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Searching for Mother: Chicana Writers Revise and Renew Malinche and Guadalupe

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Searching For Mother:
Chicana Writers Revise and Renew Malinche and Guadalupe

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty

of the English Department

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Para todas las mujeres de mi familia: mis abuelitas, mi madre, and mis amigas queridas.

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Introduction

Searching for Mother: Chicana Writers Revise and Renew Malinche and Guadalupe

Thesis

“Myths and fictions create reality, and these myths and fictions are used against women and against certain races to control, regulate, and manipulate us. I’m rewriting the myths, using the myths back against the oppressors” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 219).

“What’s got to happen now is not concentrating on that kind of victimhood but concentrating on how we’re liberating ourselves, how we’re emancipating ourselves, and how we’re empowering ourselves as Chicanas. . . . by creating a new culture” (Anzaldúa qtd. Keating 221).

Chicana feminist writer Gloria Anzaldúa’s mission of transforming culture is grounded in her belief that writing, in particular writing and rewriting of history and myth, makes cultural change possible. To Anzaldúa cultural change allows for identity change because the two are integrally related and inseparable. Postcolonial theory contributes greatly to her rethinking the abstract concept of culture. In particular, postcolonial theory challenges the conservative, traditional idea of culture as an essentialist, static center. To postcolonial theorists, the idea of culture as center no longer holds. Western imperialist ideology defines culture as a static center, or as Matthew Arnold defines it in Culture and Anarchy (1869) “harmonious perfection.” Traditionalists

like Arnold believed that culture was “an inward condition of the mind” not influenced by “outward sets of circumstances.” However, postmodern thinking dismisses this modernistic notion that culture is innate. Postmodern and postcolonial thought exposes that the center of civilization was not only Greek culture and subsequently European culture, but that “other” cultures on the supposed periphery were always already influencing the colonial idea of culture: “Partly because of Empire, all cultures are involved with one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic” (Said xxv). Therefore, postcolonialism challenges static, imperialistic notions by opening up a space for rethinking how the abstract notion of culture is greatly influenced by historical circumstance. By looking at the effects of colonization, in particular European territorial conquests, postcolonial theory reveals that culture cannot be a static, pure, unadulterated entity, but rather an ever-changing dialogic. Moreover, postcolonial reading strategies offer ways of reading and re-reading cultural texts that have influenced culture’s spokespeople: historians, fiction writers, theorists, and ethnographers. These strategies provide a means by which elitist notions of culture as a self-contained entity give way to a definition of culture as “contested terrain, a site of struggle and transformation” (Giroux 165). Literary critic and Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University, Edward Said, calls these reading strategies “contrapuntal readings.” Contrapuntal reading “must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which is done by extending our reading of texts to include what was once forcibly excluded” (66-7). In short, for postcolonialists culture is a diasporic, fluid, hybrid activity that reveals itself

not only in historical circumstance and social practice but in texts, in particular cultural stories and myths.

Defining culture as “historically produced, ever changing, and always reactively and syncretistically formed (and reformed) in relation to other cultures” (Friedman 134) discloses that difference and intermingling are always a part of its definition. Specifically, Mexican-American culture has always been what many postcolonial critics and Chicano/a theorists call a “border culture”—a space whereby the arbitrariness of geospatial boundaries blur, and imperialistic, hierarchical binaries are exposed. Border, and borderlands, in Chicana studies is a metaphor for Chicanas living in multiple worlds, multiple cultures (Saldívar-Hull 67). These include geographical worlds of the borderlands of Mexico and the United States, but also include sociohistorical worlds where Spanish and English express cultural hybridity of religious practices and gender and sexuality issues, for example. Specifically, Anzaldúa in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987) thinks of border culture as a junction of cultures where hybridity and dialogism influence identity formation. For her the borderland is psychological, sexual and spiritual and is present “wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch . . .” (v). Anzaldúa follows a core concept of identity that Edward Said discusses in Culture and Imperialism:

. . . the old authority cannot simply be replaced by new authority,
but that new alignments made across borders, types, nations,
and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new

alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of *identity* that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism. (xxiv-xxv)

The relationship between culture and identity, then, is not “pure” but fluid and relational.

Ilan Stavans in *The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America*

(1995) explains that “[c]ulture and identity . . . are larger than life abstractions, less a shared set of beliefs and values than the collective strategies by which we organize and make sense of our experience a complex . . . construction in a state of perpetual flux”

(21). For Anzaldúa and other Chicanas, writers make sense of their experiences through the act of writing; thus, stories become the site of cultural and personal revelation:

“Culture is the ‘story’ of who we are and our ideas about reality. In other words, culture is an ideology—a series of images and representations that reflect the beliefs a people have about reality. Culture is rooted in the pattern of the past; thus culture is the last system to change and adapt” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 280).

Chicana¹ writers currently assume the role of border culturalists in order to present alternative views of female figures perpetuated by histories, chronicles, myths, and other narrations motivated by imperial ideology, patriarchy and most often written by men. Two such female figures in Mexican-American culture are *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and *La Malinche*², archetypes that emerged in Mexico during the Spanish conquest period and that traditionally became dichotomous constructions of virgin and whore, Virgin Mary and Eve, and protector and traitor, respectively. However, contemporary Chicana writers, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros and Pat Mora,³ revise traditional images of Malinche and Guadalupe in order to offer alternatives to

these archetypes that contribute to a portrayal of all Mexican and Mexican-American women as passive, oppressed, static, and otherized. Their writings both question the patriarchally-inscribed images of Malinche and Guadalupe in order to revise masculinist histories steeped in colonial ideology and present new myths that depict these figures as ones who resist and struggle rather than are static and oppressed by creating them as powerful emblems of Mother—Malinche as Historical Mother and Guadalupe as Spiritual Mother.

In order to explore this Chicana mission, this study summarizes the history of masculinist constructions of both cultural archetypes and illustrates how these constructions promoted a limited and limiting identity for women. Using Chicana feminist theories that rely upon postcolonial strategies to expose dominating colonial ideology and recover indigenous female agency, this study analyzes Chicana texts that explore new identities for the *mestiza* woman, a woman of mixed heritage, in particular Mexican and white. Specifically, Chicana writers deconstruct Spanish colonial and Mexican national discourse, questioning the validity of traditional constructions of both archetypal figures that seek to control and to “otherize” indigenous females. These constructions seek to control indigenous females by imprisoning them in not only gender-prescribed walls but also in houses built in a traditional Catholic patriarchy. After challenging patriarchal subjectivities of Mexican and Mexican-American women, Chicana writers create new notions of female subjectivity that promote cultural agency for Chicana women by recovering and revising indigenous female voices that contribute positively to contemporary Chicana identity. For example, Chicana writers examine cultural hybridity constructed from a mixing of Aztec historical and spiritual figures with

the Catholic Virgin Mary. They examine the notion of their own identity as “an arrangement or series of clusters, a kind of stacking or layering of selves, horizontal and vertical layers, the geography of selves made up of different communities [a person] inhabit[s]” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 238). Identity, therefore, is not static but a process that grows as it encounters different relationships and historical circumstances. Thus, these writers construct multiple ideas of mestiza selfhood in order to break out of ideological boundaries set up by colonization that promote ideas of passivity in women and inferiority of indigenous existence and belief systems.

