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## **The New Chicana Heroine: Representations of Anzaldua's Mestiza Consciousness in Chicana Feminist Cultural Productions**

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THE NEW CHICANA HEROINE: REPRESENTATIONS OF ANZALDÚA'S  
MESTIZA CONSCIOUSNESS IN CHICANA FEMINIST  
CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

A Thesis

by

MONICA E. MONTELONGO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Texas-Pan American  
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July 2011

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July 2011



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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes Gloria Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness as a representation seen thematically in Chicana feminist cultural productions. Mestiza consciousness, defined in Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera, is a non-binary feminist ideology, which proposes a third space in female identity, explored in terms of gender, class, race, and sexuality identification. The representation of mestiza consciousness in Chicana feminist cultural productions is proposed as a new trope in Chicana cultural studies, which I term the "New Chicana Heroine." The New Chicana Heroine is both a proposal and representation of a third space in female identity.

An examination of several authors, artists, and filmmakers, spanning multiple decades and genres, are viewed to distinguish the New Chicana Heroine as a distinct female representation. The Chicano nationalist ideology of La Familia and Chicana mother's role are indicated as key influences in the formation of Chicana identity and the identification of the New Chicana Heroine.





## DEDICATION

The completion of my Master's thesis would not be possible without the support of my family and loved ones. Thank you Mom, James, and Ray.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE NEW CHICANA HEROINE—PUTTING MESTIZA CONSCIOUSNESS TO WORK

“I put it down on paper and then the ghost does not ache so much. I write it down and Mango says goodbye sometimes. She does not hold me with both arms. She sets me free.”--

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, (110)

“Living in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland, is what makes poets write and artists create.”-- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, (95)

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* has been studied in multiple disciplines, as feminist, postcolonial, ethnicity/race, and Chicana feminist theory text. *Borderlands* introduces Anzaldúa's "border theory," where as her use of this historical area (the U.S.-Texas border) combines and expresses working-class, gender, sexuality, and racial identity issues. Her final essay in *Borderlands* is dedicated to a "new consciousness" that she terms "mestiza consciousness." Mestiza consciousness is a "new" way for the mestiza to view the world, understanding the cultural oppression of both the Western world ideology and her own racial culture on the mestiza identity. This awareness is fueled by contradiction and ambiguity, as mestiza consciousness resists binary thinking and instead proposes a "third space." Anzaldúa uses the border as a metaphor for this third space.

Mestiza consciousness is represented in the literature, artwork, plays, and films of Cherríe Moraga, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Alma Lopez, Laura Aguilar, Yolanda López, and Patricia Cardoso among many others. These women have designed representations of

Chicanas that display Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness. I argue that this representation is a prevailing theme in Chicano/a literature and cultural productions and has become a trope in Chicana representation. I term this representation of mestiza consciousness the "New Chicana Heroine." The New Chicana Heroine is both a proposal for a "third space" in gender, race, and sexuality identity and representation of a female that displays a non-binary and plural identity, distinguishing a mestiza consciousness perspective, in Chicana/o cultural productions. In this section, I will introduce the terminology and concepts that have shaped the formation of the New Chicana Heroine. I view multiple genres of Chicana cultural productions in order to demonstrate that the New Chicana Heroine is visible in multiple mediums. The New Chicana Heroine resists canonical borders, just as Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* combines multiple genres to discuss the history of misogyny along the border.

### **Chicana Subjectivity, Bordered Histories, and Anzaldúa**

I recall my first experience reading a representation of a mestiza on paper. It was Esperanza from Cisneros's *Mango Street*. I was between thirteen and fourteen years old and had felt alien to the world of printed books. I loved reading, writing, and re-telling stories, but I had never read anything that seemed familiar to me. Everything in ink was foreign, and as a Mexican American I was foreign to the hour dedicated to the English Language Arts at school. English is my first language, but that did not matter, because the literature I had been presented did not speak to me and did not speak about me. Because I was not aware that I had a space in the arts, in academia, beyond the week when the school district educated us about the dangers of joining a gang, I felt my race was not second or third to the world, but did not exist; it had no value because I had learned nothing about it from school. I valued school, but it did not value me. *Mango* was the first time I felt valuable as a mestiza. I thought, "If it is in a book, it must have

worth.” It was a simplistic way to discern value, but that was all I knew. Esperanza, who hates her name, who is embarrassed of her home, felt very real to me.

While Esperanza was very familiar, I did not know the term “mestiza” when I first read *Mango Street*. It was not until college that I was educated about my “mestizo” history—being of mixed European (Spanish) and Indigenous Mexican descent. And it was not until my introduction to reading Gloria Anzaldúa did I realize the feminine form of the term—the “mestiza.” Despite having Esperanza as a figure that resembled me, not only in race, but class, and gender as well, I was still left with an unsettling and insecure feeling in my mind. I still felt absent and alien to anything academic, especially literature and the arts. I held onto Esperanza’s voice throughout school, even in college when I read *Y No Se Lo Trago La Tierra* and the plays of Luis Valdez. I held onto Esperanza’s voice because she was female, and torn between her family, school, and community. At home, I understood that males had more value, and I would never have this same kind of significance. My father had never allowed my brother to clean the kitchen. I can remember being eight years old, standing on a foot stool at the kitchen sink, hands submerged in soapy water, and knowing that it was because I was female. I stood there in my chores as my brother played and I knew then that this was not how I wanted to be valued. For these reasons, school felt like it had the potential to be my sanctuary. It worked as a place where I could have a different kind of value than I did in my home. At home, my value never seemed to change. It was always unfair. I had excellent grades, but I was still a female. My relationship with academia would be a complicated one. I knew this even then.

Assimilation began early for me, because my race and my grades didn’t correspond with the expectations of not only Anglo American teachers, but Mexican American teachers as well. It became clear that I could not be an intellectual and mestiza. Gloria Anzaldúa writes about a

similar experience saying, “When watching Mexican movies, I felt a sense of homecoming as well as alienation. People who were to amount to something didn’t go to Mexican movies, or *bailes* or tune their radios to *bolero*, *rancherita*, and *corrido* music” (82). I was pushed towards my American culture in order to “help” me escape my Mexican culture. At such a young age, I had yet to see a mestiza and Chicano culture represented in the classroom. I felt foreign, even as I was assimilated. This is why *Mango Street* has meant so much to me. *Mango* was the bridge between my culture and the classroom; it has helped me search out my identity.

I would later read in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands:La Frontera* a description of the unsettling feelings I carried with me. These feelings that rupture into an array of insecurities and rise at the injustices of misogyny continue into mestiza adulthood. Anzaldúa describes the unique experience of being a mestiza living in the geographic borderlands of the Rio Grande Valley, located in south Texas. Anzaldúa uses the border as a metaphor for the psychological, cultural, and social space mestizas inhabit. The border is part of the mestiza identity as it represents multiplicity and unity. For Anzaldúa, the metaphoric space came as a matter of survival—a way for the mestiza to straddle the border and place one foot on each side, each culture.

In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm (Anzaldúa, 101-102).

To understand this “third element”—mestiza consciousness—is greatly dependent on the author’s self-reflexivity as she introduces the alternate history of the U.S. border, often overlooked as a place of violence and terror for the woman of Mexican descent. This is the place

I grew up, and the place that has lead Anzaldúa’s search for identity. In this reflexive view, Anzaldúa examines her own culture so that she may critique, question, and respond to the history of misogyny in the mestizo culture. Her response is descriptive of what women have felt and tolerated for generations—what arises from her journey into the self and culture is a description of mestiza consciousness—something that already existed, but was yet to be termed and described. Sonia Saldívar-Hull characterizes the Chicana feminist theory in her chapter on *Borderlands*, “The New Mestiza challenges the dualisms that underpin the power structure of the United States. . . .Anzaldúa expresses the multiple consciousnesses of feminists whose gender politics are lived simultaneously with race, class, and sexual awareness” (61). Mestiza consciousness is way of living, surviving, for the mestiza, and the new mestiza is what emerges from an enlightenment of the domination and oppression she has faced in society, in her culture.

In this thesis, I analyze representations of Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness in the literature, artwork, film, and theatre of Chicana authors and artists including Cherríe Moraga, Sandra Cisneros, Alma Lopez, Yolanda López, Laura Aguilar, Patricia Cardoso, and Claudia Medina. My goal is multi-faceted in exploring these representations of mestiza consciousness. First, it is important to acknowledge that Anzaldúa’s theory is grounded in her experience as a mestiza, and mestizas had already explored the concept of a multi-identity in culture, gender, and sexuality through their art and representation of the Chicana experience. In a guest appearance at the University of Texas-Pan American in March 2009, Sandra Cisneros suggested that she was unaware of Anzaldúa’s mestiza quest while she wrote *Mango Street*. This is noted in the introduction to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Mango*. Cisneros writes about her early experience as an author, “She hasn’t read Virginia Woolf yet. She doesn’t know about Rosario

Castellanos or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga are cutting their own paths through the world somewhere, but she doesn't know about them" (xv).

One of the most notable artists who represents this ideological framework, the multiplicity of the mestiza self, is Yolanda López, as she re-imagines La Virgen de Guadalupe as her grandmother, mother, and self. López's *Guadalupe* triptych was presented in 1978 as her MFA project (Davalos 80), nine years before Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* was published.

Second, by examining the representations of mestiza consciousness, I will argue that as mestiza representation has been developed and fluidly forged in artistry, it has also become a workable symbol in the Chicana feminist literary discourse. This representation of mestiza consciousness is what I term the "New Chicana Heroine." The New Chicana Heroine works as both representation and proposal for a "third space" in gender, race, and sexuality identity. As a symbol of mestiza consciousness at work, the New Chicana Heroine provides a complex view of the mestiza, one that is resistant to the Virgen/Putra dichotomy imbedded in the Chicano national discourse. The application of mestiza consciousness to Chicana representation has birthed a dialogue about what it means to be a mestiza. This wholly encompasses the purpose of the "New Chicana Heroine" in mestiza representation.

Finally, this thesis examines and dialogues with the cultural influence of the Chicano familia, and the veneration and expectations of Chicana motherhood in the greater borderlands discourse. I look specifically at the familia and the role of motherhood in Chicano culture, in order to further unpack how the New Chicana Heroine first emerged into Chicana feminist discourse and continues to be an applicable symbol in contemporary works. The Chicano family structure has continued to relegate females into roles that further support the Virgen/Putra dichotomy. One of these roles is the passive role of the mother, whom many artists re-interpret

through the symbols of La Virgen, La Malinche, and La Llorona, or as Anzaldúa calls them “our three mothers.” By applying a Chicana feminist framework combined with the insights of gender studies and post-colonial theory, this project will present a unified, but multiple mode of viewing mestiza representation and the emergence and continuity of the New Chicana Heroine.

### **The Question of Terming: To Deconstruct and Construct the New Chicana Heroine**

Chicana scholars have for years looked towards and applied Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness to the artistic ventures of fellow Chicanas. Yet I suggest that this scholarship has significantly overlooked mestiza consciousness as a specifically clear symbol that is evident in Chicana discourse. This symbol of mestiza consciousness, the New Chicana Heroine, is as prevalent and identifiable as the figures that are re-cast, La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona, by Chicana authors, artists, and filmmakers. In reading and viewing the work of Cherríe Moraga, Sandra Cisneros, Yolanda López, Alma López, and many other artists, I too applied a mestiza consciousness perspective. I began to see these images of womanhood as more than applications of mestiza consciousness, but as new tropes in Chicana Feminist discourse. These alternatives to the Western patriarchal ideologies of femaleness resonated as symbols of exploration and border-crossings of gender, race, class, and sexuality. I decided I must term this application and representation of mestiza consciousness as the “New Chicana Heroine.”

The application and identification of mestiza consciousness in Chicana/o cultural productions has yet to be termed by scholars. I argue that this application of mestiza consciousness must be termed so that a unified “language” can be used to sync this representation across academia. If the “New Chicana Heroine” is a recognizable figure within not only Chicana/o cultural studies and productions, then as a literary figure this symbol can rectify the occlusion of Chicana/o representation within the Western canon. The New Chicana



Heroine will bridge the space between Chicana/o cultural studies and the Western Canon of cultural productions, so that a unified mode of viewing multi-representations of the mestiza can be used to incorporate the New Chicana Heroine in the classroom. My goal is to create a terminology that can be used effectively in academia—between students and scholars alike-- to identify, compare, and contribute to the application of Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness in the arts. Once this term for the artistic application of mestiza consciousness is agreed upon, then the representation can be studied across academia using a language that is effective in multiple modes of study.

Mestiza consciousness is a clearly recognizable trope, although there is a largely fluid and complex understanding of mestiza consciousness. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano writes, “This consciousness emerges from a subjectivity structured by multiple determinants—gender, class, sexuality, and contradictory membership in competing cultures and racial identities” (84). These determinants are vast variables in the deciphering and understanding of mestiza consciousness and the New Chicana Heroine. I knew that I must turn further to Anzaldúa to find a way to describe this representation and symbol of her philosophy, of the New Mestiza.

Mestiza consciousness is an ideology—a “theory in the flesh”—rooted in the historical/sociological/philosophical/psychological space of the Texas-Mexico borderlands. It is determined by intensely “real histories” that play a crucial role in the deconstruction of a singular identity of the mestiza, and reconstruct a mestiza identity defined by its plurality (Yarbro-Bejarano 84). But the complexity of a “third space” in multiple terms—gender, race, sexuality, class—has kept a space of mystery within mestiza consciousness. Yarbro-Bejarano writes, “Anzaldúa enacts this consciousness in *Borderlands* as a constantly shifting process or activity of breaking down binary dualisms and creating the third space, the in-between, border, or

interstice that allows contradictions to co-exist in the production of the new element (*mestizaje*, or hybridity)” (84).

Post-Colonial scholar, Homi K. Bhabha describes “hybridity” as a “reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity,” which ultimately challenges colonial authority by clouding the original intent of the colonizer through hybrid repetitious actions (1175). The hybridity that mestiza consciousness designs is an active process. So, in considering this process, the question of the “authentic” mestiza consciousness representation is disputed. How can mestiza consciousness be represented without creating the “authentic,” the acceptable mestiza for stage, literature, film, and culture? One manner to avoid this scenario is to apply a mestiza consciousness reading across generations, decades, and eras in all forms of media. Mestiza consciousness is evident in the work of Yolanda López in 1978 and Writer/Director Claudia Medina’s short film *Finding Llorona* in 2007. There is a twenty-nine year gap between these projects, yet mestiza consciousness is evident in both. Neither project significantly resembles the other; however there is a similarity in the presence of a female that does not align with gender or racial binaries. The hybrid that emerges does not resemble any other.

Sonia Saldívar-Hull argues in her chapter, “Mestiza Consciousness and Politics,” that the most useful way to begin to understand *Borderlands* is in deciphering the last section of the Anzaldúa’s essays, the chapter entitled “Towards a New Consciousness” (60). I too see this chapter to be at the heart of Anzaldúa’s ideology—a description of the new awareness of the mestiza. It is crucial to understand how this new consciousness is at work in the mestiza, to understand the “New Chicana Heroine” that has been proposed. Anzaldúa writes, “The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (102). This

“break down” of the duality Anzaldúa believes will “heal the split” between not only race, but in gender as well. To heal this wound she analyzes how the mestiza gender has been constructed produced for and by the male authority. Judith Butler writes of these constructed genders in her book, *Gender Trouble*, calling gender a performance, an act that has been repeated. Butler says that gender is an “active process” and not naturally defined, but instead socially constructed through gender performances, or acts (901). In *Borderlands*, the goal is to bring to the surface the fact that these performative acts are in repetition—from past to present—and aim for a different future for the mestiza.

The border consciousness she ultimately develops produces a new, revolutionary theory of politics. Anzaldúa creates a new culture, a new way of being that will entail a global healing and freedom from violence. Her desire to see with ‘serpent and eagle eyes’ invokes the New Mestiza who claims the heritage of Aztec imagery. The serpent is the female, Coatlicue legacy and the eagle is the masculinist impulse of the dominating Aztec tribe. Anzaldúa proposes an identity that merges the two warring traditions, the female and the male, into a new unity (Saldívar-Hull 62).

