

# Expression of Anguish Against Gender Discrimination: A Feminist Reading of Isabel Allende's Daughter of Fortune

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## **Abstract**

*The present study entitled “Expression of Anguish Against Gender Discrimination: A Feminist Reading of Isabel Allende's Daughter of Fortune” aims to explore Allende's representation and response to this Marginalization and silencing women. The investigation begins with a theoretical study of the set of binary, hierarchical oppositions that, according to many theorists, have structured western thought. These place women on the side of negativity, lack, and emptiness, and in patriarchal society have traditionally led to marginalization and silencing. Isabel Allende's employment expression of anguish against gender discrimination vary, but the message remains the same: women must gain access to the power of the word in order to subvert, transform and eventually, overcome the marginalization and silencing imposed on them by patriarchal society. Isabel Allende's is a Chilean American novelist Allende's novels use of the left motif of kaleidoscopic fields of vision in order to structure, frame and represent her interpretation of a feminist, political and social reality. In Allende's works, they are an eclectic collection of theoretical approaches, primarily framed by the issue of feminism as manifested Allende's fictional cosmovision. Therefore, they are several spindles to this representation of feminism, which result from Isabel Allende's own vision and definition of feminism*

**(Key words:** Fictional Sapce, Magical Feminism, Hegemony Done on Women, Magic Realism, Expression of anguish a gains racial prejudice, gender discrimination and Military dictatorship, anger against socio-political, Circumstances, Violence as another dimension of being, presence of magic realism and its aesthetic implication.)

## Introduction

The key concern for Postmodernism is the question of being. With the question of arising the necessity of knowing the history. The historiography met fiction blurs the gap between fiction and history. In the words of Linda Hutcheon, "The protagonists of historiography metafiction are anything but proper types: They are the ex-centric, the marginalized, and the peripheral figure of fictional history" (114). The protagonist of Isabel Allende's *Daughter of Fortune* is Miss Eliza Sommers ideally fits into the space of a marginalized right from her birth.

The four hundred pages of this novel has its backdrop set during the nineteenth century (1843-53) and Allende along, with her protagonist Eliza Sommers takes the readers a journey from Valparaiso in Chile to the Sierra Nevada in Hong Kong then to China, San Francisco and finally ends the journey in California, a city known during the nineteenth century for its gold rush. Everyone born in this world is destined with a special inborn talent and for Eliza Sommers, it is not one but two. A good sense of smell and a good memory were her assets. For Eliza's memory had both real and highly imaginative and it was living twice for her. Eliza was born of a surreptitious love affair and was abandoned at the house of the Sommers on March 15, 1832, and they had adopted that date as her birthday. The baby was christened as Eliza Sommers by her real aunt and patron Rose Sommers. Eliza never worried about the mystery behind her birth, as she believed "what matters is what you do in this world, not how you come into it" (*Daughter of Fortune*,5). Eliza believed that she was born for a shipwreck and not of any surreptitious love affair. Eliza as a young maiden grew up admiring the Pacific Ocean from the balcony of the Sommers' house. Miss Rose took a huge interest in educating Eliza by following the standard of British society.

Miss Rose Sommers never liked the Chilean custom as she felt it as an aberration and adopted the western ways of education, dressing and livelihood. She imparted these qualities on Eliza too. Instructors (Tutors) were hired to teach French, History, Geography and a little Latin along with prayers and good manners. Eliza was also given training by Mama Fresia to do the house chore works by helping the servants to make bread, grinding maize, washing clothes etc. She spent hours together in the living room of Jeremy Sommers, Miss Rose's brother and her real uncle; devouring the classics, out-of-date newspapers and Miss Rose's romantic novels. Her random reading of Captain Jeremy's tales gave wing to her imagination. Eliza had a very little contact with the other girls of her age and "she lived in the closed world of her benefactor's home, in the eternal illusion of being in England rather than Valparaiso, Chile" (*Daughter of Fortune*, 50-51). As years passed by Eliza Sommers became both a perfect lady as well as a perfect homemaker. Apart from this, Miss Rose also wanted to school Eliza in "the arts of dissembling and manipulation, cunning, which she had no doubt, were more useful than candor" (*Daughter of Fortune* 58).

There is a parallel plot running where Paulina, daughter of Agustin del Valle, a rich and hard-hearted patriarch is introduced. So cruel is he that he goes to the extent of shaving his daughter's head for falling in love with Feliciano.

They secretly marry without the knowledge of Agustin. Society keeps progressing with technological advancement and change in the living pattern of people. The stigmas and the unwritten canons of male centered society over women have remind the same.

Miss Rose's plans of making Michael Steward a twenty eight year old officer in the English fleet a perfect suitor to Eliza fails when the latter falls in love at sixteen with Joaquin Andieta, one of the youngest intellectual and was barely eighteen with the qualities of a natural leader Joaquin Andieta was a man of action, with electrifying personality, clear mindedness and courage to alchemize ideas from books thereby giving a revolutionary momentum. He lived with his mother in poverty. The love affair of the young couple changed the impulse of their lives. Eliza's devastating passion for Andieta had warped her life. There was no escape for her. Joaquin had learned at a very early age to hold his head high, rejecting mockery or pity. He was both a practical and prudent man. He had become a fan of Lamennais theories and declared himself as a fundamental Christian professing Catholic liberalism in politics and the separation of Church and state.

