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Cien Años de Soledad (1967) and Isabel Allende's
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Virgins, Mothers, and Whores: Female Archetypes in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad*¹ (1967) and Isabel Allende's *La Casa de los Espíritus*² (1982)

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Abstract: In “Literary Archetypes and Female Role Alternatives: The Woman and the Novel in Latin America,” Jane S. Jaquette divides the female characters in García Márquez’s *Cien Años de Soledad* into three archetypes: Mother, Witch/Mysterious Woman, and Wife/Concubine. Jaquette’s proposal is a departure from the traditional archetypes of women in Latin American literature of the Virgin, the Mother, and the Whore, all of which have their genesis in biblical literature. Unfortunately, Jaquette’s archetypal schema is inadequate, for only a few of *Cien Años*’s characters manage to fit into her three categories; she ignores important main characters that are neither mothers, nor witches, nor wives.

This paper explores the archetypes of the Virgin, the Mother, and the Whore, and how García Márquez applied and bent these traditional female roles in his classic *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967). This paper also explores how García Márquez’s novel laid the groundwork for Isabel Allende’s *La Casa de los Espíritus* (1982), which delved deeply into the psyche of these female archetypes—and broke them.

Keywords: female, archetypes, mother, virgin, whore, female roles

The female archetypes of the Virgin, the Mother, and the Whore have their roots in the Bible and re-surfaced in art and literature during the medieval period. Each of these archetypes was founded on the sexuality of women and used by society to press certain expectations on them. Through the centuries, the presence of the Virgin, the Mother, and the Whore persisted in Latin American literature with very little to no change in the design of medieval originals.

Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* and Isabel Allende's *La Casa de los Espíritus* are two of Latin America's most famous literary family sagas. Each novel follows several generations of characters through the history of its author's country of origin—Colombia for García Márquez and Chile for Allende. While García Márquez's story follows the patriarchal line throughout seven generations, Allende's story follows the matriarchal line through four generations of women and diverges from her predecessor with respect to the roles of female archetypes. García Márquez's female role assignment is innovative when compared with the literature of his time, but at their core, his female characters have the flaw of fundamentally falling into one of three traditional archetypes: Virgin, Mother, and Whore. In Latin American literature, these female archetypes have biblical roots, are based on the sexuality of women, and have persisted through the centuries. This triptych gender division in *Cien Años de Soledad* lays the groundwork for Isabel Allende's more progressive gender roles in *La Casa de los Espíritus*. García Márquez masculinizes these traditional female archetypes in terms of gender roles, but Allende subverts these literary archetypes by creating even stronger, more vocal female characters by obfuscating the limits of each archetype, thus creating characters that have very little in common with their original medieval archetype.

Essentially, Latin American female characters are categorized into the Virgin or Mother archetypes according to their

sexual activity. If they never have sex at all, they fall under the Virgin archetype, thus warranting a societal expectation of certain characteristics related to sexual purity from these virginal women. This is the case with García Márquez's Amaranta Buendía and Allende's Férula Trueba. If women are sexually active but are married with children, they then fall under the Mother archetype. This is the case of García Márquez's Úrsula Iguarán and Allende's Clara del Valle. The Mother category is an extension of the Virgin category in that they are both founded on the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, whose asexual pregnancy makes her both a virgin and a mother, and the Woman Clothed by the Sun, who gives birth to a son in the *Book of Revelations* (McGuire 40, Warner 259). These two archetypes—the Virgin and the Mother—are the basis of *Marianismo*, or Mariology, which Evelyn P. Stevens defines as “a well-defined pattern of beliefs and behaviors centered on popular acceptance of a stereotype of the ideal woman...and the [secular] position of women in society (94, 92). Stevens argues that Latin American women have learned to use *Marianismo* to gain power within their own circle of influence (95). Even though the core of these beliefs lies in the tenet that it is morally and socially acceptable for a woman to have intercourse if she is married, it is still preferable that a woman remain a virgin, such is the case of Mary the Mother of God when she gives birth to Jesus (96).

Historically, women who have sex outside the limits of marriage fall under the Whore archetype, which originated in medieval Christianity. The Whore archetype surged as a “powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity, which associates women with the dangers and degradation of the flesh” (Warner 225). This archetype emerges through the doctrine surrounding the Biblically adulterous Mary Magdalene (Warner 225, 235), and the medieval doctrine sparked by the Whore of Babylon in the *Book of Revelation* (McGuire 26-28). Female characters

that are sexually active outside of marriage, such as Pilar Ternera from *Cien Años de Soledad* and Tránsito Soto from *La Casa de los Espíritus*, are inevitably classified as whores and often associated with prostitution.

Both García Márquez and Allende delve into the psyche of each character, exploring the intimate, darkest desires of women who often appear elsewhere in Latin American literature as stock characters: archetypes. As a result, García Márquez's and Allende's virgins are not chaste young women with the purest of feelings and intentions, their mothers are not perfectly selfless caregivers and obedient Latin American wives, and their whores are not standard prostitutes dressed in red who revel in carnal pleasures while tempting wayward men away from their frigid wives.