Chicana literary criticism is an evolving body that follows one of two prevailing trends: one finds European, American and feminist criticism useful in the analysis of Chicana writers and the other trend argues for “emancipation from ‘white’ literary theoreticians in a search for an authentic critical discourse” (Herrera-Sobek and Viramontes 37). Many non-Chicana literary critics focus on how postmodern and postcolonial strategies that have been applied to works written by other colonized subjects, such as Africans, Indians, and other non-westerners⁴, can also be useful in analyzing Chicana writings. The most recent scholarly endeavors written by Chicanas themselves focus on both a feminist movement and a Chicano/Chicana movement “caught between the twin pillars of racism and sexism, the connection of gender oppression with racial oppression” (Madsen 18). This type of criticism emphasizes hybridity “that accurately portray[s] Hispanic subjectivity” (Madsen 36) by analyzing how Chicana women’s literary styles are hybrid and provisional and that Chicana literature is of the borderlands. This borderland concept breaks critical restraints and provides liberating possibilities for a Chicana literary theory that is pluralistic,

multidimensional, denying neither Anglo, Indian nor Spanish roots and emphasizing the emerging possibilities of a Chicana community and literary canon.

Gloria Anzaldúa in her 1987 work Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza calls the process of reconstructing these boundaries “the consciousness of the borderlands” (77). Anzaldúa, as well as other Chicana feminist critics such as Ana Castillo and Sonia Saldívar-Hull, promotes a new mestiza consciousness that will “break down the subject-object duality that keeps the [mestiza] prisoner and . . . will show in the flesh and through images how duality is transcended” (Anzaldúa 80). A major part of the Chicana feminist mission is to expose the limitations of binary thinking that subject Chicana women to identification as either good woman and good mother or evil woman and bad mother. Chicana feminism is a “massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness [that] is the beginning of a long struggle . . . bring[ing] the end of rape, of violence, of war” (Anzaldúa 80). It is their goal to open up border spaces in order to create their own stories that provide for cultural agency within institutions such as history and religion. In postcolonial terminology, these borderlands become the liminal space, the transcultural space, that gives birth to multiple, newly-constructed identities. Specifically, critic Homi Bhabha, in his work The Location of Culture (1994), problematizes constructivist and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality that maintain hierarchical structures by concentrating on the “in-between” or “liminal” space that “provide[s] for the terrain of elaborating selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate[s] new signs of identity” (1). Like Anzaldúa, Bhabha believes that postcolonial studies must view literature in terms of its personal, historical, and cultural hybridity rather than view it from a static binary. Chicana writers contend that

Chicana identity is grounded in a history of resistance, defiance, and active agency. Consequently, their writings question the patriarchally-inscribed images of Malinche and Guadalupe and offer recovered and revised stories of each figure that promote agency. Their intent is partly to re-see these archetypal figures in order to inspire alternative versions of history for Chicana women and to promote an uplifting spiritual identity for Chicana women today. For Chicana writers these identities often reveal themselves in hybrid forms of writing that combine literary criticism with personal experience, poetry with prose, history with mythology, and Spanish with English.

This dissertation uses the archetypal sites of Malinche and Guadalupe as a means to explore how contemporary Chicana writers employ border studies in order to reinvent both archetypes so that they are no longer manipulated by patriarchal history and religion. Their endeavor engages postcolonial strategies to propose a way for seeing alternative histories that have been repressed or silenced. Textuality, then, is connected to materiality for Chicana writers and contributes to identity formation for all Chicana women. With their reinventions of the archetypes of Malinche and Guadalupe, the Chicana writers presented in this dissertation uncover a female indigenous legacy that directly influences their identity as women who now live in a contemporary world.

Chapter Summaries

In my Introduction I will explain how my dissertation will analyze from a postcolonial feminist ideology contemporary works by Chicanas that offer a counter to traditional ethnographies written from colonial times until the present by outside observers. These outside observers were either external or internal colonizers; the external ethnographers are the Spanish colonizers who ignored or misrepresented the

indigenous, and the internal colonizers are Mexican male writers and/or Chicanos whose writings silence and/or ignore female voices. In addition, I will analyze Chicana writings as autoethnographies—what Mary Louise Pratt defines as “text[s] in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them” (“Arts” 35). I will show how Chicana feminist writers in their creative and/or critical works have always already been creating autoethnographies. In particular, I will divulge how Malinche and Guadalupe become for Chicanas the particular sites for writing culture, a culture of Mother whose history and spirituality no longer remains etched in a static discourse. Instead, Mother becomes the cultural site for exploring self through the writing of *autohistorías*, Anzaldúa’s term for writings that “use life to illustrate theory” (qtd. in Keating 242).

The remainder of this introduction will present a definition of Chicana feminism that traces its history and development to the present. This feminism depends upon Chicanas’ ability to re-vision and to understand the Mexican model of mother situated in Malinche and Guadalupe that has its roots in both indigenous and Catholic ideologies. Chicana writers’ mission includes recovering lost literature and voices and using postcolonial strategies to bring into focus culture in the borderlands that span both the United States and Mexico, both the indigenous and the European, both English and Spanish.

Chapter One, “The Silenced Mother of Mexico: Malinche as Masculinist Construction,” explores the traditional masculinist constructions of the figure Malinche, known as Mexico’s first mother because she was an indigenous woman who bore a child with the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortés. The chapter introduces Malinche as an

archetypal female figure of Mexico that was formed by a patriarchal structure that eventually portrays her as a traitor and a whore. Using texts from the “Spanish Conquest,” such as Cortés’ Letters and Bernal Díaz de Castillo’s The Conquest of New Spain, this chapter illustrates how Malinche was rendered static as a voice, a womb, and a Catholic when described in masculinist narrations. Throughout Malinche’s textualization in Spanish chronicles and popular mythic conceptions, she is subject to a patriarchal schema of identification that categorizes her within the binary of women as either virgin or whore. Histories, starting with William H. Prescott’s The History of Mexico (1843) and continuing to Tzvetan Todorov’s The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other (1984) continue to portray Malinche as a figure who is merely acted upon by colonial patriarchal desires, leaving her devoid of agency. Thus, the chapter discusses how Malinche becomes a Mexican nationalist site that is problematic in its traditional associations of her as traitor and whore, or as Octavio Paz calls her, *la chingada*—the violated mother. In short, Paz’s association of *la chingada* with Malinche as metaphor for a violated Mexico, links her microcosmic (supposed) sexual betrayal to her envisioned macrocosmic cultural betrayal. Paz’s essay “The Sons of Malinche” in The Labyrinth of Solitude (1950 in Spanish, 1961 in English) is deconstructed in order to expose his hierarchical assumptions about gender roles that keep Malinche, and hence Chicana women, devoid of active agency.