The discovery of gold in Californian mines reached Chile like forest fire. Like thousands of other Chileans, Joaquin Andieta too dreamed of bags of gold. Several of his acquaintances had already left to California. For Joaquin, California represented his one way out of poverty as it creates a chance to bring out his mother from gutters and seek a cure for her lungs and also to fill his pockets before Jeremy Sommers with his head held high to ask for Eliza's hand. Both the woman in his life protested for his journey to California. They tried telling him to foresee the countless dangers of such an endeavor and were ready to live with him in inescapable poverty than to have him pursue an illusory fortune and risk losing him forever. Joaquin was stubborn with his new mania as he was "once devoted to espousing liberal ideals" (*Daughter of Fortune*,140). Even to reach California, Joaquin Andieta didn't have any financial assistance. He approached the bank for a loan but since he did not possess collateral security, he was rejected for a loan and then he started to loot weapons from the warehouse of the British Import and Export Company Ltd, where he was bookkeeping. With the stolen weapons he started to make his fortune by selling them at high prices. With the money earned he bought a third-class passage on the first Schooner scheduled to sail North on December twenty second. That is the last day he saw both the ladies of his life. Meanwhile six weeks after his departure to California, Eliza discovered her pregnancy. Then comes the meeting of Eliza with the Chinese Tao Chien, a Chinese cook as well as a physician who could cure any ailment, through her seafaring uncle John Sommers. Eliza had sleepless nights and desperately wanted to see Joaquin Andieta. Finally, she decided to illegally take a voyage in a ship named Emilia that was owned by the Rodriguez de Santa Cruz brothers.

It was in the ship that she again saw Tao Chien. Eliza sailed from Valparaiso on the radiant morning of February 18, 1849. From this journey onwards Eliza realized her clear sensation of beginning a new life in which she became both a protagonist and a narrator for herself. While the new passengers on the Emilia grew accustomed to the waves and began with their routines, Eliza was growing sicker in the depth of the ship. She has a miscarriage and nearly escapes death.

Eliza's valiant determination and her bold love which reminded Tao about his dead wife Lin made him help and care for her in Emilia, after her miscarriage with the help of a prostitute Azucena Placeres. Eliza remains grateful for her help during those tough days.

When Emilia reached her destination, Tao disguises Eliza as a boy, who is deaf and mute and made her escape from the ship. Tao Chien's and Eliza Sommer stepped the soil of San Francisco on a Tuesday in April 1849. Meanwhile, gold fever had not left anyone unaffected. People from of all the classes were influenced by the gold fever. "They look for gold, and along the way lose their souls" (*Daughter of Fortune* 250). Their lives were determined not with any other goal except the gold fever. "For the first time in the history, gold lay scattered on the ground, unclaimed, free and plentiful, within the reach of anyone with the will to go after it" (*Daughter of Fortune* 250). Eliza, reaching San Francisco was being transported to another planet. Though Tao's responsibility of taking care of Eliza ended in San Francisco, he never felt like abandoning her unless she could meet other Chileans. Tao Chiens' oriental cultural experience gave him life again in the new city by being a Zhong yi, a physician soon his skills started spreading and his fame made the Chinese patients give witness to the extraordinary talent of the Zhong yi. Tao moved from China, wanting to be a sailor, but he retained himself in California as a doctor for Eliza.

With each day passing by, Eliza's goal of searching Joaquin Andieta in an unknown territory became fainter. The reason for her leaving behind Chile is to find her man and uniting with him forever. But as days went by her intension to reunite with her lover slowly vanished enjoying the freedom of solitary hood in the new land. This marked the striking difference between her life in the Sommers house and Californian life. Her life was only governed by the conventions that were dictated in the Sommers house. Stagnant life and emptiness covered Eliza's first part of the life. She was taught to be virtuous, but after being in California, she questioned the meaning of the word. California completely turned around her life. It had made her to enjoy life to the brim.

Her decisions shaped and mastered her new life. Eliza admits to Tao "I am finding new strength in myself; I may always have had it and just did not know because I had never had to call on it" (*Daughter of Fortune* 310). Eliza never longed for freedom in the Sommers'house. But when she was freed, she enjoyed it and wanted to possess it forever. Though her intention was defeated, she was the master of her destiny. She knew very well that she was following an illusory love, but it was that love kept her going as she could not stop.

Finally through Jack the Mexican, Eliza hears about Joaquin Murieta. Eliza had no idea about the identity of Joaquin Murieta and was baffled between the identity of her lover Joaquin Andieta who was a young nobleman with revolutionary ideals and an outlaw Joaquin Murieta with the same physical description. She could never associate her lover with a cold-blooded killer, but her conviction became debilitated as her lover appeared in her dream "wearing a thousand different marks and bringing a thousand contradictory messages" (*Daughter of Fortune* 370). She could not decode her dream that is giving her the disturbing agony. Eliza's dream vision of Joaquin Andieta image with a star of light on his forehead symbolizing death, as she sees dead bandit Joaquin Murieta 's head finally to recognise his face. Her visions came like a lewd phantom to hunt her in dreams. In her obsession to find the man whom she had dreamt, she had renounced everything including her femininity. Though her quest made her tiresome, she turned out to be bold and resistant enough like her patron Miss Rose Sommers.

Her life was linked with Tao Chien through a close friendship that later developed into love. California had changed the destinies of many people as they came in search of gold. In Eliza and Tao's case, California had brought two people from a different culture to unite as they had not approached the city in need of gold but in need of their life. Their understanding of love that is transient is the actual beginning of their life in rediscovering their true self of love and concern for each other. Through Eliza and Tao, Allende creates immigrants as not victims of circumstances, but creators of their destiny.

