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**Literary Analysis of Gender Roles of Women within the Novel  
"Island Beneath the Sea" by Writer Isabel Allende Using the  
Feminist Approach**

**Thesis Submitted to Obtain the Bachelor in English**

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## Dedication

One of the main reasons why I chose a Feminist approach for my investigation is the fact that I have been rescued, mentored and guided by amazing, strong women, throughout all my life the strongest, wisest and most loving women have held my hand so I do not face the hardest times alone: my dear mother, who has been gone for a year already, not a day goes by without thanking God for the gift of you being my mother. Moreover, my dearest friend Valeria, who had been an amazing friend and classmate, supporting me when my mother passed away while we were working together in various university projects, my dear friend Sonia, who made it possible for me to start my healing journey with ancestral medicine this year, my dear friend Abby, who took my hand, guided me through my ceremonies, and showed me kindness in a world that is often ruled by harshness, my amazing coach and dear friend Geanine, as well as my therapist Lauren, two remarkable women who help me build a better, stronger, more mature, and mentally healthier version of me, my sister Gabi, who is always there for me and is one of the best mothers I know, my dear boss Adriana, who gave me my joy of teaching back after almost giving up. Finally, all the amazing little girls, teenage girls and women I have had the privilege of coaching, mentoring and teaching throughout the years, you inspire me, bring me joy, and fill my heart with gratitude every day.

## **Abstract**

The research to analyze the novel “Island Under the Sea” by writer Isabel Allende, was conducted with the purpose of answering the question: which are the similarities found in the challenges faced by the female characters of the novel Island Beneath the Sea, compared to the reality lived by women in Costa Rica in the year 2024?

The research in reason was done and documented by César Guillermo Gómez Méndez using the feminist approach, analyzing data that showed racism, classism, misogyny and feminist reality within the novel, which would also be compared with the reality women still face nowadays, in comparison with what the characters within the novel faced; similarities were found, such as oppression and sexual exploitation, as well as differences between the two periods and settings, such as the favorable circumstances some characters enjoyed which would otherwise be very unlikely to happen, and regrettably, several misogynistic problematics that are present within the novel are still relevant within the present time in society.

## Resumen

La investigación realizada para analizar la novela “La Isla Bajo el Mar” de la escritora Isabel Allende se llevó a cabo con el propósito de responder a la pregunta: ¿cuáles son las similitudes encontradas en los desafíos enfrentados por los personajes femeninos de la novela La isla bajo el mar en comparación con la realidad que viven las mujeres en Costa Rica en el año 2024?

Dicha investigación fue hecha y documentada por César Guillermo Gómez Méndez utilizando el enfoque feminista, analizando datos que reflejan racismo, clasismo, misoginia y la realidad feminista dentro de la novela. Estos datos fueron comparados con la realidad que las mujeres aún enfrentan en la actualidad. Se encontraron semejanzas, entre las que están la opresión y la explotación sexual, así como diferencias entre los dos periodos y contextos. Entre las diferencias destacan las circunstancias favorables que algunos personajes disfrutaron en la novela, las cuales serían poco probables en la vida real. Lamentablemente, varios problemas de misoginia presentes en la novela siguen siendo relevantes en la sociedad actual.

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## Chapter I

### Introductory Framework

Feminism has always been present in modern society, one way or another, and has always fought to thrive in misogynistic societies. The researcher sees feminism as the theory that both men and women enjoy the same rights and abide by the same duties in the eyes of law and society. The novel *Island Beneath the Sea* by Isabel Allende is no exception to this description. In this story, Zarité, the protagonist, faces struggle after struggle, always seeking her freedom from slavery in the eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue (Dominican Republic), and later in New Orleans (United States), where she fights to be defined as a person, an equal. Likewise, other female characters fight to be seen as humans in a world that heavily objectifies them, posing a significant threat to their autonomy and, at times, even dignity. This book was chosen precisely as it is rich in feministic scenarios which are going to be analyzed further. This introductory framework will provide details on what will be analyzed through a feminist approach.

#### 1.1 Problem Statement

Feminism focuses its efforts on reaching equality amongst genders, providing equal opportunities, treatment, and dignity to all women regardless their beliefs, origins, or economic status, as women have been a demographic group that has been heavily affected by misogyny. Regrettably, even though nowadays society is considerably more open-minded, misogyny still affects women significantly. Therefore, as this problematic heavily affects women, this research aims to analyze the issues, challenges, and limitations that the female characters in the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* go through, and will compare them to our reality nowadays, in hopes of raising feminist awareness further.

The problematic that comes from misogyny is that it often silences feminist activism, and the efforts to keep raising awareness are silenced; consequently, this would impact progress towards equality negatively. This is seen every day in all areas, from a family dynamic to a professional environment, such is the importance of keep raising awareness of how misogyny keeps affecting women and how it limits them even nowadays. Pieces of research such as this one allow to keep working towards an equality goal, and failing to do so delays reaching an equality goal.

Misogynistic attempts to delay equality towards feminism are present all over the world in the present day, especially in Latin American countries such as Costa Rica, in which, though feminism is present, it is constantly under attack, and attempts to further solidify it are threatened by not only misogynistic points of view, but also highly conservative ones, which combined result in catastrophic outcomes, often affecting feminist initiatives, reason why proceeding with this analysis is of utmost importance, as it further contributes to raising awareness and providing further details and visibility towards this issue. As misogynistic attempts to delay feministic progress have been present through generations, it is paramount to act as soon as possible, since women are undermined in various settings of their lives every day. Consequently, it is important to act at the earliest to ensure misogyny is not favored and feminism continues gaining strength and further establishes its presence, especially in Costa Rica, and affecting Costa Rican women.

Feminism remains necessary as more and more information about the conditions that women face become available to the public. The international confederation known as Oxfam has researched significant data. Women only occupy 24% of Parliament positions worldwide, while municipal positions hold a less encouraging perspective with only 5% of positions being occupied by women. Additionally, Oxfam indicates that, on average worldwide, women's salaries are 24% lower than men's. Moreover, out of 78 million adult illiterate

people, two thirds of this population are composed of women, an average that has remained consistent over the past two decades. Furthermore, 135 countries have laws that discriminate against women. In fact, in 18 of these countries, husbands can legally impede their wives to work, and regrettably, all over the world, one out of 3 women suffers or shall suffer from domestic violence.

Moreover, amongst innumerable examples of misogyny women face, both in Latin America and the rest of the world; the researcher can mention how rape victims are often blamed of being raped, provoking offenders with preposterous reasons such as what they were wearing, attitudes and body language. Additionally, women are commonly the obvious choice to take care of children, elderly relatives, and/or sick/disabled relatives. Furthermore, victims of domestic violence are often judged, even stating that if it were significantly bad, they would leave, as this should not affect children. Women, especially in Latin America, are often congratulated if they excel in cooking, being told that they can get married since they have mastered a pivotal task to care for their husbands. Additionally, women are often judged if they do not wish to marry and/or have kids, and double standards prevail worldwide, as an angry woman is considered hysterical or under the effects of PMS, while men are regarded as passionate, honest and straightforward if they behave in the same manner. A woman who is sexually active is often regarded as a slut, a man will be seen as a catch; a woman who eats alone at a restaurant is taken pity of, while a man that does the same is considered interesting; gray hairs typically make a man more attractive, while a woman's skin and hair care routines target rejuvenating goals, so she remains desirable and youthful.

Moreover, it is important to tackle misogyny with education and provide further tools to raise awareness regarding feminism in Costa Rica, since this will allow this generation, as well as future ones, to ensure equality is enforced as time goes by, and that both genders enjoy equal treatment and opportunities by enhancing their knowledge on the matter. It is

important to educate both genders in the newest generation in matters such as emotional intelligence, compassion, assertiveness, and equality, being the last one of utmost importance. By tackling misogynistic attempts and facilitating learning resources to this generation, as well as future ones, we ensure previous attempts to establish equality would not go unnoticed, and that we would remember all those brave and strong women even in the present day.

Nowadays, there is a significant amount of women in the world, more specifically in Costa Rica. Data thrown by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, n.d.) estimates that up to the year 2019, there was an estimate of 2,508 million women in Costa Rica alone, and as of 2023, said organization estimated that “in Costa Rica, 28% of 15–19-year-olds are enrolled in general upper secondary education and 14% in vocational upper secondary education (OECD, 2023). A further 16% are enrolled in lower secondary programmes and 5% in tertiary programmes.” These results show the amount of women that would potentially be affected by misogynistic advances, and the percentage of women enrolled in education programs shows how many female students would benefit from having this research on hand, should further investigation be necessary, which prompts the question: which are the similarities found in the challenges faced by the female characters of the novel *Island Beneath the Sea*, compared to the reality lived by women in Costa Rica in the year 2024?

## **1.2 Objectives of the Investigation**

### **1.2.1 General Objective**

1.2.1.1 To analyze the gender related challenges female characters faced in the novel *Island Beneath the Sea*

### **1.2.2 Specific Objective**

1.2.2.1 To compare the situations within the novel to real-life scenarios women have faced over time

1.2.2.2 To identify similarities, as well as differences in the situations lived by female characters in the novel, compared to real-life scenarios women have faced over time

1.2.2.3 To highlight misogynistic problematics that took place in the novel and are still present in real-life, current situations women face

### **1.3 Justification of the Study**

As it has been, throughout time, gender has often limited women when matters such as voting, owning property, having their own bank accounts, not having any property rights, having to be submitted to their husbands, a paternal or fraternal figure as they had no voice of their own, work limitations in terms of which jobs women could perform, and the denial of an education, as no college or university would accept women to become students, among many others. Regrettably, a significant number of women in the novel *An Island Beneath the Sea* by writer Isabel Allende suffered from slavery, besides the aforementioned limitations. All women within the book were also limited by their race, how mixed in race they were, and whether they were free citizens or not.

Throughout time, women have supported each other, and men functioning as allies of women have also demonstrated their support by doing something both quite brave and dangerous, to raise awareness of the injustices being committed against women and fighting actively to overcome such oppression. Women like Susan B. Anthony, Olympia Brown, Margaret Fuller, Eva Perón, Simone de Beauvoir, and Gloria Steinem, amongst many others, have something in common, they not only defended and fought for women's rights, but also, once again, they raised awareness of the various atrocities women would have to endure at the hands of a patriarchal society that would favor them little.

The purpose of this research is to honor and follow this honorable path, which is to raise awareness towards inequality, this time in the novel *An Island Beneath the Sea* by writer Isabel Allende, in which female characters were subjected to being heavily objectified, sold

as merchandise and pleasure by either slavery or prostitution, others in more favorable circumstances were quite limited as well, as they depended upon marrying a man to gain not only respect within the society they were a part of, but also, at times financial stability, as it was hardly possible for women to make a living by honest means at that time without a husband, and even if they could, it would have been frowned upon. This research aims to raise awareness of the various circumstances these characters faced, how their gender defined their roles in society, and how at times they could be worsened or improved by additional circumstances such as ethnicity, religion, or freedom.

