

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Southeast Asian Studies
(Interdisciplinary Program)
Graduate School
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2012

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การให้อำนาจแก่สตรีในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้และลาตินอเมริกา: กรณีศึกษาวรรณกรรมร่วมสมัย

นางสาวแคทเทอรีนา แวลดี

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา (สหสาขาวิชา)

บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2555

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND
LATIN AMERICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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วรรณกรรมร่วมสมัย. (WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LATIN
AMERICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE) อ. ที่ปรึกษา
วิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: รศ.ดร. มนธิรา ราโท, อ. ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ร่วม: ผศ.ดร. คารินา โชติทวี, 192 หน้า.

สตรีในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้จากรุ่นสู่รุ่นต่อสู้เพื่อให้ได้มาซึ่งการให้อำนาจ ปัญหาสำคัญของพวกเขาคือชนบทร่วมประเพณีและค่านิยมที่ยึดถือกันมานาน สิ่งเหล่านี้ลดรอนบทบาทและการมีส่วนร่วมของผู้หญิงในสังคม ในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ เรามักเห็นแนวโน้มของการเปรียบเทียบสตรีในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้กับประเทศตะวันตก ซึ่งการเปรียบเทียบผู้หญิงในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้กับผู้หญิงในประเทศที่พัฒนาแล้วย่อมมีความแตกต่างกัน หากแต่การเปรียบเทียบกับประเทศที่กำลังพัฒนาด้วยกัน อย่างเช่นประเทศในกลุ่มลาตินอเมริกาย่อมช่วยให้เราเห็นถึงความคล้ายคลึงกันอันจะนำมาซึ่งรูปแบบและการกำหนดเป้าหมายสำหรับอนาคต

การศึกษานี้มุ่งวิจัยและวิเคราะห์บทบาทที่ถูกกำหนดไว้แล้วในสังคมและสภาพตัวตนของสตรีในประเทศกำลังพัฒนาผ่านวรรณกรรมร่วมสมัย ซึ่งใช้ทฤษฎี ข้อโต้แย้ง และข้อมูลต่างๆ ประกอบการวิเคราะห์ด้วย การล่าอาณานิคมได้ทิ้งร่องรอยที่ยังคงเห็นได้จากประเพณีต่างๆ และได้เปลี่ยนชีวิตของผู้หญิง โดยที่ผู้หญิงกลายเป็นส่วนสำคัญของการต่อสู้เพื่อรักษาไว้ซึ่งวัฒนธรรมพื้นเมือง ในการศึกษาวรรณกรรมของเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้และลาตินอเมริกา ผู้วิจัยมุ่งวิเคราะห์ว่าประวัติศาสตร์เปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างไร และบทบาทของสตรีมีการพัฒนาหรือถดถอยอย่างไรบ้าง

การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบมีประโยชน์ในการประเมินสถานการณ์ปัจจุบันของผู้หญิงในทั้งสองทวีป ในประเด็นต่อไปนี้ คือ ผู้หญิงในฐานะที่เป็นลูกสาว ภรรยา และมารดา รูปแบบพฤติกรรมและการมีส่วนร่วมของผู้หญิงในสังคมซึ่งครอบคลุมประเด็นต่างๆ ได้แก่ การศึกษา การทำงาน ศาสนา และการเมือง ซึ่งผลของการศึกษาพบว่าลาตินอเมริกาและเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้มีภูมิหลังทางประวัติศาสตร์อันเนื่องด้วยอิทธิพลของลัทธิการล่าอาณานิคมเหมือนกัน เช่นเดียวกันกับระบบปิดลัทธิปิตุธิปไตยและค่านิยมทางสังคมที่สืบทอดกันมาจากประเพณีที่ถือปฏิบัติกันมาอย่างยาวนาน ซึ่งต่างมีผลกระทบต่อกะบวนกรให้อำนาจแก่สตรี หรืออย่างน้อยก็ส่งผลกระทบต่อช่วงต้นๆ ของกระบวนการให้อำนาจแก่สตรี

สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา

ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....

ปีการศึกษา 2555

ลายมือชื่อ อ. ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก.....

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538 76385 20: MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORD: CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE / SOUTHEAST ASIA / LATIN AMERICA / WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

KATERINA VLADY: WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE. ADVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. MONTIRA RATO, Ph.D., CO-ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. CARINA CHOTIRAWA, Ph.D., 192 pp.

For generations, women in Southeast Asia have struggled for empowerment. Their chief antagonists in this quest have been time honored traditions and ideals which narrow their roles, and limit their involvement in society. In this region there is a tendency to compare with the West in general; yet comparing women in Southeast Asia to those in Developed Countries remains an uneven approach; instead, relating them to those in Developing Countries *within* the West – in this case in Latin America – allows us to find similarities through which we can view patterns and build objectives for the future.

This study is centered in the research and analysis of the ascribed roles and stereotypes of women in Developing Countries, through contemporary literature which was used to sustain theories, arguments and findings. Colonization left an imprint on local traditions, altering the lives of women who typically found themselves at the heart of struggles over the definition of native culture. By reviewing literature from Southeast Asia and Latin America, the author examined how history has changed, how women evolved or retroceded.

The use of comparison techniques served to evaluate the current situation of women in the regions under study; the roles analyzed – as daughters, wives and mothers – the patterns of behavior and women’s involvement in society – in education, work, religion and politics – show that Latin America shares with Southeast Asia similar backgrounds of colonial influence and, therefore, patriarchal systems and social ideals influenced by long established traditions which, in turn, have kept women disempowered or only in the first stages of empowerment.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Student’s Signature.....

Academic Year: 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Graduate School of Chulalongkorn University and the staff at the Southeast Asian Studies Program for their assistance during my studies. Particularly to the Director of the Program, Dr. Sunait Chutintaranont, for promoting the study of this field. I would like to give a special thanks to my academic advisor Dr. Montira Rato, for all her support, guidance and advice; and to my coadvisor Dr. Carina Chotirawe for her assistance during this project.

I would like to thank the people who supported me to take on this project; Ileana Rossell, Gabriela Gutierrez, Lorena Villareal, Lucia Hubard and Rodrigo Sánchez; to all my colleagues and friends from Chulalongkorn University, in particular Kristine Stenbeck; and most importantly to Dr. Carlos Castillo and Dr. Ana de la Fuente, for saving my life.

I also want to thank those closest to me; Maria Esther Soto, Nola McIlvin and Andrea Pressutto; specially to my sister for her unconditional presence and support; and to Thomas Johansson, my best friend and partner who encourages me everyday, and who has travelled this road with me.

Finally to my parents without whom none of this would have been possible, I thank them for their help, their patience, and for always encouraging me to follow my dreams wherever they take me, this thesis is for you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
GDI	Gender Development Index
GGI	Gender Gap Index
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
SEA	Southeast Asia

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

For generations, women in Southeast Asia (from here on SEA)¹ have struggled for rights and empowerment. Their chief antagonists in this quest have been the time honored traditions and ideals that have customarily narrowed their roles, and limited their involvement in society. In this region there is a tendency to compare with the West in general. Women in the developed Occident; however, have traveled a different path; one which most often is unfamiliar to the Southeast Asian female population.

There is nevertheless, another side to the “West”: the countries in Latin America², in particular, share with SEA similar backgrounds of colonial influence such as patriarchal systems and social ideals influenced by long established traditions. This study will be centered in the research and analysis of the ascribed roles and stereotypes of women in Developing Countries³; with contemporary literature used to sustain theories, arguments and findings.

Colonized women typically found themselves, their behavior, their rights, and their responsibilities at the heart of struggles over the definition of native culture. Imperialists found that women in the colonies did not live according to the expectations they held to

¹ Southeast Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

² Latin America: The parts of the American continents where Spanish or Portuguese is the main national language (i.e., Mexico, the whole of Central and South America including many of the Caribbean Islands). The countries included in Latin America are: Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, French Guyana, Suriname, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com; Henderson, Conway W. (2004); Seager (2009); Word Reference; The University of Texas at Austin.

³ Poor agricultural countries that are seeking to become more advanced economically and socially. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

their own (middle-class) women, an indication – for the imperialists – of the backwardness of native culture. Colonization left an imprint on local traditions, altering the lives of women; in late nineteenth century, European and American settlers thought that women should live as housewives and mothers, building a home for their husbands and acting as the main moral compass of the nuclear family (McVay, 2008: 153).

When it comes to the term gender we enter a complicated subject; many get lost in words and definitions such as woman, womanhood, feminine and even gender itself; sometimes leaving aside the reasons for which these words have been given considerable attention in the last couple of centuries, especially since the early 1900s. Despite the importance of eliminating – or reducing – the negative connotations attached to female related terms (i.e. Mistress, witch, spinster) and what is more important, the de facto weakness implied in the terms *woman* and *feminine*, there is yet another approach to deal with gender issues.

The importance of gender studies is not only a matter of definitions or labels, but a matter of consciously understanding how, a separation of duties and values concerning human beings has undermined the participation of members of the female sex – in the public sphere – just by belonging to such group. Although theories are crucial to understand the human mind, and actions taken through history have divided humans in two genres beyond their biological differences, it is in applying such knowledge that we can make a difference.

By, first reviewing historical data, and later analyzing contemporary literature concerning women in SEA – and Latin America –, the author will examine how history has changed or remained intact, how women have evolved or retroceded; and what level of empowerment is discernible through the words of the writers and the witness of females themselves. To begin with, the research must focus in the theoretical approach to what is and what implies *Empowerment*. The definition will be studied and used throughout the analysis sections of the document; also, the term *power* will be defined to better understand empowerment and its stages as a process.

This thesis will also compile existing data concerning major indexes established by internationally recognized organisms that work with issues of humans despite their language, culture or religion; it is through these indexes that one can discern, compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages Southeast Asian women face regarding those in Latin America (in education, protection from violence, political opportunities, etc).

In the process of power, a series of social roles have been ascribed for women; many set since the first records of history. Although biological reasons might have determined the first separation of tasks and duties that later led to stipulated gender roles, the diminished power – the power to achieve something – of the female group is a reality that nowadays, surpasses any biological trace. The weakness and lesser capabilities attributed to women are mainly cultural, and thus hard to change or abolish.

An in-depth historical review will follow the theoretical approach, after which the analysis that pertains this thesis will take place; the role of women within the private and public sphere; both having an impact on one another; both affecting the general societal rule. Literature is the main tool for this process; understanding women through literary accounts and experiences represents a powerful mechanism in the exercise of establishing social roles. Writers – and their literary works – transform knowledge and thoughts into important written statements of how the members of the group under study are perceived.

Among the private sphere roles we have that of the mother, the wife and the daughter; each with overlapping characteristics and submission but also opportunities for empowerment. In the public sphere, we can analyze women and education, women and work, women and politics; all of this directly influenced by the roles at home and the level of subservience culturally ascribed. These roles will be further researched and exemplified with literary works; this thesis will describe the complicated, and fascinating, mesh of standards imbedded through centuries to the female sex.

The comparative perspective with Latin America, the key part for this segment, comes in through the review of literature. The aim of this study in general, and the review of literature by and about women in particular, concerns gender power relations; its definitions, theories, history and application to society. The objective is to understand the

most important facts that surround the issue of gender, and to comprehend with the support of written works, the extent to which gender relations affect the lives of homes and public spheres in SEA and Latin America.

The use of comparison techniques in this research comes as an attempt to evaluate the current situation of women in the regions under study, to discern how and why roles, patterns of behavior and stereotypes have come to life and have survived generations of change and adaptation. Yet comparing women in SEA to those in Europe or the United States remains an uneven approach; instead, relating them to those in Developing Countries within the West – in this case in Latin America – allows us to find similarities through which we can view patterns and build objectives for the future. The author is aware of the existence of many differences between the regions, and within each country, yet for this study the focus will be centered on the similarities between SEA and Latin America.

1.2 Objective

- ❖ To investigate women's empowerment in SEA and Latin America in the present, by reviewing literary works that portray women in different social conditions and how different challenges are negotiated.
- ❖ To identify established roles played by women in these two developing regions of the world.

1.3 Major Arguments and Hypothesis

For generations, women in SEA have struggled for rights and empowerment. The countries in Latin America share with SEA many similarities including backgrounds of colonial influence, patriarchal systems, and social ideals influenced by long established traditions. Literature is one of the mechanisms to learn about women in both regions.

By analyzing and comparing the works of – and about – women, we can identify their roles and status in the household and society; including their presence in decision-making processes as well as access to – and involvement in – development such as education, employment, legal matters, rights, and politics. By comparing the advantages and/or disadvantages that Southeast Asian women have with their Latin American counterparts, it can be conceptualized which circumstances have stimulated or obstructed women in developing countries to gain access to equality and power (social norms, religious ideals, patriarchal models, access to human rights and etc).

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Scope

The works of literature to be reviewed for the present research are contemporary – post World War II – from the beginning of the 1960s to the present; the idea of centering the study on post colonial literature requires all countries under study to be independent at the time the works are written. Post-independence also allows to study similarities of the circumstances under which women negotiated their involvement in the process and the outcome of independence. The focus will be on prose fiction and nonfiction including novels, short stories, memoirs and travelogues. Poetry will no be included, however some poems could be mentioned as a reference; equally, some pre contemporary works will be mentioned as a references for comparison, not as a central piece of the comparative analysis.

1.4.2 Criteria of Selection

This project will focus on documentary and literary research from primary and secondary sources available in English, Spanish and French language; among the published documents to be used there are books, articles, reports and journals. Also, online publications and relevant websites. The authors cited will be male and female, as it is the ascribed roles which concern this thesis, and those roles are set by writers of both sexes.

Primary sources include novels, short stories, biographies, travelogues and memoirs, and have been selected under the following criteria: 1) works previously known to the author of this thesis, and which present specific cases of women's roles, or clear portrayals of women in one of the spheres under analysis; 2) works selected after reviewing the year, title, description and author, and which fit the criteria of contemporary literature stated on the scope of this research.

Secondary sources – which will be used to provide the context, and a better understanding of the sociopolitical situation of the countries under study, as well as the theoretical framework – include historical compilations, international agency reports, and various articles on topics connected to empowerment, women's roles, power relations, Latin America, SEA, colonialism and the Developing World.

1.4.3 Process

The research will begin with the establishment and analysis of key definitions; *empowerment* as an idea of “betterment or amelioration of a human being's position within the household or in society (Cambridge Online Dictionary).” Also the relation between empowerment and power itself as presented by Smith, Troutner and Hünefeldt (2004) in *Promises of Empowerment*, among other sources.

Theories relating to comparative analysis will also be presented to justify how comparative research can bring forth important elements to promote empowerment among societies with similar backgrounds and traditions. Attention to the connection between power, empowerment and gender will be addressed; all this supported through literature by and about women, which is being examined to exemplify key definitions and theories.

Second, documentary research will also be used to set a concise historical background of the regions under study; traditions, colonization and Cold War status as Developing Nations; this, to set the basis for the comparative analysis done in the third and final part of the project. It is in establishing differences and similarities that we can create a framework to distinguish the process each region has undergone; and to set the basis of a mutual learning experience among both regions.

Third, contemporary literature works from 1960 and onwards – as established on point 1.4.1 of this segment – will be analyzed to define the social roles of women. The analysis will focus on extracting images and portraits described by writers, which justify arguments of patriarchal domination, limited social and political access, submission, violence and the fight of women in the developing world towards equality.

1.5 Significance and Usefulness of the Research

- ❖ This thesis could assist in the design of progress and empowerment oriented models useful for Developing Nations.
- ❖ This thesis will contribute to the expanding awareness of a definite and definable rapport between the status of women in these two regions.

Along the process of literature review, a critical analysis will be required to grasp the reality of the text as a source of information; the interpretation of narrative and biographies could prove to be biased towards women, therefore an objective perspective must be kept throughout the project. Also, the critical analysis will be essential when other

difficulties and challenges arise; for example defining how many sources are enough to establish a concise image of women in each region; how not to fall prey of a feminist perspective that blurs the real aim of presenting the roles of women established in contemporary literature.

During preliminary research it has been possible to verify no other document comparing SEA and Latin America from a literary perspective has been published. Other sources, for example *Promises of Empowerment: women in Asia and Latin America*, present a broad aspect of the regions including countries of East Asia, plus a series of small essays concerning one issue in a specific country.

The present research will fill an important gap regarding the linkages and possible networking that could arise from the understanding of a region similar in many ways to SEA. Rather than just explaining Latin American history with no context, this thesis will use the mutual challenges outlived by both regions to inform the public of the overall similarities between them; a better understanding of SEA and Latin America as regions with equal standards of life opens the door for models of development and empowerment within nations where women have similar status.

Regarding the literary analysis, this thesis will bring forth a series of documents to demonstrate how it is not only in their background that both regions are similar; but thanks to their literature we will see the women in them exemplify how, despite culture and religion, societies are concretely mirrored. As stated beforehand, the primary contribution will be to document a definite and definable rapport between the status of women in the regions studied; both in the Developing World, and therefore a great laboratory for further studies to continue improving the position of women and the mechanisms to achieve empowerment.

1.6 Limitations of the Research

The limited access to original language literature is indeed the most important limitation for this research; the author must rely only on translations in English, French and Spanish which could leave out important works. Equally, short supply of historical background concerning women of both regions can be a limitation, although in this case, women's history has advanced and more sources have become available to add and verify the existing information.

Additionally the use of literature can create a space where the particulars used in this study could be subjected to biased interpretations. The author will portray only definable roles and quote clear descriptions. Finally, the author being a female of Latin American origin, could present a conflict of interests as for objectivity; yet with sufficient experience in the Southeast Asian Region, an unprejudiced analysis is attainable.

It is a wide topic to be covered; the material has to prove variety to really represent the general female population of both regions under study. Still, it is in setting and defining the central and most common roles attributed to women, that a path of objective research can be followed.

1.7 Literature Review

Previous research comparing SEA and Latin America does not exist in the format introduced in this thesis. The work of Peter H. Smith, Jennifer L. Troutner and Christine Hünefeldt (editors) from 2004 titled "Promises of Empowerment: Women in Asia and Latin America," presents a series of essays which establish similarities between Asia in general and Latin America. Yet many essays focus on India, Japan, China and South Korea; four countries which this document does not study. Additionally, the limitation of the use of Southeast Asian and Latin American countries i.e. Mainly Thailand and Vietnam in the

former, and Mexico in the latter, do not present the image this thesis is aiming for. The book in question does not work on a historical approach between the regions which for this document is crucial; however, it does focus on the processes of power and empowerment which apply for the two regions the author of this document will analyze.

Several other documents reviewed in the process of this research focus either on the Developing World as a whole (including all of Asia, the Middle East and Africa) or in one specific country with some data related to another developing country. No document refers specifically to a comparative study of literature and empowerment of women in both regions; neither does a document present a comparative perspective of history of women solely between Latin America and SEA.

The works of literature here reviewed include the book used as the main guidance for this thesis; several long and short articles were also consulted. Finally, the contemporary literature used for the comparative analysis is not included here, yet a short synopsis of the stories can be found in the Appendices section of this document.

1. "Promises of Empowerment: Women in Asia and Latin America" (2004) by Peter H. Smith, Jennifer L. Troutner and Christine Hünefeldt (editors) has been a central source of information for this research. The authors analyze the subjects of power and its different forms. This book is a crucial reference with its focus on empowerment, power, and the theorization of comparison as an important medium to study two regions with similarities and differences.

Although a comparative approach is presented here, only some similitudes are highlighted and important topics of comparison are not discussed. The book studies Asia, including Japan, China and Korea. It makes a brief yet interesting juxtaposition to some Latin American countries on very specific topics like television, cinema, schoolbooks and economic crisis among others. This book focuses on aspects which will not be the central part of this thesis. The present document comes in as a continuation of this work, a deeper analysis limiting Asia to the Southeast Asian region, and providing specific data concerning women's roles today, a historical evolution of the change in women's positioning, and an analysis based on literature review.

2. “Genders” (2009) by Glover and Kaplan, concerns gender definitions among other issues. It addresses the social and psychological approaches to gender, a word wider than a definition; from a natural, biological element of our bodies, to a socially formed ideal that searches for ways out of the established norm of what a specific gender is expected to be.

Throughout the book, Glover and Kaplan present a descriptive literary approach to all three categories of gender; through the narratives of eighteen, nineteen and twentieth century writers – males, females and homosexuals – we are introduced to a series of examples of how they used the literary media to promote a specific ideal of how a certain gender should be – or not – according to their own interpretation; a concrete element for this study based on the belief that literature should be a tool in spite of who is the writer.

Learning about gender through the texts and books here selected, has the purpose of providing the writer of this thesis with a base on the reasons for the existence of gender divisions, and their effects in society.

The authors deal with the standardization of how a male behaves and how a female should be. They discuss alternatives that transform the degradation of one sex into a unique characteristic that could, instead, complement it and bring both of them closer to a mutual understanding; what makes males and females different is not what matters, it is what makes them equal that does. Although this thesis does not deal with gender definitions per se, it is important to understand key terms.

3. “Sexual Textual Politics” (2002) by Toril Moi is another interesting, yet controversial, study of feminine literary criticism where definitions of ‘female,’ ‘feminine,’ ‘femininity,’ ‘male’ and ‘maleness’ are put into question; or to be more exact, the terms are set as the forefront for a controversial discussion of the position female literary critics have today. For this thesis, centered on the subject of literature about women, it is essential to understand theories surrounding gendered literary criticism.

Understanding the challenge faced by many female critics to establish a respected role as ‘literary critics’ rather than ‘literary female critics’ is significant; the topic is of great importance, and advances in the matter are determinant for the role of female as literary

critics and writers. Toril Moi quotes Elaine Showalter when stating that a text should reflect the writer's experience, and therefore the more authentic the experience is felt to be by the reader, the more valuable the text (Moi, 1985: 4). When female critics come into the picture, their own experience of the roles to be analyzed or reviewed, can be enhanced in ways the male critics would not be able to do it. She quotes Showalter's definition of feminist writing as a work that offers a powerful expression of personal experience in a social framework (Moi, 1985: 4).

Speaking about Kate Millet and Mary Ellmann, Toril Moi considers their studies as pillars for the feminist thinking theories. For many, a central problem has therefore been that of uniting political engagement with what is conventionally regarded as 'good' literary criticism (Moi, 1985: 23). In this thesis the author considers that good literary works are those which present a solid argument about the work under scope; independently of who writes, independently of their gender. A good argument should be the one that provides material for the analysis; criticism should not be biased by male or female aspect, it should remain objective.

Fighting for recognition in the intellectual world by doing exactly what one opposes, using gender biased ideals to reach the goal of being acknowledged seems contradictory. Toril Moi states how "women are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness, and instead must seek to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed on them (Moi, 1985: 57)"; the question of whose images are the most accurate is not what concerns the present study. The idea that either the male or the female must define a standard image of femaleness, when the struggle is to eliminate such differences, is central for the project.

Toril Moi quotes Simone de Beauvoir stating how "'femininity' is a social construct: one is not born a woman, one becomes one (Moi, 1985: 65)"; In the most basic linguistic sense, there is the need to state the organic differences between two sexes. There exists a quintessential need for the literary world to recognize the views of female critics; as new perspectives that do not present themselves against the work of other critics, but as a complimentary source of information to analyze and review literary works.

This book was reviewed with the aim of understanding gender, feminism and literary criticism; three important terms that will either be discussed, or will support the analysis section of this research.

4. “The Third Report on the Advancement of Women in ASEAN” (2007) by the ASEAN Secretariat is a compilation of both, general information concerning gender disparities among the citizens of ASEAN countries, and specific cases in some countries. The report includes background centered on the Secretariat’s methodology and objectives; with the goal of addressing the most important aspects for the advancement of women, the Secretariat looks into enhancing the understanding of the implications of globalization and regional integration and increase the awareness of those implications on women’s advancement and gender equality in ASEAN Member Countries (ASEAN, 2007: 2).

The secretariat presents seven types of inequality that include *natality, mortality, basic facilities, special opportunity, professional, ownership and household inequality*; to measure the differences between males and females. In the interest of the report, inequality is measured by trends and patters. The seven types of inequality setting the standard to look at the differences between males and females; differences that the ASEAN Secretariat consider of crucial importance for its members because the advancement of women is related to the advancement of the society as a whole.

The Secretariat establishes a system of mapping through the measure of the seven inequalities priorly mentioned; a snapshot, says the document, of where women are in comparison to men; gathering data allows for assessing the opportunities which can transform numbers into viable programs. In part two, the Secretariat presents six cases of women (Thailand, West Kalimantan, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao) with discussions suggesting empowerment methods of women; promotion of skills for work and self protection. Women are vulnerable in the economic sector not only at work but also at home, their salaries supporting several members of the family; ASEAN promotes policy making to bring forward the advancement of women in the region.

In part three the Secretariat addresses indicators for economic integration. In these they consider of the utmost importance that women are visible in developmental statistics.

The suggested indicators are gender based wage differentials, unemployment, underemployment, housework, informal work technical-vocational work and science and technology. Throughout the document women are grouped as women, not as women of a certain nationality.

This document has been reviewed as a source of support to understand the current position of Southeast Asian women, as well as the measures taken by local organisms to promote or assist in the process of empowerment.

5. “Gender in World History” (2006) by Peter N. Stearns is a compilation of the earliest information concerning male / female relations from the beginning of civilization, and until our days. The book not only explains the gender traditions in different cultures and societies around the globe; it also examines the nature of modified beliefs – adaptation – resulting from the mix of cultures throughout history, and provides a rather complete picture of how societies mixed, and gender beliefs were altered or preserved. Stearns presents information that asserts – to an extent – the existence of gender roles all the way to the beginning of humanity.

Undermining the female group was no novelty, but in doing so after the Colonial regimes, society was reaffirmed as male dominated; instead of the fight for freedom to be an opportunity for women, it became a period of truce where some advancements might have taken place – affirming this will require further study – but regress to colonial status was certain. What did come with colonialism, and stayed after its departure, was Feminism; “originated in the nineteenth century...organized feminism reflected new ideas, advances in women’s education, also a realization that men’s rights and economic power were outstripping those of women (Stearns, 2000: 132).”

6. “The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia” (2006) by Barbara Watson Andaya is also historical compilation of women in SEA. Andaya presents an overall idea of the position of women in different countries throughout the periods of early civilizations and up to postcolonial times. The aim of the text is to find where women participated in history and how, through many episodes, they were at the

frontline of change. A review of the presence of women in the development of the Southeast Asian societies.

The book begins with an introduction to why this historical compilation is crucial to understand the position of women today; it also expresses the lack of knowledge concerning their past, from the perspective of women and their role in history. The author addresses change and continuity in topics such as religious influence, economic progress and family life.

Finally, Andaya talks about what it was to be a woman in early SEA, highlighting that in spite of class differences, women of rich homes were closer to peasants, in terms of their status, than to men. She discusses women in their biological aspect; from birth to reproductive and elderly life. In the process, women are submitted to challenges and stereotypes not because of their class or lineage, but because of their gender. Their virginities protected like values that can provide for a family or destroy it, women were rarely taught about their sexuality, unlike men. Kept away, first as children and then as married women, by social standards delineated mostly by men; they pass from their fathers, to their husbands, to their sons.

The book, follows a general line on which we can discern clear patterns repeated all over the region, in all levels of society, and under various types of religious influences. The role of women changed, their participation increased in some areas, decreased in others; the value of women was altered according to social and religious values; the need to keep them at home or send them to work changed. The overall history full of contradictions and back and forth changes, which need to be studied to understand women in SEA today.

7. In “Companion to Gender History” (2004), Teresa Meade and Merry E. Wiener-Hanks (editors), present an interesting summary of world history as seen from the perspective of gender. The book includes information concerning men, women and homosexuals in all regions of the world. The specific chapters that deal with SEA and Latin America are of particular interest for chapter three of this thesis. The editors work with different historians and researchers to build a linear compendium of the roles and position of different members of society throughout time.

8. "History of Latin America" (2011) by Hernan Horna is another historical compilation concerning the main events of evolution in Latin America as a region. Starting with the pre-colonial clans and empires; the arrival of the Europeans in the 1400s; the movements for independence; and the 1900s revolutions, civil wars and rebellions to topple down authoritarian regimes. The importance of this compilation was to set the historical scene of the region to position women and, therefore, understand what has been written and what additional information must be found to complete the image of Latin American women through history.

9. In "The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World" (2009), Joni Seager presents an interesting compilation of indexes and statistics concerning women all over the world. The statistics are divided in subjects like work, health, abortion, violence, domestic violence, rape, education, marriage, motherhood, etc. Published in 2009, this book provides a great summary of data essential to understand where women from different regions are located regarding women of other regions. Along with the information from the ASEAN documents also reviewed, this compilation provide the author of this thesis with a series of data and indexes to support the findings of the literature analysis.

10. "In Slaves of Power" (2010), Mexican writer Lydia Cacho presents the resulting data from a research made throughout several countries in search for sex slavery victims and perpetrators. The book presents accounts and information of the experiences of women in many countries including Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Mexico, Argentina, and Venezuela, among others. The facts also include accounts of sex slavery survivors, their experiences during and after captivity, and other details that allow us to create a portrait of women in forced labour, prostitution and violence.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN, EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

This chapter will be centered in providing the theoretical information required to analyze empowerment; this will take place together with important data and key definitions, as well as an analysis to assert why the focus is set in countries of the Developing World, and what their commonalities and differences are. Author's in the field of women's studies concur that one of the most important variables affecting the level of equality between women and men is access to economic power; probably because it is assumed that economic strength brings opportunities. The question is, does it?

According to Jo Rowlands, approaching empowerment requires more than just paying attention to economic activities but also the processes and structures on which the activities operate; these need to be created with a scope ample enough to permit empowerment or the opportunity of it (Rowlands, 1995: 104,105). This study will not cover a deep analysis of empowerment by economic means; the focus is mainly to determine the level of empowerment women have today according to the roles ascribed in literature; how they got there; and what can be done from there on. Roles in economic sector will be analyzed in chapter five under the roles of women and work.

2.1 Establishing Inequality for Women in the Developing World

Conway W. Henderson wrote about the world being unequal concerning education, income and health, and perhaps the most distinct disparity is the monopoly of men over political systems all over the world (Henderson, 2004: 1029). Another area where women face

high degrees of inequality and challenge is violence; the portrayal of women and violence will also be covered in chapter five. Patterns of abuse can be seen throughout the world, and are not limited to Developing Countries. In her book *Slaves of Power*, Lydia Cacho – a Mexican reporter and researcher – presents an outstanding documentation on the women’s situation as seen from the perspective of sexual slavery in many countries of the world.

Frightening acts of violence mentioned by Cacho and other writers, include detention, disappearance, torture, murder, sexual harassment and degrading treatment. Because women obey traditional expectations that control even their sexuality and reproduction, they “may find themselves subject to coerced prostitution or pregnancy” (Henderson, 2004: 1032). In 2004 Naomi Neft and Ann D. Levine reported that violence toward a wife or partner was a minimum problem only in the following six countries: the Ivory Coast, Laos, Madagascar, Myanmar, Singapore, and Yemen (Henderson, 2004: 1039).

At home and at work, women suffer different forms of submission; they either have no income or they are responsible for supporting parents and/or siblings, leaving them very small space to be independent; they have no or little training and many have no updated information on the possibilities available for them, and if they do have skills, they might not have economic independence to follow their choices; domestic violence – physical and emotional – is a reality in many families in Developing Countries, and it represses women who otherwise could access economic independence and skills.

Rae Lesser Blumberg cites Luché’s claims on how “...three important constraints on women’s political participation are lack of income, lack of information, and danger of male violence; the two factors galvanizing women’s political activism are economic resources as well as training and information that are directly relevant to their lives...”(Blumberg in Smith et.al., 2004: 81). As it has been stated, the above mentioned constraints apply directly to the rest of the spheres where women participate.

The need for additional incomes sends women out to seek employment – some might even rise in the ladder of development – but the idea of women being better at home and as caregivers for parents and children becomes an issue of contradictory ideas. The

world needs women to increase economic production, the house needs their income to survive, but still they suffer under the lingering belief that staying at home in their roles as homemakers and mothers is the most suitable option for them.

In Vijayan K. Pillai's view, women who participate in the labour force experience an increase in their economic independence, challenging 'the traditional image of women as merely child bearers and child rearers'. New economic ideologies push low middle class women into workplace, but gender ideologies oppose this move and this can also be seen in many different forms of literature (Pillai et.al., 1999: 263, 277).

The problems these regions are facing today have a long tradition of predisposition consisting of established roles which determine what women should do, how they should behave, where they should put their skills, etc. The problem in the twenty-first century is that the world is moving fast, and the need for more hands in the economic sector have opened the door for women to work outside the house on a more permanent basis.

Also, work requires skills and training, ergo the increasing demand on education opportunities for women. The continuous debate lies on how does this affect the traditionally prescribed roles for them, and how does it affect the expected behavior of the female gender in society. Especially in rural communities, women's education tends to be restricted (by the families themselves) to a maximum of secondary school, after which many girls stay home to assist the mother in housework and caring of elders and siblings.

The women who successfully achieve progress in these two categories – education and work – then seek to expand their involvement even more, attempting to enter the political arena to acquire more power and directly participate in decision-making. Not everything is a success story as it shall be studied in chapters four and five.

François Hainard et.al. state, women have seen their workload multiplied due to the accumulation of duties assigned to them: on top of their regular domestic duties, modernization has brought increased income expectations to be covered by the female sex; additionally, expanded inequality has propelled women to take over community services not – or no longer – supplied by the state (Hainard et.al., 2001: 37).

In “Promises of Empowerment,” Peter H. Smith and Jennifer L. Troutner discuss Jane Jacket’s assertion of the problems arising from women’s participation in economy and politics; the double role stated clearly, as women are responsible for creating the conditions of family life and yet they are equally expected to compete with men for limited resources (Smith et.al., 2004: 17).

With women’s increasing participating in the informal economy (i.e. markets, street vendors, servants, cleaning homes, etc...) much of their work goes unnoticed and it is not accounted for in the economic indicators. In Latin America, for example, street vendors and domestic workers are – states Edna Acosta-Belen – two occupations that account for one-third of all employed women (Acosta-Belen et.al., 1990: 308).

It is the change of possibilities that becomes an issue of concern, both for women who desire an upgrade in opportunities, and the members of the family – men and other females in the house – who are not ready for the fast evolving new system which is altering long lasting traditions. Certain labors sectors have become casual and feminized which in return adds to the burdens on women and tensions they experience within their families as gender relations transform (Smith et.al., 2004: 17).

The possibilities that open up for women follow a pattern: women should be at home. Even when success sheds a light of possibility, the shadow of perpetual expectations comes back. Added to this, women still today earn wages which are about two-thirds of those of men; they lag behind in political participation, not to forget in education too (Mehra, 1997: 139).

Limited possibilities are not the only stigma on women’s potential, if they succeed in accessing new areas of involvement they tend to be viewed as hopeless and requiring constant assistance, and so the projects and opportunities are designed for people who need help, not people who can help others. “Women [...] received welfare oriented rather than production oriented training based on preconceived notions about women's tasks [...] income-generation and production projects for women often ended up pursuing welfare rather than development goals [...] in the relief-based framework, little attention was paid

to the longterm sustainability of income generating projects for women” (Mehra, 1997: 141-142).

Concerning domestic abuse – a consequence of patriarchal excessive authority – the issue today is how men have the backup of hierarchical privileges, which sometimes they consider as an entitlement for resorting to violence if they feel challenged. In societies prone to alcohol, drugs, and unemployment their impact on women’s lives makes things more complicated. Reactions are intrinsically linked to emotions, men have a pre-constructed idea of what should be and their emotions get in the way when changes happen (Henderson, 2004: 1040). The idea of domestic repression at its best to once more transmit the patriarchal message: *Stay home and obey*.

On the other hand, repression expands beyond the domestic scenarios, in the world outside the house, political repression works best when the same hierarchical advantages are used as mechanisms to implement male policies, using force against those who question male leadership. Intimidation becomes a powerful weapon (Henderson, 2004: 1040). Women became the opposition when they began searching for increased independence, opportunities and participation; the authority feels compelled to repress women through any means, another constant shown in all forms of literature.

Everything is centered on the alteration which threatens the socially constructed patterns which have worked so well for men – and even for some women – but not for *every* woman though. Charlotte Bunch and Roxanna Carrillo assert “violence against women sends a message of domination — stay in your place or expect to be hurt. They believe violence directed at women comes from structural relationships of power, domination, and privilege favoring men over women” (Henderson, 2004: 1035).

The fight for women’s empowerment in Developing Countries will be better understood if the patterns facing challenges are set in front of us because, as Smith and Troutner state, the voices of women remain unheard.

Summarizing this first segment, force and violence – used commonly but not exclusively – are mechanisms to perpetuate values and traditions that suit the authorities (in this case the male authority). For power to accumulate in the hands of women, and for

empowerment to take place, they must fight for 1) education to counteract the lack of information, which in turn provides; 2) (different) skills to seek an increase of income; 3) freedom and rights to accomplish the above, and to hinder the danger of domestic abuse that keeps women "in their place". Therefore, as we will see, power and empowerment are long and slow processes that require a change in the overall patterns of social functioning, including that of men.

2.2 Power and Empowerment

Empowerment, a crucial term for this study, does not only concern a male superior – female inferior relation; it can also imply a female superior – female inferior one¹. The focus of empowerment is not centered in the process of taking power from one hand and placing it in another, in an unnecessary transplant of existing power roles. On the contrary, empowerment must be seen as the process to gain power that eventually could lead to equality; the process, however, is long and implies a sense of awareness as a necessary condition.

The exercise of empowerment is, hence, better understood when we can identify the meaning of power itself; a topic which will be covered shortly. Empowerment, on the other hand, is much more than a definition; it is an action that requires absolute conviction and awareness of one's undermined position. By acknowledging where women lag behind their male counterparts – and among other females as well – they take the first step towards a process of acquisition of power.

¹ The case of the authoritarian mother and the submissive daughter being one of the most important examples, explained through contemporary literature in chapter four of this document.