When a novel is Isabella as magic realism, the elements of fantasy organically bind with the plot thereby projecting the reality. The moment of self - actualization of the dream or imaginary or the supernatural elements thus binds with the reality in fact with the plot to create a oneness. When logic, in reality, is overshadowed by these elements it reveals the behaviors of the characters that which disturbs them. In *Daughter of Fortune*, the Californian Gold Rush develops as a mystical element, influencing the heart and soul of Joaquin Andieta. His soul has been devoured by the blind dream of quick and sudden riches. Here, the real search for gold in the city of California becomes an obsession for Joaquin Andieta and many more men like him, thereby devouring their souls, thus weaving a web of magic and myth around them. When this search becomes hysterical, people live in an illusory utopian world where they can possess things at their will.

Tao Chien the *Zhong yi* felt that he was living in a paradise of greedy, materialistic and impatient people whose obsession was to get rich quick. There was no food for the spirit; instead, violence and ignorance prospered" (*Daughter of Fortune* 358). The myth of Joaquin Murieta, is an important aspect of this novel as it exists in the Latina myth. During the gold rush, Joaquin Murieta too went in search of it and later lost his way and turned out to be a Robin Hood hero. A nutshell of the myth is Joaquin Murieta with few other members, took up his journey to the new land seeking gold. Later his path deviated he turned out to be a bandit and there was an order passed by Governor Bigler to behead him. After a long chase, they were able to behead Joaquin Murieta and his body was placed in the public to create fear regarding crime and punishment. Though he was dead, soon mystery surrounded as the dead person was the bandit or someone else. This generated the myth. The original myth never included any woman in the life of Joaquin Murieta. Allende rewrites the other side of the history from a woman's perspective, who in search of Joaquin Andieta, reaches the new world and though she struggles, she never loses herself and thus redefines her life. In one of the interviews with Katy Butler,

Allende states:

I found that almost everything written in the history books- and this is what they teach in school – had been written by the victors. The white males....so my interest was to tell the story from the perspective of a woman and an immigrant of color. (Roddem, 2004: 271)

Allende makes Eliza as her protagonist trying to deconstruct the politics of the male centered world that neglects and suppresses the role of a woman in the world. History had sidelined Eliza but Allende revisits history and myth and construes a place for her female champion. Myth weaved through magical realism rises from the author's national and cultural background.

Latin American land is rich in its myth and Allende uses one of the myths of Joaquin Murieta in this novel just to demystify the original myth and she had given identity to her protagonist Eliza Sommers. Bruce Lincoln in *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship*, (1999) defines, Magical Realism in association with myth as follows:

Magical realism is often used as a catch-all phrase that encompasses a gamut of narrative strategies from sophisticated modernist experimentalism to the presence of indigenous folklore or myth in a text.... myth serves a radical purpose and is used in a revisionist, subversive manner that provides alternative narratives to the historical moments that the novels explore. (34)

The novel *Daughter of Fortune* envisions this alternative by weaving myth in magical realism trying to put on the map the historical condition of the postcolonial nations like Chile and China and finally switching to California and revisits the condition of the ethnic migrants. One of the main features of magic realist novels is the revisiting of historical events with an underlying irony. Here Allende wants to highlight the madness that people had over gold that made them move from their native land towards California. This migration takes an important place in the history of Chile. With migration taking place on one side, Chile's independence in 1810 opened new vistas to immigrants who had flooded and settled in the new region. The English immigrants quickly settled and amassed wealth as merchants. The British anchored their fleet in Valparaiso to control the harbour associated with the coast of Pacific. Along with their settlement, they also injected their habits and customs with the local people.

They formed a small nation within the country, with their customs, cults, newspaper, clubs, schools and hospitals, but they did it with such refined manners; that far from arousing suspicion, they were considered an example of civility. (*Daughter of Fortune*,16)

The Englishmen had different intention of harbouring their fleet in Valparaiso to control the port of Pacific. Though this novel cannot be completely labelled as a historical or a political novel, a thin layer of history travels throughout the novel featuring the gold rush where people not only from Chile were victims but from all over the world. The writer's journey moves from the South American continent to the Asian continent and China in particular. China and Great Britain broke into an opium war in 1839 while Toa Chien was sixteen years old. "At the end of almost four years of struggle, China had to accept a humiliating defeat and pay the equivalent of twentyone million dollars to the British conquerors..."(*Daughter of Fortune*,186). By revisiting history, Allende makes no direct reference to personages, but historical events are traced faintly. The important aspect of Post Modernism is the overlapping of history and fiction which Linda Hutcheon, the Canadian literary theorist terms as historiographic metafiction". With the mystic element of gold forming the economic backdrop of Chile's history the next important aspect of this novel is the folklore wisdom of the native culture which runs throughout the novel.