Chapter Two, “ ‘ Mother, Do I Hear You?’: Malinche’s Daughters Recover and Renew,” explains how Chicana feminism provides the means to revise Malinche as a cultural symbol with historical, sexual, and linguistic agency. Their artistic endeavor is tied to a political endeavor: their writing becomes a space for negotiating their own

identities, a space for the emergence of the silenced voice of Malinche. Using Homi K. Bhabha's idea of "in-between space" that is presented in The Location of Culture (1994), this chapter illustrates how postcolonial theory allows for an understanding of Malinche that problematizes the previous chapter's portraits of her as an "other." Bhabha explains how postcolonial literary theory envisions a space whereby articulations of selfhood can be explored. This space provides Chicana writers such as Sandra Cisneros, Lucha Corpi, Pat Mora, and Ina Cumpiano a way of subverting static colonial history by writing works that create multiple and shifting voices of Malinche. These works call into question the masculinist constructions that have created the mythology of Malinche and show that she does not have to be rendered as a static figure. For such writers, she becomes an "in-between space" who performs liminally, operating within traditional constructs while simultaneously escaping their totalizing and confining grasps.

Chapter Three, "The Construction of Mexico's Spiritual Mother: La Virgen de Guadalupe," outlines traditional versions of the story of Guadalupe, constructions based on patriarchal Spanish Catholic narrative, and also reveals the indigenous roots of the story and links Guadalupe to Aztec goddesses. Traditional versions of her story stress her importance as a Mother figure who assimilates the Mexican population of the New World into an acceptable Old World (in particular Spanish) Marian image that supports passivity in women and is viewed as an instrument of patriarchy and control. In essence, Spain transports the ingrown, militant Catholicism of the Iberian Peninsula during its conquest to the indigenous of Mexico. In particular, Spain renders Juan Diego's story of the apparition of Guadalupe as proof that the indigenous will assimilate Queen Isabella's Catholic

mission. A discussion of why the Aztec population embraced the figure of Guadalupe because of her similarity to their own mother goddess, Tonantzin, is also included as a means to open up the symbol of Guadalupe to multiple dimensions. Catholic feminist theologians such as Jeanette Rodriguez believe that Guadalupe must be liberated from static Marian imagery that results in a figure that is defined by binary opposition. She becomes a product of patriarchal ideology, a model of a woman for all Mexican and Mexican-Americans who is obedient, virginal, and humble. Once liberated, the possibilities for Guadalupe within a Marian tradition emerge; as mother she becomes more than virgin or intercessor—she becomes an active agent who listens to and supports all people, including Chicana women. Catholic feminist theology and recovery of indigenous female worship provide the framework for revising the spirituality of Guadalupe that contemporary Chicana writers explore in their works.

Building on Guadalupe's construction in the previous chapter, Chapter Four "The Mosaic Mother: Reconstructing the Spirituality of Guadalupe through *Escritas Ceremonias*" explores how Chicana writers recover lost matrilineal aspects of Guadalupe in order to reconstruct a mosaic figure of her that provides spiritual agency for Chicana women. Their writings act as spiritual ceremonies that create simultaneously their personal spiritual beliefs and the means of spiritual exploration for their community of readers. The chapter analyzes works by Pat Mora, María Amparo Escandón, Sandra Cisneros and others who transform Guadalupe through ceremonial storytelling within a matriarchal tradition. Chicana spirituality embraces a multidimensional Guadalupe—a figure emerging from a syncretism of Popular Catholicism and indigenous belief and

practice. Moreover, Guadalupe's multidimensionality reveals itself through the practice of bilanguaging, what postcolonial theorist Walter Mignolo calls the practice of using plural languages. In particular for Chicanas, this often means simultaneously using Spanish, Nahuatl and English, breaking down dialogical thinking so that language "is no longer exclusively idiomatic but also ethnic, sexual and gendered" (Mignolo 269).

Chicana writers revise the traditional story of Guadalupe—the one sanctioned by historiographic and/or orthodox Catholic texts--by sculpting Guadalupe into a figure with strong indigenous roots and a connection to *la familia* that provides women with a means to personal salvation, liberation from oppressive social roles, and access to a matriarchal power based in spirituality. In short, Chicanas construct a Guadalupe that is representative of their "lived" spiritualities.

The Birth of "La Movimienta": The Evolution of Chicana Feminism

The Chicano⁵ movement (*El Movimiento*) began in the 1960s in order to challenge societal inequalities for Mexican-Americans living in the United States. César Chávez and Dolores Huerta's organization of California farm workers into the United Farm Workers stands as the symbolic moment of the movement that sought to reclaim political and personal rights for Mexican-Americans who were pawns in the United States' capitalist venture. *Chicanismo*, Chicano cultural nationalism, "emphasized pride as a source of political unity and strength of mobilizing Chicanos . . . into an oppositional political group within the dominant political landscape in the United States" (García 3). It served as a means to expose the internal colonialism active in the United States at the

time and had as its goal economic and political equality for Mexican-Americans. The Chicano movement also gave birth to an artistic and literary expression known as the Chicano Renaissance. Writers of this movement sought to use poetry, fiction, drama, and literary criticism as a means to promote El Movimiento's mission.

Within both the social and literary movement, a subgroup of women who participated in the social protest sought also to mobilize their specific efforts in order to struggle against the patriarchal elements evident in El Movimiento. This group called themselves Chicanas and were concerned with how Chicanos of the 1960s and 1970s gave only "a cursory nod to the women who historically labored alongside them in the struggle against Anglo-American domination and exploitation" (Saldivar-Hull 27). Thus, Chicanas added to their mission of political and economic equality one of gender equality whereby they took to task the accepted social roles for women that were steeped in a patriarchy that was protected and preserved by a cultural ideology of *machismo*. This loaded term here refers to sexism evident in Mexican and Mexican-American societies that relegates women to an inferior social status and elevates men to superiority. Critics disagree on the meaning of the term; some posit that in Chicano culture this term means "a good brave man." However, in this instance and throughout the dissertation, I refer to the term's sexist overtones. In this capacity, machismo ideology is founded in a masculinist history that subjected women to male domination in their daily lives. In addition, as a cultural institution, Catholicism contributed to machismo ideology by providing a religious base for thinking of women as inferior and for defining them solely in the capacity of a devoted wives and good mothers. Chicanas expressed concern with traditional gender roles that relegated them to subservience. In particular, Chicana writers

challenged the stereotype of the Chicano ideal woman—a sacrificing and devoted wife and mother who gained fulfillment only in these roles. In short, in a culture of machismo, a good Chicana woman emulated the Virgin Mary in her devotion to children and family. Even within the nationalist movement, Chicanas' main role was to support the efforts of their husbands and to provide a nurturing environment for their children.