Moreover, decades, and even centuries ago, at times people who would speak up against patriarchal oppression would be but a few, which made it challenging and a matter of great risk, as it could commonly send culprits to prison. The feminist movement could only gain strength by gathering more and more sympathizers that would further support and edify each other. Nowadays, it is just the same, like-minded individuals are supporting equality-driven causes fervently, especially having the various technological advantages our predecessors did not have, which made the task at hand even more difficult. Nowadays, people have the advantage of communicating by using a wide range of choices such as social media, text messaging, video commercials, streaming platforms, even apps of several different purposes. One of those means is by reading articles and pieces of information and research carefully curated to show high-quality and accurate information; such is the case of this research, which purpose is to raise awareness to its readers about all that entailed being a woman during the Saint-Domingue days in which the story took place, and how many of those challenges are still faced today by the present-day woman.

This study will be of value in particular for university students, influencers, bloggers, and activists who seek out information related to how women were treated in times of slavery and colonization, the various challenges and ordeals they would normally face. Moreover, this

research will be of value as it would boost any work of investigation since charts will be used to further analyze behaviors, social limitations, beliefs people had at the time, prejudice women would suffer from, social norms that would affect them, as well as the analysis of key symbols, motifs, and themes present in the novel *The Island Beneath the Sea* to further analyze this story and its contents, all in order to provide further visibility on topics that should never go unnoticed.

Moreover, this investigation will be of value since it will extend existing knowledge by providing a literary analysis of the various female characters of the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* by Isabel Allende, in which several aspects of these characters' lives will be observed, such as how they were impacted by gender impositions back in Saint-Domingue, the French colony that became Haiti in the year of 1770, as well as social, and ethnic impositions that would inevitably merge with their gender, affecting their lives in various degrees quite considerably. This analysis will aid in future investigations as it will throw light on how they lived, their challenges, their advantages, and disadvantages, and it will strengthen and further complement investigations from other enthusiasts who also wish to raise awareness by using solid research papers, articles, and books, as well as a carefully curated analysis focusing on the matter at hand: feminism.

#### **1.4 Antecedents**

As the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* portrays the lives of several female characters during the eighteenth century, their highlights, challenges, gender limitations, and advantages and privileges overall according to their ethnicity and position in society. All the above were affected greatly by their biological gender. To better understand what feminism is, and how it will be of use for this investigation, it is important to note pieces of investigation that came before, which further analyze feminism, its role in society, its history, and its applications nationally and internationally.

The first piece of work that was investigated is entitled “A Review on the History of Western Feminism” by Assist. Prof. Dr. Mahir Aziz and Suzan Najj Sabri. This paper analyzed feminism by looking at waves, each with different events that marked not only the history of feminism, but also allowed the researcher to better understand the struggles women have faced as time has gone by, and more importantly, the struggle to attain their rights in a patriarchal society. The document started by giving an introduction on how women, despite their limitations, started making their presence known in literature by publishing manuscripts that were novels, poems, memoirs, translations, and works of philosophy and fiction. Moreover, it mentioned the pioneers of western feminism, and introduced British Feminist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and British writer Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), who they were and their perceptions on women’s rights at their corresponding times.

Additionally, this research documented that feminism started in the nineteenth century, in countries that were Anglo-Saxon and Western European, in which several more representatives of feminism, such as the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, and Hubertine Auclert further developed their concept through their written work. In the case of Simone de Beauvoir by publishing her book *The Second Sex*, and in the case of the later by advocating and coining a concept for feminism. It then proceeded to break down each wave of feminism, its highlights and noticeable events and definitions, such as the suffrage of women, the right to have an employment, the overall empowerment of women, and the struggle to attain equality and support to marginalized peoples regardless of their gender. It concluded by summarizing all the above and giving as final thoughts that, even though all waves aim towards the same objective, at times they have lacked cohesion.

The second antecedent to analyze is one that was made locally, research by lawyer, political expert and feminist Marta E. Solano Arias, entitled “A 90 años de la fundación de la Liga Feminista Costarricense: los derechos políticos.” This document provided an overview

of political rights Costa Rican women have had ever since the Costa Rican Feminist League was founded in 1923 in the Costa Rican high school Colegio Superior de Señoritas. It highlighted the participation of women in social and political events, as well as the fight to accomplish suffrage equality in the country. Moreover, it also documented the actions of outstanding Costa Rican voters Ángela Acuña and Sara Casal.

The research started by pointing out how difficult feminist activism over time in Costa Rica, and how attaining the right to vote was earned through significant hardships, rather than a gift given in times of enlightenment, and how it is hard to come by important feminist figures, all this caused by a patriarchal society that undermines the accomplishments of women. Moreover, this research deepened on how the patriarchy has worked through time to minimize women's accomplishments and the overall role of women in society, and how it has been enhanced by women interiorizing the minimizing roles that had been given to them, further facilitating the undermining task the patriarchy has performed over time, and it noted how Costa Rica is not an exception to this problematic.

In addition, this research documented the contributions of Ángela Acuña, one of the most noticeable Costa Rican feminists in the early twentieth century, who based her activism on the fight for equality by European feminists. Regrettably, her efforts were met with hostility when attempting the same on Costa Rican ground. She was the first Costa Rican woman to obtain a high school diploma at Liceo de Costa Rica, as her activism on behalf of Costa Rican women demanded that she was educated in topics that were not taught in other institutions. Despite facing struggles in an all-boys high school, she came out victorious in accomplishing her diploma, thus showing women how it was possible to excel in unconventional fields, further boosting her activism. Later, she enrolled in the university becoming the first female lawyer in Costa Rica.

This document also highlighted that women could not participate in democratic processes, even though they supported various causes back when Costa Rica had armed forces. In addition, they contributed to enriching the country, regardless of they were not allowed to participate in Costa Rican democracy. Furthermore, this document narrated how it was historically and socially challenging to accomplish the feminine vote, as many recognized politicians were against it at the time, and how the Costa Rican Feminist league was founded, and how it actively fought to accomplish equality in Costa Rican suffrage.

The third antecedent that was reviewed was the book *La Aritmética del Patriarcado* by Costa Rican Philologist Yadira Calvo Fajardo. Calvo was born in Costa Rica on December 23rd, 1941. She was a philologist, writer, university professor, and undeniably one of the most significant feminist activists in Costa Rica. This book highlighted how a patriarchal society undermines the role of women in society through philosophical, religious, and political pieces that boost how the role of women is minimized, how it glorifies them belonging to house chores, how their position is below the male sex, and how it is preferred as such by even God.

This book showed how it was portrayed by such philosophical, religious, and political statements that there was a supreme femininity that would reject the idea of academic thriving and professional accomplishments, and how it was preferred to care for one's progeny, to be submissive of a husband, and to take pride in taking care of one's home, further boosting the manipulation of women; thus accomplishing their submission, and how feminist women were rejecting such gifts and privileges when advocating for equality. All this aiming towards caring for the male population's interests, which were disguised behind a mask of rightfulness and reasoning, in which women were not favored beyond roles that were purposefully assigned to them. This book narrated how opposers to feminism and its ideals attempted to

persuade women by to approaches, either by cultivating fear in their hearts, or by sweet-talking them into going back to the roles that had been assigned to them since biblical times.

The fourth antecedent that was reviewed was a research by Dr. Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, an assistant professor of the department of Mathematics at Premier University, entitled “An Overview on the Feminism and Its Categories.” It analyzed the evolution of global feminism, and the contributions of feminists to eradicate oppression by patriarchal societies and entities. This research mentioned how men and women contributed equally before the Industrial Revolution; moreover, it showed how, once this movement started, men started working on various businesses, while women were limited to staying at home to care for the house and children. It further defined feminism as attaining an equal contribution from women when making decisions regarding politics, career, children and overall decision-making processes. This document also mentioned how feminism came to be as women became aware of how their sex would affect their participation in society, and how this limited them significantly.

The research also pointed at how religion and the patriarchy influenced decision-making when it came to women, and how it would affect and limit them through legislation regarding marriage. Moreover, it showed how feminism can be seen and studied through four theories: radical feminism, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and Marxist feminism. The research also emphasized how ethics played an important role in analyzing feminist research, as well as how a qualitative method was applied to analyze data further.

It started by defining what feminism is, and how it is an umbrella term for a wide variety of cultural phenomena, and then it proceeded to further break down the theories of feminism, starting with liberal feminism, which focuses mainly on equality. Later, it proceeded to talk about Marxist feminism, which states how capitalism made a clear division between the sexes

after the Industrial Revolution, then it proceeded to talk about socialist feminism, in which women believe that oppression comes from both capitalism and the patriarchy, and radical feminism, which highlights how women have been oppressed through various forms of physical aggression, such as sexual assault, amongst many others.

This research also documented ecofeminism, which points at oppression to women and nature being connected, and how women fought not only for equality, but also to attain a sustainable environment. Cultural feminism is also documented within this research, which refers to how men and women see the world differently, and how women's vision is of great value, oftentimes superior; it also praises women, approaching them from a celebratory perspective, further enhancing the view of them having a superior vision at times. Moreover, the research also documented black feminism and how it was created to empower black women, emphasizing that black women face a double challenge, that of being black and of being women. Postmodern feminism is also documented, which supports a wider range of points of view, and how knowledge and truth are attainable in a different way by every woman.

The last antecedent that was reviewed was the book *The Second Sex* written by French philosopher, activist, university professor, and writer Simone de Beauvoir. Such book is considered one of the first attempts to tackle the world and human history through a feminist point of view. Simone de Beauvoir pointed at men being considered the doers, while women would wait for them to be saved, how women are defined by men as "other," giving them a derogatory connotation, that of an object, while men occupy the role of a subject. This distinction sustained Simone de Beauvoir's arguments throughout the book.

De Beauvoir indicated how, although it is natural for humankind to classify and establish opposites, it is a heavily flawed process when it comes to gender differentiation in all matters.

In this book, de Beauvoir conducted profound research to locate the root cause of such imbalance, approaching societal, psychological, historical and biological areas to further understand the reasoning behind such imbalance. De Beauvoir further went into documenting that historical findings in which women are often undermined have imprinted on humanity, worsening the situation. Her work is especially relevant in how, as the book and her research progress, she documented that women are not feminine innately, the idea of what is considered feminine is implanted in them from a young age, thus shaping what they are from early childhood to their sexual initiation. De Beauvoir proceeded to go deeper in her research, stating that women face the trauma of reaching an old age, in which they lose their reproductive capacity, and thus their purpose and identity.

De Beauvoir continued to research significant findings, such as how women often contribute to their “otherness” as they often agree with predisposed conceptions about their sex, even going as far as referring to them as accomplices, those imposed by generations before, and how they end of contributing to a patriarchal point on view, further solidifying what is seen nowadays as internalized misogyny.

## 1.5 Scope

1.5.1 This research will investigate female characters of various age groups and ethnicities in the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* and will compare their respective realities and struggles to those of women in the present day, more specifically of Costa Rica.

1.5.2 This research will further detail and investigate the gender-related challenges women in the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* faced, such as economic hardship, objectification, as well as social perceptions of women, and will compare them to real-life scenarios.

1.5.3 This research will use a narration that takes place in the eighteenth century and will compare it to real-life investigations from the early twentieth century, until the present day.

1.5.4 This research will investigate situations that took place in the novel in Saint-Domingue and New Orleans in the eighteenth century, and will compare them with the Costa Rican, twentieth and twenty-first centuries reality.

1.5.5 This research will take place in order to raise further awareness on how the challenges lived by women in the eighteenth century are quite often still present in the twenty-first century.