The interpretation of dreams, the presence of ghost, the power of native herbs, premonitions are not only part of one's culture, but across the globe travelling over continents and countries, these beliefs are rooted firmly in diverse cultures. For instance, the second pillar of Eliza, Mama Fresia's herbs and incantations have the power to cure even measles and other deadly contagious diseases. When Eliza was at her infancy she suffered from African measles carried by a Greek sailor in Valparaiso. "As long as that dangers lasted, Mama Fresia placed a piece of raw meat on Eliza's navel every night unbound it with a strip of red flannel, nature's secret for preventing contagion."(*Daughter of Fortune*,11) Also, Eliza was shrewd enough to comprehend the dreams and the presence of ghost with her native folklore wisdom and by the tutoring of Mama Fresia. Eliza learned Indian legends and myths, how to read signs of the animals and the sea, how to recognise the habits of the spirits and the messages in dreams; and also, how to cookl. (*Daughter of Fortune*, 13)

In the world of Magic, the boundaries between the living and the dead are always merged. Wendy B. Faris in his essay *Scheherazade's Children* states that "The magical realist vision exists with the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions"(172). A postmodernist reader tends to oscillate between a character's hallucination, a miracle and a dream. If a character tends to differentiate the difference between these three elements, that character can establish its identity. In *Daughter of Fortune*, both Eliza and Tao would perfectly judge their difference in spite of fumbling and by the end of the novel, both these characters evolve themselves as strong and independent. Tao's wife Lin had asthma and it nearly took her life during pregnancy.

Tao Chien desperately consulted the spirit of his master, but Lin brought a lifeless girl child into the world. Now he could see Eliza under the same state undergoing a miscarriage in the same ship. He is very much upset and felt to reveal her presence to the captain of the ship Katz. He wanted to confess the whole matter of Eliza's secret presence in the ship. When he is about to inform about her, the apparition of his wife Lin stopped him. She was dressed in a green silk dress, that Tao remembered that the neighbour women had draped her for the funeral ceremony. "So real was the apparition of his wife there in the hold that he was thrown into a panic: Spirits however good in life tended to treat mortals very cruelly"(*Daughter of Fortune*, 227). In fact, when he saw his wife's spirit, he attempted a prayer to exorcise devils, but he could not remember the words and could remember only the love and the nostalgic feeling for his dead wife. Lin bends down and whispers to him reminding his duty as a physician to treat Eliza and not to leave her to die. Also, she reveals the destiny to Tao that "A premature death was not Eliza's Karma"(*Daughter of Fortune*, 227). Also, Lin warns Tao Chien telling that if she died without seeing her lover her soul would never be at peace and her ghost will haunt him forever.

### **Magical Realistic Narration**

In the view of Wendy B. Faris "In magical realist narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlies. Almost a postmodern pastoralism"(182). The primitive belief system forms a crux hear in the plot. In *Daughter of Fortune*, Tao Chien's life is completely rooted with the primitive beliefs of his dead ancestors in a way representing the Chinese culture.

His life was linked with the life of his ancestors who had not only given him his mind and body but bequeathed him his karma. "His fate, he believed, had been determined by the acts of his family before him, which was why he had to honour them with daily prayers and fear them when they appeared in their spectral robes to claim their due" (*Daughter of Fortune*, 6).

### **Employment of Fictional Space**

The fictional space plays the next crucial role in magic realism text. This literary space cannot be measured but can only be internalized by the readers. This fictional space is developed by a reader resulting in imagination thereby bridging the vacuum between the writer and the reader and their respective world. A fictional world may incorporate human feelings, emotions, laws governing principles and disciplines, order but lacks in its space which is an alternative. This fictional space can be divided into two categories. First in the view of Rawdon Wilson "fictional worlds in which all indications of distance, capacity, or arrangement or generated in accordance with self-contained assumptions, game like rules that are experienced as axioms" (217), second

fictional worlds in which the indications of local place or sometimes those of the extra textual world but at other times are those of another place, very different in its assumptions, and which, if it was to exist purely, would be a closed axiomatic world of the first kind. (217)

The *Daughter of Fortune* comes under the second category of fictional space. For the people of Valparaiso, the golden city is another place, that which is different in its assumptions and has its axions, but in that desperate search, they lose themselves. Further, the hybrid nature of the magical realist fictional world connects itself with an extra textual world. The next important feature of a magical realist text is the analysis of "postcolonial discourse as the mode of a conflicted consciousness, the cognitive map that discloses the antagonism between two views of culture, two views of history and two ideologies" (223). Both Eliza Sommer and Tao Chien belong to postcolonial nations. Their encounters "constructs a condition of being both tyrannized by history yet paradoxically cut off from it" (224).

An investigation of the nature of literary ghosts will tell us a great deal about their authors' metaphysics, politics, and poetics (*Magical Realism: Theory, History, and Community* 497). The sudden appearance of an apparition or any miraculous happenings or interpretation of a dream carries with it a hidden truth. They carry the burden of their collective memory that comprises of unfulfilled thoughts, emotions, wishes and carriers of cultural and historical burdens, for they represent the dangers, anxieties, and passionate forces that civilization banishes (*Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* 497). Lin as a ghost, is so real that she enters the material world and speaks to her husband, asking him to save Eliza's life in the ship. Lin had asthma and it nearly took her life during pregnancy. It is this feminine feeling of Lin that insists her husband in saving the life of the abandoned girl in the ship. Tao had seen his wife suffering in front of his eye, but was unable to save her. At this instance, he desperately wanted to save her life than thinking about anything else. With the analysis of Eliza arises the hierarchy of margin. With the discussion of margin arises the center that brings in binary structure.



