

Patriarchy and Women's Struggle in Selected Boom and Post-Boom Novels

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Abstract

*Women play vital roles and are essential in the progress of a nation, yet the fabrication of gender instituted by patriarchal-modeled societies trivializes, devoices, and devalues the female sex, placing them in domestic positions and subjecting them to violence. As literature becomes the mirror of women's struggle, it also exposes the threats and challenges of patriarchy on women to assert their voice and to be recognized as significant other and not the other. Employing feminism specifically Simone de Beauvoir's 'second sex' concepts, this paper explored and discussed the status of women against the depiction of patriarchy uncovering women denigration in the two boom novels, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2006) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and *Recollections of Things to Come* (1996) by Elena Garro, and elaborating women empowerment in the two post-boom novels, *The House of the Spirits* (1993) by Isabel Allende, and *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992) by Laura Esquivel. The women characters in the boom novels are stereotyped and placed as secondary characters, whereas those in the post-boom have successfully defined themselves and are empowered to reject the patriarchal portrayal of women. Despite the unrelenting debunking of patriarchy, the status of women characters is still inferior compared to their male counterparts. In turn, the four works convey similarities in depicting the era. These narratives have become platforms for women's rediscovery and avenues to re-evaluate the position and status of women; thus, re-securing their value as contributing voice and body in the society.*

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Introduction

Women play vital roles and are essential in the progress of a nation. Even so, most societies stereotype gender roles as masculine

or feminine, and this affects the division of labor, which places women in domestic positions while men become breadwinners (Dillip, Mboma, Greer, and Lorenz, 2018). Throughout the years, there have been many efforts for women's empowerment, while

changes among the roles of men and women continue to take place (Sekścińska, Trzcińska, and Maison, 2016). Still, Maseno and Kilonzo (2011) argue that patriarchy poses challenges to the realization of women empowerment, being that society subordinates and limits the rights of women.

Patriarchy affiliates with its set of ideas that illustrates, defends, and rationalizes the notion that men are inherently superior to women (Macionis, 2012). Taylor (in Yin, 2018), remarks that patriarchal dominance connects with the surfacing of hierarchical institutions, structural violence, and the separated personal subconscious that relates to a period of critical distress. The fabrication of gender in societies subordinates female sex and results in violence against women (Piosadlo, Fonseca, and Gessner, 2014). Mandal (2013) further purports that across history, women have suffered the most among all deprived groups in the world since they have been victims of all kinds of destitution. As Chatraporn (2006) observes, western civilization is pervasively centered, oriented, and controlled by men, which in turn reflects the literature that authors write. Thus, literature becomes the mirror of women's struggles and subordination in a society where they are oppressed, dominated, and objectified by their opposite sex.

Accordingly, Becker (1999) asserts that while women oppression is not the point of patriarchy, any "social system that is male-identified, male-controlled, male-centered will inevitably value masculinity and masculine traits over femininity and feminine traits". Similarly, Gaag (2014) reveals that there is still uneven progress in gender equality despite the improvement in the position and condition of women. Singh (2014) adds that it took women's efforts to earn their place in the community when society exploited and deprived women of their rights in former times. Nevertheless, many women still have limited opportunities due to social and cultural constraints, discrimination, and gender prejudice (Zohair, 2016). The notion that the male sex comes first while women are second encourages the former to regard the latter as beings suited to fulfill male needs.

In her book, *The Second Sex* (2011), Simone de Beauvoir contends that men have traditionally been regarded as the default, universal human beings, while women have been defined in opposition to men, as the 'Other.' This distinction places women in a position of inferiority and reinforces the idea that men are the normative standard against which women are judged. Men have used the "othering" of women as an excuse for not understanding the female sex, and this has led to stereotyping as done in societies of higher and lower hierarchies. The association of men with culture, humanity, production, and activity, and women with their perceived opposites, reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates women's subordination. Beauvoir (2011) argues that these gendered associations limit women's opportunities for self-realization, intellectual growth, and active engagement in the public sphere. Consequently, such a scheme represents man as all that is 'good,' while woman as all that is 'bad.'

