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CONCENTRATION IN TRANSLATION**

**Reimagining Female Agency in English and Costa Rican Literature: A Comparative Study
of Empowerment in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and Selected
Costa Rican Literary Works Written by Women**

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Dedication

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Abstract

This thesis explores how female agency is portrayed in literature by comparing *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman with selected Costa Rican works written by women, including Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi. These texts, although rooted in different times and cultures, reflect how women navigate and resist patriarchal systems. By applying feminist theories like Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "the Other" and Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, the study examines how these narratives challenge societal norms and give voice to the struggles of women for autonomy and empowerment. The comparison highlights both shared themes and important differences, showing how literature can question, reflect, and even transform the way society understands gender roles. Ultimately, this thesis shows that literature is not just a mirror of the world, but also a powerful space for resistance and change.

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza cómo se representa la agencia femenina en la literatura a través de una comparación entre *The Yellow Wallpaper* de Charlotte Perkins Gilman y varias obras costarricenses escritas por mujeres, como las de Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú y Ana Cristina Rossi. Aunque provienen de contextos culturales e históricos diferentes, estos textos muestran cómo las mujeres enfrentan y resisten sistemas patriarcales. A partir de teorías feministas como la noción de “la Otra” de Simone de Beauvoir y la performatividad de género de Judith Butler, el estudio examina cómo estas autoras desafían las normas sociales y retratan la búsqueda de autonomía y empoderamiento. El análisis destaca similitudes, pero también diferencias clave, que permiten ver cómo la literatura puede cuestionar las estructuras impuestas. Esta tesis propone que la literatura no solo refleja la realidad, sino que también puede convertirse en una herramienta de resistencia y transformación.

Chapter I

Introductory Framework

The exploration of female agency in literature can provide insights into how gender roles, societal expectations, and empowerment are portrayed in different cultural and historical contexts. Literature not only reflects the norms of society, but it also has the power to demur and change them. Through stories that deal with resistance and self-discovery, authors have explained the struggles and victories of women navigating the existing patriarchal systems throughout history. By placing focus on themes that include autonomy, identity, and empowerment, literary works can become a space for questioning deeply rooted societal structures. This study focuses on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and some selected contemporary Costa Rican works written by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi to analyze how female agency can be represented in different cultural and historical settings. We will pay close attention to how the different cultural contexts in which the authors are, can influence the interpretation and reception of feminist literature. For example, in Costa Rican readers may interpret Ana Cristina Rossi's critique of societal and environmental injustices differently from international audiences, particularly given the regional relevance of the themes she explores. By applying feminist theories such as Judith Butler's gender performativity and Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "the Other", this study seeks to uncover how these texts reflect and critique the societal norms of their respective contexts.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), is often considered a groundbreaking work of feminist literature. This short story critiques the rigid gender norms and oppressive medical practices of Victorian society, showing the psychological and social repression that women faced during this time. During the late 19th century, women were often confined to domestic spaces, and the societal norm was to limit their autonomy and self-expression. Gilman's narrative stresses the extreme psychological consequences that those limitations can bring, the story portrays the descent into madness of the protagonist as a metaphor for the suffocating restrictions imposed on all women during that time. Through her subtle critique, the author exposes how these societal norms and medical practices, such as the "rest cure," impacted the mental health and sense of autonomy of women during that period. All the restrictions and expectations that were placed on women made it harder for them to hold on

to their independence and well-being. It must be understood that this was a time in which the voices of women were often silenced, leaving many of them feeling trapped and powerless. As Dosani (2018) explains, Gilman wrote the story as a protest against this treatment, which enforced passivity and confinement for women suffering from mental health conditions. The wallpaper in the story symbolizes the entrapment, isolation, and denial of autonomy experienced by women, embodying the broader systemic oppression of the era.

While *The Yellow Wallpaper* shows us the struggles of women in Victorian America, the more recent selected Costa Rican novels and plays written by women dice into similar themes, of women empowerment, within a more modern but still patriarchal society. These chosen stories look into the unique ways that women navigate their imposed roles and fight back against the societal expectations. These stories highlight the still on-going fight of women for autonomy, and the courage it takes to challenge the imposed roles, they show how women even in literature continue to redefine their place in the world, even to this day. As Carvajal (2004) notes, Costa Rican literature presents a wide range of realities for women, portraying characters who are confined by traditional norms as well as those who assert their independence and redefine societal expectations. Such narratives often emphasize the tension between societal roles and personal agency, offering a critical lens through which to view the ever-evolving identities of women.

Costa Rican female writers like Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi have significantly contributed to this dialogue. Carmen Naranjo does so through her sharp critiques to the existing societal structures, that deny women of equality. While the selected works of Ana Istarú boldly explore themes of female sexuality and bodily autonomy which directly challenge the existing patriarchal norms. Likewise, Ana Cristina Rossi takes on criticizing the oppressive systems in place, and how those very structures hold women back. Her stories shed some light to the challenges women face when they fight to reclaim their autonomy. Through her writing, Rossi does not only criticize social injustices, but she also explores the connection between personal empowerment of women and the strength of collective resistance. These authors give voices to the women navigating and resisting in a world that more often than not tries to silence them.

This thesis compares the portrayal of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* with selected Costa Rican novels and plays written by women, including Naranjo's *Los perros no*

ladraron, Istarú's *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra*, *Baby boom en el paraíso*, and Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*, examining how these works reflect the feminist ideologies present in their respective societies. By comparing the Victorian ideals of confinement and domestic life with these modern stories of independence and self-determination, this study seeks to uncover how the idea of female agency and empowerment has changed over time and across different cultures. Through this contrast, we can better understand how the fight for freedom and self-expression has evolved, reflecting the changing struggles and triumphs of women throughout history. The comparison will focus on how these literary works engage with the existing societal norms, providing critical insights into the intersections between historical contexts, personal agency, and social change.

Through this analysis, the study looks to contribute to broader discussions on the role of literature in reflecting and challenging gender dynamics. It emphasizes the ongoing importance of female agency in shaping societal attitudes toward gender and empowerment. Literature, as a cultural artifact, continues to play a crucial role in nurturing conversations about equality and justice, making it an indispensable instrument in the pursuit of transformative social change. By examining the intersections of historical contexts and feminist ideologies, this research highlights the persistent relevance of literary narratives in advocating for gender equality. These stories not only reflect the struggles of their time but also inspire future generations to envision a more equitable society.

1.1 Problem Statement

The portrayal of female agency in literature helps us understand how gender roles and societal expectations shape the lives of women in different cultures and time periods. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) highlights the oppression of women in Victorian society, focusing on how strict gender roles and medical practices confined women to the home without offering real solutions or treatments for their afflictions. Through the protagonist's struggle, the story critiques the harmful effects of such limitations and unethical medical treatments.

In contrast, Costa Rican novels and plays written by women, such as those by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, including Naranjo's *Los perros no ladraron*,

Istarú's *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra*, *Baby boom en el paraíso*, and Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*, explore themes of female empowerment in a more modern but still patriarchal society. These stories present the challenges women have to face as they seek autonomy and challenge traditional gender roles.

The problem lies in understanding how female agency is depicted in these two different contexts: Victorian America and contemporary Costa Rica. While both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the Costa Rican novels and plays selected focus on female empowerment; however, they do so in ways that are rooted in the social, cultural, and political contexts of their time. The study aims to compare the portrayal of female agency to examine how each work reflects and critiques the gender norms of its society. This research will highlight how feminist themes in literature evolve across different historical and cultural landscapes. This comparison leaves open a road for further investigation into the broader role of literature in challenging and shaping societal attitudes toward gender and empowerment over time.

The comparative analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican works also highlights on the diverse ways female agency can be expressed and resisted within literary narratives. Victorian literature often portrays resistance through subtle acts of defiance or internal struggles, as seen in the mental rebellion of the protagonist against societal constraints in Gilman's story. In contrast, Costa Rican narratives tend to present a broader spectrum of female agency, including political activism, sexual autonomy, and collective resistance. By examining these variable expressions of empowerment, this study seeks to uncover the complex relationship between individual and collective actions in challenging patriarchal norms, emphasizing how cultural and historical contexts influence the representation and evolution of feminist ideals in literature.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 Main Objective

To compare the portrayal of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and contemporary Costa Rican short stories by women, including Naranjo's *Los perros no ladraron* (1966), Istarú's *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* (1989), *Baby boom en el paraíso* (1996),

lastly Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca* (1992) and *Tocar a Diana* (2019), exploring how Victorian and modern feminist perspectives on empowerment converge and diverge

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

1. To analyze the representation of female agency and struggles in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, focusing on its key feminist themes, particularly the critique of gendered medical practices and domestic confinement
2. To examine how Costa Rican short stories by women, including those by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, portray female empowerment and agency in the face of societal and patriarchal constraints, specifically referencing *Los perros no ladraron*, *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra*, *Baby boom en el paraíso*, *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*
3. To compare these portrayals, identifying how they reflect and challenge societal norms across two distinct cultural and historical contexts: Victorian-era America and modern Costa Rica

1.3 Justification

This thesis is socially relevant as it explores how narratives of female agency in both Victorian and contemporary Costa Rican literature reflect and challenge societal norms. By comparing *The Yellow Wallpaper* with Costa Rican short stories by women, the study highlights diverse perspectives on female empowerment. Moreover, the analysis emphasizes how literature can serve not only as a reflection of societal attitudes and the constraints faced by women but also as a vehicle for confronting and transforming these norms. Although the narratives examined in this research originate from different time periods and societies, they, nevertheless, converge on the theme of female empowerment, offering diverse perspectives on how women navigate and challenge the limitations imposed by patriarchal structures.

Furthermore, from a social standpoint, the research is relevant as it contributes to ongoing discussions about gender, agency, and empowerment in both literary and societal spheres, thereby, enriching broader conversations about feminist ideologies and the evolving roles of women. In addition, the thesis examines how these literary works from different contexts can

foster critical reflection on the historical and contemporary struggles for women's autonomy and self-expression.

The comparison between *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Costa Rican literature provides a platform for understanding how feminist themes have developed across time and space. It also invites further investigation into how these narratives can inspire social change, emphasizing the role of female agency in shaping societal attitudes toward gender equality. Ultimately, this analysis will not only enhance academic discourse on literature and feminism but also offer valuable insights into the continuous efforts toward gender empowerment and the dismantling of patriarchal norms.

1.4 Antecedents

Historical Context and Gender Roles in Feminist Literature

The exploration of gender roles throughout history shows the changing expectations for men and women, emphasizing how these roles affect labor division, responsibilities and perceptions of agency. This thesis examines how such roles are represented and challenged in literature, particularly focusing on feminist perspectives.

In *Imágenes de la mujer en la literatura costarricense escrita por mujeres: 1980-1995* (2004), Dora Lía Piedra Carvajal analyzes Costa Rican literature, tracing the evolution of female characters from passive figures to dynamic individuals who reflect changing societal norms. These works and insights from the author are essential for understanding the representation of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican literary works. By analyzing these texts side by side, the thesis highlights intersections between Costa Rican and international representations of female empowerment. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) serves as a cornerstone text for this thesis. Gilman's portrayal of female oppression and agency in Victorian society provides a foundation for comparing similar themes in Costa Rican literature, especially regarding gendered medical practices and domestic confinement. This study explores how Gilman's critique intersects with portrayals of female empowerment in Costa Rican narratives.

María Elena León Rodríguez's (2006) thesis on Celia Amorós's *La razón patriarcal* provides a relevant antecedent for examining patriarchal systems and their impact on female autonomy. León Rodríguez analyzes the authors philosophical critique of patriarchy as a deeply embedded structure within society, one that shapes both philosophical discourse and cultural norms (León Rodríguez, 2006). Similarly, this study investigates the representation of patriarchal forces in literature, focusing on how they influence and restrict female agency across diverse cultural contexts, specifically in Victorian and Costa Rican works. The exploration of patriarchy as an adaptable, persistent system in Amorós's work aligns with the selected approach of this study, which examines the struggles of female characters within oppressive frameworks. León Rodríguez's work supports the theoretical foundation of this research by emphasizing the importance of feminist critique in both philosophy and literature, demonstrating how these fields can serve as platforms for challenging patriarchal structures.

Furthermore, the studies of Emilia Macaya, specifically *Cuando estalla el silencio: para una lectura femenina de textos hispánicos* (1992) provides further insight into the interpretation of Hispanic texts through a feminist lens. Macaya examines how silence, as both a theme and a narrative device, is employed to critique patriarchal structures. Her work underscores the subtle, yet powerful expressions of resistance rooted in women's writing, offering a nuanced context for understanding Costa Rican texts that also grapple with themes of silence, voice, and agency.

This thesis will also consider Jeana E. Paul-Urena's dissertation *A Developmental Perspective of Women's Writing in Costa Rica* (1999), which traces the evolution of women's literary voices within the Costa Rican context. Paul-Urena's research is instrumental in contextualizing the progression from early, more constrained representations of women to more complex, assertive characters who challenge traditional roles. In addition, the scholarly article *Lectura femenina del discurso machista en Diana de Carlos Fuentes* by Nacer Ouabbou discusses the interpretation of male-dominated discourse in Carlos Fuentes' work from a female perspective, further illustrating the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms in Latin American literature. Ouabbou's analysis enhances the comparative framework of this thesis by examining how gendered discourse is navigated and critiqued by female readers, shedding light on the ways Costa Rican literature responds to similar challenges.

The thesis by María Pamela Sandí Villalobos and Adyery Priscilla Sequeira Salas, titled *Viajar en piel de mujer: análisis de las novelas Ida y vuelta de Pinto y El sitio de Ariadna de Salaverry* (2022), offers a nuanced analysis of female identity within Costa Rican travel literature. It specifically examines how journeys serve as both geographical and introspective experiences, shaping women's sense of self. This exploration of female identity and introspection through travel closely aligns with this thesis's examination of female agency in literature, particularly in how travel and personal journeying allow women to redefine their roles against societal expectations. (Sandí Villalobos & Adyery Priscilla, 2022). Both studies emphasize the transformation and empowerment of women through experiences that challenge traditional female roles, highlighting travel and resistance as central themes in the development of female characters in literature. The comparative framework in this thesis is like the approach used in *Viajar en piel de mujer*, where Costa Rican narratives are set against broader cultural contexts to understand how Costa Rican female characters navigate and resist constraints imposed by their societies. This thesis builds on the foundation set by Sandí Villalobos and Sequeira Salas, expanding on how these introspective journeys resonate across different cultural landscapes and historical periods, from Victorian America to contemporary Costa Rica.

Moreover, the thesis will engage with feminist literary analyses of works such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, focusing on how literature reflects and challenges 19th-century gender norms. Insights from Dayanara Ortega Lopez's *Analysis of the novel The Awakening by Kate Chopin from a Feminist Point of View, Analyzing the novel on its Own Era and Modern Times* (2024) will help lay the groundwork for understanding the intersections of feminist ideologies and societal structures in literature. This work critically examines how gender roles have evolved and how literature reflects, and challenges societal expectations related to gender. Ortega Lopez argues that gender roles, which historically defined and restricted the behaviors and responsibilities of individuals based on their sex or gender identity, have undergone significant changes in modern societies. These evolving roles advocate for greater equality, allowing for more inclusive and flexible expressions of identity and capabilities. Ortega Lopez highlights that while the journey toward gender equality has been gradual, literature plays a crucial role in both reflecting and challenging these historical and social dynamics. The analysis underscores the importance of literature not only as a reflection of historical societal attitudes but also as a powerful agent of change. Ortega Lopez emphasizes how women's increased access to education

and the growth of women's movements in the 20th century were influenced by literary works that questioned and defied the patriarchal structures of the time. This thesis is closely related to the current study, which also focuses on how literature, particularly feminist works, challenges and critiques gender norms across different cultural and historical contexts. Both works engage with the role of literature in reflecting the struggles and empowerment of women, providing a nuanced understanding of how women's roles and opportunities have evolved.

