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## Without Mandate for Conquest: A Transnational Comparison of Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon and Isabel Allende's Eva Luna

Vivianna Noelle Orsini  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, [vivianna.orsini@gmail.com](mailto:vivianna.orsini@gmail.com)

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WITHOUT MANDATE FOR CONQUEST:  
A TRANSNATIONAL COMPARRISON OF TONI MORRISON'S *SONG OF SOLOMON*  
AND ISABEL ALLENDE'S *EVA LUNA*

By

Vivianna N. Orsini

Bachelor of Arts- English  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
2010

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Vivianna Orsini

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Master of Arts – English  
Department of English

Vincent Perez, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Chair*

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.  
*Graduate College Interim Dean*

Evelyn Gajowski, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Member*

Julia Lee, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Member*

Elsbeth Whitney, Ph.D.  
*Graduate College Faculty Representative*

## Abstract

In our current age of globalization, multiculturalism is a key component of human relations. Place when thought of as a geographic concept is more than just coordinates on a map, it is a concentration of a set of social relations. Geographers use this information to see how places are relational to other places. Morrison and Allende are relational because of their consciousness of place especially exhibited in *Song of Solomon* and *Eva Luna*. This project examines the disparate histories, politics, and landscapes that both authors emerged from, and argue the complexity of their work stems from thinking geographically, their conscious attempt to imagine their links with the wider world, rather than boxing themselves into genre, or taking a subservient position beside a great canonical “father”. A common pitfall for scholars of the United States is to assume categories of difference or categories of dominance are universal across borders. This is demonstrated in scholarship that aims to compare writers from the United States and writers from Latin America based on the notion that they are marginalized. Scholarship that assumes “marginalization” is the same in North and South America is aiding in another construction of the “other”, by universalizing what Mohanty calls, “the third world difference.” Thinking of the components of a text within a constellation encourages analysis of the relationship between categories of both individual and place identities in their discursive setting. In their imagination of the inter-subjectivity between categories, Allende and Morrison portray power and weakness from all angles. Looking at literature geographically forces us to remove hierarchies and instead draws our attention to the subject’s struggle against their material conditions.

To my community without whom this work would not be possible, Gwen and Luz, and to my wellspring of inspiration: Anthony, Gia, and Dylan.

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## Introduction:

### Plotting the Constellations of Geographical thought in Morrison and Allende

Transnational studies, concerns with hybridity, and border culture all indicate how we have begun to think spatially as we study literature. Yet, long before it was in vogue, Toni Morrison intuitively knew that the term *place*, was more than just coordinates on a map: “I felt a strong sense of place, not in terms of the country or state, but in terms of the details, the feeling, the move of the community, of the town” (Step 10). Sure enough, she armed Pilate with a geography book to guide us through the African American community as it’s situated with the American landscape. In contrast, Eva Luna’s journey across landscapes bears witness through the pen. Her mother’s stories eventually give her voice that “rises from the earth through her body” (EL 272). She always carries with her, her tierra (her homeland) whether in the city or jungle. Morrison and Allende’s fictional worlds have the potential to show places, not only as they are, but as they could be. As transnational studies aims to have a more inclusive view of American literature, it is important to examine the relationship between authors that share socio-historic conjunctures like Allende and Morrison. In the following chapters, I will attempt to articulate the various ways both authors think geographically. The body of work of both authors provides a rich ground of exploration, but for the scope of this project, I will focus on Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Allende's *Eva Luna*.

While this project attempts to explore multiple conceptions of the term *place*, it started with my curiosity about only one place and its affiliation with women; nature. When I say nature, I mean the wilderness, like the backwoods of Virginia for Morrison, or the jungle for



Allende. As a graduate student I admit I was in love with the romanticized notion of women's inherent connection to nature, but through my research I conceded that the notion was as harmful to women as essentialism had been. Accepting this ideal inevitably means accepting a woman's destiny is restricted to the limits of her body. The fluidity of the message, one empowering and one degrading, only indicates a difference in the relations of power from which it speaks. But more importantly, the very idea itself shrouds the complexity of depictions of *real* women whom these authors laboriously create. How then was I to reconcile these intriguing women, Pilate and Eva, who arguably obtain agency against all odds through an alliance with nature? Were the "wild" spaces in both novels meaningful beyond a utopian escapism?

I contemplated these questions as I discussed bringing Morrison and Allende together on a project with a colleague. We began to talk about a visit Morrison made to our university in which to my surprise he expressed dissatisfaction. Specifically, he could not believe she would flat out deny any influence from Garcia- Marquez when according to him the influence was obvious. His response to Allende was not unlike the one he gave for Morrison; he directly disparaged her work dismissing her as a mere imitation Garcia-Marquez. Needless to say, I left his office feeling small and disillusioned about my ideas. His words continuously plagued me. After reading many articles, I realized that the sentiments my colleague expressed corresponded to the ground many scholars choose to cover with these authors. In over thirty years of scholarship, much work has tied both authors to canonical figures, or traditions, some to praise, others to devalue. Suddenly I felt empathy for both artists in their efforts to create complex, intricate worlds, boxed in by gatekeepers as my colleague tried to do. It must have been akin to the claustrophobia Pilate felt in the Butlers house despite the enormity, trapped by its ceiling and walls, or Consuelo suffocating within the cloistered walls of the church. Yet, the conversation

pointed me in the right direction because in my constant ruminating over his words, I realized the value of the “wild” spaces in these novels were far from a utopian escapism. Perhaps this is why I find Elaine Showalter’s concept of the “wild zone” useful in this project, because while on the surface it seems to reinforce women's assumed connectedness with nature, she reminds us that it is only a “playful abstraction.” Instead, she uses it to mean outside of dominant structures. Whether we are talking about the literary canon or social relations of their homelands, being in the wild means outside of the control of the master narrative, a space in which their histories become clarified when they become free of the impositions of culture. The ability to experience an unconfined space gives them subjectivity and once they become clear to themselves, they can survive no matter where they go. The wild facilitates freedom.

Like Showalter, Allende and Morrison also play with the naturalized idea of women’s affiliation to nature. Morrison’s narrator acts as the mediator between reality and myth within the African American community. This is exemplified many times, but in this context perhaps most significantly when the narrator corrects our assumptions about Hagar’s “wilderness” as part of her feminine nature: “Not wilderness where there was system, or the logic of lions trees and toads and birds, but wild wilderness where there was none” (SOS 138). In contrast with the reader’s assumptions, nature is where there was order, but as a black woman, her “wildness” is due more to an absence of control of her own life where society dictates her worth and place. Allende treats the jungles as a place not separate from society, but within society, with the capacity to act as a medium for social production: "Because of women's physiological functions of reproduction, nurture and childrearing are viewed as closer to nature" (Merchant, 144). Being "closer to nature" consequently positions women closer to animals than men. Yet in the process of becoming a soldier it is Naranjo who becomes, "one more animal in the jungle, nothing but

instinct, reflex, impulse, nerves, bones... he developed a limitless tenacity: fight to the death, to victory, there's no alternative" (*EL* 184). In her reconfiguration of this stereotype, Eva's storytelling equates Naranjo's process in becoming "programmed for victory" with animal instincts, suppressing the faculties of his humanity and instead, attacking at will. By depicting a patriarchal institution's capacity to produce "animals," Eva Luna de-territorializes the natural landscape as feminine space. Eric Prieto asserts that literature has a performative dimension in our perception of place. Not only, "do they reflect attitudes of existing places; they help to make possible the emergence and establishment of new kind of places" (9).

Scholars have recognized the convergences in the fiction of Morrison and Allende, but mostly because of their engagement with magical realism. The term "magical" itself is problematic and devalued, as its meaning depends on its negation of reality which is perhaps why Morrison is reluctant to admit it pervades her work, even as she was labeled a magical realist. She insists the supernatural in her fiction be treated as *real* events. Perhaps in response to this, many scholars have attempted to ground Morrison's "magic" in African culture. It is not uncommon for scholars tracing Morrison's African influence, to name Pilate something equivalent to a priestess or a shaman (Jennings 155). In a way, the idealization of Pilate makes sense; after all, she is the only female to "fly" in the novel. But Morrison has emphasized the wonder of Pilate's flight lies in the fact that she does not leave the ground, and that ground is the United States. In reality, for Pilate, embracing Africa is a more intuitive than a conscious gesture, and while its true it nurtures her spirit and gives her clarity, it fails to elevate her status in her current context. Scholarship that construes female agency in both novels as purely "magical" distracts our attention from the title character's struggle to survive against their material

conditions. Through the course of this project, I hope to “demystify” the two works in question, demonstrating how magic also illustrates historical or cultural processes.

It seems as we invent new terms and concepts such as the global south, we should use them to re-examine the relationship between Morrison and Allende not just because of their “marginalization” or engagement with “magic,” but because of their strong consciousness of place. In the following chapters, I use the term *place* in three different constellations to demonstrate its versatility as a category of analysis: Chapter one, “Without Mandate for Conquest,” tries to flesh out geographical terms and how I will use them in literature. Using these established tools, it finds the concepts of nation and home in the constellation of a literary canon and it tries to imagine the place Morrison and Allende occupy within it. Scholarship that confines the authors in a particular tradition, or insists upon influence from a canonical figure, is obscuring the various ways each work functions. In chapter two, “Flying through Space,” Allende and Morrison's fictional representation of place brings into view an inter-subjective exchange between hierarchies of race, gender, space, and place. Thinking geographically allows Morrison to imagine weakness from the position of the dominant group, the Butlers. Chapter three, “Territories of the Imagination,” considers the female body as a place where the myths and ideologies of a culture inhere. It looks at the way landscape as well as the female body is discursively created.

When geographers think of the term, *place*, they no longer think of it as a location with fixed boundaries. They think of the social relations that occur, and how and why people and objects are distributed across their space as they are. In our current crisis of globalization, the urge to put up walls of separation in defense of culture or identity may be stronger than ever. But a variety of disciplines ranging from geography to anthropology remind us that nothing in the

world is fixed and unchanging. Everything is in a constant flux. A consciousness of our links with the wider world will not decimate individual identity. It is quite the contrary. The hard work we all must do to understand where we fit in, our acting upon our environment, has the unintended consequence of revealing us to ourselves.

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## Chapter Two

Without Mandate for Conquest:

Charting the Fiction of Allende and Morrison

It is inconceivable to consider systems of spatial or spatio-temporal representation in the field of literature alone, unless one wishes to isolate literature from the rest of the world. (Westphal, 30)

We live in an age where every day, smartphone videos and the internet deliver a litany of images and information, making regular people insiders, giving access to culture and people, and government. For the first time, lofty images we have for the wealthy, revered sports figures, and institutions are compromised as we listen to racist sentiment captured in private conversations, blatant misogyny filmed, and a number of occurrences of questionable force and violence by the police. A hot subject in gangsta rap of the early 90's, that was disregarded by most because its messengers were "thugs", materializes for all through the Internet. People of all races and backgrounds react with emotion ranging from anger to defense for those who consciously or unconsciously sense the threat to their home, their nation. This is just one example of how the Internet intensifies the effect of time/ space compression, the speed at which information travels across cultures, communities or nation aiding in the globalization of our world. Our ability to see these videos intersects the multifarious experiences of all Americans that have historically been separated, and the anxiety that is felt by all viewers might be caused by the unsettling of key components to American identity, freedom and justice. For many across the world, the

effects of time/space compression threaten their culture and identity. In some ways, the idea of nation corresponds to the idea of "home" on a larger scale. Theoretically, a nation is a place where we belong, and that belongs to us, containing our culture and histories within fixed, geographic boundaries. The comfort derived from this self-enclosed notion of country, and the anxiety it causes when it is disrupted, suggests for many citizens, nation is identity; it is home. In the midst of a globalizing world, the cross disciplinary concern with the concept of one's own "place" as a defense to protect authenticity of a culture, or individual identity, perhaps is a natural reaction. But is home conceived of in this way ever really achievable?

Just as police brutality has been a reality for African Americans long before the camera phone, Toni Morrison, as a female African American writer, has been privy to the myth of home for all as a fixed, claimable, place. The historical exclusion of African Americans from the right to claim a home has prompted her to question the relationship between a physical location and a sense of home and its attainability, even for white Americans in her work. Similarly, Isabel Allende's experience as an exile from her home country of Chile, is all too familiar with the reality of how home's location can easily be disrupted, dismantled, and taken without a moment's notice. In this chapter, I want to explore how each author's sense of home is rooted in their distinct social grounding and how this transmits into their fiction. As I tie together their own geographical location in this chapter with their fictional representation of place in chapter two, I hope to learn more about the place they occupy in literature. The following are some questions I will try to answer in this chapter. Can we consider the literary canon a place analogous to its use as a geographical term? If so, how can critical geography be useful in locating their literary "place" in the canon? And, finally, how can a geographic perspective enhance our studies of literature? I think applying geographical concepts to literature's place, gives us a model that re-



conceptualizes power, where the ability to conceive power is possible from all angles, not just the center. My aim is not to give a complete theory or history on either author, but to suggest different ways of thinking about the works in question. I want to consider how the identities of these authors are relational, not simply because they are both members of marginalized groups, but in their struggle to emerge whole as respected literary figures.

In his project *Literature and the Postmodern Poetics of Place*, Eric Prieto brings together social and spatial sciences in order to better understand the fictional representations of place in imaginative literature. Because of the multifariousness of the term, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to get a sense of how the concept of place can be used as a category of analysis. When I say category, I do not want to imply an approach where the term place is at the center, rather I hope to illuminate the conceptual map in which place is located. My intention is to discuss place in all the senses I believe it to be relevant for discussing a canon of literature as well as how Morrison and Allende see themselves within it.

For many, the term place corresponds to a physical location, which implies we first think of its spatial or material aspects. Prieto concurs that location is a component of place, but not necessarily so, and he describes the varying degrees that can qualify:

Cupboards, dressers, hidden spots, central to the concept of home most of us carry with us; to the intermediate level of the neighborhood, city, region; to the macroscopic scale of nation, planet, and beyond- a level at which the totality cannot be directly perceived.