2.2.1 Gender and Power

Gender is important for this study because “unlike sex, which is biologically determined, gender roles vary from one place and culture to another. Equally important, they are subject to change” (Smith et.al., 2004: 7). The objective here is to prove, that societies can have similar gender roles due to their similarly structured societies and histories, even if such societies are oceans apart.

For Glover and Kaplan a gender role is something that constrains or confines. They explain it is the society that constrains – or attempts – to preserve the limits of the cultural practices that enable the human desires to be played out (Glover et.al., 2000: IX), and as literature will show, the role of the mother will become an iconic mechanism to sustain cultural practices and social values at home and beyond. Society has changed, for some it has evolved, although evolution might be at times a questionable term to define the constant transformation happening in the subject of gender. One of the main aspects is the need to change ‘women’ as a category and promote ‘women’ as human beings with an identity.

“Gender relationships are embedded in social, economic, and political institutions and are reinforced through everyday interactions. The major obstacle to gender equality is the patriarchal system” (Pillai et.al., 1999: 262-263); a shared characteristic in both regions under study, and the inheritance of a long tradition of colonialism.

Describing and studying gender in depth has been done before through different angles, and it is not in the scope of the present study to internalize the reader in the topic, beyond the most elemental and necessary definitions. Gender relations – and its downside, gender inequalities² – exist in every culture and society, in similar or different forms. The only shared characteristic being the reality of a certain degree of gender inequality everywhere. On the other hand, power – its definitions and forms – is a significant part of

² Gender inequalities are “the social forces that leave women more vulnerable to them and in a weaker position from the biological (reproductive) point of view: marginalization and disempowerment” (Hainard et.al., 2001: 37)

this research; without understanding the nature of power, empowerment becomes an indefinable term.

Steven Lukes regards ultimate power as *the manipulation of other people's goals and desires*. One subject prevents another from expressing feelings and emotions, or from ascertaining or realizing their existence; thus, one subject can shape the other's aspirations, perhaps even imprinting in the subject false consciousness. "Only if actor A wields power over actor B regarding all, or virtually all, significant issues and arenas does the relationship become one of domination" (Smith et.al., 2004: 3).

By definition, the accumulation of power is a relative matter. As the different actors involved move around the lines of power, one's win tends to be the other's loss. If our actors are males, as they continue to rise above the line of equality in power relations, their gains will be the females losses. What must remain clear is that if empowerment falls in the hands of one group, the other group becomes a *possible* victim of repression. Actors can move up and down to be above, on, or under the imaginary line of equal power, their movements up signifying empowerment, to a certain degree at least. However, the empowerment of a group does not imply a race of tyrants because power does not have to rely on domination as a norm (Smith et.al., 2004: 4, 11).

Women, especially in the Developing World, have been fighting to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the power differential between men and women; they are looking for freedom from male domination, expanding their area of maneuver is the best way to achieve this (Smith et.al., 2004: 4). "Power is considered an instrument of domination, whose use can be seen in people's personal lives, their close relationships, their communities, and beyond" (Rowlands, 1995: 102).

One group can have effective power to control others by having control over resources and ideology. Those who have power are those who control material and knowledge resources and the ideology which governs both public and private life, and are thus able to make decisions which benefit themselves. Hence, the process of gaining control over the self, ideology and the resources which determine power may be termed empowerment (Batliwala 1993 in Singha, 1995: 2306). In *Promises of Empowerment: Women in*

Asia and Latin America (2004), the authors explain how power can present itself in many forms; in an interconnected analysis.

From a feminist perspective, interpreting 'power over' entails understanding the dynamics of oppression and internalized repression (Rowlands, 1995: 102); *power over* describes the mechanics of one actor (i.e. males) dominating, having power over another actor (i.e. females), and hence controlling their participation in a defined space like the house or even the public arena (employment, economic or political sectors). This research focuses on studying the roles of women according to their relationship with men, and the pressing thumb of the patriarchal order. Power over something or someone is viable until the repressed subject has power within itself to achieve goals.

Are women in Developing Countries repressed? Are they subjugated? Ted R. Gurr distinguishes between situational repression, which is temporary and only occurs when opposition arises, and institutional repression, which is a regular ongoing tool of those in power (Henderson, 2004: 1034-1035). Women in Asia and Latin America have lived in a constantly flowing wave of institutionalized repression where, as the study will show, roles are imbedded in society like tattoos are in the skin. *Power to* – which refers to power of action, mobilization, re-imagining roles, a necessary ingredient for women's movements – comes when the subject applies knowledge and skills as mechanisms of power to achieve a goal

Two more forms of power are also important for this study, they represent the actual process of gaining power. A constant process of give and take for our subjects under study, *power within* has been provided to some (i.e. in times of need when power comes in numbers and women are needed to mobilize a rebellion or war), and later taken away after the controlling group obtains what they want. *Power within* concerns the affirmation of the individual (awareness). It may come about through education and the acquisition of skills and expertise (Smith et.al., 2004: 5-6). Power with, the power to generate change, should come later in the process, when empowerment becomes collective (Smith et.al., 2004: 1-28).

Finally, *power with* refers to collective action, the organization and mobilization of self-confident individuals for the cause of social change (Smith et.al., 2004: 6); also a form of

power our female subjects have felt and touched in instances of rebellion and collective fight for independence or democracy. Also easily taken from then, long to achieve, difficult to maintain alive and extremely hard to grasp without its complementary elements of power within and power to. Years of social mobilizations have proven that power is not permanent (Smith et.al., 2004: 3).

2.2.2 Defining Empowerment

In her book *Sexual Textual Politics* Toril Moi quotes Kate Millet's definition of sexual politics as the process whereby the ruling sex seeks to maintain and extend its power over the subordinate sex (Moi, 1985: 26). We know there is a power struggle in our societies, however, it is not limited to male and female relations; we also have contention among the rich and poor, liberal and conservative; black and white; western and nonwestern, and more. If the fight of male-female power control would be eliminated, both sides would still find themselves amidst a wide range of power struggles beyond those of gender.

Empowerment has different meanings; what some might consider empowering, others might see it as no gain. Here, we will review different definitions to construct the most comprehensible term that better suits this research:

1) Srilatha Batliwala defines empowerment as “power, control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology; empowerment, the process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power” (Smith et.al., 2004: 12).

2) Diana Santillán et.al. quote Kabeer's empowerment as “the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer 2001 in Santillán et.el., 2004: 535).

3) Empowerment can be defined as “process of accumulating power” (Smith et.al., 2004: 4).

4) According to Oxaal it is “the process geared to raising women's individual and collective awareness about the ways in which power relations affect their lives, while enabling them to gain self-confidence and nurturing their strength to challenge gender inequalities” (Oxaal, 1997 in Hainard et.al, 2001: 46).

5) Also it can be a “process of redistribution of power within and between families / societies; and a process aiming at social equality which can be achieved through disempowering some structures, systems and institutions” (Singha, 1995: 2306).

Scrutinizing the definitions above, the following terms accentuate themselves full of meaning: *control, assets, resources, ideology, process, challenge, power relations, gaining control, expansion in ability, life choices, denied, accumulating power, raising awareness, effects, enabling, self-confidence, strength, inequalities, redistribution of power.*

Additionally, Jo Rowlands quotes McWhirter’s definition as “the process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community. Rowlands makes a useful distinction between 'the situation of empowerment,' where all four of these conditions are met; and 'an empowering situation,' where one or more of the conditions is in place or being developed, but where the full requirements are not present” (Rowlands, 1995: 103).

Empowerment for women comes through women’s action within specific cultural contexts and socioeconomic settings (Smith et.al., 2004: 2). “...Women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change ... they must exercise agency” ... “a change towards gender equality or greater gender equity would not be described as 'empowerment' unless women had been agents of that change” (Santillán et.al., 2004: 535).

Two crucial terms we must also address are: women's agency, “the ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families, control over

their own lives and over resources” (Santillán et.al., 2004: 535); process, “the progression to a state of greater equity,” and outcome also describe empowerment³ (Santillán et.al., 2004: 535).

Therefore, to our previous summarization we can add *development of skills, no infringement on other’s rights, and promotion of mutual empowerment, together with agency, action.*⁴ Thus, the definition of empowerment for this study can be interpreted as a process in three stages:

1) *First stage*: development of one’s awareness of surroundings, the inequalities one is subjected to, and the existing power relations – patriarchal authorities in public and domestic spheres – that control assets, resources and ideology; awareness of the life choices⁵ which have been denied to women.

2) *Second stage*: The development of skills and abilities – taking a role as active participants – which can enable feelings of self-confidence and strength.

3) *Third stage*: The acquisition of control, challenging of existing forces and redistribution of power – women become agents of change.

If the process is successful, empowerment will then become an outcome, which in turn will show tangible results, including respect to others and assistance to promote the empowerment of those around.

Now that we have a definition of empowerment, based in all the ideas brought forth through years of study by many researchers, we must continue to understand some determinant elements of this process-outcome transformation. To begin with, one must understand that empowerment has many dimensions. Having empowerment in one aspect of life does not imply, or guarantee, empowerment in other areas; also, empowerment in one geographical setting can be different from another (Santillán et.al., 2004: 535).

When the process is repeated over and over, we establish a timeline which confirms that empowerment is not static; just because it is achieved once – or in one area – it does

³ Process – active, historical, changeable – and an outcome, with results that can be compared with goals and expectations (Smith et.al., 2004: 9)

⁴ For Nelly Stromquist, “Empowerment consists of four dimensions, the cognitive (critical understanding of one’s reality), the psychological (feeling of self-esteem), the political (awareness of power inequalities and the ability to organize and mobilize) and the economic (capacity to generate independent income)” (Smith et.al., 2004: 6).

⁵ Strategic life choices' refers to major decisions that affect a person's subsequent life trajectory, such as decisions related to marriage, childbearing, education, and employment (Santillán et.al., 2004: 535).

not automatically guarantee permanence nor expansion. Empowerment is a process; it involves personal development and movement from insight to action. The abilities ascribed to a particular set of people are to a large degree socially constructed. Empowerment must involve undoing (Rowlands, 1995: 102); in this case, undoing patriarchal values and social standards.

2.2.3 The Need for Empowerment in Southeast Asia and Latin America

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action declared that women's empowerment is "fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace" (Smith et.al., 2004: 9). "Empowerment must be about bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it" (i.e. political structures, economy, markets and incomes, participate and influence) (Rowlands, 1995: 102).

Regarding women, Smith and Troutner establish how "notions of biological determinism and the idea that this is my destiny, my role, my place" stop women from opening up to new possibilities; they add, "this kind of power is often invisible, working through everyday activities and traditions, upheld through political, economic, and social institutions. When an ideological system is well in place, power is pervasive but elusive and therefore difficult to locate" (Smith et.al., 2004: 3).

Not being able to identify where power is located or how an ideology took form, makes it harder for the subject looking for empowerment – in this case women – to direct its action or agency towards dissolving the ideal roles or expected behaviors asked of them. This will be seen in chapter four, in the roles of daughters as carers, wives in forced marriages and, in chapter five, in the cases of violence and prostitution.

In SEA and Latin America, patriarchal values are deeply imbedded in the lifestyle and social traditions. In some cases its origin being discernible, but in most the source of expectations remains lost amidst the course of history. Patriarchal values have roots so deep in these regions, that the absence of the father figure does not dissolve the regime in itself;

other males, and females like mothers and grandmothers, will perpetuate the patriarchal ideals themselves. Neither does it change in the case of women in politics, patriarchal authority in governmental positions does not disappear completely when women take office. All of these cases are portrayed in the literature selected for this research.

Change for women's benefit implies – as previously stated – undoing, deconstructing, and men – and women who benefit from the current power relations or status quo – will see this as an attack, an aggression of sorts, a challenge that could take from them long established benefits which are greatly appreciated. For example, as it shall be presented in chapter four, women in the role of carers, no woman wants that role for herself, and yet many still want other female relatives to continue on their role as caregivers.

For women to reach a level of empowerment which provides tangible results, women of all ages must accept the changes; and equally, men will have to acknowledge change and embrace the idea of shared power. Debal K. Singha explains “empowerment of women is possible only by undoing the already existing structure of power”; change affects the society as a whole because its traditional arrangement “its institutions, values, norms, culture, education, and pattern of socialization, help perpetuate imbalances” (Singha, 1995: 2311). Therefore, in the case of women, those who choose not to accept the roles ascribed to them, usually fall into a long list of negative connotations among which, *rebel*, is the most positive.

Where does the process begin? How to move from the first two steps of identifying one's current situation and new possibilities – awareness – to the actual process of acquiring skills and abilities to challenge power and become agents? Rea Lesser Blumberg explains “political empowerment seems to be promoted by, first, economic empowerment; and, second, practical training encompassing legal rights and responsibilities, gender awareness, leadership, and self-esteem. In turn, with a greater sense of political efficacy, women tend to advocate for ways to protect themselves from male violence and involve themselves in community-level activism” (Blumberg in Smith et.al., 2004: 81).

If we take this as the mechanism to follow, then we must adhere to the line of awareness, education, economic independence and finally political action. By understanding the situation of women in SEA and Latin America in the present century; the process they have experienced to get where they are; the expectations of today – the roles established for women – compared to the past; we can determine what has been useful regarding agency mechanisms for each region, and we can provide guidelines for possible changes from here on.

For those on the quest for empowerment, assimilating one's role opens the door to seeking education; and for those looking to educate "being better informed, with a better understanding of social processes, is the first step to producing effective policies" (Hainard et.al, 2001: 49). Eleonora Barbieri focuses on one more component on the subject – the last addition for the present study – that of solidarity and collective action.

Solidarity is "an important quality that seems especially strong in women," one "which will be increasingly necessary in a multicultural world" (Barbieri, 1994: 55); solidarity implies working together as women. Solidarity theories stress the motivational importance of members awareness of common feelings, values, and interests; understanding allows association and cooperation between groups with shared interests, or as Patricia Gurin describes, "Identification reflects a recognition of shared values and interests that turns a category into a collectivity" (Gurin, 1985: 147). Women in SEA and Latin America can benefit from shared experiences to work in solidarity towards a common goal, empowerment is also about helping others empower themselves.

2.3 Comparative Analysis and Literature

Comparison is a method of analysis which does not imply necessarily the uniformity between the subjects. Comparison focuses on similarities and differences (Smith et.al., 2004: 12). Chapter three of this document will present the first part of the comparative

analysis, that of Southeast Asian and Latin American history of women, thus setting the background that will allow us to locate the process of empowerment and disempowerment of women in chapters four and five, the comparative analysis of literature.

SEA and Latin America are both in a process of constant transformation. They are composed of ‘large and significant areas, encompassing well over 60 percent of the world’s population [...] they share basic similarities [...] and there are also some fundamental differences within each region and between them as a whole (Smith et.al., 2004: 2). Grouping women of both regions into a single entity can generate some doubt concerning their cultural differences and local traditions. Yet women in this study, above all, will be seen in the general frame of human beings with undeniable biological characteristics, similarities in behavior and near identical patriarchal systems ruling over social roles established before and during colonization.

As many documents demonstrate, their situation has, and continues to be linked when it comes to generalities in their position versus their male counterparts. It is also for the purpose of this thesis that women must be studied together; to show their similarities and differences makes them a potential collectivity that can work under the ideal of solidarity.

Sara Sefchovich states in her book *Are Women Better?* The existence of “many types of women, and therefore, the same way that we cannot speak of history without considering their side, neither can we speak of that other side without considering economic, social, cultural, religious, traditions and custom differences. Yet, there is one thing that makes us equal: and that is that all of us, in all times of history and in any part of the planet, rich or poor, young or old, healthy or sick, Muslim or Catholics or Jewish or Buddhist, we have all been destined to the same: to marriage and the caring of the home and the children” (Sefchovich, 2011: 309-310)

In agreeing with Sefovich’s statement, it must be added that the differences she presents are not found among women of different nationalities only, it is just as difficult to compare women in SEA and Latin America, as it is to compare one Mexican in the north, from a Mexican in the south; or a Vietnamese in the hills, and a Vietnamese in Saigon. This

goes to say, that the aim of this specific comparative research is not to state women are all equal because of their sex, but because they are women there is so much they have in common.

As Sefchovich concludes, “even if we cannot speak of ALL women, as if we were all the same, because there are important differences in culture and religion, economy and social class, either way, our destinies and the role we have in the home, family and society is very similar (Sefchovich, 2011: 309-310); it is exactly there that the focus of the present document is concentrated on.

If it is true that in Mexico it is part of the culture to be defeated and dejected, that women who capitulate or give up, those are the women who fulfill the social and moral norms as Sefchovich claims, then it must be added that, after much research, that is a characteristic not exclusive of the Mexican women, but also of their Latin American and Southeast Asian sisters (Sefchovich, 2011).

Mutual support is of great importance for this study; in finding similarities and in defining contrasts, we can observe how different approaches to empowerment have helped or held back women in each area. Acknowledging that a region can find support beyond its borders implies even more opportunities of successful acquisition of power. Smith and Troutner explain how “by definition and necessity, cross-cultural understanding must become the keystone for cross-regional collaboration and mutual support” (Smith et.al., 2004: 28).

The idea of the ‘most-different-system’ – which seeks to analyze recurrent similarities despite broad differences in context – and the ‘most-similar-system’ – which purports to identify, and analyze, differences among units under observation that are otherwise similar on basic dimensions (Smith et.al., 2004: 12), are of great use in this study; because not all women in SEA are similar, nor women between SEA and Latin America are all different.

Acosta-Belen et.al., explain it in another way: “despite the apparent differences in patterns and consequences of development among the Developing Nations, actual differences are minimal [...] unfavorable structural position in the world economy; their

economic vulnerability to the changes in the world market and flows of capital; their internal inequalities in income, employment, land tenure, and control of resources; and their populations' destitution and lack of basic necessities, such as food, housing, health, and other essential services" (Acosta-Belen et.al., 1990: 301).

The idea of a comparative analysis using contemporary literature as an instrument, goes in demonstrating not only the similarities between women in both regions –including their roles and the values that surround them – but also in establishing that *definite and definable rapport* between historical context and literature.

The particular issue surrounding the chosen literature to be compared must also be discussed here. In defining the scope of material to be analyzed, came the issue of general literature versus women's literature. Feminists have set the parameter of what is and what cannot be women's literature. This study, although respecting such scholarly defined parameters, must stand outside the feminist norm to seek diversity in the research.

Therefore, the literature for comparison is not limited to texts written by women, because it is the author's belief that to understand patriarchal values that have lasted for centuries, and that still define many women's roles, the male perspective must be taken into account.

If only women's literature is compared and analyzed, the research risks to fall into defining the roles of women as seen by them not only as reality but also as an illusion. Some of the roles portrayed by women in women's literature are tangible, real and can be conceptualized with hard data. Yet there are other roles which establish the hypothetical case of what women would do with power, not what they do in reality when they achieve it.

Sara Sefchovich provides a compelling statement on this controversial issue. "Literature consists in a mechanism to appropriate oneself of reality and to transform it, so much as in the topics and problems that it presents as in the way of structuring a piece of work, the style and language. Each woman that writes carries with her the biological particularities as well as her historical, social, geographical and linguistic position...when a woman writes – just as when a man, a youngster, a Latin American, a black man or a black woman – she sees the world in a certain way, that is different to how others see it, even if

she shares cultural values that sustain her society in a certain time in history” (Sefchovich, 2011: 228).

Nothing can be considered final; no work can be considered the last word, and with this we connect with the subject of empowerment. It is not empowering to transplant the role of suppressor into the hands of the suppressed:

- “*You ask me if it’s time for a female president.*
- *I answer like this: in my opinion to be president, governor, secretary or judge are positions that should not be obtained in terms of gender but in terms of capability and talent” (Sefchovich, 2011: 302).*

The roles to be analyzed are not taken as the final word by the author of this document, they are taken as portraits that enable us to see how writers see women, how their roles are portrayed, how the roles have evolved. Therefore, the analysis includes material which fits the criteria of research, as well as the defined roles either in SEA and Latin America, written both by female and male authors.

Literary criticism is a tool for analytical work which does not represent universal judgments; literature cannot *configure the particular in a general pattern to satisfy the convenience of a certain group*. Literature can be good or bad, and what matters is not who the author is but what message it conveys: *we cannot seek in books the ideological satisfaction of the critic instead of reading what the text says and what it can provide* (Sefchovich, 2011: 304-306).

Attempting a ‘feminist literary criticism’ exemplifies a case of inverted sexism, falling in the same contradiction women condemn: *get rid of a value judgment considered sexist, to fall into another one identical but inverse. We cannot fall into excessive womanism*⁶ (Sefchovich, 2011: 304-306).

⁶ Womanism: a form of feminism that emphasizes women's natural contribution to society (used by some in distinction to the term feminism and its association with white women). Believing in and respecting the abilities and talents of women; acknowledging women's contributions to society. Womanism is a term commonly used in the context of academic theological studies. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

2.4 Women and Developing Countries

As established in the introductory chapter, the relevance and significance of this study lies in comparing one Developing Region to another. The norm concerning women and empowerment tends to make Developing Nations rely on what Developed Countries have done and discovered through research and experience, but this does not truly reflect what women in SEA or Latin America need.

SEA and Latin America are both part of the Developing World. A characteristic of many Developing Countries is their patriarchal ideology where men control the power positions and women have subordinated roles.

Added to the patriarchal matter, we have the impact of colonization, another common characteristic in many Developing Countries; “studying the condition of Third World⁷ women, therefore, cannot be separated from the colonial experience since, historically, the exploitation of both women and colonies has been fundamental to the global system of capital accumulation, and sexism and patriarchy are part of its embedded ideology” (Etienne and Leacock 1980; Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen et.al. 1988; Saffioti 1978 in Acosta-Belen et.al., 1990: 300).

Chapter three presents a compilation of historical data of both regions under study. Familiarizing the reader with the development of women’s roles throughout history allows for an accurate positioning of the circumstances under which women live nowadays. Colonization changed the lives of males and females of the colonies; women were affected by the notion Europeans had concerning their own females.

As Europe expanded its influence in the new colonies, they worked with missionaries and official authorities who “had very little regard for any patterns of communal and egalitarian relationships among the native populations subjugated in conquest” (Etienne and Leacock 1980; Nash 1980; Saffioti 1978 in Acosta-Belen et.al., 1990: 306). With a

⁷ Third World or Developing Countries. The Developing Countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. *Origin*: translation of French *tiers monde* first used in the 1950s to distinguish the developing countries from the capitalist and communist blocs. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

total disregard for the society's past, the Europeans arrived and imposed what they considered appropriate social values, in their case, the subordination of women was well in place and therefore it was imported to the colonies.

Women in colonized territories seem to have lost their past, colonization brought alterations and foisted beliefs sometimes reinforcing existing ones, and in the end, although detrimental to all, the larger repression turned towards women. "Especially in Asia but also in Latin America, patriarchal social values have displayed remarkable resilience. Until and unless these customs and mores undergo change, prospects for political empowerment of women will be limited" (Smith et.al., 2004: 34).

The strategies for SEA and Latin America must be designed according to developing countries needs because – and as Acosta-Belen et.al. state – "most of the development strategies and policies for the Third World have been formulated from the ideological and economic perspectives and interests of industrialized countries. They are generally applied across the board, with scant attention to specific national needs and realities of the territories they are intended to transform" (Acosta-Belen et.al., 1990: 302). These realities include patriarchy, tradition, expectations, poverty, etc.

Comparing SEA to Europe or the United States is, as stated in chapter one, an uneven approach. Feminism, as applied in Europe or the United States will not open the door to women in less developed areas where concerns still linger on basic needs such as economic survival of the family, children's nutrition and health, and respect for human rights. Smith et.al., call the Western agenda not irrelevant but indulgent. The antagonisms having showed its face already in international congresses, where women from the Developing World have demonstrated a line of interests which do not match those of the West (Smith et.al., 2004: 19).

Freedom of speech and equality in politics for example, can only come after women in Developing Regions have become aware of their needs; freed themselves from the patriarchal hand and its common tradition of inheriting women as goods (from father, to

husband, to son⁸); and finally, until they have been able to achieve a minimum level of equality and independence, economic and decision-wise, at home and outside of it.

The well-known term machismo⁹ is the number one reference to male power in Latin American countries. Machismo is not only a reality, it is a state of mind imbedded since childhood to boys and girls of any social strata. It is psychologically overwhelming and culturally imposing, and to break the tradition of machismo, women have to take responsibility for their role in inculcating such cultural bias in children.

Another comparability by Developing Countries is how despite the limited roles women have in their daily activities, when in need women take active parts in the process of governmental change, assisting their male counterparts pro-democracy rebellions. Southeast Asian women were active cadres in independence movements and civil wars; while in Latin America women played an essential role in overthrowing authoritarian regimes without questioning their own involvement. Nevertheless, once new governmental forms were established – i.e. democracies in Latin America – opportunities for women were shut down, the national agenda took priority and their unquestioned roles as fellow fighters got lost on the way back home (Smith et.al., 2004: 18).

In the case of the Developing World, activists and observers in the 1980s saw the need to promote the rethinking of the process of development and its effects on women and society, to shift focus toward the exploration of socially and historically constructed gender roles; publicizing the idea took place in The First International Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 where it was highlighted how development strategies had overshadowed or neglected the economic role of women, leaving them out of the process of growth (Smith et.al., 2004: 7; Mehra, 1997: 140).

This resulted in generating awareness. In 1979 came the adoption of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, from here on CEDAW, where three major accomplishments came through: providing women with new channels for

⁸As related to Confucian submission, and traditional Latin American beliefs.

⁹Machismo (Spanish term): Strong or aggressive masculine pride. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

empowerment; inserting their issues onto the international agenda; and establishing respect for women's rights as a global social norm (Smith et.al., 2004: 18,19).

Parallel to CEDAW, Non Governmental Organizations or NGOs have become important forms of support for social issues around the world. The case of women's rights and women's empowerment is not the exception. However, Conway W. Henderson writes how "until recently, it has been rare for an NGO or government to give specific attention to the human rights violations of women in its reports. This oversight improved somewhat when the State Department Country Reports, in 1993, started a section on women that covered private acts of rape and domestic violence. Another improvement came with the 1994 creation of a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, who would file regular reports about selected countries under investigation" (Henderson, 2004: 1035).

Manoranjan Mohanty believes the involvement of NGO's has not brought the results that could be expected. According to the author, the work of such organizations disorients women from demanding that the state agencies deliver the goods (Mohanty, 1995: 1435). A possible example can be seen in a reference made earlier in this chapter; where Rekha Mehra discusses the consistent provision of welfare instead of long term sustainability projects for women. Women are given support, not thought to survive on their own; as the Chinese proverb says, *give a 'woman' a fish and 'she' will eat one day, teach 'her' to fish and 'she' will eat for a lifetime.*

If their economic power increases, women can gain other forms of power, they can reach positions in the political arena, from where tangible changes can take place, and women oriented policies can be proposed and applied. In these Developing regions women in politics are still limited to a number of quotas and to the patriarchal authority, notwithstanding more women are reaching positions of power previously denied to them.

Statistical information allows us to see some parallels among the countries under study. Some countries rank higher than others in certain aspects, and countries like Cambodia and Haiti rank lower in most categories. Also there is virtually no data available

for Myanmar.¹⁰ However, one fact can be established; women in both regions tend to rank among the same percentages in most aspects, all of them being lower than Europe, USA, Canada and Australia (The Developed World), and higher than most African Nations (part of the Developing World).¹¹

The similarities we can observe through data, and the ones that will be highlighted in the following chapters, represent a source of knowledge for women to learn more about the exercise of agency from other's experiences. *The importance of empowerment is that people strengthen their confidence in themselves and dare to speak up, participate and, above all, insist in being included* (Sefchovich, 2011: 197). Every piece of information to assist in the process must be considered a gain.

Since empowerment demands attention to specific historical struggles of women [and men] and processes of development, in the next section we will explore the background history of SEA and Latina America, thus commencing the comparative analysis.

¹⁰ According to the Gender Development Index (A composite variable that can indicate disparities between men and women in different aspects of life), most countries of SEA and Latin America are located among the medium rank of GDI; Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba and Brunei. While Laos and Cambodia rank among the lowest level. For the Gender Gap Index (Measures the relative equality between men and women in access to resources, regardless of the overall level of development), most countries are in the medium rank, with the Philippines found among the top ten in the world; Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Malaysia and Brunei ranked low on GGI. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009).

¹¹ To establish a more definite link between these two regions, please refer to Appendix C of this thesis for a summary of women's conditions in SEA and Latin America.

CHAPTER III

SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA: COMPARING WOMEN IN HISTORY

The present chapter consists of a compilation of historical data relevant to position both regions on a comparative level, i.e. the process of colonization and the new ideas brought to them by foreigners. Mention of pre-colonial observances will be added to pinpoint where the regions maintain long established traditions, and where they had to adapt to outside influence. The purpose is to establish the scope of localization; how women reached the status granted to them by the early twentieth century.

The comparative analysis of SEA and Latin America here presented, follows a timeline with three periods: Pre-colonial, Colonial and Postcolonial. The actual periods happened in different centuries for each region, with Ancient Meso-America¹ and the Andean Region² falling in the hands of Spanish colonizers at the same time that SEA was in the prime of its own pre-colonial stage. By the time the Southeast Asians fell under the colonial regime, Latin American nations had already begun fighting for independence. Yet in the fascinating field of comparative analysis, there are aspects that remain timeless; how colonizers influenced these areas equally altered the life of the colonized, because the insertion of a new culture has an impact that one cannot measure in decades.

¹ Meso America: The central region of America, from central Mexico to Nicaragua. A region of ancient civilizations and native cultures before the arrival of the Spanish. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com; Henderson, Conway W. (2004); Word Reference; The University of Texas at Austin.

² Ancient Meso-america we discuss mainly the Aztecs and Mayas, as their time is closest to colonial Meso-america, also they adopted many of the cultural traces of Olmecas and Mexicas (Aztecs). In the Andean Region, the Incas dominated the spectrum, yet other peoples like the Guarani from present Paraguay.... Other peoples include the Chané (or Izoceño are a native ethnic group whose traditional lands are in the plains and valleys between the Gran Chaco and the Andes in northern Argentina and southern Bolivia *from* Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.) and Mapuché (A member of an American Indian people of central Chile and adjacent parts of Argentina, noted for their resistance to colonial Spanish and later Chilean domination. The Araucanian language of this people *from* Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.) also from Paraguay; Potiguar from Brazil, a group of farmers. The Arawak from the Caribbean Islands of Hispaniola (Dominican Republic), Puerto Rico and Cuba. The Guarani were a patriarchal society, farmers and fishers. Farming was the work of women. Also worked as nannies and wet nurses (Horna, 2011; Silverblatt, 1978; Restall, 1997)

Shared features will be the high point of this chapter; regardless, differences will also be mentioned. In 1944 George Cœdès noted the high status women had in early Cambodian societies, a strong tradition of matrilineal success existed, and from their example he arrived to the theory that societies throughout the region could be grouped together according to shared cultural features (Jacobsen, 2008: 2). Studying the opposite side of the world, Rosemary A. Joyce states how in pre-Columbian societies, “Gendered ideologies played crucial roles in religion, and gender was central to social relations” (Joyce in Meade et.al., 2004: 307).

Women in Latin America and SEA had active positions in society and politics before the European conquest, and were dynamic actors of the emancipation movements; through history, their position fluctuated from power to subjugation as hybrid social structures took form when external forces moved in. Later, the colonial period would be one of conflicting roles, with tradition and modernity clashing, always altering someone’s expectations.

3.1 Women in Pre-Colonial Times

3.1.1 Royal and Elite Women

Within the life of the Palace and the world of the rich and powerful, women in pre-colonial times had determinant roles which included, foremost, a central part in the mythology that tells the stories of how Southeast Asian and Latin American countries originated; not only they were in these stories but from them emanated the actual connection to a certain land. Women in these times had roles as important and educated Queens – some governed in absence of male leaders – involved in teaching, writing, religion and war. An important element we will see in this segment is the key part women had in determining access to the throne for it was them who had first claim to the land.

To cement alliances between countries, it was marriage to an important royal or elite woman that allowed for expanding ones' state and influence in politics. What is more, in the next pages we will learn how powerful women were, we will observe an undeniable presence in the public life, and we will understand why it is claimed women before colonization – in the two regions under study – were respected and valued as important members for the ruling classes.

Women before the colonial period in SEA and Latin America had – undoubtedly – a degree of power and recognition within their societies. Women took part in ruling and building their countries and their roles as mothers went beyond the household and onto the realm of politics by asserting descent to potential heirs. Women had a value in the market and the fields, and even though they did not participate as warriors, they did participate in religion, mythology and spirituality. Both in SEA and Latin America, their presence was made noticeable and their position was, to a degree, one of influence.

Similarities can be found in the presence of women in mythology, especially related to the origin of cultures; Queens in both regions had an important social standing. In SEA, females ruled and played a definite part in asserting heritage rights to the throne. Equally, in Latin America, female Queens are mentioned in historical records, with the slight difference that some Queens had political power but did not govern (i.e. Maya³ Queens), while others did (i.e. Inca⁴ Queens).

In *Early Kingdoms of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula*, Paul Munoz introduces the notion of the first Kingdoms of SEA, all of which credit their foundation to a Brahman⁵ who entered into conflict with a local ruler, used his weapon to

³ Maya: A member of an American Indian people of Yucatán and adjacent areas. The Mayan language of this people. The Maya civilization developed over an extensive area of southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize from the second millennium BC, reaching its peak *c.* ad 300– *c.* 900. Its remains include stone temples built on pyramids and ornamented with sculptures. The Mayas had a system of pictorial writing and an extremely accurate calendar system. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com; Henderson, Conway W. (2004); Word Reference; The University of Texas at Austin.

⁴ Inca: A member of a South American Indian people living in the central Andes before the Spanish conquest. The Incas arrived in the Cuzco Valley in Peru *c.* ad 1200. When the Spanish invaded in the early 1530s, the Inca empire covered most of modern Ecuador and Peru, much of Bolivia, and parts of Argentina and Chile. Inca technology and architecture were highly developed. Their descendants, speaking Quechua, still make up about half of Peru's population. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com; Henderson, Conway W. (2004); Word Reference; The University of Texas at Austin.

⁵ Brahman: A member of the highest Hindu caste, that of the priesthood. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

mark the location of his future city and married either a Queen or a daughter of the King; and he founded with her the first dynasties (Munoz, 2006: 46). Legends are similar along the Mekong Delta region of modern South Vietnam and Cambodia (Clay et.al., 2008: 87).⁶ Similarly, origin legends in Latin America can be found through the creation myth recorded in the Maya text Popol Vuh⁷ where, through food production, a woman was entitled with the origin of humanity; the Maya royal line also claims to have descended from a mythical female ancestor (Clay et.al., 2008: 127,133).

Handing women an important role in the myths upon which generations of females and males have relied to explain – or justify – their very own existence as a society, provides an important base to assess where women were located in pre-classical history on both sides of the Pacific. Women had a certain position of value; and therefore this analysis will begin from the top of the social pyramid, along the lines of ancient Queens and Royal women.

In *The Flaming Womb*, Barbara Watson Andaya asserts that throughout ancient Southeast Asian history documents, various women come up as important – and cultivated – Queens and Princesses from where males claimed their right to the throne. Yet the author

⁶ The Funanese version of the myth is based on a sovereign woman named Liu Ye. A man from India, Hundien, dreamt of a spirit that gave him two bows and ordered him to embark upon a merchant ship and take to the sea. Hundien, betook himself to the temple of the spirit, and found the bow under a tree. He then took the boat and directed it to Funan. When Lui Ye saw the ship, she organized her soldiers to fight, but Hundien shot an arrow which, penetrating the side of a boat, struck someone. Liu Ye was afraid and submitted to Hundien, who made her his wife (P. Pelliot in Jacobsen, 2003: 359).

The epigraphic version in the Vo-Canh stela in Mi-son presents Kaundinya, head Brahman of Bhavapura, who planted the spear that he had received from the eminent Brahmana Asvatthaman. There was a daughter of the King of the Nagas (Naga: (Indian mythology) a member of a semi divine race, part human and part cobra in form, associated with water and sometimes with mystical initiation.), by birth... who established upon the earth the race, that bears the name of ‘Soma’: she adopted that state and lived in human form... Kaundinya married her in order to fulfill certain traditions (L. Finot in Jacobsen, 2003: 359).

The Cambodian version of the Legends focuses on ‘Mera’ the most renowned of beautiful deities...“the Maharsi Kambu Svayambhuva arrived from Aryadesa and found the Naga-king, ruler of the land. Kambu was invited by the King to remain in the land due to the common veneration of the god Siva. Later, Kambu married Mera, who had been given ‘as a daughter’ to the Naga-king by Siva. After the marriage, Kambu ruled over the land, which came to be called after him (Kambu-ja, ‘born of Kambu,’ evolving to Kamboja).” Later, in the classical period, the King of Cambodia was required to copulate each night with a serpent-spirit that appeared in the guise of a beautiful woman. If he failed to maintain tradition, catastrophe would befall the kingdom (Jacobsen, 2003: 360).