And Valeria Sevilla Sancho's thesis, *Literary Analysis of the Book A Pair of Silk Stockings Using the Feminist Approach* (2024), provides a critical feminist examination of the constraints faced by women in the late 1800s, as depicted in Kate Chopin's short story. Through a qualitative and descriptive methodology, Sevilla Sancho explores how gender norms and economic limitations affected women in the American Progressive era, drawing comparisons with contemporary issues faced by women in modern societies, including Costa Rica. By using analytical tools such as literary analysis charts, the study highlights the intersection of gender, social class, and misogyny, revealing the social, economic, and political oppression women have historically faced. This research aligns with the present study by focusing on the ways literature reflects and critiques gender inequalities and women's agencies across different historical periods. Both works share a feminist framework, offering insights into how patriarchal norms restrict female autonomy and how women, through their actions and emotions, navigate these oppressive structures. Sevilla Sancho's analysis of Mrs. Sommers' experiences of empowerment and restriction in the context of her time contributes to the broader conversation in this thesis on how female agency is portrayed in literature, emphasizing the social impact of gendered constraints.

Another valuable contribution is Silvia Lorena Fernández Garrote's thesis, *Literary Analysis of the Patriarchal Ideology in the Description of the Relationship Between the Literary Text and the Ideas About Sociopolitical Gender Facts, Power, and Sexuality Found in the Book A Thousand Splendid Suns by the Author Khaled Hosseini Through the Feminist Approach* (2023), which provides a critical examination of patriarchal ideologies and their impact on the lives of women within the sociopolitical and cultural contexts of Afghanistan. Fernández Garrote employs a feminist perspective to analyze how power, gender, and sexuality influence the experiences of the female characters, while also exploring the historical and political forces, such

as civil wars and the Taliban regime, that perpetuate these structures. The research highlights the importance of feminist waves and ideologies in challenging patriarchal norms and striving for gender equality. This thesis aligns with the current study by emphasizing the intersection of societal structures and female agency, particularly in how literary texts critique and reflect gendered oppression. By focusing on how women resist or navigate systems of power and cultural expectations, Fernández Garrote's work enriches the framework for examining the representations of female autonomy and empowerment in Victorian and Costa Rican literature.

Moreover, Ericka Calderón Rojas' *Pasión, ruptura y humanismo: la poesía centroamericana contemporánea escrita por mujeres* (2014) examines the evolution of feminist thought in Central American poetry, highlighting how female poets have historically used their work to challenge embedded gender roles and societal norms. Calderón Rojas explores how these poets address themes such as identity, autonomy, and resistance, often reflecting the broader struggles of women in patriarchal societies. Her analysis emphasizes the significance of poetry as a medium through which women not only critique societal structures but also articulate their personal and collective experiences of empowerment. Particularly, her work explores on the intersectionality present in Central American feminist poetry, where themes of race, class, and political resistance frequently overlap with gender. This multidimensional approach aligns with the focus of this thesis, as both emphasize the role of literature in revealing and subverting oppressive systems. By examining how poets navigate the tension between traditional expectations and their pursuit of self-expression, Calderón Rojas' study offers a valuable framework for analyzing Costa Rican short stories that similarly grapple with issues of identity, agency, and resistance. Her insights provide essential context for understanding the literary strategies employed by Costa Rican authors, such as Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, to engage with feminist ideologies and advocate for social change through their narratives.

Finally, the comparative studies in this thesis will investigate the differences between historical and modern expectations of women. Sonia E. Alvarez et al. (2003) with their work "*Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms*" will help illustrate the evolution of feminist movements in the region. This comparative framework is crucial for analyzing how past and present gender roles are understood and challenged in diverse contexts. Through these

works, the thesis aims to provide a rich context for comparative analysis between Costa Rican feminist literature and its international counterparts. Examining how gender roles are represented, challenged, and redefined across different historical and cultural contexts.

In conclusion, this examination of historical and contemporary feminist literature highlights the dynamic relationship between gender roles, societal expectations and female agency. By analyzing key texts and diverse feminist analyses, the thesis aims to illustrate how female agency is represented and negotiated in both Costa Rican and international literature, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender within a literary framework. The thesis positions itself within a rich scholarly tradition that critiques patriarchal structures and explores how literature serves as a platform for resistance and empowerment. Studies such as those by Dora Lía Piedra Carvajal and Jeana E. Paul-Urena provide valuable insights into the evolution of female characters in Costa Rican literature, reflecting the transformation of societal norms over time. Similarly, works like *The Awakening* and the analyses of Kate Chopin's writings offer critical perspectives on 19th-century gender dynamics, enriching the comparative framework of this thesis. By integrating analyses of global feminist movements and regional studies, such as those by María Elena León Rodríguez and Ericka Calderón Rojas, the thesis bridges the gap between international feminist discourse and localized representations of female agency. Additionally, recent theses like Valeria Sevilla Sancho's study of *A Pair of Silk Stockings* and Silvia Lorena Fernández Garrote's analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* deepen the understanding of how feminist literature addresses intersectional issues, including class, power, and sociopolitical oppression. Their methodologies and findings align closely with the objectives of this research, emphasizing the role of literature as a mirror and a tool for transformation in patriarchal societies.

Ultimately, this thesis builds on the foundations set by these antecedents to analyze and compare the portrayal of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican literature written by women. By doing so, it not only contributes to the broader field of feminist literary criticism but also provides a deeper understanding of how historical and cultural contexts influence the representation of gender roles, autonomy, and resistance. This comparative study offers a critical lens through which to explore the immense capacity literature has in order to challenge societal norms and advocate for transformative change in gender equality.

1.5 Scope

This study points out to analyze female agency within Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and select contemporary Costa Rican short stories authored by women. The selected female Costa Rican authors include Carmen Naranjo (*Los perros no ladraron* (1984), Ana Istarú *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* (1979), *Baby boom en el paraíso* (1979), and Ana Cristina Rossi *La loca de Gandoca* (1992) and *Tocar a Diana* (2019). The main focus of the study lays on how these stories portray the struggles and victories of female characters as they confront the imposed societal roles as well as their own personal challenges.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the study explores themes of mental health, domestic confinement, and the search for identity within the confines of patriarchal authority. Gilman's narrative provides a powerful insight into the historical struggles of women in the late 19th century. Moreover, the analysis of the selected contemporary Costa Rican literature complements the analysis by bringing a modern perspective, while highlighting how female writers portray themes of gender roles, societal expectations and the still ongoing quest for female empowerment.

By bringing together the different voices of women portrayed in these stories, the research looks to deepen our understanding of how the experiences of women and female agency are represented in literature. Seeking to understand the importance of narrative voice, in giving women the spaces to articulate their stories, struggles and victories. Through this exploration, the study looks to bring attention to the enduring and evolving nature of women's fight for autonomy across time and cultures.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

The way female agency is portrayed in literature has been a focal point in feminist literary criticism. This portrayal offers a deeper insight into how the roles, identities and autonomy of women are constructed in opposition to the existing patriarchal societies. Across time and culture, literature has not only reflected the constraints imposed on women but has also served as a platform for critiquing and resisting these limitations. Feminist literature often portrays women as navigating or challenging the gender norms that seek to restrict their autonomy. This study explores how two distinct literary traditions, Victorian America and modern Costa Rica; address these themes of female agency, providing a comparison of how feminist ideologies evolve across different cultural environments.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) is a steppingstone text in feminist literature, often cited for its critique of the patriarchal confinement of women within domestic spaces in Victorian times. As seen in Dosani (2018), the author intended her story to serve as a protest the medical treatment she received for postnatal psychosis. The story critiques her experience and subtly subverts expectations from the title, symbolizing an attempt to cover deeper issues. In the narrative, the wallpaper itself becomes a significant character, reflecting the protagonist's lack of agency, paralleling the enforced passivity of women under the control of male doctors at the time. Set within the context of late 19th-century America, Gilman's story demonstrates how women were often denied of their autonomy, both physically and mentally, under the patriarchal medical and social systems of the era. Through the descent of the protagonist into madness, *The Yellow Wallpaper* provides a powerful metaphor for the toll that societal repression had on women of the time, making it a key text for exploring issues of female agency, mental health, and female resistance in literature.

In contrast, contemporary Costa Rican female writers such as Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi bring a different cultural and historical perspective to the same themes of oppression, agency and resistance. Written in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, these authors address how women in modern Latin American societies oppose patriarchal structures that continue to manifest not only in the domestic domain but also in social, political,

and even environmental contexts. As noted by Paul-Urena (1999), their stories expand the discussion of female agency beyond psychological repression to include social empowerment, sexual autonomy, and resistance to broader systems of oppression. Costa Rican literature by women, therefore, offers a unique lens through which to explore modern struggles for female autonomy within a society still fighting against patriarchal norms (pp.216-218).

Therefore, by comparing *The Yellow Wallpaper* with contemporary Costa Rican short stories, the study highlights how the previously mentioned feminist themes have evolved in response to different historical and cultural contexts. While both Victorian America and modern Costa Rica reflect patriarchal structures that limit the agency of women, the ways in which these limitations are portrayed, resisted, and challenged differ considerably.

Furthermore, feminist literary theory provides the main framework of analysis for this study. This theoretical approach allows an examination of how gender roles, patriarchy, and female empowerment are illustrated in these literary texts. By exploring female agency through feminist theory, this study reveals how literature both mirrors the social norms of its time and, at the same time, it resists them, challenging the boundaries set by enduring patriarchal structures. These theoretical insights will be applied to the analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Costa Rican literary works, exploring how Butler's concept of performativity reveals the ways female characters negotiate and resist prescribed gender roles. Concepts like female agency, gender roles, patriarchy, and empowerment lay the groundwork for this comparative analysis, showing how these themes can both shape and redefine the roles of women in different cultural and historical contexts. The study takes on from the works of seminal feminist theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Kate Millett to frame the main feminist discussion.

Through this comparative approach, the study contributes to broader discussions on how feminist literature across different times and places challenges the existing societal norms and advocates for female autonomy. By examining the shared themes in which these works converge and also the divergences between *The Yellow Wallpaper* a seminal feminist work of the Victorian era and Costa Rican novels and plays written by women in the 20th and 21st century, this thesis not only brings light to the evolution of feminist thought but, at the same time, it offers critical insights about the ongoing struggle for gender equality and female empowerment and how these are represented in literature.

2.1 Brief Description of Key Concepts

2.1.1 Literature

The definition of literature has been a subject of debate and evolution throughout history, which reflects its complex nature. Scholars and critics have struggled with identifying the terms boundaries, their distinction from other forms of discourse and understanding the multifaceted role it has in human expression. Historically, literature included a wide range of written works, such as philosophical, historical, and rhetorical texts. Over time, however, as critical and theoretical studies evolved, the concept of literature became more focused on its artistic and linguistic qualities, establishing it as a unique form of human creativity.

Hernández Guerrero (2022) defines “literature” as “un lenguaje artístico elaborado con los medios y procedimientos de una lengua” (p.8). This definition emphasizes the artistic nature of literature, and it incorporates three main concepts: art, language and linguistics which are essential when defining and understanding literature. As they help not only identify literary works but to guide critical thinking and interpretation of the works.

Furthermore, the text highlights the evolving nature of the concept of literature, while literature traditionally referred to “las obras escritas” until the 19th century, its modern interpretation involves a deeper exploration of artistic expression and its distinct characteristics (Hernández Guerrero, 2022, p. 9). This modern perspective offers a deeper understanding of literature as a unique form of artistic expression, one that reflects and influences cultural and historical contexts, which is fundamental for this study.

2.1.2 Patriarchy

According to Fernandez Carballo and Duarte Cordero (2006), patriarchy is a system where men hold more power than women. This system is based on the idea that men are superior, and women are inferior. To keep this system in place, societies create rules that give men more control. These rules can be obvious or hidden, and they affect everything from how people think about the things they create. Even art and literature often reflect these ideas about men being in charge and women being less important (pp.145-147).

Patriarchal societies often reinforce gender stereotypes, limiting women's opportunities and restricting their freedom. These stereotypes can lead to discrimination, violence, and

inequality. For example, women may be denied access to education, employment, or property rights. They may also face domestic violence and sexual harassment. Literature, as a reflection of societal norms and values, often perpetuates or challenges patriarchal ideologies

2.1.3 Gender Norms

As seen on Ridgeway & Correll (2004), Gender is best conceptualized as a social system that apportions resources, roles, power and entitlements according to whether a person or practice is perceived as male or female, masculine or feminine (pp.510-513). The concept of gender as a social system, as described by these authors is highly relevant to the examination of female agency in literature of this thesis. By framing gender as a structure that distributes resources, roles, and power based on perceptions of masculinity or femininity, this perspective helps illuminate how patriarchal norms impact the lives of female protagonists in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and selected Costa Rican works.

The Yellow Wallpaper reflects gendered restrictions on autonomy, as the identity and choices of the protagonist are confined to a passive, domestic role under the control of her husband and physician. Similarly, the Costa Rican female characters navigate societal expectations that limit their agency and personal growth. This thesis applies this concept and framework by analyzing how both Victorian and contemporary Costa Rican societies assign roles and enforce power dynamics based on gender.

2.1.4 Systemic Oppression

Oppression is described as a system built from the combination of prejudice and institutional power, creating regular and severe discrimination against certain groups while benefiting others. Individuals from non-dominant groups may experience oppression through limitations, disadvantages, or disapproval, and may face abuse from people, institutions, or cultural norms. Systemic oppression is defined as historically rooted, organized patterns of mistreatment. Forms of systemic oppression include racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. Social institutions such as government, education, and cultural practices often contribute to or reinforce the oppression of marginalized groups while

upholding the status of dominant groups (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d).

This definition of oppression by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture provides a foundational lens for examining the systems of power that are central to this thesis. The narratives in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and selected Costa Rican works vividly portray how prejudice combined with institutional power affects women, especially within male-dominated societies. The experiences of female protagonists in these texts reflect how systemic oppression perpetuates a hierarchy that restricts their autonomy and agency.

2.1.5 Female Agency

The provided conceptualization of women's agency, autonomy, and empowerment by (Mishra & Tripathi, 2011) provides a crucial theoretical foundation. Their framework, highlights agency as a woman's capacity to define her own interests and make strategic choices, directly connects to the way female characters in both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Costa Rican short stories navigate patriarchal constraints. As stated by these authors, agency can act as a transformative force resonates with the way women in literature actively resist and challenge societal limitations (pp.58-59).

By applying this conceptualization of agency, it is possible to explore how the selected narratives depict women who not only resist patriarchal oppression but also redefine themselves through their actions and choices, effectively asserting autonomy and empowering themselves in contexts of social and political constraints.