As Saldívar-Hull states, the identity proposed is unified and plural. There is an “ambivalence” or a contradiction to this methodology of identifying the self, but in this contradiction is mestiza consciousness and a new way of thinking and opening a “third space.” Contradiction is crucial to understanding both mestiza consciousness and the New Chicana Heroine. Both contain contradictory elements that together form the “new.”

When I thought of the representations of mestiza consciousness, my first goal was to link Anzaldúa’s philosophy to the term. In the “New Chicana Heroine” terming, I understood that I

was working in a discourse founded by the “new.” The term “new,” in Anzaldúa’s theory of the new mestiza consciousness, is looking towards the future, with past and present carried over each shoulder. While the new consciousness opposes the previous hegemonic view of the mestiza, it is in the same instance raising the question of reaction versus action: “All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against” (Anzaldúa 100). The “New Chicana Heroine” is more than a reaction against previous representations of Chicanas; she is an action-- active process-- a symbol that is further transmitting the mestiza consciousness ideology. Since the New Mestiza, as Saldívar-Hull describes, “has her genesis in the bodies of grandmothers and mothers who literally forced survival from the earth” (63), so does the New Chicana Heroine carry with her the weight of revisiting her predecessors through reinterpreting her symbolic cultural mothers: La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona. This is a brave act for the work of mestiza consciousness, and embedding and disseminating a “tolerance for ambiguity” and a resistance of the Virgen/Putta dichotomy in mestiza representation is at the heart what the “New Chicana Heroine” does. This symbol for the New Mestiza has been present in Chicana feminist discourse for years. With Oscar Zeta Acosta’s chauvinistic view of sexualized, militant, women in his 1970 novel *Revolt of the Cockroach People* in mind, the need for an alternative representation of Chicanas was long overdue since the Chicano Nationalist Movement.

### **Chicana Feminism: A Borderlands Response to Chicano Nationalism**

The Chicano Movement was a revolutionary call for action and awareness during the 1960’s oppression of the U.S. Mexican population. Leaders like Cesar Chavez, Reis Tijerina Lopez, and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales set a foundation for Chicano liberation. F. Arturo Rosales writes,

Spurring the Chicano Movement was a perception that Mexicans living in the United States encountered repressive conditions that needed rectifications. Indeed, the *raison d'être* of the movement was the conviction that mainstream society was prejudiced against Mexicans because of cultural antipathy and because they were racially different (xix).

The Chicano Movement may have intended to seek civil rights for the U.S. population of Mexicans, but the women in the movement were excluded from this project of societal equality. Women were venerated as mothers and wives, but were offered little equality outside of these domains. Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s poem, “I Am Joaquin,” illustrates these central tenets of the Chicano Nationalist ideology. His poem represents a unified *raza*, and with its transmittance came another message. This message relegated the women in the Chicano Movement to the Virgen/Putra dichotomy. Gonzales’s poem was an anthem for the movement, and has the tone of a battle cry from a male warrior perspective (Rosales 180). The representation of women in the poem is limited to images of La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Llorona, mourning women, who cry and pray for sons that are lost. La Virgen was a powerful figure in the Chicano Movement and remains a dominant symbol of the Catholic Church and femininity in Mexican and Chicano culture. “I Am Joaquin” reinforces the symbol of La Llorona and religious devotion with the images of women it portrays.

I am in the eyes of woman,  
sheltered beneath  
her shawl of black,  
deep and sorrowful

eyes  
that bear the pain of sons long buried  
or dying,  
dead  
on the battlefield or on the barbed wire  
of social strife.  
Her rosary she prays and fingers  
endlessly  
like the family  
working down a row of beets  
to turn around  
and work  
and work.  
There is no end.  
Her eyes a mirror of all the warmth  
and all the love for me,  
and I am her  
and she is me (Gonzales 77-79).

In this image, one may read the mourning mother as La Virgen, crying for her recently crucified son. This is a dual representation of the suffering mother because it includes the image of La Llorona—one of Anzaldúa’s “three mothers”—who, as Anzaldúa remarks, has been used to “make us long suffering people” (53). Gonzales romanticizes these views of women, as the

poem assumes that the mother figure's suffering is partly endured because of her submission to and love for the men and family.

With the Chicana feminist movement, came a response to this proposal for "suffering" mothers and wives. Cherríe Moraga writes in her essay "Queer Aztlán," "What was wrong about Chicano Nationalism was its institutionalized heterosexism, its inbred machismo, and its lack of a cohesive national political strategy" (148-149). The "lack of a cohesive national political strategy" was partly due to its segregation of women in the movement. As the nationalist ideology of the Chicano familia became a systematic symbol of the unity of the raza, the feminine was overwhelmed by machismo. Angie Chabram-Dernersesian is critical of Chicano nationalist supporter Armando Rendón's *The Chicano Manifesto*, published in 1971. Chabram-Dernersesian states that the author, "reinforces dominant ideology by identifying 'machismo' as the symbolic principle of the Chicano revolt and adopting machismo as the guideline for Chicano family life" (167). This valuation of machismo perpetuates female subjugation within the Chicano culture, and condemns women who step out of socially accepted gender norms (Chabram-Dernersesian 167). Liberation from the dominant roles of mother/wife/mourner/whore was an outcry from the roots of the Chicana feminist discourse, questioning the hegemonic gendering of the Chicano Movement. Taking into consideration Margarita Cota-Cárdenas suggestion, Chabram-Dernersesian states, "...writing 'us' into the movement script meant more than substituting an A for an O at the end of Chican. We Chicanas had to create our own word, our own cosmos..." (171). New and alternative representations of Chicanas were necessary, so that Chicanas could start a discourse that did not reinforce gender subjugation (Chabram-Dernersesian 171).

Chabram-Dernersesian analyses the poem “La Loca de la Raza Cósmica”/”The Crazy Queen/Woman of La Raza Cósmica” by La Chrisx, as an example of the multiplicity in Chicana identity, expressed as a response to the unified nationalist male-dominated subjectivity in Gonzales’ “I Am Joaquin/Yo Soy Joaquin” (173). The poem honors the Chicana in everyday life, much like Yolanda López’s *Guadalupe Series*, which re-casts the image of La Virgen as the ordinary Chicana. Chicana artists and scholars re-interpreted the female figures in Chicano culture to unlearn the historical creation of female subjugation. Norma Alarcon writes of the challenges in re-writing “La Malinche/Malintzin,”

Malintzin’s history, her legend and subsequent mythic dimensions as evil goddess and creator of a new race—the mestizo race, embroils her in a family quarrel, where many male members often prefer to see her as the mother-whore, bearer of illegitimate children, responsible for the foreign Spanish invasion; and where female members attempt to restore balance in ways that are sometimes painfully ambivalent, and at other times attempt to topple the traditional patriarchal mythology through revision and re-vision (202).

In re-casting Malinche, La Virgen, and La Llorona, Chicanas have liberated these symbols from the Virgen/Putra dichotomy. The binary stations of femininity have been crossed and opened to questioning, revealing the third space—or Anzaldúa’s “third element,” that has resonated as a consciousness that spanned multiple generations and is in a continuous evolutionary movement throughout Chicana/o culture.

### **Mestiza Consciousness, Familia, y La Madre**

When I first began looking into Chicana feminist representation, what was plainly clear in the discourse was the relationship mestiza consciousness had with the Chicano/Mexicano



familia structure and “las tres madres<sup>1</sup>”-- La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona. Since the familia and las tres madres had such an influential role in Chicana/o culture, it is in considering Anzaldúa’s subjective experiences that they in turn have a presence in mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa writes about the mestiza’s experience in the Chicano/Mexicano culture, and how the familia value system has played a crucial role in subjugating Chicana identity: ”Much of what the culture condemns focuses on kinship relationships. The welfare of the family, the community, and the tribe is more important than the welfare of the individual. The individual exists first as kin—as sister, as father, as *padrino*<sup>2</sup>—and last as self” (40). Anzaldúa continues by describing how in the Chicano/Mexicano culture, “selfishness is condemned, especially in women...” and states that any “deviance” from the cultural standards is intolerable by its community members (40). For Anzaldúa, these standards and values begin with the family and the mother.

The influence of the Chicano familia is a presence that has continued to relegate females to subordinate roles, valorizing the patriarch and idealizing the role of the suffering mother/obedient wife. Richard T. Rodriguez describes la familia as being an organized structure that is bound in heterosexual politics, maintaining that the Chicano male is the head of the household (25-26). Rodriguez documents the historical formation of la familia as a way to promote cultural values and political practices during the Chicano movement, and argues that the male focused family politics have influenced both gender and sexuality within the Chicano culture (25-26). Anzaldúa writes in her second chapter of *Borderlands:La Frontera*, the stigma mestizas face in not adhering to the culturally accepted heterosexual gender practices. She fittingly calls this section “Fear of Going Home: Homophobia” stating, “For the lesbian of color,

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<sup>1</sup> Literally translated as “the three mothers” Anzaldúa calls them “our three mothers.”

<sup>2</sup> Godfather (my translation)

the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality” (41). For Chicanas, the patriarch grounded familia is a structure that has limited their identity, and further perpetuated the Virgen/Putra dichotomy. Anzaldúa says,

The culture expects women to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males...For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother (39).

Considering this statement, it is imperative to consider the role of the mother in the Chicano familia and with it the re-cast roles of las tres madres: La Virgen, La Malinche, and La Llorona. Anzaldúa has acknowledged the limitations of the female in the Chicano/Mexicano culture and the symbolic mothers have been used as oppressive tools to control the female identity.

In this thesis, I analyze representations of mestiza consciousness in works by Chicanas that exhibit the influence and presence of the Chicano familia as well as the role of the Chicana mother. This is to further explicate the formation of the New Chicana Heroine. I see the hegemonic values of la familia and motherhood as part of the larger dialogue of how Chicana scholars have expressed the need for alternative representations of females, thus applying mestiza consciousness to Chicana artistry and defining the New Chicana Heroine. The New Chicana Heroine is not “new,” just as Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness was not “new.” The New Chicana Heroine has been present, but undefined. By viewing the multiple representations of Chicanas, I argue that the New Chicana Heroine is an influential figure in Chicana/o cultural

production as this symbol opens a dialogue to link Chicana representation across genres and mediums.

I begin defining the elements of the New Chicana Heroine in my chapter, entitled “The New Chicana Heroine: Revisiting Our Grandmothers, Mothers, and Selves in Yolanda López’s *Portrait of the Artist* and Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek,” as I examine the New Chicana Heroine through generational representation in Chicana feminist literature and artwork. This is to illustrate the construction of the Chicana gender role within the Chicano/Mexicano culture and analyze how this role has changed temporally. I examine the generational representation of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters through the work of Yolanda López’s *Guadalupe Triptych* and Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek.” I parallel the artwork and short story, so that a comparison of how mestiza consciousness is represented in both can be evaluated, so to set a general understanding of the space the New Chicana Heroine occupies in Chicana/o cultural productions. It is important to view these females in temporal terms in order to explain how mestiza consciousness is ever changing—constantly shifting through generations, and how Chicana cultural history has influenced the female’s role. If Chicano cultural traditions and values are passed down through females, then it is important to acknowledge the woman’s influence on the generations that follow. Since mestiza consciousness is an ideological framework based on plural subjectivity, so is the New Chicana Heroine. This chapter introduces the influence of the Chicano/Mexican familia value system, which I further analyze in the following chapter.

In my next chapter, I examine Cherríe Moraga’s play *Shadow of a Man* and Patricia Cardoso’s film *Real Women Have Curves*, in order to analyze the influence of the Chicano familia value system on mestiza identity and how alternative representations of the familia bring

to light the cultural hegemony in the Virgen/Putra dichotomy. I argue that Moraga's play and Cardoso's film both present and resist the Chicano nationalist ideology of la familia and its relegated female roles through a male-focused stratified familial structure. Both play and film display complex views of Chicanas that represent mestiza consciousness and are examples of New Chicana Heroines. I focus on the females of the play and film and argue that while the mothers align with nationalist ideology and the traditional Chicano/Mexicano familia values, including its expectations of women, the daughters exhibit awareness to the cultural hegemony with the Chicano/Mexicano community. I examine the relationship between the mothers and daughters in both the play and film, in order to connect the New Chicana Heroine as a resistant representation to the dominant familia ideology. I also discuss "comadrizago—an alternative to the nationalist familia, defined by female solidarity, and link this alternative familia to the ongoing identification and production of the New Chicana Heroine, through mestiza consciousness representation.

Building from the focus of my previous chapter, on the subordinated female roles in the Chicano familia, in my last chapter, I analyze Moraga's play *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* and Claudia Medina's short film *Finding Llorona* in terms of the role of motherhood and the cultural subjugation of female sexuality through the Chicano/Mexicano folkloric legend of La Llorona. In her play, Moraga has re-written La Llorona's sexuality as a lesbian. Medea, the Llorona figure in the play, is a lesbian mother, living in a fictional borderland, outcast from dominant Chicano society. Moraga's play explores the influence of La Llorona's legend by re-casting her sexuality to undermine the male authority. I argue that by re-casting the popular figure, Llorona's, sexuality, Moraga has added motherhood to the presence of the New Chicana Heroine in Chicana representation. I also examine Claudia Medina's short film *Finding Llorona*

and compare the film to Moraga's play *Medea*. Medina has also re-cast Llorona's sexuality and I argue that the writer/director has done this in order to display the important influence of the Chicana symbol of motherhood. In this chapter, I also illustrate how Chicana sexuality has been re-cast in order to write in alternative sexualities through an analysis of Alma Lopez's *Lupe & Sirena in Love* and Laura Aguilar's *Three Eagles Flying*. I discuss the theoretical concept of "Queering" in Alicia Arrizon's book, *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance*, and apply gender studies, queer studies, and a Chicana feminist framework to describe the implications of "Queering" la tres madres—specifically La Llorona, on the representation of plurality within Chicana identity.

In my afterward, I discuss how the New Chicana Heroine will bridge the space between Chicana/o cultural representation and the classroom, where often times it has been neglected. Scholarship between genres and mediums require a unified language. The New Chicana Heroine terms the representation of mestiza consciousness scholars have discussed at length in their application of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* theories. I discuss the importance of the inclusion of Chicana/o cultural representation in the classroom, not only in colleges and universities, but in primary and secondary education as well.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NEW CHICANA HEROINE: REVISITING OUR GRANDMOTHERS, MOTHERS, AND SELVES IN YOLANDA LÓPEZ'S *PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST* AND SANDRA CISNEROS'S "WOMAN HOLLERING CREEK"

"The struggle of the *mestiza* is about all a feminist one."-- Gloria Anzaldúa,  
*Borderlands: La Frontera*, (106)

Gloria Anzaldúa describes in her book, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, a *mestiza* who frontiers a "new consciousness." This consciousness she speaks of can be described as a multiplicity of identity that is gained and created by Chicanas, who in their attempt to cope with contradictory cultural ideologies, have birthed a "third element"-- a new *mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldúa 101-102). Chicana artists, writers, and filmmakers have for years portrayed *mestiza* consciousness in their work. This representation of *mestiza* consciousness I see as a trope in Chicana cultural studies and production. Chicana artist Yolanda López's *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1978) embodies the spirit and representation of the consciousness Anzaldúa describes. This self-portrait portrays the artist running towards the spectator, her face and body are androgynous, she is smiling joyously, clutching a serpent in her right hand, and the star burst blue cloak of the *Virgen of Guadalupe* in the other. The spectator's gaze is drawn foremost to two immediately powerful images in the portrait: first, the overwhelming look of joy and confidence on the runner's face, and second, the runner's muscular legs leading forward. The runner is one portrait in the artist's, *Guadalupe Triptych*, in which López re-creates the venerated Catholic icon, *La Virgen*, in an attempt to honor the "ordinary" women in her life, her

grandmother, mother, and self (Davalos 86). In this homage to the “ordinary” Chicana, we can see a transitional identity through generations of Mexican American women, a constant changing and motion towards a Chicana identity that mirrors Anzaldúa’s “mestiza consciousness.” This embodiment and representation of Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness is what I term the “New Chicana Heroine.”