Moreover just about any kind of site (urban, wilderness, holy, historic, loved, loathed etc.) can be usefully thought of in terms of place. (13)

This aspect is important because the material and spatial acts as a canvas in which we consider the other dimensions of place according to the specific discursive setting we are in. Jeff Malpas

insists location is only one aspect of this complex term. The objective elements must be taken into account along with the subjective experience of place. Thinking in geographic terms, while place is made up of a concentration of social relations, space is concerned with how and why objects and or people are distributed across space as they are. Although many people may be in the same location, their freedom of mobility and access, or lack thereof, creates a sense of space that is self-reflective and contributes to individual identity. In other words, where we are effects who we are. Deleuze, in searching for the best approach to decipher individual identity, argues for a geographical analysis of the unconscious. He concludes, "In fact, it is perhaps not just the unconscious that is concerned with the spatio-temporal context in which the individual operates; perception itself is a matter of geography, while in an earlier epoch historical discourse reigned" (102). Deleuze's point is interesting because it suggests an individual's consciousness, fear and love, opinions, tastes; including what is considered good or bad art, is relational to others, society, and its surroundings. Thinking geographically forces us to consider these relations and suggest the inter-subjective nature of individual or collective groups of people that constitute place identities:

For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (Massey 149)

Massey's description depicts social processes that are not static but constantly moving. Her studies cannot look at the relations of people and power as frozen in history. The postmodern concern with history's effect on the present has made an analysis of space impossible to divorce from its temporal dimension. Through my research, I have determined any meaningful analysis of place needs to be studied in its discursive setting and considered objectively, by its material and spatial components as well as subjectively, based on an individual's or collective experience of space. Furthermore, places need to be considered not separate from but in relation to other places, meaning we need to think about their inter-subjectivity. Finally, all of these aspects need to be considered within a particular moment in time because of the shifting nature of these maps. I do not expect my short overview to capture place in all of its complexity, but I do hope it provides a point of reference as I attempt to relate it to my subject.

The literary canon is an authoritative list of what is considered the best literature. Discourse that envisions the canon concretely is common in scholarship. Some have described it as a fortress while others have referred to it as a proverbial ivory tower. Either description serves to illustrate the canon as an enclosure that separates its privileged inhabitants from the rest of literature. The canon has no physical location, yet is protected by *gatekeepers* who exclude those whose works are not characterized by certain defining features. When an author's work gains *entrance*, it is not only worthy of the privilege of being loved, valued, or enjoyed but immortalized. Yet the lack of a corporeal location might impede our willingness to recognize the canon as a "place" in geographical terms, but I propose when thinking of the materiality of a location, we think of the texts themselves. Thinking of the canon with all the complexity of a geographical "place" broadens our understanding of texts from isolated works of art to anchors of culture, products of a specific relation of time and place. Envisioning the canon as a

"proverbial tower" prevents us from seeing the way "a book was a thing, and its material qualities and physical dimensions inevitably interacted with the world" (Bertrand 20). I do not want to suggest texts are fixed points or centers; they move and shift according to who is reading, when they are reading, and where they are reading.

If we tend to think of the canon conceptually, conversely we tend to think of the term "home" as grounded in the material, a physical location, yet geographers are equally interested in its meaning and value as a concept. After discussing many configurations of the term in her field, Gillian Rose determines, "It was often argued that the home was a particularly significant place, intensely experienced and full of deeply meaningful memories and experiences" (47). Any discussion of a meaningful place will inevitably have to include the idea of home. Where one is from is deeply engrained into one's identity, but it is not the only component. One category cannot be studied in isolation, the relationship between categories such as race and gender, or class and place is of particular interest. Knowing this about individual identity, it makes sense then that place identities would be composed of a variety of factors that are always in constant flux. Many Scholars, including Rose and Massey, discuss the notion of home as a lofty concept. It idealizes where one lives as a place that is safe and familiar, attainable through claiming and ownership. However, it can also have a homogenizing effect and produce a self-enclosed sense of identity. Mohanty explains how the idea of "home" is rooted in the, "exclusions of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself" (90). In other words, the idea of home is an ideal that provides comfort and security, but that also drives a reductionist perspective that requires the idolization of certain traits and the suppression of others. Rose explains how home, an enclosed notion of place impeded research in her field by marginalizing, "discussion of the ways in which; that is constructed as part of the symbolic

legitimization of a particular arrangement of social relations" (51). Massey takes note of a common cliché, in many texts of western culture that work to legitimize gender roles.

It is interesting to note how frequently the characterization of place as home comes from those who have left, and it would be fascinating to explore how often this characterization is framed around those who - perforce - stayed behind; and how often the former was male, setting out to discover and change the world, and the latter female, most particularly distance a mother, assigned the role of personifying a place which did not change. (166-67)

Literary texts do not exist in a vacuum separate from the world; rather they are an expression of material reality.

The literary canon acts as a home, a center of great works from which all literature emanates, unchanging, and standing the test of time. It's easy to imagine how for some, the canon, although conceptual, provides all the comfort and security of a home, with aesthetic value, signs of good taste, and proven devices functioning in the same way as geographical boundaries. Today, debates defending the conservation of these values persist despite the fact that the way we are thinking is changing. Similar to the way post-enlightenment ideologies have permeated methods of research and practices across disciplines, postmodernism has initiated a sea change in how we organize our world. This change might only be seen by our own willingness to lower the enclosures that our own disciplines erect. The field of geography has recently begun to do this, finding literature of the utmost importance for understanding perceptions and social relations of place. Westfall goes into great detail in his chapter of spatio-temporality of how the shift in logic takes place that puts into view the countless possibilities. "The post-modern condition with history and memory has disrupted the typical western view of

linear time. This has inevitably engendered a concern with place and space" (Westphal 4). The traditional way the canon is perceived is consistent with old notions of time in which space was not important. Most often, these works are organized in a linear progression, forming a hierarchy of valuable literature, fixed and unchanging. Taking note of Jean Giono's observation, "One cannot know a country by the simple science of geography," Bertrand Westphal concludes: "Without the big picture, the analysis becomes partial, incomplete, and somewhat frustrating for the informed reader" (31). Similarly in literature, the canon provides a narrow perspective because the traditional way it is perceived is consistent with old notions of time in which space was not important. Most often, these works are organized in a linear progression, forming a hierarchy of valuable literature, fixed and unchanging, but more importantly the texts were treated as disembodied, floating above, but not interacting with the world. Rose detects this sentiment by the pleasure expressed by her male counterparts when discussing cultural geography as if from a disembodied location. She suspects this is, "enabled in part by this ideological notion of Art as the ultimate form of human expression. Its pleasure is assumed to be untainted by the specificity of social relations" (99). If this myopic perspective has caused a blind spot in the field of geography, as Rose suggests, what has it obscured in literary studies?

In her landmark work *Feminism Across Borders*, Chandra Mohanty thinks geographically as she draws a map in a sense that locates the systemic relations of power within a particular place, she calls the "relations of rule." She describes it as having, "multiple intersections of structures of power flowing through forms of knowledge, organized practices, and social institutions" (56). The literary canon, a social institution that works to organize knowledge is, therefore, a structure through which this power flows. Like notions of home and nation, the canon is an expression of material conditions- western hegemonic thinking that can be traced

back to new world exploration. Prior to WWII, space was only thought of as an isolated entity, according to Rose, something that could be understood through scientific, rational measurements (43). This train of thought is exemplified in new world exploration mapping. In her groundbreaking work, *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt discusses how mapping corresponded with changing objectives of claiming territory. Mapping was ever useful in this endeavor because it, "asserts the authority of print and thus of the class who controlled it" (30). Moreover, she argues they used this authority to bring order to a world of chaos, but she clarifies it was not simply a question of depicting the planet as it was. In the beginning, mapping was purely navigational, whose objective was to map the coastlines and rivers in order to aid in the search for trade routes. The subsequent mapping of inland territories marks a shift in intent. Pratt discerns, "Systematic surface mapping of the globe correlates with an expanding search for commercially exploitable resources, markets, and lands to colonize" (30). Hence, mapping was a form of consolidated European knowledge that purports to be fixed and unchanging lines on a map, yet is appropriated as one more tool to corroborate European discourse about non-European worlds we still feel the effects of today. Massey, a contemporary geographer, describes her anxiety of drawing lines on a map that seem to be purely arbitrary:

I remember some of my most painful times as a geographer have been spent unwillingly struggling to think how one could draw a boundary around somewhere like the 'east midlands'. But that kind of boundary around an area precisely distinguishes between an inside and an outside. It can so easily be yet another way of constructing a counter position between 'us' and 'them.' (152)

When looking at immigration policies historically, one can see Massey's anxiety is not unfounded. Mohanty demonstrates how immigration policies were used to define insiders and

outsiders. She argues how the historical fluidity of racial categories served to support a social restructuring that resulted from foreign policy or war. She determines, "Historically, citizenship and immigration laws and social policies have always been connected to economic agendas and the search for cheap labor. These state practices are anchored in the institutions of slavery, capitalist neocolonialism, and more recently in monopoly and multinational capitalism" (66). Immigration policy implements a social mapping in which the definition of borders, rely largely on the physical differences of people. The literary canon is one more institution in which dividing lines are drawn that ensures the position of a reigning, yet monolithic perspective that is disconnected from the world in which it was born.

Lately, the trend in literature is to veer away from this model. The fields of transnational studies and critical geography have fueled comparative studies that identify a conjuncture in Latin America and the southern United States, of colonialism and subordination. I am not the first to initiate a comparative study between Morrison and Allende. Within this burgeoning field, new terms such as the "global south" give critics a new direction where writers from North and South America have regularly been compared because of a similarity in aesthetics; elements of magical realism and a preoccupation with history, which has been attributed to their marginalization from their respective societies. However, I want to make an attempt to understand not only the similarities but also the differences in the social grounding each author is producing from. I want to avoid depicting a monolithic notion of marginalization, which would impose what Mohanty calls a "third world difference" resulting in the homogenization of not only their experience, but their histories, culture, and even their landscapes.

For instance, although Allende is from a third world country, as the daughter of a Chilean diplomat, she was born into a privileged class. She acknowledges her family traces their



heritage back to Europe and would deny any Indian blood, although Allende herself identifies with Arucan and Mapuche tribes "If not by blood then by culture" (Snodgrass, 6). Toni Morrison, on the other hand, grew up in the United States, a first world country that should've had more opportunity but as an African American woman, she had third world status. Unlike Morrison, Allende was never formally educated, she was largely self-taught reading works from Freud to Beauvoir. Chile in the late 60's was undergoing a tumultuous change. Its people were fighting for economic and social reform. Chile was also the grounds of a feminist movement that began to sweep across Latin America. Allende began her writing career as a journalist for a feminist magazine in the midst of this change. Three months after Isabel's uncle Salvador Allende, the world's first democratically elected Marxist president was elected; a military coup removed him from power and allegedly had him executed. Despite her upper-class position, "Allende witnessed a democratic movement for socio-economic change in Chili only to see it crushed by an alliance of conservative forces" (Meyer 360). Fearing her safety, she was forced into exile and fled to Venezuela. Allende identifies exile as a formative experience that has given her writing its shape. "Exile is advantageous for a writer, Allende believes, precisely because it generates imaginative space and multiple perspectives-- and because one learns to understand that, "your roots are within yourself" (Rodden14). Allende's writing, her negotiation of identities, are clearly symptomatic of the neo-colonial condition, which Pratt herself calls, "an engine of self-invention" (227).

While Allende's exile initiated her travels as an adult, Morrison's pursuit of an education gave her a mobility virtually unknown to black women and even whites. In an interview, while discussing the creation of the women in *Sula*, Morrison describes the limited mobility of black women that sharply contrasted with the American ideal:

To go back, a black woman at the time, who didn't want to do the conventional thing, had only one other kind of thing to do. If she had talent, she went into the theater. And if she had a little voice, she could sing, or she could go to a big town and she could pretend she was dancing or whatever. That was the only outlet if you choose not to get married and have kids, that was it. Or you could walk the streets; although you might get there sort of accidentally; you might not choose to do that. (Stepto,13)

Morrison received her BA in English from Howard University and went on to complete a masters at Cornell in the 1950s, where only roughly eight percent of the US population graduated from a four-year university, the majority of which were white males (Snyder, 8). While at Howard, she joined a theatrical group the Howard University Players and traveled all over the south. Experiencing first-hand the discrimination and segregation, she also was taken aback by the hospitality exhibited by strangers (Li 13). Racial bigotry and violence caused political unrest that marked the 60's as one of the most turbulent times of American history, but when the dust settled, segregation was deemed unconstitutional and the Civil Rights Act was signed into law. While Chile's attempt at reform was contained by military force, in the United States, social institutions that contradicted the ideals of freedom for all were once and for all modified. It would take time to for culture to follow suit and the process that was initiated is still struggled with today. Overcoming many obstacles, Morrison manages to emerge as an educated, well-established author. Yet in an interview she admits, "I know that I never felt like an American or an Ohioan or even a Lorainite. I never felt like a citizen" (Stepto10). Continents apart, the distinct geographical and cultural landscape out of which Morrison and Allende grew both resulted in a sense of confinement, which motivated them to invent their own spaces in their work.

Mohanty rejects the idea that simply being a woman or a member of a minority group is enough to assume what she calls a politicized oppositional identity. The way we read and disseminate the texts is of the utmost importance. "The mere proliferation of third world women's texts, in the west at least, owes as much to the relations of the marketplace as to the conviction to "testify" or "bear witness" (77). Despite distinct locations and socio-political circumstances, Mohanty would consider both Allende and Morrison third world writers. By doing so, we can bring together both authors in an imagined community, not, "Imagined" in the sense because it is not "real" but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations against divisive boundaries" (46). The challenges each author has had publishing their work, give us insight into the very different ways their works have been received.