Beauvoir's (2011) analysis of the two dualities or contrasts in social reality—the duality of the Subject and the Other, and the duality of Man and Woman—emphasizes the unequal power dynamics and the oppressive structures that exist within society. She highlights the ways in which the dominant group (the Subject, or men) exercises power and control over the subordinate group (the Other, or women) through social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms. Although the opposite pairs are not unrelated, Man always overshadows Woman, and women are assumed as the weaker sex for their supposed inadequacies that are used to justify how the female sex is seen as the Other and how they are treated accordingly. Beauvoir (2011) contends that women are subjected to a double standard that defines them primarily through their immanent or corporeal being, particularly their sexuality and reproductive functions. This reduces women to objects of desire, perpetuates the notion of their passivity, and denies them agency and autonomy over their own lives. Society perpetuates patriarchal ideology, and such persistence of ideology has enabled men to

perceive they have the right to subordinate women.

Consequently, women have internalized and adapted to their oppressed status. As Msila (2013) concludes in his study employing the concepts of *The Second Sex* on what literature speaks about women leadership in schools, the patriarchal society that Beauvoir highlights still exists, and "its vestiges manifest in various workplaces differently". Similarly, Qasim, Iftikhar, and Awan (2021), in their study exploring Beauvoir's concept in critiquing Ahmed's *The Wandering Falcon*, sum up that women are commodities deprived of their rights, devoiced, and have no identity nor liberty as they struggle with discrimination, injustice and domestic violence in a male-dominated society.

Considering the points mentioned previously, the primary concern of this paper is to compare two Latin American boom novels, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2006) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *Recollection of Things to Come* (1996) by Elena Garro, to two Latin American post-boom novels, *The House of the Spirits* (1993) by Isabel Allende and *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992) by Laura Esquivel. Specifically, it aimed to explore and discuss the status of women against the depiction of patriarchy to determine women denigration in the two boom novels as to women empowerment in the two post-boom novels. Sultan and Yahaya (2020) define empowerment as "the power and the freedom of self that an individual receives". Implicit in women empowerment is women achieving control over their own lives and delineating their own agenda, and in the process, emancipating women's marginal and inferior position as a gender (Deere and Leal, 2014). Hence, with the proper conception and awareness of women's rights and the effects of patriarchy, women empowerment follows, which paves the way for the rediscovery and re-evaluation of women's status, position, and value in society.

Methodology

This research utilizes content analysis, and the four selected Latin American narratives, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*,

Recollections of Things to Come, *The House of the Spirits*, and *Like Water for Chocolate*, are used as key texts. Content analysis is the research tool used to identify patterns in certain words, themes, or concepts by systematically collecting data from a set of texts, whether oral, written, or visual (Luo, 2019). The selected texts are read, re-read, and analyzed using the concept of Simone de Beauvoir in her magnum opus, *The Second Sex*, that woman has been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to man through her relegation to being man's "Other." Beauvoir's (2011) quintessential assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (p.330) is both a statement of women's oppression and freedom; hence, she sought to empower women, improve their living conditions, and develop their capacities to participate in public affair, which is a world where women had been excluded for the most part (Grimwood, 2008). From the fundamental ideas of Beauvoir and the feminist lens, this paper used these concepts to analyze the selected narratives that have important and considerable implications for the objective of this study.

Results and Discussion

Ademiluka (2018) denotes patriarchy as a system where males dominate over females as manifested and maintained through socialization in society. Due to the historical connections and common roots in colonialism and European dominance, Western patriarchy and Latin American patriarchy have similarities in placing men in positions of power while women are subordinated—men are assigned roles in public life while women are relegated to domestic responsibilities (Prado, 2005). Men, too, dominate politics and leadership. Yet, while Latin American, Western patriarchal norms are more on instituted systems of power and privilege. Women in Latin America have been subjugated and have experienced a number of gendered violence that have left them damaged and subordinated to men (Wilson, 2014).

