behind with twenty-one children, the town gives emphasis to Solomon’s triumph over her misery. The residents of Shalimar have named a frightening gulch after Ryna, while they have given Solomon’s name to a picturesque mountain. The hardships of these women are stressed in order to illustrate the double standard society places upon its women. In the novel, women’s abandonment shows that men are responsible only for themselves, while women are responsible for themselves, their families, as well as their communities.

Pilate is a heroic character in Song of Solomon, she is in fact the spiritual guide of her nephew Milkman and she protects him from his fathers rage. When the character is introduced in the novel it is in a not so flattering manner: “Pilate did not stink, nor was she filthy, she was simply ragged” (Morrison 38). This odd woman has a way of being straight forward whenever she talks. In Milkman’s eyes she represents a woman who has neither property nor social position, yet she “is taller and wiser than his father” (Furman 45). Pilate provides Milkman with stories from her and her brother Macon’s childhood. Pilate is the one transmitting her wisdom to others and who is initiating her relatives, as well as the readers of the novel, into the African-American culture. She embodies the spiritual transcendence of the novel. This woman is born without a navel, which can be interpreted as a lack of being born of a human being (Furman 45-46). Pilate is more or less accepted by her community; however, she is looked upon as an odd yet powerful woman.

Lena and First Corinthians are spinsters and they wonder what man would take a wife smarter than him (Morrison 165-166). This shows how deeply rooted the traditionally male way of looking at education is. However, they undergo a transformation and are altered into two rather complex characters. Although Lena may be mistaken about the nature of Milkman’s changed character, her criticism is justified and represents the revolt of the repressed female characters in the novel. She speaks not only for herself, but for her mother, sister and each and every one of the mistreated, subjugated and discarded women in the novel. The novel has a way of putting the strong women on pedestals. Ruth and Hagar are from different social groups, yet each woman harbour a deep and true love for Milkman that
suppresses her personal growth. Both women are not only powerless and completely
dependent upon their men, they are practical as well. Pilate is quite the opposite of the weak
Hagar and Ruth. In the novel Morrison raises Pilate to the status of a worthy female role
model. Her love does not need to be defined by a man and her mere appearance emits
strength. Nevertheless, Morrison reminds us that women who are self-assured and
independent are actually feared, shunned and treated as though they are evil. Unfortunately, in
the end Pilate must pay the price of alienation to achieve her freedom.

\textit{One Hundred Years of Solitude} and feminism

Bowers argue that García Márquez writes about the fictive village of Macondo in order to put
emphasis on the richness of the Latin American rural cultural and mythical life (Bowers 102).
In Bowers’ García Márquez states that magic realism is a way of expressing his cultural
background as well as his grandmothers’ oral storytelling. He explains that this variety of
narrative is the myths beliefs and legends of the common people (Bowers 40).

More than a century goes by in the plot of the book and most of the events described are
major turning points in the lives of the Buendías of Macondo village: births, deaths and
marriages. Several of the Buendía men are sexually voracious and have a habit of going to the
local brothels every now and then. Yet, others are seeking solitary rooms to read old
manuscripts or carry out research. The women range from the sociable Meme, who once
brings home seventy-two girls from boarding school, to the reserved Fernanda, who on her
wedding night wears a nightgown with a hole at the crotch, which bear a resemblance to a
chastity belt. The matriarch, Úrsula Iguarán, wonders away from Macondo, trying to find her
son José Arcadio. When she returns she brings new settlers and the knowledge of the passage
through the marsh (García Márquez 33-35). Úrsula works devotedly to keep the family
together despite its disparities. She is the first to notice that time in Macondo is not fixed.
Likewise, the presence of the ghosts of Melquíades and José Arcadio Buendía illustrates that
the past, in which those men lived, has become one with the present. When José Arcadio
Buendía dies, little yellow flowers fall from the sky, covering the streets of Macondo (García
Márquez 126).