Consequently, Chicana feminist thought was born from unresolved internal gender battles that Chicanas fought during the 1960s and 1970s within their own culture, community, and El Movimiento. Specifically, early Chicana feminism attempted to make the Chicano movement acknowledge Chicana issues such as concern for equal social standing and respect, equal pay, access to good-paying jobs, welfare rights, reproductive rights, and equal responsibility by both men and women for child care⁶. Chicana feminists criticized Chicano cultural beliefs and practices that basically kept them in the role of a socially subservient nurturer of the family. Unfortunately, by the 1980s Chicanas observed little change in their basic inequalities with Chicano men: they were still victims of employment discrimination and still subject to stereotypical submissive roles in their culture. The struggle for social rights continued.

Another avenue for social promotion opened up during the 1980s. During this time Chicana feminists began to emerge in higher academic institutions and to press for integration of Chicana issues into Chicano studies programs and also began to organize conferences dealing with Chicana equality issues⁷. After the Chicano movement as a specific historical manifestation subsided in the 1980s, Chicana feminists of this decade and of the 1990s continued efforts to combat sexism and patriarchal oppression. They began to see, as a result of academic Chicana feminist work, that discrimination against

Chicanas also came from not only their “gender and sexual identity” but also due to “their racial and ethnic and largely working class positions within the United States” (García 261). Acknowledging that there had been some success by the 1990s for Chicanas in terms of job access and social rights, Chicana feminists still noted the portrayal of stereotypes of Mexican and Mexican-American women within their own community as well as within the United States at large. These stereotypes depicted women as passive, subservient, and victims of macho ideology. Chicana feminists, in particular those within the United States academy, sought to combat those stereotypes by recovering “a history of strong Mexican women from both sides of the border” (García 262) that had been omitted and/or ignored by masculinist histories. Recovering this history would allow Chicanas to define themselves outside of the traditional patriarchal binary of women as virgin or whore.

Identity issues became a major concern of Chicana feminists during the 1990s. In particular gender identity became a more complex issue that attempted to confront notions of female sexuality perpetuated by macho culture. Chicana feminists of today who actively work within United States academic institutions are changing curriculums and publishing works that incorporate voices from Chicana history that were not advocated by masculinist writings. Chicana feminists challenge the traditional role of women within the Mexican and Mexican-American culture and question how history, religion, and culture had imprisoned them in patriarchy. They want to break out of chains of passivity and essentialism and instead bring to light models of women who struggle and assert. For Chicanas that includes dismantling accepted cultural models that kept them from their own self-construction.

The Mexican Model of Mother

The most important Mexican and Mexican-American cultural model that contributes to the construction of female subjectivity is the model of Mother. The Mexican model of Mother relies upon the archetypal figure of the Great Mother. From as early as the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras “humanity lived instinctively as the child of the Great Mother, in magical harmony with her body—creation” (Harvey and Baring 10). During the Neolithic period, the Great Mother was associated with the snake that could live anywhere—desert, jungle, swamp—and could “suffocate, poison and devour” but also stood as the symbol of all healing (Harvey and Baring 18). The Great Mother was part of the ancient society of Sumer and India, where during the Bronze Age she was thought of as cosmic energy, the cosmic ocean, and again was often depicted as a serpent or great dragon. The image of the Great Mother and her association with the snake was also part of Aztec theology (Herrera-Sobek The Mexican 3). Aztec depictions of mother goddesses most often showed them surrounded by snakes or wearing skirts of snakes.⁸ However, somewhere within the three thousand years in which three patriarchal religions evolved in the Middle East, The Great Mother lost her power. Instead of an image of light and spirituality, she became an image of darkness, and she was replaced by a Great Father image and, eventually, a Son image, both associated with spirit and light. Christianity dismissed the Great Mother and instead emphasized a female as the Mother of God. The Virgin Mary’s importance is that she was the vessel to the birth of the savior. During the rule of Imperial Spain, Catholicism’s particular reverence for the Virgin Mary was born. However, the Virgin is clearly relegated to a position of subservience to men

and servitude to God the Father and the Son. Catholicism does not depict the Virgin wearing skirts of snakes. Instead, the Spaniards brought with them to Mexico the image of a woman who crushes the snakes. The Virgin Mary is often depicted as stepping on the serpent, crushing a legacy of Eve in the garden. In addition, through their colonizing efforts, the Spaniards crushed Aztec theology that gave any type of primacy to Mother goddesses. Instead, the notion of mother they perpetuated was associated with the nurturing and sacrificial figure of the Virgin Mother Mary.

After the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the Mexican archetype of Mother was highly influenced by Catholicism and patriarchal construction that defined men and women in terms of binarism. Spanish men saw themselves as God the Father and equated themselves with power and strength. They viewed women as Mary the Mother, nurturing and sacrificial. As Chicana critic Maria Herrera-Sobek posits “sociological, historical, and geographical factors are instrumental in the formation and acceptance of archetypal images” (The Mexican 9). In Mexico, after the conquest, the family structure took on European roles: The father was supreme and absolute; the mother was self-sacrificing (Díaz-Guerrero qtd. in Herrera-Sobek The Mexican 10). The status of woman in the society was defined by her status as mother and wife. Although many sociologists agree that the mother is the most important person in the Mexican family, her importance is in her role as nurturer of children and supporter of husband.

Post-colonial Mexico provided the archetype of Mother as the suffering mother (Herrera-Sobek The Mexican 3). Based on the Virgin Mary who suffered the ultimate pain as a mother who loses her son, the suffering image was enhanced by a Mexican nationalist vision who saw Mother as suffering the symbolic loss of an indigenous

identity during Spanish colonization. No other work illustrates this identity more acutely than that of Octavio Paz in The Labyrinth of Solitude. Paz's work makes it clear that the history of Mexico, and thus the history of the Mexican and Mexican-American people, is grounded in an understanding of Mother as a "long-suffering Mexican mother" who is viewed by Mexicans and outsiders as the violated woman, raped by Spanish invaders and given over to an image of woman as *la chingada*⁹, a passive, violated mother devoid of agency. The image of *la chingada* has its roots in the figure of Malinche, an indigenous woman who became the possession of Cortés and who bore him a son, thus becoming the symbolic historical mother of the Mexican people. Firmly rooted in Manichean philosophy, Paz envisions Mexico's mother as divided into mutually excluded opposites: *la chingada* as evidenced in Malinche and *la virgen* (Virgin Mother) as evidenced in Guadalupe. He realizes that the key to recovering a sense of Mexican pride and identity resides in the image of mother; however, he does not offer any revisions of Mother that allow her to break out of static binary construction.