2.2 Feminist Literary Theory

Feminist literary theory serves as a key framework for exploring more deeply how female agency is represented in literature and how societal norms influence in shaping the identities and roles of women in various sociocultural environments. This study uses Butler's concept of performativity to analyze how characters like Gilman's protagonist perform and ultimately challenge the existing prescribed gender roles of the era. Similarly, de Beauvoir's idea of women as "the Other" serves to contextualize the suppression and resistance of female characters in the

selected Costa Rican texts, where patriarchal norms are reinterpreted and reimagined within a Latin American perspective.

Therefore, tracing the evolution of feminist discourse from Simone de Beauvoir's foundational concept of women as "the other", to more contemporary feminist theories, highlights the evident and ongoing relevance of feminist thought in understanding female agency. Additionally, adding the exploration of intersectionality enriches feminist theory by illustrating how factors like race, age, class, and gender shape the experiences of women across these different cultural contexts, such as the ones pertinent to this study, Victorian America and modern Costa Rica.

2.2.1 Historical Development of Feminist Theory

The development of feminist theory is grounded on seminal works that have reshaped the discourse on gender and identity. The exploration of women as "the Other" from Simone de Beauvoir set the foundation for feminist discourse, while the analysis of Judith Butler with the theory of gender performativity provided a more nuanced understanding of identity, challenging the fixed categories of gender, as it had been previously explored. Moreover, the examination that Millet does of literature as a reflection of the existing patriarchal dynamics highlights how important it is to recognize how narratives both shape and are shaped by the existing power structures in society.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949): Women as "the Other" and the Construction of Female Identity

The Second Sex is considered by many one of the seminal works of feminist theory. Simone de Beauvoir in this book argues that women have historically been defined as "the Other" in relation to men. Meaning that the identities and experiences of men have been prioritized in society. This introductory feminist text explores how existing patriarchal structures shape how female identity is constructed, at the same time, positioning women as subordinate to men. De Beauvoir (1949) emphasizes in this work that the existing patriarchal structures in society condition and limit the autonomy and potential of women, in this work the author asserts that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (pp.283). This idea highlights how

important it is to recognize the social and cultural influences on themes like gender, identity and agency.

The articulation of women as “the Other” explored in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* provides an essential framework for understanding how female identity is constructed and portrayed in literature, for the purposes of this study particularly within the contexts of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and contemporary Costa Rican narratives. This concept of women as the other explains how there are always existing systemic forces that marginalize female characters, relegating them to subordinate roles and limiting their agency. Moreover, when examining how these authors resist to the positioning of women as subordinate to men, the study shows how the representation of female agency and identity have evolved.

Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990): Gender Performativity and the Fluidity of Identity in Literature

The book *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler introduces the concept of *gender performativity*, at the time this book challenged the traditional views of fixed binary gender identities. Within this book, the author argues that gender is not an inherent quality but rather a series of repeated actions and performances shaped by societal norms (Butler, 1990). This idea of identity being fluid is essential when analyzing the how female characters are represented in literature, because it specifically emphasizes the ways in which gender roles can be challenged or even redefined.

For the context of this study, the framework that Judith Butler’s theory on gender performativity presents, allows for a more profound understanding and exploration of how characters in both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected stories from contemporary Costa Rican literature, navigate and resist the limitations of prescribed gender identities, ultimately highlighting the potential for agency and transformation within their narratives.

Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970): Literature as a Reflection of Patriarchal Power Dynamics

Considered a sensation of its time, *Sexual Politics*, by Kate Millett, theorizes that literature serves as a mirror reflecting the patriarchal power dynamics inherent in society. This theorization by Millett explores how women are subjugated in literature and the arts in general,

because of the existing patriarchal system. It critiques the ways in which literature reinforces male dominance and marginalizes female perspectives, arguing that the portrayal of women in literature is frequently linked to the broader cultural and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality (Millett, 1970). By looking more deeply into the representation of female characters in both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and selected works of contemporary Costa Rican literature, the study illuminates how these narratives challenge or conform to patriarchal norms. Therefore, the insights in Millett's work highlight how important it is to recognize literature not only as an artistic expression, but also as a significant place of ideological resistance.

Furthermore, the analysis of this author highlights the role of power relations in shaping narratives, which is particularly relevant when considering the oppressive environments depicted in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected works of Costa Rican authors.

When analyzing Gilman's work, it is clear how the experiences the protagonist endures of confinement and marginalization resonate with Millett's statement that literature often serves to reinforce patriarchal values. However, through acts of resistance and the subversion of traditional roles, these female characters can reclaim their agency and identities. The exploration of power dynamics offered in *Sexual Politics* not only deepens the understanding of female agency but also positions literature as a crucial space for feminist critique and empowerment.

Recent Developments in Feminist Literary Theory

Feminist literary theory continues to evolve, incorporating contemporary frameworks that address the intersectionality of identities and the global context of gendered experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality has become a cornerstone in modern feminist thought, emphasizing the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, which can create overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage. This perspective is particularly valuable for understanding how female agency is portrayed in literature that reflects diverse cultural and historical contexts, such as Victorian America and contemporary Costa Rica. Intersectionality allows a deeper exploration of the layered oppressions faced by female characters and highlights the multiplicity of their identities within patriarchal structures.

Another significant contribution is the incorporation of ecofeminist perspectives, which explore the connections between the exploitation of women and nature. Authors like Greta Gaard

(1993) argue that ecofeminism provides a lens through which literature can critique both gender and environmental injustices (pp.60-61). This perspective aligns with works like Ana Cristina Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca*, where themes of environmental degradation intersect with the oppression of women, showcasing how literature can critique multiple layers of systemic inequities.

In addition, contemporary feminist literary theory has embraced postcolonial feminism, which critiques the Western-centric nature of earlier feminist discourses. Spivak (1988, as cited in Morris, 2010), emphasizes the importance of amplifying the voices of women in marginalized and colonized contexts. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to Costa Rican literature, where narratives often reflect the broader struggles of women in postcolonial societies. The integration of postcolonial feminism provides a critical lens for examining how Costa Rican authors navigate the intersections of gender, colonial histories, and cultural identity. These recent developments not only expand the scope of feminist literary theory but also enrich the analytical tools used in this study. By incorporating intersectionality, ecofeminism, and postcolonial feminism, the thesis can better explore how female agency is represented and negotiated in both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and contemporary Costa Rican works. These modern perspectives deepen the understanding of how literature continues to serve as a space for challenging and reimagining societal norms.

2.2.2 Theories of Female Agency in Literature

The theorization of female agency in literature explores the distinction between female characters portrayed as subjects that shape their own narratives and those who are constrained by the societal expectations and norms. Literary tradition has oftentimes confined women to roles that reflect those cultural expectations, relegating them to passive subordinate figures. As stated in *Sexual Politics*, these portrayals reinforce the perception of women limited by their social environments (Millet, 1970). However, when it comes to feminist literary criticism, it challenges those typical characterizations and rather focuses on the instances in which women assert their agency and autonomy despite the existing patriarchal society constraints. These portrayals illustrate how literature can also challenge and reshape the existing conventional gender roles, moving beyond the archetype of the passive female character to reflect empowered narratives.

Furthermore, the portrayal of women as active agents in literature is crucial to the feminist critique. Unlike the traditional roles assigned to female characters, these protagonists are actively making choices and seeking independence in ways that defy the existing societal expectations of women. This redefined representation of female agency challenges the limitations imposed on women and reinforces the notion that literature serves as a powerful platform for change and resistance (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). Feminist theory theorizes that literary portrayals of agency not only reflect but actively engage with the now evolving gender norms, at the same time it invites readers to question the existing restrictive definitions of femininity and autonomy.

Moreover, feminist perspectives on autonomy emphasize on the existing broader societal structures and forces that influence on female agency. Female agency is shaped by more than individual choices, and it is rather constricted by the existing patriarchal power structure. The exploration of autonomy as a feminist concept emerges from the relationship between personal agency and societal constraints, offering us with a broader understanding of the experiences female protagonist endure. As mentioned by Judith Butler (1990), this approach acknowledges that agency is a dynamic quality, shaped by the specific limitations and opportunities presented within each social context (pp.24).

Through the examination of female agency through different cultural and historical lenses clearly demonstrates how feminist theory has adapted and continues to adapt across different contexts. Victorian-era female protagonists show agency in subtle, concealed acts of defiance, while in contemporary female characters like the ones present in the selected Costa Rican works, navigate through more liberal settings and express their agency through direct action. Finally, as expressed in the groundbreaking works of Simone de Beauvoir; this adaptability highlights the evolution of feminist theory and the recognition of both explicit and implicit forms of resistance to patriarchal constraints (de Beauvoir, 1949).

2.2.3 Intersectionality in Feminist Literary Criticism

When it comes to feminist literature intersectionality becomes a fundamental concept. It provides a framework upon which to analyze how different variables like gender, race, class, and other intersecting identities come together to shape female agency. The concept intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. This term highlights the interconnected experiences of

marginalized groups, revealing how overlapping identities impact individuals' lives and agency (Crenshaw, 1989). Through this lens, feminist critics can explore how these complex intersections influence the agency and resistance of female characters, especially those belonging to marginalized communities.

The relevance of the term intersectionality in feminist criticism becomes particularly evident when examining the unique constraints faced by women who are marginalized by both gender and race. This was previously explored by feminist authors such as “bell hooks” who stated that literature oftentimes portrays women of color navigating the double bind of racial and gendered oppression, which profoundly shapes their autonomy and social roles (hooks, 1981). Therefore, an intersectional analysis provides insights into the specific challenges faced by these characters, demonstrating that agency is influenced by more than just gender alone.

Moreover, an intersectional approach can further illustrate how different identities can impact female agency in different cultural contexts, such as Victorian America and a more contemporary Costa Rica. In Victorian literature, lower-class female characters were often doubly marginalized due to both their gender and social standing. In Costa Rican literature, the intersectional feminist criticism sheds light into the unique struggles of afro-descendant and indigenous women, these women face both oppressions based in gender and cultural ones. As noted by Collins, applying intersectional analysis to these narratives, feminist critics illuminate the multidimensional forms of oppression and agency present within each cultural context (Collins, 2000). By applying an intersectional analysis to these narratives feminist criticism illuminates the multidimensional forms of oppression and agency present within each specific cultural context.

Lastly, an intersectional feminist analysis enriches the understanding of the role literature has in either challenging or reinforcing the existing patriarchal power structures present in society. By examining the role of intersectionality in race, class and gender, feminist theory is able to capture how different existing societal forces shape the lives of female characters, directly impacting their agency. This approach acknowledges that agency can change significantly among women, shaping their identities and social circumstances in unique ways. It is through the concept of intersectionality that the feminist criticism adopted a more inclusive approach to understand female agency, revealing varied and often marginalized experiences of women face and how that can be portrayed in literature.

Understanding the history and core concepts in these feminist theories provides a broader context for analyzing feminist literary criticism. With this foundation looking at *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, it is evident that the text illustrates these ideas in action. This short story acts as a case study of feminist criticism, exploring themes of female agency, psychological confinement, and the pressures of patriarchal control in a Victorian America setting. Through the unraveling of the protagonist's poor mental state, *The Yellow Wallpaper* showcases the profound impact that societal restrictions have on the autonomy of women, directly reflecting the earlier discussed feminist themes. This story not only captures key ideas from feminist theory but also shows how gender, power structures and agency can be questioned through literature in meaningful ways.

2.3 The Yellow Wallpaper: A Foundation for Feminist Analysis

Criticizing both the restrictive gender roles and oppressive medical practices of the Victorian era, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* provides an introductory example for a feminist literary analysis. Through the lens of feminist theory, this story explores the psychological toll of confinement, and the limited autonomy and agency permitted to women in the Victorian society. Through the lens of feminist theory, the story explores the psychological toll of confinement, and the limited agency given to women in 19th-century society. This story critiques the practice of the "rest cure," which at the time was a common treatment for women with nervous conditions, enforcing passive confinement and discouraged mental or physical stimulation (Dosani, 2018). In Gilman's work, the wallpaper becomes a symbol of the entrapment that the protagonist feels, forcing upon the reader a reflection on how societal expectations of the time added to her confinement ultimately harmed her mental health.

The use of symbolism by the author is crucial in portraying the immense psychological impact of patriarchal control over the agency and bodies of women. The wallpaper with its chaotic and entrapping patterns reflects the inner turmoil and descent into madness of the protagonist. As the protagonist fixates on the wallpaper, her mental state deteriorates, representing a silent rebellion against the domestic confinement forced upon her. The suffocating

domestic setting and the oppressive medical practices highlight how these societal norms restrict the autonomy of women, pushing them towards mental breakdowns. This aligns with Butler's argument that societal norms are perpetuated through performance, as the behavior of the protagonist in this story is shaped by the expectations of passivity and confinement her husband imposes. The unraveling of her mental state becomes a form of resistance to this enforced performance, symbolizing an attempt to reclaim agency in a repressive environment. It is through a feminist view that *The Yellow Wallpaper* illustrates how devastating the oppression of women can be, and how there are subtle ways in which women resist and reclaim their own sense of self.

Furthermore, the story highlights the existing relationship between mental health and female agency. The inability to make decisions for herself and forced isolation exacerbate the deterioration of the protagonist's mental health, revealing how connected autonomy and well-being are for women. The obsession the protagonist has with the wallpaper and subsequent rebellion against her confinement can be taken as an assertion of female agency, it was a desperate attempt to regain control over her life. By portraying the struggles of the protagonist, Gilman critiques a society in which women were denied their autonomy, suggesting that a repression of such kind has severe consequences.

Finally, throughout the development of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the author offers a fierce commentary on the consequences of limiting women to the domestic sphere and denying them autonomy. The protagonist's descent into madness is not merely a personal tragedy, but a reflection of the societal constraints imposed on women at the time and her eventual rebellion, when tearing away the wallpaper, symbolize her fight to break free from the imposed societal limitations. This illustrates resistance even when subtle or unrecognized, and resistance is an inherent aspect of female agency. Gilman's work serves as a crucial feminist text because it shows how literature can both critique oppressive social structures and portray the enduring strength of women when facing such adverse realities.

2.3.1 Charlotte Perkin Gilman's Biography

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) was a writer, feminist, and social reformer whose contributions have been reexamined and revalued over time. Widely recognized during her

lifetime for her influential feminist and sociological ideas, particularly articulated in *Women and Economics* (1898), she was less acknowledged for her literary output (Harrison 2011, n.p). Her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which explores a woman's mental deterioration during enforced isolation, gained significant attention during the feminist movements of the 1970s. Gilman's personal life was marked by her defiance of societal norms and significant personal challenges. She was raised in a strict New England environment and entered an unconventional marriage with artist Charles Walter Stetson. After separating from Stetson, she facilitated his remarriage to her close friend while maintaining strong ties with both individuals. In a bold decision for the era, she sent her daughter to live with the couple to focus on her career in writing and lecturing (Harrison, 2011). Gilman battled depression throughout her life and, after being diagnosed with breast cancer in 1932, she ended her life by suicide.

2.3.2 Victorian Gender Roles and Patriarchal Confinement

In Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the critique of Victorian gender roles is evident in her portrayal of the "rest cure", the treatment under which the protagonist is put under, an oppressive medical practice that required women to remain passive and isolated (Dosani, 2018). This treatment, which was imposed by male physicians, reflects the widespread belief at the time that women's mental health could be "managed" by restricting their autonomy. In *The Yellow Wallpaper* the author illustrates how such practices reinforced patriarchal control over women, by denying them of their independence and self-expression, trapping women within the domestic sphere under the guise of care.