From the time she was left in the doorsteps of the Sommers, her identity had been questioned. Rose Sommers knew the truth that Eliza was her own brother's daughter but could not disclose it with Eliza till the end. Even in the new world, Eliza disguised herself as a boy following the instructions of Tao Chien for her safety. As time goes she emerges to be one of the round characters along with Tao Chien. She had seen everything, lost her self, battled with death, regained her courage finally discovers herself. Patriarchal societies do not readily sell their sons, but their daughters are all for sale sooner or later. (130) This sounds not only true with *The Mayor of Casterbridge* that Elaine Showalter mentions in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* but holds good even with Eliza Sommers who was born out of a Clandestine affair. She was instantly thrown at the mercy of the Sommers' doorsteps. From Valparaiso, she had chiselled herself to fit in the male dominated society and discovered a place for herself in the new world. Down the line Eliza Sommers no more fits between the lines of male tradition and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture. (131)

### **Magical Feminism**

All novels of Isabel Allende have one thing in common. It gives space for the women characters to dismiss the sexual and behavioral constraints thrust by men. Allende wants to confirm through her works that an identity of a woman is never dependent on man or the patriarchal family name. Clara, Alba, Blanca, Ines, Eliza never rest on any man for acting as their driving force. It is their sensory perception, intuition and the workings of the subconscious together give them the power to create an alternate world. A true guiding light is radiated within their self. Here they have total control of their feelings, emotions and their female sexuality refusing the treatment of the other. In turn this magical web that is connecting the real and their subconscious world, recreates a state where they represent themselves as strong and not vulnerable, creating an identity for themselves and countless muted women like them. While looking through the mirror they do not see themselves as an angel in the house rather they see their self-reflection being constructed by myths, societal doctrines and history of the patriarchy. If they have to see their true identity, they have to free themselves from the reflection of this mirror, which Ines, Alba, and Eliza Sommers achieve with the end of the respective novels as their journey begins only from the end. This understanding of the female self is termed as Magical Feminism.

### **Hegemony Imposed on Women**

The struggle that Allende wants to highlight through her novels are the control that women face culturally where her subconscious has been colonized under the patriarchal norms and when she tries to rebel and free from that shackle it remains very turbulent, yet her roots and traditions will give her hand to search her real self. Postmodernism's intensity through hegemony and suppressive act leads to pondering over marginality. Chris Snipp Walmsley in his essay *Postmodernism* feels that ...focusing on identity politics of the marginal and repressed against the dominant, central discourses of power; postmodernism has had some considerable impact, particularly in the fields of postcolonialism, queer theory and

feminism (409). While modernism mourns over the loss of unity and belonging, postmodernism celebrates the fragments and margins.

Modernists approach towards literature was very much objective to the real world, where postmodernism leaned towards the subjective approach of the real world ignoring hierarchy and embracing values from tradition. When postmodernism challenges hegemony, the others in the fringes of the society either based on race or sex is given pivotal importance. Postmodernism lightens the difference between the real and the simulated. Thus, magical realism as a narrative technique can be placed for the postmodern texts. The essence of postmodernism is that it questions and dismounts all the absoluteness may it be the Center, God, truths or history. The postmodern writers limit themselves with the textuality of the texts that they construct and dismiss fact and fiction. Postmodernism were a reaction to modernism and its extended roadmap to modernism in terms of meanings and value in the existing world. In the words of Chris Snipp Walmsley, postmodernism is perpetuated through paradoxes (406). It forms a link between man and history.

## **Magic Realism**

The extended roadmap between the unexplored and the silenced reality. It is more than fragmentation that goes on forming the identity of the others. Postmodernism's concern over the marginalized had resulted in identity politics over the dominant hegemony. Postmodern theorists like Fredric Jameson, Jean Francois Lyotard insists on the vitality of history and its representation in a text to understand the better postmodern condition. It is at this juncture magical realism earns its importance as an aesthetic and narrative style discussing the untold or unheard experiences from a historical, political and cultural perspective.

Incorporating magic realism in postmodern texts designates the importance of social connectivity. Dreams, visions, telepathy, fantasy, illusion, hallucination prevails in the real world that cannot be ignored as it forms social connectivity. This social connectivity is the depiction of various dimensions being part of one's life told and untold but being consciously present within everyone. Isabel Allende through her female characters Ines, Alba, Clara, and Eliza Sommers tries to link their silenced reality with that of history forming an identity through the exploration of roots. Alba explores her identity through the diary written by her grandmother Clara. Ines passes on her memories of struggle to her stepdaughter Isabel. Eliza known as an orphan in the beginning of *The Daughter of Fortune* explores, discovers and survives the true purpose of her life along with Tao Chien. The primary modes of postmodern concern were well expressed through allegory, irony, parody and pastiche. Isabel Allende's mode of writing liberated creativity from the hegemonic discourses of the society using the postmodern modes of expression. Isabel Allende through her characters in the novels *The House of the Spirits*, *The Daughter of Fortune* and *Ines of My Soul* reflects the new epoch that had a transition in her nation's history as well as globally especially in the industrial sector where wealth was in the hands of few.

In a conventional twentieth century world, magical realism rejected science, hegemony, capitalist society, industrial sector, and connected people with their past, revisiting history, folklore and myths. From a theoretical view, it aims to provide a way for plentitude, heterogeneous followed by a determinate history for the silenced. Latin American magic realism itself is a culmination of their native beliefs clubbed with the influence of the European Surrealism. Stephen Slemon views magical realism as a concept of resistance to the massive imperial center and its totalizing systems ( *Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse*, 410).