Recovering and Renewing Mother: Chicana Feminism's Mission

Feminist archetypal criticism postulates that archetypes are "malleable entities not glorified images encased in the psyche at birth" (Herrera-Sobek, The Mexican xii). In particular, Herrera-Sobek states that "the crystallization of an archetype in society is a result of an historical process" (The Mexican xiii). Thus, Chicana feminists need to view archetypes as theoretical constructs in literature and need to provide alternative views to those who subscribe to static European colonial ideology.

The recovery of lost literature and voices of the Hispanic population has been a concern for more than just Chicanas. In 1993 Ramón Gutiérrez and Genaro Padillo edited a collection of essays entitled Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage. In this work, it is clear that during the late 1980s and early 1990s a major task of Chicanos consisted of reconstructing their literary heritage. This task included translating some Spanish works into English and also included a discovery of different Mexican-American literary texts and genres, such as *el corrido* (ballads in Spanish that often told folklore and particular personal histories) and newspapers published in the nineteenth century, mostly in the southwestern United States. It is evident by looking at the most recent editions of American Literature anthologies, that the mission of Gutiérrez and Padillo has been somewhat successful. Works by numerous Latino and Chicano writers¹⁰ are included in both the Norton and Heath anthologies. Moreover, Latina writers such as Cisneros and Judith Ortiz Cofer and even Mexican legends of la Llorona and La Virgen de Guadalupe have also been published. However, what is lacking, according to numerous authors in Gutiérrez and Padillo's collection, is a literary theory with which to approach the literature. Chicano critics such as José David Saldívar question the validity of using European and Anglo-American theories for analysis and sought to write their own theories. Throughout the 1990s both Chicanos and Chicanas attempted the critical task. Chicanas, in particular, had much work to do because recovery of female texts and histories took much historical digging, since many were in the form of oral tradition. Moreover, in creating theory, Chicanas thought that even Chicano theories of "border studies" were still steeped in patriarchal construction. However, border ideology became important to Chicana theorizing, in that it opened a space for challenging the notion of a

stable and hegemonic history and literary past by looking at cultural history not as linear construct but as a bridge that crosses borders of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including indigenous cultures and their histories, beliefs and practices. This includes, of course, re-evaluating archetypal images that have been part of hegemonic thinking: “We [Hispanics] come with a set bag of archetypes, a difficult view of our collective past and hopeful sense for the future. To become full U.S. citizens, we need to reinvent ourselves, to rewrite our history, to reformulate the patterns of our imaginations” (Stavans 190-91). Furthermore, Chicana writers realized that this passport must also include revision of gender specific archetypes.

Postcolonial theory is related to border studies since both bring into focus culture in the borderlands: the space where different cultures merge, where binaries disappear and instead give way to conjunctural, relational ways of thinking about culture. In Chicana culture, the borderlands include Anglo culture, Mexican culture, African culture, and *la cultura de la india*. In other words, the borderlands is characteristic of cultural hybridity or intermingling brought on by a breaking down of dualistic models of thinking. In Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter (1998), Susan Stanford Friedman discusses what she calls “the politics of hybridity.” According to Stanford Friedman, hybridity is “an effect of oppression” because of a dominant group’s hegemony (90). Hybridity deconstructs this hegemonic view by “undermining authority,” by challenging “systemic structures and focusing on the individual” (Friedman 90). Thus, hybridity is location—a historical and geographical zone. In this zone “power flows multidirectionally in a contact zone instead of unidirectionally” (Friedman 90). Likewise, José David Saldívar in Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies (1997)

explores the idea of border culture as that which “transgresses various disciplines and theoretical boundaries: folklore, ethnography, musicology, history and literary theory” (39). This transgression is particularly useful in studying Chicana literature because it opens up a space for negotiating culture. For Chicanas, Malinche and Guadalupe as archetypal sites become avenues for exploration of identity and culture. In particular, these sites allow for a renegotiation of specifics of culture, such as history, religious beliefs, and a place where Walter Mignolo calls “linguaging” (simultaneous multiple language use) can be explored (269). According to Mignolo, linguaging is no longer “idiomatic (Spanish, English) but is also ethnic, sexual, and gendered” (269).

Recent theories of Chicana feminism do provide the means for revising the concept of Mother by challenging early Chicano notions of the ideal Mexican-American woman, by breaking down identity trapped in essentialist binaries, and by understanding identity as plural and relational and “grounded in historically produced facts which constitute social locations” (Moraga qtd. in Moya 127). Many Chicana feminists, such as Paula Moya, understand that identities are “subject to multiple determinations and to a continual process of verification which takes place over the course of an individual’s life through her interaction with the society she lives in” (Moya 139). Thus, Chicana feminism does not analyze oppression as do Chicanos solely from the perspective of racism but add to their analysis sexism (Moya 143). Most importantly, Chicana feminism seeks to understand that a Chicana woman’s identity is multiple, plural, and relational. In particular, images of Malinche and Guadalupe could break out from traditional binary construction and emerge as more than images of victimology and oppression defined by patriarchal social constructions.

Gloria Anzaldúa theorizes in her book Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza that any exploration of Chicana identity must take into account multiple cultures, in particular the indigenous cultural roots of pre-conquest Mexican society. Anzaldúa insists that a Chicana identity consists of the white, Mexican, and Indian cultures: “I want to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my own entrails. . . . I will have to stand and claim my space making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture” (22). *La conciencia de la mestiza*, or the mestiza consciousness, is a consciousness of the borderlands—the crossroads of different cultures—that concerns itself with the process of *mestizaje* or mixing, plurality, the hybridity of existence for Chicana women. In particular, Anzaldúa’s goal is to show how understanding cultural hybridity, or what she calls the mestiza consciousness, is essential to breaking down the false sense that a Mexican female is monolithic, essential, unchanging. Rebutting Paz’s analysis of Malinche and Guadalupe, Anzaldúa and other Chicana feminists believe that writers must recover lost indigenous female elements that contribute to a liberating construction of both archetypal figures as well as all Chicana women. For example, an understanding of a Chicana female identity should take into account Aztec mother goddesses, such as Coatlicue, the Earth Mother goddess of birth and death. The mestiza consciousness becomes vivid in an understanding of Coatlicue as an archetype not stuck in binaries but rather as “a synthesis of duality, and a third perspective—something more than mere duality or synthesis of duality” (Anzaldúa 46). Coatlicue depicts the contradictory and will emerge in the consciousness of a Chicana woman if she is able to recover that part of herself that has been buried by the conquest

and colonization and patriarchy. She will emerge in a Chicana woman's writing through simultaneous use of multiple writing forms. Thus, Anzaldúa's book combines prose, fiction, poetry, and criticism—without pausing to introduce each form. One acts with the other and for the other and can't act without the other—the hybrid state. Lines are blurred and the Coatlicue state of existence understands that self-construction is a process of recovering what was lost and an ongoing process of adding newness throughout one's life.

