

## ABSTRACT

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** The Necessary Function and Authority of the Feminine Narrative in Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, *Daughter of Fortune*, and *Portrait in Sepia*

**STUDENT:** Amy Cox

**DEGREE:** Master of Arts

**COLLEGE:** Liberal Arts

**DATE:** May 2011

**PAGES:** 62

This research demonstrates how Isabel Allende has created a trilogy representing alterity and the subversion of traditional gender roles when she wrote *The House of the Spirits*, *Daughter of Fortune*, and *Portrait in Sepia*. These texts establish a new precedent for Latina writing that had never been addressed previously. Her style of magical feminism directly corresponds with Hélène Cixous's theory of *écriture féminine*, which essentially created a metalanguage for the feminine voice. Allende's achievement lies primarily in her ability to enable the feminine narrative in a traditionally masculine forum. In so doing, her texts are embedded with feminine authority through subversive uses of silence, space and modes of expression. Allende maintains continuity throughout each text of the trilogy by utilizing "us-them" signifiers, employing a voyeuristic/photographic filter, and relying on a generational narrative. Ultimately, she forces the Other to be the masculine rather than the feminine narrative. Allende's writing absolutely challenges masculine traditions, but most importantly, it repeatedly empowers the feminine perspective, setting a new standard and reinforcing Cixous's groundbreaking work.