⁷ Popol Vuh: Narrative about the origins, traditions and history of the Quiché (K’iche’) Maya nation told by an anonymous Guatemalan Indian who produced the document between 1554 and 1558. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online.

also states how “the standard accounts of SEA rarely permit females more than a minor historical role” (Andaya, 2006: 1). Examples of Queens in both regions include:

- 1) Khmer women like Kulaprabhavati, Jayadevi,⁸ Jyestha and Indrani;
- 2) Queen Maha-Tevi from Lao⁹ – in Watson’s words the “quintessential scheming woman” whose intrusion within the realm of men results in negative effects on the country, a clear “lesson of the danger of allowing women a role in politics” (Jacobsen, 2008: 23-30).
- 3) In the Malay Peninsula Queens reigned over the state of Patani; and “Muslim Queens are found in the various Bugis kingdoms of South Sulawesi, where Islam had been adopted at the beginning of the seventeenth century but where women who carried the ‘white blood’ of royalty could outrank and supplant male rivals.” Additionally, in northern Sumatra there was a long period of female rule after 1511 (Andaya, 2006: 167-169).
- 4) Across the Pacific, in pre-colonial Latin America, Maya women rarely ruled directly although they did have strong political positioning and spiritual power; Aztecs¹⁰ were forbidden to speak on formal public occasions but exercised leadership in other ways. Still, Aztec Queens included Atotztlil and Queen Tecuichpo and – although their names might be unavailable – Maya female rulers did exist in Palenque¹¹ (Clay et.al., 2008: 133, 149, 150).
- 5) However, Inca Queens in Latin America played a bigger part as rulers. Queen Coy Chimpu Urma Yache – the wise one in Quechua¹² – is even credited with introducing the cultivation of Maize to Cusco Valley. Together with the Coyas¹³, she governed if their husbands were absent. In the Andean region, the worship of Queens after their death was

⁸ For whom evidence exists to support an autonomous reign – succeeded her father, with a brief period in which she reigned in conjunction with her husband.

⁹ She could also be from Ayutthaya and married to a Lao King from the 1400s.

¹⁰ Aztec: A member of the American Indian people dominant in Mexico before the Spanish conquest of the sixteenth century. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

¹¹ Palenque: The site of a former Mayan City in SE Mexico, Southeast of present day Villahermosa. The well-preserved ruins of the city, which existed from about ad 300 to 900, include notable examples of Mayan architecture and extensive hieroglyphic texts. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

¹² Quechua: A member of an American Indian people of Peru and parts of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador. The language or group of languages of this people. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

¹³ Coya is usually referred to as the “Queen of women,” implying that her jurisdiction was centered in this position (Silverblatt, 1978: 54).

equally important as that of Kings in the maintenance of the Empire's order (Silverblatt, 1978: 43, 45, 54).

Thus, ancient Queens had power. The title in itself granted them superiority among the common folk; and records in history acknowledge their position of power in one or more areas. Power being relative, being empowered in one aspect of life not guaranteeing power in other aspects, these women were, during their reigns, empowered. Granted, records concerning women as rulers are limited, all the same their importance had to be such that along the names of male rulers, these Queens made their way into history.

According to Barbara Watson Andaya, the greatest challenge to 'women's history,' however, is the scarcity of female writing due to limited documentation concerning women in the past, most of which was written by men (Andaya, 2006: 52, 53). Joan Scott makes a similar observation regarding Latin America, where women's history also lacks in sources to support interpretations and debates (Montalvo et.al., 1998: 3)¹⁴. The resulting effect being that the history we know does not, or rarely, present the views of females; therefore not much can be understood about how they saw themselves as a part of the process of formation of the regions, culture and traditions that persist today.

SEA as a geographical locality, coincides with a culture area where the position of women was relatively favorable and where 'early modernity' refers to a period of great consequence for male-female relations (Andaya, 2006: 231). Queens and elite females were represented in inscriptions; in Cambodia and the Island states women were highly learned, to the point of having written inscriptions themselves. This is similar to Maya and Inca women who were also highly educated (Clay et.al., 2008: 129; Silverblatt, 1978: 42):

1) Twelfth century Queen Indradevi from Cambodia, wrote a Sanskrit inscription in memory of her sister.

2) Other inscriptions in the area, from 'Pagan, Pegu, Sukhothai, and northern Thailand record the visibility of royal dowagers and consorts as they honored the monkhood, donated religious buildings and even accompanied armies into battle' (Andaya, 2006: 45,166).

¹⁴ With the exception probably of Inca Queens who are credited with having served as the historians for their communities and for the State through their weavings (Silverblatt, 1978: 42).

Women were involved in the court all over ancient SEA since early in history, and they preserved a position of power well into the fifteenth century; accounts exist about strong-minded and sometimes 'ruthless' rulers like Queen Simo from Holing (now Java) "so ruthless even pirates avoided the coast of her kingdom" (Munoz, 2006: 220). Among the Maya, elite women held an unusually high profile in warfare, but could not become soldiers nor use their military leadership to attain power (Clay et.al., 2008: 133).

Documentation shows that women were the source of what Jacobsen calls 'matrilineal reckoning' in SEA and Latin America. In the former, Kings traced their lineage to female relatives as a source of legitimate power and Malay legends tell about traders taking local wives to gain access to land and resources; something the Spanish and Portuguese did in the latter (Jacobsen, 2008: 47; Andaya, 2006: 47). Catherine Clay states that Maya and Aztec women were central in forming alliances through marriage, the relationship with mothers being crucial in providing greater status.

Social and political rank came from both sides of the family and mother roles perpetuated the lineage of her kin group (Clay et.al., 2008: 129,131,149). Incas also followed the matrilineal line of reckoning and women were important in setting hierarchy, however they could not define it as they were not ascribed with symbolic or effective control over men (Silverblatt, 1978: 50).

Southeast Asian women maintained a certain position of dominance even when Queens began to loose their 'ruling' power. In seventeenth century Java, Queens disappeared as Islam increased (Andaya in Meade et.al., 2004: 333); and in Cambodia, King Ang Duong modified the way Princesses could marry, and annulled status heritage from Queens and Princess (Jacobsen, 2008: 117-118).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the disappearance of female rulers expanded to the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago; what was left behind was their memory in a number of royal chronicles with legends of female rule emphasizing problems that may arise when women assume political power. Women became identified as a source of evil power that invariably ended in punishment for the land and its people (Andaya, 2006: 166-169). In Latin America Queens perished with the arrival of colonialism as the Europeans instituted a full-scale empire with foreign royalty.

Historians state how in both regions, women married for reasons of power and extension of territory, to serve as mediums for a male ruler to claim his right to sovereignty. Women in pre-colonial times were allowed to inherit land and other goods just as men. Many women were protected even after marriage, if divorce took place (were divorce was allowed), women would take their property with them at the end of the marriage. Therefore, in cementing relationships, women had a powerful position to enrich of her new family.

Munoz speaks of marriage alliances through Southeast Asian Princesses as a mechanism to legitimize power, she claims such agreements were the norm in those times (Munoz, 2006). Equally, Watson establishes the existence of “numerous accounts of royal Princesses traveling to and from Southeast Asian kingdoms to cement political alliances between courts” (Jacobsen, 2008: 89).

3.1.2 Women Outside the Palace

In discussing power and empowerment, one always considers the rich to have more opportunities, nevertheless, in the case of pre-colonial Latin America and SEA this was not the case; outside the royal and elite circles women had a strong position. They had access to property, economic presence and great value in society. Women had a duty as mothers and wives, they were expected to follow rules and attain to a certain conduct. Yet in the freedom seen in their sexuality, and their influence through the spiritual realm, a degree of equality is discernible.

Beyond the palace walls, women also participated in myths¹⁵ and traditional ideologies; some of which have survived until our days. Myths, although not a source of clear-cut evidence, are passed along from generation to generation asserting not only a belief that something might have been or still is real, but that a certain way of living was a

¹⁵ Myths are ancient stories especially explaining, in a literary way, the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts that relate to how a community came into being; these can still provide indispensable insights into gender symbolism and the nature of sexual identity (Cambridge Online Dictionary; Andaya, 2006: 57).

possibility. If myths in the region talk about powerful goddesses and mighty Queens who fought for freedom and righteousness, then somewhere along the line such stories could have been partially true. No matter how small this ‘truth’ is, there is an open door for interpretation that many scholars have chosen to open.

Women took part in rituals and worship ceremonies important for the local cultures; in the Andean region, Sonya Lipsett-Rivera states how indigenous women defended folkways and rituals (Lipsett-Rivera in Meade et.al., 2004: 481) and participated extensively in religious office. Inca Queens and elite women were involved in religious rituals, considered to uphold the moral order of the Empire (Silverblatt, 1978: 44, 48).

In SEA, the world outside the palace walls would mirror the life within it. Of course, one cannot but wonder how different women were in society if they lived just outside the realm of the royals, their male relatives involved in dealings with the army and government, and some female relatives having access to the secret halls and rooms of the Kings and Queens. Some things were similar, but the common people might have had more relaxed values and expectations for their females. Among the common folk premarital sex, monogamy, easy divorce, and economic independence were all more evident. Similar characteristics apply to pre-colonial Latin America (Andaya in Meade et.al., 2004: 337).

The following examples support the notion that women in pre-colonial times were respected and had a degree of empowerment within the household and family:

1) Paul Michel Munoz describes that in Javanese Kingdoms women generally enjoyed a reasonably good social status, owned land and were allowed to succeed their husband on his death. Divorce was also possible and women could keep their property.

2) Aztec, Inca and Maya women had the same entitlements in pre-colonial Latin America; though the Inca seemed to have been more egalitarian when it came to the household (Munoz, 2006: 338; Clay et.al., 2008: 128,142; Silverblatt, 1978: 39,40,44).

Yet, the roots of late pre-colonial and colonial shifts of power were already in place in some regions. Customary law in the Malay peninsula, in Java, and among the Theravada Buddhists, speaks of a woman as an object owned by her husband, giving him rights over

her. In Vietnam, Confucianism promoted the subjugation of the wife to her male relatives.¹⁶ In pre-classical Cambodia, marriage gave women status and legal protections (Jacobsen, 2008: 97) but during King Ang Duong's reign in the eighteenth century, divorce was made difficult for women; they were even prohibited from expressing themselves because any comment against a male spouse was considered an offense in the eyes of the law.

Also, Thai sources describe some of the hell-beings in popular stories as women who had "lacked reverence for a husband or had been disrespectful to a mother in law..." since sexual misdeeds by females were regarded as public offenses that dishonored their families, the agonies suffered in hell by those who flout cultural norms, a favorite subject in temple decoration, are often directed toward women (Andaya, 2006:163).

Empowerment being relative, not everything was radical. Women had a degree of power in certain aspects of their lives, many of which would change with the arrival of the colonizers. Women were empowered when it came to property and inheritance entitlements. Southeast Asian women could negotiate contracts, incur in debts, inherit property or acquire titles in their own right, and senior village females were involved in communal decisions (Andaya, 2006: 45).

Philippine women could inherit and access public roles; Vietnamese women of the eighteenth century were land owners; and in Cambodia, during the Angkor period, they had access to property, positions at court, education, access to economic and religious life (Andaya and Molony in Meade et.al., 2004: 330,523; Jacobsen, 2008). Fifteen century Thailand saw women managing affairs for both, the King of the country and the common people; men followed the decisions of their spouses, for "the mental capacity of the women certainly exceeds that of the men" (Smith et.al., 2004: 79).

¹⁶ Some examples include a Malay manuscript which states, "we women believers should be devoted to our husbands, in the hope that we shall obtain the mercy of Allah the Exalted in the hereafter" (Andaya, 2006:87); A popular saying in the same region describes life for women: "the raja rules the country/ the chief rules the district / the headman rules the clan / the leader rules his followers / the husband rules the wife." In Thailand, the Lan Na chronicle likewise notes that "servants respect their masters. Wives respect their husbands. Children respect their parents and younger brother and sister respect the older" (Andaya, 2006:148); The Confucian ideal of the Three Submissions and the Four Virtues summarize a set of moral advice for girls and women; labour (thrift, endurance, and attentiveness); appearance (neat and humble); speech (refrain from showing verbal signs of anger, frustration or jealousy, self-control); conduct (inner beauty, upright, filial, devoted, trustworthy, kindhearted). Self control, self sacrifice, self cultivation (Rydstrom, 2010: 171-172).

In pre-colonial Latin America, Aztec and Maya women shared many similarities, probably because the region was – and is – an area of continuous cultural contact. However, one major difference in the region was how the Maya civilization placed women in a high position in religious and political spheres, in some cases even equal to men (Clay et.al., 2008: 127,151; McVay, 2008: 36). The Inca also gave them high religious positions, yet they did not accept women in positions of leadership other than the Queens themselves; the equality seen at the household level was completely denied in the political one (Silverblatt, 1978: 46).

Mesoamerican women entered arranged marriages and followed matrilineal living and, as its sister Southeast Asian cultures, married women benefited by living with their birth families because they maintained more freedom (Clay et.al., 2008: 128,142). Aztec and Nahuatl cultures considered sexual restraint important; they were hierarchical, with a hereditary aristocracy and a patriarchal family structure. Aztecs believed women maintained the order in their domiciles, and therefore provided an overall harmony of society (McVay, 2008: 82; Clay et.al., 2008: 139). On their part, Incas trusted women to control the household economic surplus and make decisions regarding money. Sometimes they had the ultimate decision about the husband's role in the community¹⁷ (Silverblatt, 1978: 44).

Along the public sphere, women were active participants of the economic life of pre-colonial SEA and Latin America. There were professions solely for women, specific roles ascribed to them not only based on physical qualities but on the idea of a shared responsibility with men. There was an active participation of both males and females, in the economic sphere; production being the responsibility of the society as a whole.

Some of the activities women undertook during the classical period of SEA included wet nurses or surrogate milk mothers, slaves, religious teachers, traders, and supporters of the monk-hood. The use of wet nurses was common among Southeast Asian women – specially royals – and in Muslim societies for example, wet nursing is the only female occupation endorsed by the Qur'an, but a husband must give his permission. In Latin

¹⁷ Women also control household finances and therefore have the ultimate decision about whether they or their husbands will participate in the community's (costly) hierarchy of civil and religious posts (Silverblatt, 1978: 44).

America, the only reference to milk mothers concerned the Guarani¹⁸ women from what is today Paraguay, who also worked as wet nurses (Andaya, 2006: 45,128).

Different historians agree on the main activities for pre-colonial Latin American women (Maya, Aztec, Olmec¹⁹, Inca); which included production of cloth, tending of small gardens, processing food, corn grinding, spinning and weaving. They collaborated with men in farming and the production of pottery and clay, and latticework for rooftops. Aristocratic women could be matchmakers, artists, craftspeople, or book keepers (Joyce in Meade et.al., 2004: 315, 318; Clay et.al., 2008: 129, 131).

There was a multiplicity of jobs for women in both regions, and their active participation outside the household seems to have been uncontested. Just as in Cambodia and the Philippines, midwives held a high position in Aztec societies and, among the Inca, women disseminated the knowledge concerning agriculture (Clay et.al., 2008: 143; Silverblatt, 1978: 45).

An interesting fact is how history claims the Aztec had a reputation for abusing women which were already subjected to capture, enslavement, and human sacrifice all over the region. Pamela McVay suggests they might have been responsible for starting – or at least accelerating – the trade in women captives; Mexicas seem to have matched the treatment of women as prizes of war (McVay, 2008: 37; Joyce in Meade et.al., 2004: 316). Inca male conquerors, although not as violent as their Aztec neighbors, claimed control over all women of the Empire; only state-men were allowed to have more than one spouse, and only they set sexuality restraints on their female relatives (Silverblatt, 1978: 47,49). There is no conclusive data of similar violence in early SEA.

This section is a brief synopsis of important facts relevant to how women lived before the Europeans arrived; in spite of differences and similarities among women in one territory – or those beyond regional borders – as Nupur Chaudhuri wrote, the European rule

¹⁸ Guarani: A member of an American Indian people of Paraguay and adjacent regions. The language of this people, one of the main divisions of the Tupi-Guarani language family and a national language of Paraguay. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

¹⁹ Olmec: A member of a prehistoric people inhabiting the coast of Veracruz and western Tabasco on the Gulf of Mexico (c. 1200–400 bc), who established what was probably the first Meso-American civilization. A people living in the same general area during the 15th and 16th centuries. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

would come and alter tradition, creating commonalities regarding culture, language, religion, and social conventions (Chaudhuri in Meade et.al., 2004: 441).

3.2 Women in the Period of Colonialism

The Aztecs, Mayas and Incas saw the Spaniards in their land since the early 1500s; the peoples of today's Caribbean region even before. In contrast, SEA experienced the arrival of colonial powers in different stages and from different countries. Yet their presence would have an undeniable effect on the lifestyle and culture of all regions under colonial rules. Imposition of new believes, religions, government ideas, and patterns of behavior would create an imbalance where locals looked for ways in which their own cultures and values would transcend beyond those of the intruders; in most cases the answer resulted in control over women, their roles and the idea of them as keepers of the true societal values. This will be observed in chapter four as we study the role of women as mothers.

During the colonial period Southeast Asian and Latin American women must have experienced the equivalent to a roller coaster of ideals and demands; in some roles gaining power, in others loosing it. At the end, conflicted between too many expectations and even more rules. Not only they found themselves under the microscope of their own people, but also the colonizers had superimposed their own wishes above theirs. Overall, women suffered the biggest loss regarding their pre-colonial position; in the transition of the territories from free kingdoms to colonial subjects, women would be confronted with a visible disempowerment in key areas of their lives.

Their roles would be disfranchised from their previous power in religion and spirituality (participation alienated mainly to a pious activity of devotion and donations); education would be focused on their household tasks, with activities acknowledged as feminine taking the main part of their time; political power would be eliminated in its majority; and their previous freedom in sex and marriage would turn to unyielding restrain as they were constantly compared to a *good woman*, according to European standards.

In Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the French would contribute to the disempowerment of women; by establishing policies that devaluated them in areas where they previously had power. In Latin America and the Philippines, the Spanish took over positions where women had held leverage for centuries, for example religious and ceremonial roles. According to Trudy Jacobsen, the status of women declined overall, and Pamela McVay claims how between the 1400s and 1600s unpleasant changes came for women in Central America (Jacobsen, 2008: 173; McVay, 2008: 32).

In this segment we will classify women in three groups, the same ones we will use to analyze the literature in chapters four and five; women in the domestic sphere, women ascetics and women in the public sphere.

3.2.1 Women in the Domestic Sphere

Life at home and within the family in SEA seems to have undergone a continuous process of give and take for women. According to the needs of a certain time, was the level of restraint or freedom accorded to the female sex. What was and remains true, is that patriarchy was 'intrinsic to the natural order' and hence rarely questioned (Andaya, 2006: 148). This is an important element in the history of both, Southeast Asian and Latin American women for whom male dominance has been a stumbling block for centuries.

In SEA, matrilocality and matrilineal descent had been an important form of transmission of power for generations. Likewise, this extends to the colonies in Mesoamerica and the Andean regions. Women were important for inheritance and alliance building, having a daughter was a gain, it meant the possibility of money upon her marriage, and extra hands to work at home.

Although in both regions, the household was the women's realm, rearing children and transmitting cultural values rested in their hands (Andaya, 2006: 134); with the arrival of colonialism and new religions, women were to be confined to the house even more. In Java, for example, families welcomed daughters because of their important role in household

management and because with their marriage alliances they would bring new sons into the family (Wang Dahai in Andaya, 2006: 109). In SEA and Latin America, women became an asset for their families as marriage alliances would grant higher hierarchical status in society. As any other good for sale, women began being measured in terms of their chastity and virginity became the most valued asset.

In much of SEA, adolescent sexual relations had been accepted; and virginity and fidelity were not rigid categories, in some places even among the elite, and travelers frequently commented on the fact that married women could be sexually available to foreigners as a mark of hospitality (Andaya, 2006: 155).

This differs from Latin America where monogamy was the norm. One of the changes brought upon women came with chastity. Virginity became a good of great value for parents who had a daughter of childbearing years; what is more, chastity was to be the direct connection between the daughter's honor and her value as a merchandise. In spite of European disapproval over bride selling, or daughters being lent to men for some time, they seemed to have been rather comfortable with the notion of a non-virginal unmarried woman as an object of no value.

Colonizers arrived and found traditions which they considered unbearable within the expected behavior of women. As Nupur Chaudhuri explains, when European traders first arrived in SEA, Burmese and Filipino societies allowed cohabitation in 'temporary' marriages (Chaudhuri in Meade et.al., 2004: 436); in Ayutthaya, men had the right to sell or give a woman away for money; and in low society Siam a law code deemed it acceptable for a husband or parents to have a woman go live with another man in exchange for money or goods (Andaya, 2006: 131,149,436).

In contrast, royal edicts in Myanmar prohibited parents from legally selling their children, although it happened illegally. In the Philippines, the Spanish disapproved of bride selling and most probably refused to the practice in Latin America as well (Andaya in Meade et.al., 2004: 339; Andaya, 2006: 151).

During the colonial era, evidence of patriarchy among Spanish-Americans was clear. In the nineteenth century, women were subordinated to their husbands, and parental

rights belong only to the father, therefore reinforcing male authority. In places like Brazil, equality between spouses lost its previous importance and marriage could only be performed with paternal consent²⁰ (Restall, 1997: 123; Stolcke, Lipsett-Rivera, Besse in Meade et.al., 2004: 383,384,489,571). Rulers and governors in SEA, like their counterparts in Europe, believed that the State's hold over its subjects ultimately relied on the cooperation of the family and on the acceptance of a gender hierarchy controlled by men (Andaya, 2006: 164).

Women seem to have served two major purposes throughout the late pre-colonial and colonial periods in SEA: mother and spouse. There where, however, those women whose nature had betrayed; women who could not produce children had no value, not even as wives. From the prosperous years of Classical SEA and its valuable Queens and spouses, women became property; a reproductive machine that if rendered useless it had no value left, not even as a woman because her virtue had been taken. Barbara Watson exemplifies with a case in northern Thailand, in Nan, where “an unassailable justification for repudiation was a wife's failure to bear children or even worse, according to a 1707 Mon law code, her inability to conceive sons” (Andaya, 2006: 152).

Giving women the impossible task of assuring the birth of children, mainly boys, to guarantee male descent, represents one of the most clear cases of male domination. The capability of women to control their reproduction was completely out of their hands; it was impossible to *choose* the sex of the child. By punishing women, or discarding them as broken goods for not achieving the unachievable task, was a perpetually guaranteed mechanism of oppression that has lasted to our days.

Also concerning sexuality, blame for misconduct was hinted towards women, who even in cases of rape were considered temptresses; Mon and Vietnamese law codes, Catholic priests in the Philippines, the Thai Traibhumikatha, and reference to the Muslim Prophet himself, all point towards this angle of sexual advances from women towards men (Andaya, 2006: 158). Sex and religion became the ultimate source of control, ascribing women as abusers and males as victims of uncontrollable desires.

²⁰According to Portuguese law in 1775.

The idea of premarital sex also changed. With increased value on social standings, virginity was an asset to be protected in an attempt to mimic the elite. In Spanish colonies, women's relationships outside marriage were considered as a detrimental act towards family honor and, like in Spain, the pursuit of purity dependent on a sexual morality, virginity and chastity of women, became of paramount value (Andaya, 2006: 204; Jacobsen, 2008: 191-192; Stolcke in Meade et.al., 2004: 381). In Indonesia, *Siri* (honor) was in the hands of women, only they could break it.

In Spanish-American law, beliefs in monogamy and lifetime marriage were altered by the colonizers acceptance of males' promiscuity while penalizing that of women (McVay, 2008: 84). Within the Malay legal guidelines (*Makassarese parakara*) a woman was twice as accountable as a man for committing adultery, and in seventeenth century Burmese law, men committing adultery would be fined; women, nonetheless, would suffer physical mutilation (Watson, 2006:161).

In Latin America, female sexuality also gained value, perhaps due to prevailing socio-ideological circumstances in which women were responsible for transmitting family attributes from generation to generation; genealogical origin was traced bilaterally, on both sides of the parents descent²¹, therefore marriage was of vital importance to perpetuate honor (Stolcke in Meade et.al., 2004: 381-385). Valued chastity and honor through good sexual behavior not only changed the way women physically related to men, but their daily logistics were completely overturned. In the attempt to prevent any temptations for the women, or for the poor men who suffered the incapability to restrain themselves from the pleasures provided by them, the former were now restrained to the household as a preventive measure.

Sonya Lipsett-Rivera and Verena Stolcke discuss regulations concerning the mobility of women and domestic confinement; among Latin people women should restrict their movements and, if they stayed within the property they would be defined as honorable, modest, and proper (Lipsett-Rivera, Stolcke in Meade et.al., 2004: 387,479,480).

²¹ Bilateral genealogy is still the norm in Latin America; children are legally registered under both, father and mother's last names.

3.2.2 Religion, Women and Change

With the arrival of new religions and colonialism, women would be overall displaced, disgraced, and turned into the source of evil and pollution. In *Gender History, Southeast Asia, and the “World Religions” Framework*, Barbara Watson Andaya discusses the alterations surrounding women and religion. Without a question the introduction of new religions affected the status of women in SEA and Latin America, where previous beliefs had not only accorded women important roles, but many of the cultures addressed in this study had traditions of reverence to female goddesses. In SEA, for example, Hindu, Islamic and Confucian beliefs became determinant in the construction of gender ideas (Andaya, Molony in Meade et.al., 2004: 328,521).

Confucianism reached Vietnam and the Chinese in the Malay Peninsula (Nyitray in Meade et.al., 2004: 282). The Vietnamese elite considered female education as an essential element to promote social morality; and as other societies (i.e. Cambodia and Indonesia), religious teachings promoted the moral codes perceived as ideal for women, which in reality were ideal to men (Andaya, 2006: 82). The ideas projected in religious teachings, endorsed also by state ideologies, were remarkably similar across the Southeast Asian region. Equally, Christianity would become a ruling force in Latin America. The alliance between patriarchal state structures and male-dominated religions was far from invincible in both regions (Andaya in Meade et.al., 2004: 337, 341).

Still, in pre-classical Cambodia, Buddhist women seem to have been perceived as spiritually equal to their male counterparts and were not discriminated against in their involvement in religion (Jacobsen, 2008). As for Philippine women – and their sisters in Latin America – the arrival of Spanish missionaries during the sixteenth century²² brought important changes for women; losing power and freedom in the Christian world (Watson, 2006:22). Among the Incas in the Andean region, Spanish priests brought charges of witchcraft and idolatry against women who played strong roles in religious ceremonies.

What had been a recognized superior role among the old culture, became taboo with

²²Late fifteenth century in Latin America.

the arrival of the colonizers (Silverblatt, 1978: 52). The basis for authority in the world religions –written scriptures, classical texts, and traditions of commentary– invariably privileged literate men and that would not be different in SEA where Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Confucianism, all came together as patriarchal institutions which qualified women as ‘lesser,’ ‘dirty’ beings than their male counterparts (Andaya, 2006: 102, 103).

Christianity was the last of the world religions to reach SEA; in their overzealous missionary effort, the promotion of premarital virginity and monogamy were central because monogamy was a requirement for conversion (Watson, 2006: 100; Watson in Meade et.al., 2004: 336); the missionary effort equally affecting the Spanish and Portuguese colonies across the Pacific where the native indians were forced to convert under rather extreme measures.

From the fifteenth century onwards, world religions and strengthening state structures promoted gender regimes that clearly advantaged men. All religions at some point, demanded or incited female chastity as the norm, a tradition that continues to exist up to the present. As new religions reached the European colonies, Nupur Chaudhuri explains, enhanced restrictions on female freedom were set in place (Chaudhuri in Meade et.al., 2004: 332,437). Islam and Christianity joined Buddhism and Confucianism in stressing that good women should be ‘modest and submissive’ (Andaya, 2006: 230).

Barbara Watson Andaya goes into the subject of world religions promoting the belief that menstruation was shameful, or polluting, ‘a divine punishment,’ a view that perhaps was not originally religious per se but which these institutions adopted; they represented a fantastic mechanism to validate the distancing of religion and women because since it is impossible to stop menstruating from happening, the rejection of females in holy sites can be perpetuated endlessly (Andaya, 2006: 199). This must have been a serious affront to the Aztecs, where no emphasis was set on celebrating nor punishing the menstrual cycle.

In the Thai Buddhist Traibhumikatha from fourteenth-century Sukhothai, women are portrayed as “corrupted beings born into an inferior state because they were consumed by material and sensual desires in their past lives” (Andaya, 2006: 49). Not a pleasant description of women, but a common one around the region; a surprising fact considering

throughout history lay female support has been determinant for monk-hood survival. In SEA, the alliance between Buddhism and state authority justified new scripts for male dominance (Andaya, 2006: 76,80).

For women, cloistered life remained an option in SEA – with fewer precepts than a monk and recognizable lower status (Watson, 2006: 76). Parallel, Christianity brought profound cultural changes for women in the American colonies; it brought the end of female priestesses and the overall female religious leadership diminished. Cloistered life in Latin America became an option against forced marriage. Sor Juana Inés De Le Cruz, a renowned poetess and nun from X century Mexico, joined the convent to have education and be allowed to write. Also the lack of available spouses made women seek a place in the nunnery, as being an ascetic was less shameful than being a spinster (Bakewell, 1997: 246).

3.2.3 Women and the Public Sphere

Women are believed to be the traditional keepers of the family income in many countries; men work, women distribute the income according to the family's needs. Moreover, traditional culture gives women equality or near equality at the microlevel of the family, sometimes including a strong informal voice in community affairs (Smith et.al., 2004: 79). In some cases, women might even exert a significant degree of control in daily decision making about productive activities, while still conforming to inegalitarian gender norms by stating that men should have the final say about all family matters (Santillán et.al., 2004: 541).

As we have observed, religious practices brought changes for women all over the region. Additionally, the colonial presence also brought new beliefs about what women should do, and how they should be involved in the public spheres of life; their participation in the economic sector, their access to education and training, and finally their access to political positions. In Cambodia, for example, midwifery was a common form of sustenance for women; yet colonial policies institutionalized midwifery and obliged women

to have government set accreditations to practice, pushing midwifery to an end, or to the informal work market (Jacobsen, 2008:160).

In Latin America, the mix of traditional beliefs, colonial imposition and modernization created a commotion were women got caught between their new public roles and their place as cultivators of traditional virtues; some women might have empowered themselves, and yet the patriarchal status quo did not change, if anything, independence would enhance machismo (Besse in Meade et.al., 2004: 572).

Work opportunities came with industrialization. In America, many native women began working as house servants and in Mexico and Puerto Rico, specifically, large numbers of women took jobs in cigar manufacturing. The low-skill tasks and low wages began making their way into the region (McVay, 2008: 84, 170). On both sides of the Pacific, women began taking over certain trades previously defined as for ‘male oriented’ because women could be paid less, therefore the goods produced could be cheaper (Lipsett-Rivera in Meade et.al., 2004: 478).

When the Spanish arrived in the Philippines, as part of their mechanism of development they established a tobacco monopoly where women took most of the work available. In Mexico, tobacco processing factories were already running; women were considered to have ‘nimble hands,’ which proved to be of use for cigar making (Andaya, 2006: 122). The system of work implemented by the Spanish in both regions, in the Philippines, Mexico and Puerto Rico – and most probably in several other colonies – could suggest that the treatment of women in colonial factories was similar in both continents.

By 1810 workers at the tobacco manufactories in Mexico and Puerto Rico were primarily women. The workforce’s transformation can be related to gender notions; those in charge began to perceive women as naturally more moral and less likely to steal, which in turn would make women useful for some specific governmental positions with limited access to power (Lipsett-Rivera in Meade et.al., 2004: 478).

We know now, women participated in many forms of work and labor, but the arrival of the twentieth century and its economic implications – and hardships – increased the need for women to join the labor force. In *Clash of Cultures: Gender and Colonialism in South*

and Southeast Asia, Nupur Chaudhuri affirms that in colonial Manila, women not only worked in government-owned tobacco factories, but also as teachers, vendors, shopkeepers seamstresses, embroiderers, prostitutes and midwives (Chaudhuri in Meade et.al., 2004: 437). Additionally, in Java “local wives and female slaves provided the labor for an escalating industry where women had largely lost control over production” and where they received low remuneration (Andaya, 2006: 118).

More things changed for women during – and after – colonialism. Women had been fighters along their male counterparts and this would not be different when freeing themselves from the foreign presence. They joined and participated in independence movements and other rebellions of the region; their involvement being indispensable for successful revolutions; their presence and needs elevated during war, and later returned to its ‘not so important’ pre-uprising status. Historically women were used to being involved in war; the Vietnamese Trung sisters fought liberation from China; in northeast Thailand, Thao Suranari repelled Lao forces in 1827; in Indonesia, Cut Nyak Dhien joined her husband to fight the Dutch (Andaya, 2006: 3).

In eighteenth century Haiti, Princess Améthyste headed a company of women called Amazons and Nanny of Maroons, a guerrilla commander for Jamaican slaves, became a national hero. Many women had active roles in the wars of Independence from Spain; rebellions in eighteenth-century Mexico show that women played a prominent role in the uprisings. In 1781 Gran Colombia, women in movements had leadership and supportive roles and in 1860 Brazil, elite women took up the cause of emancipation and attempted to have social utility (Meade et.al., 2004: 480,481,483).

SEA was colonized later, and therefore its independence movements or emancipation rebellions arrived during the twentieth century; women would join the fight in all colonized countries.

3.3 Women and Post Colonialism

After centuries of alterations to their roles as members of society, and the continuously amended expectations of behavior, women were trapped in a dual set of standards. The desire to maintain a national identity after the colonizers had left their mark, together with the undeniable changes introduced into the colonies, life became difficult for women in SEA and Latin America. Both regions across the Pacific were subjected to local customs and new ideologies; a level of disempowerment under the colonial rule can clearly be identified. Equally, cultural taboos and the imposing presence of religions affected progress and inserted new beliefs in the evolution of the two regions.

Women went from pre-colonial ideas of entitlement over hierarchy, property, sexual freedom, access to divorce and inheritance, to the less enabling rank of subordination, limited access to education and choice. From a life where bearing and rearing children did not impede women's participation in the productive process of society (i.e. Andean societies), and from a joint participation in war and physical work; change came in the form of diminished access to social ranking, sexual choices, divorce, freedom of religious involvement, and even uncontested movement outside the home.

Yet, in some regions – and in certain aspects – women survived the conquest, traditions were maintained and beliefs continued living from generation to generation; however, colonial legal statutes were influential in shaping gender because they assigned roles to men and women and restricted roles and rights of women in society. Women's inherent inferiority had gone from notion to certainty (Clay et.al., 2008: 151; Lipsett-Rivera in Meade et.al., 2004: 477). Descriptions of propriety, honor, modesty, restrain, subservience, etcetera are common throughout Southeast Asian and Latin American historical and literary documentation with a fairly insistent tone usually placed in the mother.

3.3.1 Changes to Women's Status After Colonialism

With the arrival of the twentieth century, modernization and socioeconomic developments left behind by the colonizers – or brought in by new commercial contacts – gender ideals had visibly changed in colonial SEA and Latin America. The need for more hands and brains in the public sphere not only required, but also inspired women to join the forces beyond the home terrain. Increasing needs for education, skill training, and the obvious need for freedom to reach new spheres, would become central for women.

Economic challenges had women increasingly working outside the home in factories, schools, and shops, as well as in small numbers in the liberal professions. This, however, happened within limits because despite active political and economic participation, women still lacked social equality; they continued working for lesser paying jobs and inferiority heightened (Lipsett-Rivera, Besse in Meade et.al., 2004: 490,577).

Women's access to education grew, and so did the implementation of moral values and promotion of roles in schoolbooks; in Cambodia the texts of the *Cbap Srei* (The Cambodian Code of Conduct for Women) were incorporated into the state educational syllabus (Jacobsen, 2008: 170). Hence, although women have more access to education, the material taught was imbedded with messages about what women should be or do; this applies in both regions, in Mexico, the government printed books began introducing women's characters as wives, mothers, servants and any other role were submission and obedience are common. Added to this, the arrival of television and radio enhanced the promotion of roles for women as desired by society and the State.

In Politics, the vote arrived in SEA and Latin America between the 1920s and 1950s:

1) 1920-1944 Cuba, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, French Guiana, Brazil, Uruguay, Myanmar, Thailand, Philippines (In May 1937 Philippine women became the first in Asia to achieve this (Meade et.al., 2004: 523)

2) 1945-1959 Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia (Seager, 2009: 104-105).

In the 1990s, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela past laws to require political parties to run minimum number of female candidates (Besse in Meade, 2004: 583). Meanwhile, Trudy Jacobsen notes that all female heads of state in SEA have been related to charismatic male political leaders (Jacobsen, 2008: 261).

In 2004 Rae Lesser Blumberg claimed women's degree of political empowerment was "still light years away from their degree of economic empowerment and overall status" (Blumberg in Smith et.al., 2004: 80). Giving women the highest power can be interpreted as a scheme for greater projects; one could assume they are accepted because they can be controlled and manipulated to act as needed, something a male counterpart might not be so willing to do.

Women in both regions were, and still are, allowed in politics under the vigilance and paternalism of male relatives; acquisition of elected office posts can be related to a male predecessor, economically powerful male or high-level politician. Ledgerwood claims, "if female power is restrained and governed, it is invigorating, supportive and protective. It is only when the feminine is not subordinated that it becomes destructive and chaotic" (Ledgerwood, 1990: 59 in Rydstrom, 2010: 136).

Parallel to a desire of perpetual control, big improvements took place; Vietnamese and Indonesians saw improvements in women's rights with the 1959 Vietnamese Law on Marriage and the Family and the 1974 Indonesian Marriage Law. In 1997 in Peru a law established since the 1920s, which allowed rapists to avoid punishment by marrying the victim, was repelled. Sadly, this is still a reality in places like Indonesia and Malaysia where marital rape is not penalized.

In Cuba, Nicaragua, Chile, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia, among others, once political instability would settle, women would go back to the household and their role as

homemakers. Just as in SEA, in Latin America women fought the twentieth century revolutions along side men:

1) 1960s-1970s in Vietnam, women participated with the Communist party as cadres of the revolution (Literature will discuss the cases in *The Women in the Island* and *Last night I dreamed of Peace*).

2) 1960s, Cuban women participated in the Revolution against communism (Literature will include *The Patio in my House*).

3) 1970s, Chilean women opposed Salvador Allende's socialist government together with men (Literature will include *The House of Spirits*)

4) 1970s in Cambodia, the militarization of women was a consequence of the equality between Cambodians. "Once the civil war was over, women would no longer be needed in the public realm; they should therefore be prepared to return to their natural sphere of domestic concerns and acceptance of male privilege" (Jacobsen, 2008: 202,209).

5) 1970s and 1980s Brazil had strong opposition movements but feminist concerns did not achieve a strong impact.