Likewise, Ana Castillo in Massacre of the Dreamers sees that Chicana feminists must recover their indigenous roots in order to revise themselves: “Learning about our indigenismo is a way of learning about ourselves But more importantly it will show us another way of seeing life and the world we live in now” (6). Castillo believes Xicanistas (Chicana feminists) must be archeologists and visionaries of their own culture, whereby the mestiza consciousness “can contribute that collective vision toward the development of an alternative social system” (220) that is influenced by indigenous cultural practices and *sincretismo* (a mixing of cultural beliefs). The Xicanista must confront the “historical crossroad where creative power of woman became deliberately appropriated by male society” (12) Moreover, it becomes the Xicanista's task to not only reclaim “indigenismo—but also to reinstate the forsaken feminine into our consciousness” (12). In order to reinstate the forsaken feminine, Castillo, like Anzaldúa, wants to recover those stories of the female that were formed by indigenous mythology. This means rewriting the stories of Malinche and Guadalupe in order to bring to light “the mother-bond principle” that will allow for a revisioning of Chicana culture and history that breaks out of a false state of stasis and purity. For example, an understanding

of Guadalupe must go beyond its Catholic mythology and incorporate a vision of Tonantzín, the mother goddess who contributes to a Chicana woman's personal faith by allowing an alternate spirituality devoid of Spanish patriarchal construction.

Both Anzaldúa and Castillo believe that they must challenge monolithic, totalizing versions of history and religion in order for alternative constructions of Malinche and Guadalupe to be born. Understanding that masculinist chronicles denied the power of the forsaken feminine to emerge in a Chicana woman's identity is necessary also for a greater understanding of a Chicana woman's power. Alternative histories of Malinche and alternative spiritualities associated with belief in Guadalupe allow alternative subjectivities for Chicana women to emerge. Therefore, the identity of the Chicana woman is palimpsestic: like the Aztec pyramids, each layer exposes another aspect of history, culture, and identity. Scholarly work by postcolonial critics can also help in the excavation.

Chicana feminism utilizes postcolonial strategies in order to challenge a totalizing view of literature and instead to locate analyses at the local level, attempting to reveal a multiplicity of voices, including female indigenous voices. Chicana feminism is anti-hegemonic in that it challenges imperial discourse and subsequent nationalist discourse that make patriarchal and Eurocentric values and beliefs most valuable. Thus, Chicana feminism uses postcolonial strategies in order to explore the extent to which representations and language are crucial to identity formation and subjectivity construction. Masculinist writings that erased female indigenous voices leave Chicana women devoid of agency. Chicana feminists are particularly interested in how colonialism operated in different ways for women and how gender issues during

colonization cannot be ignored. Gender discrimination was most certainly prevalent during colonization but continued through nationalist efforts, like those of Octavio Paz. Thus, “[e]ven post-independence practices of anti-colonial nationalism are not free from . . . gender bias, and constructions of the traditional or pre-colonial are often heavily infected by a contemporary masculinist bias that falsely represents native women as quiet and subordinate” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Triffin 104).

Chicana feminists interested in creating an anti-colonial force promote active agency for both figures of Malinche and Guadalupe. Some postcolonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak argue that this agency is impossible since the “real” voice of either figure does not exist in any place, in any writing. What remains of both figures, Spivak would argue, is a product of colonial desire to create a particular subjectivity of the indigenous that is constructed to suit the needs of colonial domination. Although Spivak, in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), posits that in “the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak,” (287) Chicana feminists find it necessary to allow these figures to have a voice that is created by a mestiza consciousness. The Chicana mission does have a goal of providing contemporary Chicanas with a renewed self-construction that is based on recovering, revising, and renewing the lost indigenous female voice. However, their creation of new archetypes is not a mere replacement of the old with the new but provides a means for exploring differing relationships within discourses. They are concerned with a decolonization process that is informed by relationships between discourses (such as those of the colonial period and national period), as well as by social forces, such as colonization, that illustrate the particular double bind for colonized women, whereby women’s bodies become a site of conquest and control. Thus Spivak’s

concern about the subaltern's silence can be addressed by acknowledging that identity is polyvocal and often contradictory (Friedman 19). This idea is greatly influenced by postcolonial studies that look at identity discourse as “constantly shifting” through “different points of reference and material conditions of history” (Friedman 23).

Like Chicana feminist theory, Postcolonial theory “commits itself to historical and psychological recovery” (Gandhi 8). It concerns itself with relationships between cultural identity and a historical past. Postcolonial literary theory focuses on the way in which the colonizing culture distorts the experiences of the colonized culture by relying upon its ethnocentric values and by articulating experiences in terms of cultural beliefs and literary forms of the homeland. Moreover, if as Susan Stanford Friedman postulates, identity is a “site of multiple subject positions” (21), then identity must be viewed as relational and fluid. For example, the writings of the Spanish conquistadors often assume the inferiority of the Aztec and other indigenous peoples because the indigenous could not speak Spanish and knew nothing of Spanish culture, including Catholic religion. Colonial writings often describe the indigenous people as savage, pagan, and barbarian. One reason¹¹ for these descriptions could be that Spanish colonizers sought to get financial backing from Imperial Spain for continued colonizing endeavors; therefore, these writings create the indigenous people as weak and as being ripe and ready for Spanish control. Their writings purport that indigenous riches of gold and gems could be easily confiscated, and that the people would willingly convert to Catholicism. Postcolonial theory exposes how the “conquest” period relied heavily on a concept of “otherness.” This concept reduced the world into a binary of “us” represented by Old World values of good, rational, and masculine, and “them” represented by New World

values of evil, chaotic, and feminine. Of course in the colonial ideology, New World people were weaker and would succumb to Old World superiority. This ethnocentrism denies the diverse nature and traditions of the colonized people. Colonial writings privilege versions of history that elevate patriarchy, the perspectives and values of the colonizers, and Christianity in the form of Catholicism. In each of these categories the female is absent. Thus, postcolonial theory, like Chicana feminist theory, attempts to expose the biases of colonial narrations and is built on concepts of resistance, subversion, and difference. As postcolonial critic Leela Gandhi states “a productive area of collaboration between postcolonialism and feminism presents itself in the possibility of a combined offensive against the aggressive myth of both imperial and nationalist masculinity” (98).