Women Denigration in the Boom Novels versus Women Empowerment in the Post-Boom Novels

While there has been improvement in women's welfare in the public sphere, many others still experience denigration because their responsibilities as women have not been changed as seen in the lens of societal expectations (Rosaldo and Lamphere in Dionaldo and Soluta, 2021). Gnanaprakasan (2018) avers that the circumstances of these women who have been denigrated, marginalized, and neglected in society "are destructive and have multiple shades of evolution and understanding". In the globalization era, it is necessary to strengthen women's role in the economic, social, and political domains to empower them (Khalid, Ali, Noman, & Begam, 2015).

Among the denigrated women in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are Ursula Iguaran, Remedios the Beauty, Pilar Ternera, and Petra Cotes. Other minor characters from the book follow the same subjection, as in the personas of Santa Sofia de la Piedad, Amaranta, Rebecca, Fernanda del Carpio, and Renata Remedios. Consonantly, Julia Andrade and Isabel Moncada in Elena Garro's *Recollections of Things to Come* experience the same denigration as they are subjected in a society oppressive to women.

One Hundred Years of Solitude paints the history of Colombia and Latin America in general as people struggle with colonialism and the coming of modernity; thus, the female characters in the work have no say but to submit to the demands of their fathers or husbands, who in their ridiculous temper and state of mind bring them destruction and suffering. The novel, too, is laden with women who are oppressed, subordinated, or considered secondary characters. However, when looked closely, they all play significant roles in the rise and fall of the Buendia family in the novel.

A critical character in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is Ursula Iguaran, who is portrayed to be a submissive, loyal wife and a caring, motherly figure who has always secured her family's welfare by being in service to them even to the point that she fears of being rendered useless by her increasingly

growing family when she becomes blind. She yields to her husband's unreasonable demands, and when Jose Arcadio Buendia fell into insanity and exchanged three colonial coins "from a chest of golds coins that her father had put together over an entire life of privation" for a useless magnifying glass, she had to submit and could not protest (p.3). She follows the stereotypical role of a wife busying herself with chores at home, that while she "and the children broke their back in the garden, her husband acquired the habit of talking to himself walking through the house without paying attention to anyone" (p.4).

Further, when Jose Arcadio Buendia blames her for his act of killing Prudencio Aguilar, and orders her to take off her chastity pants to prove that he is not impotent as his victim claimed. Ursula cannot object, for she "had no doubt about her husband's decision" to take her virginity despite her unwillingness to make love to him (p.22). This implies that Ursula acquiesces and obeys without question the demands of her husband. Beauvoir (2011) writes that through marriage, a woman reduces into the property of her husband because "she herself forms a part of the patrimony of a man" (p.105), who considers her "a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic object, an Other through whom he seeks himself" (p. 93). Ursula is subordinated and exemplified as a wife complying with the sexual whims of her husband, who considers her as his possession.

Though Ursula is able to witness the growth and decline of her family by having reached an age up to the sixth generation, her role in the novel becomes non-essential, being remembered only as a tender of the flocks she raises and the vegetables she grows herself, running some business to make ends meet, and taking care of her family until her death. By the end of the novel, she becomes senile, and everyone in her family disregards her. Ursula's worth diminishes, and she dies while her great-great-granddaughter and great-great-grandson toy upon her, hiding her "in a closet in the pantry where rats could have eaten her" (p.341).