Literature Review

Authors and literary theorists have studied these archetypes either individually or in pairs. Literary theorist Marina Warner often cites the medieval dichotomy of the Virgin and the Whore when analyzing female archetypes (235), or pairs the Virgin and the Mother (259). Other critics explore the Mother in conjunction with the Whore (Stevens 96) and study each archetype individually (Greeley; Miller and Samples), or attempt unconvincing categories (Jaquette). García Márquez's and Allende's works require a broader study that reaches beyond the customary dichotomies or individualized examinations of these female archetypes; however, for in both literary works virgins, mothers, and whores—as in real life—coexist, thrive and react to each other in both literary works.

The Virgins: Amaranta Buendía and Férula Trueba

The traditional archetype of the Virgin consists of an innocent and sinless maiden who leads a transparent life, free of secrets. Within the Catholic Church, and the popular cult of *Marianismo* it has spawned, the Virgin Mary embodies the ideal by which society expects all women to aspire. The power of the myth of the Virgin, and thereby its archetype, rests solely on the belief of Mary's perpetual virginity and the "connection between a life of perpetual virginity and holiness" (Carroll 15). As Marina Warner explains, "Mary's virginity [is] the premise for the moral perfection of her actions" (239). Therefore, virgins are near perfect and thus purportedly holier and more morally perfect than their married counterparts. This argument is further strengthened by the belief that celibate women are simply more spiritual than married women (Miller and Samples 24). If not for Original Sin, virgins would be holy and perfect enough to ascend into heaven in the flesh as in the Virgin Mary's Assumption. García Márquez satirizes Mary's Assumption with the assumption of Remedios la Bella, a virgin who prefers to run around naked than practice the most basic of social courtesies.

Amaranta Buendía from *Cien Años de Soledad* and Férula Trueba from *La Casa de los Espíritus*, two stalwart old maids in their families, exemplify the association between virginity, holiness, and apparent moral perfection. Despite these characters' diligent works of charity and outward morality, García Márquez and Allende soon make it obvious that these women's virginal holiness and moral uprightness are façades for dark, deeply rooted passions they desperately hide.

Amaranta publicly flaunts her virginity to her niece-in-law and to the world at large. She takes pride in her virginal status, using it to claim due public respect despite her hidden flaws. As Amaranta prepares to die, she makes her mother Úrsula pub-

licly testify to Amaranta's virginity to make it unmistakably clear that she will be as pure in death as she was in birth (Garcia Marquez 337). Amaranta's virginity is a badge of her holiness, and she believes that she deserves everyone's respect for it because, unlike them, she did not give in to the carnal, sinful desire of sex. But, as Arnold Penuel suggests, something deeper is at work in Amaranta's psyche:

Amaranta's fundamental problem is her virtually solipsistic narcissism which resembles that of the infant that has not yet learned that it must accommodate its impulses to the realities of the external world. When Amaranta's pathological narcissism comes into conflict with the uncontrollable realities of the external world, we witness the birth of her pride, which is inordinate precisely because of its defensive nature. (Penuel 552-553)

Amaranta's narcissism prevents her from accepting and permitting the love and planned marriage of her sister Rebecca and Pietro Crespi, the young Italian both sisters love. It is that same narcissism that prevents her wounded pride from recovering from Pietro's rejection, embittering the rest of her life (Garcia Marquez 97). After Rebecca elopes with José Arcadio, Pietro Crespi eventually proposes marriage to Amaranta, but she cruelly rejects him, again and again, to the point that he commits suicide. Penuel explains: "Despite her obvious attraction to Pietro Crespi, the need to salve the deep wound to her pride through revenge has become more imperious than the fulfillment of a dream" (553). Since Pietro did not prefer her to Rebecca in the first place, then his love is not worth accepting; Amaranta will not play second fiddle to anyone. And so, when Gerineldo Márquez proposes to her long after Pietro Crespi's death, she waspishly replies, "I'm not going to marry anyone...much less

you. You love Aureliano so much that you want to marry me because you can't marry him"³ (Garcia Marquez 142). She prefers to face a lifetime of bitter solitude than to be someone's second choice for a wife. Notably, while *amar*, the Spanish word for "love," seems to be embedded in Amaranta's name, so is the term *amara*, which is Spanish for "bitter," (Diccionario rae). Throughout the story, Amaranta's story is woven with different threads of love—unrequited, unfulfilled, and with threads of bitterness, pride and narcissism.

Amaranta's virginity turns out to be even more complex than vengeful narcissism, however. Amaranta's attempt to poison Rebecca a week before her wedding results in the death of Remedios Moscote, Aureliano's pregnant child-bride. As penance for these accidental murders, Amaranta adopts her brother Aureliano's son with Pilar Ternera, Aureliano José, whom Remedios Moscote herself had vowed to adopt and raise as her own. Yet for all her charitable works, Amaranta hides an incestuous attraction that develops as she bathes and sleeps in the same bed with young Aureliano José. Things become serious when Aureliano José, as a young man, comes back from war determined to marry his aunt and adoptive mother. They begin a secret, incestuous, albeit apparently platonic love affair in the wee hours of the morning. "I'm your aunt"⁴ she says while doing nothing to deter him from climbing into her bed naked night after night (Garcia Marquez 152). She eventually breaks off the relationship after his repeated request to marry her. When Amaranta finally dies, she is a virgin, but below the virginal veneer of holiness and morality is an irremediable pathological narcissist, a jealous, vengeful sister, a bitter old maid, a murderess, and an incestuous aunt.