This transition and unveiling of a New Chicana Heroine is also evident in Sandra Cisneros’ short story, “Woman Hollering Creek,” where a young Mexican bride comes to the United States with her new husband, searching for a life that reflects the extravagance of her favorite Mexican *telenovelas*. In this chapter, I read Cisneros’ short story and López’s artwork together, in order to illustrate the artist’s and writer’s attempts to re-evaluate and re-design the popular representations of Chicana womanhood. For López, she is re-envisioning La Virgen, and for Cisneros, she is re-defining a legendary and notorious figure in the Mexicano/Chicano community: La Llorona, the woman who eternally cries for her dead children. Both author and artist are re-evaluating the cultural gender norms and produce representations of plurality in Chicana identity, undermining the Virgen/Putas dichotomy. Karen Mary Davalos notes how López’s *Guadalupe* triptych series does not intend to “romanticize” the women of her *Guadalupe* portraits and instead intends to “emphasize their human dignity” (9). López’s art counters the “romanticized” images of womanhood through the visual, and this move is analogous to Cisneros’ literary and textual reconfigurations of the cultural symbols of Chicana womanhood, particularly La Llorona. Both artist and author transform these central symbols of womanhood into something no longer static, but into creative dynamic forces in the discourse of Chicana femininity. By reading Cisneros’ characters from “Woman Hollering Creek” alongside López’s *Guadalupe* triptych, we can understand how the prevalent cultural themes of death,

sexuality, American mythology, and the struggles of the working class have defined Chicana womanhood through generations. Davalos views these themes in her analyses of López's portraits as significant visual representations, linking the themes of death and sexuality to the portrait of López's grandmother, *Victoria F. Franco*, and the themes of American mythology and working class issues to the portrait of the artist's mother, *Margaret F. Stewart*. Anzaldúa's chapter "Entering into the Serpent" invokes the themes of death and sexuality through her use of language, metaphorical and mythological references to the Aztec Snake Woman (Cihuacoatl), and description of the suppressed Chicana sexuality. In her chapter, "The Coatlicue State," Anzaldúa describes a "way station" of suffering for Chicanas, including the struggles of the working-class on Chicana identity. I align "The Coatlicue State" with the themes of American mythology and working-class issues, as I argue that the representation of Chicanas in the workforce has also constructed Chicana identity. These are powerful themes in the Chicano culture that have assisted in binding Chicana identity into the Virgen/Putra (whore) dichotomy. López and Cisneros ultimately reveal the conflicts of identity and culture through their female representations, including Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness through their New Chicana Heroines.

Cisneros' and López's reconfiguration of cultural symbols of Chicana womanhood parallel Anzaldúa's reformulations of Chicana identity that are central to her "new mestiza consciousness" framework. Davalos states,

The reformulations of Guadalupan iconography can be read as the "new mestiza consciousness" that Anzaldúa later writes about in her exploration of Chicana subjectivity. It is an image that requires a polyvalent meaning, gliding between



feminine sanctity, working-class empowerment, sexual freedom, and Chicana activist inspiration (86).

As Davalos points out, Anzaldúa's "new mestiza consciousness" synthesizes the intentions López had in re-designing Guadalupan icons. López's images are based on her personal history as a Chicana, while Cisneros' short story is based on the narrative history of La Llorona. In both of their works, Chicana subjectivity is the necessary catalyst for the next turn of consciousness that Anzaldúa theorizes.

### **The Politics of Narrative and the Form of La Llorona**

Considering the insurmountable power of symbols, Cisneros and López are both suggesting more than alternatives to the constructs of femaleness, they are arguing against the cultural hegemony within the Chicano/Mexicano culture that has continued to relegate Chicana identity to the Virgen/Putta dichotomy. Their New Chicana Heroines resist the socially accepted gender roles in the Chicano community and provide a proposal for an alternative to the dominant male centered discourse in the culture. Cisneros's hollering heroines are necessary to compel social change in the Chicana/o community. In "Woman Hollering Creek" Cisneros uses the popular La Llorona narrative as a device to invoke "Chicana subjectivity". Both Cisneros and López re-create popular Chicano icons to make these alternative representations of femininity accessible to Chicanas. In this way, we may understand why the legend of La Llorona was essential for Cisneros to re-write.

The legend has multiple purposes in society, as it is used as an instrument of control in the community. In her book, *Feminism on the Border*, Sonia Saldívar-Hull notes the regular form in which the story of La Llorona is told in her native city, Brownsville, Texas. Her recollection of the story involved "the weeping woman" appearing to men who were guilty of the desire to

commit infidelity in their marriages, and after seeing La Llorona the men would die from *susto*<sup>3</sup> (120). La Llorona's history, according to Saldívar-Hull, is told after a recounting of an "actual" encounter with La Llorona by the narrator (119-120). According to Norma Alarcon and Sandra Messinger-Cypess, the history of La Llorona is often linked with that of La Malinche, and used to portray the woman and mother as betrayer to her people (Messinger-Cypess 20). What is important to recognize with the history and ritualized practice of re-telling the La Llorona legend is its implications of warning and social control for not only disloyal men, but disobedient children and wandering women as well. The "actual" encounter with La Llorona varies in correspondence with the targeted subject of control. When the encounter deals with young disobedient children who play too close to the many canals of the Rio Grande Valley and La Llorona takes them away, the message is clear: Children, you must obey your parents and stay close to home. This is why Cisneros chose to re-design La Llorona's narrative: beyond her own story of sexual betrayal by her lover and the resulting death of her children, Llorona has become a practical symbol in culture that is used in new narratives or encounters. By re-casting La Llorona's legend, Cisneros is commenting on the power of narrative and the power of new encounters.

If we consider La Virgen de Guadalupe as legend as well, the similarities between the narrative encounters of La Llorona and the images of La Virgen appearing to the devout are very much analogous. These Virgen appearances serve several purposes ranging from warning messages to confirmations of faith for those who claim these encounters. López's portraits allow these Guadalupe images to be experienced by anyone, no longer only the devout, ascetic, or

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<sup>3</sup> *Susto* or fear (my translation) is a folk ailment in Mexican/Chicano culture, which happens after a person is severely scared. This ailment is said to cause an array of symptoms, and can result in death.

conservative. The experience of the encounter with the symbol becomes accessible and demystifies the legend. Through this process, Cisneros and López have created new symbols which are accessible and representative of real individual women. It is when we parallel Cisneros's and López's representations of Chicanas that their exacting insight and influence on the Chicano culture can be appreciated.

### **Death and Sexuality**

The characters of Dolores and Soledad (translated literally as pain and solitude) in Cisneros's "Woman Hollering Creek" are the protagonist's, Cleofilas', only companions after her marriage and move to Seguin, Texas. These women are Cleofilas' neighbors, in close proximity to both her and the creek, and signify the generation of her grandmother. These are women who have lived most of their lives in the conventions of domesticity. López's portrait of her grandmother, Victoria F. Franco, from her Guadalupe series can be read alongside the characters Dolores and Soledad from Cisneros' short story.

When read and viewed together, *Victoria F. Franco* becomes a visual model of the generation of Chicanas that Cisneros seeks to portray through her characters. These women's identities are defined through their relationships with their husbands and sons, even after these men have died or abandoned them. The criticism Cisneros intends on the conventions of the patriarchal familial structure are through the oppressed identities of these women, who remain alone after these structures fall apart. The seemingly contrasting themes of death and sexuality are signified through the characters Dolores, Soledad, and López's *Guadalupe: Victoria F. Franco* portrait. Death and sexuality are related through the limitations of the Chicana gender role in the common Chicano family arrangement.



Figure 1: *Guadalupe:Victoria F. Franco*, Yolanda M. López, Guadalupe series, 1978.

For Soledad, the issues of death and sexuality are interlinked, as her own identification with sexuality met its death with the symbolic “death” of her marriage. Cleofilas relates the history of Soledad’s solitude:

The neighbor lady Soledad liked to call herself a widow, though how she came to be one was a mystery. Her husband had either died, or run away with an ice-house floozie, or simply gone out for cigarettes one afternoon and never came back. It was hard to say which since Soledad, as a rule, didn’t mention him (46).

Her identification as a “widow” binds her to the institution of marriage, the consuming shadow of her once husband, and death. The choice of calling herself a “widow” versus a single woman or a rejected woman is evidence of the cultural standards Chicanas must adhere to in order to remain in good standing or in La Virgen’s image. Soledad’s sexuality is inactive as a “widow”.

The death of her marriage has not released Soledad into a different consciousness, only transferred her oppressed role into another in the same regards. Soledad represents a generation of women whose identities were stifled and formed by hegemonic attitudes, and now are forced into solitude as they can see no other way of living after the death of their familial structures.

Dolores, like Soledad, exists in these terms as her history resonates as her namesake:

In the other house lived la senora, Dolores, very kind and very sweet, but her house smelled too much of incense and candles from the altars that burned continuously in memory of two sons who had died in the last war and one husband who had died shortly after from grief. The neighbor lady Dolores divided her time between these men and her garden... (47).

Dolores's identity is integrated with the death of her sons and husband. She is the symbol of the grieving mother and wife, still fully devoted to the memory of the dead, and still living in the space of these men's memories. Dolores and Soledad are entirely defined by what has betrayed them-- the Chicano patriarch. If these women could not exist on their own terms, then they may only exist as the ghosts of their lives with their husbands.

The generation of Dolores and Soledad can be visualized through López's portrait of her own grandmother, Victoria F. Franco, as Guadalupe. The position of Franco's body and her expression are marks signifying the "inactive" role of her generation. The elderly woman is seated with her body facing sideways and head forward in a stoic glance. In terms of sexuality, her body is not positioned towards the viewer, but away and forced into a pose of proper poise for portraiture. Her body is controlled by the expected posture of the genre of a portrait, in the same way her sexuality was and is controlled by the expectations of the Chicano ideology. Her

feet are firmly planted on a wooden floor, signifying her place in the domestic space as she is seated on the star-studded cape, indicative of La Virgen de Guadalupe.

Death and sexuality are unified through the elderly woman's grip on the recently flayed snake and knife. The snake has various meanings, one being associated with Meso-American indigenism and the cyclical sequence of life and death (Davalos 93). If Franco holds the lifeless snake because she accepts and anticipates death, then dually she must accept and anticipate the death of her sexual identity. The knife in Franco's other hand is evidence of a forced control. Like Soledad's claim to be a "widow" in order to remain in La Virgen's image, the knife was used to flay the snake (sexuality) and in turn creativity. Franco's manner of control is not truly hers, but that of the expectations she must adhere to. The representation of Franco, like Soledad, is a woman in solitude, plainly seated on the symbolic Guadalupe cape to show her identity as a creation of the history of Chicano dominated womanhood.

Behind Franco, we see a cherub with his eyes downcast in a manner reminiscent of mourning, and holding above him a crown of roses. The roses may be aligned with death as Dolores would leave freshly picked flowers at her husband's and sons' graves. In "Woman Hollering Creek," Cleofilas classifies the roses scent as "sad" and a reminder of the dead (Cisneros 47). Dolores's flowers are described as "bleeding a thick menstrual color" (Cisneros 47), signifying the unity of sexuality and death. In López's painting, the roses the cherub holds behind Franco match a bright red color of sexuality.

For the representatives of this particular generation of Chicana femininity, the unified themes of death and sexuality point towards a patriarchal controlled identity manifest in the Virgen/Putta dichotomy. Through Cisneros's and López's portrayals of womanhood, the

oppressive nature of Chicano symbolism can be relegated to the past and the transition towards a different consciousness begins to take shape for Chicanas and Chicana symbolism.

### **American Mythologies and the Working Class**

American dogma insists an unfulfilled promise to the population of immigrants who search for opportunities in a country outside of their native home. This promise is romanticized and mythologized through popular media and culture. Cisneros critiques these “American mythologies” in her short story through her protagonist Cleofilas. The naïve young bride crossed the border with her husband, expecting a home--a place of stability, where the promise of happiness seemingly loomed through American myth. Through Cleofilas we can examine the entrapment and oppressive nature of the “American dream” and how this mythology has contributed to the formation of the Chicana gender role for Cisneros.

Cisneros’s criticism of this method of oppression is not without a proposal for transcendence into an alternative consciousness. Graciela (literally grace) is a savior for Cleofilas, as she acts as a bridge between the imprisonment of an abusive husband and the return to a place of familiarity and safety. In Cisneros’ story, Graciela serves as a representation of Anzaldúa’s “Coatlicue State”, as she exists in a space that comes before “crossing” into the mestiza consciousness form and philosophy. Anzaldúa regards the influence of American mythology on the working class in her chapter concerning the “Coatlicue State” from *Borderlands: La Frontera*,

Now she beats herself over the head for her “inactivity”, a stage that is as necessary as breathing. But that means being Mexican. All her life she’s been told that Mexicans are lazy. She has had to work twice as hard as others to meet

the standards of the dominant culture which have, in part, become her standards  
(71).

With López's portrait of her own mother, Margaret F. Stewart, serving as a model for this middle transition towards mestiza consciousness and example of the New Chicana Heroine, both Cleofilas and Graciela will be aligned with the portrait in order to examine how the issues of American mythology and the struggles of the working class have oppressive and formative power over Chicana identity. Chicanas entering the workforce did not experience liberation from the domestic sphere, but a similar entrapment in the workplace. Mexican immigrants crossing the border for the promise of opportunity and equality also found themselves in similar if not worse situations in the United States without the support of their families.

As Cleofilas serves as the protagonist for Cisneros's story of transitional consciousnesses towards alternative womanhoods, the question arises: Why would Cisneros choose to tell Cleofilas' story? Why not Graciela's or perhaps even more appropriately, Felice's? Why must she propose a New Chicana Heroine through the eyes of the victimized Cleofilas? Cleofilas' narrative must be told because her character represents both the position of the Chicana in society and the position of the representation of Chicanas in literature. Both are isolated, trapped, and destined to immobility unless action is taken to cross these women and "heroines" into a space where they may exist on their own terms. Cleofilas is in a state prior to the "Coatlicue State," she is beginning to recognize the promise of the American dream as a pervasive mendacity that has designated her to live in a state between "pain" (Dolores) and "solitude" (Soledad).



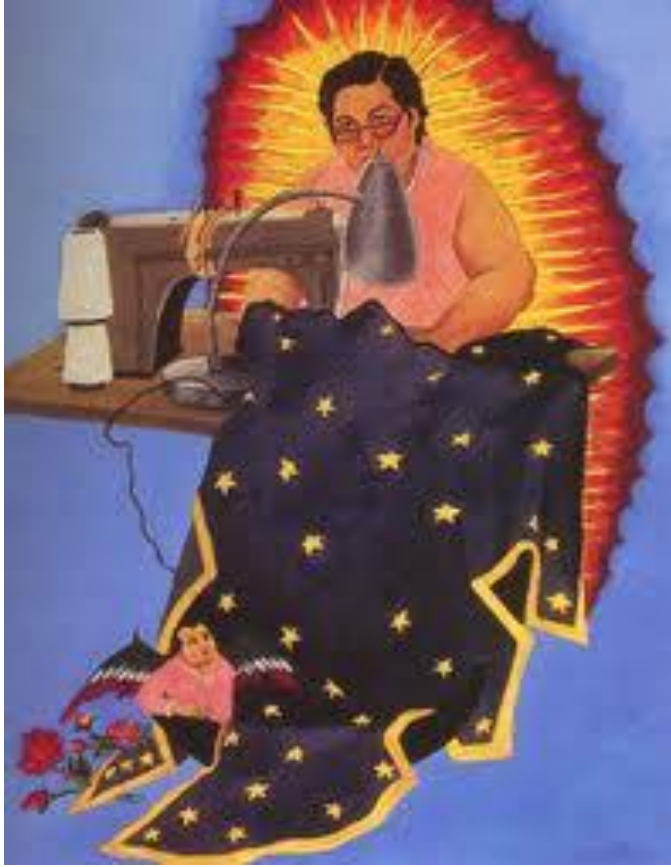


Figure 2: Margaret F. Stewart:  
*Our Lady of Guadalupe*,  
Yolanda M. López,  
Guadalune series. 1978.