Another woman character depicted as subjugated is Remedios the Beauty, whose story is one depressing example of a woman's lot being considered as an 'Other'. Beauvoir (2011) asserts that "Marriage has always been presented in radically different ways for men and for women. The two sexes are necessary for each other, but this necessity has never fostered reciprocity" (p. 105). Remedios is married off before getting over the habits of childhood, with "barely enough time to teach her how to wash herself, get dressed by herself, and understand the fundamental business at home" (p.79). Remedios has no idea about her role as a wife and is too immature to be in such a position. Her body is not yet ready to procreate, and it is the selfish act of Aurelio Buendia, driven by the influence of patriarchy where women cannot escape the ties of marriage, that leads to Remedios' early demise. She dies before her wedding, "poisoned by her own blood, with a pair of twins crossed in her stomach" (p.86).

By the same token, Pilar Ternera is raped at fourteen; Petra Cotes is shared in bed by Aureliano Segundo and Jose Arcadio Segundo; and Amaranta Ursula is implied to have been raped by her nephew, Aureliano. While the male characters objectify the previously mentioned women, the other female characters like Santa Sofia de la Piedad, Amaranta, Rebecca, Fernanda del Carpio, and Renata Remedios are stuck in a myriad of domestic affairs. Beauvoir (2011) mentions in her book *The Second Sex* that marriage "is forced much more tyrannically upon the young girl than upon the young man... marriage enslaves her to a man, but it makes her a mistress of a home" (pp. 419-420). Beauvoir explains that wives carry the duties to serve their husbands, maintain the house, and take care of the children while depriving themselves of their interests and happiness outside their homes.

As most similar to the other women characters in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the above-mentioned women representatives are pressed with the domestic chores and child-rearing and are dependent or subordinate to the male characters in the narrative. Although they make a considerable impact in driving the plot of the story, their

roles are limited and are made to diminish throughout the novel. The male characters become the focus, which merits them as more important than the women characters who are less empowered or are not influential.

Recollections of Things to Come sketches a politically difficult 1920's when the lives of a Mexican community, where their families, including themselves, are set away and alienated from other communities (Knapp, 1990). In Garro's text, the position and challenges faced by women in Mexico are depicted, often symbolized through the figure of La Malinche. La Malinche is a historical and mythological character who has come to represent a negative image of women in Mexican society. During the time of Garro's novel, La Malinche, a Nahua woman who acted as an interpreter, advisor, and intermediary to a Spanish conquistador, had been settled in Mexican history as a symbol of deceit. In the novel, Julia and Isabel become the present La Malinche that the people of Ixtepec hold reliable for the deaths from the murderous rage and military atrocities of General Rosas, a brutish tyrant who dominates and imposes order in Ixtepec along with his troops.

Julia Andrade follows an amiss image of a woman through becoming tied by her relationship to General Rosas. She is wrongfully held responsible for the unfavorable conditions or events that befall her hometown, most notably for some men hanging from the trees by the road. The people's detestation towards General Rosas' acts of violence channels to Julia as if she were the reason for everything evil that happens to the town. As the narrator of the novel suggests, "in those days, it was Julia who determined all our destinies, and we blamed her for the smallest of our misfortunes" (p.20). Thus, as can be seen in Julia's position, General Francisco Rosas personifies the patriarchal society by controlling the town of Ixtepec through the orders he imposes and the fear he creates. He beats and slaps his mistress and characterizes barbarity through the many killings that have occurred in Ixtepec since his arrival, including the bodies that hang in the trees, "women whose heads had been shattered by gun-butts and men whose faces were mangled by kicking" (p. 157).

Similarly, Isabel Moncada, a young woman from an established old bourgeois family, becomes a replication of Julia in betraying her people and her family for having a relationship with General Rosas. The instant that General Rosas bids Isabel come with him to Hotel Jardin and she obliges while at Doña Carmen's party, she immediately alienates herself from her family and the people of Ixtepec. Identically, in the second part of the narrative, Isabel, whose name is now associated with betrayal for sleeping with General Rosas, is in a quagmire as her people frown upon their relationship. This romance becomes Isabel's ultimate downfall, and her being transformed into a rock, in the end, provides her a permanent exit from the shame and condemnation brought about by the established standard of the society that wrongly places women at the root of all trouble.