A magical realist text never sees magic and real as two different entities. Rather they act together in the real world emerging out of the reality mirrored. Apart from being used as a postmodern technique, it could also be united with the postcolonial world. The postcolonial world has two strong dichotomies in the form of colonizer and the oppressor. The Eurocentric colonizer forms the rational thought resulting in logic and reasoning favoring the realistic approach. The oppressor, on the other hand, is silenced and passively becomes a silent spectator of the hegemonic power, subverts realism and favors juxtaposition of the realities in the real world. This is the power of magic. Magic in a way lights up the non-canonical texts. Stephen Slemon, related magical realism with post colonialism, and felt that the silenced, marginalized, disposed voices in their fight against inherited notions of imperial history (342) feel magic as their weapon.

For writers like Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ben Okri, Salman Rushdie and many more writers view magical realism as a triumphant mode in drawing reality between the dichotomies like the east and the west, indigenous culture against the modern, capitalist mentality over the muted society, the chimera over the reality, the presence over the delusion and the hegemony against the memory of the marginalized victims.

The power of celestial cosmos is the result of human beings interaction between nature and the receptivity that led to the possibility of rational thinking. In this case magic, fantasy, dream, hallucination, and vision are not new elements in human understanding. It is a part of the celestial cosmos that cannot be proved with empirical data, but can be experienced with the unity of nature and roots as a thread between ancestral memories. The constraints of the twentieth century realism are replaced by the magical impulse in the postmodern world.

### **Application of Linda Nicholson's views of Feminism**

When it comes to postmodernism and feminism, Linda Nicholson argues that feminist theory belongs to the terrain of postmodern philosophy ( *Feminism and the Politics of Postmodernism*, 45). The Postmodern Feminist writers and their texts of heteroglossia, afford a ready theoretical ally to the feminist goals of opening up a new fluidity of boundaries and presenting the alternative perspectives of others ( *Feminism and the Politics of Postmodernism* 45). Isabel Allende's novels fit into the postcolonial context, making magic alive and the real natural to combine with the hegemonic capitalist colonies.

Here the magic discusses the divided consciousness existing between the European historical and cultural views over the aboriginal historical and cultural views. Finally, magical realism celebrates the aboriginal tradition and customs. Allende's characters through dreams, visions and memories create room for the eccentric to draw upon the cultural systems to prioritize fantasy or dream against reality, faith over technology and tradition over modernity. It is no more an act of insanity, but normal and accepted based on belief systems on cultural diversity.

The relationship between man and his destiny is governed in magical realist text, where destiny is governed by the past forming the identical quest that get completed in the present. In this case, the events of the historical past have no rational or psychological explanation. In *The House of the Spirits*, *The Daughter of Fortune* and *Ines of My Soul*, magic acts as a satire in its political discussions of the history of the respective nations. The combination of historical and magical events collectively forms the folk wisdom, thereby forming the Latin American cultural identity. In these three novels visions and apparitions resembles the reality of the existing world and speak through the texts to the readers regarding the metamorphoses they have undergone to create their identity and for their posterity under the colonial regime. For example: in *The House of the Spirits*, the cruelty along with the reality faced by the people in Pinochet's Chilean regime takes form, when Alba faces the barbarity over her body like many other women and then gets back to her vision where her grandmother Clara carves her identity in postcolonial Chile.

The other world of Clara responds to Alba's call to strengthen her and assures her place in the existing world. History being an accessible medium to see the muted gender and race through the lens of literature, social reality is contextualized using the strategies of writing. P. Gabrielle Foreman in his essay *Past on Stories: History and Magically Real, Morrison and Allende on Call*, states that In the Postmodern world of dead authors and destabilized subjects, experience sounds like something embarrassingly antiquated (285), in order to keep alive the memory of her country Chile (285). To keep alive the memory of her country and the countless muted women ensures Isabel Allende to use magic as a resilient parameter against the civilized postmodern world.

The closing of the twentieth century foresaw the birth of a philosophical movement known as the Postmodernism. It has no fixed meaning or definition as it meant diverse aspects for various genres of writers, philosophers, critics, and thinkers. While modernism had a reason as its lens, postmodernism rejected this idea of reasoning and logical application. In *The Postmodernism Condition: A Report on the state knowledge*, Lyotard describes postmodernism thinking as a tendency to question the validity of grand narratives'(2). For Lyotard the postmodern mind has lost faith in the explanatory power of these master narratives, and in their ability to provide shared sources of value (2). Postmodernism searched for meaning and survival. Lyotard further states in the same essay that postmodern get used as an adjective for the shallow, pointless, depthless or insubstantial (3). Postmodernism blurs the established real and rational world and travels beyond dream and fantasy. Postmodern literature had the intensity of longing to discover the meaning towards reality and truth of the real world. In *Rethinking Postmodernism* Lyotard quotes Brian McHale who suggests postmodernist is governed by an ontological dominant'and is designed' to dramatize ontological issues (15).

Lyotard feels that postmodern fictions, enact an uncertainty about what exists. (15) He brings in Paul Ricoeur's observation that postmodernist fiction often finds allegory hospitable since allegory evolved as a rhetorical strategy for exploring and expressing religious insight (7).