## Chapter II

### Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, to allow a deeper and clearer understanding, the following concepts will be further explained: literary theories and approaches, types of feminism, themes, symbols, and motifs, as well as the biography of Isabel Allende, and the plot of the novel *Island Beneath the Sea*. Said concepts will allow readers to better understand the analysis that will be done in future chapters, as it is important not only to understand the approach that will be used, but also what feminism is, the types of feminism there are, and how they can be applied to this investigation to enrich it and nurture it accordingly.

#### 2.1 Literary Theories and Approaches

##### 2.1.1 Definition of Literature

Literature can have several definitions, as it is undoubtedly rich in content and thus, its ramifications extend to many topics, approaches, and cultures. Per the Britannica Dictionary (2024), Literature is about “written works (such as poems, plays, and novels) that are considered to be very good and to have lasting importance” such is the case of the book *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot* by Mikki Kendall, which is a collection of essays that further discuss the legitimacy of the modern feminist movement, reviewing aspects such as hyper sexualization, violence, reproductive rights, politics, and more. Literature aims to convey a message to readers, satisfy the hunger they have for knowledge, and can either boost or undermine a cause. Feminism is no exception to this, as there are divided opinions on what Feminism is and what it stands for, such is the case of the book *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* by Christina Sommers, in which she criticized modern feminism and showcased it as a corrupt, self-servicing, and power-hungry movement focused on male hate spreading.

Furthermore, literature aims to educate readers of all ages and backgrounds, shedding light on a wide variety of topics and problems, going from poetry to essays, novels, biographies, amongst many others. Literature often alleviates the hearts of those tormented by ignorance, as it was said once by activist Malala Yousafzai (Yousafzai, n.d.) “in some parts of the world, students are going to school every day. It's their normal life. But in other parts of the world, we are starving for education... It's like a precious gift. It's like a diamond.” Literature will be that one advantage people can have to make informed decisions, enrich their knowledge, and edify others in the process.

### **2.2.2 Definition of Theory**

Theory is present in everything society has conveyed over millennia. As it is explained by the Britannica Dictionary (2024), theory is “an idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain facts or events,” which will be essential for this investigation. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2024) explains theory as “a belief, policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action” which fits feminism seamlessly, as it quintessentially conveys the believe that men and women should be treated as equals, and thus, allowing women the same rights and validation as men. Theory is of significant importance, as stated by ICFAI University, IUJ Journal of Management (ICFAI University, n.d.), “Theory plays a vital role in research. Theory provides explanation, understanding and meaningfulness to research.” Therefore, it is imperative to consider theory when performing a literary analysis, as said theory will allow the researcher to better understand the work or literature to be analyzed.

### **2.2.3 Definition of Literary Analysis**

As this investigation will essentially examine in deep detail a literary work, which is the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* by Isabel Allende, it is important to further enrich what a literary analysis is. Per StudySmarter (StudySmarter GmbH, 2024), “Literary analysis is the examination and evaluation of a literary work.” When conducting a literary analysis,

researchers review in detail key elements of the literary work that was chosen, such as the plot, symbols, themes, motifs, characters, ending, and oftentimes events in the literary work are compared to events that either belong to other literary works, or that happened in real life. Literary analyses are important for a wide number of reasons.

According to an article in the Excelsior Classes website (Excelsior Classes, 2018), “literary analysis encourages critical thinking,” which aims towards building stronger thinkers, further encouraging them to develop their ideas, thus developing educated opinions that would contribute to a more educated society overall, capable of making informed decisions. Literary analyses are not just important for educational and research purposes, they are also highly relevant for cultural purposes, as an analysis requires further investigation, and often involving primary and secondary sources of information (said sources will be further developed in this chapter); therefore, enhancing the person’s knowledge of culture, thus allowing them to better appreciate not only literature, but also other expressions of art.

#### **2.2.4 Definition of Feminism**

As it was stated before, feminism is a movement that pursues equality. The Britannica Encyclopedia (Brunell, 2024) defined Feminism as “the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes.” Definition that has prevailed over the centuries after it was presumably originated in Greece with the poet Sappho, who sought the advocacy of dignity, resourcefulness, and empowerment of the female sex, going all the way to nowadays modern feminism, which indubitably fights against objectification, as well as the patriarchy and misogyny-based decisions.

Feminism aims to be a cultural critic to male-dominated spheres, and it attacks patriarchy from different angles, cultures, ethnicities. As it was expressed by writer Zeba Blay in her

book *Carefree Black Girls: A Celebration of Black Women in Popular Culture*, “Black women are almost always justified in their anger” (Blay, 2021), referring to the plethora of emotions awakened in women due to being oppressed repeatedly, generation after generation. Moreover, another angle that is often disregarded is that of transgender women. In her book *A Short History of Trans Misogyny*, author and historian Jules Gill-Peterson highlights the dangers transgender women face, she also defines trans misogyny as “the targeted devaluation of both trans femininity and people perceived to be trans feminine” (Gill-Peterson, 2024), further solidifying the fact that patriarchy and misogyny affect all women from all spheres and origins, as people are programmed to view what is feminine as inferior, whether they admit it or not. Therefore, a person who is biologically a man that decides to transition to be a transgender woman is frowned upon, which (according to many) justifies abuse and discrimination, since society often feminize men to ridicule them.

As stated before, the scope of feminism involves many different areas, ethnicities, social backgrounds, and even sexual orientations. There are even areas that, though belong to feminism, are often disregarded by people, such is the case of motherhood. In her book *Essential Labor: Mothering as Social Change* author Angela Garbes further details the struggles motherhood faced not only during the pandemic, but also how it is perceived worldwide. As she further detailed (Garbes, 2022), “Doing this requires knowledge of the history of mothering and care work—how they came to be seen as naturally female, which is to say invisible and undervalued,” and usually unpaid as women are expected to care for family members as part of their duties, just as Garbes depicted it, female attributes are often invisible and undervalued. Hence, the need to cultivate knowledge and culture regarding feminism.

#### 2.2.4.1 Types of Feminism

Feminism does not only count on exposure by prominent historical figures, as well as dedicated activists all over the modern world, it is also divided in different types of feminism. Haradhan Mojahan, Assistant Professor of Premier University (Mohajan, 2022) stated in his research “An Overview of the Feminism and Its Categories” that there are 8 categories of feminism: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Socialist Feminism, Radical Feminism, Ecofeminism, Cultural feminism, Black feminism, and Postmodern Feminism.

Liberal feminism originated from liberalism, emerging in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by the French Revolution, it firmly believes that women should have equal opportunities when it comes to the sexes and the misconceptions society has. Liberal feminism fully supports equal political and civil rights, a right to an education, and a right to vote for all citizens regardless of their gender. Equality also includes reproductive rights, allowing women to decide over their bodies, and thus allowing abortions, and on the opposite side of the spectrum, women that did choose to have their children, advocated for having access to child healthcare, and protection, as well as actions against sexual assault. Moreover, liberal feminism believes that nobody can benefit from inequality amongst the sexes, because both genders are harmed, and thus not reaching their full potential. One of the most significant accomplishments of liberal feminism was to give women the right to vote in USA in 1920, and to this day it continues working towards a more inclusive environment for women in mainstream society. An interesting fact about liberal feminism is that it shows mixed opinions about prostitution and pornography; while some believe it goes against principles of dignity, equality and sisterhood, others believe that this must not be condemned as women are often forced to participate in these activities, thus limiting their autonomy over their own bodies.

Marxist feminism comes from the political philosophy known as Marxism. It states that differences between genders are not merely biological but social. It also states that patriarchy is

a result of capitalism, and that it divides genders by labors, men in production and women in reproduction. Moreover, Marxism believes that the state is merely an instrument with which the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat, which also translates to the family core, in which men are seen as the bourgeoisie, and women as the proletariat. Marxist feminism observes that, while women are indeed oppressed by capitalism, this affects more significantly women that are economically weaker, while women who are solvent financially speaking enjoy more freedom. Furthermore, Marxist feminism preaches that, in order to liberate women, it is necessary to start a revolution against capitalism, as, indeed, women are oppressed by both class and gender limitations. Marxist feminists indubitably believe that oppression comes from the household, society, and their corresponding workplaces due to reasons of economic, social, and business natures, and they see the patriarchy as a product of capitalism.

Socialist feminism is characterized by not wanting to abolish the patriarchy in social interactions; however, it does believe that women are oppressed by both capitalism and the patriarchy, what they refer to as a dual system. In addition, it also states that, although women are indeed oppressed in almost all societies, it varies depending on their economic reality. Socialist feminists fuse the beliefs that come from Marxist feminism, in which capitalism is the reason why women are oppressed, and radical feminism, in which the patriarchy is the reason why women are oppressed. Socialist feminists wish to apply a fair distribution of rewards to determine the correlation between genders and classes.

Moreover, socialist feminists analyze the economical impact that has taken a toll on women's rights and access to equal treatment, and at the same time, they analyze that oppression comes from a plethora of reasons combined: gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, as well as nationality. Socialist feminism also highlights how women are perceived, socially speaking as housekeepers, child bearers, and caretakers, and once they integrate to the workforce, they are subjected to lower wages and run the risk of being

sexually harassed. Additionally, they believe in analyzing all issues collectively to address them; accordingly, hence, to accomplish liberation and equality.

Radical feminism first originated in the 1960's. It states that the patriarchy is the main oppressor and discrimination trigger for women. It is different from other forms of feminism since it views the patriarchy and its discriminatory oppression as the main reason why women are oppressed, and overlooks other areas such as race, color, age, religion, ethnicity, amongst others. Radical feminism also focuses on fighting against violence provoked by men through sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, enforcing that women of all backgrounds have suffered from oppression. Radical feminism sees women as being of absolutely positive value, and states that women are oppressed everywhere. Moreover, radical feminism does not favor neither motherhood nor marriage, as both are perceived as ways to further enable and strengthen the patriarchy.

Radical feminists perceive the society as male-dominated and believe that women are not only different from men, but also, they have a morally higher level than men, they often see men as the enemy and see marriage as a written contract to allow exploitation of women. They also believe that society built a cultural preconception that puts their sex at disadvantage, and condemn sexual labor practices, such as prostitution as pornography, as they believe these are controlled by men, and they sell objectified female bodies for sexual release. In addition, they also believe said practices are dehumanizing for women, which relates to the analysis of *Island under the Sea* since Teté, as a slave, was unable to own her body, as raping slaves was seen as something natural, as slave women were property of a man, and even their maternity was taken away from them. Women of high society were in better circumstances, yet lived in their husbands' shadows, as husbands were encouraged to cheat (depicted as "plaçage" in the novel), which was also a detriment to the women they

committed cheating with, since should they be impregnated, were bound to be protected by said men in an “honor” agreement, which could be oftentimes ignored.

Ecofeminism states that women and nature oppression are connected, and it fights for both gender equality and a sustainable environment. It is mostly expressed in thoughts and practices through the efforts of women gardeners, botanists, and animal welfare advocates, amongst others, and it looks for similarities between exploitation of women and the environment and condemns patriarchy as harmful to humanity and the planet. Ecofeminists believe that women instinctively love nature, and that both are hurt by the patriarchy. In addition, they also believe that women represent nature, emotion, and body, and that these are exploited in a male-dominated society. Ecofeminism is deeply rooted in the awakening of feelings of care towards the earth, and states that women are closer to nature when compared against men. Moreover, it seeks similarities between women and nature due to women’s reproductive capacity, and oppression that has carried on through generations of mistreatment and discrimination. Ecofeminists believe that the patriarchy thrives on destroying the environment, and they believe there is a strong link between liberating women and the survival of nature, as women are seen as natural environmentalists.