Elena Garro's *Recollections of Things to Come* advocates two women as the main characters in the story, but just like the women in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, they are put on the sideline with men dominating them or their actions discredited. Both Julia and Isabel emerge as General Rosas' mistresses, with the former in the first part of the narrative and the latter in the second part. Neither Julia nor Isabel openly rejects their situation as paramours of the general; instead, they have understood their role and status as the general's subjects by living under the same roof with him and conforming to his fickleness and fantasy. In her book *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir (2011) writes,

the woman herself recognizes that the universe as a whole is masculine; it is men who have shaped it and ruled it and who still today dominate it... she grasps herself as passive opposite to these human faced gods who set goals and standards (p. 723).

By going against the established standards of their family and society, Julia and Isabel shoulder the harsh weight that women suffer because of the faulty beliefs and traditions that people around them reinforce. As evidenced in Elena Garro's *Recollections of Things to Come*, patriarchy is shown in how

women are subjected to and made to obey the oppressive laws of their society. Beauvoir (2011) asserts that throughout history, "men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchate, they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the other" (p. 159). Men incessantly imposed themselves, and women's position has suited the male's ontological and moral ambitions. By representing everything that the opposite sex wants, women are objectified and made into men's possession. Garro's narrative explores Beauvoir's ideas by exhibiting women who are unfortunately involved in the many crises of the era that situates them and are violated by men by having them accept the abjection to which they have been reduced.

Contrastingly, Isabel Allende's main characters, Clara and Blanca, alongside Transito Soto, Nivea, and Ferula, in her work *The House of the Spirits*, demonstrate as empowered women who combat the subjugation they encounter. Likewise, this empowerment reflects in Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* in the persona of Tita de la Garza. The protagonists in both novels are women who have asserted their rights and fought for freedom over men or elements that try to oppress them. They are strong women who undergo changes from being weak to becoming empowered and are capable of controlling and attaining their prospects in life.

In *The House of the Spirits*, Isabel Allende highlights the plight of women at the mercy of their male partners in twentieth-century Latin America. The female characters, seen in the characters of Clara and Blanca, are only valued for their roles and potentials as a mother and a housewife, and they are not free to make decisions. While the women protagonists in Allende's novel experience violence and oppression from the men around them, their innate strength and power are highlighted as they battle the circumstances that befall them. Each of the women characters is unique in reacting to the domination that their oppressor or male counterparts subject them. Though silence, curses, rebuttal, and even love

are some of the responses they give to counteract the shaming, maltreatment, and violence they receive, making them seem weak, their reactions prove catastrophic to those who make their lives both difficult and abominable.

Clara del Valle Trueba, the central character in the story, is a strong woman who fights the violence and control that Esteban, her husband, directs to her. She does not succumb to his cruelty. Even when she was young, she already learned the subtlety of self-imposed silence she embraces whenever she wants to. The same silence by "not showing any sign that she was listening to the stream of curses issuing from Esteban's lips" (pp. 170-171) becomes her response to her husband when he inflicts violence on her. When Esteban hits her and causes her to lose several teeth, she stops talking to him until the day she dies. She also "*stopped using her married name and removed the fine gold wedding ring that he had placed on her finger twenty years before, on that memorable night when Barrabas, her dog, was killed with a butcher's knife*" (p. 201). Clara's self-assertion is seen in her passivity and silence that creates a substantial effect on Esteban as his "exaggerated love for her was without a doubt the most powerful emotion of his life, greater by far than his rage and pride" (p.130).