Like Amaranta, Isabel Allende's Férula Trueba also has her own secrets beneath the semblance of a Virgin. Allende places in Férula a deep resentment of her younger brother that stems from gendered expectations after their widowed mother

becomes bed-ridden. Like Amaranta, Férula had shown her love toward her brother by bathing him and sharing the same bed, but after he grew up, Férula clearly recognizes the injustice in the division of labor between socially and culturally assigned gender roles. For a character, whose name in Spanish means “despotic authority or power”⁵ (*Diccionario*), it can only be a source of galling bitterness and frustration to be denied authority over self and destiny because of one’s sex.

It bothered her to have to stay locked up within these walls that stank of medicine and age, to be kept awake at night by the moans of her sick mother... bored, tired, and unhappy while her brother had no taste of such obligations. Before him lay a destiny that was bright, free, and full of promise. He could marry, have children, know what love was.⁶ (Allende 50)

As the only daughter of the family, Férula is expected to take care of her ailing mother, regardless of her personal dreams and aspirations; her life is stunted, and she will never be able to live as she chooses. Meanwhile, her brother Esteban has no limitations on his future whatsoever and is free to leave when he pleases. The following exchange summarizes perfectly their feelings for the other’s social condition: “I would like to have been born a man, so I could leave too,’ [Férula] said, full of hatred. ‘And I would not have liked to be a woman,’ [Esteban] said”⁷ (Allende 50). Férula envies her brother’s freedom because she is trapped at home taking care of her sick mother. Since she cannot savor social freedom on earth, Férula devotes herself to the more attainable goal of heaven while relishing freedoms that are hidden from social scrutiny:

She was a tormented soul. She took pleasure in humiliation and in menial tasks, and since she

believed that she would get to heaven by suffering terrible injustice, she was content to clean her mother’s ulcerated legs... sinking deeply into her stench and wretchedness, even peering into her bedpan... She seemed so perfect that word spread she was a saint. She was cited as an example because of the devotion that she lavished on [her mother]...⁸ (Allende 47)

This passage shows Férula’s brand of virginal holiness, but it also shows that she relishes the “menial tasks” because they serve her agenda. They give her the only freedoms she has: social judgment and justification to hate without guilt. On the surface, Férula is flawless; she is a perfect saint—a perfect woman—at least to the outside world. She appears to be a holy virgin who has “sacrificed her life to care for her mother, and she [has] become a spinster for that reason” (47)⁹. Yet, she hates her mother (53, 47) for forcing this unwanted, self-effacing life on her. She also loathes Esteban for escaping her fate and relishing in every possible way the life she would have had—had she been born a man.

Férula Trueba, like her counterpart Amaranta in *Cien Años de Soledad*, also has a deep secret she desperately hides from the world. Allende describes Férula as a “regal matron, but with a bitter smile on her face that revealed her inner tragedy”¹⁰ (122), and Férula hides that “inner tragedy” under an overbearing pretense of virginal sainthood. Esteban marries Clara Del Valle and at Clara’s invitation, Férula moves in with the recently wed couple. But in a scene that is reminiscent of Amaranta Buendía bathing her young nephew Aureliano José, Férula’s feelings for Clara soon evolve beyond those conventionally felt for a sister-in-law:

Férula’s affection for her sister-in-law became a passion, a dedication to waiting on her... For Férula... looking after Clara was like being in

heaven. She bathed her in jasmine and basil water, rubbed her with cologne, powdered her with a swan's-down puff...¹¹ (Allende 109)

After her mother's death, Férula's passion for Clara becomes the main point of tension of her life: she lavishes Clara with an intense love that is both homoerotic and deeply jealous. This escalated to the point that Férula "abhorred the moment her brother returned home from the country and filled the house with his presence"¹² (110)—even though Esteban is Clara's true husband and the father of her children. In fact, by Férula's own admission during confession to her priest, she insinuates that she wants to have a sexual relationship with Clara:

You don't know the thoughts that can run through the mind of a single woman...a virgin who has never been with a man...at night...I go to my sister-in-law's room—I tiptoe in and watch her while she sleeps...I want to climb into bed with her and feel the warmth of her skin and her gentle breathing.¹³ (Allende 111)

Férula uses her virgin social status to hide her same-sex preferences. Férula's "inner tragedy" is not that she is a lesbian, but that she lives in a time and place where homosexuality is considered a scandalous sin. More importantly, it is a sin that, if expressed, would prevent her from reaping the rewards of a heaven she denigrated herself to achieve. She has no choice but to live the lonely life of an unfulfilled virgin whose only purpose and expectation is to sacrifice self and true happiness for a veneer of life-long holiness and moral uprightness.

Both Garcia Marquez and Allende show that the expectations of the Virgin Mary archetype are neither natural nor reasonably attainable for mortal women because they lead to miserable, hidden lives full of hatred and bitterness, as they do with

Férula Trueba and Amaranta Buendía.