Prior to Allende's emergence as an author, literature in Latin America was a predominantly male arena, probably exacerbated by the inextricability of literature and politics in the region, which according to Julio Ramos are said, "to be one in the same thing" (Bueno 5-6). Contrary to writers in the United States, it is common for authors to become politicians like Mario Vargas Llosa, suggesting a direct correlation between literature and social organization. While Mohanty praises discursive production as a site that works to expose invisible hierarchies of power, she also points out their use as, "the basis of the exercise of power and domination" (78). Historian Marysa Navarro sees a connection between ideological mestizaje and the literary market in Latin America, in which there is a dialectical interaction between two or more cultures in which one dominates while the others are scorned. For Navarro this explains why in Latin America, "women's writing is characterized as huacho or bastard which delineates the process as starting out as, illegitimate in the realm of masculine traditions enshrined with the lineage of accepted discourses" (276). This is interesting when considering the large portion of the body of

scholarship on Allende does explore her debt to Garcia Marquez or the male-dominated Latin American brand of magical realism. Allende recognizes the futility in trying to please critics as she points out their hypocrisy:

One “bad” thing people say is that I discovered a very attractive mixture of melodrama, politics, feminism, and magical realism and I throw it all together... Another bad “thing” is that I’m sentimental and that I’m not detached, I’m not cold; therefore I can be very kitschy, very campy sometimes. What other “bad” thing can I remember? Oh yes, that it resembles Garcia Marquez. (Rodden 14)

Allende points out the absurdity of harsh criticism that insists her work is inferior, but in the same breath claiming it resembles the revered father of magical realism. In direct contrast to her critics, Allende has enjoyed great success becoming the number one selling Latin American female author. When asked how she felt about being one of the first women to have success in the publishing market, Allende corrects the interviewer: “Maybe I’m one of the first Latin American women to do it, but in Europe and the United States women occupy almost the same place as men do in literature” (Garcia-Pinto 71). I am not suggesting Allende is free of influence, Allende herself has admitted her reverence for Garcia-Marquez, “like any other Latin American writer” (Rodden 26). What I do want to suggest is how *insisting* influence not only creates a relationship but a hierarchy between texts that obscure the ways it may be functioning in its own right. Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* may be useful to get a sense of both Allende and Garcia-Marquez's social grounding that has become integrated into their work. Pratt identifies the neocolonial condition as a primary source for the Latin American aesthetic. She explains neocolonialism as a condition where a country appears independent and sovereign, but it's economic and, therefore, political policies are controlled by outside forces limiting the state's ability to develop itself. Pratt

discusses how this anxiety seeps into culture particularly for, "writers and artists, that unease becomes a source of creativity and experimentalism, as well as exasperation. Writers use the neocolonial position of both destination (or terminus) and receptor as a continuous point of reference for the negotiation of identity and representing of self" (226). These themes of not belonging, of irrecoverable history, reoccur in Latin American texts, and they consciously or unconsciously work to expose the neocolonial predicament. Yet in Allende's reading, some "boom" authors imitate the colonizers in the way they represent women as archetypes, reinforcing a hierarchy that kept women from decision-making and power, but instead appropriated women for their own purposes. Patricia Hart identifies some of these stereotypes Allende works to discredit: the male fantasy of the hooker with the heart of gold and the idea that women want to be raped, and marriage that becomes prostitution (107). If magical realism can be viewed as a reconfiguration of the travel narratives that Pratt argues work to "invent" America, then perhaps it would be valuable to take note of her differentiation of female travel narratives in the context of Allende's work. Pratt discerns, as opposed to the males whose: "job was to collect and possess everything else, the women sought first and foremost to collect and possess themselves. Their territorial claim was to private space, a personal, room-sized empire" (156). When discussing her own work, Allende is consciously or unconsciously aware of her literary inheritance that stretches centuries before Garcia- Marquez as she proclaims, "My writing is always about freedom, about owning your own life" (Snodgrass, 30). Probably exacerbated by the scholarship that insists on Allende's secondary position to Latin American male authors, many critics have had a myopic view of Allende's work, one that continuously obscures the feminine experience of Latin American history, even as it manifests itself on the written page.

As an editor for Random house, Morrison was in a position to affect the literary market in a way Allende was not. Her primary objective was to excavate a black literary aesthetic that was independent of white American literature, which did not exist at the time. In her opinion, all the black novelist from the 20<sup>th</sup> century thus far were speaking to whites and, therefore, conscientious of acceptance by whites. This undoubtedly influenced her career-long commitment to writing for a black audience. She helped to usher in a black female renaissance of sorts editing the works of Gayle Jones, Lucille Clifton, and Toni Cade Bambara. (Li 21). Although she saw the value in building a community of black artists, she was critical of aspects of the black arts movement, which mirrored ideologies from the black power movement. Li states she was especially critical of the “Black is beautiful,” arguing that it represents a full concession that white definitions were important to us... and that the quest for physical beauty was both a good and worthwhile pursuit” (16). Her editing sharpens her sensitivity to the power of language, as she is openly critical of black male authors like Baraka and Eldridge Cleaver. She noted their works were about power, “addressed to white men for king of the hill” (26). In contrast, Morrison observed, black women wrote with a “fundamental source of joy” (Li 22). According to Li, their works explored the interconnectedness of systems of oppression beyond race to include class and sexism. Yet they never exclude the comfort derived from their own communities and use it as a source of strength. Her work became seminal to black studies programs and African American history and culture classes that began to appear in universities in the 1970s contributing worthy black authors to the curriculum including her own work.

In retrospect, it’s hard to imagine Morrison, whose works have been worthy of a Nobel peace prize the target of any criticism. Yet in the 1970s and early 1980s there were some negative responses to her work. Li points out, “Some critic found Morrison’s exploration of

social hierarchies to be overly didactic and her portrayal of white characters to be shallow and clichéd” (61). Like Allende, others have relentlessly tried to argue her debt to canonical authors like James Joyce, William Faulkner, or Gabriel Garcia Marquez much to her discontent. Others have attempted to place her within literary traditions like the Latin American brand of magical realism or detected specific politics or feminisms functioning in her work. It seems she finds any single category limiting, and obscures the complexity of her work. She demonstrates a consciousness of the ability of language to coral art in the same way lines demark territory on a map: “Canon building is empire building, canon defense is national defense” (Morrison, *Unspeakable* 132).

Allende similarly has rejected any literary categorization, yet she has been a self-proclaimed feminist since the age of five. Some critics have said her depictions of women, while intended to disrupt the patriarchy, instead reinforce the status quo. Mohanty explains how expectations for feminist values can inhibit a text in creating a productive ground for social change. She points out that many feminisms are discussed within the framework of organized movements. For her Allende’s critics, her characters don't live the perceived values of a third world feminist struggling for change. In contrast, her admirer's tendency to privilege the femino-centric, which effectively obscure the other dimensions of her work. It seems Allende’s polarizing reception is what Morrison avoided by refusing to identify with any category. Late in Allende’s career, there is evidence of her consciousness of the power of language to enclose. More recently Bonnie Craig has followed Isabel Allende’s, “implicit rejection of the equation of identity with nationhood” in her novels and made it the focus of her project, *Rewriting American Identity in the fiction and memoirs of Isabel Allende*. This book demonstrates Allende’s conscious coupling of national and literary identity aware of the processes that are responsible

for both. Allende herself has proclaimed, "I don't belong to one land, but to several, or perhaps only to the ambit of fiction I write" (Craig 178). In giving a close look at each author's response to being confined in a genre or canon, my intention is to provide a clearer picture of how both authors envision the place they occupy as writers.

When discussing how to analyze a particular place, Geographer Doreen Massey discourages us from thinking of it as a fixed point protected by borders, but instead as a constellation of social relations. The benefit of thinking about places as dynamic processes in time illuminates the relationships between places. This facilitates a change in the sense of place, from self-enclosed to outward looking, "which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world" (154). This collapsing of borders takes place regularly in Allende's works as noted by Craig, "Her interpretation of past events become part of her interpretation of the "living present" where the shared space of memory, experience, and geographical spaces symbolically mix" (19). I explore the many ways this is employed in chapter two, particularly the way her imagination allows her to see beyond the barriers erected by patriarchy and explore how its ideologies and institutions damage men. Morrison has always shown a consciousness of place in her fiction as well but has explicitly implemented geographical logic in her critical work, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. In the introduction she purports to "draw a map so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the new world-without mandate for conquest" (3). By refusing to accept walls of separation in literature as natural, she can see how the African-American presence has crept into the pages of white American authors. Westfall tries to make sense of this spatiotemporal logic as it relates to literature. Instead of using moments, which he describes as a homogeneous and indivisible point,



he opts for using tempescules, which are understood as a moment in time brief enough in relation to a theoretical context for reference. Recalling Massey's term constellation, he describes it as the "archipelago of the possible" (17). Thinking spatially whether it is as a constellation or archipelago removes the center and because its temporal dimension is considered, its movement prevents a hierarchal structure causing its onlookers to see a reciprocal exchange between tempescules so that power or weakness can be conceived at both ends.

We have been thinking about literature in a spatio-temporal sense for a long time without consciousness that the way we were thinking was geographical. Thirty-five years ago, Elaine Showalter in the task of locating a feminine consciousness in literature urged critics to "plot the precise cultural locus of female literary identity and to describe the forces that intersect an individual woman writer's cultural field" (202). Eleven years after writing this, Showalter describes essentially what a literary constellation of social relations looks like within the context of a feminist literary history.

Such a history must be critical of any single paradigm of American women's history or culture; attentive to the articulation of gender, race, and class and aware that women's writing is produced within a complex intertextual network. It cannot be defined by biological essences, stereotypes of femininity, or nationalist's myths. It must avoid both over-feminization, the insistence that everything in women's writing can be explained by gender; and under-feminization, or the neglect of gender inscriptions in women's texts.

(17)

Ultimately a geographic logic is best for deciphering identity, because it plots all the components it consists of and makes visible they way they coincide, intersect or juxtapose. Moreover, literary identities, like individual or place identities are relational which can be and

have been obscured by naturalized dividing walls. In recent years, literary studies have begun to make use of geographic logic noted in the way postcolonial, and race and gender studies have influenced a burgeoning interest in multiculturalism. This has served to remove the protected enclosures of literature bringing into view contact zones, borderlands, and hybridity. Perhaps literary studies could benefit by a more conscious, deliberate use of geographical models. In our current predicament of globalization, perhaps an identity that considers its links to the wider world would help us understand relationships between texts as this model helps geographers understand the relationship between places. This model may seem futile as the dynamic, temporal dimension ultimately means our work of mapping out texts will inevitably have to be remapped. But it is also important our own thinking isn't stagnated by fixed modes of thought. Maps that fluctuate force us to think about literature in all of its complexity and the outside forces that shape it. The value of literature inevitably changes according to the time and place in which we are reading. Allende is gaining critical acclaim as literary studies move towards a multicultural perspective. Her rightful place in the literary canon is still contested despite the fact she is one of the most widely read female authors in the world. In contrast, Morrison has unequivocally taken a place in the canon on her own terms as evidenced by winning the Nobel peace prize for literature. Intuitively, in an interview she envisioned a change in the way we think about literature that authors like her and Allende helped to initiate:

All of that will surface, it will surface, and my huge joy is thinking that I am in some way a part of that when I sit here in this office and that somehow there must be those of us in white established publishers where a black author can feel that he's going to go and get some respect- he doesn't have to explain everything- somebody is going to understand what he's trying to do, in his terms, not somebody else's but in his." (Step 29)

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### Chapter Three:

#### *Flying Through Space*

*The interrelations of space, place, and gender and race in Song of Solomon and Eva*

#### *Luna*

Although Pilate from Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and the title character of Isabel Allende's *Eva Luna* both struggle to find their identity, their positions, literally on opposite ends of the earth, move them through distinct cultural as well as physical landscapes to get to the versions of their own "promised lands" of themselves. Often called a story of male transcendence, *Song of Solomon* ends with Milkman's realization about Pilate: "Without ever leaving the ground she could fly." Flying is equated with freedom, as tied into the old African tale. The ability to fly refers to Pilate's ability to literally defy spatial, racial, and gender dictated boundaries through her travels. Much like these revered women, Allende and Morrison enjoy wide-open narrative spaces, as writers who are not corralled by any one tradition. Morrison and Allende exercise the freedom to roam and explore the territories of genre, aesthetics, and style much as Pilate and Eva run the gamut of places in their respective countries. Thus, their freedom is rooted in their unwillingness to allow labels to limit their creative space. Although Eva and Pilate never "leave the ground," they enjoy the limitlessness and perspective flying affords. Within these fictional representations of places, flying is the ability to occupy spaces that are contradictory, for Pilate the ground and the sky, for Eva as the narrator and the protagonist. According to Gillian Rose, occupying multiple spaces; the center and the margins, inside and outside, whether real or imagined, negotiates women's difficulty of being in space. She devises a concept she calls paradoxical space in order to articulate this phenomenon "Its multidimensionality refers to complicated and never self-evident matrix of historical, social,

sexual, racial and class positions which women occupy. These feminist maps are multiple and intersecting, provisional and shifting, and they require 'ever more intricate skills in cartography' (155). Flying reveals borders as arbitrary as the flyer is forced to take in the landscape as a whole, where the shift of territory is delineated by social relations, rather than maps.

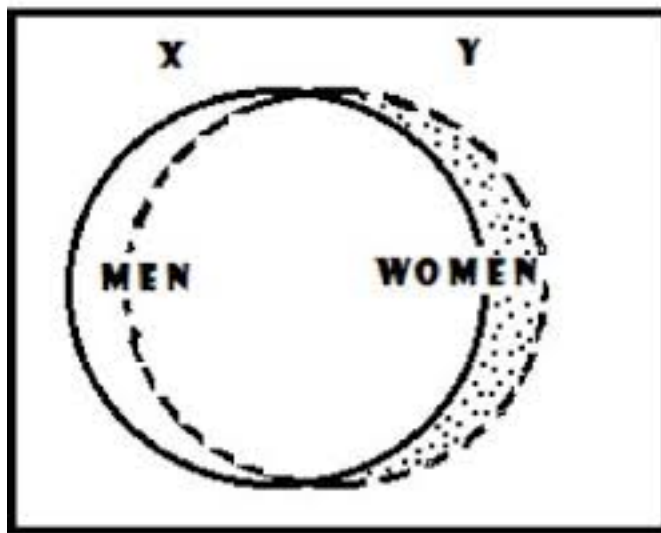
Allende and Morrison's fictional representation of place brings into view an inter-subjective exchange between hierarchies of race, gender, place, which empower us to appreciate and understand the complex interrelations that shape social and political lives. Some questions I will try to answer in this chapter are, can applying critical geography to fictional spaces help us to better understand real places? As Pilate and Eva are clearly meaningful characters to each author, can their "place" indicate how the authors envision their own literary identities? Through their fiction, Morrison and Allende have laid out a map for us, which allow Pilate and Eva as well as Morrison and Allende to reclaim their territory. Not ownership of the territory, but ownership of the knowledge that enables them to engage in the struggle for space, and claim their place.