Clara's stance and regard on the violence that Esteban gives her is a combat in the form of escaping her husband's cruelty in a civil yet effective way, and as Beauvoir (2011) puts it in her work, *The Second Sex*, "she no longer seeks to drag him into the realms of immanence but to emerge into the light of transcendence" (p. 849). Clara's response is a clear testament that she is not complacent to the lowly position that Esteban is trying to impose on her. Such stubbornness is later shared by Blanca, Clara and Esteban's daughter, who easily adapts to her forced married life, and leaves her husband, Satigny, when she discovers his debauchery. Likewise, Blanca "*managed not to ask her father for anything, so as not to give him the least opportunity to humiliate her*" by making and selling creches and teaching children with down syndrome (p.279). Beauvoir (2011) notes that "worth is not a given essence: it is the result of a favorable

development" (p. 831), and Blanca, as portrayed, sets a model for a woman character who manages to earn the confidence in her own work and ability, which is not primarily given to her in her society.

Some other female characters in *The House of the Spirits* who manifest strength by being independent and free from the restraints of men is Transito Soto, who bears no commitment to men despite serving them for their pleasure; Nivea, a suffragette who denounces the inequality that handicaps women; and Ferula, whose curse of eternal loneliness to Esteban manifested. The situations of these female personas lead them to redefine themselves in a world where men lord over them. Further, the adverse effects that patriarchy has on their status force them to find and choose their independence in a society where men curtail their freedom and let women assume themselves as Other—which Beauvoir (2011) expounds as an attempt on woman "to freeze her as an object and doom her to immanence, since her transcendence will be forever transcended by another essential and sovereign consciousness (p. 37)."

Conversely, Laura Esquivel writes about women in nineteenth-century Mexico in her novel, *Like Water for Chocolate*, which exhibits the lives of every Mexican woman at home to be bound to household chores and the routines of their every waking day. Esquivel recognizes that the world in her work "and its language comes from her Mexican heritage of fiercely independent women, who created a woman's culture within the social prison of marriage" (Valdés, 1995). Rightly so, the female characters in Esquivel's novel have power over men, can make decisions of their own, and defy the norms of society.

Though the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel is dominated by women as featured in their constricting roles of domestic life, patriarchy substantiates when Mama Elena takes over the De La Garza ranch the moment her husband dies, and she espouses the role of a patriarch among her daughters and constituents. Hence, the novel depicts women being oppressed and subjected by the family traditions which the patriarchal society

sustains through other women. The main protagonist Tita de la Garza is put within the domestic shackles of her mother because of the illogical family tradition that the youngest daughter cannot marry. Her seemingly unfulfillable path to marriage or being with the man she loves becomes one of the main conflicts in the story as "she knew then that it would be her lot in life to be denied marriage" (p.6). Tita's voice is stifled, and in the mother-daughter hierarchy, Tita is the disadvantaged one as she is forced to be silent and not express her opinions.

The novel initially portrays Tita as outwardly submissive to her mother, who dominates her life from the very beginning. Later in the book, there is an implication that she tends to rebel and denounce the power that Mama Elena, as head of the house, wields on her. This can be seen in the way Mama Elena tells her that Tita does not have any opinion in marrying Pedro since, as a tradition, she must take care of her mother until the day she dies. Nevertheless, she contradicts Mama Elena, and her willful disregard to what has been a long-established belief reflects that of Beauvoir's (2011) idea in her work *The Second Sex*, as the author claims that woman has the autonomous freedom as "she discovers and chooses herself" (p. 37). Tita's defiance by questioning the suffocating imposed rules of Mama Elena on the way she should act and do her role as a daughter and a woman incites Tita's initial steps toward self-assertion and autonomy.

Tita's going back to nurse her immobilized mother despite the latter disowning her, and the fact that Tita has the choice of remaining in John's house where she is free proves not only Tita's maturity but at the same time her unprecedented power over Mama Elena. She has no fear of her anymore, and she knows that she has control over herself and the things that are about to come. While Mama Elena becomes bitter about her lost love and metamorphosizes into a heartless and impervious mother until her death and her return as a spirit, Tita uses her energy for love, freedom, and rediscovery of her identity. Tita's firm will and sense of control enable her to banish the domineering spirit of Mama Elena forever and free herself of any guilt. Tita's new

sense of power and control is further manifested by how she clashes with Rosaura, finally fulminating her long-held view of her family's selfish tradition of marriage. She confronts Rosaura, and emphasizes her (Tita's) equal right to marry, adding that Rosaura has "no right to stand between two people who were deeply in love" (p. 213).