The Mothers: Úrsula Iguarán and Clara Del Valle

As discussed previously, the myth of the Virgin Mary also includes the archetype of the Mother. Evelyn P. Stevens defines this aspect of *Marianismo* as, "the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are...morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men" (91). According to Thérèse McGuire, the twelfth century religious foundation for this female superiority is based on the belief that the Woman Clothed with the Sun in the *Book of Revelations* "symbolized Mary, the Mother of God" and in fact symbolized the Church itself (McGuire 40). Andrew Greeley further explains why Mary as the Mother is a symbol of feminine superiority:

[Mary] is the servant of the Lord, the agent of Yahweh...She represents the rich, abundant, variegated creativity with which Yahweh has blessed the earth. Therefore, she reveals to us the life-giving, the feminine dimension of Yahweh. (Greeley 112)

The myth of the Mother—or the Madonna—represents the feminine, unconditionally loving nature of God, as opposed to God's angry and vengeful nature depicted in the Old Testament. In the Catholic Church, "The Virgin...represents motherhood in its fullness and perfection" (Warner 192). In addition, "[Mary] is the Queen of Heaven. Yet in reality her Queenship is simultaneous with her Maternity" (Daly 265). So it follows that, according to Catholic thought, Mary's power as "Queen" originates from her status of Mother. This is a type of power that Amaranta's and Férula's virginal "holiness" never affords them.

The archetype of the Mother extends to Latin American women and it is prevalent in Latin American literature. Stevens

explains that Latin American women are expected to be constant exemplars of spiritual strength, abnegation, humility and sacrifice: “No self-denial is too great for the Latin American woman, no limit can be divined to her vast store of patience with the men of her world” (94). The image of the Woman Clothed by the Sun, with her crown of twelve stars, standing triumphant over the crushed head of the serpent brings home the expectations of superhuman moral strength placed on mothers, even in the face of the flaws of their husbands (Stevens 94).

Gabriel García Márquez moves away from *Marianismo* with his main character, Úrsula Iguarán, even if at first, she seems to be the archetypal obedient and faithful wife. For instance, she goes along with her husband José Arcadio Buendía’s ideas of spending her money on fantastical experiments and useless instruments. She probably would not have cared much, except he spends money from a chest of gold coins Úrsula’s father left her as an inheritance, which immediately draws attention to the fact that women in García Márquez’s world have the right to inherit and dispose of personal large sums of money. Úrsula humors her husband and lets him trade in the farm animals she is raising for the future. But Úrsula’s rise to power has nothing to do with *Marianismo*, and this begins to show when José Arcadio Buendía decides to abandon Macondo out of frustration for not finding a route out of the town he founded with his wife:

“Since no one wants to leave, we’ll leave all by ourselves.”

Úrsula did not become upset.

“We will not leave,” she said. “We will stay here, because we have had a son here.”

“We have still not had a death,” he said. “A person does not belong to a place until there is someone dead under the ground.”

Úrsula replied with soft firmness:

“If I have to die for the rest of you to stay here, I will die.”¹⁴ (García Márquez 14)

This dialogue represents a competition for power between husband and wife, and it is a match that Úrsula wins handily. José Arcadio first assumes Úrsula will go along with his decision: “we’ll leave by ourselves” is neither a question nor a request. But Úrsula lives up to the root meaning of her name—“bear” from the Latin word *ursus*—and displays a strength of character and biting humor that will be characteristic of her during the entire novel: “If I have to die... I will die.” (García Márquez 14). Of course she does not die, but rather she tells her husband, “Instead of going around thinking about your crazy inventions, you should be worrying about your sons... Look at the state they’re in, running wild just like donkeys”¹⁵ (14). Traditionally, it is the Latin American mother’s responsibility to ascertain that her sons are raised properly (Stevens 97), to make certain they are not “running wild just like donkeys,” and it is a responsibility she is not expected to share with her husband. But Úrsula does not care for this duty, and she outright blames José Arcadio Buendía for the neglect of their children. Even more remarkable, he seems to accept they are his responsibility: “All right... Tell them to come help me take the things out of the boxes”¹⁶ (García Márquez 15). And from that moment on, José Arcadio Buendía raises their boys, teaching them to read and write, and to work in his laboratory alongside him. If Úrsula has anything to do with their upbringing, it happens off-page.

Úrsula is a strong mother, like the she-bear her name typifies, and she is willing to search the world for a lost child, but she is also a mother who can abandon her newborn baby girl. When her oldest son, José Arcadio leaves Macondo with a group of gypsies and no one knows his whereabouts, Úrsula walks further and further away inquiring insistently for her lost son. Eventually, she walks so far away from Macondo, she simply does not

go back: “José Arcadio Buendía did not discover that his wife was missing until eight o’clock at night...[when he] went to see what was wrong with little Amaranta, who was getting hoarse from crying”¹⁷ (García Márquez 35). García Márquez makes it hard to be too judgmental of Úrsula’s mothering skills; she abandoned one child to seek another whom she thought needed her most. But perhaps this experience is not entirely about Úrsula’s mothering techniques. Perhaps García Márquez made this an opportunity for gender role swapping. Except for getting a wet nurse, García Márquez writes, José Arcadio Buendía “took care of little Amaranta like a mother”¹⁸ (35). In a clear reversal of gender roles, when Úrsula finally comes back, she comes back with a crowd of new citizens for Macondo, and she “found the route that her husband had been unable to discover in his frustrated search for the great inventions”¹⁹ (García Márquez 37). It was Úrsula who found the much-needed road out of Macondo, and it was she who brought new blood to strengthen Macondo’s newly founded society.