Gilman uses the wallpaper in the room of the protagonist as a symbol of this confinement, with its chaotic and disturbing patterns mirroring the suffocating effects of patriarchal control. The protagonist's obsession with the intricate pattern becomes a metaphor for entrapment. Trapped within this oppressive environment, the protagonist's mental health deteriorates, shedding light to the damaging impact of denying women their personal agency. The wallpaper in the protagonist's room also becomes a powerful symbol of resistance, as her obsession with the wallpaper grows, her fixation symbolizes an unconscious rebellion against her lack of agency and freedom.

“Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing
 on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it!
 All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling
 fungus growths just shriek with derision!
 I am getting angry enough to do something
 desperate.” (Gilman, 1892)

By ultimately tearing at the wallpaper, she symbolically confronts and attempts to break free from the limitations imposed by Victorian gender norms, illustrating how even small acts of resistance can challenge an overwhelming system of control.

2.3.3 Psychological Oppression and Domesticity

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the domestic sphere is not a space of comfort. Instead it is a psychological prison for the protagonist, highlighting the harmful effects of confining women to household roles. Her confinement at home, combined with the enforced passivity mandated by the “rest cure,” intensifies her isolation and alienation.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane.
 And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me
 back!" (Gilman, 1892)

This story distressingly illustrates how the mental health of women is directly impacted by their lack of autonomy, as the protagonist is deprived of her agency, freedom, and even self-expression. Denied to decide in her own treatment, she becomes trapped in a cycle of dependence, her mental state deteriorating with each day of enforced domesticity. The mental decline of the protagonist becomes a clear critique of the societal belief that the roles of women should be limited to caretaking within the home.

“Personally, I disagree with their ideas.
 Personally, I believe that congenial work, with
 excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal--having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition” (Gilman, 1892)

Her emotional distress is intensified by the inability to exercise any form of agency, determination or creativity, as her husband even forbids her from writing. The wallpaper symbolizes her repressed potential and autonomy; as her obsession with it grows, it becomes a reflection of her desperation to assert her identity. Ultimately, her breakdown serves as an implicit critique of the psychological oppression inflicted by the Victorian society that valued women only in domestic terms.

2.4 Female Agency in the selected Costa Rican Novels and Plays Written by Women

Costa Rican women writers like Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi engage deeply with themes of female agency, offering a modern perspective on women’s autonomy within a still-patriarchal society. Their stories often portray women who resist and navigate the different limitation that society imposes on them, presenting female characters as active in the struggle for self-expression and autonomy. As stated by Paul-Ureña (1999), these narratives reflect the authors’ critique of patriarchy in not only the domestic realm but also within broader social, political, and even environmental contexts, challenging the boundaries of traditional gender roles in Latin American society (pp.226).

In Carmen Naranjo’s works, social critique and empowerment are central, as her female characters challenge patriarchal structures through social and political awareness. Ana Istarú explores themes of female sexuality as a form of autonomy, presenting protagonists who defy societal expectations and assert their agency in bold, unapologetic ways. Meanwhile, Ana Cristina Rossi illustrates the experiences of women facing repression from political and social systems, highlighting the resilience and strength required to confront and resist these structures. Together, these authors provide a multifaceted portrayal of female agency in Costa Rica,

emphasizing both the personal and collective efforts of women to redefine their roles in a modern Latin American society.

2.4.1 Carmen Naranjo: Social Critique and Female Empowerment

Carmen Naranjo (1928–2012) was a Costa Rican writer, poet, and diplomat, widely recognized for her contributions to literature and cultural development in Costa Rica. She is well known for her innovative narrative techniques and widespread social critique, her works often explored themes of gender dynamics, urban life and political corruption. As noted by Ramírez (2018), her notable novels include *Los perros no ladraron* (1966), which is celebrated not only for the experimentation with form but also for the sharp commentary about social issues it includes.

In addition to her literary achievements, Naranjo played a significant role in Costa Rican public life. Her dual career as a writer and diplomat reflected her commitment to both artistic expression and public service.

The works of Carmen Naranjo offer a sharp social critique regarding the limitations imposed on the autonomy of women. Using her characters as vehicles to explore resistance in patriarchal structures. Naranjo addresses the constraints imposed on women's agencies in the selected works. At the same time this critique aligns with de Beauvoir's concept of women as 'the Other,' as her female characters reflect the systemic marginalization that conditions their roles within both domestic and public spheres. Through acts of defiance, such as the protagonist's awakening to social injustice in *Los perros no ladraron*, Naranjo illustrates how female agency emerges as a rejection of these imposed identities. The author explores themes of female agency in both the domestic and public spheres and her characters are portrayed challenging and pushing against the imposed restrictions.

Moreover, the central female character in *Los perros no ladraron* deals with the oppressive norms of her society, a struggle that reflects the broader challenges faced by women of her time. As Naranjo writes, "La mujer está atrapada en las redes de un sistema que la define y limita, confinándola al ámbito de la casa y la familia" [Women are caught in a system that defines and restricts them, keeping them confined to the home and family] (Naranjo, 1966). In Araya (1991) the author explains how Naranjo uses this confinement to highlight the transformative power of social awareness and activism as a path to empowerment (pp.55-56). It

is through the political and social awareness of her characters that Naranjo highlights the transformative power of education and activism as means of female empowerment.

Carmen Naranjo's stories often depict women who challenge societal expectations, using their voice and intellect to confront patriarchal systems. One of the central characters in *Los perros no ladraron* embodies this struggle by questioning societal expectations and finding ways to assert her identity and beliefs. The gradual awakening to the social injustices around her serves as a means for self-discovery and resistance. In one scene, the protagonist reflects on her constrained role, "Toda su vida había girado en torno a las expectativas de otros; nunca había tenido la libertad de decidir por ella misma" (Naranjo, 1966). Through this character's journey, Naranjo emphasizes the importance of social awareness as a foundation for empowerment, highlighting how even seemingly small acts of defiance can challenge patriarchal norms.

In *Los perros no ladraron*, Naranjo's female characters are not portrayed as passive, instead, they are actively engaged in the struggle for autonomy and independence. As noted by Araya, the novel goes beyond personal autonomy to illustrate how social critique, and political activism can serve as pathways to societal transformation. Through *Los perros no ladraron*, Naranjo challenges traditional narratives by presenting women who are not merely subjects of societal expectations, but active participants in reshaping them, showing how female agency can disrupt entrenched power dynamics (Araya, 1991). Additionally, Naranjo emphasizes the role of solidarity and collective empowerment among women as a means of resisting patriarchal structures. "No estaba sola en su lucha; otras mujeres compartían sus mismas frustraciones y deseos de cambio" [She was not alone in her struggle, many other women felt the same frustrations and hoped for change] (Naranjo, 1966). *Los perros no ladraron* illustrates how women's relationships can become spaces of resilience and support, offering strength against societal pressures.

Through *Los perros no ladraron*, Naranjo challenges traditional narratives by presenting women who are not merely subjects of societal expectations, but active participants in reshaping them, showing how female agency can disrupt entrenched power dynamics (Araya, 1991). This evolution represents a break from traditional portrayals of passive female roles, showing instead how knowledge and activism empower women to confront the constraints imposed upon them.

2.4.2 Ana Istarú: Sexuality and Female Autonomy

Ana Istarú, born in Costa Rica in 1960, is an acclaimed poet, playwright, and actress whose work often centers on themes of gender, identity, and sexuality. Known for her fearless exploration of taboo subjects, Istarú has garnered widespread recognition for challenging societal norms and advocating for female autonomy. Her notable works include *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* and *Baby boom en el paraíso*, both of which portray strong, self-determined female characters navigating a patriarchal society.

Ana Istarú's selected works challenge conventional portrayals of female sexuality, using it as a vehicle for asserting autonomy, agency and self-determination. In *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* and *Baby boom en el paraíso*, Istarú presents female characters who embrace their sexuality as an integral part of their identity. This notion defies the patriarchal norms that seek to control and stigmatize female desire. As noted by Tavares dos Santos: In Istarú's novel, female sexuality is not defined in terms of phallocentrism but is presented as an autonomous, empowering experience that challenges cultural norms of control (Tavares dos Santos, 2022). These narratives confront societal taboos around female sexuality, portraying women who courageously reclaim control over their bodies and lives, often at the risk of social criticism.

Istarú's characters openly express their sexuality, using it as a source of empowerment, and a means of asserting their identities outside traditional, male-dominated paradigms imposed by the patriarchy. This resonates with Butler's concept of performativity, as Istarú's characters actively disrupt the norms dictating female sexuality by asserting their own desires and identities. In *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra*, the protagonist's sexuality is portrayed not merely as a physical act but as an affirmation of her autonomy and self-worth. According to Tavares dos Santos (2022), sexuality in these narratives is not only a physical act but an affirmation of identity and autonomy. Through such portrayals, Istarú positions sexuality as a vital part of her characters' identities, illustrating how self-expression and bodily autonomy are essential in the broader struggle for gender equality.

This author's narratives illustrate the complexities of modern femininity in Costa Rica, where societal expectations still impose restrictive norms on women. Her characters actively assert their independence and challenge the conventional gender roles, portraying the pursuit of personal autonomy as a necessary act of rebellion against patriarchal systems. By embracing and celebrating their sexuality, these women resist the boundaries imposed by societal expectations.

“In Costa Rica a woman who reclaims her sexuality faces social judgment and symbolic repression still imposed by patriarchal society” (Tavares dos Santos, 2022). Istarú’s characters challenge this repression, navigating the tension between personal freedom and societal judgment.

By placing sexuality as a source of empowerment both *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* and *Baby boom en el paraíso* emphasize the importance of self-expression and bodily autonomy. Her characters use their sexuality to reject the passive roles historically assigned to women and to claim a space for themselves within society. This approach offers a powerful critique of patriarchal structures that seek to control female sexuality, Istarú portrays in her female character instead a model of femininity that is assertive and resistant to the traditional limitations. Through these portrayals, these works add depth to the discourse on female agency, demonstrating that autonomy and identity are deeply connected with the freedom to express oneself in a free and unapologetic manner.

Ana Cristina Rossi, a Costa Rican author born in 1952, is celebrated for her incisive critiques of repressive systems and the resilience of women who resist them. Her work frequently intertwines social, political, and environmental issues, creating a multifaceted portrayal of female agency. Rossi’s novels, including *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*, feature protagonists who confront and challenge societal, familial, and ecological oppression.

2.4.3 Ana Cristina Rossi: Repressive Systems and Female Resistance

Ana Cristina Rossi, a Costa Rican author born in 1952, is celebrated for her incisive critiques of repressive systems and the resilience of women who resist them. Her work frequently intertwines social, political, and environmental issues, creating a multifaceted portrayal of female agency. Rossi’s novels, including *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*, feature protagonists who confront and challenge societal, familial, and ecological oppression.

The narratives explored by Ana Cristina Rossi highlight the struggles of women within repressive systems emphasizing on how gender intersects with social, political and even environmental issues. In the selected works *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*, Rossi presents female protagonists who confront not only familial but also societal restrictions, they challenge the oppressive environments that attempt to control and confine them. These characters embody resilience, and they constantly resist the societal expectations imposed on

them by seeking control over their own lives. Particularly *Tocar a Diana* examines how Latin American women are subject to power dynamics and judgmental scrutiny, which limit their choices and enforce restrictive gender norms. As noted by Madrigal Chaves, this scrutiny, described as “la mirada... está sujeta en un discurso de poder y conquista” [the gaze... is subject to a discourse of power and conquest] (Madrigal Chaves, 2020, p. 26) frames women within patriarchal narratives of control, reinforcing societal constraints.

Moreover, in *La loca de Gandoca*, the protagonist becomes a powerful symbol of resistance to environmental destruction and government corruption, as she takes a stand against those exploiting the natural resources in Costa Rica, specifically Gandoca-Manzanillo. The struggle of the protagonist reflects the critique of the author towards a patriarchal society that not only marginalizes women but also disregards the ecological well-being of the country. Costa Rican readers, who are more familiar with the local environmental and political context, may connect deeply with this narrative of resistance, viewing it as a reflection of their country’s struggles. In contrast, international audiences may interpret the story primarily as a feminist or ecofeminist critique, potentially missing the cultural commentary Rossi inserts within the narrative. According to Zúñiga, the protagonist not only fights against environmental destruction, but her resistance becomes an act of reclaiming her own power and autonomy (Zuñiga, 2017). By positioning the central female characters within both environmental and social conflicts, Rossi expands the conversation around female agency, illustrating how personal autonomy is deeply connected to larger struggles for justice and equality.

Furthermore, Rossi addresses issues of sexual agency and psychological freedom, in *Tocar a Diana*, the protagonist grapples with the moral judgments of her family versus her own desires, she is portrayed navigating an intricate social landscape that punishes female autonomy. As seen on Madrigal Chaves, the protagonist’s journey reflects the psychological strain of navigating these oppressive forces. Rossi’s portrayal underscores how women are often “etiquetadas y silenciadas” [labeled and silenced] (Madrigal Chaves, 2020, p. 27) when they deviate from prescribed gender roles.

Finally, Rossi’s characters show active resistance, highlighting the strength women need to have to stand up against systemic oppression, imposed by the patriarchy. In both *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*, the women portrayed refuse to remain passive, they use their voices and actions to push back against the restrictive society they live in. Her portrayal of

empowered women underscores the importance of agency, as Rossi's characters not only resist societal pressures but also redefine their roles within these repressive structures. As Madrigal Chaves (2020) explains, "su resistencia se convierte en un símbolo de liberación" [their resistance becomes a symbol of liberation] (p. 28), illustrating how defiance can transform individual agency into a broader call for social change. It is through her narratives that Rossi highlighted the significance of personal autonomy and female agency as a way of resisting against the imposed roles, making the connection between individual empowerment and the pursuit of justice in both a personal and societal level.

2.5 Comparative Analysis: The Yellow Wallpaper and the Analyzed Costa Rican Novels and Plays Written by Women

The analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* along with the selected Costa Rican novels and plays by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú and Ana Cristina Rossi offer a comprehensive review of themes of bodily autonomy, gender roles and female agency in literature written by women. While these works span across different cultures and eras in time, they all share a common focus on the struggles of women seeking autonomy within patriarchal societies. At the same time, these works also diverge in how those struggles are portrayed, each character shaped by their unique intersectional contexts. While *The Yellow Wallpaper* addresses the late 19th-century American context of restrictive domesticity, the Costa Rican works reflect 20th and 21st-century struggles in Latin America, where gender issues intersect with broader social, political, and environmental concerns.

Despite the different settings, these works converge on themes of resistance, autonomy, female agency and resilience. In Gilman's work the protagonist confronts her isolation and repression through a symbolical battle against the wallpaper in the room, the protagonist embodies all the societal restrictions imposed on women and their autonomy during the Victorian era. Similarly, the selected Costa Rican authors portray women who actively challenge societal expectations, through more varied and explicit forms of defiance. Characters like those in *Tocar a Diana* and *La loca de Gandoca* confront not only gender-based oppression but also engage with societal structures widening the portrayal of female resistance to incorporate multiple dimensions of injustice present in their context.