If Pilate and Eva could lead us to both author's literary location, we would find ourselves in the wilderness; the backwoods of Virginia or Pennsylvania for Morrison, and the Amazon rainforest for Allende. Pilate and Eva are always on the move, yet no matter where they go they carry with them a sense of home that seems to derive from their affinity to natural spaces. And so it seems we are faced with an imaginative task. Where are we to find the "wild" location of literature? In an attempt to find a place where women's literature could exist independent of androcentric models, Elaine Showalter found herself in the "wild". Showalter borrows a diagram from Social Anthropologist Edwin Ardener that depicts the different experiences of male and females in a patriarchal society, spatially in a diagram. (See figure 1) The included diagram

consists of intersecting circles, one for men (dominant groups) and one for women (muted groups). In the woman's circle, there is a crescent that has no corresponding space to the male circle. Showalter explains how this space constitutes "the wild zone."

Figure 1

Source; Adhikary, Soumita. "Autobiography as Testimony: Truth and Fiction in Tehmina Durrani's Writings." *International Journal of English Language Literature and Humanities* II.V (2014): 370-83. [Http://ijellh.com](http://ijellh.com). International Journal of English Language Literature and Humanities. Web. 29 Sept. 2015. <<http://ijellh.com/papers/2014/September/37-370-383-sept-2014.pdf>>.



We can think of the "wild zone" of women's culture spatially, experientially, or metaphysically. Spatially it stands for an area, which is literally no-man's-land, a place forbidden to men, which corresponds to the zone in X, which is off limits to women. Experientially it stands for the aspects of the female life-style which are outside of and unlike those of men; again, there is a corresponding zone of male experience alien to women. But if we think of the wild zone metaphysically, or in terms of consciousness, it has no corresponding male space since all of male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus accessible to or structured by language. In this sense, the "wild" is always imaginary; from the male point of view, it may simply be the projection



of the unconscious. In terms of cultural anthropology, women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it because it becomes the subject of legend (like the wilderness). But men do not know what is in the wild (Showalter, 200).

Although the diagram Showalter includes only depicts culture as male and female it is important to note that Ardener's diagrams also include other muted groups. Showalter gives the example of an African American female poet whose literary identity would be formed by the dominant circle, a muted woman's circle, and a muted African American circle. While Showalter plays with the idea of the wild zone deriving from women's assumed closeness to nature, it's clear Showalter uses "wild" to mean outside of or unknown by dominant structures. That's why in this sense, the "wild zone" is imaginary, because although both order reality at the level of the unconscious, "dominant groups control the forms or structures in which consciousness can be articulated" (Showalter,199). Years later, Geographer Gillian Rose devises a similar concept to describe how women often occupy multiple spaces simultaneously in order to negotiate a place for themselves. She calls it paradoxical space and describes its effect as breaking distinctions, "between mind and body; its refusal to distinguish between real and metaphorical space; its refusal to separate experience and emotion from the interpretation of places" (155). This seems to describe how Showalter negotiated space for women's writing by asserting they occupied both the muted and dominant circles in order to leverage an area that only belongs to women. Showalter's "wild zone" in effect is a space that is paradoxical, in Rose's words, "a place imagined to negotiate the hegemonic discourse of masculism" (159). Its potential, as Showalter puts it is to enable women and minorities to, "write their way out of cramped patriarchal space" (200). It works to articulate multiple possibilities of existence for subjugated groups. However, Showalter's interpretation of the diagram is still governed by a hierarchy that favors dominant

groups. Muted groups, if they speak at all, will always have to speak through patriarchal structures. This unintentionally reinforces hegemonic separations by constructing the muted as dependent on the dominant for subjectivity and consequently weak. Hers will always be a space that is devalued or “imaginary”. Rose's imaginative space is necessarily a paradoxical geography, “in order to acknowledge both the power of hegemonic discourses and to insist on the possibility of resistance” (155). Thinking geographically puts into focus the interrelations between categories which effectively disrupts hierarchal structures, never losing sight of the possibility of power or weakness to be conceived from all angles. In an interview, Morrison alludes to her own engagement in this process as she describes how the predicament of black women who could not depend on whiteness or maleness, pushed them into an imaginative territory and in facing "the desolation of their reality, they invented themselves". As an African American woman and an editor searching for a black aesthetic, we can view Pilate as a manifestation of this process. In an interview, Morrison admits Pilate is the kind of woman she'd like to be.

That's a totally generous free woman. She's fearless. She's not afraid of anything. She has very few material things She has a little self-supportive skill that she performs. She doesn't run anybody's life. She's available for almost infinite love. If you need her-she'll deliver. And she has complete clarity about who she is (Moyers, 269).

Similarly, Allende has famously stated she is inventing herself all the time. As the daughter of a Chilean diplomat, her childhood was spent in several countries. Many have identified Eva Luna as a depiction of Allende's own wandering life. Allende herself has admitted, "Writing Eva Luna was imagining how the world could be if I accepted myself- and if I had love" (Rodden, 85). If they do not directly represent themselves, they clearly are both author's idealized visions of women who make their own agency in the world, much as Allende and Morrison have in

literature.

Although Pilate is not the narrator, as Wientz has observed, "she has an omnipresence throughout the novel"(147). The recollections of others mythologize her within her community, giving her the same privilege as Eva of being inside and outside the story although less consciously so. Most scholarship of *Song of Solomon* only considers secondary characters in their relation to Milkman. This seems natural; after all, as the protagonist, his position is at the center of the text. Just as Milkman and others profit from Pilate's wisdom, so too can the reader if they choose. Imagining Pilate at the center expands her limitations, becoming not only a guide for Milkman but for the readers of the novel as well. Armed with her geography book, and deep experience, Pilate discredits the idea of any group of people living and behaving uniformly and instead lends the reader the perspective to observe the complexity of African Americans with varying dynamics of place and identity.

Pilate is a contention of the geography book she carries for it marks her to roam the country in a time where black people, "ain't supposed to go nowhere" (*SOS* 145). A book of myths of sorts, tempting Pilate with freedom of space that maps suggested was all around her. After reading many different articulations of the concept of space, Rose finds freedom is a universal feature. "Infinitude and unboundedness, transparency, it is simply everywhere"(34). Like many disciplines, the field of geography was built on androcentric models. Space conceived of as freedom can be traced back to early European explorers.

Their masculine consciousness peers into the world, denying its own positionality, mapping its spaces in the same manner in which Western white male bodies explored, recorded and surveyed appropriate spaces from the 16th century onwards: From a disembodied location free from sexual attack or racial violence. Space for them is

everywhere; nowhere is too threatening, or too different for them to go. Time geographers become the invisible observers of social life, tracing its patterns and making sense of it all, its reproduction, resistance, and contradiction. (Rose 34)

She concludes the concept of space is under their assumption, "that all spaces are white, bourgeois, heterosexual, masculine, public space" (Rose, 39). The geography book itself is produced as an indicator of the territory that white, masculine consciousness, has on knowledge and therefore culture in the United States. It mirrors the white male experience of space measuring and fixing its boundaries from a disembodied location. However, as Pilate makes her way through the country, she fails to experience the freedom of space depicted in the geography book and barely manages to stay, " within the boundaries of the elaborately socialized world of black people" (SOS ). That is because the geography book does poorly in depicting its various locations as *real* places. Place is now recognized in geographical discourse as a complex concept; one which cannot be understood by simply looking at a map. One must take into account, "the specific set of inter-relationships between environmental, economic, social, political, and cultural processes," when defining its borders (Rose,41). The rocks she collects are not only empirical evidence of the places she's lived but imbued with her memories and give a sense of the intimate relationship she had with the land. They contest the "reality" the geography book was designed to convey. In fact, her rich journey trivializes the book, pointing out the arbitrary way in which territories are separated as she plants: "her feet in each pink, yellow, blue, or green state" (148). Just because Shalimar, Virginia could not be found on a map did not negate its reality, "having lived there, it was hers" (SOS 329).

The folkloric tale of the flying African frames the notion in Song of Solomon that flying is freedom, but it also equates the desire, and ability to fly with masculinity. In both novels,

maleness does enable a degree of freedom in spite of race. When an interviewer notices movement as a distinct characteristic of African American literature, Morrison admits the mobility of black men is something she deeply admires.

Although in sociological terms that is described as a major failing of black men - they do not stay home and take care of their children, they are not there- that has always been one of the most attractive features about black male life. I guess I'm not supposed to say that.

But the fact that they could split in a second, delights me (Step 25).

Her doting implies there is a difference between the way black men and black women experience space. In geographic terms, while place consists of a concentration of social relations, space is concerned with how and why objects and people are distributed across space as they are. Guitar and Macon both exercise their perceived freedom differently. Macon's ambition and relative success confirm his belief that, "Money is the only real freedom there is" (163). Indeed his economic success enables him to widen his parameters enough to engage in white space, yet his own anxiety places limitations on himself and his family as demonstrated when he rejects his own blood, Pilate for fear of what white bankers would think. He fails to see how internalizing the values of the dominant inevitably dictate his lower position. Conversely, Guitar is more aware of his spatial limitations. Trying to accommodate Milkman's request for no geography, his response suggests ignorance does not exempt him from its process in social production. "No geography? Ok no geography. What about some history in your tea? Or some sociopolitical-No. That's still geography. Goddamn, Milk I do believe my whole life's geography" (SOS 114). Discussing the flaws of black activism in the 50's Hooks discerns, "Black activists defined freedom as gaining the rights to participate as full citizens of American culture; they did not reject the values of that culture" (5). If Hooks is describing the majority of blacks who were

trying to assimilate, then Guitar, as a separatist is a perversion of this idea. The seven days consists of only black men, whose ideology makes them believe their actions can impact the "ratios" of an entire race of people. As blacks, without the support of "money, the state, or the country," they carry out their "justice" in silence, and anonymity for they do not have the total freedom of space whites do, where lynchings are carried out without consequence. Yet, in their own space, albeit, in the shadows, they experience a kind of "freedom" in the way they believe they can direct their destiny and their people's destiny. Especially since they are not free, like the new world explorers claiming and mapping out territories, the actions of the seven days mirror a disembodied, masculine conception of space. Both Macon and Guitar have accepted what they perceive as the values of white society. But Guitar believes the brutalities in which blacks are treated are a more accurate reflection of white values. Hooks would argue Guitar is a product of his culture. "In an imperialist and racist patriarchal society that supports and condones oppression, it is not surprising that men and women judge their worth, their own personal power, by their ability to oppress others" (104). His rebellion against the "unnatural" behavior of whites instead ends up mirroring their injustice, killing and raping arbitrarily.

Similarly in *Eva Luna*, Huberto Naranjo, as a member of the guerilla fighters, a radical socialist movement in South America, he also participates in a separatist group. He was supposed to represent the interests of the "people" living on the fringes of society, "yet the people seemed to be composed exclusively of men" (EL 233). In fact, he is ashamed of his attraction to Eva, perceiving her as his weakness that may jeopardize the mission. Despite Eva's attraction to Huberto, she concedes he was an "engrained macho" and his notion of men and women's place was developed from childhood (EL 232). Despite his lengthy speeches illustrating injustice and oppression, he never loses the sense he is able, "to direct his own destiny" (EL 233). His

effortless movement across the South American terrain reflects his mental notion of seamless space, conquering all corners, and alleyways of the city, and then moving to the mountains and jungles. In contrast, when it came to Eva Luna, "He believed that because [she] had been born a girl [she] was at a disadvantage, [she] should accept [her] limitations and entrust [herself] to other's care" (EL 233). Mimi, a transvestite, with previous experiences as a man, gives her insight that leads her to recognize that if Naranjo is successful, he will probably, "behave in the same way all men do when they obtain power" (EL 233).

While flying offers the opportunity for transcendence for males, females are left behind to mourn their absence and care for their children. Women's spaces in both novels are depicted as cramped, confined, or non-existent. Rose remarks for women, "being in space is not easy. Indeed at its worst, this feeling results in a desire to make ourselves absent from space; it can mean that we acquiesce in being made invisible, in occupying no space. We participate in our own erasure" (143). Ruth, trapped in a loveless marriage, becomes a receptacle of myths for men to store their fears and insecurities. She is described spatially as not an odd woman but a "small one." In her process of being indoctrinated into society, Consuelo, Eva's mother feels as if she's suffocating within the cloistered walls of the church. Both authors are delineating boundaries dictated by gender. When discussing place as a medium for social production, Bondi and Davidson assert, space place, and gender are interrelated processes rather than fixed entities (16). As a result of Eva and Pilate's constant movement, they bypass the process of the social production of gender as an "ordering principle" that dictated a limited place and a specific location (Ardener 5).

Because Eva eventually refuses her "place" as a servant, Patricia Hart's comments imply her wandering not only literally changes her location, but also violates expectations for her gender and race. " A picara in the finest traditions of picaros, and she had much more in common

with the male of the species," (164). Her freedom of movement equates her with a man's experience of space, "to stretch out and leap without bounds and without constraint." (Rose 26).

As the narrator, Eva is able to relate events across continents and tie them into her own story effectively occupying spaces that are paradoxical. Perhaps as a result of her own experience living all over the world, Allende has openly rejected the equation of nationhood with identity. In an interview when asked her position on immigration, Allende replied, " The borders are there to be violated permanently" (220). Gould-Levine suggests this is telling of her narrative technique, " In which her characters not only cross geographical borders but also the borders separating gender, class, ethnicity, religious beliefs and ingrained views of national identity" (220).

Although many have identified the setting as Venezuela, Eva divests the text of this power by leaving the location unnamed. As the political backdrop of capricious governments in South America are juxtaposed with that of WWII in Europe, it dismantles the hierarchy in which Europe holds the higher position, as it is perceived as the more advanced society. Oceans apart, they are merely different versions of colonizing, patriarchal societies who are all participating in a constant chaotic struggle for power. Ironically, the historic wars and dictatorships in South America suggest "progress" is at the expense of its people, who are constantly looking for social change. Despite each regime's political promises, the poor people were unaffected living as they always had. Eva describes change for Eva's mother Consuelo as inconsequential as, "being able to see a Carlos Gardel movie" (EL 17). As Eva encounters manmade structures and statues, she senses the contrast they have with reality. "In the center was a bronze equestrian statue of the Father of the Nation, a flag in one hand and reins in the other, humiliated by the irreverence of pigeon shit and the disillusion of history" (EL 62).