6) 1980s in Nicaragua, Socialist women guerrilla fighters had to double their work as homemakers in the camps (McVay, 2008: 221).

7) 1990s in Mexico, southern indian women joined the fight for equality with the Zapatista Army for National Liberation.

In 1990 in Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi's party won 80 percent of the seats in a democratic election in 1990, but the military government refused to recognize the results and she was held in home detention for different periods, her final release in 2010.

The new century has brought visible progress for women. In 2000, Malaysian women lawyers achieved the right to wear trousers in court, a big step for a country that still imposes dress code in certain circumstances; in 2001 the Brazilian Civil Code granted equal rights to women in marriage and divorce; in 2002 Vietnam banned polygamy and dowries in marriage; and in 2007 Thailand joined Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Peru, Argentina, Venezuela and the Philippines in considering marital rape a criminal offense (Seager, 2009: 104-105).

Women have been oppressed through violence, rape and forced labor. Yet despite patriarchal values and imbedded moral restrictions, women have succeed in politics and activism, positioning themselves at the top of governments in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama and the Philippines. Current female Head's of State include Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica and Thailand (http://womenshistory.about.com/od/rulers20th/a/women_heads.htm).

It must be dully noted that in spite of the difficulties to reach high office, public positions, or parliament seats, women in the region have taken active measures since early twentieth-century. NGO's and other organizations have been the medium through which women became agents and continue to seek governmental compromise:

- 1) 1904, Philippine Feminist Association is established (Meade, 2004: 523).
- 1920s, The Vietnamese Youth League and Vietnamese Nationalist Party formed to promote women's liberation along with the national liberation goals (Meade et.al., 2004: 525).
- 2) 1928 First Indonesian Women's Congress (Meade, 2004: 522).
- 3) 1949 Cambodian Women's Association formed to address poor literacy, improve education, and offer vocational training for women (Jacobsen, 2008: 243,250).
- 4) In 1975, the First United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico brought together 133 governments with 6,000 delegates present. The conferences that followed saw an increase in participation with 145 governments and 8,000 delegates in Copenhagen in 1980; 157 governments and 15,000 delegates in Nairobi in 1985; and 189 governments and 30,000 delegates in Beijing in 1980 (Seager, 2009: 106-107).
- 5) 1978 Indonesia celebrated their first International Women's Day by marching against domestic violence (Meade et.al., 2004: 522).
- 6) From the 1980s women's shelters for battered women began opening in Mexico, Thailand, Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, Philippines, and most recently Laos in 2006 (Seager, 2009: 29).
- 7) 1984 in the Philippines, the General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action (GABRIELA) was formed. They have criminalized sexual harassment in the workplace and, although not abolished yet, the mail order bride system has been outlawed (Meade, 2004).

8) Aung San Suu Kyi (1991) from Myanmar and Rigoberta Menchú Tum (1992) from Guatemala, won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work for democracy, and social justice and ethnocultural reconciliation, respectively.

9) By 2009 all member of SEA and Latin America had signed and ratified the CEDAW agreement (Seager, 2009: 14-15). Sadly this does not mean they are legally bound to it because Domestic Law takes precedence over international agreements.

10) In the present in Vietnam, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women, together with the Vietnam Women's Union work for education, health and awareness (Molony in Meade, 2004: 526).

Notwithstanding the important work done by them, these agents are linked to political movements and follow a partisan agendas pursued by the State to promote certain policies. Even though they can – and have – promoted the betterment of women, they are indisputably connected to governmental strategies, hence we cannot consider them to be solely gender oriented nor empowering steps.

3.3.2 Women in Contemporary SEA and Latin America

In the following two chapters, the comparative analysis of literature works will present the position of women, their roles, because as this document is written, women are often restricted to the domestic sphere, and social norms claim they should aspire to become mothers and wives.

In Mexico, and most of Latin America, it is common knowledge that a woman passes from her father to her husband on her wedding day; if a spouse is absent, women pass to their sons, sons in law, brothers or even nephews. There is no written mandate or literary reference, word of mouth and tradition prove both men and women still believe this is the rule of life. In Singapore, among the Chinese, daughters were transferred to their husbands upon marriage, and they even transferred their filial piety to their new family (Rydstrom, 2010: 195).

Creole women in the Caribbean are described as loving wives, good mothers, modest, hardworking and kind, and the only defect they could be charged with was that their very kindness served to encourage the ruinous ways of their sons (Lynch, 1994: 325); while women in Peru have long been confined to the household and to the performance of domestic chores (Trivelli in Smith et.al., 2004: 149).

If in Vietnam, in the twentieth century, women still live under submission – to their fathers, their husbands and to their sons; and if they continue to be ruled by traditional virtues – housewifery, appearance, speech, and conduct (Molony in Meade, 2004: 524); it can be stated that these Confucian inspired mandates are virtually everywhere in SEA and Latin America. In chapters, four and five, we will see these values and virtues (silent, uncomplaining, modest, loving, loyal, chaste, dutiful, etc.) applied to the characters of the selected texts under study.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

In this chapter the author will begin to analyze the roles of women in SEA and Latin America as described by various writers, female and male, to understand how women are perceived in society. Literature – a tool from where images will be extracted to portray the roles women have within the household¹ – is useful because writers use this medium to express feelings and perspectives of what they see as the reality, or the desired reality around them. Some of the works are based in real life characters, some others are modeled around ordinary people we can find everywhere in the regions under study. The analysis here presented is one hundred percent the interpretation of the author of this thesis.

The portrayal of women in Southeast Asian and Latin American literature is not only similar in the characters chosen but on the expectations society has from these women, and the fates many of them confront. What the reader will observe throughout this chapter is a randomly selected series of narratives in which can be detected what will be proven beyond doubt; women in these regions, within the domestic sphere, fall in one of three categories: daughter, wife or mother. Within this classification, women will also be generally portrayed – something the reader will be able to attest – in the frame of *virtuous*² or *inadequate*³. There is no middle ground when it comes to how a woman performs her prescribed roles.

Female roles in the domestic sphere are divided in three main categories that cross over one another through time, because daughters are always daughters even if they

¹ An interesting phrase from *The Women on the Island* by Vietnamese writer Ho Anh Thai states that one of the male characters tended to separate women in two basic categories, that of the mother-type and that of the sister-type; for this chapter such statement is crucial. Is it only in *Hoa's* eyes – the character in question – that such classification exists? Could it be that in real life, outside of the pages of a novel, society sees women as belonging to one of these two types?

² *Good, uncomplaining, obedient, submissive, passive, restrained...*

³ Everything that does not live up too virtuous.

become mothers or wives; mothers can be wives and even grandmothers. Within the daughters we also have the variation of the unmarried aunt or sister which becomes a lifelong caretaker to her elder and younger relatives. Either way, the single, childless woman does not escape the stigma of having to fulfill a certain duty in life.

Similar descriptions are found throughout literature where women are described as quiet, modest, humble, well behaved. In Cambodia for example, the old Code of Conduct for Women or *Cbap Srey*⁴ – written during the nineteenth century – states women should not show contempt because it reflects badly on their character⁵. The defined precept of womankind claims loudness to be a bad quality, rage should be avoided, kept within oneself.⁶ For women, happiness comes from keeping a good and happy home, that is the task women must achieve; good marriages of status enhance the possibility of happiness⁷.

Patience, humbleness and receptiveness⁸; important qualities for a woman in Cambodia. The same ideal also found in the poem “The Image of my Homeland,” where we can read a quote that compares women to the motherland, “If I liken Kampuchea to a young girl she is modest, humble, petite, and cute, always preserving her way” (Luoth, 1998: excerpt). This is useful to position the evolution of literature as a description of how women are perceived; and even when this documents were written prior to the scope of this thesis, their understanding comes in hand for the analysis that will be presented here.

In the 1937 Thai novel, *Behind the Painting*, male writer Sriburapha describes women as seen in Thai society of the early twentieth century; the main character affirming to her young friend to have sympathy for the female sex which is *born to be decorations, to please the world, and in order to perform these duties to the best of our ability, we [women]*

⁴ The Cbap Srey will be used as a reference only, to make connections between past and present to understand where and how roles and expectations have evolved, or not.

⁵ “Contempt reflects bad on yourself” (Cbap Srey 2).

⁶ “It is unseemly to be too loud; if you would rage and rant over matters, consider them in your thoughts, with head and body bowed” (Cbap Srey, 2).

⁷ “Let you give no admittance to feelings of hot anger or execration, for others will shrink and draw back and be frightened off, each in his own way” (Cbap Srey, 4).

⁷ “Good state and high rank bring happiness ... Maintain cozy home for this is the mark of a good woman” (Cbap Srey, 4).

⁸ “Being patient, humble and receptive each day as a matter of course” (Cbap Srey, 7).

have to preserve our appearance (Sriburapha, 1990: 97). This document, also written prior to 1960 is also useful to position women in contemporary literature.

In Bali in more recent years, Diana Darling sets forth a good rendition of womanhood; one which we can compare to the accounts of other writers: *a woman she must always have at her command the arsenal of her sex: the confusing powers of virginity, the terrorism of menopause, the subterfuge of menstruation with its attendant toxins, the diplomatic resources of old age, and the magical aptitude of childhood* (Darling, 1992: 74).

Meanwhile, across the Pacific, Chilean author Isabel Allende writes how regarding women, *their duty is motherhood and the home* (Allende, 1986: 85); an idea also reflected in the works of Laura Esquivel, Angeles Mastreta, and even Gabriel García Márquez whose novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* underlines the subject of a man's murder due to his affairs with a young bride returned to her parents – as a damaged good – the day after her wedding.

4.1 The Roles of Women as Daughters

4.1.1 Portraits of Women as Daughters

We open the analysis with the image of women as daughters. Literature describes them all; the good ones (virtuous) who care for relatives, obey their parents, marry as indicated, accept their fate and never complain; all the others (inadequates) who question their parents, who speak up their mind, who do not accept to live in silence. We begin by analyzing what is expected from them to discern deviations and characters which lay far from the ascribed idealism; to understand such expectations the terms of *virtuous* and *inadequate* will be continuously summoned.

A *virtuous* daughter is usually described in literature as one responsible for household tasks, who cares for her parents, siblings and other relatives – concerning health

matters or in providing for them – she assists the mother in whatever way she needs, and she obeys her father, brother, uncle or any other male relative – in any reasonable or lunatic endeavor chosen for her – who holds the position of the household patriarch. Literature displays these common features over and over, in many cases, women as daughters relinquish education, forfeit their right to love and surrender their lives to their relatives.

Written works also lay out the roles of the *inadequate* daughters; the rebellious ones who choose not to obey, not to marry the suitor selected by their parents. Some characters study or work; in the most extreme cases, they surrender to death if they cannot achieve freedom. Through the texts reviewed for this thesis, all such characters were found in novels, short stories and even poems. Geographically, these *virtuous* or *inadequate* daughters exist throughout SEA and Latin America.

The Cambodian Cbap Srey – which instructs women to respect their parents and spouses and to create a peaceful and safe environment in the home – is by no means the last document written with such lessons: “A woman must be frugal, soft and sweet in speech, always forgiving of her husband and she must never reveal any tensions in her household to gossiping neighbors. Success in following the dictates of the Cbap may be rewarded with great boons –such as rebirth as the mother of the great Buddha. However, breach of the rules can bring rebirth in a state of gender disorder, as a hermaphrodite in hell (Harris 2005 in Rydstrom, 2010: 132-133).”

We will observe how more recent documents, for example in Latin America where Catholicism is the reigning religion, women continue to be threatened with hell if they do not obey their parents. Inadequacy on the appropriate fulfillment of her roles gives women the perpetual punishment of life – and afterlife – in hell; whether the texts suggest her punishment will come in this life or another is inconclusive at times, yet most punishments on women for their inadequacy is applied immediately.

The most common role, in the contemporary literature analyzed, attached to the word “daughter” is that of the *caretaker*. Repeatedly, daughters in SEA and Latin American literature; daughters in poor settings and in rich households; daughters in rural communities or large cities; are often required – blindly expected – to take on the role of the one that

cares for her relatives until her death, sometimes they are asked to promise they will care for a relative.

Table 1 presents the cases of two women from distant regions; yet the expectations of them are very similar. With a difference on which daughter should be the caretaker – in Mexico it is the youngest daughter who cares for her mother, and in Thailand it is the eldest – what must be highlighted is the common belief that one of the daughters will stay home, unmarried, forever. The same case will be found in literature from Chile and Bolivia, Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia; which will be reviewed later in this segment.

In the case of Phan, Pensri Kiengsiri's main female character in *Arrival of Dawn*, she is described as an older woman without much education because her life purpose is to assist with the household duties⁹; she is single and childless, holds a menial job which her mother makes her take over the family business. Her lifelong duty, like Tita's, being forever single, forever present, never complaining, always attentive and caring; Phan is aware of her situation of misfortune.¹⁰

Tita and Phan live two worlds apart in the imagination of two very different writers, and yet they have so many things in common: when Tita's mother passes away, she remains home to care for her sister, her niece and her sister's spouse. Meanwhile, across oceans in a middle class neighborhood, Phan lives aware that when her mother dies, she will be responsible for her brother and two sisters who, by that time, are no longer children, they are either married or unwed but, with children¹¹.

Table 1 Daughters as Caretakers I

Title and Country	Character	Quote
<i>Like Water for Chocolate</i> Mexico	Mama Elena to her daughter Tita:	<i>You know perfectly well that being the youngest daughter means you have to take care of me until the day I die!</i> (Esquivel, 1989: 14)

⁹ *I had little education, so that the three of them [siblings] could have a good education* (Kiengsiri, 2009: 51)

¹⁰ *I was unfortunate enough to be the first-born, who my parents hoped, would put my younger siblings on my shoulders and carry them through life, on their behalf till the day I died* (Kiengsiri, 2009: 8).

¹¹ *When she was gone [mother], the duty of looking after my brother and sisters would be mine* (Kiengsiri, 2009:11)

Title and Country	Character	Quote
<i>Arrival of Dawn</i> Thailand	In Bangkok, Phan's mother screams repeatedly:	<i>What you like and what's your duty are two different things...since you are the eldest and should be able to help your parents sooner than the younger ones [siblings](Kiengsiri, 2009:48).</i>

The cases in Table 1 are very specific to the character of the daughter as the caretaker; a lifetime of sacrifices for two women who had nothing in common, and yet their duty in life is equally shaped making them destiny-soul-mates. Notwithstanding, the expectations and duty found in them can be seen in plenty of works by different writers (see Table 2). The same tale repeats itself in many towns, in several languages and under different voices; the result always the same: as a girl, as a daughter, the possibility of having to stay home and give up life and dreams for the well being of the others is always present, and in many cases the only option. This is a clear portrayal shared by both regions.

Table 2 Daughters as Caretakers II.

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Vietnam	Lat and Loan: Two girls that must care for their relatives and work to support the household.	Lat in <i>Young Keng</i> by Vnam Kien, "Then her husband fell sick and had to stay in bed for two years. Lat did the best she could, taking care of her parents-in-law and her husband and at the same time raising her baby" (Vnam Kien in Yamada, 2002: 223). Loan from <i>Unsettled</i> by Vo Phien, described as a wife and niece; she cares for her uncle and war comrade (Vo Phien in Yamada, 2002).
Bali	Kusuma Sari lives under the promise her father makes to her uncle.	<i>When you are old, Kusuma Sari will take care of you...</i> (Darling, 1992: 26)
Lao	Two children weep for their mother who goes to care for her ill father, leaving the children at home with their own father. In <i>Mother's Beloved Stories from Laos</i> :	"Grandfather sent a letter asking for his only child, mother..." (Bounyavong, 1999: 157); "her family was poor, so mother had to do many things to help out" (Bounyavong, 1999: 161).
Mexico	Aurora from "I Pity Him" in "Husbands" by Angeles Mastreta.	Cares for her father because of a promise to her dying mother.

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Bolivia	In “Mapamundi,” Cristina cares for her mother-in-law under the reminder of a promise:	“Remember you promised my son not to abandon me ever. What you promise a dying person you must do child” (Roca, 2005: 36).
Malaysia	In “Kebaya Tales,” Janet, leaves her job to care for her mother-in-law until the old woman dies.	“When Bibik became very ill, it was Janet who gave up her teaching job to take care of the old lady...Janet, the devoted sister-in-law” (Kim, 2011: 45).
Philippines	Consuelo is a nun, who must leave the catholic robe to go home and care for her own mother and her sister-in-law.	“The sudden death of her only brother forced her to return to the world. He had left behind their elderly mother and a young widow with two children and no means of support” (Pantoja in Yamada, 2002: 225)

Moving forward, an important character to study is that of Way Way, Ma Ma Lay’s main character in *Not out of hate (Myanmar)*. She is another example of a daughter who cares for her father: *She had been obliged to end her schooling in order to look after her father, who was alone, since her older brother and sister had by then left home. She helped her father take care of the business, keeping the records and accounts and handling money* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 6).

In this novel, set in early twentieth century Burma during the British occupation, Way Way had more options than her counterparts in other novels. The unexpected turn of events will take this young woman to face an uncommon case in literature, her caretaker role would have been more empowering than her wife role because, as we shall see in due time, she will suffer disempowerment by leaving her home and moving to that of her overpowering husband. Way Way doubts her role in life and eventually chooses under the overwhelming pressure of her surroundings and the propriety of a young woman of marrying age: *She thought that even though her mother, her brother and her sister had left her father, she could never do so. Her own position became clear to her as she pondered this matters* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991:50).

The author tells – through the lines of her characters – how the family *can’t stop you [Way Way] from getting married just because dad will be left alone. You can’t be a spinster*

because of Dad (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 72). Ma Ma Lay describes a rare case for women of the time, by ascribing them with possibilities in a world where many caretaker daughters had no choice to leave the home due to their imbedded responsibility to “care” for parents and even siblings; Table 3 presents examples of how, together with the role ascribed to the virtuous daughter, its virtuosity expands to *the sister* who in repeated cases also must be readily available to turn her life into that of the provider for her siblings.

Table 3 Sisters as Caretakers of Siblings.

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Malaysia	Little Rahimah from <i>Jungle of Hope</i> by Keris Mas.	A good example of the daughter-sister who takes care of her brothers and cousins, she doesn't go to school and loses her childhood in house chores. She is denied education to help at home so her younger siblings can achieve one.
Chile	Férula, A grown woman who has given up her life to care for her mother, and provide for her younger brother Esteban.	<i>Férula had accepted the role of her mother's nurse...she was cited as an example because of the devotion that she lavished on Doña Esther and because of the way she had raised her only brother when their mother became ill and their father died, leaving them in dire poverty</i> (Allende, 1986: 57)
Cambodia	<i>My Sister</i> by Mey Son Sotheary	A young woman becomes a prostitute to pay for her siblings education after their parents die.
Philippines	Remedios	A spinster who looks after her brother as her only duty in life: <i>His sister looked after the house, his clothes and his general well being</i> (Sionil in Francia, 1993: 110).

4.1.2 Portraits of Women as Spinsters

Another common feature is that of many of the daughter (or sisters) caretakers that cross into the stereotype of the *spinster*; Remedios (Table 3) is not the only one, both Tita and Phan (Table 1) remain single for the rest of their lives like Férula (Table 3) who, *when her mother died, found herself alone and with no useful purpose to her life, at an age when*

she could no longer hope to marry (Allende, 1986: 115). This idea brings to mind the stereotypical belief that women, single and childless, are of no use. They have no one to care for them, mainly because they have no daughters of their own, and like Vietnamese Mien from *The Women on the Island* explains:

I know I lost my opportunity to get married. But if I least I had a child, I would be consoled in many ways. If I hadn't been so concerned with 'preserving' myself all those years ago, at least I could have had a child with my beloved. And at least I wouldn't have to suffer like I do now...and who did I keep myself for? What do I need with my virginity, when all it does is bring me loneliness? (Ho, 2000: 94)

Daughters as caretakers are portrayed as virgins, in lonely endings, with no one to pay them back the same respect they accorded their relatives. In the “Kebaya Tales” of Malaysia, Lian is also described as “an old maid. A confirmed spinster. She was plain and unattractive, with a morose and reticent personality” (Kim, 2011: 53). Except in her case, her sisters will do everything possible to marry her off through an arranged marriage.

4.1.3 Portraits of Daughters in Arranged Marriages

This opens the line for another duty of the *daughter*; to marry according to her parents plans. Marriage as a contract finds a way to survive well into the twentieth century, the idea of it surviving into our days. The perception of women as more caring than men is globally widespread – yet in places like Singapore daughters are also perceived of as more reliable than sons. They have become an important source of support for the house, however, some abandon their ‘traditional’ duties of marriage and motherhood by remaining single and/or childless (Rydstrom, 2010: 195).

Marriage without love is another common topic of Southeast Asian and Latin American literary works; a tool to reinforce power over the women in the family, arranged marriages bring along status and connections. In “Sex, Size and Ginseng”, the patriarch of the house will take two wives in order to achieve a male heir, but when all fails he is left

with several daughters who in turn become an asset for him: “The daughters married well and his sons-in-law, well-chosen, reinforced his business connections, and he was now aligned with many powerful people in the community” (Loh, 1997: 181).

Table 4 Daughters and Arranged Marriages.

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Thailand	As a Reference to see continuity: M.R. Kirati confides in her friend the reasons for her loveless marriage.	<i>Father, he wanted to see me married so that I would have my fair share of happiness.</i> (Sriburapha, 1990: 99).
Singapore	Late in the twentieth century, Li-ann – a sweet girl with talent, a good job and a bright future – suffers the pressure of her mother:	<i>She was going to be twenty-nine years old, already three years in the danger zone of lonely spinsterhood so feared by her [mother] (Lim, 2003: 103). This is the greatest nonsense I've ever heard, said her mother who had been very anxiously looking for a good match for her very pretty, very intelligent daughter from her seventeenth birthday. Now approaching twenty-two, Li-ann was in danger of the worst faith that could befall women – spinsterhood. Mrs Chang's loving, motherly heart suffered severe palpitations at that horrible prospect...Heart! Heart! Why don't you listen to your head for once? In a few years's time you'll be twenty-five! cried Mrs Chang in exasperation, twenty-five being the age for the alarm bells to start ringing shrilly (Lim, 2003: 4,6).</i>
Mexico	In <i>Mystification</i> by Aline Pettersson: Laura Hansen's parents would intensively attempt to secure her meetings with a valuable young man, but she wants to be allowed to study and write, and become a nun.	<i>My parents gave me the news, about the party naturally, and they spoke of the young man that was profiled as someone it would be good for me to meet. That should give a good impression, that it was convenient for me, that it was convenient for us all, that I was approaching a good age and I should make an effort from my side...in love with God², I was not willing to cheat him...deep inside, I perceived myself as one more object for sale in my father's business.</i>
Chile	Blanca from <i>The House of the Spirits</i>	In mid-twentieth century, young and pregnant she marries a man chosen by her father to cover up her indiscretions – and the shame of having a bastard child. Blanca marries out of fear to her father.

Table 4 presents cases of women who are being pushed into marriages by their parents, even when they wish otherwise. However, stories not often end well when it comes to loveless nuptials, a practice that continues to live – though with less power, probably because in earlier times the fate of the damsels was sealed without taking into account their feelings and many suffered of death by love a way of expressing the wish of fatality over the imprisonment those alliances brought. In the cases of arranged marriages some daughters dispute them with good excuses; others (Table 5) walk away. Nonetheless, it must be noted that not all women leave the home because of fear to be forcefully married – nor because of the possibility of being sold; women also leave for work opportunities, a topic which will be addressed again in chapter five, due to its importance in the role of women and work.

Table 5 Daughters who Dispute Marriage

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Mexico	In <i>Mystification</i> Laura Hansen	She wanted to write and join the Catholic Church, she found a way to avoid the encounters with the young suitor her father had so carefully selected for her.
Malaysia	The main character of “The Kling Kling Woman”	“A rare young woman, country-born and country-raised, [who] suddenly realized that there was more to life than following the time-honored tradition of being given in marriage to some young man, bearing up her children, worrying about sickness and death, and receiving in return for the fulfillment of her last days on earth, the tidings of the marriages of her grandsons and granddaughters” (Maniam in Yamada, 2002: 120).
Rural Mexico	Camila from “Weaving Fortune” lives in a town where girls got sold at a young age. In “Husbands” by Angeles Mastreta.	She is secretly sent away by her mother; all alone she manages to survive, and one day she returns, high spirited and educated in Law with the goal of helping women in her hometown.

Literature thus describes daughters as beings who are born full of responsibilities and little choice; also as women with good opportunities; or as rebellious beings who will get their way one way or another. The main role ascribed, the *virtuous daughter*, remains

that of the submissive child who will care for her family above and beyond any of her needs. Obedience, self-restraint and filiality being key qualities of daughters, which in many Developing Countries not only remain in place, but in most it is a characteristic later inherited by wives and mothers. This is how the roles ascribed to women interconnect.

4.1.4 Portraits of Empowered Daughters

Some cases are also described in empowered roles. Those self-sacrificing young and old women who early or late in life discover first, their rights; second, the power of their silence; and finally the power of their voice. In *Like Water for Chocolate (Mexico)*, when Rosaura –Tita’s older sister– attempts to perpetuate the tradition that had hurt her so much, Tita opposes her sister and fights for her niece’s freedom, eventually winning against her. This is one of the characters moments of empowerment.

Additionally, she is beaten up violently by her mother and, thus, she must remain under the care of a doctor. So it begins her journey towards acquisition of power, first by choosing silence¹²; and later – when death closes in her mother, Tita must return and face that overpowering force noiselessly (*for the first time Tita firmly held her gaze, and Mama Elena lowered hers. There was a strange light in Tita’s eyes* (Esquivel, 1989: 118) Finally, when her impending freedom approaches she discovers the power of her voice: [she] *felt a violent agitation take possession of her being...she calmly met her mother’s gaze and then, instead of obeying her order, she started to tear apart all the sausages she could reach, screaming wildly. ‘Here’s what I do with your orders! I’m sick of them! I’m sick of obeying you!’* (Esquivel, 1989: 89)

In *Arrival of Dawn*, caretaker daughter and sister, Phan will also turn her life around after her mother’s death. Before submitting completely to her siblings desires and needs, Phan takes a bold, empowering first step; she chooses to see a therapist who will point to

¹² *Why won’t you talk?... ‘Because I don’t want to.’ With those words, Tita had taken her first step towards freedom* (Esquivel, 1989: 106).

her what she must do to break the pattern she has lived: *begin to think of, and do things for yourself* (Kiengsiri, 2009:169). She too will opt for silence as her first empowering weapon: *I walked out of the dinning room saying nothing and complaining to no one. I went up to the second floor, straight to my room, sat down and smiled. It was the smile of a person who began to see things more clearly* (Kiengsiri, 2009:175).

In time, she will move them out of the house she so rightfully inherited from her mother, she will quit responsibilities that were never hers; finally she will even leave the job for someone else to step-in in her place. In two continents, two different times in history, two separate writers describe what constitutes the life of many, and the possibilities for them too. Phan and Tita do not marry, nor they have children, but they learn about their choices, they voice them, and they act.

Thus, women as daughters do share similar portrayal in contemporary literature of SEA and Latin America, sadly, their representation continues to be disempowered in the majority of cases, with most daughter characters still assuming the roles ascribed by society for them. Notwithstanding, more daughters are beginning to put a stop, and this could have beneficial consequences for their later roles as wives and mothers.

4.2 The Role of Women as Spouses

4.2.1 Portraying The Good Wife¹³

In the classical period, as wives and mothers women were honored as sources of support and benevolence, yet as symbols of sexual desire they were denigrated as obstacles in a man's path to salvation (Meade et.al., 2004: 325). Has this changed since then? In the idealist form, the humility, obeisance and other characteristics of a *virtuous daughter*, are to be transposed into her role of a married women. Quoting the Cbap Srey with its

¹³ The average marriage age is between 20.1 and 26 years of age for women in both regions. Source: Joni Seager in "The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World" (2009)

characteristic tone of lecturing young ladies about what is expected from them, the Cambodian Code of Conduct states that *when having a husband, women should not be cross or rude, they should not try to break their bonds or speak ill of their spouse* (Cbap Srey: 2).

Therefore, the *virtuous* wife must be like the virtuous daughter: Good, uncomplaining, obedient, submissive, passive, restrained and tolerant... She must put her husband and his need always above hers. If a wife contradicts any of such characteristics, she will fall in the category of *inadequate*. In Vietnam it is said that “when the husband is angry, the wife should keep silent. Rice boiled over medium fire never burns” (Santillán, 2004: 546). When the wife has an agenda that includes her own needs, she breaks with a precept of the perfect wifeness: she considers herself equal or superior to her husband and that unsatisfactory.

In its motherly instructive tone the “Cbap Srey” utters: “O my child, weal, contentment and prosperity shall rise to great heights above you if you are a maid who is loving and kind and who lives up to the station of your husband (Cbap Srey 3). When you have a husband and lord, O young lady, let you humbly serve and care for him as your refuge; do not neglect him ever, least you break the precepts of womankind... Serve your honored husband, let you take your food with your husband” (Cbap Srey 5).

A character we have previously discussed, Laura Hansen (Table 5) describes her mother with qualities that seemed to be pulled from the *Cbap Srey: My parents didn't want for me anything else than the proper formation for a woman. And, finally, my mother had a set of very good qualities. Her docility, her unquestionable submission to paternal laws ...The perfect woman, the one who accepts her destiny with joy, the one who dedicates her life to nurturing (and only that) with sweets the soul and body of her children. The improved replica of that patient woman, passive as was my mother* (Pettersson, 1996: 65,66).

In Indonesia, beautiful Kusuma Sari (Table 2) is told that *it is her duty as Mudita's wife to go with him* (to follow him in his endeavors (Darling, 1992: 139). In the novel *The Painted Alphabet*, Kusuma Sari – even though she has been allowed to marry while still caring for her uncle – must transfer her submission to that expected from a wife. Just like

her aunt, who many years before had the choice of staying behind or following her own husband – *even a holy man needed a wife to comb the twigs from his hair, to fetch water and gather flowers for his prayers. Who else was she but his wife?* (Darling, 1992: X) – Kusuma Sari must follow hers. A man who pursues her affections describes Kusuma Sari as *pure, competent, unspoiled by old wives’ tales about women’s rights*¹⁴ (Darling, 1992: 100).

Examples of more good and dutiful wives can be observed in Table 6; where faithfulness, submission, dedication and duty are all present.

Table 6 Dutiful Wives

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Myanmar	Kyu Kyu from “Marriage and Divorce Myanmar Style”	“The wife [...] should supervise and look after household affairs; should entertain guests, visitors, friends, and relatives and employees; should love and be faithful to her husband; should protect his earnings; should be clever and energetic in all activities” (Chit, 2004: 69-70).
Philippines	Fiancée Esperanza from “Dead Stars”	She was “not prone to indulge in unprovoked jealousies. She was a believer in the regenerative virtue of institutions, in their power to regulate feeling as well as conduct. If a man were married, why, of course, he loved his wife; if he were engaged, he could not possibly love another woman” (Marquez in Francia, 1993: 5).
Philippines	Carmen from “Dead Stars”	A traditional woman, mother and daughter who admires Esperanza, for her patience and loving manners; and Doña Adela, also a traditional woman committed to her wife role. “Carmen also came with her four energetic children. She and Doña Adela spent most of the time indoors directing the preparation of the mourned and discussing the likable absurdities of their husbands” (Marquez in Francia, 1993: 6).
Bolivia	Constanza Roca’s male character describes his wife in “Chamú el Galán”	“A good cook, who keeps the house clean, and has never ruined [my] clothes...” (Roca, 2005: 67)

¹⁴ The suitors father stating *what they really want [women] from a husband is instruction. Nothing wins the heart of a woman like instruction* (Darling, 1992: 102).

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Colombia	Leonora is described by her husband in “Erotic Symphony”	“...in her flows the efficacy of good education and manners adequate for my professional and social standing, and the best, she does not express any feminist complaints” (Pérez Gaviria, 2006: 49)

Wives in literature – despite the conditions of their marriage, their status or place of origin – are sometimes portrayed in their role as lovers who await their spouses, sometimes forever. The most common case is that of the wife who waits for her soldier; but in places like Mexico, for example, women also wait for those who have left for another country to work, a situation very possible to find in other Latin American and Southeast Asian countries. A Cambodian poem expresses the feeling women waiting probably face: Fear. “I try to detach myself, but doubt I can do it, since, as a woman, I fear the thought of the danger you face” (Luoth, 1998: 42). Table 7 below presents the cases of women waiting for their loved ones, a very respectful and dutiful wife is one that waits.

Table 7 Wives who Wait.

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Indonesia	Sita from “The Purification of sita” by Leila S. Chudori, waits for her love during four years.	She meets other men, but never has a physical lover. Probably invoking the case of <i>Sita</i> from the hindu tale of <i>Ramayana</i> , she fears he will doubt her for having close male friends. Sita debates if she must come clean to her fiancé, who confesses he has not been faithful to her. Her questioning leads her to a challenge of values; had he not confessed, would she be able to question his loyalty the way men are allowed to question that of women? “You are a woman, and women seem to be more capable of exercising self-control” (Chudori in Yamada, 2002: 101)
Thailand	Bun Lam from <i>Second Nature</i> lives through the change when her fiancée returns from the big city (Bangkok) to discover his <i>traditional</i> fiancée has changed into a modern girl.	He cannot accept her change because, as it is customary, she should preserve her values and morals for him: “ <i>You can be wife to a husband and mother to a child, and the opportunity to be both is not hard to come by...I can’t be comfortable with your new nature, Bun Lam, which has undergone such successful Development</i> (Sujit in Mendiones, 1995: 101).

From the story of Bun Lam (Table 7) we can dissect the idea of women holding on to traditional values while men evolve and discover new ways to live. Women who show initiative, personality or spirit are often considered *less good; inadequate* wife material. In her novel *Grass roof, Tin roof*, Dao Strom describes her own mother – a young Vietnamese reporter – as seen by her grandmother: *you don't know how to cook or clean properly. They say you walk like a rooster and smoke cigarettes and drink beer like the men, and that's why no man wants to marry you. What man wants to marry a woman who's like a man?* (Strom, 2003: 26)

Non exemplary daughters can turn into less exemplary wives; and so a good solution to avoid rebellions, bad choices or having a spinster daughter, women in the past – and still in the present – are facilitated the task of marriage by their parents who happily select the proper suitors for them. This applies for SEA and Latin America.

4.2.2 Portraits of Women in No-Choice Marriages

Forced marriage is a strong term in the case of contemporary literature concerning post World War II stories; it is common to find the forceful act in previous decades and centuries, but in the narrative of 1960 onwards we see less imposition – though it is still present – and more parental influence. For the present analysis, three types of imposed marriages can be identified: first, the actual imposition of parents and other relatives; second, the choices made by women under the influence of others; third and final, the self imposition of women to marry men they do not love for a bigger purpose like the hope of love, company, economic means, etcetera. We begin with the first type of wives in what can be called *no-choice marriages*.

The tendency is that girls in such situations become sad, live in sorrow, and die unhappy; which under the circumstances is self-explanatory. Some women in literature refuse to marry a man they do not love, most cases of parental imposition come along when relatives seek social benefits, economic betterment, payment of debts, etcetera. In Golden

Fronde, the beautiful servant girl from “The Song of Golden Frond” by Catherine Lim, who immolates herself in protest to an arranged marriage with an old, repulsive man who she does not love – and who she knows has abused other young servants in the same household. Unfortunately if all the damsels in distress died upon being forced to marry, this would not be the long-lasting tradition it continues to be nowadays. Many do not have a choice, they marry against their will and are supposed to, within the proper description of the role for women, be contempt, obedient, faithful, serviceable and submissive.

In Cambodia, a form of forced marriage is documented in the real life stories of the Khmer Rouge survivors; *Under the Drops of Falling Rain* by Oum Suphany, describes the dreadful process of “The Angkar’s Wedding plans” were Cambodian women were to be married arbitrarily to an unknown spouse, as long as they were twenty-five years old and up. Clearly this affected men equally, specially since the men did not have to be twenty-five years of age and many times they were much younger than the wives they were given. Regarding the woman who narrates the story, she explains her feelings towards the imposition with an exhausting tone. She is tired of the labor they have to do every day; she is worn out and weak, even more so for a forced sexual encounter with a man she had never met before (Suphany, 2011).

A more common style of imposition – by relatives – where the heroines of our stories do not escape the fate of marrying without love can be found on Table 8.

Table 8 Wives in Arranged Marriages

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Philippines	In “Tong,” Alice Tan is a Filipino woman of Chinese origin whose three brothers and uncle promise her in marriage to an older Chinese man, not the one she loves:	“It cannot be, Conrado. I have been promised in marriage to someone already. There is just a little time for us”...And so Alice Tan, who gets pregnant while dating Conrado secretly, marries the Chinese man because her family has arranged it and because after her indiscretion, she must have a husband before she shames her family as an unwed mother (Sionil in Francia, 1993: 115).
Singapore	A not so young Sue Kwan, in “Kebaya Tales,” is a childless wife to a man she does not love:	“..her parents hastily married her off to a distant cousin, twelve years her senior. It was a lonely marriage worsened by barrenness, the blame placed entirely on [Sue Kwan]” (Kim, 2011: 140).

Country	Character	Quotes and Cases
Vietnam	The Women in Brigade Five	The story of <i>The Women on the Island</i> by Ho Anh Thai, runs around the pandemonium caused by the arrival of a young man who will entice the sexual needs of the women in Brigade Five; curiously, the story begins with the young man's heartbreak because his love, Chi –who does not profile much in the story– is forced to enter into a marriage for convenience and to break up with him.
Mexico	Tita	In her process of empowerment chooses to marry her doctor, whom she did not love because <i>she hoped that her spirit, which had been dampen for so long, would eventually be kindled by the presence of this wonderful man</i> ; although in the end she never marries (Esquivel, 1989: 118).
Thailand	As Reference: M.R. Kirati, the lonely beauty from <i>Behind the Painting and Other Stories</i> , is a “victim” of marriage with no love.	<i>I needed a change in my life. I needed something that was different from what I had been doing for thirty-four years. The only thing that was going to help me achieve this, was marriage</i> (Siburapha, 1937: 101). <i>It is my duty to be loyal to Chao Khun [husband], to follow him wherever he goes, to look after him and wait upon him like a good wife for as long as he still wants me and as long as he doesn't neglect his own obligations.</i> She is modest and dies alone and in sorrow (Sriburapha, 1937: 105).