In the last part of the book, the very last of the Buendía’s translate a set of ancient
prophecies and finds that all that ever happened in Macondo has been predicted. Úrsula tends
for José Arcadio Buendía in the same way as Mary Magdalene tended for Jesus Christ. They
both took care of their loved ones during their last troubled hours (García Márquez 37). This
shows some of the compassion that is protruded from the women of this novel. During the end Úrsula is old and blind and recalls being pregnant and having a fear of bearing a child with a curly pig tail (García Márquez 217). Eventually, Amaranta Úrsula gives birth to her and Aureliano’s son and the child has a curly pig tail. Within the same day Amaranta dies and the newborn child is eaten by red ants (García Márquez 356). This tragic end to the story is predicted in the old manuscripts found in one of the rooms of the Buendía estate.

The subject of free love and having various lovers is present throughout the novel. The women who have unconventional relationships tend to be better off and more compassionate than the women who cling to society’s standard of manners. When Petra Cotes is coupling with Aureliano Segundo, the reproduction of his animals’ increases and it can be interpreted as a signal that free love can be vigorous for society in the long run.

**Genealogy in One Hundred Years of Solitude**

García Márquez seeks merely to reflect the reality of the role of women in Latin America. He presents Úrsula’s capacity for work as being the same as that of her husband. She is the true matriarch seeking to ensure the prolongation of the family line to the extent where she fights against the laws of creation. Úrsula Buendía creates authority for herself as the family matriarch. The frustration of this woman can be understood in terms of the loss of voice or dialogue that she experiences during the last chapters. “In the marginalization of the female voice, and especially that of Ursula [sic!], the author makes a profound statement concerning the importance of women, and their role in the family. Clearly, it is not the woman’s duty to speak out, or express her own feelings, opinions or desires. The woman’s role is to be subordinate and accommodating”. (Montague unpaged) Úrsula manages her responsibilities and confronts the problems that she is faced with, as a result of her status within the society and family. She symbolises the role of woman as a maternal stature. She considers it to be her duty to act as the one in control in her family and Úrsula is under the impression that the obligation of a fine spouse is to cook, to clean up the house, and to endure the life of a women silently and softly. Another of Úrsula’s concerns is maintaining the dignity connected to her family name within Macondo. This woman puts forth the most power in her family and in the village, furthermore, her family’s position in Macondo granted Úrsula significant power.

Although the citizens of Macondo spread rumours regarding the Buendía family, no one would oppose Úrsula or question her deeds. She even has the courage to talk back at her husband when he upsets her: “If you have to go crazy, please go crazy all by yourself!’ she shouted” (García Márquez 5). She had an extraordinary position in her own family and as the
family matriarch she was respected by her descendants. On top of that, she refused to be entirely subordinate to her husband.

The importance of families and names

The importance of names and naming relates to a sense of fitting in and being able to trace the roots of one’s family. When reading Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*, and García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the blood relations are of great importance, as is the importance of naming family members. “It is in the revelation of family histories that the worlds of *The House of the Spirits* and *Song of Solomon* are constituted: worlds full of walking, talking ghosts, women with green hair and no navels, marvellous worlds” (Foreman in Zamora 286). Clara’s clairvoyance as well as Pilate’s magic storytelling is something that the men of these novels are trying to suppress, however, they do not succeed in doing so. When it comes to naming, Pilate in *Song of Solomon* can be considered as a homonym of pilot, the one who actually leads the way, while Clara in Allende’s *The House of the Spirits* can be seen as the one who lights the way. Clara’s daughters are named Blanca, the white, and Alba, the beginning of light, which both can be seen as synonyms of her own name (Foreman in Zamora 291). In *Song of Solomon*, names illustrate the outcome of oppression as well as liberation. The fact that Milkman’s nickname describes him better than the name he was given when baptised, confirms that written names are sometimes unreliable. Due to this fact, the written names are often replaced by nicknames telling a story about its bearers. During Milkman’s journey, Circe supplies him with his family history, so that he can end his search for the family legacy. As in the other novels, the names have meaning in *Song of Solomon*, Pilate keeps her name in a small brass box attached to her ear and she states that: “when you know your name you should hang on to it, for unless it is noted down and remembered, it will die when you do” (Furman 47).