The maps of power Eva Luna's travels attempt to delineate are based on what Allende



calls a South American reality: "The confluences of races and cultures of the whole world superimposed on the indigenous culture, in a violent climate" (6). Each town, a distinct episode in Eva's life, explores the lofty ideals immigrants had for civilization. Foley-Buedel makes these observations in her essay, "Magical Places in Eva Luna". She views the town of la Colonia as a reference to the Nazi policy of pure race. "Living in a cultural bubble, no one speaks Spanish and the children have defects because of inbreeding. Although Agua Santa seems to be a quaint community that integrates Hispanic, Arabic, and Indigenous cultures, most of them are illiterate" (135). Conversely, the people of Agua Santa embody the disillusion of the Latin American racial ideal; Mestizaje. Riad Halabi, a resident captures the romanticized notion of a cosmic race's ability to form a uniformed identity for Latin America: " I like this country...rich, poor, black and white, a single class, a single people. Everyone thinks he's king of the mountain, free of social ranks and rules- no one better than anybody else by birth or money". Others hold the same belief, in fact, boasting, "of being a uniformly brown people" (EL 211). Upon closer examination, the tolerance of the town is a façade. Robinson remarks on the strategic placement of mestizos that closely resembles Agua Santa. "A major goal in resettling them in nucleated villages was to allow better political and administrative control and to facilitate the required conversion of the heathens to the new Catholic faith" (166). Halabi is constantly aware of the town's perceptions as demonstrated when he feels obligated to attend their church with Eva and puts aside his own religious beliefs for the sake of peace. A hacienda owner murders a boy for picking mangos on his land and no laws exist to bring him to justice. Rafael Torres- Perez discerns what mestizaje really means for its people:

On the one hand, racial mixture embodies a flight away from the "primitive" Indian towards the "civilized" European. The de-Indianizing body semantically

manifests a social transformation that embraces hegemonic notions of progress and advancement. On the other hand, the mestizo body indexes a physical connection to a repressive colonial history of enslavement, genocide, and exploitation. The mestizo body inherits an untenable dichotomy involving numerous forms of erasure and presence (7).

The schoolteacher Inez, mother of the boy who was murdered brings Halabi back to reality, "This country has as many layers as phyllo dough...Have you ever seen a rich Indian? Or a black general or banker?" (EL 211).

Ironically a more accurate illustration of Latin American reality comes from the mirage Eva encounters which she calls Palacio de Los Pobres (Palace of the poor). This account eloquently depicts invisibility as a social reality for many disenfranchised people. Green and Branford explain in the vast majority of South America, "The legacy of the colonial system has been as extreme and growing concentration of land, wealth and power in the hands of big landowners, who are a tiny minority, while the vast majority of rural people have insufficient or no land, and are poor, hungry, and excluded from the political system" (113 ). In the palace, they finally find a "place," and the symbolic value of the benefactor's belongings finally had use value as the "rococo furniture" was splintered to fuel cook stoves" (EL137). The inability of the guardia to remove the people because "they lost their way" illustrates the double-edged sword of exclusion. While their personal welfare is never considered, they also are not bound by conventions of the mainstream, including their sense of reality and place. Reimagining the social invisibility of the poor as a vantage point, demonstrates how power can be conceived of from the position of the underclass.

According to Climo and Cattell, having one's own place is imperative to a sense of home and rootedness. In contrast, "People who are on the move frequently are people who are on the

move in their self-understanding" (15). Indeed, Pilate and Eva's movement are symptomatic of their inability to achieve this state of belonging. However upon closer examination, this dilemma of "homelessness" plagues many of the characters in both novels and it corresponds to the crisis of modernity experienced by both Latin America and North America that muddled a clear path home. Marc Connor identifies homelessness as a defining feature of modernity and a prominent theme running through Morrison's novels. Latin America is not exempt from the effects of modernism demonstrated by Allende's works which often center on figures of exile and outcasts. Connor has traced this condition back to slavery, which Morrison has said is the largest defining event of the modern world. For Connor and Morrison, this is the origin of modernism's displacement and alienation, "the making homeless- of entire gatherings of people" (23).

Ironically, what has historically been the crux of the meaning of home for whites; the naming and claiming of territory, fails the Butlers in the modern world in their spiritual search for home. Duvall points out how elites often experience home as a dislocation in white Southern fiction. "Complicit with the conditions that cause the black diaspora, these privileged whites find their sense of home disintegrate; if not a literal dispersal and scattering, there is a psychological one" (15). It seems the fiction that Duvall is describing was an expression of the material conditions of the time. "The process of cultural dissolution among the American middle class has been traced in some detail after 1880, as rapid and economic and technological change, urbanization and the erosion of traditional beliefs conspired in in complex ways to produce a disorientation of personality and culture" (Ley 47). Psychically distanced from the location they used to ground an idea of home, it became more fluid and transformed itself into a status symbol rather than a place fortified by memories and history.

After the civil war, as the United States is becoming industrialized, the farmer's

"provincialism," their "unprogressive outlook," and "unscientific methods" were considered backward. He was encouraged to treat farming as a business and made to believe their success was dependent on big cities (Vann, 76). The anglophilic discourse of the elite was re-appropriated, "towards anti-urban, anti-immigrant values" (Hugill 78). If they expressed concern for immigrants, one could imagine their anxiety at the thought of newly freed blacks acquiring land. Macon assumes the murder of his father was motivated by the "American" need to "own things" as he contemplates how Lincoln's Heaven must have been worth a fortune in oak and pine. However, once the Butler's acquired Lincoln's Heaven, their actions suggest other motives. By taking a position of power as a successful landowner, Jake is violating their territory. Once they have the land, they do not exploit it for profits, rather they build their house on it, even when they owned half of the county. Duval locates the reason for this behavior within southern culture. "Although not immediately obvious, this problem of home and homelessness can be related to the politics of racial difference, which is grounded in a key piece of southern epistemology: whiteness knows itself in distinction to the negro" (2). Their identity as elites depends on the subservience of African Americans. They could have built a house anywhere. Deciding to build it on Jake's land connotes their attempt at seizing not just property, but the "home" that Jake built.

The decay of the Butler's house illustrates their failure at achieving any psychic connection with the property. Hugill argues after the civil war, land became less equated with home and more symbolic of wealth and prestige (79). Similarly, the Butler's house is not a home imbued with heritage or personal meaning but is emblematic of the limitless space that is available to them as members of elite society. The décor of the house was inspired by a conglomeration of disparate cultures, from Italian marble to Belgian silk having no reason to be

in the same house were it not for the opulence they projected. The fragility of the structure, silk walls that took a Belgian woman eight years to make, torn down in one day, unveil the Butler's place as less of a home secured by a foundation of tradition and meaning, and more of a house of cards, its stability compromised by a mere gust of wind. Elizabeth Butler's capacity for suicide is enlarged by her own hollowness and is parallel to the empty house; devoid of meaning except its monetary value. If she had had any psychic connection to the farm as a home as opposed to a social status, she would not have equated its decline with her own. "Place is security; it is a holistic ensemble promising satisfaction through union with itself; it is thoughtless passivity and unthinking emersion into the natural" (Rose, 59). Morrison shows how the institution of slavery damaged whites irreparably by removing themselves from a process that allows them to physically benefit from the bounty of the land replenishes the mind and body. Elizabeth Butler's own removal from the upkeep of her home consequently removed herself from a reciprocal process that in exchange for her work, would have given her back a spiritual sense of home devoid of geographical boundaries.

In Latin America, a precarious political climate create a different sort of alienation. Scholar Pratt argues the neocolonial condition of many Latin American countries gives a distinct socio-political dimension of homelessness in Latin American modernisms. She discusses how neocolonial status of a country begins politically, but seeps into culture:

To be modern is to subscribe to the values of the metropole and to seek to fulfill them. To be neocolonial is to be unable to do so, yet unable to exit the system and chart a separate course. The neocolonial cultural predicament then is this: Norms generated elsewhere cannot be implemented where one is, but cannot be refused either. One is forced to be a second-class member of a club in which membership is not optional (226).

If this was in fact Allende's predicament as a writer, it's understandable how her own exile was advantageous in a place where belonging was impossible and history irrecoverable. She confirms this in an interview when she says, "The fact that I have had to put distance between myself and my country has made my country clearer to me" (14 Displacement). This can be observed in Allende's absurd illustrations of the capital. Comically, she conveys the historic growth of the big cities as people migrated from rural areas. "Since the 1930's millions of peasant families have left their farms and villages and joined the trek to the great cities." (127 ). The appeal to migrate was both economical and ideological. The people envisioned the big cities as hub-centers of modernity and progress. The race *towards* progress also inferred running *away* from their perceived "inherent primitiveness". As a result, rural areas outside of the big cities, especially within the jungle, were often neglected in the way of funds for modernization. Consequently, "One could soon identify the initiation of a new patterning of place: places of plenty and places of neglect, of provincialism now perceived as an unhealthy attachments to traditions that conflicted with the new demands of the state" (Robinson, 172). Eva's perception of the capital captures this juxtaposition.

The rain had stopped and the late afternoon sun was evaporating moisture from the wet asphalt, swathing the world in a sticky veil. People, traffic, noise-lots of noise: construction sites with giant roaring, yellow, machines, ringing steel, screeching brakes, horns, the cries of street vendors. A vague odor of swamp and fried foods drifted in from the café. (EL 61)

The natural, tropical climate seeping into the corners of modernity alluding to the sense of anxiety the culture had towards their "primitive" untamed landscape. The hypocrisy of allocating funds to be the most "modern" while their own people starved is emphasized as Eva

observes the absurdity of the architecture. Each building design from another part of the world, forming a conglomerate of culture caricatures : "Italian marble palaces, Texas ranch houses, Tudor mansions, steel skyscrapers, residences in the form of mausoleums, Japanese teahouses, Swiss Chalets, and wedding cakes with plastic icing" (EL 61). According to Laurence Whitehead, Eva's whimsical portrait turns out to be a rather accurate description of the Latin American metropole. He calls Latin America a "mausoleum of modernity" because over the past 200 years it has sought, "the very latest in modernity the western world has had to offer but has at the same time been unable to fully absorb and incorporate these new ideas before the next wave of modernity came along and displaced them. The result is that the landscape of Latin America is filled with unfinished, unevenly accepted modern projects" (72). Eva finds them to be "empty" places, "growing shapelessly like a malignant tumor, assailed by lunatic architecture in an unholy mixture of styles" devoid of meaning and culture (EL 61).

The city's lack of culture is reflected within the household of one of Eva's many employers, "la Patrona" a middle-class European migrant. Here, Eva is introduced to the art of Universal Matter; a kind of dough that can be formed to take any shape or texture. It is in this house Eva acquires a "suspicion of inanimate objects," that is evident when she is confronted with historical monuments or structures. Her uneasiness implies the duplicitous nature of these objects by having to, "touch things to know whether they are what they seem, or Universal Matter" (EV108). Allende's description of her illogical taste in décor satirizes the typical domestic home interior of European Bourgeois taste. "a Coromandel screen in the entry; four musketeers dressed in velvet and lace... an elephant decorated in the Indian manner serving as a telephone table; a roman frieze at the head of her bed" (EL109). An actual description of a common middle class European home suggests the possibilities for Allende's storytelling

grounded in reality. "it was an escape of masquerade: " The butter knife is a Turkish dagger, the ashtray a Prussian helmet, the umbrella stand a knight in armor, and the thermometer a pistol" (Ley, 45). These items, aside from their symbolic value of wealth and prestige, are devoid of meaning. Having four musketeers as opposed to three implies the final product is not necessarily an accurate historical account, but subjective to the creator. Eva deconstructs the supposed permanence of inanimate objects by pointing out their malleability. "Porcelana is a dangerous temptation, because once its secrets are known, nothing stands in the way of the artist's copying everything imaginable, constructing a world of lies and getting lost in it" (EL 108). This explains the hysteria of La Patrona as she misinterprets an act of cruelty most likely carried out by "boys," as a threat from the communist party delivered by the Bolsheviks themselves. Ley claims by a close examination of culture, "there is some evidence that the hoarding of esoteric objects by the middle class did indeed conceal a deeper insecurity" (46). Filling her house with "useless" and "disparate" objects, is indicative of an internal insecurity which impedes her ability to make her home a place of significance in accordance to her values and culture, which in turn is what makes it so easy for her to flee the country.

In direct contrast to others failed attempts to get home through land or property, Eva and Pilate achieve a psychic sense of home in wild spaces. Scholarship often parallels Pilate and Eva's alliance with nature to their eccentricity. Some have pointed out Pilate's ability to embrace African culture situates her closer to the earth. Conversely, Eva seems a model of what some critics call Allende's women; utopian, and affiliated with magic and nature. While these assertions are used to either venerate or discredit the authors, what they have in common is that they suggest either a "natural" or a voluntary separation from mainstream culture. This ignores that by the end of their journeys, they don't remain in the backwoods of Virginia or the jungles of



South America. Rose determines separation from the community, at least as a temporary strategy, is imperative to self-knowing. Separation arms the women to understand others from their community and allows them to distinguish their alliances. Thus within, "The spaces of separatism...then, is also a space of interrelations; another paradox" making both their separation and assimilation equally relevant to finding their place (Rose 153). According to Malpas, their ability to navigate within their environment is ultimately what gives them subjectivity. He argues subjectivity is formed by, "Our awareness of the world around us, including our strategies for organizing the world into meaningful structures, is conditioned by the need to move within and act upon our environment in ways that favor our interests, beginning with the skills necessary for survival" (30). By removing themselves from the currents of their culture, they can survey the land so to speak; evaluate their tools and determine the best route to find a place within mainstream society.

As big as the Butler's house is, Pilate feels confined within its walls. Her longing to be outside stems from the upbringing her father, an ex-slave gives to her. Jake's work forces him to interact with the natural landscape, implicitly immersing himself, as he carves out his own "place" in Lincoln's heaven. The notion that Africans were closer to animals legitimized enslaving them and the work that came with it. Ironically, despite their slave status, the work gave them human subjectivity. "The demands of this struggle motivate the agent to create ever-better representations of its environment and this representational groundwork contributes in turn to the further development of the agent's sensorimotor and cognitive abilities, enabling him to gain better control of his environment" (Prieto 30). Stewart corroborates this process, arguing that the slave's work gave them a "closer view" of the natural environment than their masters. "In slaver's attempt to cut costs by making slaves self-reliant by growing and hunting their own

food, they inadvertently supported slaves, "creating a community of their own that had its own coherence and that was closely tied to the environment in which they lived and labored" (Stewart,134). As a former slave, Jake evades the disconnect from nature whites experienced. Although the South was in Spillers words, "the scene of the crime" so to speak for African Americans, by the work of their own hands was shaped into a home that they created with the only knowledge that was acceptable for them to obtain. Having never owned anything, he clearly does not project these values onto Lincoln's heaven. He plows only half of his fields and lets the other half grow wild even though it could have meant a fortune in oak and pine. Rather he has a reciprocal relationship with the land. After performing backbreaking work for 16 years, not only did it yield a profit but also was the only farm around to grow fine Georgia Peaches. Yet, Jake only carries on what blacks have been doing for centuries:

Black Americans shaped the landscape of the American South. The houses that were built, the human beings that were nurtured in them; the forests that were cleared, and the crops that were planted and harvested were all tended by Black hands and formed by African cultural practices, technologies and sensibilities. The landscape of the South, in the beginning so alien to African slaves, became, for the most part, neither legally nor economically their own, but became spiritually their own through their own labor and under the most difficult of circumstances (Wardi 35).