Through a comparative analysis, it becomes evident that the ways in which female agency is expressed in literature are heavily influenced by cultural and historical contexts. Feminist theories such as Butler's and de Beauvoir's help frame this analysis, showing how Victorian and Costa Rican characters perform resistance in ways that are also shaped by the existing societal expectations of gender and identity. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, set in Victorian America the protagonist shows resistance in a largely solitary struggle against the imposed domestic confinement, reflecting on the limited autonomy of women of the time. By contrast, the Costa Rican protagonists engage in collective and intersectional struggles, embodying the Latin American feminist ideals of solidarity and community engagement. Together, these works illustrate the adaptability of feminist thought across time and place while also reflecting about the unique societal values and pressures of their respective cultural contexts.

2.5.1 Convergences in Depictions of Female Agency

Both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican literature by women focus on female agency as a way of living and resisting patriarchal norms. This resistance once again ties into the feminist theory of performativity, as the protagonists in these works challenge the societal roles imposed on them. For example, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist resists her confinement through her obsession with the wallpaper, which becomes a symbol of her entrapment within rigid gender roles. This descent into madness reflects her rejection of the enforced passivity expected of women in Victorian domestic life. In contrast, characters in Naranjo's and Rossi's works assert their identities through political and environmental activism, pushing back against patriarchal expectations on a much broader scale.

“I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.
Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody
else, but when I am alone.
And I am alone a good deal just now.” (Gilman, 1892)

This story illustrates how forced passivity and isolation create psychological trauma, pushing the protagonist to internalize and ultimately rebel against societal expectations. Furthermore, in the selected Costa Rican works, the authors adopt a similar approach with varied

settings and themes. For instance, in *Tocar a Diana*, the protagonist, Diana, challenges social and family judgment surrounding her sexuality, establishing control over her body and desires in defiance of the existing patriarchal expectations. Diana's journey represents a direct confrontation with the societal gaze, wherein “the look, especially towards women in Latin America, is subject to a discourse of power and conquest” (Madrugal Chaves, 2020, p. 27). Both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the Costa Rican works depict female protagonists who resist the restrictions imposed by patriarchal systems. This resistance emphasizes a shared theme of women asserting agency in response to societal constraints.

Another convergence pointed within the revised literature is the use of symbolism to represent the oppression faced by the female characters. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the wallpaper itself becomes a symbol of the protagonist's entrapment and struggle for freedom. Similarly, Costa Rican authors like Rossi use symbols such as the environment in *La loca de Gandoca* to represent broader social and gender-based oppression, highlighting the impact of external forces on female autonomy.

Lastly, in this set of texts, the protagonists' internal conflicts and psychological struggles are central to their resistance. Gilman's protagonist experiences a descent into madness as a form of rebellion against her confinement, while Costa Rican characters, especially in Istarú's works, confront societal judgment on their desires and identities. This internalized battle against restrictive social norms underscores the emotional toll of limited agency and highlights a shared psychological dimension in the portrayal of female resistance.

2.5.2 Divergences: Cultural and Historical Contexts

Despite sharing themes of female resistance and agency, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican works diverge significantly because of their different cultural and historical settings. These differences influence not only on how female agency is portrayed in each narrative but also on how empowerment is outlined within each specific context. Additionally, the cultural context shapes how these works are received by different audiences. When it comes to the interpretation from Costa Rican readers, they might interpret Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca* as a direct critique of local political corruption and environmental exploitation, while international readers could view it through a more generalized feminist or ecological perspective.

This highlights the importance of cultural familiarity in fully to appreciate the layers of meaning in feminist literature.

First, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, set in Victorian America, reflects a period marked by rigid gender roles and restrictive medical practices aimed at enforcing passivity onto women. This work critiques the “rest cure,” a treatment that isolates the protagonist from intellectual and social stimulation, confining her to a domestic space that exacerbates her psychological distress. As noted by Dosani, this enforced domesticity embodies the Victorian belief in women’s fragility, where isolation and control were seen as necessary for their supposed well-being (Dosani, 2018). In contrast, the Costa Rican works depict broader, often communal forms of resistance. In *La loca de Gandoca*, Rossi’s protagonist stands against environmental destruction and government corruption, framing her agency within political activism. This reflects Latin American values of solidarity and collective resistance, illustrating how female empowerment in Costa Rican literature extends beyond the personal and into the social and political realms (Zuñiga, 2017).

Second, the protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper* experiences isolation and a personal struggle, the analyzed Costa Rican works emphasize on collective female resistance. For example, in *Los perros no ladraron*, Carmen Naranjo portrays women who find strength through community, challenging societal expectations by supporting one another in the face of patriarchal oppression. The portrayed collective approach contrasts with *The Yellow Wallpaper*, where the protagonist is in an isolated struggle with no support from a community and therefore must internalize her resistance. Costa Rican narratives, particularly those by Naranjo and Istarú, reflect the region’s cultural emphasis on community and shared resilience, showing how women can reclaim their identities and assert agency through solidarity rather than isolation.

Lastly, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the Costa Rican works diverge in how they address female sexuality. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, sexuality is suppressed, the identity of the protagonist is reduced to a “nervous condition” that her husband believes requires strict confinement and restricts her even from writing. Her defiance and struggle are reduced to her own mind, because the rules of her society inhibited any expression of desire or independence in women. In contrast, Costa Rican authors like Ana Istarú explore female sexuality as a central aspect of women’s agency. In *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* and *Baby boom en el paraíso*, Istarú’s protagonists openly embrace their sexuality as a form of self-expression.

These differences underscore how cultural and historical contexts shape the expression of female empowerment. While Gilman's work reflects a Victorian struggle confined to the domestic and mental spheres, Costa Rican literature broadens the scope of female agency.

2.5.3 Evolution of Feminist Ideologies

The evolution of feminist thought in these works demonstrates how ideas of female agency have shifted over time and across regions. *The Yellow Wallpaper* aligns with early feminist ideas centered on individual autonomy and resistance to restrictive domesticity. Gilman's work critiques patriarchal control over women's lives and bodies, addressing early feminist themes of personal liberation from oppressive societal expectations.

In opposition, Costa Rican literature reflects a more modern and intersectional approach, acknowledging issues beyond gender, including race, class, and environmental rights. Naranjo, Istarú, and Rossi integrate themes of sexuality, social justice, and environmentalism within their narratives, expanding feminist discourse to include collective forms of empowerment. For example, Rossi's *Tocar a Diana* explores how the protagonist navigates societal condemnation of her sexuality, ultimately using her experiences to assert her agency and challenge Costa Rica's restrictive norms. This tension is evident as Diana faces "social judgment due to the openness with which she lives her sexuality" (Madrigal Chaves, 2020, p. 33). This comparison shows the adaptability of exiting and ever evolving feminist ideologies across time and place.

While *The Yellow Wallpaper* reflects to those early feminist concerns about autonomy, Costa Rican literature incorporates a broader feminist discourse that challenges systemic inequalities across various societal dimensions. This expanded approach not only addresses gender but also incorporates social, environmental, and cultural issues, reflecting the complexities of modern feminist thought with key concepts like intersectionality.

Therefore, analyzing these works side by side reveals shared struggles and unique expressions of female agency, showing how feminist literature powerfully critiques and reshapes societal views on gender and autonomy. By applying feminist theories, this study explains the ways in which literature not only critiques patriarchal systems but also offers various possibilities for imagining and performing female autonomy. Furthermore, cultural contexts significantly influence how these texts are received. The local relevance of themes like environmental degradation in *La loca de Gandoca* or sexuality in Istarú's works may resonate

more deeply with Costa Rican readers, while international audiences may interpret these narratives through broader feminist or ecological frameworks. This emphasizes the importance of considering reception when analyzing feminist literature across cultures.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework outlined in this study provides a thorough understanding of the concepts central to analyzing female agency in literature. By exploring feminist literary theory, gender performativity, and the socio-cultural context of women's roles, this framework allows for a comprehensive examination of the ways in which female agency is represented and subverted in both Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican novels and plays written by women. Drawing on feminist thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, as well as Costa Rican scholars like Dora Lía Piedra Carvajal and Ericka Calderón Rojas, this study situates the analysis within a broader discourse on gender, power, and identity. Ultimately, this theoretical foundation underscores the complexity and diversity of experiences that women face, offering a lens through which the literary narratives of female agency can be not only critically examined but deeply understood within a global and local context.

Chapter III

Methodological Framework

This chapter outlines the methodology used to analyze the representation of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and selected Costa Rican works by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi. It provides a detailed description of the research approach and design, explaining the reason behind the chosen methods and their relevance to the objectives of this study. Additionally, it outlines the sources and criteria used to select the literary texts, to ensure a well-designed analysis. This chapter also discusses the data collection instruments, and analysis techniques used to examine themes, narrative structures and character development surrounding female agency. By establishing a clear methodological framework, this section ensures a systematic and strong framework to address the research questions of this study.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze the portrayal of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and selected Costa Rican literary works by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi. A qualitative approach was selected for its emphasis on the interpretation of meaning, particularly useful for examining texts critiquing patriarchal norms. By applying feminist literary theory, the study uncovered how the selected texts construct and challenge societal expectations placed on women.

Drawing from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), this research examined concepts such as gender performativity and the positioning of women as "the Other." This feminist theoretical foundation allowed for an in-depth understanding of the multifaceted ways in which these works portray female autonomy, resistance, and empowerment.

A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this analysis because it allowed for a detailed examination of how female agency is constructed and portrayed in the selected literary works. By applying core concepts of feminist literary theory, the study revealed the multiple ways in which these works challenge the dominant gender ideologies and patriarchal system. In

The Yellow Wallpaper, for example mental decline of the protagonist critiques the 19th-century medical practices that reinforced passivity in women. Similarly, the selected Costa Rican works address gender oppression in a more contemporary Latin America context, where patriarchal structures intersect with other socio-cultural dynamics. These works offer a richer lens to analyze resistance and empowerment in literature written by women.

This methodology also facilitated a comparative analysis of these texts to identify both shared themes and unique cultural expressions of female agency. Through a close reading of the selected works, the study identified how literary elements such as symbolism, narrative voice, and characterization are used to depict the struggles of women for autonomy. The qualitative approach also facilitated comparative analysis; by comparing Victorian America and contemporary Costa Rica, the research showed the evolution of feminist ideologies, offering valuable insights on how literature critiques the patriarchal systems across historical and cultural contexts.

3.2 Research Design

This research was structured as a comparative literary analysis. Comparative analysis enables a focused examination of the thematic and symbolic representations of female agency, autonomy, and resistance in literature. As Fairclough (2003) notes, comparative analysis is well-suited to exploring shared themes and divergences across texts, particularly in relation to gender norms. When identifying critical elements such as character development, narrative strategies, and symbolism, this method allows for a nuanced understanding of how each text critiques and resists patriarchal systems.

Feminist literary theory formed the foundation of this research. It offered a lens to examine the portrayal of women in literature as both subjects and agents of change. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as "the Other" provided a framework to understand the existing societal constructs that restrict female agency. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity further showed how individuals challenge societal norms through repeated actions, revealing the fluidity of gender identities. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) added another layer by critiquing how patriarchal power dynamics shape narratives and marginalize female perspectives.

Together, these theoretical perspectives offered essential tools for understanding the layered portrayals of female characters in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican texts. They provided a framework to analyze how these works critique patriarchal norms and resist systemic oppression, whether it is through internal struggles, acts of defiance, or solidarity within their communities.

Through this comparative analysis, the study identified recurring themes and divergent strategies in portraying female agency. For instance, the symbolic role of confinement in *The Yellow Wallpaper* parallels societal constraints faced by Costa Rican characters, such as those in *La loca de Gandoca* and *Tocar a Diana*. However, while Gilman's protagonist experiences isolated resistance, Costa Rican narratives often depict collective empowerment, reflecting cultural values of community and solidarity (Carvajal, 2004). This comparison underscores the richness and diversity of feminist literary expression across time and place.

3.3 Information Sources

The sources used in this study are divided into two main categories: primary texts, which serve as the core for the literary analysis, and secondary texts, which provide the theoretical, historical, and cultural context to support the interpretation of the primary texts. By integrating both types of sources, this study ensures a well-rounded examination of female agency within the selected literary works. The primary texts, including *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and selected Costa Rican works by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, are analyzed in depth to explore how female characters navigate and challenge systemic oppression in distinct historical and cultural settings. These texts offer rich portrayals of women's resistance, autonomy, and struggles against patriarchal constraints. Meanwhile, the secondary sources encompass a range of feminist theoretical perspectives, literary critiques, and historical analyses that contextualize the findings of the study.

3.3.1 Primary Texts

The primary texts analyzed in this study include *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and selected Costa Rican works by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi. These texts were chosen because of their rich engagement with feminist themes

and their varied portrayals of female agency and resistance within distinct historical and cultural contexts.

1. **The Yellow Wallpaper** (Gilman, 1892): This short story, written during the Victorian era, critiques 19th-century gender norms and medical practices, which confined women to domestic spaces under the excuse of therapy. Through its portrayal of the mental decline the protagonist experiences and her eventual rebellion, the story explores themes of confinement, autonomy, and resistance.
2. **Costa Rican Literary Works:**
 - a. *Los perros no ladraron* (Naranjo, 1966): This novel examines the social expectations imposed on women in mid-20th-century Costa Rica, reflecting the tensions between personal agency and societal constraints.
 - b. *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* (Istarú, 2011) and *Baby boom en el Paraíso* (Istarú, 2016): These works depict themes of motherhood, identity, and resistance within patriarchal structures.
 - c. *La loca de Gandoca* (Rossi, 1992): This novel intertwines environmental activism with feminist themes, portraying the fight against systemic oppression and ecological degradation.
 - d. *Tocar a Diana* (Rossi, 2019): Rossi's exploration of sexual autonomy and personal empowerment in this work offers a contemporary perspective on female agency.

These texts together provide a varied set of narratives, allowing the study to explore how female characters navigate and resist systemic oppression in both historical and contemporary settings.

3.3.2 Secondary Texts

The secondary texts complement the primary analysis by providing the theoretical, historical, and cultural contexts which are needed to interpret the portrayal of female agency in the selected literary works. These sources are categorized into theoretical foundations, cultural and historical analyses, and supporting literary critiques.

1. Feminist Theoretical Foundations:

- a. *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir, 1949): This seminal work provides the foundation for understanding how societal constructs position women as "the Other," shaping their agency and autonomy.
- b. *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990): The author's concept of gender performativity showcases how gender is constructed through repeated actions, allowing for subversion and resistance within literary narratives.
- c. *Sexual Politics* (Millet, 1970): This work critiques the patriarchal structures embedded in literature, emphasizing how male-dominated narratives marginalize female perspectives.

2. Cultural and Historical Analyses:

- a. Naranjo's (1991) *La enajenación de la mujer en los sectores medios*: This study contextualizes Carmen Naranjo's portrayal of women within the context of Costa Rican socio-economic dynamics.
- b. Dosani's (2018) critique of *The Yellow Wallpaper*: This analysis situates the story within the medical and social constraints of Victorian America, offering insights into its critique of gendered medical practices.
- c. Alvarez et al. (2003) and Tavares dos Santos (2022): These works provide a broader understanding of Latin American feminist movements and their intersection with literary representation.

3. Supporting Literary Critiques:

- a. Chaves's (2020) study on *Tocar a Diana*: Offers a detailed analysis of Ana Cristina Rossi's exploration of gender and autonomy.
- b. Gaard's (1993) *Ecofeminism*: Highlights the intersection of ecological and feminist concerns, particularly relevant to *La loca de Gandoca*.
- c. Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) *The Madwoman in the Attic*: Provides a framework for understanding how women writers subvert patriarchal norms through their characters and narratives.