Cultural feminism is a category that validates feminine qualities that have been undermined by the patriarchy, and praises attributes that correspond to the feminine gender greatly, such as cooperation, relationship building, and peace. It also states that men and women see the world differently, and that higher value must be placed upon women’s approach to the world. Moreover, it aims for society to enable spaces to develop the feminine approach to the world and rebuild society as a result, such as bookstores, art galleries, gyms, amongst others, in order to create a patriarchy-free consciousness in society. Cultural feminists see discrepancies between genders as the result of cultural background, ultimately aiming towards healthy relationships and settings that are free of male-dominated ideologies.

Cultural feminism aims to promote feminism by allowing women to create woman-centered environments, promoting female biology and energy as the core of these spaces, thus accomplishing even peace amongst nations, as male characteristics, such as a proclivity to engage in war conflicts, are harmful to society.

Black feminism fights the oppression that women of color suffer from. It is a practice that centers itself on the practices, lifestyle, art, and philosophy inspired by the lives of black women. Moreover, it preaches that black women are valuable, and their liberation holds importance as it is the inherent right to own their autonomy. Furthermore, black feminism highlights the presence of racism and the limitations it establishes, and alongside classism and sexism, it poses a significant threat to black women and their equal rights fight. Historically, black women were seen as less than human by enslavers all over the world. Black women oftentimes suffer from prejudice regarding their reproductive rights, as writer Nichole Perkins details in her book *Sometimes I Trip On How Happy We Could Be* (Perkins, 2021), “Women have to have a lot of babies to be worth anything.”

Culturally and geographically speaking, black women have also suffered innumerable atrocities: Child marriage, genital mutilation, rape, slavery, amongst others. The scope of black feminism does not only involve racism, but also issues of class and gender. Historically speaking, the contrast within struggles of women of different ethnicities has been overly noticeable; while white women fought to be seen as equal members of society, black women fought to be seen as human, since slavery undermined them and took them to a subhuman condition, a misconception that would take decades to fight, and although liberation movements took place during the 1960’s and 1970’s, black women struggled to relate to said movements. As Women Liberation movement focused on white women, and the Black Liberation movement focused on liberating black men, thus creating Black Feminism as a response to this struggle. Furthermore, Black feminism sees the liberation of women as a

liberation of other categories as well, racism, sexism, social class oppression, liberation frees all people and preaches that women must not be seen as second-class citizens and must work towards building their individual identity within society, as it was a double discrimination against black women to be black and being born women.

Postmodern feminism comes from having to rethink male and female interactions, as after liberation movements such as the Women Liberation Movement raised divorce rates rise quite alarmingly, while also struggling with the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 80's, thus forcing people to see relations differently. Postmodern feminism focuses on new ideologies in which there is openness regarding other forms of feminism. Postmodern feminists believe in diversity of opinions, as well as coexisting with other categories of feminism, though at times their points of view might clash with each other. However, regardless of any potential clash, postmodern feminism believes each woman sees truth differently and seeks to remove gender inequality from society. Moreover, Postmodern feminism states that, although we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, prejudice and bias against women are still present and require immediate action. Postmodern feminism states that there is a correlation between language and gender, and believes that knowledge is provisional, open-ended, and subjected to interpretation, and seeks to remove gender inequality from society, pointing at the fact that gender inequality comes from assumptions on how women should function in a society, and believes that truth is not absolute but constructed by groups, and areas like language and culture.

### **2.2.5 Literary Approach Definition**

Literary approaches are essential to further understand a piece of literature. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2024), one of the various definitions of the word “approach” is “the taking of preliminary steps toward a particular purpose,” which fits to perfection when it comes to a literature-oriented context, as indeed, a series of steps are taken to accomplish a goal, literarily speaking, that would allow the reader to fully comprehend

what is within a text. In accordance with research made by the Mariners Polytechnic College Foundation (2020), “literary Approaches are methods used to compare, analyze, interpret, and/or evaluate works of literature. Literary approaches are the means of the readers to unveil the secrets of the texts.” It is then understood that in order to reveal whatever hidden messages a text has, it is imperative to follow a literary approach to fully understand its content, elements, characteristics, etc.

Literary approaches are of significant relevance, as they will trigger and nurture critical thinking, they allow not only to break down those hidden messages in a text, but also to analyze them from different pers: historical, social, psychological, feminist, amongst many others, all aiming towards the same goal, which is to analyze details within a work of literature, as thoroughly as possible. Moreover, they allow readers to expand their knowledge, as researchers will have to oftentimes investigate other information sources to build a more informed opinion and conclusions. For the purposes of this investigation, the chosen approach for this investigation is the Feminist approach.

#### **2.2.5.1 Feminist Approach**

Feminism, naturally, would gain strength and further presence in literature as time has gone by. Thus, it was essential to develop a literary approach to further analyze the contents of literature for the sake of feminism awareness and activism. According to teacher and youtuber Aiz Dumuk (Teacher Aiz Dumuk, 2021), the feminist literary approach “focuses on literary representation in literature, paying attention to female points of view, concerns, and values.” This approach has assumptions, such as the fact that western society is noticeably patriarchal, it is male-centered and subjugates women, also it assumes that gender is a social construction, and it is not biologically determined.

As it was further detailed by Dumuk, his approach can be employed by examining the portrayal of characters of both genders, also by investigating factors such as the language of the text, the attitude of the author, and the relationship between the characters. Moreover, Dumuk indicates that comments the author makes about society must be considered as well, as there are feminist critics that express that certain male writers exclude their readers as if they were all men, thus excluding female readers. Furthermore, Dumuk states, in her research, that the feminist approach uses the principles and ideology of feminism to further critique and analyze the literature language that was employed in the text to be analyzed under this approach. In addition, Dumuk also expresses that the goals of this approach include the development and discovery of female tradition, as well as to establish a way in which male domination can be put into evidence, being that through economic, social, or psychological depictions. Additionally, this approach aims to further analyze female symbolism, so it will not be lost to readers as a result of the inherent sexism that prevails in works of literature to this day.

In addition to the information above, the feminist literary approach seeks the examination of female characters to further demonstrate how women have been historically objectified in works of literature, all this, regrettably, from a male-predominant perspective. In addition, it seeks reevaluating works of literature, the world, and the way in which readers assimilate works of literature, questioning whether male authors have been valued more as per underlying sexism that undermined the value, and thus relevance of female authors. A feminist approach will allow researchers not only to analyze information through a feminist lens, but also to expand knowledge about feminist matters, and thus advocating for feminism divulgation across the media and other relevant sources of information, enhancing impact and, hopefully, raising awareness and calling people to action, employing resources to

ultimately keep fighting against patriarchal structures, that have oppressed women for far too long.

### **2.2.6 Themes, Symbols, and Motifs Definition**

Themes, Symbols, and Motifs are essential details to be analyzed, should an investigator wish to fully examine a work of literature, as they will shed light on details that are often overlooked, since there is more than what meets the eye in every piece of literature ever written.

#### **2.2.6.1 Themes**

Themes are essential in a work of literature as they provide substance to that is being written. J.T. Bushnell, a novelist and senior lecturer at the Oregon State University (Bushnell, 2024) defines a theme as “a central, unifying idea. It’s the bigger issue that emerges as the characters pursue their goals.” He further details that themes trigger questions with more depth, as well as conflicts of various natures to further complement a piece of literature work. Themes are significantly important since they will make the reader analyze and dab into details that otherwise would be overlooked; for instance, in the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* an ongoing theme is freedom, and how strongly Zarité, the main character, fights to ultimately obtain hers, after many years of being objectified, abused, and mistreated by her enslaver, Toulouse, as well as other characters like Toulouse’s second wife, Horténse. Themes allow researchers and readers alike to better identify what the emotions, context, and main idea behind a work of literature are, as they allow researchers and readers to better understand hidden messages that oftentimes the author meant to include for further awareness.

#### **2.2.6.2 Symbols**

Just as themes, symbols add significant value to a piece of literary work. A research made by the Stone Writing Center at Del Mar College (Del Mar College, n.d.) defines a symbol as

“an object, a person, a situation, or an action that has a literal meaning in a story but suggests or represents other meanings.” According to said research, symbols can be of two different categories: general, in which a symbol is universal when it comes to its meaning; and specific, when it is the opposite of a general symbol, and thus not universal in its meaning, its meaning depends in the context the author created.

Symbols can be used by authors to further enrich a work of literature, as they can have hidden meanings that, once discovered, provide significant context to further understand the piece of literature in reason. They can represent good, evil, life, death, also destruction, innocence, sexuality, growth, evolution, amongst many others. Moreover, it is worth noting that meanings in symbols are not always obvious, at times they will require further analysis, as their meanings can be more subtle, and as a result, rather indirect. In the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* a symbol that can be easily recognized is music and dancing, since to Zarité music and dancing are not only an expression of art, but also an expression of the freedom she yearns much, as it is mentioned in the book that *The slave who dances is free ... while he is dancing* (Allende, 2009), further evidencing hidden meanings behind details such as music and dancing.

### 2.2.6.3 Motifs

Motifs offer even further detailing when analyzing a work of literature, as it is stated by Senior Instructor Liz Delf, and English Graduate Marisa Williams in an article written for the Oregon State University (Delf, Williams, n.d.), “A motif is a repeated pattern—an image, sound, word, or symbol that comes back again and again within a particular story.” It is identifiable rather easily by noticing a repetitive element in any given work of literature, as stated by Delf and Williams, it is worth asking oneself what the author wants readers to understand from this element, as it can tell further details not only of the story, but of characters as well, to better understand what they go through and who they are in the story.

Moreover, motifs can reinforce, connect, and evoke moments in any given work of literature; it will work in convergence with themes and symbols to make a story rich in detail and content, therefore creating an appealing, and oftentimes endearing work of literature.

### 2.2.7 Biography of the author Isabel Allende

Isabel Allende has enjoyed a strong career in magic realism literature, which is defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary (2024) as “painting in a meticulously realistic style of imaginary or fantastic scenes or images,” which reflects quite artfully in Allende’s style of writing. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia (2024), she is considered one of the first successful female writers in Latin America. She was born in Lima, Peru in 1942, to Chilean Parents. As an adult, she worked as a journalist until she was forced to flee to Venezuela, after her father’s cousin, President Salvador Allende had been murdered in 1973.

Her writing career began in 1981 when she wrote her first novel, *The House of Spirits*, and afterwards writing novels such as *Of Love and Shadows*, *Eva Luna*, *The Infinite Plan*, *The Stories of Eva Luna*, *Daughter of Fortune*, *Portrait in Sepia*, *Zorro*, *Inés of my Soul*, *Maya’s Notebook*, *Ripper*, *The Japanese Lover*, *In the Midst of Winter*, *A Long Petal of the Sea*, and *Violeta*. She has been delivering uncountable sensible and rather magnificent works of literature, amongst them is the title to be analyzed in this investigation, *Island Beneath the Sea* which was written in 2009.

Although her career mostly includes magic realism novels, she wrote a non-fiction work in 1994, entitled *Paula*, which was meant to be a letter to her daughter, who had died of a hereditary blood condition two years prior. Additionally, she wrote two memoirs, *The Sum of our Days* written in 2007, in which she talks about her extended family, and *The Soul of a Woman* written in 2021, in which she further details her becoming a feminist.