In The Location of Culture, postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha explains that it is politically crucial for theorists to focus “on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (1) in order to widen the limits of theories that look at situations from a binary or dualistic perspective. Problematizing constructivist and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality that maintain hierarchical structures, he believes that it is necessary to concentrate on the “in-between” space, the “liminal space, that “provide[s] for the terrain for elaborating selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate[s] new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1). Like Anzaldúa, Bhabha believes that postcolonial studies must concentrate on the boundary or bridge where “stuff happens” (Bhabha 5). Specifically, the sites where “stuff happens” involve those sites where historical and cultural meaning can be negotiated. Malinche and Guadalupe as archetypes

are sites for negotiating meaning, in particular subjectivity issues for Chicana women, such as historical roles, sexuality issues and women's spirituality. Chicana feminist theory views literature in terms of its personal, historical, and cultural hybridity. This hybridity defines a Chicana as a Mexican, a citizen of the United States, a woman, a daughter of the Aztec fertility goddess Tonantzin, a practitioner of Guadalupan Catholicism—this is just the beginning.

In the hands of Chicana writers, then, Malinche emerges as a mother figure to be admired not denied. Malinche's image becomes a literary construct that changes based upon interpretation of her historical significance at the time. History is not seen as a monolithic entity but rather an entity that changes based on the purpose of the writer. Mexico's spiritual mother, Guadalupe, is also an entity that changes in the hands of different writers who have different purposes: historical, political, and spiritual. As an archetypal figure Guadalupe stands as the symbol of the hybrid moment and mother of Mexico; she is the mother of the mestiza people, the new race, *la raza*. A mix of Spanish Catholicism and indigenous reverence to the Aztec mother goddess Tonantzin, Guadalupe emerges as a symbol of the liminal space where the mestiza people are born. For Chicanas, the construction of Guadalupe is a construction for female subjectivity, informed more than anything else by a Catholic patriarchy.

Although many feminists would reject Guadalupe because of her roots in the figure of the Virgin Mary, other Catholic feminist theologians, such as Elizabeth Johnson and Rosemary Radford Ruether, acknowledging the populist roots and the female experiences associated with the Virgin Mary, explain that the Virgin Mary does not have to be static entity. For them Mary is not simply the vessel that carried the savior, not

simply a subordinate female to God the Father and God the Son. Instead, Catholic feminist theologians stress the independence of Mary, the woman who actively chose her destiny, and who listens and comforts the poor and oppressed, allowing them access to spiritual power. Chicana feminists also seek to claim this spiritual power and autonomy for Guadalupe in order to provide an alternative model of Mary that contributes positively to a Chicana woman's vision of herself. They look to revise the image of Guadalupe in order to broaden the scope of the patriarchal Catholic church's mission—a mission that keeps the traditional Mary, and thus the traditional Guadalupe, in a subordinate role to God the Father and Son. The power of Catholicism in Latin America and, in particular, Mexico can not be ignored. However, Chicanas seek to liberate Mary and Guadalupe from the patriarchal confines of the Catholic Church. Liberating Guadalupe from male construction allows for a plurality of her construction that acknowledges her indigenous roots and indigenous female creative power as well as her Catholic roots that are not steeped in passivity but rather in the activity of a mother figure that is never too busy to listen and to offer support. Catholic feminist theologian Jeanette Rodriguez, in her 1994 work Our Lady of Guadalupe, studies how Guadalupan Catholicism contributes positively to Chicana identity by “provid[ing] them with a spiritual form of resistance to sociopolitical negation of Mexican-American women” (xxi). Specifically, Rodriguez finds that as a symbol, Guadalupe “bridges cultures” and “affirms [Mexican-American women] because she looks like them and is a woman and a mother and she affirms their Anglo-educated side, challenging sexism” (151).

The above feminist critics are concerned with exploring a space whereby Chicana women may find an avenue to reinterpret their roles in society, which have kept them

chained to binary constructions. The space they look for is part of a postcolonial ideology that recognizes how colonial discourse reduced all to self/other, master/slave, civilized/indigenous, etc. Chicana writers seek to enunciate life in this in-between state or borderland that provides a fluidity in which languages and identities hybridize and evolve. For too long the subaltern history of the Chicano/a peoples has been buried, silenced. As Chicana feminist historian Emma Pérez posits, “these silences, when heard, become the negotiating spaces for the decolonizing subject” (5). Pérez and other Chicanas look for a way to make Chicana agency transformative. Pérez calls this new perspective the decolonial imaginary (5), the space and/or the borderland where negotiation and possibilities come to consciousness. Likewise, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the borderland or *la frontera* as an “undetermined place . . . that is in a constant state of transition.” Her writing is an example of hybridity and borderland consciousness that combines performance elements of an oral tradition with poetry, prose, and personal ethnography, in order to reveal experiences of Chicana women within and between cultures. The figures of Malinche and Guadalupe provide a way into borderland consciousness whereby Chicana feminists explore re-understandings and re-evaluations of these figures within a multicultural, postcolonial framework.

¹ Women of the United States who are “politically aware . . . of Mexican heritage [and] at least partially descended from the indigenous people of Mesoamerica” (Moya 139).

² I italicize these Spanish names only once. Afterwards, I will not use italics to note their Spanish language origins. I have followed this practice throughout the dissertation with the purpose of crossing language boundaries. After italicizing and/or defining Spanish words, I will integrate Spanish words into my text.

³ Gloria Anzaldúa is a Chicana *tejana* lesbian-feminist poet and fiction writer. She co-edited [This Bridge Called My Back](#) (1983), a ground-breaking work for feminists of color. Her book [Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza](#) (1987) is quoted in just about every critical publication about Chicana writers or Chicana feminism and is also quoted regularly in books about postcolonial and border studies. She has played a pivotal role in redefining U.S. feminism, cultural studies, Chicana studies, U.S. American literature, queer theory, and postcolonial theory.

Ana Castillo is a Chicana feminist author of the 1987 American Book Award winner, [The Mixquihuala Letters](#), the novel [So Far From God](#) (1993), a collection of essays on Xicanisma entitled

Massacre of the Dreamers (1994), and various poetry collections. Most recently she edited La Diosa de las Americas: Writings on La Virgen de Guadalupe (1996).