Throughout the novel, Úrsula consistently shows she is a logical, resourceful woman who does not wait for a man to financially support her and her children. At one point, one of her sons spends the family’s fortune, but Úrsula does not stop to regret the bad times of poverty:

Aided by Santa Sofía de la Piedad, she gave a new drive to her pastry business and in a few years not only recovered the fortune that her son had spent in the war, but she once more stuffed with pure gold the gourds buried in the bedroom... “As long as God gives me life...there will always be money in this madhouse.”²⁰ (García Márquez 151)

García Márquez created a remarkable female character who is not only strong and dominating, but who is also *right*. The

counsel she gives the generations of men in her family is backed by sound reasoning and logic, as opposed to the men who are, in Luis Harss’s words, “criaturas caprichosas y quiméricas, soñadores siempre propensos a la ilusión fútil, capaces de momentos de grandeza pero fundamentalmente débiles y descarriados,” (402). What is significant is that traditionally it is the women who are the “whimsical and chimeric creatures,” the “dreamers of futile illusions... [the] weak and wayward,” while the men “tend to be solid, sensible and constant, models of order and stability.” García Márquez inverts these roles, to the extent that he declares, “My women are masculine”²¹—which unfortunately somewhat confirms that he thought women are the weaker sex while men are the “solid, sensible, and constant” sex (402). And so, as Harss points out, in García-Márquez’s world, men and women are represented as objects: “men are the fragile butterflies that burn their wings, women are not people, but a strong force” (403). This characterization is true of all the women in *Cien Años de Soledad*: each one is significantly stronger than her male counterpart. As in *Marianismo*, men are the weaker sex. And so, with Úrsula, García Márquez plays and stretches the archetype of the Mother, showing that not all mothers are illogical, financially and emotionally dependent, and not all mothers are “good” mothers. Úrsula is the strongest of all the women, moving and shifting the plot around her, as García Márquez stretches the Mother archetype out of proportion. Isabel Allende, on the other hand, completely breaks the Mother archetype.

Allende’s Clara Del Valle is emotionally independent to the point that she is detached from her children and her husband. Her emotional attachments are not of this world. She spends her time communicating with spirits, consulting a small, three-legged table, and playing the piano telekinetically: “Clara had no interest in domestic matters. She wandered from one room to the next without ever being the least surprised to find

everything in perfect order and sparkling clean”²² (143). Unlike most Latin American female characters, Clara is not concerned with her husband, instead she treats him like a child—or a cat, in her case—which is a marked trait of *Marianismo*. To Esteban’s unending rage, “Clara treated him with the same kindness she displayed toward everybody else. She spoke to him in the same cajoling tones she used to address her cats, and was incapable of telling whether he was tired, sad, euphoric, or eager to make love”²³ (Allende 144). Furthermore, Clara is not bothered by Esteban’s many infidelities, nor does she use these infidelities to demonstrate her spiritual superiority over him. In fact, when Esteban makes it a point to announce that he visits a brothel, Clara’s only response, to his increasing frustration, is “that it was better than raping the peasant girls”²⁴ (Allende 201). And so unlike so many Latin American mothers, Clara’s concern is not her husband, keeping him at home and away from other women, or even making him happy. She is an ethereal character more concerned with communicating with spirits than with her husband and children. Clara’s spirituality is free from the burdens of religious dogmas and their mythological virgin mothers.

As a mother, however, Allende’s Clara del Valle is as absent from her children’s lives as she is from her husband’s bed. Her two sons are sent away to a British boarding school, and when Clara suddenly realizes that her daughter Blanca has grown up, she sits her down to explain menstrual cycles, to which Blanca responds: “Don’t worry, Mama, I’ve already had it once a month for the past year...”²⁵ (Allende 160). Not only does Clara leave her daughter to figure out menstruation on her own, but also when Blanca takes on a lover from a lower class—a fact both women know will enrage Esteban—Clara does nothing to stop this relationship or the ensuing pregnancy. As long as it is had for love, extramarital sex is acceptable to Clara; social and civil statuses are irrelevant.

Clara del Valle is simply an independent woman with interests outside the home who also happens to be a mother. She is neither self-sacrificing, nor obedient, nor attached, but this does not mean she is not loving or caring in her own way. Clara shows her love for her children by letting them live their own lives with very little supervision, religious structure, or meddling. She does not worry for them, knowing that they will make mistakes – like Blanca getting pregnant out of wedlock. She does not become upset or obsessed over their mistakes, instead she lets them learn and grow. Clara does not judge her children, does not criticize them, much less beat them, but she does offer them her smiles, laughter, friendship and loving support at every turn of their lives. Clara does not permit *Marianismo’s* precepts to obstruct or hinder her life or her enjoyment of interfamily relationships.