In 1996, Allende used the money she earned with the sales of *Paula* to fund the Isabel Allende Foundation, which aims towards supporting non-profit organizations that help women and girls in Chile and the San Francisco Bay Area. Furthermore, she was awarded with the Chilean National Prize in Literature in the year 2010; additionally, she received the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014, and furthermore, the PEN Center USA's lifetime achievement award in the year 2016.

### **2.2.8 Plot of the Novel *Island Beneath the Sea***

This story narrates the events in the life of Zarité, who was born a slave during the 1700'. She was the mulatto daughter of a slave black woman and a white sailor. Her childhood as a slave was surrounded by the sounds of traditional African music and the voodoo loas that were brought with slavery to Saint-Domingue (called Haiti nowadays) by her fellow slaves. She would grow to be owned by Toulouse Valmorain, son of a French Grand Blanc who established a sugar plantation in Saint-Domingue named Saint Lazare. Toulouse was brought to Saint-Domingue to somehow save the plantation, and thus the main source of income his family had after realizing about the poor management his father had displayed.

Zarité experienced the tough realities of plantation life, suffering from oppression and abuse repeatedly, always at risk, not only at the hands of Toulouse, who would often sexually assault her, but also from other plantation employees. She started forming connections with other slaves in the plantation, such as Tante Rose, the plantation healer, who would play a key role in plantation life, not only as a support to Zarité, but also to Eugenia, first wife of Toulouse.

Zarité would eventually develop a forbidden love with a fellow slave named Gambo, who would eventually play a major role in aiding both Zarité and Toulouse after the slave uprising.

The novel dabbled into historical aspects such as the Haitian revolution, in which slaves uprose and fought for their freedom, slaying enslavers, and forcing others to run. As a result, Zarité was forced to flee to New Orleans, where Toulouse would attempt rebuilding his fortune by dabbling into cotton plantations, and where he would eventually marry Hortéense.

Zarité's and Toulouse's lives were heavily intertwined during the novel, in which readers can fully experience Zarité's resiliency and strength to overcome not only Toulouse's repeated raping, the loss of a son that would later re-appear in her life, the loss of a loved one, and relocating to New Orleans after slavery had been abolished in Saint-Domingue.

After more challenges Zarité finally obtained her freedom, saw her children marry, and enjoyed her newly acquired status surrounded by loved ones who supported her all along her journey. Zarité managed to establish connections and build a chosen family in the vibrant community of New Orleans, reflecting on how she obtained her newfound freedom.

This story also went into the lives of other characters, providing a rich and significantly high range of experiences and emotions such as love, betrayal, and the constant pursuit of freedom. This story aimed to narrate the complexities of the era, further highlighting the challenges of slavery, racism, prejudice and male entitlement, while contrasting it with the admirable strength of the human soul.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodological Framework**

Approaching an analysis by following steps and a method is essential, for the purposes of this research. Following a process or method is vital for the investigative process, so the investigator stays focused on the topic while keeping a broad perspective culminating on a well-structured work. BMC (McMeekin, 2020) defines a methodological framework as “a structured guide to completing a process or procedure.” In this chapter, it will be considered, a series of steps, guides, and methods to develop the analysis in reason, such as research approach, research design, sources of information, analysis of categories, and instruments of data collection.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The research approach will be of significant importance in this investigation as it will determine the type of research that will be applied to it. There are three types of research approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and a combination of both. This investigation will employ the qualitative approach, as it fits seamlessly in the type of investigation to be conducted. According to the National Library of Medicine (Tenny, Brannan, Brannan, 2022), a qualitative research can be defined as “a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems, as opposed to the quantitative research, which focuses on quantities, numbers, and ciphers. The qualitative research approaches a subject by asking open-ended questions, generating hypotheses, and overall aims at further understanding reasoning.

Qualitative research possesses important characteristics that distinguish it from other approaches, such as collecting data from real-world settings, applying an inductive approach, which is an action of creating theories based on what was obtained, considering social,

cultural, historical, and psychological aspects, applying subjectivity and interpretation, and allowing adaptability and flexibility to take place when needed. This research is based on 3 key elements: the novel under analysis, the researcher's own knowledge and points of view, and the information collected from the sources cited. Therefore, the qualitative method is the most viable one.

While qualitative research focuses on characteristics, a quantitative research style aims towards analysis through numbers with respect to measuring, classifying and analyzing, mostly promoting an objective and scientific method, which regrettably is often disregarded in literary analyzes. As mentioned by David L. Hoover in his research "Quantitative Analysis and Literary Studies" (Hoover, 2008), "Quantitative approaches are most naturally associated with questions of authorship and style, but they can also be used to investigate larger interpretive issues like plot, theme, genre, period, tone, and modality." The previously mentioned information denotes that, whereas this style is not often chosen to analyze a piece of written work, it offers usefulness in analyzing text components offering precision that is often accomplished only by involving numerical categories.

Furthermore, as we analyze the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches, it is important to consider that there is a third approach, which is referred to as mixed approach. It uses both a quantitative and qualitative methods. John W. Cresswell mentions in his book *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* that this method is best employed when the two previous approaches together offer a better understanding of a given problem, being that only one of the methods proves to be insufficient to provide a thorough analysis, and also out of pragmatism, to observed multiple points, both biased and unbiased, and both objective and subjective.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research design will be paramount for this investigation in terms of further establishing the model to follow for analysis purposes. Adi Bhat at Question Pro (Bhat, n.d.), states that a research design is “the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to conduct a study.” Bhati also points out that there are three main types of research designs, which are data collection, measurement, and data analysis. For the purposes of this investigation, the research design to be carried out will be data analysis from excerpts of the novel *Island Beneath the Sea* that will later be analyzed and compared to real-world events and experiences.

According to Adi Bhat in his article “Research Design: What it is, Elements & Types,” there are several characteristics a successful research design possesses. Firstly, it is important to convey neutrality in terms of research being free from any sort of bias. Additionally, it is of the utmost importance to demonstrate reliability by ensuring that standardized research questions are used. Thirdly, validity must be ensured by choosing adequate measuring tools. Finally, outcomes should be generalized, aiming towards a population, as opposed to being restricted. For the purpose of conducting this investigation, the researcher’s chosen method will be descriptive research design, which will fit the best to the objectives previously defined in this investigation. According to Shrutika Sirisilla in her article “Bridging the Gap: Overcome these 7 flaws in descriptive research design” (2023), the “Descriptive research design is a powerful tool used by scientists and researchers to gather information about a particular group or phenomenon.” Furthermore, she details that this type of research is significantly appropriate to provide an accurate picture of both characteristics and behaviors observed in a particular population or subject, reason why this type of research will fit impeccably with the objectives of this investigation, as it will allow the researcher to analyze deeply the characters of the novel, as well as the various aspects that will be

contemplated further as this investigation progresses. Out of the many characteristics this research method possesses, it allows researchers to understand a population and/or phenomenon, as it is to understand racism, classism, and misogyny.

Although descriptive research adapts to the objectives of this investigation beautifully, the researcher must consider important disadvantages that might come with this method, and keep them present in order to avoid falling into them, and make the necessary arrangements for them not to affect the success of this investigation. Sirisilla mentions them as follows: initially, a limited scope, which does not allow the establishment of cause-and-effect relationships. Secondly, dependence on existing data, which has the risk of not always being fully comprehensive or accurate, a lack of control, over variables, a bias the researcher might already have towards the topics of investigation, the possibility of not being able to apply findings to other populations and/or situations, a potential lack of deep-level understanding, and being time-consuming.

### **3.3 Sources of Information**

Information sources can be anywhere, and they will be used to boost this research and enrich it accordingly with the researcher's own knowledge. According to Lis Education Network (Ashikuzzaman, 2018), information sources can be defined as "the origins or channels from which individuals obtain data, facts, knowledge, or insights," which come in various forms. Modern researchers have an advantage over those who researched before the era of internet; the latter had to perform a more time-consuming work as their only sources of information were physical such as books, magazines, or newspapers. Nowadays, researchers have an ample variety of options at their service, including subscription to virtual publications specialized in their particular area of studies. For the purposes of this investigation, the sources of information to be used will be books, magazines, articles, libraries, internet resources such as search engines, videos and online publications. Sources of information are

divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary sources are original sources that provide new research results, such as the case of theses, books, scientific articles, research reports, amongst others. Secondary sources gather information from the primary sources, summarize it and structure it further; these can be found in encyclopedias and training handbooks, amongst others.

### **3.4 Analysis of Categories**

This research will further investigate three categories from a feminist approach: racism, classism, and misogyny.

#### **3.4.1 Racism**

Racism predominates in the novel *Island Beneath the Sea*, and therefore, it must be analyzed accordingly. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2024) racism can be defined as “a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.” In the novel, this is visible given the significant differences Zarité and other slaves suffered from when compared against other ethnicities. A clear example is how race divided people in Saint-Domingue, since the amount of blackness in a person’s racial mix would determine how many privileges they would enjoy, and on top of said system, the European (and later on American) Caucasian conquerors would enjoy the most privileges.

#### **3.4.2 Classism**

Classism is also found within the novel, and thus requires analysis. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster, 2024) classism is defined as “a belief that a person's social or economic station in society determines their value in that society.” This is seen in the novel through the fact that even within white inhabitants of both Saint-Domingue and New Orleans, both settings of the novel, white inhabitants would be classified according

to their origins and level of income; therefore, impacting their level of power, eligibility, and destinies.

**3.4.3 Misogyny**

Misogyny is strongly present in the novel, and it is the main reason why a feminist approach was chosen to analyze this novel. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2024) defines misogyny as the practice of “hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women,” which is seen in innumerable scenarios, such as the ongoing raping Zarité suffered from at the hands of Toulouse, as well as in the practice of plaçage, in which Violette Boiser would organize events for white eligible men would meet and dance with potential placeés. This would grant placeés better opportunities, which would objectify women heavily.

**3.5 Instruments of Data Collection**

This investigation will employ charts in which several excerpts from the novel will be compared using three different categories from a feminist perspective: racism, classism, and misogyny. In said charts, excerpts from the novel will be compared to real-life events, in which conclusions will be given.

**Racism**

A part of the book that shows racism, it can be from a single phrase or word (if it is powerful enough) to a small paragraph.	The researcher’s input on why that part of the book shows racism

*Table 1 illustrates a part of the book that shows racism. Source: Researcher’s creation.*

**Classism**

A part of the book that shows classism, it can be from a single phrase or word	The researcher’s input on why that part of the book shows classism.
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(if it is powerful enough) to a small paragraph.	

*Table 2 shows examples of classism found in the book. Source: Researcher's creation.*

### Misogyny

A part of the book that shows misogyny, it can be from a single phrase or word (if it is powerful enough) to a small paragraph.	The researcher's input on why that part of the book shows misogyny.

*Table 3 illustrates examples of misogyny found in the book. Source: Researcher's creation.*

### Current Feminist Reality

A part of the book that shows behaviors that were observed in the period the novel took place, and that are still present in nowadays society, can be from a single phrase or word (if it is powerful enough) to a small paragraph.	The researcher's input on why that part of the book demonstrates that said behavior is still present in nowadays society.
She chose to confess the truth to Violette Boisier, without wallowing in the suffering that had crushed her in the past, for that had eased in recent years.	By choosing to share her truth with Violette Boisier, Tété strengthened solidarity with other women. This act of sharing can be seen as a form of empowerment and sorority, reinforcing the importance of women supporting one another in their numerous struggles.