In contrast to her brother Macon, Pilate harbors no shame her father was an ex-slave. Instead, she remembers the possibility he physically inscribes onto the land. She consciously decides to take heed of her upbringing in the American south, growing up on a farm and "knowing the kindness of her father and brother"(SOS 150). Despite the fact that slavery is abolished, the system that is meant to restrict Pilate, is the same system that enslaved her

ancestors. Her use of the environment indicates an alliance with the natural landscape similar to the one her ancestors had. Unger discusses how environmental knowledge armed African Americans with ways to thwart the system that bound them. As the land in the South became exhausted, women, who were the majority of field workers, feigned ignorance. As a result, the south yielded fewer crops helping to incite the civil war. Once they became free, they practiced methods like crop rotation to avoid exhausting the soil"(Unger, 26). Their environmental knowledge empowered them to play a role in facilitating their own freedom and inadvertently Pilate's and future generations that acknowledge these efforts as valiant when knowing what little space they had to work with.

Pilate's travels reveal the limited mobility black people had in general, but especially black women in particular. Although black men were wanted for work, " these companies did not encourage women to come. They did not want an influx of colored settlers in their town" (SOS 144). Given absolutely no space, they lived where it was cheap or free. Their options for work kept them in these cramped spaces with their only choices being backbreaking work for low paying wages or prostitution. Removed from slavery, Pilate continues the tradition of using the resources found in nature to break out of a space that seems to have already been mapped out for her. Her skill of making homemade wine and whisky of homegrown crops, " allowed her more freedom hour by hour and day by day than any other work a woman of no means whatsoever and no inclination to make love for money could choose" (SOS 150). By coming to terms with her past, Pilate can make out the dim light out of her own history that illuminates African Americans using nature, the only medium they had access to not only as a form of survival but as a method of resistance.

Eva's voluntary separation from the capital is akin to Allende's separation from her

country, which she says enabled her to "see" her country more clearly. Spending a few nights in the jungle puts into view the truth about her female mestiza identity. She exercises her new found wisdom when she confronts General Tolomeo, a keeper of social order. "While you and I are speaking here, behind your back Christopher Columbus is inventing America, and the same Indians that welcomed him in the stained-glass window are still naked in a jungle a few hours away from this office"(300). Eva alludes to the legacy which is grounded in the obfuscation of reality by colonizers as Christopher Columbus "invents" America. She points out the indigenous in the glass is historicized as if it only belongs to the past when they are still very much a part of the present. She disrupts the myth the window perpetuates and exposes the so-called "natural" jungles as repositories for the shame mainstream society had for their indigenous past. In the jungle, when Eva mistakenly ruins the mold the for the Universal Matter, the Indian literally uses "vegetal" blood to restore its malleability suggesting an alliance with nature to mock the "reality" construed within institutions of the patriarchal system.

Eva realizes through having endured 500 years of persecution and extermination, the Indigenous were the only constant in the chaotic world of South America. Despite their history, they remain a smiling people, content with the bare minimum for survival. Eva cannot help but admire this fortitude that superseded even the guerilla movement that promised to liberate the marginalized.

Those Indians, as poor as their ancestors at the beginnings of American history, had even with the intrusion of colonizers, maintained their customs, language, and gods. Of the proud tribe hunters they once were, there remained only a few sad indigents, but the long record of misery had not erased the memory of their lost paradise, nor their faith in the legends that promised they would regain it. (EL 277)

The ultimate sign of Eva's maturation is beginning to menstruate in the jungle after a long cessation. A biological change that marks a girl's transition into womanhood, it also becomes a sign she had "overcome her fear of love." Fear impedes the ability to mature by barricading engagement with the world. Craig notes that "Allende's sense of love is experienced as a non-hegemonic space where there is no concept of an autonomous, unitary individual. It is by experiencing love that a person lets go of imagined notions of individual subjectivity and instead sees subjectivity as relational" (37). Unlike the mainstream, Eva engages with the natives and in turn derives strength from their permanence. She notes it as the only thing that remains constant throughout Latin American history. Perhaps it is because their belief systems, although disparate between tribes, generally acknowledge the interconnection between assumed opposites. Robinson discerns the belief systems of many tribes from the west, which were typically bilateral and harmonious. "Meso-America units often boasted two gods (often the duality of gender, or elsewhere of counterposed forces" (162). Able to discern such commendable attributes in a people so devalued, she is unconsciously aware of her connection to them as she looks for her own image in each of their faces unsuccessfully. When she has anxiety about her part in the guerrilla subversion, she is calmed by the feminine energy of the moon ironically provided by her father's affiliation to the Luna tribe. Sanabria gives the example the sun god, a supremely important male deity is paired with the moon; an all-important female god (148). In all the strides towards progress, led by capricious political systems, Eva notices the indigenous as the only constant throughout Latin American history.

Both Pilate and Eva end their journeys by carving their own spaces within mainstream society and making homes for themselves. In contrast with the Butler's enormous house filled with useless objects, Milkman is amazed at Pilate's home's ability to be comfortable without one

item of comfort, "But peace was there, energy and singing and now his own remembrances" (SOS 300). Similarly, as Eva adorns her apartment with portraits of complete strangers, she attempts to trace back her genealogy based on the little she knows of her family and her mother's stories. The spaces they imagine become integrated into both their material reality and sense of self. Eva's script for the tele-novela, is parallel to her own journey, violating all of the "normal patterns" (EL 256). If we consider the oppressed only in relation to a higher position, we are creating the conditions that naturalize them as more "primitive" and therefore victims, and consequently obscure their capacity for resistance. Through their fiction, Morrison and Allende show how reimagining the interrelations between categories, we are able to expose vulnerability in positions of power as well as strength in the oppressed, breaking down false barriers that separate us.

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## Chapter Four

### Territories of the Imagination:

#### Mapping the Network between Landscapes and Bodyscapes in *Eva Luna* and *Song of Solomon*

Isabel Allende's *Eva Luna* and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* remind us that "natural" landscapes, are anything but natural and like other places in society are "full of human interpretation and significance" (Rose 43). Economies of sex vary according to culture, yet "the impulse to con- flate female imagery into the natural landscape has long been a literary trope, spanning continents and centuries" (Alexzandre 917). When considering the reach women's supposed "inherent" connection to nature has had, its function in society can no longer adequately be described as a social product of any one group of people. Rather belief systems are often grounded in an actual location, which includes the topographical characteristics of the land and in the same way, the physical features of the body deemed "foreign." These myths are one way to facilitate social organization by securing the vantage point of dominant groups. I will examine how both authors explore the cultural and ideological composite of women in each of their societies demonstrating how myths imposed on their bodies intersect with the myths derived from the natural landscape of their origins. Due to their shared histories, scholars like Deborah Cohn have begun to take note of the likeness of the regions of the South in the United States and Latin America, breaking down artificial borders with terms like "global south." In Pilate's veneration by scholars, and denigration by her community, I will demonstrate how both groups use Pilate's body as a conduit for myths tied in the natural landscape and history of the South and how Ruth and black women, in general, inherit this cargo. Conversely, Allende imagines how the passive construction of female characters in the Latin American literary

tradition has burdened the female body. In bringing these two works together, I hope to demonstrate what Laura Doyle has established in her book *Bordering on the Body*, "that hierarchies of race and gender require one another as co-originating and co-dependent forms of oppression rather than merely parallel, compounded or intersecting" (21). Morrison and Allende map the socio-political inheritance that is anchored in the topography of the gendered, racialized body. By contrasting these works born from distinct political and cultural contexts, we will find sex, race, and place, specify ordering principles that determine "who has what rights to whom" as well as who has what rights to where (Rubin 400).

*Song of Solomon's* narrator acts as the mediator between reality and myth within the African American community. Conversely, Eva Luna, both the title character and the narrator of Allende's novel participates in myth-making, and, therefore, complicates the process through the telling of her own story. Through both strategies, both authors fictional representation of places include the bodies of these women, a location that anchors local myth onto their sex and race. Geographers and anthropologists have found that human agency is the number one component in the shaping of landscape, including the wilderness. While it may seem nature, natural, wild, spaces are untainted by the social relations of humans, sociologists Greider and Garkovich explain how nature is reconfigured to justify people's distribution through space. "Each culture constructs its own world out of the infinite variety of nature.... [Nature is] socialized ... reorganized ... [and] made into a material manifestation of social structure" (6). Natural places are an especially powerful tool of social organization because its topographical features act as a monument for imagined or historical events. "The fact that myths and tales are place specific make them as a system more resistant to change" (Astvaldsson 622). Because women have historically been excluded from the public sphere and have been relegated to passive roles in

culture, women are discursively created by men, yet it is in the feminine body these myths become naturalized because they are "place specific" in the same way landscape is. Essentially, if women's bodies are used as the medium, they become what Dupleiss calls, "the impact point of a strong system of interpretation masked as representation, [The female body becomes] the materials one's culture considers powerful and primary" and continues to be used "to rehearse one's own colonization or "iconization" (106). In a sense, women are effectively trapped by their own bodies. Although Gayle Rubin's purpose in her essay "The Traffic of Women" is to find the locus of women's oppression, she implicitly uncovers women as integral to the propagation of cultural beliefs and values in the same way that landscape is used. In fact, their function is so similar that, "historically, in geographical discourse, landscapes are often seen in terms of the female body and the beauty of nature" (Rose 87). My intention is to avoid homogenizing Allende and Morrison's experiences simply because they engage in feminisms. As Mohanty points out, "No one becomes a woman (in Simone Debeavoir's sense) purely because she is female. Ideologies of womanhood have as much to do with race and class as they have to do with sex" (55). My aim is to locate the relationship between differing female subjectivities in order to bring into focus the burdens of a connected yet disparate history of myth projected upon female bodies. The comparison hopes to put into focus how gender and race work as relational terms. "They foreground a relationship and often a hierarchy between races and genders" (Mohanty 55).

Critics like Cohn have begun to take note of the similarities between the US South and South America, calling them, "neighboring spaces" with "similar personalities" deriving from shared histories" (21). Although continents apart, the homes of Pilate and Eva at one point shared a convergence in history in which European explorers "invented" the Americas. Doyle discusses land was often depicted as a beautiful woman, fruitful and worth dying for: "So often territories

are defended in a sexual language; the rape of women become the absolute assault on national character" (27). The sexualization of landscape signifies on a national scale what it does for women at the familial level. According to Rubin, "The phallus is more than just a feature which distinguishes the sexes: it is the embodiment of male status, to which men accede, in which certain rights inhere- among them, the right to a woman. It is an expression of the transmission of male dominance" (408). In other words, the metaphor that depicts the new world as a beautiful woman suits the Europeans because it underscores the projection of the phallus onto the territory, which in turn gives them access, lays claim, and ultimately seals their conquest.

Motivated by economic and territorial gains, the mythology that placed women and nature together was expanded to include slaves, the indigenous, and all non-Europeans. Mohanty describes the "order" that was implemented also managed to reinforce their superiority: "Institutionally, colonial rule operated by setting up rigid, hierarchal distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized. The physical and symbolic separation of the races was deemed necessary to maintain social distance and authority over subject peoples" (59). Scholar Zauditu-Selasie claims Pilate's geography book confirms her role as earth mother. Yet, for Pilate and other black women in the United States, "Earth Mother" was a stereotype that equated black women with fertility and sexuality, excluding her from culture, relegating her to the natural world. O'Reilly asserts, "The discursive and material erasure of the slave woman's mother love served the economic interests of slavery and ensured its continual reproduction" (128). In the context of slavery, earth mother meant she was everyone's mother, expected to perform motherly duties in the service of others, and also no one's mother; incapable of the psychological ties, reproducing was viewed as breeding for a female slave. To be clear, I am not trying to deny the existence of or undermine the value of African culture that abounds in Morrison's work, but any

scholarship that lifts these observations out of its cultural context comes off as one dimensional, and promotes a kind of utopian escapism that is hopelessly impossible. It fails to answer the question of, how the knowledge of African culture and self, arm one to survive in the American landscape. Spillers reminds us that slavery is a, "radically different kind of cultural continuation" that "interrupted hundreds of years of black culture." Anyone who writes and thinks about African-American life in the United States [including Morrison,] is doing so, "under the pressure of those events" (209).

The exchange of women, mainly through marriage but also by other means is one of the fundamental ways societies get organized. Gayle Rubin, while trying to find the locus of women's oppression, examines kinship systems; what some believe to be the foundation of human societies. Although her essay's purpose is to uncover the root of female oppression, her studies also reveal women as integral to the creation of culture. She first discusses the importance of gift exchange in a culture in order to illustrate the values projected upon the object that have little to do with the gift itself. In fact, "In a typical gift transaction, neither party gains anything." (397) In the *Elementary Forms of Kinship*, Claude Levi Strauss argues women are the most valuable commodities in this system of gift giving as they are exchanged in marriage. Power from social organization is the product being exchanged and women are the conduits for that power that men are the beneficiaries to. Rubin's sex/ gender system is an imposition of social ends upon natural biological differences. In effect, the exchange of women is a means to social organization according to the values of the culture. If women are used as conduits for values, then a people would be most easily conquered through the subjugation of its women. Hooks differentiates the female slave experience by pointing out they were not always shackled as the men. "It was only with the female slave that the white slaver could exercise freely absolute

power, for he could brutalize and exploit her without fear of retaliation" (18). The figurative projections imposed on the body, discursively and institutionally created, materialize in the terrorization and brutality in which slaves bodies were subjected to. In fact, Spillers calls events that occurred in the middle passage, "a theft of the body" (635). Under normal circumstances, the exchange of women confers a tacit "mystical power" that determines, "who gets which rights to whom (400). But in the violent conditions of the middle passage, a "theft" of the body also meant the severing of these "rights" through the violation of the bodies of African women. Spillers finds evidence of this "stolen body," in historical accounts of the middle passage often described as, "crimes against the flesh" (633). The flesh comes before the body because it acts as a blank canvas; free of social conceptualizations. In contrast, a body carries the values designated by its culture. In the mass rape and brutalization of African women, whites removed the lynchpin of black culture by disrupting their social order, effectively turning their bodies into mere flesh. In the empty spaces of their physical wounds and crushed spirit, whites naturalized concepts that worked towards a new desired social organization.