With the promise of the American dream is also the promise of Chicana entrapment stemming from the patriarchal familial structure. Cisneros expands her critique to not only castigate American culture, but Mexican culture as well. The author finds the *telenovelas* and *fotonovelas* of Mexican popular culture culpable for misleading Cleofilas to believe in an idealistic and unrealistic form of romantic love and marriage (Saldívar-Hull 108-109). Cisneros dually blames and scrutinizes the influence of the “heroines” of these Mexican entertainment medias and in the same way she is breaking away from representation of Chicanas/Mexicanas in literature. By presenting Cleofilas as a heroine that becomes aware of the false representations of women in her favorite *telenovelas* and *fotonovelas*, Cleofilas now characterizes a woman who has entered Anzaldúa’s “Coatlicue State”—a necessary step to eventually reach the “new mestiza consciousness” and become the New Chicana Heroine.

Cleofilas is facing what I term as the “Llorona state”, as her husband’s infidelities, abusive tendencies, and her overwhelming isolation are stifling any opportunity of creating identity outside of Chicano patriarchy. The Llorona state can be described as stagnation in position, where a woman is in a constant, unmoving state of suffering. Cleofilas can only resist an inured existence through a new awareness of the misleading nature of the representations of womanhood. Cleofilas’ method of escape came through her confession to Graciela, a woman working at her doctor’s office. In order to avoid the Llorona state, Cleofilas turned to another woman with her story. Graciela works as a bridge to the new consciousness-- she cannot take Cleofilas to it, but can show her to someone who has already crossed.

Graciela represents a woman outside of the domestic sphere in “Woman Hollering Creek.” We only know the character through her dialogue with Felice, who Cisneros will later fully introduce. Graciela is representative of the transition through the “Coatlicue State” because of her experience as a working-class Chicana and awareness of the oppressive nature of both American and Mexican conventions. In terms of a borderland consciousness, Graciela is ready to cross, but unable to due to the oppressive nature of American mythology as evident in her conversation with Felice, “Felice? It’s me, Graciela. No, I can’t talk louder. I’m at work” (Cisneros 54). For Cisneros, Graciela represents the difficulties the working-class must struggle against to have a voice in society. Graciela’s hushed plea to Felice may not be a “holler”, but it transcends the “weeping” of the generations before her.

Graciela also recognizes the dilemma of victimized women in the United States. With no immediate family or friends for Cleofilas to turn to, Graciela takes action. She facilitates the meeting between Cleofilas and Felice, and distinguishes the need to venerate real and actual women in society, versus the saints and predominant icons of Chicana womanhood: “Oh, and her

name is Cleofilas. I don't know. One of those Mexican saints, I guess. A martyr or something" (Cisneros 54). The venerated martyr, the woman who suffers, these are the icons that Chicanas have to model their identities after and name their children for. Since Graciela's dialogue suggests she is unfamiliar with Mexican saints, Graciela's own individuality as a non-religious Chicana represents the complexity of Chicana identity and representation. As Felice agrees to take Cleofilas to the bus station, Graciela says, "When her kid's born she'll have to name her after us, right?" (Cisneros 55) Graciela calls for the working-class, every day woman to become the new icons or "heroines" to be respected and admired. This is how Cisneros has directly alerted the Chicana community of the dismissal and neglect of the dignity of actual women.

López's *Margaret F. Stewart: Our Lady of Guadalupe* portrait amalgamates the falsity of American mythology and the struggles of the working-class. Using the artwork as a visual representation of these concepts and their effect on the transitional identity towards the New Chicana Heroine will illustrate how Cisneros's characters are in movement, ready to cross into mestiza consciousness. In the portrait, Margaret F. Stewart is seated behind a sewing workstation, nearly entirely covered by her trade tools and the Guadalupe cape. The sewing station can be read as a dual representation of the domestic expectations of the Chicana and the Chicana working-class. In these readings, the sewing station aligns with American mythologies due to its implications of the conventional familial form and the prospect of working to achieve the "American dream." Although López's mother is "at work" in the portrait she is still an example of the "immobility" of the Chicana gender role. Betty LaDuke notes in her essay on López's art, the "tired and bespectacled" mother as an honored "ordinary woman" (120). This reading can mislead or limit the viewer from the implied immobility of the image by the cape profusely covering and hindering the mother's legs and feet inactive. While López intends to

honor the everyday woman, she also is drawing attention to the problematic structure of American society and the labor industry.

The star-spangled cape immobilizes Margaret F. Stewart and also conceals a portion of the workstation. The viewer cannot see what is structurally holding up the sewing station. This leaves the viewer to speculate where the station obtains its stability and signifies the importance and potential strength of the working-class, as they are the foundation of this economic structure. As the sewing station is also indicative of domesticity, the same reading may be applied to the household structure, implying a hidden strength in the arduous domestic responsibilities. The weary eyes of Stewart tell the story of personal struggle and physical endurance, while the portrait provides an alternative representation of the female body image. López presents the conventions of the domestic sphere and the duties of the labor industry to outweigh the individual Chicana sexuality as the serpent is wound and pinned tightly around the sewing machine. The cherub, indicative of Mexico with its green, white, and red wings (LaDuke 120), watches Stewart work with an apathetic gaze as he rests his head on one arm.

I compare the character Cleofilas from “Woman Hollering Creek” with the Stewart portrait in their portrayals and criticisms of American mythologies and the strenuous labor of maintaining the household. Cleofilas struggles with her domestic responsibilities as the labor becomes tiresome and unappreciated, “She has to remind herself why she loves him when she changes the baby’s Pampers, or when she mops the bathroom floor, or tries to make the curtains for the doorways without doors, or whiten the linen” (Cisneros 49). I also compare Graciela and Stewart as they are both representations of the working-class Chicana. While they are examples of women living outside of the domestic conventions of the “housewife,” they are still subjected to the oppressive treatment of the labor industry. However, Graciela and Stewart also point

towards the “Coatlicue State” in their positions in society, as Graciela actively insists on helping Cleofilas, and Stewart displays an alternative body image and projection of the working-class struggle. The Chicana representations of Cleofilas, Graciela, and Lopez’s *Margaret F. Stewart: Our Lady of Guadalupe* portrait are essential in understanding the transition in the New Chicana Heroine which I am proposing. Considering these transitions towards Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness to influence Cisneros’s alternative representation of Chicana womanhood, and López’s self-portrait are definitive elements in the New Chicana Heroine identification.

### **The New Chicana Heroine: A Non-Binary Resolve**

Cisneros’ and López’s representations and proposals for different types of Chicana womanhood exist in the development of the New Chicana Heroine. This heroine serves as a new symbol for Chicanas, as the author and artist both reclaim and transform the Virgen/Putal/Llorona archetypes into a womanhood that traverses the gender/race/class borders and enters into Anzaldúa’s new mestiza consciousness. This New Chicana Heroine extends beyond Anzaldúa’s consciousness as the embodiment of Anzaldúa’s philosophy which serves a purpose in her literary form as a new archetype for female representation. Cisneros, like López, recognizes the power of symbols in Chicana/o culture. I will read Cisneros’s character, Felice, and Yolanda López’s self-portrait as New Chicana Heroines. I will examine and compare Felice’s individual self-confidence, use of language, ambiguous sexuality, and commitment to “hollering” with the visual model of a New Chicana Heroine in Yolanda M. López’s *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgen of Guadalupe*.

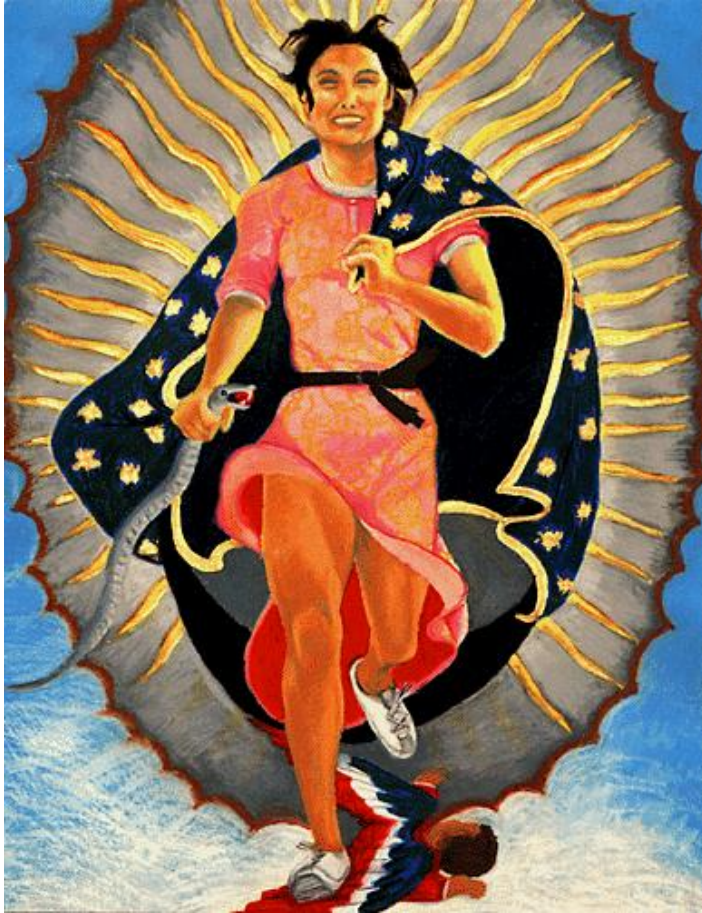


Figure 3: *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe*, Yolanda M. López, Guadalupe series, 1978.

Felice is the woman who will take Cleofilas across Woman Hollering Creek to the bus station in San Antonio, away from the abuse of her husband and isolation from the community, into another man’s arms-- her father’s. Her character is first distinguished as the “woman in the pickup” (55). Cleofilas initial question is if the pick-up belongs to Felice’s husband. But Felice is unmarried, as she tells Cleofilas that she has no husband. The ambiguity of Felice’s sexuality and relationship status is left for the reader to consider: Is Felice single? Divorced? Dating, but not married? Dating a woman? Married to a woman? Divorced from a woman? Felice’s statement suggests she is not “married” in the traditional sense, and what her individual situation may be is left ambiguous to emphasize Felice’s complex and unconventional identity.

Cleofilas is stunned by Felice's ownership of the pick-up, as she herself does not own a vehicle, nevertheless a vehicle that insinuates masculinity. However, what is more critical to understand than Felice's ownership of material property is that Felice chose this property, "The pickup was hers. She herself had chosen it. She herself was paying for it" (55). Felice makes her own choices, and her decisions are her's alone. Felice's property also indicates that, like Graciela, she is a working-class Chicana since she pays for her own car. She has transitioned from the oppressive models of womanhood into the New Chicana Heroine, a woman who represents Chicana liberation from binary conventions of gender and enters into the "third space" Anzaldúa describes in *Borderlands*.

Felice recognizes the expectations of Chicana female-ness in the generations that preceded her in her comment, "I used to have a Pontiac Sunbird. But those cars are for *viejas*. Pussy cars. Now this here is a *real* car"(55). The car is not a real car because it symbolizes the masculine. The pick-up is a "real car" because Felice chose it as her car. Felice's identity is real and actual because she created it on her own terms. She was not manipulated and limited by the dominant male-centered ideologies.

Cisneros distinguishes the Virgen model for Chicana womanhood through the name of the creek: "Did you ever notice, Felice continued, how nothing around here is named after a woman? Really. Unless she's the Virgin. I guess you're only famous if you're a virgin" (55). Felice's observation of the lack of female veneration, besides that of Guadalupe, comes directly after she "hollers" as she crosses Cleofilas and her son over Woman Hollering Creek. Felice hollers to pay homage to the female-named arroyo and poses a central question to the general community: Where are the women? Why are they not represented? And why must Chicanas be held to standards that exist to control and limit them? Cisneros poses these questions to her

readers through Felice. Will Felice's or Graciela's compassion be as honored as that of La Virgen? Felice's perspective on the consistent dismissal of the alternative representations of Chicana womanhood in the culture is indicative of the need and importance in regarding a New Chicana Heroine for the Chicana community. As a "hollering" woman, Felice is a New Chicana Heroine. The "holler" is ambiguous because Cleofilas cannot distinguish it from "pain or rage" (56). The reader is left to assume that Felice hollers as homage to the women in the community who have escaped the Virgen/Putta dichotomy. Felice can holler due to her self-confidence, as she is a model of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness. Felice is living in her name, in a state of happiness, in her own space and identity.

López's self-portrait is a representation of the New Chicana Heroine through visual symbolism. López's image is like Felice in her expression of happiness and self-confidence. López is smiling, her body tall and proud with the Guadalupe cape clutched in her hand as it waves behind her. Laura E. Perez analyzes the hybrid "superheroine" and Guadalupe imagery, as this combination is used to display "the Virgin's superhuman ability to crush evil..." (280). López's cape is reminiscent of the "superheroine" attire in comic books and television. López is literally turning herself into the symbol of the heroine as she carries the cape behind her. The cape is also symbolic of the artist's family history and the arrangement of the Chicano familia. Her history may follow her, but it does not overshadow or engulf her: her image is indicative of the present and future.

López positions her image forward, facing the viewer, acting as a mirror for the Chicana spectator. Chicanas have the ability to see themselves in the artist's image as the image is actively calling to the viewer through a running motion. The woman in the portrait is active, not sedentary like the portraits of Stewart and Franco. Her activity is running towards an alternative



consciousness for Chicanas, into the mestiza consciousness Anzaldúa describes, and she becomes a visual symbol for the New Chicana Heroine.

In the portrait, López holds a live snake, the symbol of creativity and sexuality, as she displays her powerful legs under a shirt-dress. The choice of portraying herself in a dress versus pants or shorts symbolizes the intent to re-cast the accepted attire of the female. This New Chicana Heroine is a woman who creates her own identity. If she wants to run in a dress, she will run in a dress, muscular legs proudly showcased as she hurdles over the cherub. López has re-configured the gendered dress into attire that represents activity and motion.

The New Chicana Heroine is in constant motion; her symbol is a process of evolution, where the complexity of identity can be represented through cultural productions. The New Chicana Heroine cannot become a stagnant symbol of womanhood, or else the symbol will no longer exist beyond the Virgen/Putta dichotomy, but become embedded with it through a fractured definition of her identity. The generational transitions of the Chicana gender role have led to the development of Cisneros' and López's new heroine for Chicanas. "Woman Hollering Creek" may be situated in the discourse of Chicana feminism due to the author's realistic representations of women as López's *Guadalupe* triptych serves as a model for these actual generations of women. Both author and artist's New Chicana Heroines will serve as proposal for Chicana womanhood, as the work's social and cultural criticism recognizes the oppressive history of Chicanas. For Chicanas, this new symbol will initiate conversation and revolution, leading "towards a new consciousness" (Anzaldúa 99).

### CHAPTER III

#### CHICANA LOVE: THE NEW CHICANA HEROINE CROSSES INTO THE FAMILIA BORDERLINES IN CHERRÍE MORAGA'S *SHADOW OF A MAN* AND PATRICIA CARDOSO'S *REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES*

“Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them.”-- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 38

When I look collectively at the literature, art, film, and culture that transmit Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness, what I notice to be a central theme throughout Chicano/a cultural representation is la familia. This is evident in the previous chapter in my analysis of Yolanda López's *Guadalupe Triptych* and Sandra Cisneros' “Woman Hollering Creek.” In this chapter, I will build from this analysis of the transitional roles of women from generation to generation, and focus on the influence of the Chicano familia structure on Chicana identity. The Chicano familia is a theme in Chicana studies that is often represented and questioned by scholars, as the male-centered familia structure has often been re-structured to show the importance and influence of the female in transmitting mestizo/a culture and values.