Both regions suffer from this tradition of a male relative selecting the appropriate suitor for a woman; however, in some cases it is a female who imposes the partnership, thus we see how women assist in perpetuating customs that disempower other women.

4.2.3 Portraits of Disempowered Wives

Not all women fulfill the descriptions above; not all can be obedient and submissive forever. Some never have such qualities and some do; others wish they had them to feel successful as spouses. In this section we look into the portrayal of women who are unaware of their situation, or they have a level of awareness yet they do not (cannot) take the steps

to change their position. Deuan-ai, in the Thai novel *Only God will Judge Me*, has all the characteristics of the perfect wife. *She was a cool-tempered housewife who cooked well and was very attentive to her husband's every need.* What did Deuan-ai do but spend her life as *a sweet and cool-tempered woman who had always taken very good care of Payu* [her husband]? Still she is portrayed as *less good*, as her husband ends up leaving her for another woman, a Thai Christian nun nonetheless (Thaisonthi, 2011: 133-134).

There is also the case of good wives betrayed by nature; it is of the common knowledge, and it has been documented in chapter three, how one of the characteristics – impossible demands – of a *virtuous wife* is not only to provide children to her husband, but preferably a male heir, specially the first one. Historically, women who did not fulfill this *duty* [sic] could be, and were, discarded as damaged goods. Women bereft of the capability to produce the desired male offspring their families *expect they will provide*, are at times considered failures; as if biological determinism were in the hands of the female sex. Though slightly less common in the twentieth century, literature is not short in describing these incidents, examples are provided in Table 9.

Table 9 The Duty of Bearing Male Offspring

Story	Cases and Quotes
<p>In Singaporean story <i>Sex, Size and Ginseng</i>, the Big Mistress (first wife) failed to give her husband any children, therefore, the husband feels cheated by them and by any means attempts bearing a son:</p>	<p>“Neither male nor female. She has failed in her duty. Hence Mistress number Two, who had two beautiful daughters by him, but they say that her womb is also dried up. It cannot fulfill a wife’s first duty, which is to produce sons to carry on the family name” (Loh in Yamada, 2002: 179).</p>
<p>In the marriage of a Cuban couple in <i>The Patio in my House</i>, Ester is commanded to have not one but five boys by her husband Mondoñedo, who has even picked names for them:</p>	<p><i>The first one is a boy. The first five boys. Then all the girls you want, that will be your business.</i> Sadly for him, she bares five girls and not one single boys (Hiriart, 2000: 17).</p>

In discussing *empowerment and women's roles*, disempowered wives in literature can be found in plenty. Here we will observe cases of failure, self-imposed marriage, heaviness

of traditional values and the judgement they bring along; all these disempowering characteristics can sometimes be found in one character alone. Table 10 below presents the cases of women who have no power; they might though have some awareness of their situation but they are not open to make a change.

We can observe for example the case of Tham, who would not dare leave her husband because *a divorced woman was no more than a 'leftover' to be picked at by crows and vultures* (Ho, 2000: 128). Not even if Mrs. Cay, her hideous mother-in-law, would mistreat her. *Fruitless tree! Childless woman! You are ruining the future of my family...this state forestry enterprise is overrun with unmarried women, all of them dying for a husband, my son could have as many wives as he wants. What a pity he had to end up with a good-for-nothing slut like you!* (Ho, 2000: 128)

Table 10 Disempowered Wives

Story	Cases and Quotes
<p>In <i>An Umbrella</i> by Ma Sandar, three Burmese female characters:</p>	<p>Ma Sein Mya and her lazy husband suffer to make enough money every month, yet she stays with him because she believes anything is better than being a woman on her own: "A woman who has no husband to lean on is like a person walking in the rain without an umbrella. There is no one to shield her from the rain and the wind" (Sandar in Yamada, 2002: 18)</p> <p>Daw Sein Kyi's husband constantly went astray, even so she would rather not tell him she is aware because she needs his financial support, if they divorce there is nothing else for her.</p> <p>Ma Shu Kyi is married to a rich and abusive alcoholic; yet she cannot divorce him either because they have two children and it would not be good for them: "In our culture, a widow might get respect from people. As for a divorcée, even the neighbors don't respect her" (Sandar in Yamada, 2002: 18)</p>
<p>In Singapore, Kim lives dazzled by riches and status</p>	<p>[She] <i>remained dazed and wide-eyed, gratefully submitting to a bombardment of wealth, prestige and influence never dreamt before...Kim was supremely happy, the epitome of female success in Singapore. Ensconced in a huge house with a sprawling garden that her parents... never dreamt of.</i> This while knowing in secrecy that her husband has been unfaithful even before their second anniversary; <i>it would only be in the 90s, after three children and much anguished thinking, that she considered divorce.</i> She would finally speak up, <i>I wish with all my heart I had never dropped to the university</i> (Lim, 2003: 53-55).</p>

Story	Cases and Quotes
<p>In <i>The Story of an Actress</i> by Duong Thu Huong (Vietnam), Thom:</p>	<p>She wants to be a performer; she marries an older man – by many years – who owns the theater company. She becomes a housewife, never allowed her to take part in the theater. When she becomes pregnant she is aware there is no hope for her. So she sits among her riches, and the constant harassment of her much older stepchildren, and sees her life pass her by without hope. (In <i>Virtual Lotus</i>, Teri Shaffer Yamada ed.)</p>
<p>Tham, among the women in Brigade Five from <i>The Women on the Island</i>:</p>	<p>Was the only one married. Unhappy, childless, not in love and subjected to the constant insults and criticism of her mother-in-law. At the age of thirty, she was considered “rather old for a single woman.” She married believing <i>if she refused Cuong, other women would rush to marry him, just for the sake of being married. Better to have a strange husband than to be an old spinster</i> (Ho, 2000: 126).</p>

Way Way, previously discussed in her role as a caretaker, represents an interesting case that lies between the disempowered wife, the rebellious one, and finally the wife who empowers herself. She marries out of a love that can never last, *he loves me so much that I love him back, that's all*; she will soon discover her life has taken a turn for the worst when – from a respected, loved and valued daughter and sister – she becomes nothing but a frail doll (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 85). Way Way's disempowerment is such that her husband instructs her on her schedule, clothes, eating habits, relaxation time and family visits: *Now that she was married, she would be forced to do whatever another person expected of her. She would just have to steel herself and follow her husband's wishes*. She blames her misery on karma¹⁵ and takes it all, as the submissive, obedient wife her husband wants (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 101).

As a wife, she is described as *simple and honest. She submitted to his will, gave into his desires. She respected her likes and dislikes. She never gave him cause for unhappiness. She did not know how to speak hurtful words, she went along with his way of doing things, and behaved according to his rules. How much pleasure she brought him, and peace of mind!*” (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 149). However, Way Way's character alludes to the first stages of empowerment. In the next sessions we will review how and where this young woman rebels to her husband's commands.

¹⁵ “It was her fate to have happened in a love that demanded submissiveness and renunciation of herself, a love that did not even understand her sacrifices” (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 127)

4.2.4 Portraying The Rebellious Spouse

Another portrait to analyze is that of the rebellious wife, who begins to acknowledge her situation and possibilities. This not always becomes empowering, sometimes rebellion ends in disorder, but other times it does provide the tools to continue to process of acquisition of power; here the author analyses the possibilities of empowerment. Turning back to Way Way, the Burmese young woman from Ma Ma Lay's novel, we review here the stages of her process of rebellion – empowerment. In her case, like in Mexican novel *Like Water for Chocolate* and Thai Novel *Arrival of Dawn*, women begin taking measures to act on their choices:

1) When the opportunity presents itself she goes away with her mother, leaving her husband in absolute despair.

2) She acknowledges her situation and the choices she has: *you may think what you wish, but I am not going to explain a thing to you. You can keep on ill-treating me. You are responsible for this. You were not aware that my heart was breaking. Staying with you was for me like being a marionette on a gilded box. The princess doll was not supposed to have a will of her own, but had to be moved by pulling strings* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 144). Yet she returns aware of her fate, *I'm going to be subject to being further corrected and improved by my dear husband* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 154).

3) Upon returning – out of moral consciousness as a future mother, a new dose of absolutism and a terminal case of tuberculosis, empowers her to voice her feelings: *you have no pity for me...you do not really love me. Her voice, full of bitterness and resentment...*(Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 13)

Two more women, Doña Lupeng and Lat (Table 11) also represent the rebellious kind of wife who moves towards empowerment; with acknowledgement and action the former begins to explore possibilities and demand love, while the latter seeks to rebuild her life despite people's opinions of her character.

Table 11 Wives and the Beginning of Empowerment

Characters	Stories and Quotes
<p>Sumathi from “The Kling Kling Woman,” confronts the reality her mother lives as a devoted, submissive wife, and that of her great-grandmother who fought for freedom to work and equality. Sumathi is aware of her surroundings and the social expectations in Malay society.</p>	<p>She thinks to herself how she would not follow on the steps of a mother who had given up everything to be the perfect wife in the eyes of her husband and the world, simply put she was “fully resolved to hunt her mother out of her subservience” (Maniam in Yamada, 2002: 130). “She would never be like her mother!...waiting for her husband to come back. She wouldn’t get up in the small hours of the night to let in a drunk, unfamiliar man whom custom had dictated she accept as her husband. She wouldn’t wait, like a slave...” (Maniam in Yamada, 2002: 120)</p>
<p>In Revolutionary Cuba, Amalia marries an insurgent tossing away all propriety and morals when she announces her plans:</p>	<p><i>I will not marry by the church, and no dress with silly lace. We are going to the militia</i> (Hiriart, 2000: 118). She abandons her family for her husband who dislikes them, and leads a lonely life of fear; <i>without saying it, she was afraid. Visceral panic. Her husband inspired her fear. She spoke of nights of martyrdom. A violent love one day and total lack of love many months. Of the whores he dated...</i> (Hiriart, 2000: 165)</p>
<p>In “The Summer Solstice” by Nick Joaquin Doña Lupeng represents tradition:</p>	<p>She is a traditional married woman. Submissive to her husband; a prudent woman who blushes to impure thoughts. Yet during the summer solstice festival of the Tadtarin, she rushes out to see the woman by the river worshipers of nature and mother earth. She becomes involved with the rituals and reconnects with her own sexuality (Brown River, White Ocean, Luis Francia ed.).</p>
<p>In Vietnamese story “Young Keng” by Dien Bien hPu, Lat marries young and became a mother soon after.</p>	<p>She is described as independent, spirited, a believer in love, strong and hardworking; before becoming a widow she cares for the family and her child. She marries again, to Young Keng, while keeping her rebellious ways, working late into her second pregnancy, organizing work meetings, promoting her husband to be a leader and growing their patch of land.</p>

4.2.5 Portraying The Empowered Wife

The characters chosen to be in this segment are those who display some of the elements required in the definition of empowerment outlined by the author in chapter two of this thesis. These spouses are aware of their situation and choices; most importantly they take action in search of change. Some women empower themselves during marriage or after

divorce; or in the case of Mrs Fez who after putting her husband to rest makes one simple statement: “I’ve done my duty” (Mastreta, 2009: 76), empowerment comes with the rare freedom obtained in her widowhood. In her book *Husbands*, Mexican writer Angeles Mastreta tells dozens of stories of love and failed marriage with empowering results we can see in Table 12.

Table 12 Empowerment in Wives

“Husbands” by Angeles Mastreta: Cases of Empowered Wives	
<p>Paula’s husband comes to her with a confession; he has never loved her... “In twenty years? Why hadn’t he told her before? Paula couldn’t believe it. She had spent her entire life in contemplating him and had done nothing else but agreeing to whatever silliness he could come up with” (Mastreta, 2009: 116). In her newly divorcée life, she begins a career in Political Science.</p>	<p>In “Empress Merluza” the main character dreams of being Sissy the Austrian Empress since she is a child, but her reality is much different. She has a loving husband, but feels incomplete; and so after nurturing a family and caring for a husband all her life, she finishes high-school in secret and enrolls in university to study Medicine.</p>
<p>Isabel and Leonor are cheated by their husbands, and they both decide they deserve better. Isabel Cobarruvias from “In the Park,” leaves her husband, moves in with her best gay friend and after their divorce, she takes her husband as an occasional lover. Leonor throws Enrique out (and so does Lupe the lover) and moves the dogs out of the yard and into the house in “The Kingdom of Dogs.”</p>	<p>Finally, in “Traveling without husbands,” an exasperated Clemencia decides to take a trip without telling her husband where she is, freeing herself of the overwhelmingness of their marriage, and feeling missed for the first time in a long time.</p>

South of Mexico, in Chile, Clara – Isabel Allende’s superb character in *The House of Spirits* – is described as *a rather eccentric creature not particularly well suited to the duties of marriage and domestic life* (Allende, 1986: 109); and though she married without love, she is a good wife and loving mother, she is the epitome of an empowered woman. She lives according to her own spirit and promotes the well being of many. Her solidarity towards those in suffering is well explained during the novel. Yet despite Clara’s internal beauty and charisma, in a rage of patriarchy and *machismo* her husband beats her daughter

and herself.¹⁶ *Clara never spoke to her husband again. She stopped using her married name and removed the fine gold wedding ring that he had placed on her finger twenty years before...* (Allende, 1986: 234)

Silence as an empowering tool, as discussed previously, she emotionally tortures him until her dying day. She will always be there for him, but never again as his wife. The symbolism of the act of divorcing can be seen in Myanmar and Chile; there is no need for papers to be signed, Kyu Kyu (“Marriage and Divorce Myanmar Style”) divorces her husband in her soul to fix her marriage; Clara will do the same thing, except she will never allow him to touch her again.

Another character named Sita – this time a Thai woman – reads her husband’s diary and finds a questionable appointment. After confronting him about it he rejects the accusations but Sita feels relieved being able to express something more than yes and no. She is used to being a good wife and a mother, but “since that unhappy day, [she] has felt quite proud of the way she conducted herself in the matter, and on the way she was able, finally, to gain control of her feelings. For in the end, she did...and [she] continues to believe in the importance of expressing one’s feelings. It is a matter of self-respect as far as she is concerned...” (Sri Daoruang in Yamada, 2002: 208, 209).

This story can be compared with the previous Indonesian story “The purification of Sita” (Table 7), where the character also questions her spouse’s faithfulness, the difference being that Sri Daoruang’s Sita from Thailand empowers herself while Indonesian Sita (Table 7) remains in first stage of empowerment: the awareness stage.

Wives arrive into marriage either already in the path towards empowerment or completely unaware of their possibilities because, and as the role of the mother will show, empowerment starts at home with what all these women learn. This is another similarity in the portrayal of women in both regions – SEA and Latin America – the mother as the first teacher, either fighting or, more often, perpetuating patriarchal ideals and values.

¹⁶ *Esteban vented his rage on Clara. He accused her of having raised Blanca without morals, without religion, without principles, like a libertine atheist, even worse, without a sense of her own class...* (Allende, 1986: 233)

4.3 The Role of Women as Mothers

4.3.1 Portraying the Ideal Mother

Mothers, there are many types. Submissive, caring, loving, self-sacrificing and abstained. At times mothers can be dominant matriarchs who oppress their own children into total submission. Mothers can also be the central figure around who an entire Nation functions; the glorification of the mother persona has become a mechanism that allows for control and structure at home and outside of it. By enshrining the *virtuous* mother and her attributes of safekeeping, renunciation, acceptance, compliance and obedience her children are taught to obey her and respect her, just as the children of the mother Nation are taught to do the same for the Motherland.

Ideal mothers in SEA and Latin America classify as *virtuous*; they manage to put their children's needs ahead of theirs – in perfect balance to keep the husband's needs also at the top – they are omnipresent, uncomplaining, never tired, always available. Among the domestic roles, the venerated mother is the *mother of all roles*. The spinster stereotype is more damaging for a woman for its lack of progeny than for its lack of spouse, because as it has been discussed and as literature shows, being incapable of bearing a child is the quintessential shame, and even one in the most respected marriage can end up discarded as *not good enough*¹⁷.

In the first segment of the chapter, daughters were carefully studied because in them we see many of the ascribed values that will accompany a woman in every stage of her life. Virtuous daughters marry well, good wives bare children, and thus daughters and wives are expected to become *virtuous* mothers¹⁸. Mothers are the all encompassing role of what is good; they nurture, care, provide, defend and love. In Latin America, to found the perfect

¹⁷ “A daughter is not recognized as embodying inborn patrilineal ‘honor’ and ultimately ‘morality’ [...] daughters must learn to compensate for their bodily deficiency, for instance, by providing male progeny and starting a happy family” (Rydstrom, 2010: 178).

¹⁸ The average number of children per mother in SEA and Latin America is 2.2-4 children. Except for Thailand, Cuba and Chile where it's 2.1 or fewer, and Guatemala where it's 4.1-6. Source: Joni Seager in “The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World” (2009).

mother one must look towards the brown skinned *Morena*, The Virgin of Guadalupe, the mother of all Latin Americans; in whom they enshrine all the great qualities of a true Latin mother. Equally in the Philippines, a culture well accustomed to stories of miraculous births, she became an iconic image carried by all (Meade, 2004: 336).

Mothers are revered, *mother was someone we should put high above our heads, to always treat with reverence and honor, no matter whether she had gone to far with us or not, or was wrong or not* (Kiengsiri, 2009: 45). This suggests that in Thailand mothers are revered whether they are right or wrong. Mothers have infinite roles and parts to play, bringing back Vietnamese young wife Lat – the rebellious widow who marries a second time – we can see the multitasking mother: “her husband fell sick and had to stay in bed for two years. Lat did the best she could, taking care of her parents-in-law and her husband and at the same time raising her baby” (Kien, 1963: 223). Other mothers in literature also have several roles within the home sphere; the first step is to find what are the traditional values a mother should have.

This brings a complicated matter as at the same time of being a mother, the woman as wife and the woman as daughter must maintain the values and moral standards ascribed to those specific roles. This can result difficult when a woman must disobey her husband to protect her children, or when she must disregard her children in her submissiveness to her husband or father. Such is the debate of a mother in Mexican novel *Mystification* which is exemplified in the Table below.

Table 13 The Double Role of Mother and Wife.

Mother and Wife	Mother
<p><i>Through my mother I observed the outshining for a man...I saw her submission, her virtual acknowledgment for having been selected among many others...My father did not accept discussions and my mother normally supported him</i> (Pettersson, 1996: 24, 33).</p>	<p><i>She had become an accomplice...in one way or another she would end up being guilty; mothers, for strange reasons, end up assuming not only the sins of those in the house, but also their responsibility in them</i> (Pettersson, 1996: 35).</p>

Hence, mothers suffer the pain of their rebellious children, the lack of their family's union; they have an assigned image to which alterations not only affect males; changing the status quo of their roles has an impact on women too. They suffer because they must sacrifice for their children. Table 14 includes four examples of mothers who must confront shame because of their children's acts; no matter what mothers do, they end taking the fall for what society believes to be correct.

Table 14 Mothers who Pay their Children's Sins

Mothers: Take the blame	
<p>Mrs Chang: <i>though of other mothers in the same sad situation, and took comfort in a growing sorority of mothers in Singapore linked by the common sorrow of having unmarried daughters on their hands</i> (Lim, 2003: 160).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In <i>Only God will Judge Me</i>: Sister Veeranand's mother also suffers the consequences and shame of her daughters' disgraceful behavior.</p>
<p>A mother loses control to the Television set, the new center of attention in the house: "She feels stressed for having lost the invisible power conferred eternally in the feminine shoulders and heart, to guide her loved ones in the puzzle that is family time at home" (Pérez Gaviria, 2006: 96).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Deuan-ai <i>A typical housewife, due to her love for her daughter, she would rather spend money on her daughter than pay for things that were not necessary. It was what a good mother would do</i> (Thaisonthi, 2011: 136,137).</p>

Before becoming mothers, women as wives carry the tumultuous task of making baby boys by the dozens. In "A Promise is a Promise" by Lee Su Kim, Bebe is considered a successful wife and mother of three charming little girls only because she is *good enough* to make one baby boy at last;¹⁹ however, during her fourth pregnancy she is hunted by the thoughts of failure until that boy arrives. Mothers are taught to be proud and fulfilled as women if they have children, specially boys. Mai Sein from "The Shinglung's Father," has no husband and yet her duties are to her son: "if you live for him, do your duty. Give him the yellow robe, the garb of the Buddha. Wearing the robe is the crowning moment of a

¹⁹ "She knows her husband and entire clan would be disappointed if her baby turned out to be a girl...if she could only have a son, her husband would stop pestering her to keep trying. A son would ensure the continuity of the family line, an heir at last to inherit the vast family fortunes. And remove the excuse for her husband to take another wife or a concubine" (Kim, 2011: 139).

boy's life and for you, his mother, the highest privilege...that of the mother of a man-child. How I wish my little girl were a boy so that I can novitiate him!" (Chit, 2004: 43).

4.3.2 Portraits of Unwed Mothers

Mothers who bare children out of wedlock – although not carrying the stigma of spinsters – represent a terrible danger to family honor. Literature also addresses the subject: Malin in *Arrival of Dawn*; Luyen from *The Women on the Island*; Blanca from *The House of the Spirits*; Tran in *Grass roof, Tin roof*; Alice Tan in *Tong*; and Margaret in “The House of Jonker Street (Kebaya Tales).” Margaret is a rebellious and self-sacrificing mother who leaves home after her father forbids her to marry. When the husband gambles away all they have, Margret is forced to go to her cousin for help raising her daughter Nona. Yet Margaret succeeds to raise a very empowered, independent woman.

In *Arrival of Dawn*, Malin, is a sexually free woman who sleeps around until she becomes a single mother. She believes her mother's ways are antiquated, *mother lives in the present world and must accept present day people. As the female sex, we have been oppressed for so long already. It is now time for changes.* She is careless and disconsiderate to her own child. Throughout the novel, Malin will remain completely dependent not only on the care of her mother and sister, but on their financial support as well (Kiengsiri, 2009: 91).

In Vietnam, Luyen, is subjected to questioning by the authorities of her Brigade *to criticize the immoral, unethical and destructive behavior displayed by [her]* (Thai, 2000: 91). Meanwhile in Chile, a pregnant Blanca is beaten up badly by her father who in turn blames her mother *of having raised [Blanca] without morals, without religion, without principles, like a libertine atheist, even worse, without a sense of her own class...* (Allende, 1986: 233)

The literature here analyzed shows that in similar or different ways, women do still live under the *Confucian-style* mandates of submission and virtue; and therefore, after their womanly cycle reaches the highest splendor of motherhood, we meet women like Maria Rita Alvarenga Chagas from Brazil. She is on the train, with her entire life in a suitcase:

“I’m going to my son’s Hacienda, I’m staying there the rest of my life, my daughter brought me to the train and my son waits for me with the car in the station. I’m like a package delivered hand to hand” (Lispector, 2010, 47).

4.3.3 The Role of Mothers in Education

It is the responsibility of a mother to educate virtuous daughters, even when the extent of education is usually determined by patriarchal ideals. Latin Americans have a saying, *la educación se mama*, which means *education is milked*. Mothers could be considered the first approach of a child to any form of education, in their hands is the basic formation a child, boy or girl, will first relate too. Submissive mothers create submissive daughters and authoritarian sons. Empowered mothers, empower their daughters and their sons to acknowledge equality. In a world of disempowered women, mothers are often to blame for nurturing their children, both male and female, with preserving patriarchal values.

Phan also explains this maternal benevolence in *Arrival of Dawn* when explaining how her mother raised their brother: *she made us pamper him and serve him as if he were our boss* (Kiengsiri, 2009: 10). Yet in a very contradictory way, Phan’s mother also believed *arrogant men, who regarded women as their inferiors, did so with the encouragement from the women themselves, beginning with the women who were their own mothers* (Kiengsiri, 2009: 19).

Phan’s mother was no saint, neither was Mama Elena, in *Like Water for Chocolate*. They represent the repressive mother, who with others like Mrs Chang from *A leap of Love*, have their daughters entire future planned before they begin to walk; or like Daw Mya Thet in *Not out of Hate*; a mother who prioritizes her role as a Buddhist nun over that of mother and wife. Even though they are not the model of mother described in many works of literature, or documents of research, all four of them represent mothers with long traditions

which are hard to discard in one day because, their roles are imbedded in centuries of State and Religious intervention.

4.3.4 Mothering the Nation, the Mother as a Role Model for the State

With colonialism and independence wars of the Developing World came the need to reassert feelings of Nationalism; this was best done by promoting a return to traditions and old time values which were imbedded in the image of the mother. By making mothers the figure of Nationalism, the image of all that was desired for the new independent States, traditional roles were reinforced and exploited in benefit of patriarchal governments.

Table 15 Mothers and the Nation

Mothering the Nation
In Chile, women should be suffering, self-sacrificing mothers according to the Constitutional Commission of 1973. The destiny (curse) of woman was to give birth, with pain. The idea here is that “the enemy of the ‘patria’ is embodied in women” (Acuña, 2005: 157, 158).
In Nicaragua, most honored women are the mothers of the martyrs and heroes; “womanly women who sacrificed not their own lives, but the lives of their sons for the nation” (Meade, 2004: 576).
In Mexico, the romanticized view of women in their <i>mothering role</i> , encourages them to continue with their high socioeconomic burdens. The revolutionary program prioritized its view that “women were first and foremost subjects of the domestic arena” (Craske, 2005: 130).
In Argentina, Eva Perón was not only the humble wife loyally serving her husband. A real life character; she was the mother of all Argentinians; she embodied “the ‘self-sacrificing’ mother of the Argentinian ‘national family.’ She represented the ‘feminine’ values of the Peronist doctrine (love, compassion, charity, altruism)” (Meade et.al., 2004: 575).
In Cambodia, “The image of my homeland says, if I liken Kampuchea to a mother, he is compassionate, devoted, carrying and shielding all her children from harm” (Luoth, 1998: excerpt).

Mothering the nation takes place when the belief that women embodying the image of mother must carry the traditions of each nation, spread through education, media and its benefits are reaped by the state authorities. This is no exception in SEA countries, nor in Latin America where a nation is known as *La Madre Patria*; the Motherland (Table 15).

4.4 Portraits of Women Subjected to Domestic Violence

Violence takes place in both regions²⁰, it takes place in the domestic public spheres. In the literature reviewed we can see two sides of violence, physical aggression and sexual abuse; among relatives and friends, or from people in positions of authority. Violence works as a means to resolve a crisis, as it reconfirms a self-evident male hierarchy facilitated by a patrilineal tradition (Bui and Morash, 1999 in Rydstrom, 2010: 179).

Violence is not a role, it is a mechanism to control and subjugate women, and it is commonly used in the patriarchal system²¹. Sadly this portrayal is so common in literature, the author of this thesis considers that within the subject of empowerment, and for the analysis of what level of have women achieved, the images and descriptions of domestic violence must be included in this study. The selected passages in Table 16 refer to women and violence, which as stated before, it is not a role but a constant portrayal of women in contemporary literature. The examples include cases of wives and daughters, among who the abuse is perpetrated by relatives or friends usually at home, cases of people known to the victims.

²⁰ Women in Cambodia and Nicaragua display the highest percentage of acceptance of domestic violence; together with Chile, they are the highest number of women suffering in silence. In Chile and Colombia, almost half the married women suffer ill-treatment by their partners; in Sao Paolo, Lima and Bangkok, between thirty and fifty percent of married women suffer oppression. Bolivia has the highest percentage of violence with seventy percent of adult women suffering of abuse. Source: Joni Seager in "The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World¹" (2009)

²¹ Murder by domestic violence is high in Mexico, Guatemala and Jamaica; it is the leading cause for death in girls ages 15 to 24 in Thailand; and its cause for weekly deaths in Venezuela, Uruguay and Colombia. Honor killings occurred in all countries in SEA and Latin America at least until 2006; in Ecuador and Brazil they occur regularly (seventy-two percent of murders by a relative or friend). Source: Joni Seager in "The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World¹" (2009)

Table 16 Domestic Violence

Country	Cases of Domestic Violence
Chile	In <i>The House of the Spirits</i> , we have the case of Blanca who was beaten up by her father for having an affair – out of wedlock – with a man considered a communist; Blanca never had the courage to oppose her father. In turn, her mother Clara is also beaten to a pulp by her husband, Blanca’s father, for defending her daughter and questioning her husbands’ affairs and violent actions prior to their marriage.
Thailand	In <i>Arrival of Dawn</i> , Wikanda is a battered wife who <i>springs fresh bruises</i> every time she does not give his husband – a lazy man who lives with his wife and child at his mother-in-law’s house – money; and whose brother will not help her, stating he could not assist his abused sister under the excuse that the issue was within a husband and wife, and no one can interfere.
Singapore	In “The Rest is Bonus” in “The Woman’s Book of Superlatives,” Meenachi makes offers and promises to a Goddess if she helps by diminishing the violence in her home; a woman contempt with less beating from her drunk husband, whom after almost murdering her, buys her a jewel to make it better ²⁰ . When he beats her to the point of making her lose her child, and after two weeks in the hospital, she thanks the Goddess for her help in not being beaten in two weeks; the Goddess has kept her promise. Only the woman ignores the consequences and price of being safe at the hospital while almost dying. “Thank you Goddess... Thank you for helping me. For during the week she had been hit only four days, not the full seven, a tremendous improvement...” (Lim, 1993: 69)
Nicaragua	In <i>Country of Women</i> , Eva is beaten by her ex-husband and terrorized by him after she leaves the house and all her belongings. She finally turns to her father for help, and never hears from her ex again. She joins a feminist political party and becomes the Head of Security for her country.
Mexico	In <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i> , caretaker and spinster Tita is violently abused by her mother Mama Elena, for not obeying her orders.
Colombia	In <i>Feminine or the Sweet Aroma of Pheromones</i> , Teodora witnessed her father’s violence through her childhood;
Singapore	Also in “The Woman’s Book of Superlatives,” Pei Yin from “The Enemy,” suffers a double kind of abuse, at home and among strangers. In the story, “she hated the men in the buses who had pinched, touched, stroked or rubbed themselves against her ever since the breasts came, but no, the real trouble didn’t come from them, for it was in her power to remove herself from them” (Lim, 1993: 18). Also, she is abused by her stepfather, when knowingly, she puts herself at risk for the bigger purpose of having her school project approved.
Nicaragua	In <i>Fraguas</i> , the fictional Nation of <i>Country of Women</i> , President Viviana Sansón, in discussing about child abuse: <i>the ten year old girls that the stepfather impregnated were as frequent as the robberies and assaults on the State by government workers</i> (Belli, 2010: 72).

The characters analyzed are examples of what women go through to remain subjugated within the patriarchal system; even when many of the examples presented through this chapter are fictional – travelogues and memoirs refer to real life characters – all of them are a form of expression for the authors here reviewed. This allows to conclude that although the subjects might not exist under those names or their circumstances might be different, they do represent the perception the writers have from the situation women confront in reality.

The analysis of the cases, in Latin America and SEA, allows the author of this thesis to determine that the portrayal done by the writers is similar in both regions; the roles established for a woman remain limited in the sphere of the domestic life. Women, throughout the words inscribed in the contemporary prose fiction reviewed, share characteristics of submission, filial piety, obeisance, patience, passivity, good manners and acceptance of her circumstances. What is more, throughout the stories, their situation rarely changes; except for the specific cases mentioned in Tables 5,11 and 12 – plus those cases examined for their empowering characteristics – the rest of the characters either just accept their lives as it is, or they are aware of their submission and subjugation; yet they do not go far beyond that.

If the authors have used literature as a mechanism of expression of the reality perceived around them, which in most cases is what inspires work like those studied in this chapter, then it is possible to conclude that the overall portrayal of women – in SEA and Latin America – is disempowered.

CHAPTER V

THE ROLES AND PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

With women in the Developing World still being subjected to the rules of patriarchal society at home, those who for different reasons decide to head out to the public sphere, and join the world of education, work, politics or activism, have done so with the shadow of values and traditions lingering over their heads. In this chapter we will see how such patriarchal values and ideals extend beyond the home and into the public sphere where women seek to develop themselves and generate opportunities for their and their family's benefit. The shadow that carries on to the world of work, education and politics many times presupposes women's only reason to seek power is to take revenge on men:

With the end of her reproductive years a woman entered a new stage of greater individual freedom and often enhanced authority in the community, but behind the wise and benevolent grandmother figure, lurked the shadowy crone, inherently hostile to her fellow humans and prepared to use her knowledge and experience for evil purposes (Andaya, 2006: 225).

In this chapter, we continue with the comparative analysis of SEA and Latin American literature. Here, the focus goes toward the roles and portraits of women in the fields of education, religion, work, politics and activism; additionally the portrayal of female characters regarding violence and abuse will be addressed.

Women have faced several challenges and opposition throughout history to take part in the public spheres, thus navigating across the realm of private life and into the public world has been a difficult battle. Women still lag behind men in all aspects of the public sphere. In education, even though more women now have access to schooling, many leave their studies unfinished at different levels to return into the housewife or mothering world. In religion, despite having had a strong role in pre-colonial times, the losses that came with colonialism have never been completely recovered, women still live under the thumb of

patriarchal religions were access is limited mainly to activities of devotion than actual ascetic participation.

The work scenario has been conquered slowly; women control the markets of unpaid work and labor; salaries are lower for women than for men; benefits are limited; and harassment is an issue of concern for many woman employees. The realm of politics has been penetrated, but many women owe their positions to male contacts; others have achieved access independently but harassment and limitations to their power of decision are strong deterrents for progress in such field. Finally, women activists are increasingly taking spaces in the world of NGO's and other civil societies, but at the cost of high risks to their safety. All of this has been properly documented by writers in their fiction and non fiction prose.

5.1 The Role of Women in Education

The educational aspect of the public sphere has undergone tremendous change in the roles ascribed for women. The first main objective has surrounded the benefit of skills and knowledge as a tool to create better mothers and wives; Raden Ajeng Katrini, an early twentieth century symbol from Indonesia, argued that through education women would be able to escape from arranged marriages and polygyny, and prepare for motherhood; in her follow up work she called for women's education to right their status, to make them better mothers, and to emancipate them from marital inequality (Meade et.al., 2004: 438,521)

Reviewing the Cbap Srey, which in the twentieth century was promoted in Cambodia as an important part of the school curriculum, the authors claim: *I prescribe word for you to commit to memory in verses and strophes; I would teach my well-loved youngest how to come to be of good estate and high rank, and thereby be happy (Cbap Srey 4); I teach you how to achieve heaven's bliss (Cbap Srey 4). Let you watch, let you know let you be keen to learn and reflect and seek to be orderly (Cbap Srey 6). Let there be no break, let there be no forgetting for even a single night: this code is a school which trains the*

faculties of each and everyone at all times (Cbap Srey 7). As literature shall demonstrate, the idea of keeping women away from education, or to educate them for the household duties, is a subject that authors today still write about.

One of the most common features of literature concerning education to young girls and women, is the portrayal of those denied access to it, specially in poor or rural areas due to their expected roles in the household. Girls are no longer *only* marriageable assets, they are another valuable helping hand at home. Therefore, they are kept in the house and denied access to proper schooling. Table 17 has some examples of women who are blatantly denied access to education because a woman should stay home and help her parents.

Table 17 Women Denied Access to Education

Story / Country	Character	Cases / Quotes
“Jungle of Hope” Malaysia	Rahimah	Was not sent to school because “however high a girl’s schooling, she will end up in the kitchen. And too much schooling would bring a myriad of vices” (Keri Mas, 2009: 58). The vices probably include a desire for knowledge, ideals beyond the realm of the kitchen and the nursery, and desire of further education.
“Kebaya Tales” Malaysia	Margaret	“She was pulled out of school as her parents were worried that too much education would result in an independent, brash young woman, and she would not become a good wife” (Kim, 2011: 21); Margaret indeed failed as a virtuous wife, yet had she had an educational background she might have avoided the fate of a full time job, being exploited as a housemaid by her own cousin, and being a single mother.
“Feminine or the Sweet Aroma of Pheromones” Colombia	Teodora	She must fight against domestic violence and a patriarchal authority when she decides to go to University; “she had to confront a visceral refusal [from her father]. Women do not need any learning. That was the answer that she got for her request...his arguments did not came as a surprise. Since she was a child she had witnessed the violence he had over the house” (Estrada, 2008: 137-138).

The three cases in Table 17 argue about a woman’s education as a waste of time and money because women will end up in the kitchen, because education can give a girl the wrong ideas of independence, or because women simply do not need learning. Table 18 will show how the actual learning a woman needs – or so do some families believe – can be

learned at home, because after all women belong there – a continuous idea portrayed through many examples in chapter four of this thesis. The case of Margaret in Table 17 enhances the believe of women seeking power for revengeful purposes – established in the first paragraphs of this chapter – by adding that too much education would make a woman brash, independent and not a good wife.

The contraposition of woman vs education, commonly seen in pre contemporary literature, where women are commonly portrayed as housewives and mothers and which has been clearly extended to contemporary literature, brings about an important fact concerning women with skills; it would seem that authors perceive that men are afraid that with knowledge the female sex would despise the roles ascribed for them; they would be able to differentiate right from wrong, abuse patterns, etc. Knowledge after all is power, and keeping women in the darkness of ignorance perpetuates the patriarchal ideologies in Southeast Asian and Latin American societies.

Finding examples of women in the public sphere has proven a difficult task, therefore one could assume that the limitation of stories and narrative about female characters as leaders, professors, politicians and soldiers is in short supply also in real life. Although some women are denied proper education, others are only allowed to receive some basic instruction, mainly courses and lessons that teach them how to be virtuous wives; they learn about embroidery, cooking, cleaning and keeping the house budget. In some advantaged cases they learn some elementary culture to be able to accompany their spouses into the public life of politics and work; but this is not highlighted in any of the contemporary literature sources reviewed during this research.