Pilate's body acts as the map in which all socio-historical projections converge. She is key to understanding what women like Ruth inherit simply for being born black and female. Gillian Rose notes the female body and the landscape of a culture as both "places" in which social power is played out. "Far from being natural, then, bodies are maps of power and identity, or rather maps of the relations between power and identity" (32). In concurrence with the naturalized association between blacks and nature, Pilate's eccentricity is always inscribed on her body as the wilderness. Macon recalls how Pilate always smells of pine, and he sees her as a willow stirring over her girls. Milkman describes her as a tall black tree with berry-stained lips and her voice sounded of Pebbles. Pilate's community growing up remember her as, "the little

woods-girl couldn't nobody put shoes on" (SOS 234). Pilate's origins, "The American South is a center of both exile and home for African Americans" (Wardi 35). As millions of blacks move north during the great migration, Pilate's body becomes a paradoxical center for this dichotomy. "While Pilate is depicted as a woman of natural dignity and black folk pride, she also suffers from a stigmatized identity and becomes the site in the text for middle class anxieties about the black underclass" (Brooks, 85). She is laughed at by the children, and dismissed as ugly, poor, dirty, and drunk by her community; even her granddaughter Hagar is embarrassed by her. Hortense Spillers, an African American female scholar recognizes her own body as a center of myths that she, many generations removed from slavery has inherited: "Peaches, Sapphire, and Earth Mother... a locus of confounded identities" (630). In the same fashion, myths are projected onto Pilate by her community, and she must navigate through the identity imposed on her physical body in order to shed herself of it, and get to the heart of who she really is.

Pilate's biological difference subjects her body to myths that cause her to be alienated. Her dress does not change as she goes from being a child to a young lady. It was acceptable to wear a dress without a bra without shoes as a child. However, as she begins to mature, both the men and women of her community sexualize her unconfined woman's body. "Their wives did not like the trembling, unhampered breasts under her dress, and told her so. And though the men saw many raggedy black children, Pilate was old enough to disgrace them" (SOS 144). Pilate's experience reenacts the conditions of slavery for black women as they, "lived in constant awareness of her sexual vulnerability and in perpetual fear that any male, white or black, might single her out to assault and victimize" (Hooks, 24). Hooks goes on to say it was common for 8 female slaves to be sexually assaulted as young as thirteen years old. Similarly, black men sexualize Pilate as the preacher starts "patting" on her. His wife's reaction after catching him, is



likened to how white wives put the blame on black women for morally corrupting their husbands. Although it was her husband "thumbing" at her breasts, she puts Pilate out.

The story of Pilate's birth exemplifies how her community has mythologized her. "It was the absence of a navel that *convinced* people that she had not come into this world through normal channels; has never lain, floated, or grown in some warm liquid place connected by a tissue-thin tube to a reliable source of human nourishment" (my emphasis SOS 27). According to the book *African spiritual Traditions* of Toni Morrison, Pilate's lack of a navel signifies her, "otherworldliness" keeping her, "attached to her mother in the spiritual realm" (81). This interpretation is formulated by examining African beliefs, which can also be described as produced by the sex economy of African culture. Her fictionalized lack transforms into a symbol of sexual difference, just as Pilate herself assumes, never having seen another woman's stomach. When it comes to a belly button, she figured, "he has one. She did not. He peed standing up. She squatted down. He has a penis like a horse did. She had a vagina like the mare...She thought it was one more way in which males and females were different" (143). Similarly, within the scholarship of African cultural studies, the meaning of smooth stomach is derived from her physiology as a woman.

The narrator informs us, in reality, Pilate's lack of navel is of no consequence, but is only given life by, "intimacy, gossip, and the time it took for curiosity to become drama." (149) Though it is tempting to attribute the odd trait to Pilate's magic, especially considering Morrison's style, her narrator deconstructs this myth. "Her defect, frightening and exotic as it was, was also a theatrical failure" (148). However her smooth stomach is constituted, it affected Pilate's material reality in the way, "It isolated her...every other resource was denied her: partnership in marriage, confessional friendship, and communal religion" (SOS 148). Whether

Pilate's lack of a navel is venerated by scholars or denigrated by her community, it uses her body to confer what Rubin calls the "quazi-mystical power of social linkage" or in the case of her community, breakage.

Because Pilate was born "naveless," perhaps we can better understand this "defect" as an inherited trait, but not the biological kind. Pilate's father Jake, an ex-slave provides a key to the map of socio-historic relations of power that emanate from Pilate's physical features, much like Consuelo does for Eva. Although slaves were not included in the American sex/gender system, Spillers argues concepts of inferiority and "otherness" were nonetheless propagated through the slave's body. Spillers argues that if the flesh acts as the "primary narrative" for African Americans, the woundings slaves endured, lacerations, tears, punctures, lesions, scars, "render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh," a discourse intended solely for the captive body," that Pilate's own father suffered (207). The bullet holes in Jake's body literally produced a cultural message more binding than the contract he was made to sign because it perforated the flesh and would be re-inscribed with each generation. If we believe marking and branding transfers from one generation to another, as Spillers suggests, then perhaps Pilate's navel may qualify as a "symbolic substitution in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiating moment" (207). Pilate's lack of a navel performs the same function as the "brands and marks" that descendants of slaves unknowingly carry on their smooth, undamaged skin. Her own smooth stomach, harmless except for the fear it invoked in black people, materializes their anxiety of being less human than whites, serving to affirm black women were something, "God never made" (SOS 144).

In the United States, Ruth best exemplifies the confined space African American women had to endure as a result of ideologies that can be traced back to slavery. African American men who attempted to assimilate into white culture, could at least depend on their "maleness" if not

the color of their skin. Morrison took notice of African American literature during this period, whose weakness she felt lied in the manner they were always written with a white audience in mind. She explains, " Those books and political slogans about power were addressed to white men trying to explain or prove something to them" (Li 26). Bell Hooks points out the ill consequences of fighting for the right to participate in American culture, inevitably also meant accepting the values of that culture in which women were devalued. "Contrary to popular opinion, the sexual politics of the 50s socialized black women to conform to sexist defined role patterns" (184). Women were relegated to a passive role in which their bodies bear the male's burden of the internalized battle that put into question their own humanity. "That the black woman was victimized by sexist and racist oppression was seen as insignificant, for woman's suffering however great could not take precedence over male pain" (Hooks 5). Morrison illustrates this very process in which Ruth becomes a receptacle for Macon and her father's insecurities. If we consider American cultural production in terms of Gayle Rubin's Sex/ Gender system, Ruth becomes a conduit for the social dominance both Macon and the Doctor are trying to achieve. As the daughter of the most respected negro in town, a small woman with lemony skin, Ruth was a prize, a symbol of achievement. "In the black community the fair skinned black woman who most nearly resembled the white woman was seen as the "lady" and placed on a pedestal while darker skinned black women were seen as bitches and whores" (Hooks 110). After 20 years without being intimate with his wife, all he missed was her underwear described as, " the most beautiful, the most delicate, the whitest and softest underwear on earth," revealing 11 the value he sought in Ruth was her ability to "whiten" him, granting him access to mainstream society that his family had always been excluded from (SOS 16). High stakes were conferred in the exchange of women including, "sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage

names and ancestors, rights and people-men, women, and children- in concrete systems of social relationships" (401). However, Macon is not granted full access because Doctor never relinquishes his dominance as his marriage to Ruth would suggest. He is not impressed by Macon's self- induced transformation from humble upbringings. He attacked his masculinity by belittling the way he made his living, calling it, "buying shacks in shacktown" (SOS 71).

When Ruth declines coercing her father for money to invest in the Erie Lackawanna railroad, Macon takes it as a personal attack, wondering, "who she was married to-me or him?" In reality, she was not opposed to the idea, she simply said it had to be his decision and she could not influence him. The perceived alliance against him may have intensified the idea that Ruth and her father were sexually intimate. Rubin says Lacan distinguishes between the penis and the phallus, like organ is to information. Thus the penis symbolizes the phallus in intra-family exchange, essentially the transference of male dominance. "In the cycle of exchange manifested by the Oedipal Complex, the phallus passes through the medium of women, from one man to another" (408). This explains Macon equation of the barrier to capital his father-in-law puts in place, with a barrier to sexual access. The Doctor knowingly will not release his "dominance" to Macon, and Ruth's "slow-wittedness" will not allow her to see this exchange between her father and husband.

When Macon sees Ruth at her father's bedside he mentally fabricates her fall from grace. Prior to the incident, her subservience as a wife and light skin allowed him to put her on the same pedestal white women have been placed on due to their assumed moral purity and sexual 12 passivity. The snowy whiteness Macon misses about her underwear depicts this ideal, which after the incident of Ruth with her father, "those round, innocent, corset eyes now lost to him forever" (17). Although Ruth is diminished from an idealized to a desecrated woman, she

continues to maintain her status as object. Hooks explains, "the idealized woman becomes property, symbol, and ornament; she is stripped of her essential human qualities. The devalued woman becomes a different kind of object; she is the spittoon in which men release their negative, anti-woman feelings" (110). The narrator ensures we cannot trust Macon's perspective because, "little by little he remembered fewer and fewer of the details, until finally he had to imagine them, even fabricate them, guess what they might have been. The image left him, but the odiousness never did"(SOS 17). Fueled by his internalization of the myth of black women's sexual, animalistic, nature, he contrives evidence in every memory of Ruth and the Doctor that points to a perverted incestuous relationship between them. He even manages to sexualize giving birth as her father delivered her babies: "She had her legs wide open and both times he was there" (SOS 71). Constructing Ruth as this sexually depraved being causes his rejection of her. Remaining in a marriage and withholding physical intimacy and affection, he implies she is not worthy of being loved. His unfounded feelings of her sexual nature are evidenced in his irrational response to the origin of his son's nickname.

Without knowing any of the details, he guessed, with the accuracy of a mind sharpened by hatred, that name he heard schoolchildren call his son...he guessed this name was not clean. Milkman- It sounded dirty, intimate, and hot. He knew wherever that name came from, it had something to do with his wife and was, like the emotion he always felt while thinking of her, coated with disgust (SOS 15).

Hooks' explanation connotes Macon's distaste for his wife, "Because they, like white men, see black women as inherently more sexual and morally depraved than other groups of women, they have felt the greatest contempt toward her" (110). Despite Ruth's privileged looks coincides with values of lady-hood in our society, she cannot escape the myth attributed to her

sex and intensified by her race. Unlike Macon, who has maleness to allow him entrance into patriarchal culture, Ruth has nothing. At first glance, Ruth comes off as a strange and peculiar woman. But this is fueled by Macon's perspective. As she describes what she gets from visiting her father's grave, she expresses not only a longing for someone wanting to touch her, but a relationship of reciprocity. "To talk to somebody who wanted to listen and not laugh at me. Somebody I could trust. Someone who trusted me. Someone who was...interested in me. For my own self" (SOS 125). Ruth is not a sexually deprived, immoral, strange person, much like the lot of so many other African American women, she was starving for love, acceptance, and approval.

In contrast, to scholars finding Pilate's "wildness" useful in celebrating African culture, Allende's "wild" females are generally viewed as archetypal. Many critics have agreed with Gabriella Mora's assertion that Allende's stereotypical characters, specifically women with an affinity for magic and nature, are essentialist (Jorgensen 134). Writing of Allende's women as one-dimensional either ignores or is ignorant to the differing nuances of racial and gender construction in Latin America in comparison to the United States. Rafael Torrez Perez's explanation of mestizaje focuses for the most part on the Chicana experience; however I would argue mestizaje is an inheritance rooted in Latin American bodies which represent, "the physical trace of a historic process, an often violent encounter in which identities of race (as well as gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity) become inextricable from the material conditions of colonial and neo-colonial histories" (XV). Painting Allende's women with one brush imitates a discursive tradition in Latin America that is arguably responsible for America's "invention". Pratt includes many travel narratives that exemplify this effect. One, in particular, in the book *Imperial Eyes*, chronicles the long history of the convergence of women and nature. Madame Godin husband wrote her account of the new world as, "a replay of the great Amazon quest,

carried out by the female amazon herself- or a thing near to it. Love, loss, and jungle transform the creole woman from a white aristocrat into the combative woman warrior that Europeans had created to symbolize America to themselves" (Pratt 21). Pratt describes this story as compelling, even today. One can only imagine the effect it had on Europeans luring them to settle the new land.

Consequently, this act of conferring meaning using women and landscape continues to be a prominent trope of Latin American literature. *Dona Barbara*, written over seventy years ago, was an Amazonian woman aligned with the "recalcitrant land" needs to be "husbanded, controlled, and civilized" (Bueno, Andre, 6). The Classic Colombian novel *Maria* constructed a passive female whose function was to idealize the Colombian landscape. More recently Garcia Marquez continues this tradition with Remedios the beauty; eccentric for being in tune with her natural rhythms and ultimately levitating out of the plot. Through these works and more, the function of women and landscape are continuously reinvented. In her article "The Blank Page: Issues of Female Creativity", Susan Gubar examines how women are used as a medium for art using the metaphor of women as "the blank page." Gubar's article has undertones of Rubin's sex/gender system, except she uses it to see how women are used to generate social products through art. "Woman is not simply an object, however. If we think in terms of the production of culture, she is an art object...but she is not the sculptor" (244). Hector-Fernandez L 'Hoeste depicts this very process as he argues Issacs, the author of *Maria*, was concerned with building a national identity for newly independent Colombia. Idealizing the land would attract European settlers who would in turn "whiten" the country, helping Columbians to visually distance themselves from their indigenous past. If we consider literature as a tool of social organization, Issacs uses *Maria* as a conduit for the social product of national identity as well as conquest.