The change in the thought process of mankind was very evident during the Victorian era followed by the modernist and postmodernist thinkers. Craig Owens in his essay *The Allegorical Impulse Toward a Theory of Postmodernism* states post modernity as:

A sea change in belief, at least among intellectuals: not only has religious faith and faith in rationality been discredited, but so has faith in the referential capacities of language, as well as faith in the idea of self, in the reliability of history, and in the stability of knowledge. (4)

Isabel Allende's female characters, who question the certainty of meaning on truth, knowledge and history of the postmodern culture. History never traces the physical and mental traumas of numerous women. From the society's context, the male being the bread winner of the family, his struggles, his pains and sufferings plays a humongous part forming the history of the nation. Here women are neglected. Their voices are pushed to the fringes. Isabel Allende and many other women writers want to write that part of the history, where the chapters of the women were not featured. In a man-made world of human ethos, a woman has to differentiate her role and must also unify her beliefs with that of a male-centered society. It is at this juncture there is a distinction between an ideal woman and who a real woman is for herself and perceiving the world from her eyes. The reality, is being a woman for her, is far away from an ideal woman, often perceived from the eyes of the society. With the prevalence of this gap arises next question about the essentials of woman identity and her identity as a human being. With the question of identity arises the struggle experienced by women because of historical and cultural trappings. Isabel Allende through her above-mentioned novels for this thesis highlights these issues where her women characters are trapped and they are trapped to their ignorance blindly adhering to the societal norms, but in the end, all the major characters free themselves and retreat and step ahead with jubilation.

The end of the novel marks the beginning of her protagonists. Clara, Blanca, Alba, Ines, Eliza all protest against various aspects existing in society with solidarity. These characters show the varying feminine facets of their condition and Allende's women characters are no more going to shut themselves inside a door with the societal norms applied on them rather they go beyond it and explore what the world has in store for them. In the view of George Henry Lewes ...the advent of female literature promises woman's view of life, woman's experience: in other words, a new element (45). Perhaps the dual facets of a woman in the society is similar to the dual nature of magic and realism as the power of these two terms in the view of Gilles Deleuze's is an ontological model in which being is univocal and yet none the less has two sides, the actual and the virtual, provides a frame work for reconsidering this double nature of magical realism (*Magical Realism and Deleuze*, 146). Magic is nothing eccentric and impractical. There are enough other oddities that could be found in imagination being unpinned. Magic is a tradition which is linked with the folklore and runs counter to the mainstream literature.

This traditional element magic act as a catalyst in resistance and features in different genres like science fiction, gothic literature, fantasy literature, magical realism and many more.

In this case, magic acts a combination with realistic elements reconstructing and reproducing the traditional literature of supernatural lore in a rationalized form elevating in wordplay, symbolism and myth-like narratives in the contemporary literature. Magical realism stories move out of the everyday world into the realm of the marvellous which is been experienced and cannot be explained and has only a short span in the form of dreams, supernatural activities like spirits, being haunted, prophesies, premonitions. Gothicism, the grotesque, existential absurdism, science fiction, utopia all these genres have a connection with the fantasy that is linked with magical elements. W.R Irwin points:

Whatever the material, a narrative is a fantasy if it presents the persuasive establishment and development of an impossibility, an arbitrary construct of the mind with all under the control of logic and rhetoric. (9)

When this fantasy links with magic, it violates what is accepted as reality. It presupposes a view of exterior reality and goes on to contradict. J.R.R Tolkien the author of *The Lord of the Rings* says founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on recognition of fact but not slavery to it (2). Magic treats impossibilities without hesitation, without doubt, without any attempt to reconcile issues with an intellectual understanding of the workings of the day to day happenings. In brief, it disturbs the fundamental assumptions of matter and life. While Science fiction is predominantly speculative, magic is more introspective and traditional. Science fiction novels convince the reader by bringing the impossibilities in terms of explainable in the world of science. Whereas Magical Realist novels, grotesque novels and fantasy novels as C.S Lewis states utilizes unconvincing characters and unlikely events but it makes everyday effort to place them in a mundane, nonfantastic world (2). In short, the setting is everyday life and its routine with magic in the form of prophecy, dream or any supernatural activity, that has a short stay with reality.

In the poem, *Because I Could not Stop for Death* by Emily Dickinson speaks of a carriage ride with death beyond earth with a mortal soul, highly imaginative though not magical, yet an illusion that speaks the frustration of the poet's mind. Isabel Allende to voices not only the frustration of herself being a daughter, wife and mother but voices the frustration of countless voiceless women through the revisiting of history and giving her women characters the stability to move on the mundane life along with supernatural happenings that give them an upper hand over the other characters. The thought of her homeland and her settlement in the new land (United States) drives her narration using the technique magical realism. Her projection of women being treated different, ignored, assaulted creates an edge over others during crises.

They are prone to suppression and violence in their domestic life. Thus, resistance comes within over a point of time. For example, Clara from *The House of the Spirits*, and Ines from *Ines of my Soul*, though being different and treated as an outcast, used by men for their selfish intensions turn to be the champions of their self. Their self-identity had grown through the crisis time. Magical realism can make impossible seem familiar and the familiar grow strange. When Clara of *The House of the Spirits* sees dreams and moves with spirits, she is in her familiar world.

But her real world and mundane life had become so strange to her that even her daughter Blanca sees her as an angel who often used to be dressed in white. For Tao Chien in *Daughter of Fortune*, the apparition of his wife Lin was so real that he goes by her advice to save Eliza Sommers life in the ship. In engaging the attention of the reader, Magical Realism novels generate a lot of suspense by engaging the characters whose fates we are interested in the living real world with the memory of the other world. Hallucinations, Dreams, Visions, Conscience all alert our human mind and communicate something to us in the expected real world.