*Table 4 provides a comparison between behaviors that were observed in the period the novel took place and that are still present in nowadays society. Source: Researcher's creation.*

### **3.6 Collection Data Process and Data Analysis**

To further develop the topic to be investigated, the researcher must be prepared to read the chosen literary work to be analyzed multiple times, with the sole purpose of knowing said literary work intimately, as to know exactly which piece of it to extract for further analysis, and conduct a proper investigation that shows components that accurately demonstrate examples of racism, classism, misogyny as well as the reality of feminism, to know the origins of each component, and thus to find the best definitions to convey the researcher's message with the utmost accuracy, choosing examples that reflect the researcher's inputs with unmistakable veracity.

All things considered, such an investigative journey can only meet a satisfactory end by knowing the literary work deeply, the thought process of the author who lovingly puts heart and soul into what was artfully conveyed within the novel. Moreover, the period in which the novel took place will highlight both advantages and limitations characters might have enjoyed or endured. Ultimately, to accomplish the goal of providing a thorough and veracious analysis, it will be the researcher's responsibility and priority to properly know, read, and re-read the novel to be analyzed to grant and impeccable performance.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of data will be of the most relevance, as it is within this process that the researcher of this work will collect and analyze data from the novel in order to show clear examples of racism, classism, and misogyny within the written work. Said examples will work with the researcher's own points of view and his knowledge to provide a thorough analysis. Therefore, this chapter contains approaches to the investigation, as well as analysis steps, a review of theories vs literary work, finishing with a description and further explanation of themes, symbols, and motifs.

#### **4.1 Approaches to the Investigation**

The chosen approach to proceed with this investigation is the Feminist approach, which consists of analyzing and deconstructing how female characters are described within literary works. For the purpose of this investigation, the researcher will contemplate examples of misogyny, racism, and classism, as they are deeply related within the novel, as the setting of this novel took place in both Saint-Domingue and New Orleans during the 1800's, in which cases of misogyny were oftentimes different according to race and class. Black women were the most affected, as they were allocated in the lowest degree within a complicated system that defined how much power, influence, and even freedom people had. Nevertheless, at the time women were considered less capable, and thus discriminated regardless of their skin color and/or social status, and although white women navigated life in more privileged circumstances, such privilege depended on remaining virgin until marriage, and considered as spinsters should they fail on catching a husband in their youth.

### **4.1.1 Feminist Approach Analysis Steps**

As this will be a literary analysis under the Feminist approach, considering also elements of racism and classism present in the literary work, the researcher will conduct the investigation by using comparative tables, in which extracts of the literary work will be selected after careful consideration and upon a thorough reading of said material. The first table will select snippets of text that reflect racist behaviors present within the literary work. Afterwards, the second table will show snippets that, according to the opinion of the researcher, show examples of classism, as these items are correlated to various instances in which Feminism, as we know it today, was insultingly challenged. Thirdly, the next table will show excerpts that show misogynistic behaviors within the literary work, and finally, a fourth table will show extracts of the literary work that show feminist behaviors (e.g. support amongst women for women) that are not only present within the literary work, but also exemplified in today's society.

## **4.2 Theories vs Literary Work**

### **4.2.1 Racism**

Book Excerpt	Researcher's interpretation
<p>The masters did not suspect that those symptoms could be provoked, undetected, by sticking a fine needle into a soft part of the baby's head before the cranial bones hardened. In that way the baby went happily to the island beneath the sea without ever experiencing slavery.</p>	<p>It is observed that injecting a needle into a slave's baby's head to grant smooth and pain-free death to ensure said baby did not suffer the hardships of slavery reflects a racist belief, since it reduced the suffering of black people to nothing, and made it preferable to sacrifice a life as opposed to bring it into the world to experience such pain and hardship.</p>
<p>He had heard that Negroes have more capacity for suffering; the proof was that no white could bear what the blacks endured, and just as they take pups from bitches, or calves from cows, they were able to separate the slaves from their children; in a short while they recovered from the loss and later did not even remember.</p>	<p>Affirming that "Negroes have more capacity for suffering" thoroughly dehumanizes Black people by stating they can endure more pain. Moreover, by referring to separating mothers from their children, means that Black lives and emotional bonds are less valuable than those of white ones.</p>
<p>His one drawback was that he attended people of all colors. His white patients put up with it because in exile differences of nature tend to be erased and they were not in a situation to demand exclusive attention. They would not, however, have forgiven him a wife and children of mixed blood. That is what he told Adèle, though she never asked for explanations.</p>	<p>The fact that a doctor was permitted to assist patients of all races, though having a wife and children of mixed color, reflects how deeply rooted racism was in society. Moreover, this further reinforces how mixed races were seen as inferior and shameful; thus, reducing individuals who partake in mixed relationships to live in hiding.</p>
<p>The whites had succeeded in passing a law that forbade women of color to wear a hat, jewels, or showy clothes in public places, under threat of a lashing.</p>	<p>Such laws demonstrate racism as they sought to take dignity and presence from people of color, further reducing them to an insignificant value in comparison to white people, and thus strengthening the ironclad control white people bestowed upon people of color.</p>

<p>“My dream is to have several of these gaming houses, Zarité. Of course it would take white partners, like Fleur Hironnelle, to get the money.”</p>	<p>Regrettably, having to work alongside white individuals to boost a business clearly reflects how society at the time the book took place enforced dehumanization of people of color, removing all traces of validation and equality through a strong hierarchy that would limit them to the fullest extent.</p>
<p>A few slaves were on display on a platform, four adults and a naked little boy about two or three years old. Interested parties were examining their teeth to calculate age, the whites of their eyes to check health, and their anuses to be sure they were not stuffed with tow, the most common trick for hiding diarrhea. A mature woman with a lace parasol was weighing with gloved hand the genitals of one of the males.</p>	<p>The objectification of Black slaves further strengthens the idea of racism as this reflects how utterly dehumanizing it was to be a slave at the time the book took place. Furthermore, Black slaves were dehumanized further as they were reduced to objects when they were touched in body parts on which touching white people would not only be inappropriate, but also deeply penalized.</p>
<p>Physical violence and rape were not crimes if the victim was a woman of color, even if she were free.</p>	<p>This excerpt demonstrates racism by showing how there were power dynamics in motion that would not only facilitate the objectification and abuse of women of color, but also how dehumanizing it was to be a woman of color at the time, who could be abused by a male at any chance and no prosecution would take place.</p>
<p>Until that moment she had never been abused by a white, and she had no idea of the power they had over her.</p>	<p>It is visible in this excerpt that Rosette enjoyed what nowadays would be referred to as white-passing privilege, which would have facilitated her journey through life; regrettably, as the person was not white according to societal standards, he/she/they might be the target of racial discrimination regardless of their “advantage.”</p>

<p>Six weeks went by before the judge reviewed her case, and he acted with relative speed only because she was a free woman and because of Pere Antoine's insistence. The other women could wait years before they even knew why they had been arrested.</p>	<p>The delay observed, as well as the actions taken to address Rosette's situation more quickly, both reflect how systemic racism took place at the time the novel took place, providing advantages based on influence, emancipation, and skin color, which could drastically change a person's outcome.</p>
<p>"This boy is a Valmorain by his father and his mother. He has blue eyes and can pass for being white. He should not be brought up among blacks. I want to help him, I want him to have a good education and bear my surname, as is right."</p>	<p>By expressing in such a way, Valmorain further reinforced his white superiority beliefs, reasoning that his grandson would not have such an advantage in life should he be raised amongst people of color, thus reflecting how racism was so strongly inherent at the time the novel took place.</p>

*Table 1 illustrates the examples of racism found in the book and their corresponding explanation. Researcher's creation.*

#### 4.2.2 Classism

Book Excerpt	Researcher's Opinion
<p>Work was for a different class of people.</p>	<p>This excerpt further perpetuates class division problems, and thus devalues individuals of a lower social status, thus taking the dignity of hard, honest labor from them.</p>
<p>At first he tried to win Valmorain's esteem with intrigues, but soon he realized that they were separated by an abyss of race and class.</p>	<p>In this excerpt it is strongly reflected how non-conforming individuals are seen as inferior, limiting their interactions only to people within their same social status, reinforcing how hierarchical societies had such strength and presence within the time period the novel took place in.</p>
<p>Once the Intendant had recovered from the surprise of seeing them at his door so early, he welcomed them though he scarcely knew them, mellowed by Valmorain's prestigious name and the lamentable state of his wife.</p>	<p>How the Intendant behaved after learning of Valmorain's social status clearly demonstrates how class influences interpersonal relationships. It shows a society where status and reputation dictated treatment, thus showcasing privileges that were enjoyed by the grand blancs the novel referred to.</p>
<p>His manners were impeccable, an essential requirement in the upper class, where the proper use of the fork was more important than moral tenets.</p>	<p>This excerpt strongly suggests that social etiquette, rather than moral character, was the true measure of worth within the society within the 1800's, and the fact that this took place not only in Saint-Domingue, but also in New Orleans, shows how society regards a person's value based</p>

	on not only their origins, but also their education and manners.
Valmorain avoided any ostentation in decorating the house, for that was a sign of being nouveau riche.	This excerpt emphasizes the stigma associated with newly acquired wealth, which takes place even in nowadays society, in which it is reinforced that only those families with generational wealth are regarded as true high-class within society.
Hortense's family line compensated for her minimal dowry.	Mentioning that Hortense's family line would compensate for her minimal dowry shows how classism operated through marriage and social connections within the novel, thus reinforcing how lineage represented such importance within society at the time the novel took place in.
Valmorain would need a great deal of money to compensate for his lack of roots among old Creole families and the lamentable fact that he came from Saint-Domingue.	Noting how important and powerful ancestry is to demonstrate one's worth is proof that Valmorain's need for money would compensate for his lack of "roots" among old Creole families, reinforcing that at the time heritage and established wealth would prevail when choosing people even within their same social status.
He needed to be around boys of his social class and not just those Murphys, so common.	The desire for the Valmorains to associate Maurice only with boys of his social class, distancing himself from "those Murphys," reveals a disdain for lower social classes, even those that would be regarded as pertaining to their same racial status.