Tita journeys in the story commencing as an enfeebled, submissive character and later developing into an unyielding persona who ends up the most triumphant in making her dreams happen, most especially in redeeming the love denied to her by her demoralizing and vindictive mother. To Beauvoir (2011), "if woman discovers herself as the inessential and never turns into the essential, it is because she does not bring about this transformation to herself" (p. 28). Tita has evolved into an empowered woman who eventually escapes the issues of her past and selfish family traditions while voicing her sentiments and opinions. She becomes free from the restrictions of Mama Elena and even Pedro and is finally ready to have control over life and her future with confidence and conviction.

The principal female characters in *The House of the Spirits* and *Like Water for Chocolate* experience restriction in society and have found their way out of their difficult situation. Each of their circumstances has made them stronger to confront and resist the barriers that come their way. With the inner strength they have, they surpass the challenges of patriarchy. In the same way, they regain their rights, freedom, and dignity. As manifested, the contrived reactions of the selected women characters against the violence they encounter from oppression may not have immediate results, but these have proven to be more effective in soliciting the necessary outcomes. Conveying the concepts of Beauvoir (2011), woman "has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and alienation as object; she is not the plaything of contradictory drives; she devises solutions of diverse values in ethical scale" (p. 76). For Beauvoir, society shapes sexuality, and women have to choose a multitude of values in everything they do and fight for the possibility of freedom. The

selected women characters in the novels *The House of the Spirits* and *Like Water for Chocolate* assert their femininity and womanhood and try to find their place in a world where men dominate. Thus, the selected female characters are empowered women who defy patriarchy and push themselves forward to be free from the shackles of power that men enforce.

In a patriarchal colonial Latin American society, women's role was significantly different from that of its counterpart because men occupied positions of authority and power; and if colonial women could exercise such power, much of it would be informal or materialize only at home (Socolow, 2000). Burkett (1977) further remarks that colonial Latin American women engaged in the type of work restricted to specific roles that were considered traditional and appropriate for their gender. Such limiting of women can be seen among the major women characters in the four selected novels, confined to the walls of their homes and expected to do the household chores for these are the roles given to them by the dictates and the politics of the society where they belong.

As evidenced in the works by the four authors, women in the boom novels are denigrated and rendered as secondary characters, as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Recollections of Things to Come*. By contrast, *The House of the Spirits* and *Like Water for Chocolate* draw women characters as empowered and strong women who defy men's subjugation and patriarchy. Additionally, Allende and Esquivel position women as the primary focus in their novels, as opposed to how the women characters are overshadowed in the works by Marquez and Garro.

Conclusion

Patriarchy establishes a system in which women are considered inferior and secondary to men. It reinforces a hierarchical structure where women's voices, perspectives, and contributions are undervalued or even silenced. As a result, patriarchy is the main stumbling block towards women's

advancement and development because it limits women's rights while advancing privileges to men. The women characters in the boom novels, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *Recollections of Things to Come* by Elena Garro, are stereotyped and placed as secondary characters, whereas those in the post-boom, *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende and *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, have successfully defined themselves and are empowered to reject the patriarchal portrayal of women. Despite the unrelenting debunking of patriarchy, the status of women characters is still inferior compared to their male counterparts. In turn, the four works convey similarities in the depiction of the era. Seen in the light of Beauvoir's 'second sex' concepts, these narratives provide a foundation for women to reclaim their agency, challenge oppressive depictions, and work towards a society where their contributions are recognized, valued, and fully integrated.

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