Magical Realism makes use of all these concepts though, they are not synonymous in nature. More than realistic fiction, a magical realist novel can bring a clear picture of philosophical and moral debates, bringing the day to day lives designed to give form to life, death, good and evil that folktales embody. To achieve an effective magical realist text, the author must create solidity that confines characters within the imaginary world transcending the patterns of truth reworking the myths or legends. When the realm of impossible is given a definite location, magic becomes the expected and normal. When supernatural elements act as willful falsehood, they create a temporary belief that marks the literature of magic. Magic is not a new concept for the classics too. For example, the Puritans considered themselves as God chosen, and they believed that the universe was divided into good and evil. God with his angels and Satan with his fallen angels were split to know the moral lines, where God spoke through his miracles and revealed his presence to the world. Puritanism strongly encouraged in supernatural as an essential credo of faith but it also had limitations in the characters of supernatural lore. Magic was reserved only for God and other worthy phenomena were considered as an act of evil.

The pull of the mysterious and occult organized the apprehensions and aspirations under transcendentalism, mesmerism, or spiritualism. Nearly every writer of magic wants to demonstrate that the marvellous is not arbitrary or irrelevant to human life. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's phrase willing suspension of disbelief points out that the supernatural can partake an emotional truth, fidelity to the human experience that rides over the unreality of the subject matter. In the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge, Brian Attebery states that we cannot only perceive, but also believe, the horror, despair, and awe generated by the experience (34). He also states We know the truth that, there is none in such a sea (34). Somewhere Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* expresses subjective truth, not observed, but felt deep inside. To move one's world away from the observable world to the realm of the impossible, where deep human truths and desires tend to take the form of dreams. This takes the form of magic realism. The world of magic in itself is a complete universe with its own rules and rewards used as a medium to illuminate the existing real life. For Brian Attebery, the author's using this technique have new freedoms over their imagination, as the readers are willing to accept the irrational and magical, not in place of, but alongside the rational and the mundane (153). Magical Realism is never modern as it holds together the ancient beliefs and safe insights without much consequence.

While the reality is structured on the actual, the magic is framed on the divergence of any structure modeled with reality. At this junction magic together with reality governs the explicit representation of the ordered social organization thereby moving across the boundaries. It means magical realism deals with society, history and identity.

Magical realism allows its writers to escape and provide an alternative world view thereby allowing its readers to move from the constraints of politics, war, society and culture. The readers 'feel in the words of Roh, the reality of the object and of space, not like copies of nature but like another creation (2). This holds good even for literature. William Spindler proposes three variants of magical realism in his essay *Magic Realism: A Typology*. They are Metaphysical magical realism, Anthropological magical realism and finally ontological magical realism. 1. Anthropological magical realism: In the words of Spindler it is characterized by the use of two voices': one rational and realist, and the other indicating a belief in magic (3).

In this case, the mythical and rational coexist. As the term goes it has its crux over the roots of the native social and cultural background. Magic is not the primary narration, but the realist flow of narration in the text is disturbed by the flow of the traditional and mythic beliefs of the people. Example: Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits, Ines of My Soul* 2. Metaphysical magical realism: In the words of Spindler it is characterized by the technique of defamiliarization, creating an uncanny and disturbing atmosphere, but without the element of the supernatural (3). This is associated with Roh's definition of the term magic realism. It does not explicitly deal with supernatural but creates a conjuring effect over the readers. Example: Franz Kafka's *The Castle* 3. Ontological magical realism: The magic is not explained in any subjective, psychological way; but rather the unreal has an objective, ontological presence in the text (*Magic Realism: A Typology* 82-83). Example: Carpentier's *Voyage to the Sea*. This has its partial reference to anthropology with a slight deviation as Spindler states the narrator is not puzzled or skeptical of the supernatural...as s/he describes it as if it was a normal part of ordinary everyday life. (83) While dealing with the term magical realism, it is often linked with the postcolonial world and the postmodern concept. The linking of the term with the postcolonial world shows its connection with the Anthropological magical realism as postcolonial nations 'deal with the history of the subversive power against the hegemony. When it comes to a nation's history it also includes the plight of its women and their repressed history. Isabel Allende's selected novels come under this category. Possibly magical realism in the words of Stephen Slemon comprise a positive and liberating engagement with the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity (*Magic Realism as a Postcolonial Discourse*, 422). Novelists such as Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison, Rushdie and Ben Okri use their magic against the established order (4) and the use of magic narrates the historical violence narrated in them.

## Conclusion

Magical realism is a clash of two cultures: the old and the new. Brenda Cooper's *Magical Realism in West African Fiction* states that the often-chaotic meeting between capitalism and a pre-capitalist society in developing countries, and the ensuing climate change and ambiguity, is a catalyst for magical realism (15-16). Isabel Allende's selected novels are weaved with this class struggle where the common people are driven behind the madness of gold to fight against the capitalist society. Here the web of magic overshadows the concept of the city of gold for many adventurers from different parts of the east.



For Cooper Magical realists are post colonials who avail themselves most forcefully of the devices of postmodernism, of pastiche, irony, parody and intersexuality (*West African Fiction*, 29). Hence the postcolonial themes are dealt with magic using the postmodern techniques. In literature, from time immemorial, magic had always been one of the literary themes. Oracles, miracles, prophecies, untimely natural calamity, eerie atmosphere have always been associated with magic. Magical Realism gave scope to get into the roots of the cultural anthropology and historical dimension of a nation. Both Post colonialism and Feminism deals with the politics of suppression, power and exploitation. The friction between the real and the magic results in an antagonistic approach towards power and eccentricity of the others'. This is well incorporated in magical realism and is discussed with respect to the selected novels.

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