The Whores: Pilar Ternera and Tránsito Soto

The Whore is an archetype that also has its genesis in twelfth century interpretation of the Whore of Babylon in the *Book of Revelations*. The antithesis of the Woman Clothed by the Sun, the Whore of Babylon is described with great detail by John the Beloved:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk... The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was

written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations." And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. (Revelation 17:1-2, 4-6)

This description identifies the Whore of Babylon "with all the evils of the world and with iniquity in general (McGuire 28), including fornication and murder. She is lavishly dressed and decked out in gems, which suggest the idea that any type of excess—particularly in the form of wealth and drink—is a sin. The Whore of Babylon tempts kings to "commit fornication" with her, and in this way she enthusiastically leads them to their destruction. These depictions have been translated into one of two archetypes that women fall under. As McGuire explains:

The contrast between the Whore of Babylon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun evokes the message handed down from the time of Hesiod that women fit into one of two categories: that of Eve who was believed to have tempted Adam or that of Mary who embodies all that is good. (45)

The Whore of Babylon, the symbol of all wicked and sinful women, is a magnified version of Old Testament Eve, through whose disobedience to God all sin and evil came into the world. The archetypal dichotomy of the Whore and the Virgin/Mother then, has made it impossible for women who seek the same sexual freedoms as men to fit into society other than as malignant whores. The word "fornication" throughout the *Revelations* passage implies that women who enjoy sex are wicked whores, tempting and leading men unto their destruction. Stevens further explains the implication of this archetype in Latin American women's sex lives: "The ideal dictates not only premarital chastity for all women, but postnuptial frigidity. Good women

do not enjoy coitus; they endure it when the duties of matrimony require it" (Stevens 96). Clearly, the Whore of Babylon does not see sex as a "duty," and any woman in Latin American literature who dares to think likewise earns herself the epithet of "whore." And so, women in Latin America are trapped in a philosophical conundrum where their sex lives are concerned: sex is forbidden to women, but when the duties of marriage require them to yield their bodies to sex, it is for their husband's enjoyment only.

For most Latin American authors, the Whore is the most archetypal character, and García Márquez himself does very little to create a complex character in Pilar Ternera outside the archetype's parameters. García Márquez's depiction of Pilar Ternera is not very flattering: "Around that time a merry, foul-mouthed, provocative woman came to the house to help with the chores, and she knew how to read the future in cards"²⁶ (25). The Spanish *mujer alegre*—or "merry woman"—is a euphemism for a whore. The subtext of these images is that Pilar is a sexually loose woman who enjoys sex, which is what makes her "merry." It is also understood that, like a man, she has more freedom to be foul-mouthed and to dress "provocatively"—but this freedom has cost her a good name and a good reputation. And this is the kind of life Pilar Ternera is content with, despite the potential dangers such a loose sexuality can cause. When Arcadio—whom Pilar Ternera knows is her son even if he does not—grabs and tries to rape her, she is horrified at the prospect of having sexual contact with her own son, and Arcadio says, "Don't play the saint...After all, everybody knows that you're a whore"²⁷ (115). Pilar does nothing to hide or deny the fact that she *is* a whore, but she is not incestuous. Even in her old age, when she can no longer attract clients, she gladly lends her bedroom to the neighborhood girls who want a place to meet their lovers: "I'm happy knowing that people are happy in [my] bed"²⁸ (157).

García Márquez gives Pilar Ternera a very important

task, and that is to become the “pillar”—the supporting structure—of most of the Buendía clan. Her last name, “Ternera” is a word that means “heifer,”—a young cow—and Pilar Ternera produces offspring as a cow does. In fact, she is the most fruitful of all the women in *Cien Años de Soledad*; not even Úrsula comes close with her three biological children. Pilar Ternera produces a son by each of the original Buendía sons, and the entire lineage of the rest of the Buendías can be traced back to both women: Úrsula, the Mother, and Pilar Ternera, the Whore. García Márquez plays with these archetypes, using them as a dichotomy of his novel’s genealogy to show what traditional Latin America considers to be two conflicting and irreconcilable social roles of women. For how can a woman, he seems to ask, become a Mother without first becoming a Whore?

García Márquez’s Pilar Ternera, despite her initial colorful story line, does not progress as a character. Toward the end of her life, which spans over 145 years, Pilar Ternera is a madam with her own little brothel of young prostitutes in the dying town of Macondo, where she dies “as she watched over the entrance of her paradise”²⁹ (404)—i.e., her brothel. Sadly, there is no evidence to support that Pilar Ternera progresses or prospers in any way throughout the epic novel socially, emotionally or financially. She is introduced as a cheap small-town prostitute, and she continues as such until the end, with not much of a character arc. Pilar’s signature sentiment toward her profession is of simple acceptance: she enjoys sex and enjoys making men happy in bed. Through García Márquez, the archetype of the Whore begins to progress, however. Even though Pilar Ternera is a minor character in terms of on-page presence, her maternal role is very important throughout the progression of the story, thus making it easier for Allende to create a truly progressive Whore character.

In *La Casa de los Espíritus*, Tránsito Soto, like Pilar Ternera,

is a small-town prostitute, but with a twist. As a twelve-year-old prostitute working in the local brothel The Red Lantern, she is the best dancer, yet she has something that is not often seen in a prostitute of any age: ambition. “I’m not going to spend my life in the Red Lantern...” Tránsito tells Esteban, “I’m going to the capital, because I want to be rich and famous”³⁰ (77). Tránsito Soto has even less on-page presence than Pilar Ternera, but her character arch, unlike Pilar Ternera’s, is strong and well-defined. Even in this first scene, she has the courage and self-confidence to borrow money to buy “a train ticket, a red dress, high-heeled shoes, a bottle of perfume, and a permanent,”³¹ (78). Allende disarms the reader with this young girl’s ambition and knack for planning, so that it is hard to tack onto Tránsito all the negativity associated with the Whore of Babylon: surely such an archetype does not apply to an optimistic preteen down on her luck but who seeks betterment.