<p>Violette, with Loula, had settled into a modest house in a barrio of whites and mulattoes, several grades above Adèle in the hierarchy of class thanks to her distinction and the money she had saved in Saint-Domingue.</p>	<p>The fact that Violette and Loula could allocate themselves in a socially better household highlights the class hierarchy based on both race and economic status. It demonstrates how social mobility was severely restricted and would depend upon skin color and acquisitive power.</p>
<p>If it came to be known, his honor would be irreparably stained, and everyone would turn their backs on the Valmorains. How would they show themselves in public? He had to think about the future of his five daughters, his businesses, and his social position, just as Hortense had pointed out to him.</p>	<p>The palpable concern over one's family honor and social position over personal values comes to show the importance placed on reputation in society, in which ostracism was perceived as the greatest dishonor and biggest fear a family could face at the time.</p>

### 4.2.3 Misogyny

Book Excerpt	Researcher's Opinion
<p>Under her mother's tutelage the girl began to exercise her profession when she was eleven; by thirteen, when her mother was murdered, she had mastered the exquisite arts of pleasure, and at fifteen had surpassed all her rivals.</p>	<p>Being trained from a young age to become a prostitute demonstrates that Violette, like many other young girls and women, were to be sexual objects rather than individuals with identity and power, reducing them to show value through sexual utility.</p>
<p>The capitaine tried to see her as often as his campaigns allowed, and by the end of a few months he had made himself indispensable, caring for her and advising her like an uncle, until she could not imagine life without him and began to contemplate the possibility of marrying him in some poetic future.</p>	<p>By behaving in this way, Relais exercised a rather concerning power dynamic known in the present day as grooming a minor, as Violette was evidently in a position of disadvantage in which Relais would groom her into believing marrying him was the best possible option.</p>
<p>"He is a true monsieur, cultivated and rich, but even if he were deformed, you would marry him. You will soon be twenty, and you have no dowry."</p>	<p>At the time the novel took place, marrying a man "even if he were deformed" highlights how women were often pressured into marriage in order to accomplish financial security rather than personal choice or compatibility.</p>
<p>She was grateful for her luck; Lacroix, the owner of the plantation neighboring Saint-Lazare, kept a seraglio of girls chained in barracks to satisfy his fantasies, in which guests and a few blacks he called "my studs" participated.</p>	<p>The abhorrent way in which Lacroix treated his female slaves further illustrates objectification and dehumanization of women, as they were viewed as mere possessions or instruments for male pleasure.</p>
<p>Tété had learned to let herself be used with the passivity of a sheep, her body loose, not</p>	<p>Tété's heartbreaking dissociation while being sexually abused reinforces how women have been</p>

<p>offering any resistance, while her mind and soul flew elsewhere.</p>	<p>conditioned to accept their objectification, being dominated by a society that devalues their autonomy and rejects their value as individuals equal to men.</p>
<p>The Guizot family, and Hortense herself, would understand that he had consoled himself with a slave during his years as a widower, but now the problem had to be resolved.</p>	<p>Hortense’s husband’s behavior, as well as the way men generally behaved towards women of color sexually speaking, establishes how women in general, though more specifically women of color, were seen as interchangeable objects for male desire, reducing their humanity and agency, making them only useful to fulfill male needs.</p>
<p>When Hortense’s belly was obvious, and she had to stay in—no lady appeared in public showing proof of having copulated—.</p>	<p>Hortense staying indoors because her pregnancy was visible implies a societal shame associated with female sexuality and reproduction, thus establishing that a woman's worth was undermined severely by the evidence of her sexual activity, even in wedlock.</p>
<p>Toulouse Valmorain, on his knees beside his wife’s bed, announced that the child would be named Marie-Hortense, as was appropriate for the firstborn female, and everyone applauded emotionally, except Hortense, who wept with rage because she wanted a male child to compete with Maurice for the inheritance.</p>	<p>Hortense’s anger at not giving birth to a male child emphasizes a preference for sons over daughters in society at that period of time, reflecting a misogynistic belief that women were worthy only by being able to produce male heirs, thus reinforcing they were useful only to fulfill a reproductive role.</p>

<p>It did not seem strange to her. All the women and girls she knew, free or not, belonged to a man: father, husband, or Jesus.</p>	<p>This excerpt fully emphasizes the lack of autonomy women experienced, portraying them as property, thus suggesting that their very own core identity is defined by their relationships with men.</p>
<p>“We are going to arrange things so that Rosette lives well without having to work,” Violette declared. “How will we do that, madame?” Tété smiled, incredulous. “Plaçage. Rosette needs a white man to keep her.”</p>	<p>The practice of plaçage underscores the transactional nature of relationships in which women must rely on men for financial security, reinforcing deliberately how women are objectified to the benefit of white men.</p>
<p>Dr. Parmentier suggested that the girls should also have subjects for conversation, but according to Madame Violette no man is interested in what a woman says, and Don Sancho agreed.</p>	<p>Violette’s point of view that "no man is interested in what a woman says" reflects a deep-rooted belief that women’s thoughts and opinions are unworthy or unimportant; therefore, making them unsuited for intellectual, or emotional conversations filled with acknowledgement and respect towards their identity.</p>
<p>After the patriarch's death, his fortune would pass into the hands of the Guizots, and the surname Valmorain would appear nowhere but on the stone in the mausoleum, since his daughters could not pass it down to their descendants.</p>	<p>The privilege of passing down a fortune to a male heir only puts into evidence one of many scenarios that privileges men over women, reinforcing the belief that women are incapable of holding power or legacy at the time the novel took place, gatekeeping opportunities and erasing women’s potential contributions.</p>



#### **4.2.4 Feminist Reality**

Book Excerpt	The Researcher's opinion
<p>Witchcraft, Cambray said, that's what those two women are up to; nothing he couldn't resolve with a good lashing.</p>	<p>Cambray's attitude towards women and his tendency to use violence to be obeyed reflects a patriarchal mentality that controls women through punishment. Modern feminist activism addresses the need to dismantle patriarchal structures like the one mentioned above, as it is regrettably still present in nowadays society.</p>
<p>After the third moon without menstruating, she went to beg her godmother to end her problem with a sharp stick, but she refused; the risk of infection was enormous, and if they were caught attempting anything against the master's property, Cambray would have the perfect motive to flay them with his whip.</p>	<p>The reference to seeking help with a "sharp stick" to resolve pregnancy issues highlights the lack of safe options available to women for controlling their own bodies, which sadly connects to current feminist discussions about reproductive rights.</p>
<p>It appeared that she lived on the pension from her deceased husband and giving clavichord classes to young mademoiselles, but under cover she resold stolen goods, served as a procuress, and in case of emergency performed abortions.</p>	<p>By reselling stolen goods and performing abortions under dangerous conditions, the life this woman led exemplifies the lengths to which women often go to survive in oppressive circumstances, which regrettably aligns with modern feminism's fight advocating for the reproductive right to have an abortion in a controlled and safe environment, as well as to allow women on oppressed countries to afford better employment and income opportunities.</p>

<p>He accused me of raising him to be a coward, like a woman, and I told him in a fit of anger that we women are not cowards.</p>	<p>The accusation that raising a boy to be “like a woman” cowardly further strengthens the concept of fragile masculinity, still present in nowadays society. Feminist activism challenges these gender norms, advocating for the equality of both genders.</p>
<p>“How can you follow that man who does not recognize you as the mother of his children?” she sobbed. “He loves me the best he can,” Adèle replied, without anger. “He has taught his children to pretend in public that they don’t know him!” Violette exclaimed.</p>	<p>The fear of losing a daughter to slavery or abuse further reinforces the vulnerability of women and children under oppressive systems, both at the time the novel took place, and in nowadays society. This connects to feminist advocacy in terms of child protection, anti-violence, and the rights of mothers to raise their children free from fear.</p>
<p>My daughter was what mattered most to me in the world. We had lived like a single body, a single soul, until my fear that she would be sold, or that her own father would rape her, as he had me, had forced me to separate from her. More than once I had seen the master feeling her, the way men touch girls to know if they’re ripe.</p>	<p>The emotional support and compassion shared between the two women in the excerpt shows how important sorority is in a world dominated by patriarchal structures in which women are severely undermined. Feminist activism nowadays emphasizes the power of community and collective action in addressing struggles against patriarchal oppression.</p>
<p>While others were refusing to mix with the Americans, Violette devoted herself to studying them up close, to see what she could learn from them and how she could keep afloat through the</p>	<p>Maurice’s rejection of plaçage demonstrates a desire for justice and equality, which aligns with feminist principles of advocating for relationships amongst both genders</p>

<p>inevitable changes they would bring to New Orleans.</p>	<p>in which mutual respect and freedom are present and strong.</p>
<p>The two women wept, holding hands, joined by a delicate current of mutual compassion. At last the tears dried, and they concluded that what Valmorain had said could not be erased but they might soften its impact on Jean-Martin.</p>	<p>Violette’s evident resilience reflects the need for women to adapt and strategize in the face of evolving social landscapes. This aligns with nowadays feminist activism, which often encourages resilience and innovation as women navigate through a world filled with patriarchal challenges.</p>
<p>Maurice did not look at anyone. The mere idea that these girls were being offered to benefit the white men made him ill.</p>	<p>Maurice’s refusal to accept the treatment of women at the time echoes feminist critiques of patriarchal systems that take place nowadays, which emphasize dismantling structures that perpetuate gender inequality and highlight the unfairness of male privilege.</p>
<p>He did not intend to submit to society's hypocrisy or to expose Rosette to the injustice of plaçage, in which she would be trapped while he enjoyed total freedom.</p>	<p>Maurice’s concern for Rosette and his desire to protect her from the injustices of plaçage demonstrate a commitment to supporting women in their struggles. This represents contemporary feminist activism wholeheartedly, which often seeks to create alliances between men and women to challenge misogyny and advocate towards gender equality.</p>

### **4.3 Themes, Symbols, and Motifs**

In literature, themes, symbols, and motifs have always been used to convey a deeper meaning to a piece of literary work. Within this research, said components of the novel will be analyzed by using a comparative chart that will further detail their presence and relevance in the novel.

Themes	Researcher's interpretation
Colonialism	<p>The novel deeply explores the lives of slaves in contrast with that of free people, indicating how colonialism dictated the future of thousands of enslaved people, whites and people of color alike, all suffering under the ironclad regime imposed by those who conquered lands that would ultimately be worked by initially indigenous peoples, and after those perished and thus became extinct, Black people were taken from Africa to work the land and indulge grand blancs and other wealthy populations in different cravings.</p>
Belonging	<p>Throughout the novel, a deep need to belong is visible through the yearning for freedom slaves had, the need to fit in white people of high society had, the way in which women would accept and endure submission to men to grant security for themselves and their children, and the way in which all would attempt to be white, or at least a lighter color to ensure a better place in society.</p>
Resilience	<p>It is noticeable how the characters of the story, more specifically the female characters and people of color, pull through hardships to ensure their survival and that of their families. It is particularly noticeable in the way Tété adapted to the ordeals she suffered under Valmorain's rule, as well as hardships both Violette and Adele endured to grant their families survival after Relais passed away, and Dr. Parmentier had to stay away to save enough money and wait for an opportunity to escape Saint-Domingue to be reunited with his family again.</p>

Oppression	Oppression is palpable through numerous scenarios in the novel, where sadly slaves were the ones being oppressed the most, having to abide by a master's rules and desires. Women were deeply oppressed as well, regrettably viewed as incapable of critical thinking and actions other than reproduction and providing sexual satisfaction to the males, and ultimately the very own whites that, in lesser positions would often retort to slavery in order to pay debts.
Identity	Identity would always be a struggle within the novel, as there were several different ways to classify a person within the novel as per their skin color; moreover, identity was so deeply rooted and would dictate the person's destiny, and could only get around the strict rules imposed at the time by having the support to pass by a different classification, as was the case of Valmorain's son, who, despite his grandfather's deep racial and classist beliefs, was willing to ignore his grandson's mixed blood to give him a better life and accomplish reconciliation with his son Maurice.