The relationships with our families are instrumental in determining how our identities will be formed. For Chicanas, love and family are intertwined, and the identifiable qualities of heterosexual “love” and parental (especially motherly) “love” are viewed, experienced, and expressed as dominate cultural norms. This, however, may mask many underlying social and gender issues in the Chicano family structure. The Chicana feminine identity has been deeply formed through a forced positioning in the Chicano nationalist ideology of the familia by

dominant Chicano/Mexicano culture. This familia ideology can be seen in the artwork of East Los Streetscapers, specifically in the mural entitled, “La Familia” from *Chicano Time Trip* produced in 1977 (See Figure). The mural portrays a Mexican American family consisting of a father, mother, daughter, and son. The father is the focus of the mural as he has his arms wrapped around his family, and his body language indicates cultural and gender dominance and pride. The mother and daughter cling to the arms of the father, while the son modestly acknowledges his mother’s touch on his shoulder. Richard Rodríguez notes that this image, like many others portraying the nuclear Chicano family, propagates a message that delimits the acceptable family structure to only heterosexual coupling and reproduction (41). As Rodríguez states, “...Chicanas are always bound up in male codes of identification, so that even if they are duly included in the family picture (Chinas) or nation (Rendon), they must appear alongside their man, prove that they are (heterosexual) mothers, and in turn let the men take charge” (45). For Chicanas, the familia has continued to reinforce the Virgen/Putra dichotomy that Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness intends to disrupt.



Figure 4: “La Familia,” from *Chicano Time Trip*, 1977 by East Los Streetscapers, mural

“La familia”, as a social construct, has occupied the space in Chicano nationalism as a cultural and political resistance to Western oppression. Rosalinda Fregoso analyzes in her essay “The Chicano Familia Romance,” the 1995 Gregory Nava film *My Family* as supporting Chicano nationalist “familia” ideology. Her analysis discusses the role of Catholicism and the subjugation of female identity within the familia structure. Fregoso writes about the intentions of the “familia” ideology:

Early movement activists thus envisioned la familia in both political and cultural terms, as an indispensable support system capable not only of meeting the needs of its members but also of sheltering them from the violence, exploitations, racism, and abuse perpetrated in the external public sphere of the Anglo capitalist world (73).

However, Fregoso also argues that such highly idealized notions of la familia do not represent many actual Chicana/o familial structures. The outcome is that the familia discourse marginalizes non-heterosexual, extended, and blended families, perpetuating the Western patriarchal notions of family identity—the very same ideologies it intended to resist and depart from.

In this chapter, I will consider Chicana gender identity and how it has been formed and bounded by the familia cultural and political ideology, and how this has been a theme in the representation of mestiza consciousness or the New Chicana Heroine by Chicana authors and artists. Fregoso notes in her chapter how gender power relations come into play in nationalist identity, as well as the major role of Catholicism on the Chicano familia romance. I intend to apply the insights of Fregoso’s “Chicano Familia Romance” to Cherríe Moraga’s play “Shadow of Man” and Patricia Cardoso’s film *Real Women Have Curves* in order to illuminate how the Chicano family structure has formed the female characters into the tropes of tradition-holding

mothers and wives, as well as tradition-resistant daughters, who question their agency over their own racial and sexual identities. These daughters represent Anzaldúa's new mestiza and mestiza consciousness. Their characters are examples of the New Chicana Heroine which I propose because they have complex and plural identities which correspond with Anzaldúa's border consciousness.

Moraga's "Shadow of a Man" is a play that concerns a Chicano family consisting of Manuel (the father), Hortensia (the mother), Leticia (the teenage daughter), Lupe (the youngest daughter), and an older son (Rigo) that is only referred to and never seen on stage. Rosario (Hortensia's sister) and Conrado (Manuel's compadre) are characters outside the nuclear family that also play important roles in the storyline. Moraga designs her play at the manifest level to portray the nationalist idealized Chicano family structure, where the patriarch is the head of the family and has assigned the females to their limited positions in the familia. The identities of these mothers, daughters, and wives can be viewed in Anzaldúa's "Borderlands" theory, as the concept of identity in the play is highly based on multiplicity in Chicana subjectivity. The three main females of the play, Hortensia, Leticia, and Lupe, are the author's re-formation of the Chicano cultural icons of La Llorona, La Malinche, and La Virgen de Guadalupe or "las tres madres." Moraga's play depicts the oppression of Chicana identity by portraying the impact of the Chicano nationalist familia on these female characters. In contrast to nationalist representations of familia, Moraga's play reflects the issues of love, sexuality, desire, and power that Chicanas must face within their own culture.

What is also a crucial theme in the play and film is the relationships between mother and daughter. The dynamics between Hortensia and Leticia resemble the mother-daughter relations portrayed in the 2002 film *Real Women Have Curves*, directed by Patricia Cardoso. The film is

an adaptation of Josefina Lopez's play by the same title, and while there are differences between the two narratives, the motivation of the main character, Ana, remains a staple in driving the plot. In the film, the tradition-holding/disseminating mother, Carmen, is highly critical of her youngest daughter Ana. Tensions are high between the two as Ana has a determined feminist spirit and questions the gender limitations her mother regulates both at home and at work. While there is minimal scholarship on both the play and film, what has been published are criticisms dedicated to deciphering the American values of the female body image in Chicana identity, including scholarship by Jeff Berglund, Sarah M. Tillery, and María P. Figueroa. My argument instead focuses on a plurality of Chicana identity, mirroring mestiza consciousness. In "*Real Women Have Curves: A Feminist Narrative of Upward Mobility*", Christie Launius writes about Lopez's play in order to discuss Chicana drive for upward mobility through education in relation to Chicano cultural expectations of women. I will further this argument by specifically analyzing the role of the daughter within the Chicano familial structure and compare the relationships between both pairs of mother and daughter to further illustrate how the family structure has defined the feminine identity. Also, this will further argue the thematic influence of la familia in terms of mestiza consciousness representation and the New Chicana Heroine.

I also intend to show how the concepts of love and family are more than an innate emotion and a static structure usually relegated to either motherly or romantic concepts. This will be analyzed in Moraga's play as well as Cardoso's film. Fregoso's attention to the cultural concept of comadrizago, a sister-hood between Chicanas, will be examined through both the film and play to provide examples of different types of love and familia. Comadrizago is expressed in both the play and film as a support system for females, outside of the male dominated structure. This is an important concept in consideration of the New Chicana Heroine, as this representation

offers identity alternatives in terms of gender, sexuality, and familia. This alternative type of familia will surface a New Chicana Heroine that recognizes the male-dominated familia as a hegemonic structure that perpetuates female oppression. For the New Chicana Heroine, comadrizago is the next step in recognizing the importance of the feminine identity in Chicana/o cultural studies.

### **Mothers, Daughters, and a Love that Drowns**

In *Shadow of a Man*, Hortensia, the mother, is the center (but not the head) of the family, representing Chicano and Mexican traditional family values, upholding the traditions of the culture, and aligning with Chicano nationalist agenda concerned with the reinforcement of the importance of family ties and loyalty. Hortensia is the foundation of the family, and Moraga's play illustrates how complex issues of identity and desire are overtaken by the cultural insistence of the mother and wife's role in the familia. The author first establishes Hortensia's loyalty to patriarchal family and nation in her relationship with Rigo. When her son, Rigo, begins dating an Anglo woman, Hortensia objects to the woman's cultural influence over her son's Chicano identity. In a kitchen scene with her sister, Hortensia says: "She can go to hell as far as I'm concerned.... La gringa. They didn't even get married yet, and she's already got my son where she wants him" (45). Hortensia continues to perpetuate the male-centered familial ideology by reinforcing the importance of the father-son relationship. Hortensia says to her sister: "Ni lo conozco. He's a stranger. The other day, Rigo comes home from college. Manuel sees him in the door, and of course he jumps up from his chair para darle un abrazo<sup>4</sup>....And you know what Rigo does? He pushes Manuel away" (45). Hortensia, as the center of the Chicano familia tradition, upholds the cultural standards that tie family to la raza. If Rigo rejects his culture, he

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<sup>4</sup> "to give him a hug" (my translation)

rejects his family, and if he rejects his family, he also rejects his culture. The familia value system can be further viewed in Hortensia's lessons to her daughters regarding their designated positions within the familia. In her book *The Wounded Heart*, Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano analyzes a scene where Hortensia is doting over her new grandson. Yarbrow-Bejarano writes, "In this scene, Hortensia teaches her daughters, in an act of fundamental betrayal, that women's only access to value and power (the phallus, in her eyes) is bestowed through a man, or through the birth of a male child" (55-56). This view corresponds with Rosalinda Fregoso's insights regarding the influence of Catholicism over the Chicano familia romance and the Chicana identity. Fregoso states, "Explaining gender roles within the familia, the author's naturalize the mother's (Virgin Mary) subordination to both the father (God) and the son (Jesus)..." (77). In Chicano nationalist ideology, Hortensia's place in the familia is assigned as a subordinate to both her husband and son, and her value can only be assessed in these terms.

Considering the character's valorization of Chicano traditional values, Hortensia is comparable to Carmen, the mother in *Real Women Have Curves*. Carmen practices a Mexican tradition of praying to Saint Anthony for her two daughters to find men and get married. By hanging a statue of Saint Anthony upside down while she prays to him, Carmen hopes that her older daughter, Estela, will get married. This practice is to make the prayer work faster, by promising Saint Anthony that he will be turned right side up once the request is answered. Carmen, frustrated with her younger daughter, Ana's, rebellious nature, says that after so many years of prayer and no "man for Estela" that she must turn her attention towards finding a husband for Ana. She then takes the baby held by a second statue of Saint Anthony (meant for Ana) out of his hands, promising to give the baby back to him once Ana has a husband, so that the prayer will work faster. These scenes invoke two important affirmations of the mother's role



in the familia. The first being focused on Carmen's tradition-holding qualities centered around religion—namely Catholicism. Since Carmen is a cultural transmitter of her religious beliefs and values, she is perpetuating the female subjugation of the wife/mother (La Virgen) and valorizing the presence of a husband/father (God). The second affirmation is focused on how Carmen transmits the female's value to be discerned by whether or not she is a wife. Carmen's concerns are dedicated to her daughters filling the role of "wife" just as she has fulfilled this role in her marriage to her husband, Ana and Estela's father. As a mother, Carmen's expectations are for her daughters to live as she has, and continue to "transmit" the cultural influence of the familia romance. Ana is combative to her mother's traditional lessons, while still caring for and respecting her family's needs. Ana, the New Chicana Heroine in the film, is a representation of the embodiment of a feminist spirit and nostalgia for family values. The roles Hortensia and Carmen play in their families influence their daughters' identities in terms of gender, race, and sexuality.

While Hortensia's character does uphold the traditions of the Chicano family, just as Carmen does, Moraga develops the character to be a more radical and complex representation of the Chicano mother and wife. Moraga's familia in *Shadow of a Man* has many layers, just as Hortensia's character. I would like to address the more provocative plot in the play—Hortensia's history with and desire for Conrado, in order to examine the identity limitations of the mother in Chicano familia. With this storyline, Moraga is acknowledging that the female sexuality has not left with her role as a wife/mother. Nearly thirteen years before, Manuel "gave" Hortensia to Conrado for one night—the result of that night was Lupe, the youngest and favored daughter of Manuel and the biological child of Hortensia and Conrado. In regards to Chicana identity and sexuality, let's consider the idea that Hortensia was able to be "given" by

her husband to another man. While Manuel's infatuation with the "ideal man" Conrado represents is culpable for his desire to "share" his wife with him, we need to consider that the female body is a commodity to the Chicano male. Hortensia's body is assumed to be at service to the male and a vessel of production for the Chicano male as well as for the benefit of the family. The female's identity is confined in the abuse and betrayal to her physical body by the male. Her body is key in the Chicano family as it is the source of children and the able body working in the domestic sphere. When Manuel decided to "share" his wife with Conrado, he gave more than her body to his compadre. He gave the foundation and center of his own family and it is after this occurrence that his relationship with Hortensia fatally sours.

Hortensia's desire to be with Conrado cannot be ignored in the play and this relationship further serves to illustrate the complexity of the feminine identity. While talking to Rosario, Hortensia remembers Conrado, "I remember how when Conrado touch me...jus' to grab my hand nomas, and los vellitos on my arm would stand straight up. I've never felt that with Manuel" (64). Moraga shows that female desire is stifled by the familia ideals, while also exploring the type of male Hortensia desires—Conrado, the symbol of the "ideal" man. While Manuel "gave" Hortensia to Conrado, Hortensia's sexual desires are still active and her feelings for a man that is not her husband and her devotion to the family she has raised causes conflict for her as a mother and wife. Moraga raises these issues to draw attention to the female identity in marriage and motherhood. Moraga's representation of motherhood and marriage is one that is seldom seen in the Chicano culture. The Chicano nationalist ideology reinforces the Virgen/Puta dichotomy with the veneration of the non-sexual Virgin Mother. Hortensia's sexual desires undermine the nationalist familia values and gender expectations. Moraga portrays a female who is complex, conflicted, and trapped in the hegemony of patriarchal ideology.

Within the framework of the mother/wife representation in the play, Hortensia functions as a re-creation (and recalling) of La Llorona. After being verbally and physically abused by Manuel, Hortensia re-enacts a scene reminiscent of the La Llorona legend, which entails a mother drowning her children, with her lover to blame as the root cause of this tragedy. Hortensia pushes Lupe into her lap as she says, “I cover your little head with my hand and push it down into the water. Your piernitas<sup>5</sup> stop kicking. Your skin turns white and your little hands float up like a toy baby” (66). Lupe goes limp on the floor while Hortensia is in a dream-like state, between the past and present, creating a memory from the legend of La Llorona. While the legend has many variations, Moraga employs it to draw attention to the guilt and blame placed on Hortensia for her feelings and act of desire with Conrado. Manuel’s constant abuse and emotional distance from his wife have left Hortensia isolated in her marriage. She repeatedly says she is “sucia<sup>6</sup>”, for the occurrence with Conrado (which Manuel orchestrated). She re-enacts the drowning of Llorona’s children with Lupe because her daughter is a reminder of that night and proof of her sexual desires for a man other than her husband. Hortensia, like Llorona, is a suffering mother who has endured the stifling of the patriarchal ideology in her culture.

### **Mestiza Consciousness: More Than a Careful Balancing Act**

Leticia from *Shadow of a Man* and Ana from *Real Women Have Curves* are examples of the New Chicana Heroine because both characters are representations of Chicanas who exemplify Anzaldúa’s mestiza conscious, through their balancing and hybridization of two cultures—the Mexican and the American—and multiple generations-- the generations past and present—all while considering their futures. In the same scene where Hortensia is teaching her daughters a lesson on the familia values while she is doting over her new grandson, we begin to

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<sup>5</sup> Legs (my translation)

<sup>6</sup> Dirty (my translation)

see Leticia as a young woman who questions the authority of the familia as a source of female value. Yarbrow-Bejarano writes, “When Leticia comments that maybe she won’t have children, Hortensia responds, ‘Then you should have been born a man,’ defining “woman” exclusively in terms of her reproductive function” (56). Leticia, who is obviously beginning to rebel against what has been considered “natural” in her family and culture, represents a young Chicana revolutionary. She is a character with a complex identity beginning to emerge as Yarbrow-Bejarano notes,

Immersed in the politicization of her ethnicity as an activist Chicana, Leticia has become radicalized by both racial and gender experiences. Her character captures the contradiction of fighting for justice around issues of race within the movement, while only the men, whom she refers to ironically as ‘Raza gods’ (78), have the power (58).