Tránsito never considers another life other than that of a prostitute; throughout the novel, she is happy and satisfied with her position in life and society. When Esteban catches up with her years later, she is working at a fancier brothel in the city, where she is considered the best in her profession. Her reasons for this are even more captivating: “I bring enthusiasm to this profession,”³² (131). With the exception of *Revelations*’s the Whore of Babylon, who delights in destructive fornication, it is hard to imagine a prostitute being enthusiastic about anything, much less her ill-reputed thankless profession. By this point, however, Tránsito has grown up to be a beautiful woman, one who possesses a strong sense of self and an unbreakable determination to never depend on any man, especially a pimp:

But why give a man something that is so hard to earn? In that respect women are really thick... They need a man to feel secure but they don’t realize that the one thing they should be afraid of

is men. They don't know how to run their lives. They have to sacrifice themselves for the sake of someone else. Whores are the worst, *patrón*, believe me. They throw away their lives working for some pimp, they smile when he beats them, feel proud when he's well dressed...³³ (131)

In this passage, Tránsito Soto takes *Marianismo* to task. She criticizes women who feel they must depend on a man for safety, arguing that it is men from whom women must protect themselves. And she is indignant at women, particularly whores, who feel they must sacrifice themselves for and take abuse from a man, or pimp, to feel validated. Such a feeling is particularly disturbing since it does not fit a Whore's description to feel as self-sacrificing as a Virgin or abnegated as a Mother. And so, through Tránsito Soto, Allende shows that women who subscribe to the precepts of *Marianismo* are no better than whores, who have the same preoccupations of safety, dependency, and the apparently feminine trait of needing to sacrifice themselves to feel worthy—regardless of whether they are a virgin, a mother, or a whore. Tránsito seems to believe that women self-sacrifice not out of moral superiority but because they feel dependent. Humility, she implies, stems not from spiritual superiority but from lack of self-esteem. The idea of feminine spiritual superiority through abnegation then, is a fallacy and a trap; Allende seems to argue that no man is worth a woman's self-sacrifice, for in the final analysis, all women are treated the same. For instance, Tránsito Soto tells Esteban how she would have lost her teeth had she remained in the Red Lantern (128, 131), the brothel close to Esteban's ranch Las Tres Marías. It is with no small amount of irony then, that it is Clara del Valle, the honored wife and Mother, who loses her teeth when Esteban beats her (214, 223) as a pimp beats one of his whores—a fate Tránsito Soto avoids successfully.

Allende's final demolition of the Whore archetype occurs when Tránsito Soto becomes a savior, much like the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ, who save people from Hell's torture. When Tránsito Soto is a middle-aged businesswoman and the madam of her own high-end brothel with a clientele that includes high-ranking officials in the Chilean government, she becomes Esteban's last hope for getting his granddaughter out of the Chilean military's torture chambers, where she is systematically raped and beaten. By this time Tránsito Soto has reached the pinnacle of her success and wealth, first by setting up a cooperative of male and female prostitutes, and then turning that cooperative into an elegant hotel that serves as a front for an elite brothel. Tránsito is wealthy, powerfully well connected and, in a complete reversal of gender roles, the one able to locate and deliver Esteban's granddaughter from her captors in two days, something Esteban Trueba is incapable of doing as a patriarch and a Senator.

In the final analysis, Tránsito Soto is the ultimate feminist: she progresses and succeeds on her own, without the help of *Marianismo*. Her divorce from patriarchal religious dogmas empowers her to make her own rules, seek and create her own opportunities, even in a patriarchal society that looks down on her and her chosen profession. Tránsito Soto does not belong to the world of Latin American women so she depends on and answers to no one but herself. Tránsito Soto serves men as a prostitute but she refuses to be subservient to them. When Esteban offers her the capital for her cooperative business venture, she refuses him: "No thanks, patron... There's no point in trading one capitalist for another..."³⁴ (Allende 131). It is a polite rejection, but a rejection nonetheless. What Tránsito actually means, however, is: "It's pointless to trade one pimp for another." Tránsito wants and earns the freedom to choose a life for herself, a freedom neither Férula Trueba the Virgin nor Clara Del Valle the Mother can

ever have.

Conclusion

García Márquez created progressive female characters that paved the way for Allende's extraordinary feminist characters and for advancing her feminist agenda. As Allende stated:

We need to value the feminine... We have to end patriarchy. Women and men have to share the management of the world in equal numbers... We have to start educating people and creating awareness. (Craig 65)

Allende's novel is an empowering corrective contribution to the education about these traditional, overused female archetypes in Latin American literature and culture. The number of conversations about the detrimental effects of rigidly categorizing women must increase. As examples of free and empowered women, even in fiction, spark these conversations, then perhaps the patriarchal system and *Marianismo* will begin to phase out and evolve into more equitable social systems.