“The primacy of the maternal in Morrison’s fiction is manifested through the numerous “mothers” that populate her texts… Morrison creates triadic structures of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters to illustrate the importance of matrilineal heritage, as well as to reveal the difficulties associated with such bonds”. (Gallant Eckard 34) In, *Song of Solomon* each name describes the characters’ personalities as well as their behaviour. Ruth is breast feeding her son too long, hence the name Milkman. (Morrison 52). Circe in this novel can be compared to Circe in the *Odyssey* by Homer, who is a minor goddess of magic. Pilate is
named after Pontius Pilate who presided over the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Like her namesake, Morrison’s Pilate is a powerful character, but unlike the man from the New Testament, she is utterly free from evil. Hagar is also a biblical name, who bears a direct explanation of her injured and desperate relationship with Milkman, who abandons her. The Hagar of the Bible is at first given to Abraham to become his second wife in order to bear him a son, when that is done she is abandoned by him and thrown out by his first wife, Sarah.

Clara in The House of the Spirits, Pilate in Song of Solomon, and Úrsula in One Hundred Years of Solitude are the true guardians of the families in each novel. Their memories are what bring their families to remembering their heritage. Both Pilate and Clara use their magic to bring the men closer, in order to either get married to them or have their babies. These women also bring strength to their relatives in times of hardship. The names return generation after generation and the repetition of personalities and events is significant in One Hundred Years of Solitude.

According to Foreman, Allende and Morrison use their storytellers differently. What Clara, Alba and Pilate have in common is that they are female narrators recording history. To both authors the past is relevant and useful in order to understand the present as well as the future. Foreman points out that in each of these novels we are acquainted with a history of women that for a long time has been erased from or written out of chronicles of history (Foreman in Zamora 300). In accordance with Foreman, Pilate can be considered the counsellor of Milkman who teaches him the value of oral traditions. She is the giver of stories and counsel in Morrison’s novel and she is the true link to the past (Foreman in Zamora 287-288).

Conclusion

When performing a feminist reading of these three novels there are several facts to consider. “From a position of female empowerment … the beginning of magic realism … signals the beginning of the end of the patriarchal age (Faris 180). As the novels were set, more or less, in first half of the twentieth century, the position of women in the social hierarchy of this environment is worthy of consideration. These novels more or less take place in a patriarchal society where men were always superior to women.

Allende documents the gender issues of Latin America and she blends realism with elements of injustices carried out against women. She is often described as devoted to a feminist perspective and the marginalisation of the underclass. Her revelation of female roles in a patriarchal society has been highly praised. Morrison is frequently mistaken for her
representations of a matriarchal culture that features poor, uneducated black women, with a small number of positive black male characters. This is somewhat ascribed to her attempt to create a mysticism that is specifically black and feminist. Morrison’s work has been viewed as the patterns of female beauty prescribed by the white culture, nevertheless accepted by the blacks themselves. Garcí­a Márquez presents the matriarch Úrsula Buendía whom can be looked upon as a strong yet towards the end, muffled woman. The female voice is double since it determines the dominant approach as well as the muted, female voice. No matter how strong a woman she appears to be, her role is to be subordinate and obliging. For a feminist interpretation of these magic realism novels it is vital that the view of the dominant hegemonies as structures can be re-written and deprived of their power.

The feminist criticism that is primary in this essay is examining images of women in literature written by both men and women which examine power relations. It is stated by Faris that magic realism is not a feminist genre though Allende, Morrison, and Garcí­a Márquez have used magic realism in their novels. There seems to be a certain focus on the experiences, and problems of women in these novels, nevertheless, there is no single definable feminist ideology that unites them (Faris 172). Additionally, Faris declares that the women in the novels challenge patriarchal despotism and social-sexual prejudices. In contrast to Morrison, where myths and historical references do exist side by side throughout the novel, the magic in Allende’s world is swept away by the political disaster she describes (Forman in Zamora 294-295). Furthermore, Allende tends to use the matriarch Clara, as a feminist nouveau; therefore Allende embodies the surfacing of a feminist text containing several voices, which expresses hope of an acclimatised community (Faris 173).

To conclude, the women in these novels are looked upon as odd, yet powerful by the societies they are living in, since they emit a sense of female magic. Although it is easy to consider females with magic powers as witches, the word is never mentioned as an epithet to neither, Pilate or Clara, nor Úrsula. Written as well as oral history is significant in the texts dealt with and it is the women who are the true bearers of the family history in these three volumes.
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