Leticia’s concern with gender inequality can be examined in her response to her mother’s statement: “If God wanted you to be a man, he would of given you something between your legs” (76-77), to which Leticia replies, “I have something between my legs” (77). In *Real Women Have Curves*, Ana echoes Leticia remark, telling her mother, “I’m worth more than what’s in between my legs” after Carmen has discovered Ana has had sex for the first time. Ana, like Leticia, exhibits Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness in a conversation with her mother, after Carmen gossips about a local girl who got married because she became pregnant. Carmen tells Ana that men “don’t like a woman who knows so much. Men want a virgin.” To this Ana replies, “Why is a woman’s virginity the only thing that matters? A woman has thoughts...ideas...a mind of her own.” Ana and Leticia are demanding recognition of female value outside of the dominating Chicano ideology and outside of the possession of the Chicana

body by the male. Both are searching for agency over their own identities, and see the value of the physical body as a source of entrapment that they choose to liberate themselves from. Leticia tells her mother that she has had intercourse with one of the “Raza Gods” (neighborhood pachucos) in order to see herself as something other than her mother’s daughter. With this act, Leticia is resisting the patterns of marriage and motherhood implicit in Chicano nationalist values and which her own mother has taught her. Leticia’s action is not only to separate her identity from her place in relation to her mother, but also to remove the value placed on virginity in the Chicano culture. Hortensia says to her daughter: “Why you give your virginidad<sup>7</sup> away for nothing?” Leticia answers: “I was tired of carrying it around, that weight of being a woman with a prize...Not for me to be worthless, but to know that my worth had nothing to do with it” (78). Ana also has pre-marital sex, liberating herself from the value placed on her body as a virgin. Both young women are examples of the proposed New Chicana Heroine as they have chosen to find liberation from the Chicano family and cultural values by using the female body to gain power and agency over their worth and identities. The characters Ana and Leticia, as they embody the New Chicana Heroine, illustrate a progressive and radical character in Moraga’s play and Cardoso’s film, as both show insight on the gender inequality in the Chicano culture.

Both Leticia and Ana show devotion and love for their mothers and family throughout the play and film. However, both women still decide to resist the Chicano cultural standards and the familia value system in terms of the limitations of women in the culture and society. This “awareness” of the injustice towards women in the culture can be aligned with Anzaldúa’s “mestiza consciousness.” Since Leticia and Ana are revolutionary models of a Chicana, in the eyes of Chicano nationalist terms they would be viewed as a “Malinche.” Malinche, or

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<sup>7</sup> Virginity (my translation)

Malintzin, the translator of Hernan Cortes during the Spanish conquest of Mexico, is a highly controversial figure in Chicano culture. Seen as a traitor, this woman has become the symbol of all women who resist the dominant cultural norms that support the Chicano familia (Harris xi).

Amanda Nolcea Harris writes:

In the literature and in the general historical testaments, conformity to patriarchal authority through obedience, sexual control, food preparations, behind-the-scenes organizing, and child-rearing earned Chicanas a secure place in the ethnic community. Conversely, sexual independence (choosing if and with whom to be sexually active or choosing non-procreative sexuality), bringing feminist concerns to the table, public leadership, and refusal to have (Chicano) children, earned Chicanas epithets that imply the mutual exclusivity of Chicano activism and feminism—‘agringada,’ ‘Malinchista,’ and ‘vendida’—under the assumption that feminism is a negative foreign influence as opposed to an authentic concern within Chicana/o communities (xi).

In Chicana feminist representations, as we see in the play and film, Malinche is re-designed as no longer as a traitor, but as an individual woman who suffered and became the mother of the mestizo people. Her image and story are comparable in historical relevance to La Virgen, where she previously has served as the “whore” in the Virgen/Putta dichotomy.

In her play, Moraga draws upon Malinche’s history in Leticia’s resistance to the cultural hegemony. Leticia, in nationalist terms, would be considered to be a traitor to her culture since she refuses the prospects of virginity and motherhood to be indicative of her value as a female. Ana echoes this resistant ideology in multiple conversations with her mother. Ana doubts the legitimacy of finding value in virginity, and speaks openly about her negation of this value of the

female body. She tells her mother that she wants a man to love her because she has “thoughts and ideas.” Leticia questions the values of the Chicano culture, and Moraga has instead designed her as a symbol of Malinche that represents individuality and the Chicana subjectivity that Anzaldúa speaks of in her *Borderlands* theory. By re-designing Malinche through Leticia, Moraga has the opportunity to portray the internal conflict Chicanas face when they begin to see the social limitations their culture has perpetuated through family and religion. Ana, like Leticia, can be seen as a Malinche figure, because she desires to change the expectations her mother has for her within the familia. Ana desires to move to New York to go to college. Ana’s plan to pursue higher education is resistant to her culture’s gender norms. Christie Launius writes, “Ana self-identifies as a feminist, and her desire to achieve class mobility via education is inextricably tied to her critiques and rejection of the traditional gender norms and roles for women in both mainstream Anglo culture and in her Mexican-American working-class community” (16). As Launius states, Ana’s educational prospects deviate from her culture and family’s gender roles. Her family is upset with the idea of Ana moving away to attend college. Her mother’s immediate response is “We are a family, and we are going to stay that way.” Ana’s father affirms this response. This scene is interesting, because her teacher begins the conversation by reminding her father that he left “his country” for a better life and now Ana should do the same. This is the point when Ana’s mother declares their “familial” intentions. From this scene, it is clear that it is acceptable for Chicano/Mexican males to “leave home” but not the females.

The female, according to Anzaldúa, is a cultural transmitter, without her the familia would be incomplete and unsustainable. She holds the domestic space together. Ana’s desire to leave for college is a threat to her family and the patriarchal familia structure. Leticia also

questions these cultural norms, but she still remains devoted to her family, caring for her mother and sister's well-being, and serving as a positive role-model for young Lupe, who eventually wants to go to college. Ana as well is resistive of the dominating cultural standards, but continues to help her sister in her sewing shop so that she may meet her strict deadline. These reconstructions of "Malinche" reflect the internal conflicts of the Chicana, who in trying to discover their identities outside of the hegemonic structure have delve deeper into their relationships with their family members.

### **The Part of Vulnerability in Mestiza Consciousness and the New Chicana Heroine**

The New Chicana Heroine, as a representation of mestiza consciousness, is an active figure—constantly evolving. Lupe, in *Shadow of a Man*, is an example of the New Chicana Heroine as her character has an exploratory spirit when she considers her own sexuality, love, and family. Lupe exhibits Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness throughout the play, while still following her family's strict codes and religious values. Like Leticia, Lupe is a complex figure who shows the plural subjectivity of the Chicana. Anzaldúa describes the new mestiza in *Borderlands*, "She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else" (101). Lupe, the youngest daughter, represents the embodiment of the fragility of the Chicana identity in the familia romance. Lupe questions gender and identity in her conversations with her aunt, Rosario, and often looks inwardly to find her answers. Moraga configures Lupe (short for Guadalupe) as La Virgen to humanize the venerated Catholic mother of Christ. Lupe is La Virgen as a child, still exploring where her place in familia and culture will designate her, while abiding to the standards of Catholicism. Lupe is almost always seen wearing a Catholic school uniform,



indicating her ties with religion as well as her identity being bound in the framework of Catholic ideology.

However, Lupe is also a young girl who is beginning to show interest in sexuality and desire. This is clear in her consideration of using “Magdalene” as her confirmation name. Lupe is fascinated with the biblical figure’s physical and sexual presence as a female in her confrontation with Jesus. Lupe correlates the forgiveness of sins with a sexualized atonement that she imagines Mary Magdalene partaking in at the feet of Jesus. The young girl fantasizes about the feeling of being adored by a woman, putting herself in Jesus’ place, “...Can you imagine what it musta felt like to have this woman with such beautiful hair wiping it on you? It’s jus’ too much to think about” (70). Mary Magdalene is an often sexualized and stigmatized figure in the bible. Lupe is both honoring female sexuality and questioning the limitations of heterosexual coupling when she considers Magdalene as a confirmation name. It is also significant to note that the name Lupe (Guadalupe) is commonly used for both males and females. Only Manuel, her father, genders the young girl by calling her “Lupita”. Otherwise, her name, although indicative of La Virgen, is non-gender specific. Considering Lupe’s progressive statements surrounding sexuality, she is a New Chicana Heroine because she eliminates the gender binary. In Anzaldúa’s section “Half and Half,” she discusses an elimination of binary gender limitations:

There is something compelling about being both male and female, about having an entry into both worlds. Contrary to some psychiatric tenets, half and halves are not suffering from a confusion of sexual identity, or even from a confusion of gender. What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are

able to be only one or the other. It claims that human nature is limited and cannot evolve into something better (41).

Anzaldúa is rejecting Western gender norms in this statement, calling “half and halves” evolved and negating the prescriptive identification of them as “confused.” Instead, Anzaldúa considers half and halves to have a more holistic view as they can see through both genders. Judith Butler engages the concept of gender construction. Butler says that gender “is an historical situation rather than a natural fact” (901) and it is constructed from a series of “stylized repetitive acts” (900) or more simply, performances. Alicia Gaspar de Alba argues that since gender is constructed, “the sexes are conditioned socially to serve patriarchal interests and safeguard patriarchal power” (51). This patriarchal power is the basis of the Chicano familia romance—keeping men in power and women in submissive roles. Then, since gender is constructed into the binaries Western society has accepted, those who cross these binaries are taboo beings.

Anzaldúa sees the queer population to exist in this borderland where gender binaries meet. From this space, a half and half resists social and cultural authority. Lupe can be considered a half and half. She shows concern with the human spirit and nature. Even though she is still a child, Lupe exhibits a spiritual element that is similar to Anzaldúa’s myth-making. Both are concerned with human consciousness and existence. Lupe says, “Sometimes I jus’ feel like my eyes are too open. It’s like the more you see, the more you got to be afraid of” (45) Lupe’s ability to “see” so much is due to her having access to “both worlds”—the male and female—existing in a gender borderland.

Lupe’s ultimate choice of confirmation name, Frances, after a girl she knows at school, indicates the child’s awareness of gender inequality in the Chicano familia. Lupe says she chooses Frances because, “...When she sits, she doesn’t hold her knees together like my mom

and the nuns are always telling me to. She just lets them fly and fall wherever they want, real natural-like, like they was wings instead of knees” (84). Frances invokes a female resistant to the dominant expectations of femininity and culture. Lupe expresses a desire to “climb inside” of Frances to “feel what she feels” and to be someone else. Lupe’s desire to feel like someone else is not surprising. The girl she chooses to “climb inside” is confident in her body, as Lupe desires to be. While she is clearly a spiritual figure in the play, as a young girl about to enter into her teen years, she must come to terms with her Chicana body. Finding comfort in the Chicana body outside of the dominating patriarchal expectations is an important element in the New Chicana Heroine, because the ability to “see” the prohibitions American and Chicano/Mexican culture has placed on the Chicana is indicative of mestiza consciousness.

### **Mestiza Spaces: A Familia in Support of La Chicana**

While there are obvious lesbian undertones in Lupe’s statement regarding her desire to “climb inside” Frances, I want to consider an alternative view of Lupe sharing Frances’s feelings and experiences. I would like to consider Lupe searching for camaraderie between herself and a girl outside of her family. This most clearly ties to comadrizago, a bond between women outside of blood-ties that is similar to the male form of carnalismo. Carnalismo is defined as “an ethic of fraternal solidarity or brotherhood...(Carnalismo) was a key force of constructed homosocial kinship during the Chicano Movement” (Allatson 55). Comadrizago is most similar to a sisterhood between Chicanas where a community and space can exist for women to express themselves and identify with each other. Paul Allatson calls this “fictive kinship” practice “comadrismo” (58), while Rosalinda Fregoso uses the term “comadrizago.” Both terms stem from the root word, “comadre” the feminine form of “compadre” (What Manuel calls Conrado). These terms are most commonly used to describe a kinship between parents and godparents of a

child (Allatson 57), however the terms are also used to show a close non-blood relation, similar to family. If Lupe desires to have a bond with a female outside of her family, she desires to find identity outside of the familia structure, to discover an alternative to tradition. Lupe's desire to "climb inside" her friend follows her father's death. As the literal patriarchal figure of Lupe's family has died, she searches for a different type of familia. Fregoso states,

...for decades comadrizago has served as a kinship system crucial to women's survival in the absence of males. In light of large numbers of Chicana/Mexicana female-headed households, comadrizago developed historically as a women-centered alternative to the patriarchal kinship basis of familia, as a form for appropriating la familia 'for women's communities (90).

Lupe has begun the process of searching for a familia outside of the patriarchal norms. Lupe, like Leticia, is a fundamental representation of Chicana identity—where family, religion, and sexuality all intersect to create this complex, and at times conflicting, individuality that parallels "mestiza consciousness" and is definitively the New Chicana Heroine.

Considering Fregoso's definition of "comadrizago," I would like to make an amendment that comadrizago does not only exist as a "survival" mechanism in the "absence of males." The practice of comadrizago is represented between women who are married, have males in their lives, but still seek a support system outside of the dominant Chicano familia structure. The support system they turn to is based on female bonding and solidarity. An example of this type of comadrizago is represented in the film *Real Women Have Curves*, between the women working in Estela's sewing shop. It is clear that Carmen, the mother, has a relationship with the women at work, as she sits and gossips with them daily. This may seem like a superficial relationship, but Carmen has developed a relationship with women outside of her family, and uses this

relationship as a source of comfort during her long tedious days at work. Pancha and Rosali, Carmen's co-workers, also take the time at work to bond through sharing their daily experiences. Pancha especially engages with Carmen in discussions about marriage and motherhood.



Figure 5: Estella's Sewing Shop from *Real Women Have Curves* (2002)

Another principal example of comadrizago in the film is the scene where Ana removes her clothes because of the heat in the literal "sweat" shop and then encourages her co-workers to remove their clothes as well. In this scene, the women compare their bodies and share their insecurities about body image and weight. They support each other by sharing these private feelings and making their physically and emotionally stressful workplace now a space where they can have comfort in knowing that they have similar concerns. Ana spurs the moment of comadrizago in this scene. As a New Chicana Heroine, she is aware that her clothes are not only physically restrictive, but metaphorically restrictive of her body image. Ana questions the

dominant expectations of the Chicana body, as throughout the film her mother has ridiculed her for being overweight. Ana uses her body as a source of agency, not only sexually, but in terms of body image acceptance. She says her weight is a way to tell the world she does not care about the dominant standards and will be her own woman. The woman Ana represents is the New Chicana Heroine because she illustrates mestiza consciousness by her refusal to abide by dominant cultural standards and instead exists in a non-binary third space.

The Chicano familia is an element in mestiza representation that must be viewed as a formative structure in Chicana gender identity. As Chicano cultural traditions have dominated the ideology and limited the woman's role in the familia, it is important to consider how women have chosen to "survive" this system—through an alternative type of familia--comadrizago. Just as Anzaldúa considers the home and family to be places where the mestiza has been oppressed and her identity formed, for the New Chicana Heroines, Leticia and Lupe in *Shadow of a Man* and Ana in *Real Women Have Curves*, the family has been an influential element in representation. If the New Chicana Heroine mirrors mestiza consciousness in representation, then the Chicano familia romance will be a consistent theme throughout Chicana representation, as will alternative familias that emerge to continue to support Chicanas.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHICANA MOTHERHOOD: RE-CASTING CHICANA SEXUALITY THROUGH LAS TRES MADRES IN *THE HUNGRY WOMAN: A MEXICAN MEDEA*, *FINDING LLORONA, LUPE & SIRENA IN LOVE*, AND *THREE EAGLES FLYING*

“For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality.”-- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands:La Frontera*, (41)

In this chapter, I will analyze mestiza consciousness in representations of Chicana motherhood. In the previous chapter, I have discussed how daughters are often represented as females who possess Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness. It is clear that young women like Leticia from *Shadow of a Man* and Ana from *Real Women Have Curves* are artistic representations of Anzaldúa’s new mestiza, or the New Chicana Heroine, because of their ability to do more than survive in between two cultures and multiple generations, but to merge them all together and look towards their futures. The role of the New Chicana Heroine though should not be seen as a concept exclusively for “daughters.” Because the mother is a cultural transmitter, it is important to recognize that her role is often re-cast by Chicana artists and scholars, and how she too possesses mestiza consciousness and is an example of the New Chicana Heroine.