4. Intersectionality and Social Constructs:

- a. Crenshaw's (1989) and Collins's (2000) foundational works on intersectionality: These sources explore the overlapping systems of oppression that shape women's experiences, enriching the analysis of the texts' socio-political dimensions.
- b. Harrison's (2011) reflections on Charlotte Perkins Gilman: These insights contextualize Gilman's work within her broader feminist and socio-political ideology.

The combination of primary and secondary sources guarantees that the analysis is grounded in both textual evidence and theoretical foundation. These theoretical foundations provide the lens through which the texts are analyzed, while the cultural and historical context provides further understanding of the specific circumstances shaping the selected narratives. Literary critiques and intersectional analyses help to refine the exploration of female agency, allowing for a comprehensive interpretation.

3.4 Analysis Categories

To thoroughly analyze the representation of female agency in the selected texts, themes and variables were categorized. These categories allowed for an organized exploration of feminist concerns, such as resistance, autonomy, and solidarity, which are central to the objectives. The process of categorization was guided by conceptual definitions rooted in feminist theory, guaranteeing a consistent and theoretically informed approach to textual analysis.

Resistance was examined as a recurring theme, highlighting how female characters confront societal norms and patriarchal limitations. This includes overacts of defiance like the rebellion of the protagonist against the medical prescriptions in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. As well as other subtle forms of resistance, like the subversion of traditional gender roles in some of the selected Costa Rican literary works.

Autonomy was another critical theme, it was explored through the struggles the protagonists go through to assert control over their bodies, lives and decisions while living within oppressive systems. In texts like *La loca de Gandoca*, autonomy intersects with environmental activism, showing a broader fight against systemic injustice.

Solidarity also resulted as a key variable, particularly in the selected Costa Rican texts, because collective action and community play a vital role in the empowerment of the characters. It is through their community that they find strength. This contrasts with the isolation portrayed in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. This shows how cultural differences influence how female agency is negotiated. By organizing these themes into categories, the study was able to draw meaningful comparisons between the texts that highlighted both universal feminist concerns and unique cultural expressions of resistance and empowerment.

Lastly, this categorization helped incorporate theoretical frameworks like Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "the Other" and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity into the analysis. This approach enabled a nuanced exploration of how literature critiques patriarchal systems while presenting alternative perspectives on female autonomy and solidarity.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

To effectively gather and organize the data required for analyzing female agency in the selected texts, a variety of data collection tools were employed. These tools were chosen for their ability to capture the nuances of the literary analysis and to ensure that the research questions could be answered. The tools provided a structured way to collect, organize, and interpret the textual evidence, which included the portrayal of female resistance, autonomy, and empowerment in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican works. Each tool served an individual purpose to facilitate a thorough analysis of the texts. The following sections describe the data collection tools, explaining how they were used throughout the research process to support the analysis and interpretation of the primary texts.

3.5.1 Reading Notes

Reading notes played a very important role in the data collection process. This tool allows for a detailed and organized way to track observations and ideas related to the portrayal of female agency in the selected texts. As the analysis progressed, these notes helped to document specific themes and main character developments. The process of taking reading notes involved a careful reading of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican works by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi. Each text was examined toward identifying

recurring symbols, important moments of female resistance even when subtle, as well as the social and cultural forces that influence the actions of the characters. These notes also helped to identify key textual elements such as the use of language, narrative structure, and character development.

By gathering important information from initial readings, these notes guaranteed that the analysis was not only grounded in textual evidence but also able to capture emerging themes and connections across the selected literary works. The reading notes were organized thematically, this helped the researcher to follow threads of female agency, power dynamics, and social problematics throughout each of the texts. This approach made data collection dynamic and flexible, which allowed for previously unnoticed themes to emerge and be further examined during the comparative analysis.

Moreover, the reading notes provided a detailed record of the observations made by the researcher while helping to refine the research questions and guide the interpretation of specific passages. The notes highlighted both obvious and nuanced representations of female agency, deepening the understanding of how each of the selected texts critique patriarchal systems in their unique ways. By capturing immediate reactions and reflections during the reading process, these notes became a crucial tool to develop a thorough and insightful analysis of the selected works.

3.5.2 Comparative Charts

Comparative charts worked as an essential tool for visually organizing the key elements across the texts being analyzed. The charts were designed to compare the portrayal of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican works. They facilitated a side-by-side examination of the texts in relation to one another. These charts were constructed to track specific aspects such as narrative structure, character motivations, symbolic imagery, and the ways in which each text engages with patriarchal systems. The creation of comparative charts helped to map out commonalities and divergences across the works, providing an organized framework for comparison that could be used during the analysis process.

The charts were particularly valuable in highlighting the ways in which female agency is depicted differently within the two cultural and historical contexts. The charts visually illustrated differences in how the authors used narrative strategies to convey resistance, empowerment, and

autonomy, offering a clearer understanding of how literary techniques reflected and critiqued gender norms in each context Victorian America and contemporary Costa Rica. By organizing data into comparative charts, the study also facilitated conclusions about the evolution of feminist literary representation over time. Additionally, the charts helped identify potential areas for further exploration. The charts served as both a visual and analytical tool for comparing the texts in detail. This approach was very important to identify the unique and shared elements of female agency across Victorian and Latin American contexts.

Example Comparative Charts

The following are examples of charts used in the study to illustrate these insights:

Figure 1

Themes of Female Agency

Theme	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Resistance to Patriarchy	The protagonist is having a mental breakdown as a form of rebellion against patriarchal control imposed by her doctor and husband. Her resistance is both psychological and symbolic. She is challenging the societal norms of the time.	In <i>Tocar a Diana</i> , resistance is portrayed through her journey of self-discovery. She is constantly in defiance against gendered expectations. Her actions show a clear rejection of societal constraints. She emphasizes autonomy and solidarity.

Figure 1: Illustrates the central themes of female agency explored in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and selected Costa Rican texts. Source: Researcher's creation.

Figure 2

Character Development and Agency

Character	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Protagonist (Female Agency)	The protagonist begins as a passive figure, following the instructions of her husband and doctor. Confined to a	Female characters often begin in similarly oppressive situations but undergo transformations rooted in either collective

	<p>room under the "rest cure," her agency emerges as she spirals into a mental breakdown. Through her obsessive focus on the wallpaper, she reclaims a sense of autonomy, ending in her rebellion against societal norms.</p>	<p>action or personal awakening. In <i>La loca de Gandoca</i>, the protagonist shifts from isolation to ecological activism, asserting her voice against patriarchal systems. In <i>Los perros no ladraron</i>, the female characters challenge traditional social expectations, finding agency through defiance and self-awareness. In <i>Tocar a Diana</i>, her journey of self-discovery embodies a rejection of gender roles, as she confronts societal pressures and redefines her identity through solidarity and autonomy.</p>
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Figure 2: Compares the character development of female protagonists and their evolving agency across the selected texts. Source: Researcher's creation.

Figure 3

Symbolism and Imagery

Symbol	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Nature and Freedom	<p>The protagonist's vision of freedom through the window contrasts with her physical reality.</p>	<p>In <i>La loca de Gandoca</i>, nature represents liberation and defiance against patriarchal systems that exploit both the environment and women. In <i>Tocar a Diana</i>, natural elements mirror the internal journey and struggle of the protagonist toward empowerment.</p>

Figure 3: Explores the use of symbolism and imagery as tools of resistance and empowerment in the analyzed texts. Source: Researcher's creation.

Figure 4

Narrative Voice and Perspective

Narrative Element	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Voice of the Protagonist	The voice of the protagonist becomes more fragmented as her resistance grows, reflecting her inner turmoil.	The female voice may evolve from submission to self-assertion, showing growth and resistance. In <i>Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra</i> , the voice of the protagonist shifts from passive acceptance to self-assertion, mirroring her journey toward empowerment.

Figure 4: Highlights the evolution of narrative voice and the shifting perspectives of female protagonists. Source: Researcher's creation.

3.5.3 Conceptual Maps

Conceptual maps were used to further clarify and visually represent the relationships between the main concepts and themes emerging from the analysis of female agency in the texts. These maps provided a graphical representation of how various elements, such as resistance, autonomy, oppression, and empowerment, were interconnected within the texts. By organizing these themes and concepts the researcher was able to track them across the texts and better understand the layers of meaning that informed the portrayal of female characters.

Each conceptual map began with a central theme (female agency) and then branched out to related sub-themes, such as cultural context, patriarchal oppression, gender roles, and resistance strategies. This allowed the researcher to capture how these sub-themes were depicted in the various selected texts and how they interacted with one another. For example, the map could show how characters in *The Yellow Wallpaper* experience isolation and mental deterioration as a form of resistance to patriarchal constraints, while characters in the Costa Rican works might engage in more active forms of resistance, such as political activism or environmental justice. By visually mapping these relationships, the researcher was able to gain a clearer understanding of the complex ways in which female agency is negotiated and represented in different cultural contexts.

Furthermore, conceptual maps were also useful for connecting theoretical concepts from feminist literary theory to the textual analysis. Key concepts from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity were mapped alongside the thematic elements of the texts, showing how the portrayal of female agency in the selected works reflects or challenges these feminist ideas. These maps offered a concrete way to organize the theoretical framework alongside the textual evidence.

3.6 Collection Process and Data Analysis

The data analysis techniques used in this study were designed to examine the portrayal of female agency across the selected literary texts. These methods helped the researcher identify key themes, patterns, and literary elements within the works. This provided a deeper understanding of both shared and unique representations of resistance and empowerment. By combining thematic categorization, critical analysis, and comparative analysis, the researcher was able to connect ideas across texts, highlight recurring ideas, to evaluate how each work contributes to feminist discourse.

The following sections describe each of these analysis methods in more detail, starting with thematic categorization, which helped organize and interpret the central themes related to female agency in the texts.

3.6.1 Thematic Categorization

Thematic categorization was the primary technique used to analyze the texts, enabling the researcher to identify, group, and interpret recurring themes central to the portrayal of female agency. This method highlighted dominant themes such as oppression, autonomy, resistance, solidarity, and defiance across the selected works. Each text was read multiple times to ensure that all relevant themes were systematically captured and categorized. The researcher focused on both explicit themes and implicit ones, such as subtle acts of resistance or personal transformation.

Thematic categorization helped to establish clear boundaries for analysis by grouping themes into categories based on their relevance to the study's research questions. For instance, themes related to the external forces of patriarchy, such as societal expectations, medical

practices, or gender roles, were grouped together, while themes related to personal agency, such as defiance, self-discovery, or empowerment, were categorized separately. This process allowed for a deeper exploration of the ways in which female agency is depicted in different literary contexts.

Additionally, thematic categorization made it possible to explore the intersections between different forms of oppression, like for example the ways in which gender and class or race intersect to shape the experiences of female characters. Once the themes were categorized, they were examined in relation to the theoretical frameworks of feminist literary theory. This allowed for an interpretation of how each theme relates to broader social and cultural norms, as well as how these themes reflect or challenge gender ideologies. Through this process, the researcher was able to generate a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding female agency in the selected texts.

3.6.2 Critical Analysis

Critical analysis was employed throughout the research to examine the literary techniques used in each of the selected works to construct female agency. This technique involved looking beyond superficial readings of the texts to assess the underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and social contexts that inform the portrayal of women. Critical analysis also involved an interrogation of the social, political, and historical conditions that shape representations of female characters and their experiences by the selected authors. For example, in analyzing *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the researcher critically examined how Gilman's critique of 19th-century medical practices and domestic confinement speaks to broader themes of gender inequality and the pathologization of the experiences of women of the time.

By engaging with the texts through a critical lens, the researcher was able to identify the ways in which these texts can challenge or reinforce patriarchal norms. Critical analysis also allowed the researcher to assess how the authors use narrative voice, symbolism, and character development to craft their critiques of gender roles.

Moreover, the conducted critical analysis involved engaging with secondary sources, including feminist theory, historical context, and literary criticism, to enrich the interpretation of the texts. By integrating these external perspectives, the researcher was able to position the selected works within a broader intellectual and cultural conversation on gender and power. This

critical approach offered a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the texts and their significance in the ongoing discourse surrounding feminism and female agency.

3.6.3 Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis, as mentioned earlier, was a central technique used in this study to analyze the similarities and differences in the representation of female agency across two distinct cultural contexts: 19th-century America and contemporary Costa Rica. This technique involved a systematic comparison of *The Yellow Wallpaper* with the Costa Rican works of Naranjo, Istarú, and Rossi to highlight how each text approaches the recurring themes of gender, resistance, and autonomy. By placing the works in conversation with one another, the researcher was able to explore the ways in which different cultural and historical contexts influence the representation of female agency.

The comparative analysis allowed for the identification of both universal and culturally specific elements of female agency. For example, while the portrayal of female isolation and resistance in *The Yellow Wallpaper* shares similarities with the struggles of female characters in the Costa Rican texts. There are key differences in how these struggles are depicted. By comparing these texts, the researcher was able to identify how the broader socio-political environments shaped the experiences of agency for the different characters, and how these environments influenced the approaches of the selected authors to portray resistance and empowerment.

Lastly, the comparative analysis also allowed the researcher to explore how literary style and narrative structure shape the portrayal of female agency in each text. This included looking at how language, character development, and symbolic imagery work together to create nuanced representations of women's lives. By using these comparative insights, the researcher was able to provide a more thorough and culturally aware analysis of female agency in literature.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Ensuring the validity and reliability of this study was crucial to maintaining the integrity of the research. The validity was established by carefully selecting texts that are well-known for their feminist themes and portrayals of female agency. *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the Costa Rican works Naranjo's *Los perros no ladraron* (1966), Istarú's *Madre nuestra que estás en la*

tierra (1989), *Baby boom en el paraíso* (1996), lastly Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca* (1992) and *Tocar a Diana* (2019) were chosen because they directly aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework, ensuring the analysis was focused and relevant.

In addition, reliability was addressed by using consistent methods throughout the study. The researcher relied on detailed reading notes, comparative charts, and thematic categorization to systematically analyze the texts. This approach ensured that the research process was repeatable and transparent. By sticking to a structured methodology, the findings of the study can be considered both valid and reliable.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were an important part of this research, particularly in relation to how literary texts were used and analyzed. Given that this study involved works by authors like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, it was important to respect their intellectual property. All texts were properly cited, ensuring that the work of each author was acknowledged appropriately.

The researcher was also sensitive to the ethical responsibility involved in analyzing complex topics like gender oppression and female agency. The research was conducted with respect for the cultural contexts of each work, and care was taken to avoid misinterpreting or oversimplifying the intentions of these authors. The aim was to handle these themes with respect and accuracy, recognizing the seriousness of the issues discussed in the texts.

3.9 Limitations

While this study provides a detailed exploration of female agency in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and selected Costa Rican works, there are a few limitations to consider. One key limitation is the focus on just a small selection of texts. Although these works are representative of the themes discussed, they do not fully capture the wide range of feminist ideas present in literature from different time periods and cultures. Expanding the range of texts could potentially offer new perspectives on the portrayal of female agency.

Another limitation relates to the subjective nature of qualitative research. While every effort was made to interpret the texts with objectivity, the analysis inevitably reflects the own

interpretations and biases of the researcher. This means the conclusions drawn are shaped by personal readings and reflections, which can influence the depth and direction of the analysis. Additionally, while feminist literary theory provided a strong foundation for this study, other theoretical frameworks could have offered additional layers of insight into the texts.