With progress, women have had access to higher levels of education, in many cases covered by the State, which even if its not the finest, it is at least a decent level that allows them to seek some menial jobs. Still, through literature we learn how many young women in SEA and Latin America are expected to do a maximum of secondary school and then head home to work alongside their mothers for the real education they need to run a home.

Table 18 Women Educated for the Household

Mexico	Laura Hansen, the young aspiring writer-nun in Mexican novel <i>Mystification</i> talks about her early writing:	<i>In my family there was no precedent, at least not any known. And my parents, to whom at the beginning my activity seemed cute, and which they saw as a way of knowing about my movements, later, when I didn't abandon it, they changed their mind about it (Pettersson, 1996: 29). My mother found so many new activities for me. The certainty that I was in an age of learning, besides school, that other knowledge that makes a good woman and that one does not learn them over night (Pettersson, 1996: 47).</i>
Indonesia	In Balinese novel, <i>The Painted Alphabet</i> , the education of Kusuma Sari was not all wizardry and books.	<i>She also learned the simpler things that women need to know: how to build a fire and make it leap or purr...swirl the raw rice on a flat round tray of woven bamboo and to toss the grains in the air so that the wind took away the dust... how to climb like a goat up from the river gorge with a jug of slushing water on her head [...] to scrub their clothes in the river with fine sand and soap nuts, and to bleach cloth in the antiseptic light of the sun... Mpu Dibiaja taught Kusuma Sari the science of the market (Darling, 1992: 62,63).</i>
Mexico	In Mexican novel <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i>	Tita learned all her skills in the kitchen, from how to plow a live chicken to how to create the setting for a wedding size meal.

Tables 17 and 18 present cases of women denied or limited in their possibilities of education. Two countries per region had literary topics presenting the position of women in relation to education, Malaysia and Indonesia in SEA, and Mexico and Colombia in Latin America. Undeniably, after the Second World War, and with the increase of industrialization and capitalism, women have expanded the arena of rights for the female sex and in most countries they now have access to education¹; being allowed by their families or by their economic situation is a different thing. Yet they exist, many of them wrote these novels, biographies and stories. There are spaces in society that see women as assets and they are not only allowed but encouraged to study, and literature does portray

¹ Adult women illiteracy in most countries ranks between eleven and twenty-five percent. Illiteracy is fifty percent higher among women in Peru, Bolivia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009).

women with careers and advanced knowledge quite commonly. In Table 19 we observe the literary examples of women who do achieve education.

Table 19 Women and Knowledge

Indonesia	<i>Kusuma Sari most loved the study of scripture, which she practiced since childhood with her father (Darling, 1992: 64).</i>
Philippines	In Cristina Pantoja's "The Painting," Consuelo was an educated woman with a PhD degree and research experience.
Cuba	<i>The Patio in My House</i> by Rosario Hiriart, Cuban sisters Catalina, Elena and Zoraya, all attended school even if deterred by the Revolution. Catalina, once in exile, studies medicine; Elena, must stop her education with the arrival of the Revolution; and Zoraya, the youngest one of five sisters and the last one to be exiled, struggles to find a job in America without any education but eventually she becomes a writer and professor.
Malaysia	"Son Boy and Sisters" in "Kebaya Tales" by Lee Su Kim sisters Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald are all University Students. Ruby studied Economics at the University of London; Sapphire studies Law at the University of Kent and Emerald studies Biochemistry at the National University of Singapore.
Singapore	Sapphire was not only a brilliant student of Law but a rebellious activist who used her knowledge to address her own father; "upon his opposition to her marriage with a South African she sent her father an article about 'patriarchy and the female condition'" (Kim, 2011: 157,163). This is a particularly conspicuous and fascinating act of the author, as she writes about matriarchs, maidens and matchmakers; adding the spiciness of that touch of feminism to convey her stories.
Chile	In <i>The House of the Spirits</i> young Alba confronts her grandfather's patriarchal authority: <i>he had finally come to accept that not all women were complete idiots, and he believed that Alba, who was too plain to attract a well-to-do husband, could enter one of the professions and make her living like a man</i> (Allende, 1986: 344). Alba, as all the previous rebels of the female clan in her house, <i>finished school and decided to study philosophy for pleasure and music to annoy her grandfather</i> (Allende, 1986: 363).
Vietnam	Dang Thuy Tram from <i>Last Night I Dreamed of Peace</i> , was a Medical Doctor in the field and an active cadre of the Communist Party during the American War in Vietnam.
Myanmar	Way Way from <i>Not out of Hate (Myanmar)</i> , learns the business of rice paddies through her father; <i>being the daughter of a good rice broker; she had learned all the ways money was used to produce profit in the paddy business...she was knowledgeable and efficient in dealing with the various business transactions in which landowners had to engage</i> (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 14).

Vietnam	In “Story of an Actress,” Bê passes university exam for foreign language university in Vietnam, and goes to Germany under a scholarship to finish her studies By Duong Thu Huong in “Virtual Lotus”, Yamada (ed.)
Singapore	In “The Enemy,” little Pei Yin risks her life to finish her school project in time. In “The Woman’s Book of Superlatives” by Catherine Lim

From the examples in Table 19, we can observe a clear presence of SEA in the fight for education in contemporary literature, yet the one from their counterparts in Latin America is more limited. Nonetheless, the situation will balance itself out when we review women in politics and activism, where more examples from Latin America are portrayed, and which imply – and mention – the careers pursued by the characters. Equally, examples mentioned in chapter four, in Tables 5 and 12, support the similarity of women fighting to achieve education.

Two cases from Table 19 are interesting to review, Kusuma Sari in Indonesia and Pei Yin in Singapore. The author chose to present these examples as women who fight for education because the resilience shown by such characters, the former keeping her knowledge of scriptures up to date with that of her household duties; and the latter risking her own life to complete her one responsibility, represent cases of awareness. In SEA and Latin America there are women who fight for their own betterment; they choose any possible road to achieve their dreams of becoming writers, doctors, teachers, reporters, or nurses. These women seek empowerment, they have achieved the first stages and have become aware and active.

Country of Women by Gioconda Belli, is a Nicaraguan novel based on the story of fictional country ‘Fraguas’; first woman president Viviana Sansón, becomes a news reporter after the tragic death of her husband. Later, as she grows as an important figure she decides to become a politician. Viviana believes *something should put an end to the waste of talent that came together with the fate of being born a woman* (Belli, 2010: 107). She sees potential dissipating in a country where women would work maybe one or two years after graduating, *as soon as they gave birth, or before, the husbands would seclude them at home* (Belli, 2010: 62). In her statement, *from our childhood we are trained to doubt our own*

criteria as emotional, sensible, subjective, without rationale, she gives words to that disempowering force that surrounds women and education (Belli, 2010: 175).

It might seem surprising that there is a limited example of cases of women and education considering the analysis continues with the same scope and contemporary literature analyzed already in chapter four of this document. Yet it is not, because women are mostly denied education, limited to a certain level of it, or groomed for home and marriage. The large amount of examples available concerning the role of a woman in the domestic sphere as portrayed in the literature of both regions, demonstrates that their participation in and access to the public sphere is far from equal than the one given to men.

As with the importance of the awareness and empowerment signs daughters show in chapter four – due to the cascading effects it could have on the future roles of wives and mothers – the role of women in education is vital. The lack of examples, the lack of portrayals, or the portrayals of having to fight for it in the twentieth century, demonstrates a still existing belief in societies from both regions – at least through the words of the writers here studied – that hints to the place of a woman still being the house. If skills are not important in the portrayal of women, their access to economic and political arenas cannot grow and women cannot pass from stage one of empowerment “awareness” to stage two “action” and acquisition of skills.

5.2 The Role of Women Ascetics or Women and Religion

In this chapter, as part of the public roles, the author has chosen to include that of the ascetic woman, mostly because in literature asceticism is not only seen as devotion, but also as good source of freedom from forced marriage, household duties, and life without education. Thus, women *entering the religious realm moves women from the position of ‘threat to moral order’ into a position in which they might acquire recognition as regenerators of morality. The religious realm offers women hope of protection, power and transcendence of gender vulnerability* (Rydstrom, 2010: 129).

Table 20 Women and Religion

Country and Character	Cases and Quotes
Mexico, Laura Hansen	Wants to become a nun, like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, to be free to write to her wits ends. "Mystification" by Aline Pettersson.
Myanmar, Way Way	She is married and does not have an interest to join the nunnery; yet when her marital debacle gives her instability, she joins her mother and other Buddhist nuns in the convent in search of clarity of mind and peace in her heart. <i>Not out of Hate</i> by Ma Ma Lay.
Myanmar, Ma Thu Kha	In the Buddhist nunnery, a young girl explains her reasons to become a nun: <i>Miss Way Way, for myself, I never wanted to become a nun, but I had no choice ...the conditions of my life were pretty bad. I had to live with a stepfather who ...when she [mother] was not there, he looked and acted quite differently. His behavior was not proper ...one day he started talking to me and embraced me ...it was so shameful ...when I got here, she told me [her aunt] to become a nun so I wouldn't have to return</i> (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 145-146).

The Cbap Srey states as teaching for women: *Let you be conscious of yourself and follow the Dharma of the Buddha, which is most effective in its teachings, true since ancient times, and exists in the form of gatha* (Cbap Srey 4). *By the dharma being a woman, know well how to cite and follow the precepts with fixed resolve, lest you be in bad odor or beget sin and come to merit the deep Hell of Boiling Mud for ever and eye* (Cbap Srey 7). A good Buddhist woman, thus knows how her behavior should be; she must be adequate, her attitudes must follow that of the religious precepts for decency. Not surprisingly, other religious expectations do not fall far from those the Cbap Srey has demonstrated as essential.

In Thailand, Catholic nun Sister Veeranand (*Only God will Judge Me*), is a good example of expected behavior: *the fact that she was a Catholic nun meant that she had to abide by the three virtues: humility, modesty and purity* (Thaisonthi, 2011: 104). *And although she wanted to cry out loudly, the Sister had been well-trained and so her manners caused her to moan softly* (Thaisonthi, 2011: 112). The expectations of a Catholic woman in SEA or in Latin America are the same; the expectations of Southeast Asian women of other religions

are similar to Catholicism. In the case of Sister Veeranand, we can see a cross between Southeast Asian values of modesty, virtue and contempt, and a common feature of Latin America's catholic imbedded behavior of good manners, humility and modesty.

Another nun in SEA, Sister Consuelo from *The Painting (Philippines)*, has to choose between her Catholic faith and the Churches' precepts, and her well instilled filial piety – characteristic of both SEA and Latin America: she was a Sister...*but the sudden death of her only brother forced her to return to the world. He had left behind their elderly mother and a young widow with two children and no means of support* (Pantoja in Shaffer, 2002: 225).

Religion for women can be a source of empowerment, like the case of Amanda who for one night becomes *The Suprema*, the head of the priestesses from the local religious groups of The Philippines; she is one with mother nature and neither her husband nor any other soul can appease her sexual desires while she is possessed by the soul of the Tadtarin (Joaquin in Francia: 1993).²

In *A Long Awaited Day*, a young Mexican girl is shamed by the untimely arrival of her first menstruation, learns how *the idea of God as a male began when the patriarchal system was established and this idea is linked to politics and religions based in false ideals, in the desire of power and control, disregarding compassion*. Matilde, a coffee shop owner in Mexico City believes that *menstruation is considered shameful and ridiculous. Even women fear their own blood, they see it as a curse* (Armengol in Lavín, 1999: 52,53).

In trying to lift the spirits of the young girl she uses the powerful belief of women related to earth, so well known from pre-colonial SEA and Latin America, and which was lost with colonialism and the arrival of new religions: *Many centuries ago we gave up our gift and decided to be silent ...be honored by this blood. Listen to your body, it is your instruction manual, explore it and you will discover the power, the magic that lives within you* (Armengol in Lavín, 1999: 53,55).³ This story like *The Summer Solstice* from The

² About the Tadtarin: *She is the wife of the river, she is the wife of the crocodile, she is the wife of the moon...Those rituals come to us from the earliest dawn of the world. And the dominant figure is not the male but the female. Those women worship a more ancient lord* (Joaquin in Francia, 1993: 96-98)

³ *A Long Awaited Day* in *Trapped in School*, Monica Lavín ed.

Philippines reaches into women's historical involvement with rituals, ceremonies and the representation of femininity as a gift and not a shame.

Some men believe that ascetic women are after all just that, 'women;' *In The Patio in My House*, a father of five daughters must put his family's life in the hands of nuns of a local convent in Cuba; a task he finds difficult due to his misogynistic belief that *because of being women [the nuns] he did not considered them very intelligent* (Hiriart, 2000: 65).

The case of Burmese ascetic Daw Mya Thet in *Not out of Hate* could be considered as an empowered role as wife and religious woman. Due to the nature of her heart's choice to be foremost a nun, and not a wife nor mother, this character empowers herself twice; once by leaving the realm of the domestic home where she is unhappy, and then by joining a buddhist nunnery. As an ascetic she conveys to her daughter, Way Way, the meaning of virtuous woman:

1. *According to the wisdom of the elders of long ago, there are three things that cannot be undone: 1) getting married, 2) building a pagoda, 3) getting tattooed* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991:106)

2. *Keeping ones' husbands' material resources and his future welfare uppermost in one's mind is vital to marriage. Considerable reflection and discretion are needed to make a marriage successful. Now that you have attained the honorable state of matrimony, you need to develop the right qualifications and disposition according to the world of nature and humankind* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991: 106).

This is a formidable statement from a woman who chose to leave her marriage behind; *as to my past marriage, it was a matter of obeying my parents, who arranged it. I wanted to make them happy. For myself, I did not have any desire whatever to have a home and a family* (Ma Ma Lay, 1991:106). However it is done and whatever the reasons, supported in part by the rules of Buddhism – where her vows to marriage do not superpose those of her religious piety – and no matter how improper such behavior might seem to other's, Daw Mya Thet is an empowered woman.

In her own rebellious style, rebellion considered mainly as going against the precepts of social behavior or the ones of a religious norm; Thai nun Sister Veeranand disgraces her Catholic role when she sends the community into a craze: *the upstanding*

people in the area happened to see the image of a nun riding on the back of a motorcycle with a young man (Thaisonthi, 2011: 124). Set in Thailand, the story of Sister Veeranand is about a woman who manages to empower herself by leaving the convent, a requirement in some branches of Christianity where a religious Brother or Sister wishes to marry or have a relationship with any other than God himself.⁴ Sister Veeranand gives up her religious vows for her love to a man, and with her decision she sets in motion a chain of consequences to be paid by her mother through social shame.

In Brazil, *Better than Burn* tells the story of Sister Clara, a young nun whose fate was chosen by her family. Sister Clara is not happy, she wants to marry and have a family; she consults with the Priest who tells her it is better to ‘marry than burn.’ *She asked an audience with the Mother Superior. The superior reprehended her ferociously. But Sister Clara was firm: she wanted to leave the convent, she wanted to find a man, she wanted to marry...so she left and moved into a boardinghouse for women until the day she met her husband* (Lispector, 2010: 79).

As stated previously, the examples of women in religious roles in the contemporary literature reviewed are scarce, probably because in Catholicism less women join the habit compared to centuries ago; and in Buddhism and Islam because women live the religion everyday, even if not as ascetics. Yet the importance of analyzing the brief examples that are indeed portrayed in literature, provide some insightful information; women in both regions do empower themselves when taking a habit or a robe; and women continued to be seen by the faiths as moral compasses that if broken, lose their value.

⁴ The Catholic Church does not allow marriage among its priests and nuns; celibacy is one of the vows they make. Other lines of Christianity do allow the Pastor to marry and have a family.

5.3 The Role of Women at Work

By the year 1975 women in Cambodia continued to be associated with nurturing and domestic roles despite their activities in the fields and factories which began since colonialism; this does not differ from many other countries including Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, etc. It is a known fact that women get offered the lowest paying jobs in factories because of their uncomplaining nature, their tenacious capacity to overwork and the easiness with which many sustain harassment and poor conditions of labor.⁵ In Mexico women are the main force in Maquiladoras⁶; the extreme cases of violence and abuse they suffer having been documented extensively after the case of *Las Muertas de Juarez (The Dead ones of Juarez)*. By working odd hours in dark and dangerous districts, women have been subjected to rape, murder and kidnapping with no one to claim responsibility.

In Peru, “women still face various forms of economic discrimination, especially in relation to their presence in the labor market and in the biases that exist in income distribution...this situation makes it difficult for women to improve their position in society, both with regard to objective measures (income and employment) and subjective perceptions (recognition and status). It therefore impedes improvement in women’s self-esteem and psychological empowerment as well” (Smith et.al., 2004: 164).

Literature documents similarities among women in SEA and Latin America who suffer equally under the duress of unpaid labor.⁷ It is also important to consider, when discussing women and work, that many women perform a triple role in society: reproductive work, productive work, and communal management work...the evident result

⁵ Major migrant-sending countries include Mexico, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009).

⁶ Maquiladoras (Spanish): A factory in Mexico run by a foreign company and exporting its products to the country of that company. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

⁷ By 2004 women in the informal sector were above fifty percent in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Indonesia and Philippines; and between thirty to forty-nine percent in Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Argentina. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009).

is a serious underestimation of the economic contributions made by women (Smith et.al., 2004: 150).

The first portrayal of women in this area appears often as denied access to join the work force – like the education system – for reasons established in chapter four: the realm of women is that of the household and of the caretaker; and reasons established in this chapter, women lack skills and training. Table 21 presents examples of literature where unfortunate characters are subjected by their male relatives – and in some instances female ones too – to stay at home and behave like beautiful objects who need constant care and polishing.

Table 21 Women Denied Work

Country and Character	Quotes and Cases
Myanmar, Way Way	Became disempowered when she passed from the house of her father to that of her new husband. Upon leaving her husband refused to allow her to continue her work for the rice company and becoming nothing more than a doll he would care for. <i>Not out of Hate</i> by Ma Ma Lay.
Vietnam, Thom	A beautiful aspiring artist, married believing her husband would support her career, only to find out her new place was at home, as a wife and later a mother. With marriage, Thom lost her chance to access a career and was sent to fulfill her housewife role. “Story of an Actress” by Duong Thu Huong
Thailand, Phan	From <i>Arrival of Dawn</i> is not kept from working, but her work is decided by her mother and siblings; she is commanded to leave her job and tend to her family’s business.

Three cases of Southeast Asian women who are denied work; interestingly two cases in Table 21, Phan and Way Way, are disempowered in the process of the story as they are forced to give up their work at some point. Table 22 presents the examples of literature descriptions where women do work outside the house; in some cases highlighting the abuses and consequences of low paying jobs.

Table 22 Women, Work and Subjugation in the Public Sphere

Cases of Abuse and Harassment
In Laos, “A Bar at the Edge of a Cemetery” by Bunthanaung Somsaiphon, presents both mother and daughter who set up a liquor shop. The daughter graduated from a teacher’s college, yet she works at the whiskey bar with her mother, subjected to sexual harassment from clients.
“Kebaya Tales” Margaret, from “The House in Jonker Street,” worked as a washerwoman in several homes to earn money to pay for her daughter’s education. After working all day, she would come home to more housework at her cousins house (Kim, 2011: 25).
In Thailand, Anong works in a glass factory with no steady position and takes any job they give her, living at risk of being left without any work at all. In “A Drop of Glass” by Sidaoru’ang.
In “The Hand,” a rubbish-sorting woman tells the story of her life’s jobs and her past selling her labor. In a line up of insecure and dangerous work, from a building site where she sorted clay; to a restaurant kitchen; a textile mill; a battery factory and a soap factory; an accident, and bad medical care, affect her performance. The consequences being the loss of her hand and, therefore, her menial job (Sidaoru’ang, 1994: 104).
In Singapore, Helen, a secretary sexually harassed by her boss, attempts to bring the issue into the open. Her boss not only jokes about it but continues to impose himself on her; in “The Gift of a Man’s Understanding”: “Mr Ong, please forgive me if I sound too ...too unreasonable, but I wish you would stop touching me ...you know ...touching me. The boss replies laughing, but of course it’s unreasonable of you, Helen, to ask me to stop touching you. Very unreasonable indeed. A beautiful woman like you simply cries out to be touched” (Lim, 1993: 38).
Working under seclusion in Vietnamese Cat Ba, in <i>The Women in The Island</i> , the members of Brigade Five set an example of empowerment in the workplace... <i>the majority of the women had been in the Volunteer Youth Brigades themselves. They’ve survived bombs and bullets, jungle rains and rugged mountains, and they’d risked their lives to do whatever had been asked of them ... ‘C’ startled at seeing a mob of women headed to him ‘what we will do...is report your abusive behavior to the district level and make sure you’re punished’</i> (Ho, 2000: 100,102).

The examples presented in this segment, including those in Tables 21 and 22 are mainly focused in cases portrayed in Southeast Asian contemporary literature, the cases of women in Latin America are focused in activism and military involvement, where they too suffer exploitation and abuse. Yet the situations expressed by the writers in the prose analyzed are similar to the actual cases that take place in countries like Mexico and Peru – and many other as seen in chapter three of this thesis–, where exploitation and abuse is severe. Hence the importance of a historical background, because in understating the current situation we can attest to the existence of certain similarities which are not even portrayed in literature.

5.4 Women's Roles in Politics and Activism

5.4.1 Women Militants and Cadres

Women have been active participants in politics, rebellions and war since the fight for independence began in Latin America in the 1800s, and SEA in the 1900s. As the historical chapter shows, in some cases women participated in war efforts, politics and work in their communities long before colonial times. Writers, biographers and novelists acknowledge this in their books; with women involved in the fights for independence, civil wars and uprooting of military governments, also came their search to be active participants in society and politics.

In Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, Myanmar, Philippines, Bolivia and Cuba, women have been out there amidst the bullets and political developments from the early times of independence from colonial powers; and their hunger for involvement has not diminished and probably never will. The ideals of reaching equality seem to be in crescendo.⁸ Table 23 exemplifies how in Latin America, women are commonly displayed as the victims of military abuse, a topic that will be analyzed in the segment of women and violence at the end of the present chapter.

Table 23 Military Abuse in Latin America

Chile	Cuba	Colombia
Alba from <i>The House of the Spirits</i> , gets involved with the communist rebels; she is abused by the military as a form of attempting to terrorize her to confess the whereabouts of her lover (Allende, 1986: 484).	In <i>The Patio in my House</i> , Beatriz is a teacher accused of spying for the Americans during the Cuban Revolution; she unjustly spends months being tortured and abused, and after years in prison, she is released when she becomes terminally ill.	In "In Flying Atoms," a young girl is forced to join the guerrilla. During her militancy, she is continuously raped by many soldiers, and she learns the importance of obeying. One day she kills a comrade by mistake, with a lost bullet, and she is sentenced to death by the guerrilla. By Berta Lucía Estrada Estrada.

⁸ Women are active in military in Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, Jamaica, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009).

The fact that examples are unavailable does not signify women in SEA do not suffer from violence in the hands of the military; some cases will be addressed in the segment of Violence in the Public Sphere in this chapter. Meanwhile, other stories tell about women militants with either success or failure; cadres dispatched home after they finish fighting for the cause; women who perish during war; women who are both militants and wives.

Table 24 Women Cadres

LAOS	VIETNAM	MEXICO
<p>In “What a Beauty,” Phaengkam is a Lao civil servant who during the liberation was the woman’s leader from her district. After she finished her round as a militant, she went back home to sell <i>kanomkok</i> (Bounyavong, 1999: 65).</p>	<p>In <i>Last Night I Dreamed of Peace</i> we read the rescued diary of Dang Thuy Tram, a woman concerned with the fight, but a woman after all. War is also inside of her; and social expectations are an issue in the middle of tension. She would worry about her behavior as an unmarried Vietnamese woman, even under the danger of death: <i>We go down to the shelter, which is built like an artillery shelter, fairly large but old...rather than having just the two of us, brother Ky and I, staying in the shelter, I let Eight Sister stay with us as well. (Although nothing will happen if Ky and I are alone, I still feel awkward, concerned that people might misunderstand)</i> (Dang, 2007: 160-1)</p>	<p>Gertrudis, ‘The Generala’ from <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i>, leaves her home to follow the Mexican revolutionary rebels and becomes a high ranking official. She is a well respected female fighter among her cadres, and in her family, a loving mother and wife.</p>

What must be highlighted from this short segment is the presence of women in the military, as cadres or as victims, the world of fight does not distinguish male or female. Both regions have seen their women joining the ranks to fight for rights they are later denied; both regions have seen their women attacked and raped by military groups or militia. Sadly, more similarities in cases will be displayed in the final part of this chapter.

5.4.2 Women Activists and Politicians

A form of participation in the sphere of politics⁹ is the role of women as activists. Commonly mentioned in literature, we see characters that fight for women's rights and freedom. In Mexico, Laura Hansen remembers the words of a feminist: *We are half of the world and people haven't realized it. Why do our opinions seem to lack weight? Is it because there is only one view? I make politics just by existing* (Pettersson, 1996: 62), *a rabid feminist who spent time in reunions, of which the results I [Laura Hansen] now benefit directly...* (Pettersson, 1996: 21)

In *The House of Spirits*, Nivea is a Chilean feminist: *She had often discussed with her suffragette friends and they had all agreed that until women shortened their dresses and their hair and stopped wearing corsets, it made no difference if they studied medicine or had the right to vote, because they would not have the strength to do it...* (Allende, 1986: 17). *Nivea would chain herself with other ladies to the gates of Congress and the Supreme Court, setting of a degrading spectacle that made all their husbands look ridiculous* (Allende, 1986: 85).

Finally in "Transit to Heaven," Dora is a fervent feminist who dedicates her life to the women's movement. Her words and theories fixated on the premise that men are to blame for all of women's evils on earth; until she realizes how her words sure helped the movement, but it was her touch that most women suffering the physical abuses needed. When she realizes her mistake, and her lack of empathy, she has a chance to change her life from a published literary feminist to a woman that would truly fight for those in need. In Dora's view, "man had been using language to enslave women for hundreds of years and he did it with such cunning that women suspected nothing and fell into his trap, so that each time she opened her mouth to speak, she fell deeper" (Lim, 1993: 127).

Berta Lucía Estrada Estrada also addresses the subject of feminism through the narrative of several Colombian women writers and artists in her novel *Feminine or the*

⁹ The percentage of women as elected officials by 2007 ranked maximum twenty-four percent for most countries. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009).

Sweet Aroma of Pheromones, where characters Fernanda, Teodora and Saskia were the feminists among a group of friends. Saskia had critical beliefs about marriage, *she never wanted to marry. She considered that it meant losing the freedom she loved. She thought it useless having to sign a paper to be allowed to love* (Estrada, 2008: 105).

An important part of women's activism is the aspect of solidarity, to work as a team in search of equality and respect. Collaborating, women can reach more goals. In the story of *The Kling Kling Woman*, the main character leaves her home to become a worker in the Malay railroad tracks. In her search for independence, she finds the difficulty of being a woman among male workers and she suffers of abuse. Still, she believes women must work together to enhance their chances of empowerment: *We must keep together as a group...in spirit* (Maniam, 1997: 124).

The epitome of power in a woman is the character of President Viviana Sansón, the in *Country of Women*. She creates a leftist feminist political party which she names the PIE, the Party of the Erotic Left; *The aim of the PIE campaign is to use in its favor the stigmas that have put women in the margin of political life, with the goal of producing a change of paradigm that ends with the overused macho schemes of male domination* (Belli, 2010: 119).

Yet in her approach to empowerment she follows a 'patriarchal' style of politics when she chooses to implement a dirty campaign: *the only way to find a spot for ourselves within the political arena is to use the same force to bring them down. To make that the mechanisms of domination turn against them* (Belli, 2010: 122).

In SEA, an example of politics and disempowerment towards women can be seen in *The Paper Woman* by Catherine Lim, where three women come together in a story about the power legal documents can have over the female nature of women. They are women for whom a paper determines their femaleness:

1. A Singaporean mother gives up her womanhood to prove herself "sterilized" in order for her son to attend the best schools as prescribed by the government¹⁰;
2. A Filipino worker, after being requested to sign a non pregnancy agreement, undergoes abortion as the only choice to remain in Singapore as a housemaid;

¹⁰ In the story, to promote birth control, women who provided the Government with a Certificate of Sterility would gain access to the top schools in Singapore without having to be wait-listed.

3. A Thai prostitute needs *another* certificate of virginity to “work,” her price going higher if she can demonstrate she is a virgin.

Among the analysis of Mary Ellmann’s works done by Toril Moi in *Sexual Textual Politics*, Moi defines Ellmann’s eleven major stereotypes of femininity as presented by male writers and critics – *formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, compliancy, and finally ‘the two incorrigible figures’ of the Witch and the Shrew* (Moi, 1985: 34).

Moi quotes her stating that such stereotypes should be “exploited for all they are worth for women’s own political purposes” (Moi, 1985: 39). Nicaraguan writer Gioconda Belli, also seems to believe this form of approach is real when describing Viviana as a woman whose *political genius was, in how she had emphasized everything that was seen as feminine, all the way to making it ridiculous* (Belli, 2010: 46). For example, when she states that she wanted to *wash the country. Wash it and iron it...* Belli exploits the parody of female roles to explain how an ascribed duty can be transferred to other spheres (Belli, 2010: 100).

In choosing a political strategy, Viviana Sansón believes in fighting like women, yet at some point she begins fighting with the same tools used against them; she decides to turn the tables and send all men home. Gioconda Belli deals with two aspects of the feminists in power in her novel; on one side the motherly figure who wants to wash and iron the country; on the other, a woman who chooses the extreme measure of governing like a man, to teach men what women have felt over the years.

The messages in *Country of Women* can be interpreted not only as the empowering possibilities for women in politics; but also as a warning against the extreme feminism, what Sara Sefchovich calls *mujerismo (womanism)*¹¹, which could be a tremendous failure for the women’s movement: *In a world populated by both men and women, one gender*

¹¹ The term *mujerismo* does not exist in Spanish as a word in the Royal Academy of Spanish Language, therefore the author of this thesis has translated the term as womanism, the closest translation possible.

cannot assert itself by eliminating the other (Belli, 2010: 158)¹². We can discern the possible warning in Belli's work by analyzing character Viviana's acceptance of the impropriety of treating men, like men have treated women in politics: *It was crazy to send men to their homes, but I don't regret it ...it was an extreme measure... I wouldn't suggest it as an imperative for society to recognize women, or for women to recognize themselves...* (Belli, 2010: 276)

Still, what the author seems to convey is the notion of what would imply for women to take the role of government officials, not only in the presidential seat, but everywhere else in the State: *the problem to me is not what is thought of women, but what we have accepted to think about ourselves* (Belli, 2010: 101).

5.5 Beyond The Roles: Portraits of Victims in the Public Sphere

5.5.1 Portraying Labor and Prostitution in Literature

The most unfortunate women who 'work' outside the realm of the house, are those who are forced into labor and prostitution. We can discuss the portrayal of prostitutes, sex slaves and other forms of forced labor such as factory work, which is more enslaving than rewarding when underpaid. Stories that include issues related to slavery and prostitution are extensive in literature. In Mexico, we mentioned the case of the maquiladoras and the women that work unhealthy hours for little money and high risks. A collection of poems has been written to immortalize victims of abuse: *Walking under the darkness of the night...tired, fatigued...mixed up by the foreign selfishness, by the schedules of their opening and closing...I am a woman! And to walk under the night, now my fears are my reality...* in *Flowers of the Desert* by Israel Gayosso.

¹² In discussing the new policies Viviana has a conversation with Emir, a man who supports her cause and who attempts to show her that women will not win by imposing patriarchal style mechanisms of power: Viviana believes *Power is imposition* but Emir questions her idea of such *exercise as one to change the nature of power*. Viviana calls it *feminine power*; to which Emir responds that *feminine power does not represent any change. It's a substitution; one authority for another* (Belli, 2010: 174).

In Cambodia, labor and prostitution took place during the Khmer Rouge Regime. Women were forced to work extensive hours under duress, threat and torture. Many of their stories, documented through biographies and novels, recount the hardship of those times. In *Worms from our Skin*, author Teeda Butt Mam writes how *a woman would be killed if she was too tired to work*.¹³

Prostitution and sex slavery are a different matter; worlds full of violence and abuse. It is frightening that many novels and short stories narrate stories about women working in brothels or being sold for some petty cash. Yet there is also extensive literature that relates the real cases of women in biographical narrative¹⁴. In her excruciating book *Slaves of Power*, Lydia Cacho describes the true stories of many girls and young women whose work is the sale of their bodies. Much more than the need for money lies behind their stories. Daughters, mothers, sisters and wives end up in paths of prostitution in the search of additional forms of income for their relatives. The money they make in this denigrating form of work being used by the rest of the household members who, additionally, blame them for being *easy women* and treat them with demeanor.

In her research in SEA, Cacho found that *Thailand and Cambodia are the two Southeast Asian countries where more prostitution is consumed: seventy percent of men pay for sex*. Meanwhile in Cancun, Mexico, she found that...*more tourists [American and Canadian] look for sex with young women, docile and obedient*. A male testimony about Latin women describes them as *nice, hot, tender and obedient; as women who still believe in the sanctity of marriage and in respecting men, true women* (Cacho, 2010: 178).

The sex industry is nourished constantly from the most popular *stereotypes* that are reaffirmed by the clients around the world...*silent Japanese Geishas; submissive Thai masseuses; uninhibited and savage Colombians; insatiable nymphomaniacs from Cuba; perverted Russians; sweet and loving Dominicans...* (Cacho, 2010: 174)

¹³ *Worms from our skin* by Teeda Butt Mam in *Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors* by Pran Dith.

¹⁴ Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines are both, source and destination countries for sex trafficking. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009)

In a district in Mexico City, she explains the surroundings where she met with some young girls; dressed as a nun to do undercover research. She expresses her emotions about where she was: *There were only two ways for a woman to walk in that area controlled by Mafia without awakening any suspicion: dressed as a nun or as a prostitute ...I confess I was hoping to find in those areas something different of what I had discovered in Bangkok or Cambodia, but it was not like that.* Her testimony asserting the similarities between her experiences in SEA and Latin America (Cacho, 2010: 161,162).

Charm Tong, a Burmese Shan activist, documents how in the twentieth-first century, the Myanmar army still uses rape as a war technique; *rape and slavery means vulnerability for the communities and it adverts them they are being watched* (Cacho, 2010: 115,120). That is how many girls remain prostitutes and sex slaves for the rest of their lives, or until discarded for being too old. Many women do no escape prostitution.

In the Cambodian short story *My sister*; a young prostitute is judge harshly by her brother who he claims, *that kind of girl creates a bad impression, one that slowly destroys Cambodian values and tradition.* In discovering the truth of where the money he spends comes from, he calls it a ‘degrading job’ and sends her away ashamed of her, unaware she has done it all for him as his aunt will state *Don’t you realize whom she prostitutes herself for?* (Sotheary in Yamada, 2002: 47,51)

Prostitutes or sex slaves are rarely lucky enough to escape that life, still, some fictitious cases do exist in literature, and many true stories can also be found. Table 25 presents examples in Thailand, Singapore, Mexico and Colombia about fiction and non-fiction prose reviewed, and where women die or survive, choose or are forced into the trade by their relatives.

Table 25 Women Portrayed in Prostitution and Sex Slavery ¹⁵

Thailand	The short story “Light after dark” tells the story of Oi, a single mother turned prostitute. She narrates her story, her reasons to become one. Oi moves up and leaves the prostitution life to become a bus conductress and later a bus inspector.
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¹⁵ Patrón (Spanish term): the master of a Latin American Colonial style Hacienda or large property. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

Chile	In Allende's novel <i>The House of the Spirits</i> , a prostitute from the province moves to the city to try her fortune: Tránsito Soto <i>had become a slender, middle-aged woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a black woolen dress with two strands of simple pearls around her neck, majestic and serene; she looked more like a concert pianist than the owner of a brothel. Life has been good to me 'patron' Do you remember that when we met I told you one day I'd be rich? She smiled.</i> She was an influential woman among the military and politics (Allende, 1986: 472,473).
Singapore	Catherine Lim tells the story of Bina, a young girl of Indian descent sold into marriage to a man fifty-three years older than her. When she is taken away after the marriage, the author describes the scene of her rape in the hands of her new husband. Finally, Bina fights the incarceration of her enslaving marriage by seeking help from a flight attendant in the airplane where she is traveling to her new home. "The Woman's Book of Superlatives."
Singapore	"The Solace of Guilt" tells the story of a Thai underage virgin prostitute killed by accident out of fear to be punished by her handlers. The mother of the girl attempts to sell her younger daughter to the man responsible of the young girls' deaths. "The Woman's Book of Superlatives" by Catherine Lim.
Mexico	In <i>Slaves of Power</i> ; Lydia Cacho writes that <i>forty-three percent of the rescued girls [from sex slavery] said they had been sold by their own mother</i> (Cacho, 2010: 82).

Among the women who live under such terrible circumstances of slavery, some do find the way out of the system, their accounts have helped researches and authorities understand the truth behind the sex trade and they are also the portrait of a woman empowered. They combine many of the portrayals here analyzed; to survive slavery they enact the characteristics of all the women we have analyzed. They must be tender and sweet, even if they are almost dead inside. To escape they must be aware and active; they become agents of their own lives. Finally, to prevent other from suffering their fate they become active participants in society, they work with solidarity to assist other's.