Motherhood is a role that Chicanas have been expected to fulfill as the Chicano familia structure has designated females to the limited roles of the mother and wife, and continues to

keep the patriarch in power (Harris x). In Chicano/Mexicano culture, the mother is a figure that while subjugated by the male authority, still has a powerful mark in the culture. This is evident in what Anzaldúa calls, “las tres madres”—La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona. While these three mother figures are subjugated in the Virgen/Putra (whore) dichotomy, I suggest that La Llorona is a hybrid figure among them, and in Chicana feminist discourse she is often re-cast to show her as more than a suffering or guilty mother. A common account of the legend of La Llorona, or “the weeping woman,” includes a young Mexican woman who falls in love with a white or European man. After the man leaves her to marry a woman of his race and class, Llorona then murders her children by him by drowning them in a river. The legend says that Llorona now cries along the river mourning her children and hoping to find them in the waters. To understand La Llorona as a hybrid figure, I view her as a “border” between La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche. La Llorona is seen as a traitor to her role as a mother, since she drowns her children, and without children not only did she fail as a mother but no longer is a mother. Because of this traitorous view of her, she can be linked to La Malinche. At the same time she is seen as a suffering mother, mourning her children along the riverbank. This links her to La Virgen, the eternal suffering mother of Christ. She is a complex figure in Chicano/Mexicano culture, as she is seen as both a villain and a victim. This hybridity of good/bad or Virgen/Putra makes La Llorona a figure that represents the border where, as Anzaldúa says, the mestiza resides.

Anzaldúa links La Llorona to La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche, seeing their symbolic motherhood and female distinction to be used as tools of oppression to the Chicana. According to Anzaldúa, Llorona has been used in particular to make Chicana/os “long-suffering people” (53). If La Llorona is seen as a symbol of Chicana/Mexicana femininity and



motherhood, then guilt and blame are entrenched into the Chicana/Mexicana gender role. Just as La Virgen has been used to make Chicana/os “docile and enduring” (Anzaldúa 53) and La Malinche has “made us ashamed” (Anzaldúa 53) of our (mestizo) indigenous past, and in turn sexuality, La Llorona has become more than a tormented soul and guilty mother. She has become a symbol for female suffering. Anzaldúa says: “This obscuring” (of the three mothers) “has encouraged the Virgen/Putra dichotomy” (53).

In re-envisioning the La Llorona legend, Chicana feminist scholars like Norma Alarcon and Sonia Saldívar-Hull, see La Llorona’s legend as something other than the binary symbols in the Virgen/Putra dichotomy. These scholars link the cultural history of La Llorona to La Malinche. Saldívar-Hull writes that “La Llorona murdered her children because she was betrayed by a Spanish ‘gentleman’; La Malinche symbolically murdered her ‘children,’ the Indian tribes that Cortes and the Spanish conquistadores massacred” (120). If we figure La Llorona with Malinche’s history, then an alternative view of the legend arises. We can read La Llorona as a woman that would rather drown her children instead of having them live as slaves in the Spanish Conquest (Saldívar-Hull 121). For these Chicana scholars, the infanticide is seen not as an act of insanity or madness, but rather a “rational, political act of opposition against the Spanish colonizers” (Saldívar-Hull 121).

With this figure in mind, I intend to discuss Moraga’s play, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, in the terms of re-seeing La Llorona as a mother figure who represents the border, the cultural conflicts along it, and how Llorona is re-cast to represent Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness. In Moraga’s play, Llorona has become marginalized and outcast from her own culture--the Chicano culture, due to her sexuality. Moraga has “queered” Llorona (Medea) and represented her as a figure whose sexuality is no longer determined by a male counter-part.

While there is limited scholarship published on *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, the scholarship that is available addresses the re-location of Aztlán, as Alicia Arrizón discusses in her article “Mythical Performativity: Re-locating Aztlán in Chicana Feminist Cultural Productions.” I will contribute to the existing scholarship on Moraga’s play through addressing: Why has Moraga re-told La Llorona, the weeping woman, the guilty mother, as a lesbian mother? What implications does this have on Chicana identity, and in turn how does this example of motherhood contribute to the New Chicana Heroine?

In this chapter, will also analyze a short film by Claudia Medina entitled *Finding Llorona* and discuss how Medina’s “queer” Llorona contributes to the discussion of mestiza consciousness representation and the cultural influence of the mother figure. *Finding Llorona*, like *Medea*, re-casts Llorona as a lesbian, but the motherhood expressed in the short film is metaphorical, as Pieta (Llorona) is a popular ranchera singer, who inspires young women to sing. Medina’s Llorona is a performer, an artist, a symbol of a creator and has the ability to give love, desire, and heartbreak. I will also discuss how the mestiza body, in terms of the mother figure, has been “queered” by Chicana artists and how these images depict the trope of Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness and connect the New Chicana Heroine to Chicana motherhood. I will do this by comparing Alma Lopez’s *Lupe & Sirena in Love* and Laura Aguilar’s *Three Eagles Flying* to both Moraga’s play and Medina short film. I argue that the symbolic mother, Llorona, (alongside La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche), has been re-cast to display not only the hegemonic discursive practices of American, Mexican, and Chicano culture, but also to counter this discourse with representations of alternative sexualities. Before I begin my analysis of these Chicana cultural productions, I will first look towards defining the framework for my analysis of

sexuality and motherhood in the figure of La Llorona. This will be accomplished through a discussion of the interrelation of gender, queer, and Chicana feminist theory.

### **Re-conceptualizing Chicana Sexuality through Queer Theory**

The oppression and persecution of Chicana sexuality has been expressed in the cultural productions of multiple Chicanas, including Cherríe Moraga, Alma Lopez, Claudia Medina, and Laura Aguilar. However, Chicanas are not solitary in their subjugation of sexuality by patrocentric authority. Second wave feminism, spurred in the 1960's brought to surface the oppression of female sexual identity and soon after the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement found common ground in the feminist movement as both groups were stigmatized and marginalized by the male-centered prevailing ideology (Rivkin and Ryan 885). Gender studies became an area where the dominant gender and sexual norms could be challenged. Judith Butler's pivotal work *Gender Trouble* dialogues the determinants of gender being socially and historically constructed rather than naturally assigned (Rivkin and Ryan 887). Butler's theory is derived from Michael Foucault's work mapping the links between gender, sexuality, and historical discursive practices in his book *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. Foucault's arguments are founded in his theories of the power of discourse and relegation of sexuality through language and knowledge (Foucault 6). Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan write about Foucault's *History of Sexuality*:

Foucault's argument that 'homosexuality' is a social, medical, and ontological category invented in the late nineteenth century and imposed on sexual practices that prior to that point had enjoyed an absence of such 'scientific' scrutiny provided impetus to the idea that modern heterocentric gender culture founds

itself on the anathemizing of non-reproductive sexual alternatives that are in fact everywhere present in human society (886).

Foucault's theories point towards a hegemonic structure, where those who practice non-heterosexual and non-reproductive sexualities are marginalized and ultimately viewed as "other."

As part of a historical movement, Queer theory aligns with Gender theory in its framework of the instability of gender identity. The politics of Queer theory are intended to unify the issues of gays and lesbians. Rivkin and Ryan state,

Queer Theory adopted a term of stigmatization ('queer' being a derogatory name for a gay or lesbian person) and turned it against the perpetrator by transforming it into a token of pride. The shift in name also indicates a shift in analytic strategy, for now gay and lesbian theorists began to explore the 'queerness' of supposedly 'normal' sexual culture (887).

The expression "Queer" in the framework of Gender and Queer theory is now a term that has given agency to the gay and lesbian community. Chicana lesbians have adopted the term to unify Queer theory with Ethnicity/Race theory, specifically Chicana feminist theory. Cherrie Moraga uses the term in her essay, "Queer Aztlán: the Re-Formation of the Chicano Tribe." Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* is an example of Queer theory merged with a Chicana working-class vantage point. Anzaldúa provides a view that is plural but unified in its subjectivity, acknowledging multiple determinants of her identity, including her sexuality.

Alicia Arrizón writes in her introduction to her book, *Queering Mestizaje:*

*Transculturation and Performance:*

The use of 'queering' in this book serves several purposes: to investigate or probe as in querying; to present a 'queer' angle on the concept of mestizaje; and to

account for a sense of difference that comes with marginality. Here, one must understand and apply queer critiques, which follow feminist theory in rejecting institutional power, in its broadest terms (3).

I will employ the term “queering” in a similar fashion. I will use the term “to account for a sense of difference that comes with marginality” (Arrizon 3), and like Moraga in her essay “Queer Aztlán,” where she re-configures Aztlán as a space accepting of the “other” Chicana/o populations, including women, gays, and lesbians, link the marginalized female sexuality, in particular the lesbian Chicana, to the legend of La Llorona. I explore Moraga and Medina’s re-cast Llorona in terms of sexuality, in order to dialogue the separation of the role of the mother and female sexuality in the Chicano culture.

### **“Queering” Llorona: Chicana Sexuality Along the Border**

Cherrie Moraga’s play, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, is a re-telling of the La Llorona legend, linking Chicana cultural history to indigenous past. Set in the near future, Medea is a modern day Llorona living in a fictional borderland between Gringolandia (U.S.A), where people of Anglo-Saxton descent reside, and Aztlán, where the Chicano population resides. The audience is taken between time and settings from this fictional borderland to a mental institution, where we are slowly learning the reason why Medea has gone mad. After an ethnic civil war, all “unwanted” and marginalized people are exiled into the border region—in what remains of Phoenix, Arizona. This includes Aztlán’s queer population. In this borderland, Medea lives with her lover, Luna, her lesbian grandmother, Mama-Sal, and her thirteen year old son, Chac-Mool. Medea was exiled from Aztlán after her husband Jasón caught Medea and Luna together in bed. After several years, Jasón has come to the border to reclaim their thirteen year old son, Chac-Mool, and take him back to Aztlán. This is after he learns that his new virgin bride is barren and

unable to give him a child. Now, Medea is faced with losing her son to both his father and the nation that has betrayed her. Driven from fear of losing her son, Medea poisons Chac-Mool, so that she may control her and his destiny.

To re-write Llorona's sexuality implies that not only suffering mothers and wives are connected to this legend, but the marginalized population of Chicana lesbians. By "queering" Llorona, Moraga has incorporated the marginalized gay and lesbian Chicana/o population to her legend. She has dually linked them to the suffering woman, as well as the politically oppositional reflection of Llorona/Malinche. In this way, Moraga has rewritten La Llorona as a complex woman who possesses Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness and is a New Chicana Heroine. Llorona, as one of "las tres madres" has been influential in the formation of the Chicana gender role. Irene I. Blea writes about the cultural influence of Llorona on female identity:

In traditional culture, males have been given certain entitlement because they are born males, and one of these privileges includes not being questioned or confronted by women. Dona Marina<sup>8</sup> tells Cortes she does not want the child to go to Spain. She steps out of her prescribed gender role and is severely punished... This more firmly plants fear of deviating from the prescribed gender role and fixates La Chicana into that role (34).

Considering Llorona/Malinche to be a figure that has "stepped out" of the expected gender roles, Blea suggests that Llorona is in fact a "cultural heroine" that this has been overlooked due to the continual influence of European/American gender standards (29). She suggests that often people who are capable of "surviving" "incredible voyages" (as she reads Llorona/Malinche to have

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<sup>8</sup> Dona Marina is Malintzin/Malinalli/Malinche's Spanish given name. It is one of the four names used to reference Cortes's native translator.

survived the Spanish conquest) are considered heroes (Blea 28), however Llorona/Malinche are not often viewed in these terms.

However, because society does not attribute heroic deeds to women, it rarely conceptualizes the hero as female. In fact, it does the opposite, producing negative images of women. Since heroines are rare in American culture, and Chicanos in that culture have been Europeanized and Americanized, Chicanos have failed to recognize their cultural heroine and have instead been taught to believe the Euro-American conquerors' version of La Llorona. They are blinded to the heroic deeds of Malintzin (Blea 29).

These "heroic" deeds of Malintzin have been questioned in Chicano/Mexicano culture. But what is evident is that Llorona/Malinche did not adhere to her gender expectations. Moraga's Llorona, Medea, too does not fit into her designated gender role. Medea's sexuality makes her an outcast in her culture, and she is banished to live in a desolate borderland. Anzaldúa writes about her own experience as a Chicana lesbian in *Borderlands*. She says: "For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality" (41). Medea acknowledges that as a lesbian she has no place in the Chicano culture, "A woman is nothing in Aztlán without a husband" (68). So by writing Llorona as a lesbian, Moraga has designed her as a woman resisting her native culture's oppressive expectations in terms of sexuality. Alicia Arrizón writes about Moraga's use of the Llorona legend to subvert the homophobic tendencies in the Chicano culture:

Medea does not represent a woman who regrets her role as the transgressor of the social order; she is not the Medea found in many patriarchal narratives. Instead,

this Medea embodies motherhood while transgressing her role as a potential lover of men. The motherhood inquiry closely connects the dramatist's personal experience with that of her protagonist. In the play, Medea laments—as Cihuacoatl lamented the passing of the Aztec Empire—the homophobic censorship inhabited in her beloved and estranged homeland, Aztlán (48).

As a Chicana lesbian, Medea's sexuality threatens the patriarchal centered gender norms. Since Medea is a lesbian mother, she undermines the value of the Chicano male, and exists on terms outside of the expected cultural standards.

The intolerance for Medea's sexuality (as well as Luna's and Mama Sal's) is why she was exiled from the Chicano nation of Aztlán. With no nation or home, Medea, Luna, Mama Sal, and Chac-Mool, come together as family that is an alternative to the dominant Western ideology of the heterosexual nuclear family. All three women help to raise the young boy, and provide support for each other. Medea and Luna's relationship is at the center of the play, as Medea's fears and anxieties about losing her son, begin to wear on the couple. Moraga is writing an alternative discourse on what familia means in the culture. She is opening the terms of motherhood to exist beyond the heterosexual, nuclear family. In this way, she is proposing cultural acceptance and recognition for alternative types of familia, alongside alternative sexualities. But Moraga is also opening the discourse to discuss the complexities of motherhood and sexuality, as Luna questions Medea's acceptance of her own lesbianism: "I don't know what's going on with you. It's like the thought of losing Chac...no kid between us... and we got nothing to disguise what we are to each other. Maybe for you, Chac-Mool somehow makes us less lesbian" (47).



With Luna's statement, Moraga is validating the concerns of the Chicana in terms of family, sexuality, and identity. Moraga is addressing the complexity of Chicana sexuality, and how this borderland is a place where motherhood and female sexuality are permitted, but not always validated.

While Moraga is drawing attention to the displacement of the Chicana lesbian within her own culture, she is also commenting on women's sexuality being silenced by the cultural expectation of the mother's role. This is evident in her play *Shadow of a Man*, where Hortensia feels guilt for her desire for Conrado, a man other than her husband. Hortensia's stifled sexuality can be seen as determined by her role as a mother. In the Virgin/Putta dichotomy, the Virgin mother is expected to only desire sex for reproductive purposes. By writing Llorona as a lesbian mother, Medea's sexuality is no longer determined by the male authority. Medea's sexuality is not defined by reproductive purposes, as Llorona is no longer cast as the betrayed lover. Medea, as Llorona, has betrayed her lover instead, Jasón (Cortes). By queering Llorona's narrative, Moraga has given the Chicana agency, and re-cast the mother figure as a complex individual in the borderlands.