Finally, the comparative approach, while enriching, may have posed some challenges in fully capturing the unique cultural and historical contexts of each text. Given that the selected works come from different genres and cultural backgrounds, it was sometimes difficult to strike a perfect balance in analyzing them against one another.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

This chapter presents the comparative analysis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican literary works by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi. The study applies feminist literary theory, focusing on key concepts such as gender performativity (Judith Butler), patriarchal oppression (Kate Millett), and the construction of female identity as "the Other" (Simone de Beauvoir). The analysis integrates a triangulated approach using textual evidence, expert interpretations, and thematic analysis.

This methodological approach is essential for comparing these literary traditions. *The Yellow Wallpaper* provides a historical foundation for feminist critique, highlighting psychological confinement as a metaphor for patriarchal oppression. In contrast, Costa Rican literature presents more explicit challenges to gender roles, with protagonists engaging in direct resistance against systemic structures.

4.1 Theoretical Application in Literary Texts

4.1.1 Gender Performativity and Female Agency

Judith Butler's concept of gender as a social construct is evident in *The Yellow Wallpaper* through the forced conformity to the domestic ideal of the protagonist. The slow descent into madness of the narrator symbolizes the impossibility of sustaining this performative role. In Costa Rican works, gender performativity is also a central theme, particularly in Istarú's *Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra*, where the protagonist actively challenges the social expectations by embracing her sexuality as an act of autonomy.

Rossi's *Tocar a Diana* further exemplifies performativity by showcasing how social expectations shape the behavior of women. Unlike the protagonist in Gilman's work, who succumbs to patriarchal expectations, Rossi's protagonist reclaims agency by redefining her role outside the existing societal constraints. This contrast emphasizes the cultural evolution of feminist resistance, shifting from undercover to evident forms of defiance.

4.1.2 Patriarchy and Confinement

Kate Millett's critique of patriarchal power is evident in both literary traditions, though its manifestations differ. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, domestic confinement is both physical and psychological. The clear entrapment of the protagonist within the home reflects Victorian-era medical oppression, reinforcing the idea that both the health and autonomy of women were controlled by men.

In contrast, Costa Rican texts show broader social confinements. In Naranjo's *Los Perros no Ladraron*, the protagonist faces societal rather than physical imprisonment, restricted by economic dependence and rigid gender norms. Similarly, *La Loca de Gandoca* presents an environmental metaphor for female agency, as the protagonist's struggle against environmental destruction parallels her fight for autonomy in a male-dominated world.

4.1.3 Intersectionality and Female Resistance

Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "the Other" is central to understanding how female characters navigate patriarchal structures. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist is infantilized, her voice dismissed by her husband, mirroring the broader systemic suppressing of women in Victorian society.

Costa Rican literature expands this analysis through intersectionality. Rossi and Istarú explore how class, sexuality, and political activism intersect with gender oppression. In *Tocar a Diana*, the struggles are combined by societal expectations of morality and propriety, illustrating how gender oppression functions alongside cultural norms.

4.2 Comparative Themes, Motifs, and Symbolism

A key finding of this study is how each literary tradition utilizes themes, motifs, and symbols to critique gender norms. Both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the selected Costa Rican works employ these literary devices to highlight the constraints imposed on women and the different forms of resistance they engage in. Themes like confinement, liberation, and female empowerment are central to both analyzed literary traditions. They illustrate the ways in which patriarchal oppression manifests and is challenged in literature. Motifs such as walls, silence, and nature serve as recurring elements that reinforce the struggles faced by female characters while

also symbolizing their paths to autonomy. Symbols, including the oppressive wallpaper in Gilman's work and the use of natural landscapes in *La Loca de Gandoca*, function as metaphors for societal restrictions and the possibilities of self-liberation. By examining these literary tools, this study reveals how feminist narratives across time and cultural contexts contribute to a broader understanding of gender roles and resistance, emphasizing the continued relevance of literature in shaping the feminist discourse.

4.2.1 Themes

Themes are the grounds for understanding how feminist literature critiques and challenges patriarchal structures. By examining recurring themes found across *The Yellow Wallpaper* and selected Costa Rican literary works, this study explores the common struggles of female protagonists as they navigate oppression, fight for their rights, and ultimately find empowerment. These themes provide insight into how literature acts as a tool for social commentary and even transformation. The following themes are recurrent in the analyzed texts:

1. **Confinement and Liberation:** *The Yellow Wallpaper* explores the physical and psychological entrapment of the protagonist, while Costa Rican works highlight broader societal and environmental constraints on female autonomy. In *La Loca de Gandoca*, the protagonist's struggle against corporate destruction of nature parallels her fight for personal freedom, emphasizing how environmental and gender oppression intersect (Zuñiga, 2017). This establishes how feminist literature critiques various layers of oppression, in *La Loca de Gandoca*, it reveals the interrelation there is between social and environmental injustices.
2. **Female Resistance and Empowerment:** Both literary traditions emphasize the ways in which women reclaim agency, though the protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, does so through psychological rebellion, while Costa Rican characters engage in activism and self-liberation. In *Tocar a Diana*, Diana's journey of self-discovery and sexual autonomy challenges traditional gender expectations, portraying resistance as an internal and external struggle. (Madrigal Chaves, 2020). This shows that empowerment in feminist literature often manifests through different forms, ranging from mental emancipation to active societal engagement.

3. **Sexuality as a Means of Autonomy:** In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, female desire is repressed, while in *Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra*, sexuality is portrayed as a means of asserting identity and independence. This theme is also evident in *Tocar a Diana*, where the protagonist's exploration of desire serves as a rebellion against patriarchal norms (Madrigal Chaves, 2020). The way sexuality is approached and depicted in these texts reveals how oftentimes women reclaim their autonomy by challenging the social constraints imposed by men that seek to control their bodies and desires.

4.2.2 Motifs

Motifs provide deeper insight into the struggles and resistance of female characters by reinforcing central themes and offering symbolic representations of oppression and liberation. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *Los Perros no Ladraron*, *Tocar a Diana*, and *La Loca de Gandoca*, motifs serve to illustrate the different forms of confinement, control, and resistance experienced by female protagonists. The use of physical and psychological barriers, also the enforced silence, and nature as a site of liberation reveals how feminist literature critiques patriarchal structures and reclaims female agency. Motifs provide deeper insight into the struggles and resistance of female characters.

1. **Walls and Barriers:** appear prominently in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, where the entrapment of the protagonist within a room with barred windows and the oppressive yellow wallpaper symbolizes both her physical confinement and the psychological constraints imposed by patriarchal medical authority. (Gilman, 1892). The wallpaper becomes a manifestation of her deteriorating mental state and a metaphor for the larger societal restrictions placed on women. In *Los Perros no Ladraron*, the protagonist faces economic dependence as an invisible barrier that limits her autonomy, trapping her in a cycle of financial reliance on male figures (Naranjo, 1966). Unlike the physical enclosure seen in Gilman's work, Naranjo's depiction of barriers highlights how economic and social constraints function as a form of silent imprisonment for women. Both works demonstrate how barriers, whether tangible or abstract, serve as tools of patriarchal control, reinforcing the systematic oppression of female characters.

2. **Silence and Voice:** silence is a recurring motif representing female oppression. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the voice of the protagonist is dismissed by her husband and doctor, reflecting on the broader systemic silencing of women in Victorian society. Her forced silence leads to psychological breakdown, illustrating the dangers of denying women autonomy over their own narratives. Similarly, in *Tocar a Diana*, the struggle of the protagonist with societal judgment and repression forces her into moments of silence, as she navigates the expectations placed upon women regarding sexuality and propriety (Madrigal Chaves, 2020). However, unlike the protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Diana can ultimately find empowerment through self-expression, reclaiming her voice in defiance of patriarchal norms. These works emphasize the importance of breaking silence as an act of female resistance and the transformative power of reclaiming your own narrative.
3. **Nature and Space:** The motif of nature and space serves as a contrast to confinement, representing freedom and resistance in feminist literature. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the domestic space becomes a site of restriction, where the protagonist is confined within a room that exacerbates her mental distress, in contrast in *La Loca de Gandoca*, nature is portrayed as a place of empowerment, when the protagonist fights to protect the environment, it parallels with her struggle for female autonomy. The natural world in this work of Costa Rican literature is portrayed as a refuge from patriarchal oppression. It allows the female character to assert her agency outside of the societal expectations. By contrasting restrictive domestic spaces with the boundlessness of nature. These texts illustrate the different and diverse ways women seek liberation from imposed constraints.

Ultimately, motifs such as barriers, silence, and nature provide profound insights into the lived experiences of women within patriarchal structures. These literary elements not only reflect the struggles faced by female protagonists but also highlight the different avenues of resistance available to them. Through these recurring motifs, feminist literature continues to challenge oppressive norms and advocate for greater female autonomy.

4.2.3 Symbolism

In feminist literature, symbolism adds depth and meaning, offering a powerful way to challenge gender norms and question societal constraints. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *La Loca de*

Gandoca, and *Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra*, symbols serve as powerful tools to illustrate the struggles and empowerment of female protagonists. These symbols, ranging from physical objects to abstract concepts, encapsulate themes of confinement, resistance, and self-discovery, reflecting the diverse ways in which women oppose patriarchal structures.

The following table summarizes the key symbols found in the analyzed texts, explaining their meanings and significance in each story.

Figure 5

Symbols and meaning found in the selected works

Symbol	<i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i>	Costa Rican Works
Wallpaper	Represents confinement and entrapment. The protagonist's obsession with the wallpaper mirrors her mental deterioration and the oppressive control of patriarchal authority.	N/A
Nature	Symbolizes the absence of autonomy. The protagonist is confined indoors, cut off from the natural world, which reinforces her lack of freedom.	Represents empowerment and resistance. In <i>La Loca de Gandoca</i> , the protagonist's fight to protect nature parallels her struggle against patriarchal oppression, symbolizing her reclaiming of agency.
Sexuality	Embodies repressed desire. The protagonist's mental decline reflects the consequences of enforced sexual restraint under patriarchal control.	Symbolizes liberation and self-assertion. In <i>Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra</i> , female sexuality is portrayed as a tool of empowerment, challenging societal norms that regulate women's bodies.
Silence	Represents oppression. The protagonist's voice is dismissed,	Symbolizes both oppression and resistance. In <i>Tocar a Diana</i> , silence becomes a form of protest, reflecting the

	reflecting the societal tendency to silence women's experiences.	protagonist's defiance and eventual self-liberation.
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Figure 5: Summarizes the symbolic elements found in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Costa Rican feminist literature, highlighting their role in female resistance and identity. Source: Researcher's creation.

One of the most striking symbols in *The Yellow Wallpaper* is the wallpaper itself, which embodies both physical and psychological confinement. The protagonist's growing obsession with its patterns mirrors her deteriorating mental state, symbolizing the oppressive control exerted over her by patriarchal medical authority (Gilman, 1892). The wallpaper also acts as a metaphor for the societal restrictions placed on women, trapping them within domestic expectations and denying them autonomy. This symbol of confinement is central to understanding the struggle the protagonist has against the gendered norms of her time, as her eventual descent into madness reflects upon the devastating consequences of enforced passivity and isolation.

In contrast, Costa Rican literature shifts from internal psychological entrapment to external struggles against broader social structures. Nature emerges as a symbol of both oppression and empowerment in these texts. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist is confined indoors, with the outside world remaining inaccessible and unattainable, reinforcing her lack of freedom (Gilman, 1892). Conversely, in *La Loca de Gandoca*, nature has become a site of resistance and empowerment. The protagonist's fight to preserve the environment parallels her battle against patriarchal oppression, as her connection to the land symbolizes her reclaiming of agency and autonomy (Rossi, 1992). This contrast highlights the evolution of feminist literature from depicting personal confinement to showcasing collective activism as a means of achieving female autonomy and liberation.

Building on the theme of liberation, sexuality emerges as another powerful symbol, representing both repression and empowerment across these texts. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, female desire is suppressed under patriarchal control, with the mental deterioration of the protagonist reflecting the consequences of enforced sexual restraint (Gilman, 1892). In contrast, in *Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra*, female sexuality is portrayed as a means of self-assertion and empowerment, challenging societal norms that seek to regulate women's bodies (Istarú, 1990). This shift highlights the changing feminist discourse, from depicting the dangers of repression to celebrating female autonomy and bodily agency.

Just as sexuality symbolizes the reclaiming of personal freedom, silence serves as a universal symbol of oppression and protest across these texts, though its meaning evolves significantly. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the voice of the protagonist is continuously dismissed, reinforcing the societal tendency to silence women's experiences (Gilman, 1892). Costa Rican works, however, portray silence not only as oppression but also as a form of resistance. In *Tocar a Diana*, moments of silence reflect the defiance against societal expectations and the protagonist's eventual journey toward self-liberation (Madriral Chaves, 2020). This transformation of silence from subjugation to empowerment illustrates the broader feminist movement's shift from passive endurance to active resistance.

Ultimately, symbolism in these literary works deepens the understanding of feminist struggles and triumphs. By analyzing symbols such as wallpaper, nature, sexuality, and silence, it becomes evident how literature reflects, and challenges gendered power structures. The evolution from psychological entrapment to activism signifies the dynamic nature of feminist discourse, proving that literature continues to be a crucial space for reimagining female agency and resistance to patriarchy.

The analysis reveals both convergences and divergences in the portrayal of female agency across these texts. *The Yellow Wallpaper* presents a deeply personal and symbolic rebellion against domestic oppression, focusing on the psychological toll of patriarchal control. In contrast, Costa Rican works such as *La Loca de Gandoca* and *Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra* expand the scope of female resistance to include political, environmental, and sexual autonomy, reflecting broader social and cultural struggles. These findings underscore how literature serves as both a reflection of and a challenge to societal norms, illustrating the adaptability and evolution of feminist discourse across different historical and cultural contexts.

This comparative study contributes to feminist literary criticism by demonstrating how empowerment is articulated differently based on historical and cultural settings. While Victorian-era literature often portrays resistance as internal and psychological, modern Costa Rican works depict more overt and collective forms of struggle, emphasizing activism and communal solidarity. Despite these differences, both traditions highlight the enduring importance of literature as a space for reimagining gender roles and advocating for female autonomy.

Ultimately, these texts collectively underscore the ongoing necessity of literature in challenging patriarchal structures and redefining women's roles in society. By examining the

symbolic representations of confinement, resistance, and liberation, this study reaffirms the power of literature to not only critique existing power dynamics but also to inspire transformative change. As feminist discourse continues to evolve, literature remains a vital tool for envisioning and advocating for a more equitable world.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter of this study provides a summary of the key findings and their implications in the broader context of feminist literary analysis. It reviews the objectives outlined at the beginning of the research and evaluates how effectively they were achieved. This chapter also explores any unexpected findings and their significance in understanding female agency in literature. Finally, the recommendations section suggests future avenues for research, and the broader societal impact of the conclusions.

5.1 Purpose of the Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the key findings of this study and evaluate their contribution to the understanding of female agency in literature. By conducting a comparative analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and selected Costa Rican works written by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, this research highlights how cultural and historical contexts shape the portrayal of female empowerment in literature. Specifically, the study explores how these texts employ symbolism, narrative structure, and thematic elements to critique patriarchal norms and show the struggles and triumphs of women. This chapter not only restates the research question but also discusses the findings, emphasizing their significance for feminist literary criticism. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for future studies, suggesting areas for further exploration and analysis.