Examples of empowered women who survive prostitution and slavery can be seen on Table 26. These four cases are from a memoir or travelogue, the characters are real and they come from different parts of the world; the characters in Table 24 are mainly fictional, which makes literature even stronger as a tool of expressing perception of our surroundings: the cases selected by fiction prose writers in both regions are remarkably

similar to the factual cases of four women presented in a nonfiction memoir from Mexico, – which interestingly enough portrays women from Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Table 26 Women, Violence and Empowerment (Non-Fiction Memoirs)

<p style="text-align: center;">Somaly Mam Cambodian survivor, <i>works day and night with one mission only: to abolish female sexual slavery</i> (Cacho, 2010: 87)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Qui Cambodian survivor; a slave under the Chinese triad, now working with a Cambodian Civil Organization. Qui wants to study social work to help Cambodian girls rescued in other countries. (Cacho, 2010: 98)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Nan Burmese survivor raped by soldiers and sold to a brothel in the border with Thailand. After two years she was rescued by a Christian organization and sent back home to Burma. After speaking out about her ordeal she was arrested, tortured, raped and almost killed for implicating the military in her abduction. She is now a translator for clandestine human rights groups in Burma. Lydia Cacho states, <i>I get the sensation that she is possessed by a compassionate will like I have never seen before.</i> (Cacho, 2010: 122)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Arely Venezuelan aspiring model taken to Mexico under the promise of work and studies. Forced to have a breast implant surgery; they tell her she is <i>soft and obedient</i>. Knowing she can be killed, she escapes. Arely was rescued by paramedics in a local police office where she was gang raped and drugged when she claimed to be a sex slave. Back in Venezuela she chose to study to become a social worker in a refugee. (Cacho, 2010)</p>

The right of women to choose – when, how and if they want sex with men – implies to many men of many countries an affront, going to the point of adopting the false idea that all women want is to win power over them (Cacho, 2010: 196). Violence is a mechanism selected to suppress that excessive search of power men *believe* women *want*.

5.5.2 Victims of Violence as Portrayed in Literature

Harassment, is one form of violence women face in their daily lives. Not only in the workspace, but also at home. Sexual abuse and assault are other forms of violence also confronted by many. In her novel “Feminine or the Sweet Aroma of Pheromones,” Colombian author Berta Lucía Estrada describes her beliefs about women and

violence through the voice of female character Teodora who “believed women in Latin America suffered of ablation ...she meant from the ostentation of power of the father figure over daughters, to the male politicians...to the priests who have denied women the possibility of sex if she wishes, to the State and the Church, who condemn her if she has an abortion, to harassment in the workplace” (Estrada, 2008: 137-138).

In chapter four there was mention of the cases and characters in literature where their portrayal is not an actual ‘role,’ instead they are the image of what many women suffer at home regarding domestic violence. In Table 27 we review the cases of abuse women suffer at the hands of strangers; figures of authority, soldiers and police officers tend to be the main perpetrators of violence towards our female characters¹⁶.

Table 27 Women and Violence in the Public Sphere

<p>Philippines A young girl is raped by soldiers after she attempts to rescue her drunk father from a local prison. The soldiers force her to make a deal by stating they will allow the father to leave if she complies with their rules and follows her duty as a daughter:</p>	<p>“You owe your father that much...any self-respecting daughter would do much more” (Rosca in Francia, 1993: 198).</p>
<p>Chile</p>	<p>The smallest of the Trueba girls in <i>The House of the Spirits</i> – Alba – is tortured, raped and imprisoned by military officials who want her to confess to the whereabouts of a young dissident; while punishing her conservative Grandfather at the same time.</p>
<p>Colombia In Colombia, a young girl is attacked by a rejected suitor in <i>The Veil</i>. The man burns her alive for the rejection.</p>	<p>“He’s here for me, he wants to negotiate with my father and the merchandise is me ...in our culture, women do not choose their husband, it is the father who decides for them” (Estrada, 2009: 92,93).</p>

¹⁶ Rape is used as an instrument of power in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia. Source: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (2009)

Guatemala	In Guatemala, a nonfiction character, a Congresswoman who debated prohibiting prostitution, was anonymously threatened to be raped and killed. She knew the message came from a top ranking military controlling sexual slavery. She could do nothing but save the piece of paper and continue her fight (Cacho, 2010: 298).
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The first case in Table 27 establishes a link between the responsibility of the daughter as defined by tradition, owing everything to her father; and the patriarchal abuse that comes from upholding such traditions. Blame on a woman is not limited to the cases above. The idea of a woman showing her skin or her shape, as a cause for the violent acts perpetrated against her can also be found in literature. *In a culture ruled by misogynistic and patriarchal values, the female body is seen as an object that can be bought, sold, used and discarded. Women are educated to subject themselves blindly to rules, and men are instructed to reproduce them without questions* (Cacho, 2010: 277):

In “The Mayor of the Roses,” Mary Eileen is violently raped and murdered by several men who plan her kidnapping as an amusement for the Mayor of the town. Her case is taken into court, yet through the story judgments that involve her behavior – for example that she was dressed in short pants – aim to label her not as ‘victim’ but as ‘cause’ of her own assault.¹⁷

Sara Sefchovich, writes accounts of her experiences and her opinion considering local and international issues. In her book “Are Women Better?” She describes the case of a raped woman and the considerations made around her case: In Mexico, “Claudia Rodriguez killed the man who attempted to rape her. She killed in self defense, because a woman has the right to defend herself from aggressions...a man shot a thief that attempted to rob him. Two hours later he was free because it was considered fair and correct that he defend himself. Instead, Claudia Rodriguez, mother of five, wife and employee, has been in prison for over ten months because she didn’t allow herself to be raped” (Sefchovich, 2011: 188).

It cannot come as a surprise that just as in real life, among the many cases documented of violence against women, some might have to defend themselves at any cost.

¹⁷ “The Mayor of the Roses,” by Marianne Villanueva in “Brown River, White Ocean. An anthology of Twentieth Century Philippine Literature in English,” Luis Francia ed.

Others, also documented in real or fiction narrative, choose to take matters into their own hands, using violence as a mechanism of empowerment which reverses existing power roles. This is equivalent to the criticism discussed in *Country of Women* where fictional character President Viviana Sansón attempts to justify her transplant of power from suppressed to suppressor with the excuse of teaching men a lesson. Two occurrences of female defensive aggression include:

“The Revenge” by Catherine Lim, a case of power transplant where mother and daughter castrate a young man who dishonors and rejects the young girl. Men turn aghast by the crime, while the women accept the terms of their punishment, convinced at least one man will not dishonor another girl.¹⁸ In “Generations,” a young girl is raped to help her father; he mocks her, calls her a *slut*; the girl responds with a blunt attack to the head, kills her father and leaves him to die. The existence of violence is excruciating in literature, the imagination of the authors not being extreme because many of their descriptions are either based or reflect real situations. The undeniable fact is that both in Latin America and in Southeast Asia, fiction and nonfiction literature, women are still subjugated by domestic and public acts of violence which diminish the desire and hope of empowerment.

5.6 Portraying Empowerment and Change

The character name Julia in “Dead Stars;” a bright, witty woman who balances her traditional values with her search of independence.¹⁹ Non fictional characters such as Dr. Dang Thuy Tram in Vietnam or Claudia Rodriguez in Mexico are clear examples of a woman empowered. The former *wrote her diaries under extreme duress. She penned these entries in battle trenches, bomb shelters, and triages, and in wards filled with dying*

¹⁸“The Revenge” in “The Woman’s Book of Superlatives” by Catherine Lim

¹⁹ The woman who represents change between tradition and new freedoms “the girl had grace, distinction...she had a tantalizing charm, all the more compelling because it was an inner quality, an achievement of the spirit. The lure was there, of naturalness, of an alert vitality of mind and body, of a thoughtful, sunny temper, and of a piquant perverseness which is sauce to charm.” (Marquez in Francia, 1993: 6)

patients. Through destruction, hunger, extreme fatigue, loneliness, and psychological trauma, this remarkable young woman still had the presence to reach for the literary and the sublime (Dang, 2007: xx); the latter, spent months in prison for killing her attempted rapist. Other real life characters who represent action and agency are the survivors of slave trade in Mexico, Cambodia and Thailand.

Patricia – Joan of Arch, as she liked to call herself – is a fictional character from Nicaraguan Novel *Country of Women*. Raped and prostituted by her uncle, sold into slavery, and tortured: *she read feminist documents and was disturbed by their doctoral tone, the language inaccessible to some. ‘For heavens sake women, she thought, don’t over do it now! To show their intelligence to men, so much knowledge lost contact with its own listeners* (Belli, 2010: 127). Through Patricia, Gioconda Belli touches the subject of excessive ‘feminism’ again.

Empowered women characters also include daughters Tita and Phan, who stand up to their families and begin living their lives even if considered *spinsters*; or Sister Veeranand – who leaves the church to marry the love of her life – and Sister Clara – who leaves hoping to find love –; little Bina, who escapes forced marriage by vocalizing her enslavement; and the members of Brigade Five in *The Women in The Island*, who stand up in solidarity against male authorities empowering themselves in the process.²⁰

Finally fictional character President Viviana Sansón and her novel ideas of seclusion for men: *What a dare it was! But how beautiful to try out. At least once in a lifetime, every woman deserved to go crazy like that; to take on an idea and ride away with it, trusting that, whatever the result, the effort was well worth it* (Belli, 2010: 106).

Women have – and continue to – live under all sorts of disempowered ascribed roles. Literature maintains the ongoing portrayal of women as mothers, daughters, spinsters, abused employees, rape victims, etc. It also depicts many cases of women who represent change. However, it cannot be denied that in most of the cases reviewed and compared throughout chapters four and five of this research, the overall situation of women

²⁰ See Appendix A for details of the stories: *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Arrival of Dawn*, *Only God will Judge Me*, “Better than Burning” in “Better to Burn and other stories”, “Bina” in “The Women’s Book of Superlatives” and *The Women in the Island*.

– as central and supporting characters of stories – comes attached with victimization and overall lack of power. Women are portrayed mainly disempowered or aware of their situation. Though awareness is portrayed more often than not, the step towards a second stage of empowerment, action and agency, is very limited in the cases reviewed.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

To analyze the roles – and stereotypes – ascribed to women in Southeast Asia and Latin America, this study has reviewed the historical background of women in both regions, as well as a series of literary works to determine what those roles are, and what level of empowerment do women have in these Developing Countries. From the historical perspective examined in this thesis, we can summarize the situation of women in the pre-colonial times as a period where women in both regions had a notable degree of power and influence. Women were valued in society, both in the palace and among the commoners; they had access to social rank, property, economic roles, religious rituals, education and several profession outside the house.

Royals had power and education, in some areas they had more influence than in others, but generally they had a strong presence in the public life. Similarities can be found in the presence of women in mythology, especially related to the origin of cultures; Queens in both regions had an important social standing, in Southeast Asia, females ruled and had a definite role in asserting heritage rights to the throne. Equally in Latin America, female Queens are mentioned in historical records, with the slight difference that some had political power but did not govern (Maya Queens), while others did govern their lands (Inca Queens).

Matrilineal reckoning was also important in both continents; it extended to the common folk where women became of great value to their parents due to their possibility to marry them off to powerful men. Here, we already see an established regime for arranged marriages which will persist until our days, yet nowadays it is less strict in some places.

Both regions saw the intermarriages of locals and foreign traders for economic alliances; Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia (Javanese) and Meso-america (Maya and Aztec), accepted temporary marriages or the sale of daughters (and wives sometimes) for the benefit of power, ascent on the social strata, etc.

During the colonial period, with the arrival of foreign influences and new religions, we can observe an overall process of disempowerment as compared to the pre-colonial status of women. New religions enhanced the importance assigned to virginity and the value of marriage as a transaction for many of the colonized people; they also brought a tight connection between women and connotations of evil and dishonor. During colonialism, changes affected women more than men; it was in both areas a time of confusion with traditional and new roles.

Overall disempowerment – enhanced by limitations to religious power, political influence, restraint within the marriage, and a constant comparison to European women as the standard to follow – allowed for a reinforcement of the patriarchal rule in the domestic and public spheres; European opposition to local traditions – and the fact that religion advantaged men – exalted the subordination of a woman to her father and husband. Daughters became assets whose virginity, monogamy and chastity kept them under control. Religion promoted the confinement of women to the household; and codes of behavior were established to maintain the image of an ideal female figure which should be obedient, submissive and modest.

Colonialism resulted in a mix of ideas; women were the keepers of tradition, it was their responsibility to maintain the old beliefs and ideals while adapting to their new roles. Later, they were active participants in the fights for independence, yet right after the new Nations obtained freedom, women were sent back home to pursue their roles as mothers and wives.

Post colonialism brought more confusion, women lost entitlements such as hierarchy, property, sexual freedom, access to divorce and inheritance; their subordination increased and their access to active involvement beyond the domestic sphere became limited. Education, which was available for elite women before colonialism, was again

denied or it focused on how to be a good spouse and mother, and how to take care of the home and the children. Access to higher education would become a fight for many.

With the expansion of industrialization, and the many positions opened for women in factories and markets during the colonial period, postcolonial Southeast Asia and Latin America saw their women taking on several roles at one given time. The big industries that employed women since colonialism, and which profited from their skills and commitment to work, continued to do so after the Independence movements, yet no benefits nor increased salaries were given to them even after their involvement in the fight for freedom.

Post colonial women in both regions redefined the term multitasking when they became involved in the work industry, politics, activism for women and poor people; while at the same time pursuing education and taking care of the household and its adjoining responsibilities of caring for relatives, childrearing and housework. Although women did work out of choice, many began working out of necessity. The post colonial woman of the Developing World was described with words such as propriety, honor, modesty, restraint, subservience, piety and obedience.

From the position women had in the pre-colonial world, women in postcolonial Southeast Asia and Latin America remained disempowered, they remained at a loss regarding social equality, restrained movement beyond the household and access to positions they had attained before the colonial regimes. However, compared to their position during the European presence they did regain a degree of freedom and value in society. The need for increased income in the household, forced women to participate in the economic sphere and learn new skills; thus, during the twentieth century education became more accessible to women, notwithstanding the messages imbedded in it were centered in how to be a good wife and mother.

The arrival of the vote in the first half of the twentieth century allowed for increased participation in politics, and even though quotas¹ were established to guarantee a certain number of positions for them, a paternalist regime remained in place with more strength than ever. The feminist agenda allowed for groups to pursue and promote new laws for

¹ Quotas: A limited or fixed number or amount of people or things, in particular. Sources: Cambridge Dictionaries Online; Dictionary.com.

protection within the household and marriage, but the fight for equality has kept the activism on a standstill where women, probably out of necessity, fight for political agendas rather than for the betterment of society.

Another commonality perceived in the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods was the transition of women's active participation in religions, to a mere observational position. Religious rituals, spiritually and worship – previously a scene of activity for women – passed to the hands of men. Women took on the supporting role, watching from a distance and having a meager part to play.

As for women in a contemporary literary context, they continue to be described as obedient, caring, quiet, modest, and humble. Daughters for example, should obey their parents, care for their relatives and follow the patriarchal rules set for them. From the narrative analyzed for this thesis we can observe that the main role of a daughter is that of caring for her parents and siblings, a daughter should have a strong sense of familial piety. The cases portrayed continue to narrate stories of women with limited education, restrained to the household, married young to avoid social disgrace, and always hinting to a form of submissive behavior.

Marriage is often described as a familiar decision were – if no forced marriage is set for a daughter – her parents still have the last word in the engagement. Women who do not marry, usually because they care for their parents, are portrayed as *spinsters*; childless and worthless after their role as a caretaker ends, usually late in her life. However, cases of rebellion and empowerment usually point to a daughter who has a submissive mother, a woman who is being forced to marry, and women who desire to have a career outside the domestic sphere. Empowered daughters in literature have a tendency to dissociate themselves from their parents.

Those who do marry – out of love or by force – are expected to export their daughterly characteristics into their married lives. A daughter's piety and submission is often described as a trade that passes from her father or uncle, into the hands of her husband and later her son or son-in-law. In the literature analyzed, a good wife is described as supportive, obeisant, silent, passive, good mannered and submissive. A virtuous wife

accepts everything that comes her way as part of her destiny; she follows her spouse and cares for him; she takes care of creating a home; and if he must leave her, she waits faithfully for his return.

Narrative of forced marriages and unhappy wives is common in the regions under study. Most cases portray women as disempowered wives – either completely unaware of their choices, or aware and resigned to their destiny. Most cases of resignation are connected to money, fear, violence, tradition, and protection of children. Another subjugated group, also portrayed in literature, is that of the barren wife who believes and accepts the stigma of failure assigned to women who cannot bare children. Rebellious and empowered spouses are equally described in the narrative under study; these women confront their fear and traditions. Most of the cases found, point to women seeking education, solidarity with other women, confrontation to assert their position in the household and – in some cases – silence and rejection towards their spouses.

The role of mother is always present in literature. In the case of Southeast Asian and Latin American contemporary literature, mothers fall into two categories: the image of the mother within the family, and the mother as a national image to promote tradition. Characterized by submission, caring and loving manners, self-sacrificing and abstinent behavior; mothers are expected to protect the family, renunciate their dreams, and accept their destiny. Mothers in Southeast Asia and Latin America are portrayed as omnipresent, uncomplaining, available and multitasking; mothers take the blame for anything that happens in the family.

Mothers are enshrined and respected, even in cases were they oppress and abuse their children. If unwed, they are described as a danger to society; because the family honor rests in the woman, any variation to the roles of daughter, wife and mother are seen with distaste. A mother has the responsibility of educating good daughters that in turn will become good wives and good mothers. It is in her hands that the strongest patriarchal ideals are located, and it is women who are taught to inculcate newborn sons and daughters to perpetuate the long standing traditions of male authority. This is intertwined with the idea that – as a symbol of the Nation – mothers are seen as the image of tradition, as the real

values and morals a society has; thus the stigma attached to women who do not marry and bare children, they are a bad example for society.

Outside the domestic sphere, women are often portrayed as unworthy of further education than elementary schooling. The belief of education as a source of vices is found in both regions; the conviction that women should learn household duties is also common. The denial of it is commonly attributed to the destiny of women to stay at home and help in the domestic sphere. However, another constant found was the absolute certainty with which some of the characters fight for their betterment at any cost. There are cases of women described as very knowledgeable and well learned – yet in most cases – they must face a degree of challenge is presented. Education seen as a threat is another commonality; so is the continuous portrayal of women who desire it increasingly. The images of women who fight tooth and nail for access to higher education always come alongside rebellious behavior.

Women and religion, although less common in the narrative here analyzed, presents faith as a source of freedom from forced marriages or a life of caring for older relatives; also it represents access to education – religious women become teachers among other things. Nevertheless, ascetics are equally subjected to precepts of behavior and morality including modesty, virtue, contempt. Religion is also described as a source of disempowerment for women; for societies where long ago religion was their realm, it is disconcerting that now it even shames femininity with its taboos surrounding the female body and its biological functions. It is also disempowering when it is considered how it educates women into submission.

The roles of women in the work industry are often described within low paying positions; in Southeast Asia, women are mainly portrayed working for low paying jobs in factories and markets, and Latin Americans constantly appear in positions of house servants. The portrayals also tend to include bad conditions of work and situations of harassment. A commonality between the regions is the double function of women working inside the home and outside of it.

In some cases, the characters are denied access to work for the same reasons patriarchal ideas limit access to education; knowledge is power and power will be used against men, or so is the belief. Others believe simply that virtuous women need not to get involved with work and should stay at home managing the household duties and rearing children. Some cases introduce women who do work outside the home, yet not beyond the realm of the domestic sphere; these women tend to be employed in family businesses and the profits are usually not for them but for the entire family, which perpetuates the lack of value given to women in the workplace.

Contemporary literature does, however, introduce characters empowered in the employment. Women professionals, doctors, teachers, soldiers, activists and politicians. The analysis of literature shows that women involved in politics tend to be subjugated by the predisposition society has over the role of the female sex. Access to military positions comes with the price of violence and abuse; when they join the military they have less recognition yet equal commitment and danger. Sometimes their assigned characteristics are expected to follow them into war, their behavior must be adequate and they tend to take the role of caregivers no matter what their position is.

Activism is seen more as political tool, yet women characters are portrayed as constantly fighting for rights. The portraits done in literature mimic more what the outsiders see – crazy housewives tying themselves up to gates and trees – than the actual movements and their roles in it. Literature does discuss the female solidarity in many aspects, including the fight for equality and freedom. Politics seems to be covered mainly as a reminder that it is a male terrain. When the topic is addressed because a woman is attempting to involve herself, references to rebellious or inadequate female behavior are often established. In other cases where women join politics they are described as either submissive or revengeful, either powerless puppets or vicious beings trying to take over men and punish them.

Additionally to the roles ascribed for women, the author of this thesis chose to address the portrayal of women in cases of violence and prostitution which – sadly – are found in plenty in contemporary literature in both regions. Domestic violence is a common

topic usually connected to control and subjugation; men use violence to restrain women in many stories, and domestic rape is a common occurrence with women of all ages.

The issue of labor and prostitution is also found all over literature. Harassment at work is present, rape and violence are still mechanisms of control in the military, and sex slavery is an issue of concern whose survivors usually dedicated themselves to promote awareness. In cases of war and conflict there is always reference to sexual violence and torture to women in and out of the military; in many cases of violence depicted in contemporary literature, female characters are blamed for the acts perpetrated against them. Women also turn to violence in the stories, there are those who do it to subjugate other women such as daughters, in other instances they do it to fight back an assailant, and there are those who do it for simple revenge.

6.2 Discussion

This research began with the establishment of important definitions such as power and empowerment based on a series of studies made by researchers on the subject. According to such definition, the term empowerment was divided in three stages: awareness, action and agency. Therefore, in this concluding discussion it will be determined where, according to literature portrayal, are women in Southeast Asia and Latin America located regarding their level of empowerment.

These two regions were chosen for a comparative study on the basis of the similarities known to the author of the document. The idea that the experience of colonialism and post-colonialism affected them correspondingly is true, particularly in the realm of women and the presence of continuous patriarchal models of authority throughout history. Although many differences can be found between these two regions – and between neighboring countries – the commonalities are easily located.

Destined to play the role of housekeeper – and nation-keeper within the eyes of society – women have suffered subjugation and confronted shame and violence to move forward; regardless of the time in history, the location of a country, the differences in wealth, the age of the subjects or their religion; women have been destined to marriage and childrearing just as much in Southeast Asia as in Latin America.

The comparative analysis is necessary to establish the possibility of collaboration between two regions so far apart geographically, yet so close to each other socially. In reviewing the most-different-system for comparative analysis, it can be argued that despite the major differences in language, culture and religion between Southeast Asia and Latin America, the similarities in society are irrefutable; beyond the contextual situation of each region, the patriarchal system and its effects on the performance of women in all spheres of life is equally present.

Furthermore, the most-similar-system assists on the present argument; just because geographically some societies are closer, or have shared characteristics regarding culture, history, religious beliefs and values; it does not mean they have more in common than a society which shares fundamental commonalities in behavior regardless of basic differences. Southeast Asia and Latin America, share fundamental similarities when it comes to the role of women in society, and the portrayal of females in contemporary literature.

The first objective of this thesis, *to investigate women's empowerment in Southeast Asia and Latin America in the present, by reviewing literary works that portray women in different social conditions and how different challenges are negotiated*, required an in-depth analysis of the historical background of women in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

The examination of history proved that changes in women's empowerment took place during major transitions such as the arrival of Europeans and – later – when they departed and new Nations were established. Historical records available demonstrate that women's access to power has fluctuated, and significant changes have taken place. What is evident is that social roles have been ascribed for women since before the colonial period.

The process of power among women in these Developing Countries has been in constant change. Women have gained power in some aspects of life, while losing control of others. The process of empowerment has been one of evolution and regress for Southeast Asia and Latin America at least for the past four to five hundred years; irrefutably, the historical process has indeed influenced the attributed capabilities of weakness and under-capacity in women. These traits have been very reticent and therefore have not been abolished.

Power has many forms, one of them is as a tool for manipulation which patriarchal societies have used to maintain certain groups under strict control. In Southeast Asia and Latin America this became evident during the colonial period when the Europeans were the powerful subject preventing the locals – particularly women – from expressing their potential. The colonial powers, and later the patriarchal authorities that prevailed after the wars of Independence, became the force that would shape the aspirations of women.

The implementation of codes of conduct and religion to dominate women, was also the mechanism used to instill false consciousness on them; making them believe they are where they want, doing what they are good at. Only this is not true, since in the last century women in both regions have become active participants in society, through activism and positions in the work industry and politics.

If we consider the analysis of power presented in *Promises of Empowerment*, where one actor can subjugate another partially or absolutely, thus determining if there is domination, the case of women has been, since early colonial times one where women have been underpowered by one authority or another; women have been undermined in virtually all arenas of life; a fact demonstrated by historical records available as well as clearly documented in different works of literature.

Four types of power are described in chapter two; power over – the power to dominate another actor into submission – is a role usually ascribed to fathers, husbands and male figures of authority in contemporary literature, yet there are cases presented in chapter four where it is a mother herself who has absolute power over her daughters. Power within is awareness; present in many histories, power within is the underlying topic of many of the

stories analyzed where a girl or woman realizes her undermined position, her potential, or both.

Power to is the power of action; found mostly in works which expressly deal with issues of women who rebel to their parents or husband, women who through the course of a story take control of their own lives by vocalizing their issues, leaving the home, emancipating economically and emotionally. Finally, power with is the collective action to organize and promote change; this we have been able to observe in stories related to sexual violence where victims become agents of change by working for NGO's, as well as in stories where a woman obtains an important position in the military or government.

The author of the thesis quoted Ted R. Gurr's idea of situational repression which is temporary, well documented in literature in the cases of characters submitted to military torture and violence; and institutional repression which is permanent, such as the cases of women who are destined to forced marriages with no means to emancipate themselves.

Opposite to being repressed, empowerment can also come in two ways, an empowering situation, which is momentary – for example raising concerns of sexual harassment such as the case of Singaporean secretary Helen; yet there is no permanent change nor long lasting benefits. Moreover, a situation of empowerment – where the different phases of empowerment are crossed, and from awareness a woman reaches a state of agency– can be seen in contemporary literature in characters like Tita and Phan, the caretaker daughters who finally take control of their lives.

These two characters also assist in understanding of how long it takes for empowerment to be achieved – *a long and slow process* – which can take a lifetime for one human being, or centuries for a social group. In the case of *The House of Spirits*, the story narrates how four generations of women fight against the patriarchal regime in Chile. The reason, mainly the long process of undoing what has been done and built over years and centuries of repression.

The second objective set was to *identify established roles played by women in these two developing regions of the world*, for which the author of this document reviewed a series of literary documents from where the summarized images were extracted; in these

stories it is possible to identify three main roles and four different portrayals which demonstrate the existence of patriarchal domination, limited social and political access, submission, violence, and fight for women's equality in the Developing World.

The main roles identified are those of mother, wife and daughter; portrayals present images of women at work, religion, politics and in violent situations; the main stereotypes include that of the spinster, the *maid* and the dying lover. Within the public sphere women are portrayed in extreme opposites, there is usually no middle ground, characters are either disempowered – kept at home, away from school and work, denied access to knowledge beyond the kitchen, harassed; or empowered – braving bullets in the military, fighting violence with violence, taking on the roles ascribed for males with no trace of seeking equality but vengeance.

It seems as if writers from different worlds, cultures and sex all agree in how portraying women in the middle position, between empowerment and disempowerment, automatically implies women will demand men to pay back the damages caused to the female gender through years of oppression. It is possible that male writers might see the danger and portray it as a possible outcome of equality; it is possible women want to portray the way they believe men see them. Yet it is all uncertain because until women do not empower themselves, the actual effects of female agency will not be known.

The tendencies imbedded in the idea of power, where one's win implies the other's loss do not assist women in the process of empowerment. If there is any progress, the opposite sex sees it as a threat, hence the stereotyping of women as aggressive and controlling in the public sphere. Empowerment must not rely on domination, and this is something that has to be taught to children since a young age to avoid immortalizing patriarchy.

What is known and shown in this thesis is how all the roles and stereotypes – and their portrayal in contemporary literature – are intertwined. The effects of one are felt and transported into other roles; a woman cannot leave her role of wife, mother or daughter at home, and this has a tremendous effect the general societal rule.

The author has stated that comparing women in Southeast Asia to those in Europe or the United States is an uneven approach; yet comparative analysis with other developing countries results in a more legitimate study where States come from the basis of a similar economic situation, relative similar conditions of life and access to services, as well as education and work.

In both regions, history and contemporary literature indicate that social norms – established as a result of colonialism and the desire to rid the colonies from the European influence – found in women the ideal scape goat. Religious ideals attacked women and their biology, patriarchal models were built on the premise that men were stronger and better suited to rule the domestic sphere, while women were better suited to deal with the household issues. Access to education, employment, legal matters, rights, and politics is now higher to that of colonialism, and yet women are mostly portrayed at a disadvantage when compared to women from the precolonial period.

The roles identified in literature as inherent to women in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Southeast Asia and Latin America signal an overall process of post colonial empowerment, which can be situated mostly within the first stage – awareness – and occasionally in the second stage – action. Notwithstanding, many women in these regions are far from even achieving stage one, that is the acknowledgement of their own situation or awareness of their choices.

It must be stated though, this does not mean women choose to remain disempowered; it is the situation around them, the patriarchal oppression, the violence and the lack of economic means for independence which explain their helplessness to act beyond awareness. These are the main circumstances which stimulate or obstruct women in developing countries to gain access to equality and power. To reach stage three of empowerment – agency – and become fully empowered in society and at home, women must work together, through solidarity and collective action, domestic and cross cultural. In the process, contemporary literature in Southeast Asia and Latin America continue to portray mainly disempowered women, or women who are just starting to realize their potential.

6.3 Challenges

In a process that requires awareness, education, economic independence and finally political action to generate change; women have to fight two fronts, the home and the public spheres, where new challenges arise everyday. Competitiveness is already an issue in the present century, for women to have to add the disadvantages imbedded in their biology increases the level of challenge to achieve empowerment.

In the search for independence, women have become the enemy, and the existing patriarchal authorities become hostile when they feel threaten by new groups who seek power. While hostility and violence remain as the main mechanism to control women, access to empowerment will remain on a standstill where for every step towards progress, two steps go towards self preservation.

Finally, until educational systems – and the education given from mother to child – do not stop perpetuating the existence of roles and portrayals, so antiquated for the first century, and until the value of women in society is not recognized as necessary, women will not be entirely free to access enough empowering situations to generate *a situation of empowerment*.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

Women before the colonial period in Southeast Asia and Latin America had undoubtedly a degree of power and recognition within their societies. Their roles as mothers went beyond the house and onto the realm of asserting descent. Women had a value in the market and the fields, and even though they did not participate as warriors, they did participate in religion, mythology and spirituality. Both in Southeast Asia and Latin America, their presence was made noticeable.

The result of the colonial and postcolonial experience has turned into a male struggle to stop women's empowerment, and a female fight to succeed. Ideas of female as breeding machines; governmental control over the issue of family planning; the choice between surviving under control at home – or fighting for partial freedom as a labour worker come to show that women in Southeast Asia and Latin America continue to be subjected to a patriarchal system, with a challenging fight ahead.

Women still face a degraded status in many areas of life; they are still being qualified as less valuable than their male counterparts, their incomes are lower than men's and their access to services is limited. Yet empowering situations have come their way since World War II – and especially in the last fifty years – where access to politics has placed many women in positions of power, providing them with an opportunity to promote the betterment of their gender. Education has also increased and with knowledge, and its inherent power, some women have become agents for the female cause beyond activism.

However, women have not achieved an equal stance in Southeast Asian nor Latin American countries in any of the spheres analyzed in this document. Yet they have increased their level of awareness, action and agency since the beginning of the Cold War and until now, particularly after the Colonial period and the disempowering episodes of post-independence movements.

If empowerment is determined by historical processes, then women have re-empowered themselves in the last century, yet they have not returned to the descriptions of previous power and quasi-equal status they seem to have had prior to colonialism. If analyzed from the portrayal of women in contemporary literature, writers in both regions – male and female – describe many stances of filial piety by tradition, forced marriages, marital submission, shame in bareness, denied access to education and work, limited access to power, religion as a source of freedom from filial responsibility and continuous acts of domestic violence, sexual harassment and torture.

Equally, writers present cases of women rebelling to each of these instances, and successful cases where women survive sexual slavery, spinsterhood, long life marriages without love, women who win battles to be educated and work outside the home, etc.

Women are, thus portrayed as having defined roles and yet they are also portrayed as having access to empowering situations which enable them to seek complete agency to change their own lives and even assist others, through collective action and solidarity, in achieving their process of empowerment too.

Yet the presence of so many images and descriptions made by different authors regarding disempowering situations highlights the undeniable fact that there is still a strong subjugation over women in general, and a continuous use of tradition and expectations that keep women under the spell of what they should be instead of what they wish to be. The constraints placed on women in literature match those the different researchers have presented as the reasons for which women remained undermined by patriarchal societies, and which include lack of information, lack of economic independence and the constant threat of violence, particularly sexual.

With the idea of opening a space of dialogue between societies confronting similar situations, as women's issues conferences and conventions around the world strive to do, this thesis has produced information to substantiate the claim of an undeniable similarity among societies in Southeast Asia and Latin America; long term similarities in traditions so deeply rooted, that collective action might be the only mechanism to displace them.

The information tendered, can assist in the design of progress and empowerment oriented models useful for developing nations, since it can be asserted that the roles of women in Southeast Asia and Latin America are not only alike, but their portrayal by contemporary writers from both regions, is consistent in every subject – home, work, marriage, politics, military, etc. Furthermore, with a definite and definable rapport between women in both regions firmly established through historical, statistical and literature data; it is not only important, but necessary to promote collective action, women must work together across borders because strength does come in numbers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF LITERARY WORKS

Novels

1. *Under the Drops of Falling Rain* by Oum Euphony (Cambodia)

Another story during the time of the Khmer Rouge. In this one, the author explains the rituals of marriage where cadres, male and female, had to marry a stranger, picked for them by the regime in order to procreate. Simply put, they were signaled, told who to marry and watched carefully to insure their consummation of the marriage.

2. *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende (Chile)

The story of four generations of women in twentieth-century Chile, under the hardship of strong patriarchal figures. The women of the story will fight tooth and nail in a world of domestic abuse, forced marriages, rape, abandonment, loss and strong love relationships. The women of the story are Clara, Blanca, Alba, Férula, Nívea, Amanda, Pancha García and Tránsito Soto. *The House of Spirits* is a masterpiece that sums up the roles of women in society, and at home, like only a few stories can. An important source for this thesis due to its description of a series of woman who through hate, love or mysticism empower themselves to survive the patriarchal figures of father and country.

3. *Feminine or the Sweet Aroma of Pheromones* by Berta Lucía Estrada Estrada (Colombia)

The story of twenty-five year University reunion of a group of Colombian women; all university students, all writers, some exiled, some living in Colombia. One of them tells the stories of her friends while she waits for them to arrive to their meeting point, she describes their experiences at home and as students of literature and arts.

4. *The Patio in my House* by Rosario Hiriart (Cuba)

The story of a family of many strong women in revolutionary Cuba; Amalia, Beatriz, Catalina, Elena and Zoraya. Five sisters and their stories of love, disappointment, revolution, death and exile.

5. *The Painted Alphabet, a mythical story of Bali* by Diana Darling (Indonesia)

The story of Kusuma Sari, a young beautiful witch and her relationships to her ascetic father and his professor, to the cousin she marries, and to a disdained suitor who wishes to destroy her if he cannot have her. Kusuma Sari is a caring daughter, an educated woman with opportunities, and a sacrificial, loving wife.

6. *Husbands* by Angeles Mastreta (Mexico)

Stories of love and despair, of pain and divorce, of happy endings and sour losses. The women in the stories leave and are left, some are empowered and some are disempowered in the process.

7. *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (Mexico)

The story of a young woman in Revolutionary Mexico, her love for cooking and her unbearable destiny to care for her mother until her death. In the tradition of the family, Tita, the youngest of three sisters, is deemed unable to marry, ever, because of her life role as her mother's companion. In a turbulent life of aggression and violence from her mother, Tita reminisces her life stories in the kitchen, her sacred space, and through delicious recipes brings her family, and the readers, to connect with her emotions of pain, lust, sensuality and anger.

8. *Mystification* by Aline Pettersson (Mexico)

The story of Carola Primus and the book she wrote with the stories of her great-grandmother. The story is told by three narrators, one of them, the great-grandmother herself recounts her childhood. Laura Hansen, a girl who identifies with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a famous Mexican nun from colonial times, who joined the church to be able to study and write poetry. In her stories she tells of her life in a bicultural home; her friends, those with means and those without means; the suicide of her best friend Karin whom her parents blame for being a bad influence, and her desire to write.

9. *Not out of Hate* by Ma Ma Lay (Myanmar)

The story of Way Way, the youngest of three siblings, who cares for her ill father after their mother leaves her family to become a Buddhist nun. A smart, independent, hard working girl who, after her marriage, becomes a possession to her husband; her every activity under control. After much sorrow, Way Way leaves for sometime, coming back only out of force due to her pregnancy. Her sad story ends with a miscarriage and a case of tuberculosis, the same that killed her father sometime before.

10. *Country of Women* by Gioconda Belli (Nicaragua)

The story of five daring women that fight, against all odds, to form a political party and take government in Fraguas, a small country perpetually ruled by men. The book tells the story of President Viviana Sarason who has the support of her loyal friends and members of her cabinet, Eva, Martina, Ifigenia and Rebeca. With her colleagues she forms the PIE¹ or *Party of the Erotic Left*. In her road to presidency, she will work with several strong women including Joan of Arch or Patricia, a surviving sex slave rescued from her handlers at the age of sixteen.

¹ PIE is the acronym for Partido de la Izquierda Erótica, Spanish for Party of the Erotic Left. In the book, the acronym PIE, which means “foot” is the basis of her campaign to promote her slogan of change through taking steps, a foot with beautiful red nails being the symbol of her party.

11. *A Leap of Love* by Catherine Lim (Singapore)

The story of a young woman who believes marriage should come out of love; her mother who fears she will be forever single; her friends who believe only married life can give a woman happiness; and the encounter with a young man, over the course of several years, with who she believes to be predestined to share her life.

12. *Arrival of Dawn* by Pensri Kiengsiri (Thailand)

The story of a Thai family; mother, elder daughter, son and two younger daughters. The story revolves around the mother's demanding ways with her eldest daughter as to her family responsibilities, and the ever present subject of male dominance. A story of acquiring awareness and empowerment, the conflict of traditions and new generations.