Thus, in depicting female characters with an affinity for nature and magic, Allende is tapping into a common trope in the Latin American literary tradition primarily shaped by its male authors. Eva Luna's structure, a string of episodic over the top accounts, seem to corroborate Allende's critiques. This reductionist perspective undermines the effect of Allende's meta-fictional strategy, allowing her to be inside and outside her own story in order to question the relationship between reality and fiction by means of blurring its boundaries. Patricia Hart points out how with Allende, the real consistently undermines the magical and proves to be the more powerful force" (Jorgensen 136). Allende did not invent women's affinity to nature and magic, however, her text does imagine how this association has impacted Latin American women's material reality.

As the narrator, Eva's choice to begin her own story with her past implies the importance her history is to her own self-discovery, just like Milkman in *Song of Solomon*. Consuelo, Eva's mother embodies a cultural, as well as literary past for women in Latin America. Similar to iconic female characters of the Latin literary canon like Maria, Consuelo is depicted as part of nature, "marked forever by that landscape"(EL 1). But unlike Maria, at first she does not display a "feminine passivity" that aligns her with nature. Her unique appearance contrasts rather than blends with the landscape, "her long red hair, like a whip of fire against the eternal green," connoting her as a separate entity (EL 3). As Latin America began its race towards modernity, funds were mostly allocated to big cities. Rural areas and jungles were financially neglected and were used as centers of transculturation for mestizo and indigenous groups. Thus rural areas and jungles became repositories for the shame mainstream society had for their indigenous past. Consuelo's proximity to nature signifies what it did for the mestizo and the indigenous; she has no "place," as the priests who control the social organization of the mission exclude her. The setting invokes the colonization of South America by the church, but she clearly does not fit into



the hierarchy of the mission. "She was not exactly a servant, but neither did she have the status of the Indian boys at school, and when she asked which of the priests was her father, she was cuffed for her insolence" (EL 2). The priests were preparing the Indian boys to assimilate as men into their culture, but as an orphan, Consuelo carries no ties, or lineage, property, or wealth of any kind, which significantly reduces her value in a system of exchange. As Luites examines gender roles in Latin America, she concludes gender defines destiny, "Al niño se le educa para una carrera, a la niña para el matrimonio y la subyugación normalmente para ella no hay otras posibilidades." "A boy is educated for a career, a girl for marriage and subjugation. Normally, there are no other possibilities for her" (7). Marriage was not viewed as a viable option so the priests, "paid little attention to Consuelo." (EL 3) She was wild, not because she was, "growing up scorched by the sun, poorly nourished on yucca and fish, infested with parasites, bitten by mosquitoes, free as a bird," but because she had no place in society (EL 3).

While Morrison's work intimately looks at the African American community for these processes, Allende recognizes that all Latin American women are continually punished for the so-called sins of La Malinche, mythologized as the ultimate traitor for her relationship to Spanish settler, Hernan Cortez. The episode that joins Consuelo and El Portugues in the jungle reenacts this period in Latin American history. El Portugues is a microcosm of European settlers coming to South America with hopes of finding cities of pure gold. His fascination with Consuelo recalls the conquistadors Eva mentions at the start of the novel who are described as, "staring into the abyss of their own ambitions" (EL 1). Similarly, she is likened to his dreams of getting rich as he is "bedazzled to gaze upon her" (EL 4). Her distinct appearance, exotic, "a white-skinned girl with a blaze of hair," like the virgin land, unaltered by man, was a sign of the treasures that awaited whoever could tame it. He uses Consuelo much as he uses the chickens as a means to

collect gold from the land. "Harvesting gold," meant slitting the craw of chickens he had let "pillage" the land eating anything that glittered. Afterward, the craw was sewn with a needle not simply to save its life, but so, "it could continue to serve its owner" (EL 4). If they died during the process, their bodies were sold as commodities. This parodies the domination of the indigenous by the Europeans for the purposes of exploiting the land and their labor. Consuelo's treatment of the process as a game implies her naiveté in being complicit in a system where, "women are in no position to realize the benefits of her own circulation" (Rubin 398). The blood that is spattered onto her solidifies her exclusion from the creation of culture. Gubar uses Dinesen's story to exemplify how blood is a "symbol furnished by the female body" (254). The nuns frame the bed sheets of royals after the wedding night to "tell the story" of their submission, the bloodstains become, "a testimony to the women's function as a silent token of exchange" (254). Author Octavio Paz detects the myth of La Malinche as symptomatic of a cultural internalization: "The strange permanence of Cortes and La Malinche ... reveal they are something more than historical figures: They are symbols of a secret conflict we have not yet resolved" ( Delden, Grenier 61). As an "art object" the spattered blood acts as a kind of hieroglyph inscribing the myth of La Malinche onto Consuelo marking her as a traitor, giving her the blame for the indigenous blood spilled to exploit the natural resources of the land. A myth that materializes in the psyche, it is found to be at the heart of physical abuse of women in Latin America. "Violence against women in Latin America is rooted in the opposition conqueror/ conquered and in the lack of resolution in 18 our past, placing la Malinche as a metaphor for the ambivalence of the feminine in our countries" (Montesino 277). The same "story" has been written on countless women in Latin America.

When Consuelo returns to the mission, Priests "read the story" of spattered blood, a reminder of women's "nature" that is inevitably developing in Consuelo as an adolescent of twelve. Carolyn Merchant argues women's wild and uncontrollable nature generated the myth that women were more sexual and often responsible for the moral degradation of men. In Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a popular handbook on sex in Europe, he claimed, young women sought sex as soon as they reached puberty (Merchant 132). These values were transferred to Latin America through European colonizers. Once they realize Eva is upon sexual maturity, they can no longer facilitate her "freedom." They send her away from the jungle to the city to join a convent for nuns in which Allende depicts the process of indoctrinating a woman into patriarchal culture. Contrary to the freedom she has always known, she is confined in the convent as, she looked up and saw the sky reduced to a rectangle, she felt she was suffocating" (EL 5). The nuns worked to remove all signs of virility, even toning down the vibrant color of her hair they deemed as a "Satan's tail." As a result, she becomes passive, vowing a self-imposed silence unless absolutely necessary. The nuns take an interest in Consuelo because she is white and they try to convince her to stay in the convent and become a nun a choice that would not be given to her daughter as demonstrated by the treatment of the others. All the other girls were Indian or Mestizo from the barrios and they were trained to be servants because, "it was assumed they were incapable of anything else"(8). The choice that Consuelo has, exemplify the limited places designated for women implied by a social production of gender called "Marianismo", the Latin American version of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Anthropologist Harry Sanabria illustrates "marianismo": "The identity pivots around being a self-sacrificing mother and caring 19 for children. It draws upon images of the Virgin Mary and overlaps with concepts of honor" (152). The Victorian model of femininity had slight nuance of difference, but I suspect Hooks'

decoding of its implicit message can be applied to both: As long as white [or light] women possessed sexual feeling they would be seen as degraded immoral creatures; remove these sexual feelings and they become worthy of love, consideration, and respect" (31). At first glance drawing a comparison of becoming a nun to institutional marriage seems unreasonable and exaggerated. But in Latin America, whether a virtuous nun or wife, the expectation is to strive to embody the virtues of the Virgin Mary. For both, it secures a "place" in society, one that ensures control and subservience.

Pilate and Consuelo are closer to nature as a result of an inheritance of the historical relations of power imposed onto traits of their sex and race. Although Pilate's physical difference derives from Morrison's imagination, it retains the power to construe itself as knowledge, both within Morrison's fiction through the community's memory and storytelling, and in reality through scholarship on Morrison. Allende demonstrates how the Latin American literary tradition has bled into culture, perpetuating ideology that always uses gender and race as ordering principles. This exemplifies the struggle of power that is always taking place within a culture; the process that includes, "creating, sustaining, ne-gotiating, and imposing symbolic landscapes" ( Greider, Garkovich 17). Actual landscapes and "symbolic landscapes" include women's bodies that have, across culture and time, have proven to have use as territories of the imagination.

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## Chapter 5

Deliberately thinking about literature geographically unveils many new dimensions as it provokes a transnational comparison between the authors subjective experience of space within distinct landscapes. Multiculturalism is becoming a key component across many disciplines, specifically within Toni Morrison and Isabel Allende studies. A common pitfall for scholars of the United States is to assume categories of difference or categories of dominance are universal across borders. This is demonstrated in scholarship that aims to compare writers from the United States and writers from Latin America based on the notion that they are marginalized. Although more than likely unintentional, scholarship is aiding in another construction of the “other”, by universalizing what Mohanty calls, “the third world difference.” Thinking of the components of a text within a constellation encourages analysis of the relationship between categories of both individual and place identities in their discursive setting at a particular moment in time. This preserves the complexity of each text that despite the comparison is almost certainly reacting to its own unique, environment. It promotes a deeper consideration of each cultural landscape from which each text is born. Any comparative study, which purports to have a multicultural component, based solely on a singular category must be read cautiously. Without a consideration of all the dynamics of a relationship, the results cannot claim to be conclusive. As Toni Morrison explores the effects of racism, not only from a “victim’s” perspective but also from a privileged position, we can see how it works to degrade white American consciousness. In contrast, Allende demonstrates how men benefit when they embrace stereotypically feminine traits, like nurturing. In their imagination of the inter-subjectivity between categories, Allende and Morrison portray



power and weakness from all angles. Although each of my chapters explores “place” in a distinct discursive setting, all of them attempt to think of the different conceptions of place geographically.

In my second chapter, I try to locate Allende and Morrison’s place in literature and argue that the literary canon can be considered a place. Morrison and Allende are both critically acclaimed as well as popular authors, demonstrating that the two are not mutually exclusive. My findings are, in consideration of a work’s merit, we must also not separate texts from the socio-political circumstances, landscapes, or cultures from which they are born. Looking at literature geographically forces us to remove hierarchies of influence and genre and place. A comparison between these authors is warranted because of their attempt both inside and outside the text to create space for themselves in order to emerge whole as respected literary figures. My second chapter looks at the fictional representation of geographical places and its relationship to other categories of identity such as sex and race. Two female characters of color traversing geographic boundaries provide an insightful perspective into the most important component of landscape, human agency. I argue where you are effects who you are, and Pilate and Eva’s travels enable them to break out of the limited space prescribed to them. Concepts like Showalter’s wild zone, demonstrate how we have been thinking spatially about literature for a long time. Showalter’s interpretation of Ardner’s diagram still reinforces a hierarchy, which has the inevitable effect of constructing women and minorities as “weak”. A more contemporary geographical concept, paradoxical space is trying to free itself from androcentric models as well, but it articulates how women negotiate space within a patriarchal system. The result is this model both acknowledges the power structure, but avoids undermining the capacity for resistance. My third chapter imagines the female body as a place that corresponds to its geographical location corroborated by

myths and legends. Reading *Song of Solomon* and *Eva Luna* side by side remind us that sex and race or place are not blanket categories you can apply to any culture. Rather it is the way societies think about these categories that matter. By illuminating the different constructions of gender and race across culture, as well as the vehicles for those constructions, can reveal how they contribute to certain arrangements in society and who stands to benefit.

A call for a geographic analysis of literature is basically a call to consciously reorganize the way we are thinking. It seeks to avoid linear thought processes and to recognize identity itself as relational. It must make use of and give value to imagination as a means to plotting a constellation according to a specific discursive setting. I envision this being especially useful when studying texts from different countries. However, maps that attempt to plot human relations can be provisional, shifting, and riven with tensions depending on when we are looking. Unfortunately, the temporal aspect, which is impossible to divorce from any concept of place means our work mapping a text, will inevitably have to be remapped. I believe this can work to the advantage of comparative literary studies by encouraging scholars to keep current in their fields. As there will always be a need to “remap,” there will be limitless opportunity for research. Depending on the object of study, it could require cross-disciplinary research inspiring engagement with other departments. My research was based on a few central geographical concepts. Perhaps regular interaction with other departments can provide more tools that can be useful to literary studies. As we begin to see relationships between categories of identity as co-dependent and co-originating, any analysis based on any singular component will inevitably be reductive, and mapping will prove to be an indispensable tool to comparative studies.

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## Curriculum Vitae

**Vivianna Orsini**

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7867 Prairie Bluff St.  
Las Vegas, NV 89113  
Phone: 702-339-3528  
e-mail: [orsiniv@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:orsiniv@unlv.nevada.edu)

### Objective

To obtain a tenure track position specializing in comparative, transnational literature in an institution that values both excellence in teaching and research.

### Teaching Experience University of Las Vegas Nevada (UNLV)

#### Instructor ENG 407A

**1/2014 – 5/2014**

In this class, I help students develop the skills needed to write successfully in the workplace. I introduce the rhetorical principles and compositional practices necessary for writing effective business letters, memos, and reports.

#### Instructor ENG 102

**1/2013 – 5/2014**

Students learn the processes necessary for collecting and incorporating research material in writing. I have implemented a theme where we investigate comedy's social functions, and socio-political influences, and how comedy, by either reacting to or reflecting societal norms, can influence and affect significant change.

**Instructor ENG 101**

**8/2012 – 12/2013**

A writing intensive course in which students progress from personal expressive writing to text-based expository essays appropriate for an academic audience. Students develop strategies for turning their experience, observations, and analyses into evidence suitable for writing in a variety of academic disciplines.

**Writing Tutor**

**1/2012 – 12/2012**

Providing 45 minute consultations with students reading essays out loud to locate gaps in ideas, problems in organization, grammatical errors, and style.

**Education**

UNLV

**1/2012 – present**

M.A. English GPA 3.91

M.A. English GPA 3.91

UNLV

**1/2006**

**– 8/2010**

B.A. English GPA 3.71

**Honors and Awards**

UNLV Graduate Assistantship

**1/2012**

**–5/2014**

GPSA- travel reward

**4/2015**

English Department travel reward

**4/2015**

**Conferences**

**PMLA** “The Way to the Heart is Through the Spirit” .....**10/2014**

**MELUS** “Without Mandate for Conquest” .....**4/2015**

**Languages**

Fluent Spanish

### **Research Interests**

My research interests are in comparative 20<sup>th</sup> century literatures from the Americas. More specifically, my work examines How women writers transform their stereotypical connection to nature into an integral component of accessing their own humanity.

### **Memberships**

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Golden Key International Honor Society | <b>10/2009- present</b> |
| Sustainability Action Team             | <b>3/2009- present</b>  |
| Latin Heritage Committee               | <b>10/2009- present</b> |
| Meadows Parent Association             | <b>8/2011- present</b>  |

### **Professional Qualifications**

Proficient in full Microsoft Suite

### **References**

**Available upon request**