This conclusion looks to reinforce the relevance of the study by highlighting its contributions to the broader discourse on gender and literature. By examining the thematic elements of the selected works, this research enhances our understanding of how literature both reflects and challenges societal expectations of gender roles. The findings demonstrate that while *The Yellow Wallpaper* focuses on the psychological and domestic dimensions of female oppression, the selected Costa Rican works expand the scope of resistance to include political, environmental, and sexual autonomy. This comparative approach underlines the adaptability of feminist discourse across different contexts and shows the different ways in which female agency is articulated in literature.

Ultimately, this chapter aims to highlight the importance of literature as a tool for social critique and transformation. By analyzing how these texts navigate themes of confinement, resistance, and liberation, the study highlights the enduring relevance of feminist literature in advocating for gender equality. The insights gathered from this research not only contribute to academic discussions but also offer practical implications for understanding the evolving role of women in society. Through its findings, this study reasserts the power of literature to inspire change and reimagine gender dynamics, paving the way for future research that continues to explore the intersections of culture, history, and feminist expression.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 To analyze the representation of female agency and struggles in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, focusing on its key feminist themes, particularly the critique of gendered medical practices and domestic confinement

The analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* demonstrates that Charlotte Perkins Gilman critiques the patriarchal structures of Victorian society by portraying the psychological deterioration the protagonist suffers because of the forced domestic confinement. The wallpaper serves as a symbol of female entrapment, and the final breakdown of the protagonist represents act of rebellion against the gender oppression of the time. This work aligns with feminist theories such as Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as 'the Other', and Judith Butler's gender performativity, highlighting the restrictive gender roles imposed on women by society. Furthermore, this story illustrates the medical oppression, and the lack of autonomy granted to women within a domestic setting of the time which underscores the broader societal limitations placed on women during the 19th century. By restricting the intellectual and physical agency of the protagonist, Gilman exposes the detrimental effects of patriarchal control over the lives of women, emphasizing the necessity for female independence and self-expression.

Additionally, *The Yellow Wallpaper* critiques Victorian medical practices, particularly the "rest cure," which required women to remain passive and isolated. This treatment was imposed by male physicians, and it reflects on the widespread belief that the mental health of women could be "managed" by men restricting their autonomy. The descent into madness of the protagonist highlights the damaging impact of those practices and emphasizes how enforced passivity worsened rather than relieved psychological distress. The wallpaper in her room, with

its chaotic and disturbing patterns, becomes a metaphor for patriarchal control and the suffocating effects of domestic confinement. The fixation on the wallpaper and eventual act of tearing it down symbolizes an unconscious but powerful rebellion against the lack of agency and freedom of the protagonist. Through this act, Gilman is demonstrating the psychological consequences of denying women their personal and intellectual autonomy, at the same time it reinforces the need for a systemic change in how mental health and autonomy of women were treated in Victorian society.

5.2.2 To examine how Costa Rican short stories by women, including those by Carmen Naranjo, Ana Istarú, and Ana Cristina Rossi, portray female empowerment and agency in the face of societal and patriarchal constraints, specifically referencing *Los perros no ladraron*, *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra*, *Baby boom en el paraíso*, *La loca de Gandoca*, and *Tocar a Diana*

Costa Rican female authors show women navigating and resisting patriarchal structures in different ways. Carmen Naranjo critiques societal constraints through female characters who challenge traditional expectations, Ana Istarú portrays sexual autonomy as a form of empowerment, and Ana Cristina Rossi integrates social and environmental activism into the struggle for female agency. Unlike the protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, these characters engage in more direct and collective forms of resistance, which reflect the evolution of feminist thought within Latin American literature. The examined Costa Rican texts describe a wide range of female experiences, from political activism and sexual liberation to environmental advocacy, illustrating that empowerment can manifest in many ways. These works emphasize that female agency is not a singular concept but rather a multifaceted experience shaped by the cultural, social, and historical influences. The portrayal of collective female resistance in these texts also shows the importance of solidarity and community in the fight of women against systemic oppression and gender roles.

Moreover, the analyzed texts underscore how agency is exercised not only in individual acts of defiance, but also through communal acts and sorority. In *Los perros no ladraron*, the protagonist starts growing awareness of her oppression, which leads her to seek alternative ways to independence, mirroring a broader societal change toward recognizing the rights of women. Similarly, in *Tocar a Diana*, the main character struggles with societal judgment, reflecting on

the persistent control over female sexuality and behavior. The stories in both *Baby boom en el paraíso* and *La loca de Gandoca* intertwine personal autonomy with broader socio-political themes, reinforcing the notion that female empowerment is extremely connected to the struggle for justice in multiple dimensions of life. By placing female agency within diverse contexts, whether political, environmental, or sexual, these authors present a thorough and dynamic portrayal of the modern feminist movement in Latin America.

5.2.3 To compare these portrayals, identifying how they reflect and challenge societal norms across two distinct cultural and historical contexts: Victorian-era America and modern Costa Rica

The comparison reveals key similarities and differences in the portrayal of female agency. Both *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the Costa Rican works explore themes of oppression, gender roles, and autonomy, but they do so within different frameworks. While Gilman's protagonist experiences psychological oppression and limited personal resistance, Costa Rican female characters exercise more overt and diverse forms of empowerment, including activism and defiance of social norms. The cultural and historical shifts between Victorian America and modern Costa Rica influence the ways in which female characters navigate and challenge patriarchal systems.

Furthermore, the study highlights that while Victorian literature often frames female resistance as internalized or symbolic, contemporary Costa Rican literature offers a broader perspective on gender struggles by situating them within political and societal conflicts. By contrasting these different narrative strategies, this research underscores how literature both reflects and shapes evolving feminist ideologies over time. The psychological and domestic struggles showed in *The Yellow Wallpaper* contrast with the more externally defiant actions of Costa Rican protagonists, suggesting an evolution in feminist discourse from subtle critiques to direct confrontation with patriarchal systems.

5.3 Restatement of the Research Question

This study pursued to answer the following research question: *How does the portrayal of female agency in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper compare to that in selected Costa Rican literary works written by women?*

The findings show that while both literary traditions address female agency within patriarchal structures, they present different methods of resistance based on their respective social and cultural environments. *The Yellow Wallpaper* illustrates the mental consequences of oppression, while the selected Costa Rican literature portrays resistance of women as more active and multifaceted. The examined works reveal that the portrayal of female empowerment is mostly shaped by the historical moment and cultural framework within which a text is written.

Additionally, this research underscores the role of literature in both reflecting and shaping societal attitudes toward gender. While *The Yellow Wallpaper* reveals the damaging effects of psychological confinement and enforced passivity, Costa Rican literature shows a broader spectrum of resistance, going from activism to environmental advocacy. By addressing these differences and similarities, this study contributes to the broader discourse on gender roles, literary representation, and feminist theory. The findings emphasize how literature serves as a fundamental medium for documenting the struggles of women in a patriarchal society, which promote critical discussions on gender equality, and inspire new generations of writers to challenge the established patriarchal narratives.

5.4 Unexpected Results

One unexpected finding was the extent to which Costa Rican feminist literature integrates broader social and environmental themes into the discussion of female agency. Unlike Gilman's work, which focuses primarily on domestic confinement, Costa Rican literature expands the conversation to include political and ecological dimensions, illustrating a more collective form of empowerment.

Moreover, the Costa Rican texts suggest that female resistance is not only an individual struggle but also a communal and intersectional endeavor. This finding broadens the scope of feminist literary analysis by demonstrating that female agency can be linked to other forms of activism, such as environmentalism and political resistance. The presence of these intersectional concerns in Costa Rican texts underscores the complex, multidimensional nature of feminist struggles in different cultural contexts.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to further explore the themes of female agency and literary representation.

5.5.1 Future Research

Further comparative studies could explore additional Latin American literary works to examine how regional feminist literature engages with global feminist discourses. Investigating authors from other Central and South American countries would provide a broader perspective on how female agency is represented across different cultures. Additionally, expanding the scope of research to include contemporary feminist literature and digital storytelling could offer insights into how modern narratives continue to challenge and redefine gender roles.

5.5.2 Intersectional Approaches

More research on intersectionality in Costa Rican literature could deepen the understanding of how factors such as race, class, and sexuality shape female agency. Exploring works by Afro-Costa Rican and Indigenous women writers would add valuable insights about how multiple layers of identity can influence the empowerment of women and female agency. Additionally, intersectional studies could help highlight the diverse challenges faced by women from different backgrounds and how these challenges are reflected in literature.

5.5.3 Expanding the Scope

Analyzing female agency in contemporary media, including film and digital literature could offer new perspectives on how feminist narratives evolve in modern storytelling. Literature is no longer confined to printed works; audiovisual and digital platforms have become critical spaces for feminist discourse. Examining these media could show new and innovative ways in which the voices of women are being amplified in the digital age.

5.5.4 Educational Applications

Given the relevance of these themes, integrating discussions of female agency into literature and gender studies curricula could enhance critical thinking and awareness of gender issues among students. Educational institutions could develop specialized courses that focus on

feminist literary criticism, providing students with the analytical tools to critically engage with gender representation in literature. Encouraging discussions about female agency in classrooms could inspire more inclusive and gender-conscious academic environments.

5.5.5 Translations and Accessibility

Many Costa Rican feminist works remain inaccessible to wider audiences due to limited translations. Increasing translation efforts would allow for greater international engagement with these important texts. By making these works more widely available, scholars and general readers alike could gain a bigger appreciation of the unique contributions of Costa Rican women writers to feminist literature. Additionally, ensuring that these translated works reach diverse audiences could facilitate cross-cultural dialogues on gender representation and female empowerment.

By addressing these recommendations, future research can build upon the findings of this study, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of female agency in literature and beyond. These recommendations also emphasize the continuing relevance of feminist literary studies in shaping discussions on gender, social justice, and representation in literature.

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Appendix

Appendix A.

Comparative Charts

Chart 1: Themes of Female Agency

Theme	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Resistance to Patriarchy		
Isolation vs. Empowerment		
Mental Health and Autonomy		
Gendered Oppression		

Chart 2: Character Development and Agency

Character	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Protagonist (Female Agency)		
Symbolism of Confinement		
Role of Relationships		
Cultural Specificity		

Chart 3: Symbolism and Imagery

Symbol	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
The Wallpaper		
The Room		
Nature and Freedom		
The Protagonist's Descent		

Chart 4: Narrative Voice and Perspective

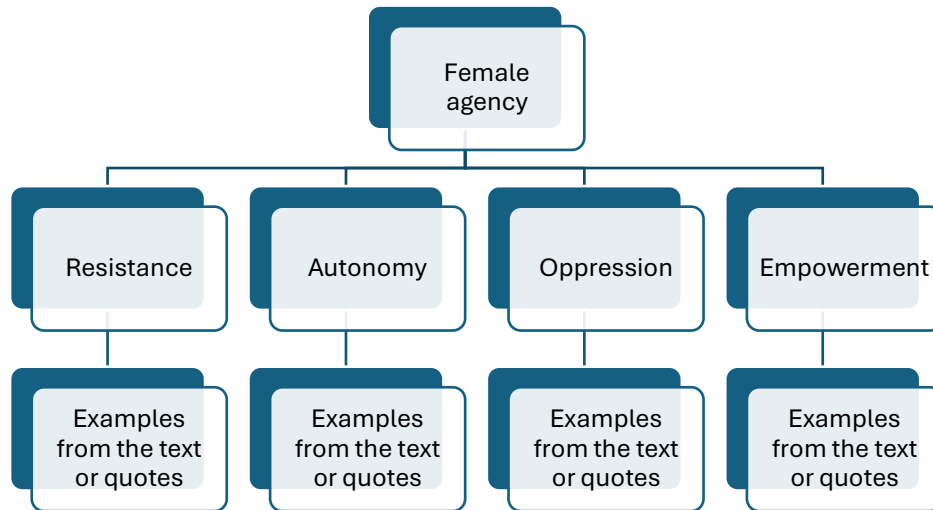
Narrative Element	The Yellow Wallpaper	Costa Rican Texts
Narrative Structure		
Voice of the Protagonist		
Psychological Depth		
Role of Male Characters		

Appendix B.

Conceptual Maps

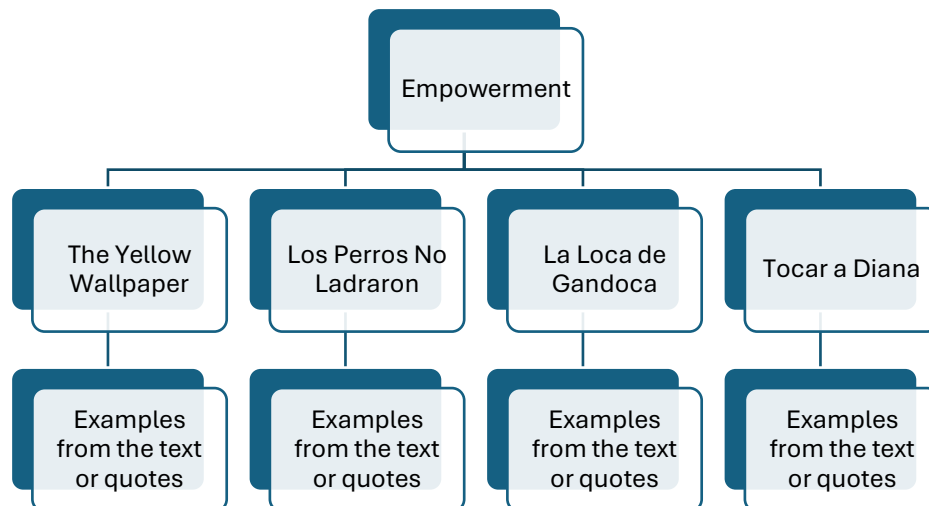
1. Central Theme with Sub-Themes

This map focuses on a single central theme and branches into sub-themes.



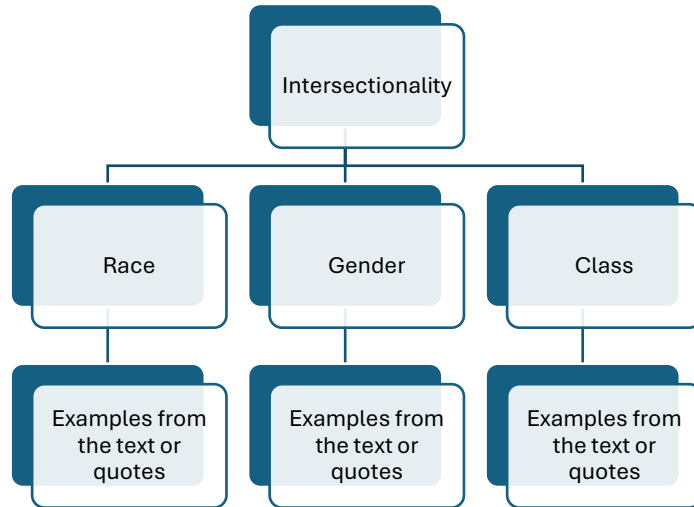
2. Sub-Themes Across Texts

This map correlates sub-themes across texts.



3. Theoretical Framework Integration

These maps linked theoretical feminist concepts to the texts. For example, intersectionality



4. Representation of Cultural Contexts and Feminist Theory

This map shows layers of interaction between cultural contexts and feminist theory.