13. *Behind the painting and other stories* by Siburapha (Thailand)

The story of a Thai married woman, M.R. Kirati who meets a young man in Japan and secretly falls in love with him. This is a story where a woman must be proper always, marries out of love and hope and love comes to her just through death.

14. *Only God Will Judge Me* by Gassanee Thaisonhi (Thailand)

The story of Thai-Christians and a love triangle among them. This story emphasizes on the women and their education or behavior; women's habits after marriage.

15. *Grass Roof, Tin Roof* by Dao Strom (Vietnam)

A young Vietnamese woman visits Vietnam for the first time since her exile as a child. She tells the story of her mother, a Vietnamese reporter who had to leave Vietnam to America. She married a Dutch man and had another child with him.

16. *The Women on the Island* by Ho Anh Thai (Vietnam)

The story of the women of the Brigade five in Cat Ba Island, Vietnam. The author narrates the legend where a woman had been raped and the men guilty of the crime punished by their commander. After the war, 38 women between the ages of twenty-one to forty-four move to the island to work in the brigade. All single except one, all far from the possibility of love.

17. *Excerpt: The Faded Flower* by Nou Hach (Cambodia)

Another story of love destroyed by the prospect of an arranged marriage. Vitheavy, a young girl, is to be married to man she doesn't love. Her end is tragic, she dies of sorrow for her true love, a complication to a case of tuberculosis.

Biographies, Life Accounts, Memoirs and Travelogues

18. *Worms from our skin (Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors)* by Teeda Butt Mam (Cambodia)

A narrative concerning Khmer women during the Khmer Rouge regime, women at war and the treatment they received during this terrible episode of history. Women were raped before execution in order to take away the last shred of individuality and honor they might have left. A story of abuse and lost of identity under a violent patriarchal regime.

19. *Slaves of Power. A trip to the heart of women and girls's sexual slavery around the world* by Lydia Cacho (Mexico)

An excruciating and gripping account of the author's travels around the world to infiltrate and research sex slavery in several countries including: Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia and Guatemala, among many other. In her work as a reporter she suffers death threats, kidnapping, torture and

prison; but she succeeds in documenting the accounts of those involved, especially those of the survivors she meets around the world.

20. *Are Women Better?* By Sara Sefchovich (Mexico)

A collection of accounts in news articles, conferences, public appearances and published articles. The author focuses on feminism, roles of women, history, and literature among other details.

21. *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace* by Dang Thuy Tram (Vietnam)

Dang Thuy Tram, a woman concerned with the fight for freedom in Vietnam, she joins the communist party as a medical Doctor. Her diaries tell of her work on the field amidst the heaviness of social expectations.

Short Stories

22. “Private Function and other stories” by Constanza Roca (Bolivia)

In this compilation, “Mapamundi” tells the story of Cristina must care for her mother-in-law in a foreign land after her husband’s death and her deathbed promise to him of never leaving the old lady. From afar, she dreams of her South American life while caring for the demanding old woman and her own son; and a full time job. The demands of the mother-in-law seem to push her to decide it must be time to take on the world and see more with her son. In “Chamú el Galán,” a young man dreams of a beautiful woman, not his own wife, with whom he stays put because of her wife-like qualities. Even though at the end, he discovers his wife, Julia, is having an affair with the beautiful woman of his dreams.

23. “Better to Burn and Other Stories” by Clarice Lispector (Brazil)

In “The Departure of the Train,” two women in a train silently observe each other and think of their lives, an elderly woman who is moving to be cared by her son; and a young one who is leaving her spouse. In “Better than Burning” Sister Clara joins the Convent out of obligation to her family. Yet she is unhappy, she feels she is in the wrong place, she wants a man and a family. Finally she confesses her dilemma to the priest, who tells her it is better not to marry but it is better to marry than to *burn*. In her unhappiness she finally decides she wants to leave the Catholic vows. She met a man, married and had 4 sons.

24. “My sister” (Virtual Lotus) by Mey Son Sotheary (Cambodia)

In Cambodian tradition, women were sent to the Palace to be the consorts of the King, that was of great value. In this story about prostitution in Phnom Penh, a young woman, Elder Sister Keo, relies in her job as a prostitute not only to support her younger brother and sister, but to fight and provide them with opportunities she never had (i.e. education) after their parents death. In finding out the truth, her brother rejects her and her money, all this many years after she has supported their education and life in exchange for hers.

25. “The Purification of Sita” (Virtual Lotus) by Leila S. Chudori (Indonesia)

The story of Sita, a young woman who has waited for her fiancé over a the course of four years while he studies in a foreign country. The girl has a lover, even though it is a relationship on the non physical realm, and yet she feels guilty for cheating with her emotions; upon his return, she learns he was unfaithful. At that point, Sita struggles to understand how if she would had been able to question his loyalty the way men are allowed to question women’s loyalty even without a shed of proof that states otherwise?

26. “Voices of silence” by Berta Lucía Estrada Estrada (Colombia)

Two stories from this compilation were used for this thesis. In *The Veil* a young girl narrates the episodes of her forced marriage as it is tradition in her town. From the arrival of a suitor who her father rejects because of his plans for her, to the violent attack perpetrated by the angry rejected suitor as revenge. “In Flying Atoms,” a young girl is forced to join a guerrilla in Colombia, she is continuously raped by many soldiers, and she learns the importance of obeying. When she kills a comrade by mistake she is sentenced to death by the guerrilla.

27. “Pulsating stories” by Lina María Pérez Gaviria (Colombia)

A collection of short stories. In “Erotic Symphony” a man describes his desires for a sensual woman in a stage. Also he compares it with his own wife, Leonora. At the end of the story, he finds both women to be one. His precious wife is also the sensual body of the stage actress he dreams about and compares to Leonora, unknowing they are one and the same. In “Tension Zone,” a mother struggles to reunite her family which lives raptured by the television set. By unplugging the device, she wishes to bring back the familiar environment she feels she has lost control off.

28. “A Bar at the Edge of a Cementery” (Virtual Lotus) by Bunthanaung Somsaiphon (Laos)

Mother and daughter set a shop to survive after a raid of prostitution closes most bars and liquor shops in the area. The daughter is graduate of teacher college working at the whiskey bar with her mother, subject to sexual harassment from clients.

29. “Mother’s Beloved stories from Laos” by Outhine Bounyavong (Laos)

In “Oh What a Beauty,” Phaengkam is not pretty nor rich or popular, she helps her mother at work and cares for six younger siblings. She is a civil servant who returns home to care for her family. In “Longing” a boy misses his mother who, as the only child of her own father, has to go back to care for him in his old age, leaving her own children at home

with their father. The responsibility of the only daughter seen now even when she is a mother herself.

30. “Jungle of Hope” by Keris Mas (Malaysia)

Rahimah, is a young girl, who cares for her brothers and cousins, she helps at home and she doesn't attend school. A girl who losses her childhood in house chores, she dreams of playing with the other children her age but she cannot because her duty is to assist her mother.

31. “Kebaya Tales, of Matriarchs, Maidens, Mistresses and Matchmakers” by Lee Su Kim (Malaysia)

In “The House on Jonker Street”, Margaret leaves home after her father forbids her to marry a man whom he doesn't trust and who eventually leaves her with nothing. Alone, she is forced to go to her cousin for help to raise her daughter Nona. In “Boxed-In Bibik”, Janet takes care of her mother-in-law after she becomes ill, despite the fact that she has two daughters and another daughter-in-law. In “The Bachelor from Balik Pulau,” Lian cares for her ill father, while her sisters plan her marriage to a good prospect. Lian has no hopes for love, so when the man turns out to be less than what they had told her, all she notices is his willingness to marry her despite her spinster status.

In “A Promise is a Promise,” Bebe has three daughters and is hoping her latest pregnancy will give her a boy as it has been terrible for the family that she cannot conceive sons. In “Son Boy and Sisters” in a family of four daughters and one son, the three older sisters all attend colleges and defy their father when they choose to marry men he does not approve of.

32. “The Kling-Kling Woman” (Virtual Lotus) by K.S. Maniam (Malaysia)

The story of Sumathi who remembers her great-grandmother's story. She promises to challenge the duty of the wife just as she did. The story she tells of her great-grandmother is about her fight for freedom and respect as a woman working in the

development of Malaysia, but who suffers of harassment among the men who work along the women.

33. “Flowers of the Desert” (The dead of Juarez) by Gayosso, Israel (Mexico)

A poem dedicated to the exploited and endangered women who work in the *maquiladoras* in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; and whose lives have been destroyed by rape and taken violently in a series of unresolved crimes.

34. “Trapped in School, Stories by Mexican Writers” by Mónica Lavín (Mexico)

In “A long awaited day,” Nuria Armengol tells the story of a young girl who is in love with a boy and who escapes from school with her friends to meet him in a small coffee shop. To her surprise, and bad luck, her period comes for the first time right in front of him and his friends, making her the laughing stock and breaking her confidence. Matilde, the cafe owner, tells her the stories of empowerment that come to women from the power of producing life.

35. “An Umbrella” (Virtual Lotus) by Ma Sandar (Myanmar)

Three women with their marital problems. Ma Sein Mya, whose husband is lazy and they suffer to make enough money every month. She feels she cannot rely on him to survive. Daw Sein yKi whose husband cheats on her but she rather not tell him she knows because she needs his financial support, if they divorce there is nothing else for her. Finally Ma Shu yKi, the wife of a richer man who drinks and beats her; she cannot divorce him because they have two children and she must give them a family despite her own pain.

36. “Her Infinite Variety and Other Stories” by Khin Myo Chit (Myanmar)

In “Marriage Divorce Myanmar Style,” a newlywed couple destined to fail by the pre-marriage reading of their fortune. When problems arise among the young bride and groom, exactly within the year of marriage, a close relative helps them survive the crisis by

making a *virtual* divorce, written on paper, and teaches them how to leave as brother and sister, to respect themselves again and finally save their marriage. In “The Shinglung’s Father,” Mai Sein is an abandoned wife with one young son, as she bares the shame of her husband living her for the rebellions, she finds through her friend, her only confidante, that to be a respectable mother she must ordain her son, that is the duty of a good mother.

37. “Dead Stars” (Brown River, White Ocean) by Paz Marquez Benitez (Philippines)

The story of Alfredo who is engaged to Esperanza, the image of traditional woman, and who meets another woman, Julia, a non traditional one who makes him wonder of new things. He struggles to confront his reality and the desire he has for this beautiful, outspoken woman. Other two women who appear reinforce the role of the woman as wife and mother in the Philippine community.

38. “Generations” (Brown River, White Ocean) by Ninotchka Rosca (Philippines)

The story of a girl, abused by soldiers to save her drunken father from prison and her mother who cares for a widow father in law, a drunk husband, two young boys and one girl of age to marry; while trying to survive the domestic violence and the difficulties of the life they must lead working in large plantations.

39. “The Mayor of the Roses” (Virtual Lotus) by Marianne Villanueva (Philippines)

The story of the rape of Mary Eileen and the trial around her shocking murder on the hands of important local political figures. The author touches the subject of the temptation the girl *provides* by dressing up in close that does not cover her legs.

40. “The Painting” (Virtual Lotus) by Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo (Philippines)

The story of a catholic woman and University teacher. Consuelo, a woman with an uninhibited laugh and a loud voice who holds a deep secret. She loves a painting, loves the man on the painting whom she never knew but whom she feels she met in a previous life.

41. “The Summer Solstice” (Brown River, White Ocean) by Nick Joaquin (Philippines)

This story involves the belief on spirits and the role of women in them. A sensual, erotic story of women involved with higher powers and raptured by them. During the season of the Tadtarin, when women go out to explore their sensuality in a series of rituals involving nature. Amanda is so raptured she explores her sexuality vigorously and Doña Lupeng represents tradition, a married woman with european influence and a new religion (catholicism). Submissive to her husband, he makes decisions, she blushes to impure thoughts. The day after the Tadtarin she rebels and demands to be treated with sensuality and not like an object; wants to be adored by a man, be kissed in the feet, be treated more like a person not a thing.

42. “Tong” (Brown River, White Ocean) by F. Sionil José (Philippines)

The story of Alice Tan and her impossible love affair and a sexual encounter with Conrado. Yet they are not allowed to marry, she is of Chinese descent and must marry a Chinese man chosen by her uncle and three brothers to be the one who will care for her, and for the family. Conrado lives with his sister Remedios, a spinster who cares for him while depending on him to survive.

43. “Sex, Size and Ginseng” (Virtual Lotus) by Mary Loh (Singapore)

The narrative tells of the failure of the wives to conceive children or provide any boys and the shame they bring into the family for having only girls. Eventually all of them marry well into society, giving their father the joy of having a higher social status.

44. “The Women’s Book of Superlatives” by Catherine Lim (Singapore)

In “The Enemy” Pei Yin is abused by her stepfather; she knowingly puts herself at risk for the bigger purpose of having her school project approved. In “The Gift of a Man’s Understanding” Helen, a secretary sexually harassed by her boss, attempts to bring the

issue to the open and asks him to stop touching her. He not only jokes about it but continues to impose himself on her. In “Bina,” a girl fights the incarceration of an arranged marriage by speaking out loud the abuse she sees in being the property of a man 53 years older than her.

In “The Paper Woman” a Singaporean mother gives up her womanhood to prove herself “sterilized” in order for her son to attend the best schools as prescribed by the government; a Filipino worker takes abortion as the only choice to remain in Singapore as a maid after being requested to sign a non pregnancy agreement; and a Thai virgin prostitute who needs a certificate of virginity to “work”; all come together in a story about the power legal documents over the female nature of women. In “The Rest is Bonus” Meenachi, makes promises to a goddess in exchange for less violence in her home; a woman contempt with less beating from her drunk husband; whom after almost murdering her, buys her a jewel to make it better.

In “The Song of Golden Frond” a servant girl lights herself in fire as a demonstration of refusal to an arranged marriage with a man whom she doesn’t love and whom she knows has abused of other young servants in the same household. In “The Solace of Guilt” a Thai underage virgin prostitute, sold by her mother, dies while escaping the possible punishment of her handler. In “The Revenge,” Singaporean mother and daughter castrate a young man who, after dishonoring the young daughter, refuses to marry her. In “Transit to Heaven,” Dora struggles to understand why after dedicating her life to the women’s movement, her work is not appreciated by other. When she realizes she never empathized with women in need, she chooses to change her life from a published literary feminist to a woman that would truly fight for those in need.

45. “A Drop of Glass and Other Stories” by Sidaoru’ang (Translated by Rachel Harrison)(Thailand)

In “A Drop of Glass” Anong, works in a glass factory, without a steady position and the risk of loosing her job any day. In “The Hand” a rubbish-sorting woman tells the story of her life and the loss of her hand. In a line up of insecure, dangerous forms of work, bad

medical care affects her performance and she injures herself at work. After losing four fingers her final days are spent working as a cleaner for the monks and sorting trash to collect plastic bags for money. In “Light after Dark” Oi, a young single mother turned prostitute, tells her story and her reasons to become one. Oi moves up and leaves the prostitution life to become a bus conductress and later an inspector.

46. “Second Nature” (In the Mirror: Literature and Politics in Siam in the American Era) by Sujit Wongthet (Thailand)

A story about the relationship between Bun Lam and her fiancé who moves to Bangkok to work while Bun Lam stays behind in the province. Upon his return, he disapproves of her love for the city life and the city things. The changes in Bun Lam, her dressing style for example, makes her fiancé regard her with disdain, and not a woman who can be a wife.

47. “Sita Puts out the Fire” (Virtual Lotus) by Sri Daoruang (Thailand)

Sita reads her husband’s diary and finds a questionable appointment. After confronting him he rejects the accusations but Sita feels relieved of being able to express something more than yes and now. She is used to being a good wife and a good mother. Sita as in Ramayana?

48. “The Story of an Actress” (Virtual Lotus) by Duong Thu Huong (Vietnam)

The story of Bê who enters the Foreign Language University and goes to Germany; and Thom a beautiful girl who wants to be actress. Thom marries an older man, the owner of a theater company. She becomes a housewife, who must forget her career as an actress.

49. “Young Keng” (The Watch Maker of Dien Bien Phu) by Nguyen Kien (Vietnam)

The story of Lat, a young widow with a child; she marries a man whose father believes she has bewitched his son. Lat is a free spirited woman who will teach her husband a new perspective on how to care for her and for their people.

Other Sources

50. Cbap Srey Code of Conduct for Women, Philip N. Jenner (translator) (Cambodia)

A set of behavior rules for women, transmitted from mother to daughter in a *poem-like* manner. Believed to have been written by Buddhist monks or by King Aung Duong in the eighteenth century. There is a demeanor of guilt imbedded in the text, the mother who speaks to the last-born daughter and reminds her of her duties and responsibilities as a good woman.

51. Nou Hach (the author) by Klairung Amratisha (Thailand)

A biographical analysis of the author and his work. Dr. Amratisha discusses the oppressive hold of custom and tradition over Cambodian women.

APPENDIX B

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHIES

Isabel Allende (Chile): (1942) She won worldwide acclaim when her bestselling first novel, *The House of the Spirits*, published in 1982. She has since written nearly 20 more works and has received dozens of international tributes and awards over the last 30 years. Her writings are equally informed by her feminist convictions, her commitment to social justice and the harsh political realities that shaped her destiny. Source: http://ia-site.s3-website-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/cont/other/Bio_Isabel_Summary-en.pdf

Nuria Armengol (Mexico): (1955) Studied Modern Letters (Literature) in the National University of Mexico. In 1988 she obtained the “Manuel José de Otero” Award. She has published a book of tales named *This side of the Table* and she has co-authored several books. She promotes culture, works as a therapist, and she dedicates her life to alternative medicine, research and teaching. Source: Lavín, Mónica (editor). *Trapped in school*. México City: Selector, 1999.

Gioconda Belli (Nicaragua): (1948) Belli's literary career has from its beginning been intimately connected to her political life and the political life of her country. Belli joined the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) in 1970 and was in the underground resistance until 1975 when she had to flee the Somoza regime's secret police and go into exile. Her early poetry celebrates heterosexual womanhood. Her lyric voice matured and evolved into that of a committed militant and revolutionary muse. In her book of poetry *Apogeo*, she celebrates mature womanhood in poems that are sensual and self-confident and that challenge stereotypes of older women. All of her works since 1995 have been published in Nicaragua as well as abroad. Source: <http://www.giocondabelli.org/about/>

Outhine Bounyavong (Laos): (1942) A well-known author of contemporary Lao fiction, his works have been translated into Russian, Vietnamese, and Thai. He has devoted

much of his work to environmental concerns and the wisdom of Lao villagers and the value of traditional customs. Outhine's short stories of recent years provide a commentary on the changing state of Laos and its culture; others serve as a warning against the rapid pace of modernization as well as the unquestioning acceptance of foreign culture and values that is becoming the norm. Outhine writes at a time when traditional culture is increasingly being relegated to the status of an artifact, destined to be placed in museums for the sole purpose of bringing in foreign revenue. Source: http://www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/laoliterature/short_stories/motherBeloved/mother_author.htm

Lydia Cacho (Mexico): (1963) Journalist, social activist and writer; she has been awarded with the National Human Rights Award Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, the Yo Donna Award from Spain for humanitarian work, the Ginetta Sagan Award from Amnesty International, and the Guillermo Cano Award from UNESCO for freedom of expression. She specializes in violence and gender subjects, and she is an advisor for the UNIFEM. She founded a center for women victims of violence and their children in Cancún, Mexico; certified by the National Training Center for Domestic and Sexual Violence. She has published several books and articles. Source: Cacho, Lydia. *Slaves of Power*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2010.

Leila S. Chudori (Indonesia): (Considered one of Indonesia's boldest storytellers, she has worked as a journalist for the influential news magazine Tempo in Jakarta since 1989. She has published several collections of short stories, some of which have appeared in English, in anthologies and literary magazines in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Her work includes *9 dari Nadira* awarded the *Penghargaan Sastra Badan Bahasa* (Literary Award by the Indonesian Language Institution); and *Pulang*, a story based on Indonesian exiles in Paris after the bloody 1965 coup. Source: http://www.westerlycentre.uwa.edu.au/news-and-events/2011_symposium/guest-writers

Diana Darling (Indonesia): Diana Darling has lived in Bali for more than ten years and speaks the language fluently. She is an American born sculptor who trained in Paris and Italy. Source: http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1987918.The_Painted_Alphabet

Laura Esquivel (Mexico): (1950) She is best known for *Like Water for Chocolate* (1990), an imaginative and compelling combination of novel and cookbook. Esquivel has continued to show her creative flair and lyrical style in her later work. Accompanied by a collection of music, her second novel *The Law of Love* (1996) combined romance and science fiction. *Between the Fires* (2000) featured essays on life, love, and food. Her novel, *Malinche* (2006), explores the life of a near mythic figure in Mexican history-the woman who served as Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés's interpreter and mistress. Once married to director Alfonso Arau, Esquivel is divorced and lives in Mexico City, Mexico. Source: <http://www.biography.com/people/laura-esquivel-185854>

Nou Hach (Cambodia): (1916 - 1975?) Established his most important literary legacy, that of social critic, with the publication of his first novel *Phka srabon*, serialized in the paper *Kambuja* in 1947 and published in 1949. This novel was the first Cambodian work to make a direct attack on traditional values. After 1955 he published two more novels. He worked for the Government until 1972 after which he published another important piece of work entitled *Mala tuon citt*. He is believed to have been killed by the Khmer Rouge Regime sometime after 1975. Source: Smyth, David. ed. Nou Hach (the author). *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. 348 (2009) 210-212

Rosario Hiriart (Cuba): Born in La Habana and exiled to the United States, she lives between New York and Madrid. Lecturer in the Iona College, a position she left to dedicate more time to her work as a writer. Her work includes titles such as *Last Dream; Island, woman;* and *Your eye, green crocodile*. She has written numerous essays, books of critical analysis and articles for literary magazines. Source: Hiriart, Rosario. *The Patio in my House*. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2000.

Duong Thu Huong (Vietnam): (1947) One of Vietnam's most popular writers. At twenty, she volunteered to lead a Communist Youth Brigade sent to the front during the Vietnam War. During China's 1979 attack on Vietnam, she also became the first woman combatant present on the front lines to chronicle the conflict. A vocal advocate of human

rights and democratic political reform, Duong Thu Huong was expelled from the Vietnamese Communist party in 1989 and was imprisoned without trial in 1991 for her political beliefs. *Paradise of the Blind* is her fourth novel and her fourth novel to be effectively banned by the Vietnamese government. She is also the author of *Novel Without a Name*, which was nominated for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Duong Thu Huong is not allowed to leave Vietnam. She lives and writes in Hanoi. Source: http://www.harpercollins.com/authors/24655/Thu_Huong_Duong/index.aspx?authorID=24655

Nick Joaquin (Philippines): (1917-2004) Nicomedes Joaquin, a Filipino novelist, poet, playwright, essayist, and biographer whose works present the diverse heritage of the Filipino people. Starting as a proofreader for the Philippines Free Press, Joaquin rose to contributing editor and essayist under the nom de plume “Quijano de Manila” (“Manila Old-Timer”). He was well known as a historian of the brief Golden Age of Spain in the Philippines, as a writer of short stories suffused with folk Roman Catholicism, as a playwright, and as a novelist. Joaquin’s later works are mostly nonfiction, including *Manila, My Manila: A History for the Young* (1990), *The D.M. Guevara Story* (1993), and *Mr. F.E.U., the Culture Hero That Was Nicanor Reyes* (1995). Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/304268/Nick-Joaquin>

Pensri Kiengsiri (Thailand): (1931) famed novelist and short-story writer. Special lecturer in *Communicative English* and *Creative Writing* in Ramkham-haeng University, Bangkok. Winner of the *Surindharaja Prize* in 2008 as Outstanding Translator by the Translators’ and Interpreters’ Association of Thailand. Co-authored books such as *Thai Social Etiquette* by the Thai Ministry of Culture, and *Thailand – Traits and Treasures* by the National Identity Board of the Prime Minister’s Office in Thailand among many other titles. Sources: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/29801265?versionId=36198117>, Kiengsiri, Pensri. *Arrival of Dawn*. Thailand: Praphansarn Publishing, 2009.

Lee Su Kim (Malaysia): Lee Su Kim is the author of nine books; She has authored texts and resource books on writing, grammar and short stories for secondary children.

Recently published, *Kebaya Tales: of Matriarchs, Maidens, Mistresses and Matchmakers* is a collection of short stories inspired by real-life events. She is Associate Professor of English at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She holds a B. Arts (Hons) degree in English, Diploma in Education (TESL) and Masters in Education from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Houston. She is a founder member and the first woman President of the Peranakan Baba Nyonya Association of Kuala Lumpur & Selangor. Source: <http://www.leesukim.net/index.html>

Ma Ma Lay (Myanmar): (1917-1982) one of Myanmar's foremost female authors, she was a tireless journalist with a vigorous intellect as well as a major contributor to the creation of modern Burmese literature. Her works give realistic treatment to serious cultural and social themes. Source: Lay, Ma Ma. *Not out of Hate*. Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2006.

Catherine Lim (Singapore): Catherine Lim grew up in Malaysia and lives in Singapore. She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and has published articles on sociolinguistics as well as on the problematics of writing fiction in Singaporean English. Before she became a full-time writer, she was a lecturer at the Regional Language Centre (RELC) in Singapore. Catherine Lim is the author of various collections of short stories as well as of four novels. Source: <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/singapore/literature/c.lim/bio.html>

Angeles Mastreta (Mexico): (1949) graduated from Journalism in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the UNAM. Published her first novel in 1985, *Tare my life out*, which obtained the *Mazatlán* Award in Mexico; the novel was translated in fifteen languages. She has published many books and short stories. In 1997 she wrote the novel *Mal de Amores*, which won her the *Rómulo Gallegos Award* given to a woman for the first time. Source: Mastreta, Angeles. *Husbands*. España: Editorial Seix Barral, 2009

Lina María Pérez Gaviria (Colombia): She is a Colombian narrator, graduated in Philosophy and Literature. In 1999 she was awarded the "International Award of Tales Juan

Rulfo” in France; in 2000 the “National Award of Tales Pedro Gómez Valderrama”; and in 2003 the “XXXII International Award of Tales Ignacio Aldecoa” in Spain. Source: Pérez Gaviria, Lina María. Shooting tales. Bogota: Panamericana Editorial, 2006.

Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo (Philippines): (1944) The renowned teacher, editor, writer, and pioneer of creative nonfiction obtained her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Philippines in 1993. She has received such prestigious awards as Gawad Balagtas, Graphic, Free Press, Focus, Manila Critics’ Circle, British Council Grant to Cambridge, and the U.P. President’s Award for Outstanding Publication. She has been recognized as Outstanding Thomasian Writer, Hall of Famer for the International Publication Award, and Grand Prize winner for the Novel in the Palanca Awards. Her work includes seven autobiographical travel books, five short story collections, and two novels. Her work in literary criticism has produced four books that include studies of women’s literature and numerous anthologies. She previously worked as Vice President for Public Affairs of the University of the Philippines and as Director of the UP Institute of Creative Writing. Source: <http://www.panitikan.com.ph/authors/h/cphidalgo.htm>

Aline Petterson (Mexico): (1938) Born in Mexico City, she has written stories, poetry, novels and children's fiction. Through her work she expresses her observations concerning language, and the possibility of communication, relationships, and sensual knowledge of the world. None of her works has been translated into English. Source: Petterson, Aline. Mystification. Mexico City: UAM, 1996; <http://www.themodernnovel.com/mexican/petterson/author.htm>

Constanza Roca (Bolivia): Winner of the “National Award of Tales Bartolomé Arzáns Orzúa y Vela,” her stories have appeared in story magazines and literary supplements in Bolivia, Germany, Australia and Mexico. She graduated from Fine Arts in the East Sydney Technical College in Australia. Source: Roca, Constanza. Private function and other stories. Mexico City: Distribuciones Fontamara, 2005

Ninotchka Rosca (Philippines): An outstanding contemporary writer, human rights activist and feminist; she is the author of six books. The Novel *Twice Blessed* earned the 1993 American Book Award for excellence in literature. Rosca's short stories have been included in several anthologies. She is a two-time recipient of the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship and a frequent contributor to Ms. Magazine, The Nation, Village Voice, Q and other U.S. and European periodicals. Rosca is an internationally known activist for human rights. A political prisoner under the Marcos regime in the Philippines, she was forced into exile when threatened with a second arrest. Rosca has participated in numerous world forums and conferences for human rights. She was a founder and the first national chair of the GABRIELA, the preeminent women's rights organization of the Philippines. Rosca is particularly concerned with women's human rights focusing on the issues of sex tourism, trafficking, the mail-order bride industry, and violence against women. Source: http://www.speakoutnow.org/userdata_display.php?modin=50&uid=112

Sara Sefchovich (Mexico): She has a Master's Degree in Sociology and a PhD in History from the UNAM in Mexico, where she has been a researcher and full time professor in cultural sociology subjects for at least three decades. She is a lecturer, translator and narrator, author of essay books, novels and articles in national and international magazines. Her work has been translated into eight languages. She has been awarded the prize "Agustín Yáñez-Planeta" for novel; the prize "Plural" for essay; the "Leona Gerard Lectureship from the University of California; and the scholarships INBA-Fonapas and John Simon Guggenheim. Source: Sefchovich, Sara. *Are Women better?* México: Editorial Paidós, 2011

José F. Sionil (Philippines): Francisco Sionil José was born in Rosales, Pangasinan in 1924. He had to work as a laborer to support his family when young but studied at the University of Santo Tomás and then took some pre-med courses, before starting a career as a journalist. He has worked as a journalist, founded a publishing house, run a bookshop and art gallery as well as working as an editor. His work has focused on the history of the

Philippines as well as on the plight of the underprivileged. Source: <http://www.themodernnovel.com/filipino/jose/author.htm>

Mey Son Sotheary (Cambodia): (1977) She was only 18 years old when her works " My sister" and "Why" appeared in 1995 in Rasmei Kampuchea, one of the largest and best-equipped newspapers. She focused on the social problems that arise from the social confusion of radical changes of politics and economics and explained the background of the problems. After working at some media organizations, and at the same time writing short stories for Rasmei Kampuchea, as well as a popular magazine Procheaprai, Mey Son Sotheary is now on the staff of Women's Media Center, a NGO that works to improve the participation and portrayal of women in the mainstream by producing and promoting effective TV, video and radio programs. Source: <http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/ase/cam/res/ot06.html>

Dao Strom (Vietnam): Born in 1973 in Saigon; her mother fled the country with her when she was a baby. Strom grew up in Northern California and is a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop. She was the recipient of a James Michener fellowship and the Chicago Tribune/Nelson Algren Award. She lives in Austin Texas. Source: Strom, Dao. Grass Roof, Tin Roof. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

Gassanee Thaisonhi (Thailand): Author and regular columnist for the magazine *YingThai*, she has already completed three literary works regarding portions of history. *Only God Will Judge Me* is her first work of fiction. She lives in Bangkok, Thailand. Source: Thaisonhi, Gassanee. Only God Will Judge Me. Thailand: Blessover Publishing, 2011

Marianne Villanueva (Philippines): (1958) Marianne Villanueva writes and publishes stories about the Philippines and the lives of Filipino-Americans abroad. She was born and raised in Manila. She was accepted at the University of the Philippines Writers Workshop when she was only 17, and the Creative Writing Program at Stanford when she was 25. She has coedited an anthology of women's writings, which gathered the writings of

Filipino women from around the world. She now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and teaches creative writing and literature at Foothill College, Notre Dame de Namur University, and UCLA Extension. Source: <http://www.filamartists.com/2008/07/29/marianne-villanueva/>

APPENDIX C

DATA ON WOMEN'S SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA

SOURCE: Joni Seager in *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World*¹ (2009)

a) Main Indexes

- ❖ According to the Gender Development Index (GDI), most countries of Southeast Asia and Latin America are located among the medium rank of GDI; Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba and Brunei. While Laos and Cambodia rank among the lowest level.
- ❖ For the Gender Gap Index (GGI), most countries are in the medium rank, with the Philippines found among the top ten in the world; Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Malaysia and Brunei ranked low on GGI.
- ❖ No country in either region practices seclusion for women.

b) Marriage

- ❖ The average marriage age is between 20.1 and 26 years of age for women in both regions. Only Singapore, Belize and Jamaica have an average age for marriage of 26 years of age.

¹ This compilation has information from sources such as the United Nations, the Population Reference Bureau, the United Nations Development Program, Human Rights Watch, World Health Organization, United Nation Development Fund for Women, among many other. Published in 2009, all the data is current up to the last available information before publishing, most sources showing data from 2000, 2005, 2006, 2007.

- ❖ Concerning domestic violence; women in Cambodia and Nicaragua display the highest percentage of acceptance of women being abused by their spouses; and together with Chile, they display the highest number of women suffering violence in silence. In Chile and Colombia, almost half the married women suffer some form of ill-treatment by their partners; and in capital cities like Sao Paolo, Lima and Bangkok, between thirty and fifty percent of married women suffer some form of oppression. Bolivia has the highest percentage of violence with seventy percent of adult women suffering of abuse.
- ❖ Murder by domestic violence is high in Mexico, Guatemala and Jamaica; it is the leading cause for death in girls ages 15 to 24 in Thailand; and its cause for weekly deaths in Venezuela, Uruguay and Colombia. There is not much information about Southeast Asia, which might indicate unreported deaths. Honor killings occurred in all countries in Southeast Asia and Latin America at least until 2006; in Ecuador and Brazil they occur regularly (seventy-two percent of murders by a relative or friend).

c) Motherhood and Sex

- ❖ The average number of children per mother in Southeast Asia and Latin America is 2.2 - 4 children. Except for Thailand, Cuba and Chile where it's 2.1 or fewer, and Guatemala where it's 4.1 - 6.
- ❖ Contraception use in Mexico, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Guyana, Suriname, Brazil, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei and Indonesia dropped at least in half between the 1970s and 2000s. In Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Myanmar, Laos, Malaysia and Philippines only twenty-six to fifty percent of women use contraceptives. Haiti and Cambodia have less than twenty-five percent

of women under contraceptive care. The rest are above fifty percent, but no country is above seventy-five percent, where only developed countries are found.

- ❖ Until 2007, only Belize had legal abortions for social and economic reasons; Cuba, Guyana, Cambodia, Vietnam and Singapore had legal abortion upon request. The rest of Southeast Asia and Latin America considered abortion illegal².
- ❖ In matters of sex trafficking; Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines are both, source and destination countries.

d) Women in the Workforce

- ❖ Women in the workforce represent between forty to fifty-nine percent in Honduras, Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Haiti, Jamaica, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Laos, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Mexico, Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guyana, Malaysia and Brunei. Cambodia (45%) and Belize (42%) qualify among the highest rates of female child labor as of 2006.
- ❖ Women in the informal sector by 2004 were above fifty percent in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Indonesia and Philippines; and between thirty to forty-nine percent in Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Argentina.
- ❖ More than seventy percent of women in Laos and Cambodia worked in agriculture³ by 2005, and between fifty and sixty-nine percent in Haiti and Vietnam; thirty to forty-nine percent in Thailand and Indonesia; ten to twenty-nine percent in Guatemala, Honduras Nicaragua, Cuba, Guyana, Brazil, Paraguay, Malaysia,

² Known changes have taken place in Mexico City in recent years.

³ Women working the fields, not counting informal work or agriculture for self use.

Philippines. Every other country has less than ten percent except Peru, Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Brunei with no data.

- ❖ In Mexico women work twenty-one to thirty percent more hours a day than men; seventy-seven percent of women's total work is non-market oriented (67% in Uruguay); women spend 33hrs a week in housework and 7hrs a week in childcare.
- ❖ Major migrant-sending countries include Mexico, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand.

d) Education and Access to Property

- ❖ Adult women illiteracy in most countries ranks between eleven and twenty-five percent. Illiteracy is fifty percent higher among women in Peru, Bolivia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia.
- ❖ Primary schools by 2005 enrolled between seventy-five and ninety-four percent of girls in Thailand, Vietnam and Jamaica; the rest of the countries under study had enrollments of ninety-five percent and over.
- ❖ Secondary schools by 2005 had the lowest averages of enrollment in Guatemala, Bolivia, Laos and Cambodia with forty-nine percent and under.
- ❖ University enrollments by 2005 were between forty and fifty-nine percent in most countries.
- ❖ Access to Internet was highest in Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia where women are forty-percent and above of all internet users (2002).
- ❖ Only Paraguay has known data of women as owners of land, between twenty-six and fifty percent; all others are unknown or under twenty-five percent. Widespread discrimination for ownership and inheritance is usually supported by civil, customary or religious laws in Honduras, Dominican Republic, Malaysia and Indonesia.

d) Women in Politics

- ❖ The percentage of women as elected officials by 2007 ranked maximum twenty-four percent for most countries.
- ❖ Rape is used as an instrument of power in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia.
- ❖ Women are active in military in Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, Jamaica, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia.

BIOGRAPHY

Ms Katerina Vlady was born in Mexico City, on October 17, 1978. In December 2001, she graduated from the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, where she received a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations with Academic Excellency.

She did an internship in The Foreign Bank of Commerce in 2001 and an internship at the Mexican Consulate in Paris in 2002. She worked as a translator for Kyron Ediciones Graficas in Mexico City from 2002 to 2008. She has collaborated with *Fahrenheit Magazine* (Mexico) as a travel writer for the section *Latitudes*, publishing the following articles:

Bangkok, where new technologies live alongside local traditions. Fahrenheit Magazine. 9, 50 (February, 2012) 156-158

Mandalay, scenario in transformation. Fahrenheit Magazine. 9 (April, 2012) 156-158

Social Networks and Travel. Fahrenheit Magazine. (2012) In print

Currently she collaborates with IEE Thailand as an English and History Tutor and with The Nation University, where she has assisted in training the Nation Multimedia Staff in Business English Communication and Email Writing as well as additional courses in General English, Literature and English for Business.