Symbols	Researcher's interpretation
The plantations	<p>Plantations represented hope for the Grand Blancs who owned them, to provide money for their families in the island, as well as their families in France. It represents stability as it was perceived as “sweet gold”, which sustained the French economy, alongside coffee and tobacco.</p> <p>However, it also represents oppression and a deep pain, as thousands of slaves were dehumanized, abused, mistreated, and ultimately killed in said plantations.</p>
The gris-gris	<p>A representation of deeply rooted beliefs slaves brought, represents cultural heritage, diversity, hope as it offers good luck to the person wearing it, both Tété and Valmorain used them in different periods of their life, in both circumstances looking for good luck, protection and, in the case of Valmorain, a way to extend his life once he realized it was slipping away from his fingers.</p>
The ships	<p>Representations of progress, hope for a better future and connection to the rest of the world, as in Saint-Domingue they were used to bring goods, both legally and illegally.</p> <p>Later in the novel would also represent salvation, as hundreds of</p>

	<p>people were carried to safety once an uprising in Saint Domingue took place. Nevertheless, they also represent heartbreak, despair, and the loss of innocence and humanity, as thousands of slaves were transported, broken, raped and killed during the trips from Africa to Saint-Domingue.</p>
<p>The roots</p>	<p>Meaningful in the novel, roots represented where slaves came from, deeply associated with their beliefs by practicing voodoo, by remembering the warrior blood in their veins, royal blood as well in the case of Tété's mother, who was presumably a queen as per Madame Delphine's story. Moreover, it would also hold great importance amongst the grand blancs in Saint-Domingue, as their French roots would grant them a far more favorable position within the island, as well as the Creoles in New Orleans, whose roots were their pride and safety as well.</p>

The gold

Gold represented hope for those who worked hard to earn a living, it also represented freedom for Violette, who alongside Loula would save and invest earnings made through exercising prostitution for them to later grant them a better life once they fled to Cuba, and later to New Orleans. It also symbolizes regret and greed, as Valmorain did not care about using slaves to enrich their family, such as many other grand blancs, and as the story progressed, Valmorain would later be hunted by his felony of stealing Lacroix's gold to start anew in New Orleans.



Motifs	Researcher's interpretation
Journey	<p>Several journeys were made within the novel, both physically and psychologically, The journeys slaves endured from Africa to Saint-Domingue, the journey to safety made by Violette and Adele in order to flee from the uprising taking place in Saint-Domingue, as well as the one made by Tété, Rosette, Valmorain and Maurice to reach safety in Le Cap.</p> <p>Moreover, the journey Tété made from being a slave abused by her master to become an emancipated mulatta who ultimately got married and had a daughter in complete freedom.</p>
Family	<p>Family was always of the utmost important for the characters of the novel: Tété would mourn the loss of her firstborn child after being taken away by Valmorain, later cherishing the birth and life of Rosette; Valmorain who would put Maurice above all else, ensuring the family name would be carried in the next generation, same as with Violette and Relais, who would cherish and protect Jean-Martin, asking Valmorain for his emancipation so they could be a family. Finally, the way creoles would protect their own and work as a pack to accomplish their goals in life.</p>
Power Dynamics	<p>Regrettably, power dynamics in the novel are tarnished by oppression and misogyny, the most palpable case being Tété, who was continuously raped and mistreated by Valmorain, Violette, who would see slaves as merchandise and would not even glance at them. Moreover, how in New Orleans young girls would be prepared for</p>

	<p>plácage, a practice in which they would be granted security and respect by submitting to a white male from a prominent family, and perhaps the most heartbreaking of all, when Hortense used her white privilege to have Rosette arrested, which would ultimately kill her.</p>
Freedom	<p>Freedom was the goal of uncountable slaves, mostly of women, who regrettably were the most oppressed of the sort; it is particularly visible through Tété, who would cry as a child in Violette’s apartment begging for her freedom, also in Violette herself, working and saving money to eventually leave prostitution, also in Jean Martin, whose foster parents, Violette and Relais would beg Valmorain for his emancipation, and finally, also presented as a means to withstand the pain Maurice felt after losing Rosette, embarking in a trip to forget about the pain of losing her.</p>
Tradition	<p>Tradition strengthened identity as well as a sense of belonging within the novel, specially seen through the voodoo and kalenda celebrations slaves had. Moreover, it was especially palpable throughout Hortense’s life how tradition dictated all her carefully curated steps to accomplish her goals, and finally, how tradition greatly injured Maurice and Valmorain’s relationship after Maurice decided to wed his stepsister, a woman of color who, to the eyes of society, was unacceptable.</p>

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This final chapter of this investigation aims towards showcasing the conclusions of the investigation. The researcher's final thoughts with regard to analyzed excerpts, the theory used to analyze it, and the researcher's own perspectives used within the analysis, will be considered as well.

#### **5.1 Purpose of the Conclusion**

This conclusive chapter aims towards showing the results of the presented investigation. Said results will focus on the outcomes obtained regarding the three specific objectives. Moreover, recommendations will be provided in the form of pieces of advice that would eventually help future researchers that seek to enhance their knowledge.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

The main purpose of this analysis was to analyze the novel *Island under the Sea* by Isabel Allende through a feminist approach. The researcher focused on three specific objectives to carry on with this analysis. Firstly, to compare the situations within the novel to real-life scenarios women have faced over time; secondly, to identify similarities, as well as differences in the situations lived by female characters in the novel, compared to real-life scenarios women have faced over time; and thirdly, to highlight misogynistic problematics that took place in the novel and are still present in real-life, current situations women face. To accomplish these objectives, the researcher used 4 charts designed to analyze book excerpts that would evidence the points the researcher sought to find, and as conclusions are mandatory, they shall be displayed within the points below.

5.2.1 To compare the situations within the novel to real-life scenarios women have faced over time

The researcher made several findings while analyzing the novel from various perspectives. Initially, it was concluded that Colonial Oppression is present still nowadays via taboos and stigmas related to one's origin, as seen in countless scenarios where slaves were treated as merchandise and reduced to mere objects for trade. Additionally, sexual exploitation, which is a heartbreaking reality women face nowadays was present in the novel depicted through atrocious scenarios women faced at the time. It was specially seen through the way Lacroix (a slave owner) would brutalize his female slaves to his pleasure, as well as in the way white female slaves would be mainly used as sex workers given the morbid desires they awakened in men. Moreover, this was seen within the novel by observing the struggle for independence, suffered nowadays as women fight for their autonomy, even in countries where they are perceived as citizens and independent beings. Likewise, in the novel, it is not only seen through Zarité's fight for emancipation, but through Adele, Loula, and Violette's fights to survive, firstly in Cuba and secondly in New Orleans, where they had to make ends meet and were capable of thriving without the help of a man.

Motherhood and sacrifice were widely observed as well, especially through Zarité, Adele, and Violette's fights to provide for their children while being enslaved (in the case of Zarité) and while their husbands were either away or deceased (Adele and Violette). Motherhood was present and quite strong, in the sacrifices each mother endured within the novel, reflecting impeccably how similar this is to our nowadays reality. Furthermore, economic disempowerment was perceived as another reality yet present in nowadays society, as at the present time women suffer from injustice when their belongings, property, inheritance and future are taken away due to various circumstances. Within the novel, it was seen through slavery, when thousands of slaves were taken away from their homes, and their identities, agency and humanity stripped away from them through uncountable aggressions,

as well as in the way free women could not inherit, nor pass down their last names to their children, as it was a man's concern to do so.

5.2.2 To identify similarities, as well as differences in the situations lived by female characters in the novel, compared to real-life scenarios women have faced over time

Within the novel, several similarities were observed. It is seen how Zarité and other characters lived under the oppressive dominion of the grand blancs, as it happens nowadays to women in many nations that are colonized even in the present day. In addition, as Zarité experienced sexual exploitation at the hands of Valmorain in repeated moments within the novel, thousands of women in marginalized zones are at the mercy of men who seek sexual pleasure at the expense of these women. Additionally, as it is seen in the novel when Rosette must submit to plaçage to thrive in a society where she is at a disadvantage. Women historically have dealt with countless limitations regarding economic resources and opportunities, merely for their gender.

On the other hand, various differences were perceived, for instance: while Zarité at the end found her freedom and independence, raising a daughter in a place of safety and freedom, millions of women all over the world, and historically as well, regrettably did not share the same fate. Moreover, the way Violette was depicted, a light-skinned cocotte from free parents, an emancipated grandmother whose children were born out of love and not rape, who was able to bring up their children via honest means, and whose daughter (Violette's mother) chose prostitution, reflects a clear opposite to what thousands of women nowadays and even historically lived, being thrown into prostitution through trafficking, or overall bad choices that did not have a positive outcome.

5.2.3 To highlight misogynistic problematics that took place in the novel and are still present in real-life, current situations women face

The researcher found various circumstances that reflect misogynistic problematics that prevail in the present day, amongst them sexual exploitation, which is seen through various scenarios, one of them how Cambray would claim 11-year-old virgins, clearly abusing his power and doing with slaves as he pleased. In addition to this, the way women were objectified in the novel as it happens nowadays. One of the most visible circumstances is seen through the “me too” movement, seeing how models, actresses, and singers are passed over powerful men in the entertainment industry, reflected as well within the novel through the practice of *plaçage*, and seeing how normalized it was for men to relieve and console themselves (noting how the use of the words “relieve and console” are used with a rather convenient tone to favor men), while women were objectified and used, oftentimes not even penalizing men for such crimes, as it was written in the novel that such practices were not seen as crimes should the woman be of color, even a free one.

Furthermore, reproductive control is not only seen within the novel, but also in real life, as regrettably happens all over the world with women fighting to gain agency with regard to their bodies and their right of choice on whether they give birth or not. Regrettably, within the novel, it is seen how children, whether they come from a free woman or not, are deemed the priority, often reducing women to mere reproductive facilities that have no agency on what happened to their children, as both the mother and the child were seen as property, either of a master or a husband.

### **5.3 Restatement of the Research Question**

The researcher was able to fulfill all objectives of the investigation, thus answering the question: which are the similarities found in the challenges faced by the female characters of

the novel *Island Beneath the Sea*, compared to the reality lived by women in Costa Rica in the year 2024?

#### **5.4 Unexpected Results**

The researcher found fascinating the fact that, despite the novel posing various challenges, one of them was its length, as well as several rather crude depictions of realities lived at the time the novel took place. It was not only easier than expected to conduct the research, but rather fulfilling, as Isabel Allende did a remarkable job portraying the hardships women faced, but also how they found support along the way, either via sorority amongst women, or by finding unexpected allies that supported them along the way and ended up easing the burden if only a little, as it was the case with Maurice and Per.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

The following recommendations come from a place of deep empathy and aim towards facilitating the journey of upcoming researchers that might face similar challenges in their own investigations. Initially, reading repeatedly is of the utmost importance, highlighting excerpts and having a repository with excerpts that, though might not be used, could help strengthen reasoning and further solidify an opinion. Pairing the reading with an audiobook might help the researcher in reason, not to lose focus and optimize timing, especially in lengthy pieces of literary work such as the novel this researcher used.

Moreover, it is highly recommended to have a deep passion towards feminist advocacy, as this fosters a deeper understanding of all circumstances present in a literary novel such as *Island Beneath the Sea*, which will also facilitate the researcher's journey, as vivid examples of advocacy and the reality women face every day are present everywhere, thus having an open mind, emotional intelligence and a deep passion towards gender equality will make the journey not only easier to bear, but deeply enjoyable.

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