Notes

1. One Hundred Years of Solitude
2. The House of the Spirits
3. "No me casaré con nadie... pero menos contigo. Quieres tanto a Aureliano que te vas a casar conmigo porque no puedes casarte con él," (170).
4. "Soy tu tía," (182)
5. "Autoridad o poder despótico"
6. Le molestaba tener que quedarse encerrada entre esas paredes hediondas a vejez y a remedies, desvelada con los gemidos de la enferma... aburrída, cansada, triste, mientras que su hermano ignoraba esas obligaciones. Él podría tener un destino luminoso, libre, lleno de éxitos. Podría casarse, tener hijos, conocer el amor. (55)
7. —Me habría gustado nacer hombre, para poder irme también—dijo [Férula] llena de odio.
—Y a mí no me habría gustado nacer mujer—dijo [Esteban]. (56)
8. Tenía un alma atormentada. Sentía gusto en la humillación y en las labores abyectas, creía que iba a obtener el cielo por el medio terrible de sufrir iniquidades, por eso se complacía limpiando las pústulas de la piernas enfermas de su madre... hundiéndose en sus olores y en sus miserias, escrutando su orinal... Parecía tan perfecta, que llegó a tener fama de santa. La citaban como ejemplo por la dedicación que le prodigaba a [su madre]...(53)
9. "sacrificado su vida por cuidar a la madre y se había quedado soltera por esa cause," (53)
10. "regia matrona, pero tenía un rictus amargo en el rostro que delataba su tragedia interior," (121)
11. El cariño que Férula sentía por su cuñada se transformó en una pasión por cuidarla... Para Férula... atender a Clara

- fue como entrar en la gloria. La bañaba en agua perfumada de albahaca y jazmín, la frotaba con una esponja, la enjabonaba, la friccionaba con agua de colonia, la empolvaba con unos hisopos de plumas de cisne... (109)
12. “detestaba el momento en que su hermano regresaba del campo y su presencia llenaba toda la casa,” (110).
 13. Usted no conoce los pensamientos que pueden haber en la mente de una mujer sola... una virgen que no ha conocido varón... En la noche... voy al cuarto de mi cuñada... entro de puntillas para verla cuando duerme... tengo la tentación de meterme en su cama para sentir la tibieza de su piel y su aliento,” (111).
 14. –Puesto que nadie quiere irse, nos iremos solos.– Úrsula no se alteró.
–No nos iremos –dijo–. Aquí nos quedamos, porque aquí hemos tenido un hijo.
–Todavía no tenemos un muerto–dijo él–. Uno no es de ninguna parte mientras no tenga un muerto bajo la tierra. Úrsula replicó, con una sueave firmeza:
–Si es necesario que yo me muera para que se queden aquí, me muero. (24)
 15. –En vez de andar pensando en tus alocadas novelorías, debes ocuparte de tus hijos...Míralos cómo están, abandonados a la buena de Dios, igual que los burros. (24)
 16. “Bueno...Diles que vengan a ayudarme a sacar las cosas de los cajones,” (25).
 17. “José Arcadio Buendía no descubrió la falta de su muer sino a las ocho de la noche...[cuando] fue a ver qué le pasaba a la pequeña Amaranta que estaba ronca de llorar” (48)
 18. “se ocupaba como una madre de la pequeña Amaranta” (49)
 19. “encontró la ruta que su marido no pudo descubrir en su frustada búsqueda de los grandes inventos” (51)
 20. Ayudada por Santa Sofía de la Piedad había dado un nuevo impulse a su industria de repostería, y no solo recuperó en pocos años la fortuna que su hijo gastó en la Guerra, sino que volvió a atiborrar de oro puro los calabozos enterrados en el dormitorio. «Mientras Dios me dé vida... no faltará la plata en esta casa de locos.» (181)
 21. “Mis mujeres son masculinas,” (Harss 403).
 22. A Clara no le interesaba los asuntos domésticos. Vagaba por las habitaciones sin extrañarse de que todo estuviera en perfecto estado de orden y de limpieza” (140)
 23. “[Clara] lo trataba con la misma simpatía con que trataba a todo el mundo, le hablaba en el tono mimosa con que acariciaba a los gatos, era incapaz de darse cuenta si estaba cansado, triste, eufórico o con ganas de hacer el amor,” (141)
 24. “[es] mejor que forzar a las campesinas” (194)
 25. “No se moleste, mama, ya va hacer un año que me viene todos los meses...” (157)
 26. “Por aquel tiempo iba a la casa una mujer alegre, deslenguada, provocativa, que ayudaba en los oficios domésticos y sabía leer el porvenir en la baraja,” (37)
 27. “No te hagas la santa... Al fin, todo el mundo sabe que eres una puta,” (139)
 28. “Soy feliz sabiendo que la gente es feliz en la cama,” (187)
 29. “vigilando la entrada de su paraíso,” (474).
 30. “No me voy a quedar en el Farolito Rojo toda la vida, pa tron... Me voy a ir a la capital, porque quiero ser rica y famosa,” (80).
 31. “pasaje en tren, un vestido rojo, unos zapatos con tacón, un frasco de perfume y para hacerme la permanente,” (80)
 32. “Yo le pongo entusiasmo a esta profesión,” (129)
 33. Pero, ¿por qué darle a un hombre lo que cuesta tanto ganar? En ese sentido las mueres son muy brutas... Necesitan a un hombre para sentirse seguras y no se dan cuenta

- que lo único que hay que temer es a los mismos hombres. No saben administrarse, necesitan sacrificarse por alguien. Las putas son las peores, patrón, créamelo. Dejan la vida trabajando para un cafiche, se alegran cuando él les pega, se sienten orgullosas de verlo bien vestido... (129)
34. "No gracias, patrón... No me conviene salir de un capitalista para caer a otro," (130)

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