### **La Llorona as a Popular Icon**

In order to further illustrate Moraga's re-vision of La Llorona's sexuality, it is helpful to compare it to Chicana artist, Alma Lopez's *Lupe and Sirena in Love* (See Figure 6). The artwork portrays the religious image of La Virgen de Guadalupe and popular cultural image of La Sirena (from the Mexican Loteria game) embracing in a pose that exhibits lesbian desire. Laura E. Perez notes that the background, graffiti images on a border wall and the Los Angeles skyline, suggest "a history of intolerance of queer presence" within the Mexican and Chicano "anti-imperialist" culture (176). Moraga questions the Chicano nationalist agenda and cultural politics

in the same way by re-telling La Llorona as a lesbian. Moraga has taken the “popular” legend of La Llorona, and the symbolic mother of the mestizo race, and turned her into a resistant force, just as Alma Lopez has joined the popular cultural image of Sirena with the revered holy mother, Guadalupe. Both author and artist have re-written popular figures in Chicano/Mexicano culture to draw attention to the marginalization of the queer population within the culture. In her essay, “Queer Aztlán,” Moraga says that in the attempt to resist Western ideology, Chicano nationalism excluded women, gays/lesbians, and any person seen as “other” to the nationalist proposal (147-148). Moraga has included the “other” into the discourse of legends, folklore, sexuality, family and motherhood through her La Llorona narrative, as all of these lines cross in the play as well as in the traditional narrative.

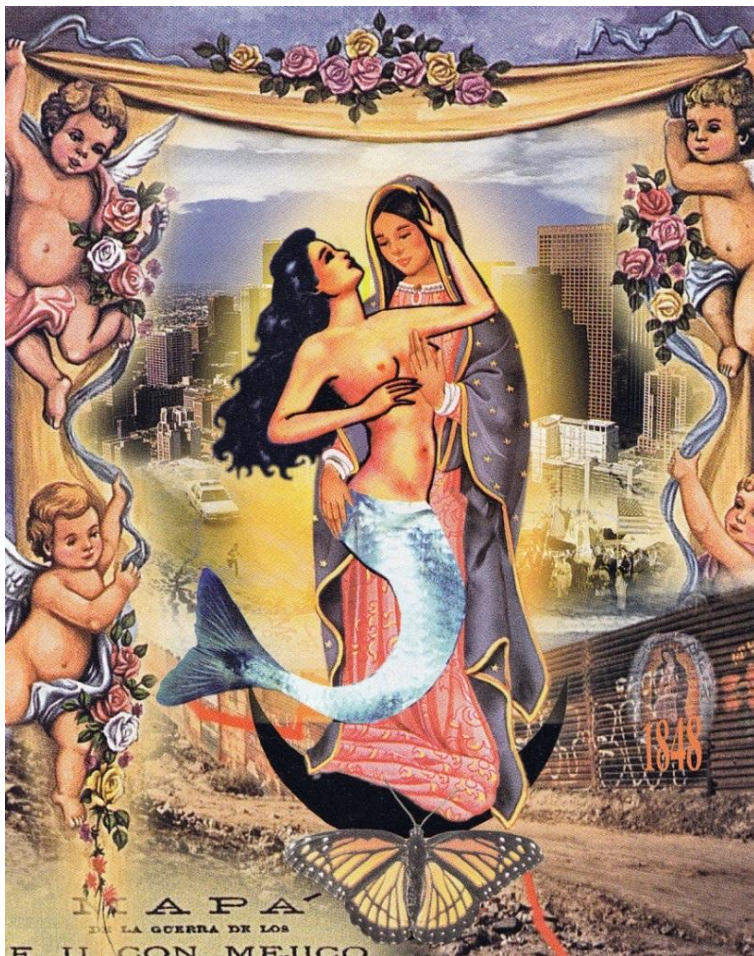


Figure 6: *Lupe & Sirena in Love*,  
Lupe & Sirena Series, 1999,  
Alma Lopez

In re-casting Llorona's sexuality, Moraga has depicted the complexities of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness. As a lesbian mother, Medea is continuously torn between her past life experience in Aztlán and her present life in the border with her lover Luna. Medea feels confused about her place in society as the threat of losing her son nears. Ultimately, Medea has to contend with the cultural expectations of motherhood and her sexuality, which eventually cause her demise. Artist Laura Aguilar depicts how female sexuality is constricted living in a borderland, between two cultures. The artist's self-portrait, titled *Three Eagles Flying* (See Figure 7), is a photo displaying her body placed between the American flag and the Mexican flag. Her hands are bound by a rope that wraps around her waist, crosses her nude torso, and again wraps around her neck. A hood with an eagle adorned on it covers her head, and her lower body is covered with another American flag.

Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano writes in "Laying it Bare: The Queer/Colored Body in Photography by Laura Aguilar," that the position of the subject's body indicates a state of living "in-between," referential of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (286). The scholar also notes that the American flag which "binds" Aguilar's waist conveys that lesbianism is seen as exclusively "white" (Yarbrow-Bejarano 286). I read the binding of the subject's waist with the American flag not as exclusive to lesbianism, but all female sexuality on the border. This photograph is a visual which conveys Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* theories and the position of Chicana identity within the Chicano, Mexican, and American cultures. The subject's positioning between the two flags, her confined sexuality, her bare breasts indicative of maternal care and thus motherhood, her face bound in nationality (the Mexican eagle), all are indicative of the borderlands mestiza experience which Anzaldúa describes.



Moraga's Medea is, like Aguilar's self-portrait, bound in nationality and cultural duties. Her exile came as a stern punishment for her sexuality. As a lesbian, in a relationship with Luna, Medea, who was once a political activist in Aztlán, could not be connected to the Chicano political agenda any more. Since she has "betrayed" her gender role, she has also "betrayed" her culture. Medea tells her estranged husband:

I am a woman. A Mexican woman and there is no protection and no place for me, not even in the arms of another woman because she too is an exile in her own land...Betrayal occurs when a boy grows into a man and sees his mother as a woman for the first time. A woman. A thing. A creature to be controlled (70).

With this statement, Moraga is implying that the Chicana lesbian is not only placed in a borderland, but also unprotected, unaccepted, and always an "other" to dominant culture. Like the legend of La Llorona, the Chicana lesbian is "controlled" at the border, with dominant American, Chicano, and Mexicano culture is unwilling to "forgive" her betrayal to the gender role. Moraga writes in her essay "A Long Line of Vendidas,"

You are a traitor to your race if you do not put the man first. The potential accusation of 'traitor or 'vendida' is what hangs above the heads and beats in the hearts of most Chicanas seeking to develop our own autonomous sense of

ourselves, particularly through sexuality. Even if a Chicana knew no Mexican history, the concept of betraying one's race through sex and sexual politics is as common as corn. As cultural myths reflect the economics, mores and social structures of a society, every Chicana suffers from their effects (95).

As the author has linked La Llorona as a popular legend to Chicana sexuality, she is dually acknowledging that Chicana's who explore their own sexuality and "develop our own autonomous sense of ourselves" are both a villain to the Chicano/Mexicano culture, but are also victimized by the mass hate and unaccepting cultural standards. By queering Llorona in *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, the author has portrayed the issues of the Chicana lesbian mother, as complex and indicative of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness. Medea, living in the borderland, is in the "in-between" place where she contends with multiple cultures. Moraga has re-written motherhood to be non-sexuality exclusive, and has depicted a New Chicana Heroine that comes to a sad conclusion because of her culture's limited gender binaries perpetuated by the Virgen/Putta dichotomy in Chicano cultural tradition.

### ***Finding Llorona: Looking For "Other" Chicanas***

*Finding Llorona*, written and directed by Claudia Medina, is a short film released in 2007 that re-casts Llorona's sexuality, similar to how Moraga has re-written Llorona as a lesbian mother. The short film, however, does portray motherhood in a different, metaphorical, sense. The Llorona figure in the film is a singer—a woman able to convey emotion and portray the sorrows of the mestizo people. The film centers on the relationship between a young woman, Sofia, who desires to be a singer, and her favorite Mexicana singer, Pieta, or Llorona. Sofia desires to have a voice like Llorona's, full of loss, suffering, and sorrow. Pieta (Llorona) tells Sofia that she must experience loss, to have suffered and be able to sing about true sorrow and

love. Sofia searches for a heartbreak that will inspire her to sing with Llorona's voice, but she is unable to get this type of heartbreak from the men she dates. Sofia then, upon revisiting Pieta, falls in love with her, and they begin a relationship. Pieta leaves Sofia, giving the young woman a heartbreak that inspires her to sing for her sorrows.

The film portrays Pieta, Llorona, as a female who carries the weight of sharing the mestizo people's suffering. People send Pieta letters, asking her to dedicate her songs to their suffering. Like the legend of La Llorona, Pieta mourns their losses through her singing, just as Llorona weeps along the riverbank. Pieta is a symbolic mother of suffering, and like Llorona, is a cultural transmitter of the Chicana/Mexicana gender role. Anzaldúa says women are cultural transmitters, spreading the male "rules and laws" of culture and gender, and ultimately are the ones who suffer most from these tenets (38). The legend of La Llorona has taught the Chicana/Mexicana that suffering is part of her gender, just as Pieta says to Sofia that she doesn't hear "her" in her voice, that Sofia has not known suffering. Pieta assumes that a female's voice must know loss and suffering. As a Llorona figure, she has "taught" Sofia that to be a woman, you must suffer, and from suffering Sofia will gain a voice that shows her "loss." Anzaldúa writes, "Wailing is the Indian, Mexican, and Chicana woman's feeble protest when she has no other recourse" (55). Sofia has learned, from Pieta (Llorona), her symbolic mother, and eventually lover, that suffering leads to faculty. At the end of the film, Sofia's voice sounds nothing like Pieta's, whose voice resembles a great Ranchera<sup>9</sup> singer, and instead resembles the wailing of the folkloric woman, Llorona, full of pain and deep mourning.

By "queering" the Llorona figure in her film, Medina is depicting that women, specifically Mexican/Chicana women, are the ones who give other women pain. By having Pieta

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<sup>9</sup> Ranchera is a traditional type of Mexican music that often is about love.

break Sofia's heart, Medina has expressed that the Chicana/Mexicana gender role is perpetuated by the female, although it is constricted by male authority. The writer/director is not removing blame from the male authority, but instead shifting focus to the female authority, Llorona, as a mother figure, and more importantly, a power figure. Alma Lopez achieves a similar message in her *Lupe & Sirena in Love* piece. By combining two popular cultural figures, she has directed the focus to the authority of these symbols. Sirena, the Mexican Loteria icon, is highly sexualized in the game and often referred to casually as "La Chichona"<sup>10</sup> by those who are familiar with her image. Lupe, La Virgen de Guadalupe, is a powerful figure in the culture, and is often de-sexed, so to keep female sexuality solely in reproductive terms. By putting these two figures in a sexual embrace, Lopez has undermined the previous message in their symbols, and designed both as representations of mestiza consciousness. In *Finding Llorona*, Llorona's influence is no longer limited to the "passive" mother figure, but has expanded to show that she has impact over all of Chicana suffering. The cultural influence of La Llorona's legend works in the same way. By "queering" Llorona in the film, Medina centers on the female as the source of her own pain. This is an important part of Chicana motherhood, understanding the influence and power of the "mother" figure, and how she has become a cultural standard.

In the film, the New Chicana Heroine is a clouded figure. Mestiza consciousness representation is evident in the young Sofia, and her relationship with Pieta. However, the film's ending, like Moraga's *Medea*, depicts an inescapable sadness that the Chicana must face. This does not exclude Medea, Sofia, and Pieta from the New Chicana Heroine classification though. These narratives, although tragic, address the issues of sexuality and motherhood that are still unresolved in the Chicano/Mexicano culture. The endings are not like those from *Real Women*

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10 "Woman with large breasts" (my translation)

*Have Curves*, where Ana leaves to college to start a new life, or like Yolanda López's self-portrait, depicting the artist running steadfast and smiling. These endings, instead, provide a view into a Chicana/o culture that still needs more New Chicana Heroines, and contemplates the lines where sexuality and mothers have not been able to cross.



## AFTERWARD

The New Chicana Heroine is a recognizable figure across genres in Chicana/o cultural productions. The reason for this is because Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness is a framework that allows for a multiple application in viewing Chicana representation. Since mestiza consciousness is an established element in Chicana representation, it is clear that this application of Anzaldúa's framework should have a unified language to identify the New Chicana Heroine as a significant figure in Chicana/o literature and visual productions.

Terming mestiza consciousness representation is crucial to add Chicana/o cultural production to the larger literary and visual arts discourse, where often it has been occluded. In Romantic literature, the "Byronic Hero" is an identifiable figure, which scholars use to discuss the attributes of characters in a cohesive language. In an attempt to build a cohesive language for the application of mestiza consciousness, I identify the New Chicana Heroine, as an "Anzaldúan Heroine," because this trope has been read in Anzaldúa's terms, mestiza consciousness and borderlands theories. However, the New Chicana Heroine is not exclusively defined by Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* came after many Chicanas had already begun an uprising in the Chicano nationalist movement. The reason I employed Anzaldúa's terminology to define the New Chicana Heroine is because scholars had already put *Borderlands* terminology to use in their scholarship on Chicana/o literature and visual arts. Anzaldúa's framework had already created a unified language to discuss mestiza experience. The terming of its application further distinguishes her framework as being an influential element in Chicana feminist discourse and resolves to include the New Chicana Heroine as a figure as notable as the Byronic Hero.

Having an amalgamated terminology for this representation of Chicana plural identity is important to Chicana/o cultural studies so that depictions of Chicanas and Chicana/o culture can be analyzed in a language that is interdisciplinary. My goal is to give a name to mestiza consciousness representation, so that this application can be recognized not only in Chicano/a Literature and Cultural Studies courses at the university level, but also in high school classrooms, where often Chicana/o literature has been neglected. Anzaldúa writes about her teaching experience in her chapter “How to Tame a Wild Tongue:”

In 1971, when I started teaching High School English to Chicano students, I tried to supplement the required texts with works by Chicanos, only to be reprimanded and forbidden to do so by the principal. He claimed that I was supposed to teach ‘American’ and English literature. At the risk of being fired, I swore my students to secrecy and slipped in Chicano short stories, poems, a play. In graduate school, while working toward a Ph.D., I had to ‘argue’ with one advisor after the other, semester after semester, before I was allowed to make Chicano literature an area of focus (82).

Anzaldúa’s description of the classroom exclusion of Chicano literature is unfortunately not unique. With the state of Arizona’s recently adopted HB 2281, which bans Ethnic Studies curriculum and has specifically targeted Latino/a studies in the classroom, the need to bring Chicana/o cultural productions into the primary, secondary, and post-secondary classrooms is more necessary than ever, so that the marginalization of ethnic “others” can be eliminated in academic settings.

For these reasons, the New Chicana Heroine should serve to bridge the space between Chicana/o cultural studies and the classroom it has been excluded from. Anzaldúa’s text began

this process through crossing genres, and identifying with multiple theoretical frameworks. In this thesis, I propose the New Chicana Heroine to be a symbol that is effectively identified within the thematic structures of the Chicano nationalist ideology of la familia and motherhood, most often in “las tres madres,” or La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona. But these cultural determinants are not the only influence on the New Chicana Heroine in Chicana/o cultural production. The Chicana in the work-place and female body image are also notable themes that the New Chicana Heroine has been constructed within. These influences are explored briefly in my readings of “Woman Hollering Creek” and *Real Women Have Curves*, but a more thorough study of the New Chicana Heroine and the work-place and body image will further explicate the figure as a trope in Chicana feminist discourse. Television has also produced many examples of the New Chicana Heroine, so it is important to view how the television industry has influenced the representation of Chicanas for the mass market. Programs in the last decade such as “Ugly Betty” and “The George Lopez Show” have emerged a sway of critique over their depictions of Latina/os in American culture.

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