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago in 1954, the daughter of a Mexican father and a Mexican-American mother. She now lives in San Antonio, Texas. She is the author of the novel The House on Mango Street (1984), Women Hollering Creek and Other Stories (1991) and several collections of poetry, including Loose Woman (1994).

Pat Mora is a native of El Paso, Texas, and author of numerous poetry collections, including Chants (1984), Border (1986), Communion (1991), and Agua Santa: Holy Water (1995). She is the most widely anthologized Chicana poet in the country and also has authored numerous children's books as well as a 1997 novel, House of Houses.

⁴ See bibliographic sources: Ghandi, Said, and Spivak.

⁵ Chicano is a politically-charged term that refers to Mexican-Americans who sought social, political, and economic freedom for themselves in the United States during the time period.

⁶ These issues are detailed in an article by Anna Nieto Gomez published in volume 2.5 of Caracol in 1976 on pages 3-5.

⁷ See essays by Espinoza, Sandoval, and Mujeres en Marcha at the University of California at Berkeley that are all published in section 5 of Alma M. García's Chicana Feminist Thought, 1997.

⁸ One such goddess is known as Coatlicue, goddess of the serpent skirt. Detailed discussion of her appears in chapter 3.

⁹ La chingada means "the violated mother," or literally "the fucked mother." A complete discussion of the term as used by Octavio Paz appears in chapter 2.

¹⁰ Some examples of writers include Rudolfo Anaya, Gary Soto, and Pedro Pietri.

¹¹ There are many complex reasons for portraying the native American as inferior beings. Some go back to ancient times in Plato's concept of the savage as inferior and, of course, Euro/ethnocentrism plays a major role. During the early 1500s there were debates regarding whether or not the Indians were rational beings. Bartolome de las Casas defended the natives as rational whereas Juan Gens de Supulveda argued that they were not. I stress the financial incentive here but there are other reasons that should be considered.

Chapter One

The Silenced Mother of Mexico: Malinche as Masculinist Construction

How does one introduce Malinche? No writings of her own exist. What does exist about her comes from indigenous texts translated into Spanish and then translated again into English or from chronicles written by Spaniards whose goal was not to tell of her but rather to tell of the conquest of the New World. Questions and conjectures abound. Whose story is to be trusted? Is there any one story that is truer than any other? How different would the entire story of the conquest be if told from Malinche's point of view? The chroniclers of the conquest came from different ethnic backgrounds and different cultures but they all shared one commonality: they were male. Male-inscribed chronicles tell the story of this one woman. What is presented in this chapter, however, is not an historian's attempt at presenting the one and only valid historical figure called Malinche; instead, this chapter concentrates on the archetypal figure and the myths of Malinche--for these are what have constructed her. That said, readers unfamiliar with Malinche would require some summary of her: what follows is my own summary reconstruction.

Malinal or Malinulli was born around 1505 in the village of Painalla within the province of Catzucualco located in the Yucatan peninsula. She was the daughter of a *cacique* (chief) who died when Malinal was young. Her mother remarried, bore a son, and was determined that he should be the heir to all of her first husband's wealth. Therefore, she sold her daughter into slavery but told the village that her daughter died. Malinal then became a slave for a *cacique* in Tabasco, where she grew up, evidencing a facility for learning different languages. The Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés arrived

in Tabasco in 1519 and began to either defeat non-Aztec villages or to convince them to join him in order to defeat the powerful Aztecs. The Tabascans were one of the powerful groups who joined with Cortés. In 1519, the Tabascan *cacique* gave to Cortés many female slaves, one of whom was the 14-year-old Malinal. The Spaniards pronounced her name as Malinche, and Cortés soon learned her value as a translator of the different *mexica* dialects. Her proximity to the Spaniards afforded her quick opportunity to also learn Spanish. Her role in helping Cortés in the conquest of the Aztecs earned her a place as his constant companion. Soon she was baptized as a Christian and renamed Dona Marina. Malinche remained under Cortés' command until the Spaniards conquered the great Aztec city of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City). Some time during these events she gave birth to Cortés' son who was baptized under the name of Martín. She eventually returned to her hometown where she is said to have forgiven her mother and brother for their complicity in her slavery. Eventually, she married Juan Jaramillo, one of Cortés' subordinates, and lived on land located in Jilotepec that was given to her by Cortés. She died in 1530.¹

The above summary is all that is officially known about Malinche, and even within this summary there is historical debate. Conjectures comprise most of what is written or said about Malinche, known now as the mother of the *mestiza* people. She is considered the first mother of Mexico, but her association has been with the archetypal figure of Eve rather than with Mary. According to María Herrera-Sobek, Malinche is a version of the archetypal traitor figure of Eve because of "selling out" to the Spanish and betraying her own people (67). Because of conflicting information about her and her role in the conquest, historians and chroniclers have referred to her as a mother, a slave, a

princess, a traitor, and a lover. Moreover, her numerous names suggest the numerous constructions of her by others: She was Malinal--the slave, Malintzín--the princess, Dona Marina--the Christianized lady, and la Malinche--the traitor. According to Sandra Messenger Cypess, Malinche is “a literary construct” (4) whose identity changes based on the historian/writer’s ideology and on intertextuality—the incorporation of texts into other texts, suggesting that no one text is self-contained (5). Considered the first mother of the Mexican nation, she is also seen as the traitor of the indigenous. Her history and legend traditionally have exposed her as the mother/whore who was complicit in the conquest of Mexico. Her importance to Mexican identity can not be dismissed: “From the time those first messengers reached Moctezuma [the Aztec chief at Cortés’ arrival] down to the very present, she has remained a site for ongoing negotiation of meaning and self understanding in Mexican America” (Pratt, “Yo Soy” 859). In particular, her significance upon Mexican and Mexican-American women’s identity is paramount and has been historically dangerous to these women’s psycho-social existence:

Because the myth of Malintzín pervades not only male thought but ours [Chicana women’s] too as it seeps into our own consciousness in the cradle through their eyes as well as our mothers’, who are entrusted with the transmission of culture, we may come to believe that indeed our very sexuality condemns us to enslavement. An enslavement which is subsequently manifested in self-hatred. All we see is hatred of women. We must hate her too since love seems only possible through extreme virtue whose definition is at best slippery. (Alarcón “Chicana’s” 183)

In order to understand Malinche's influence on these women's subjectivity and construction, her image must be re-evaluated, and histories and myths about Malinche must be deconstructed.

Traditional masculinist constructs of Malinche helped to create a mythology of her as a traitor and a whore that serves as a negative symbol for all Indian women. In other words, Malinche is an archetypal figure of Latin America that has been formed by a patriarchal structure in both Spanish and Mexican cultures that portray her as a betrayer, as Eve-like, as sexually passive, and as "highly pawnable" (Alarcón "Chicana's" 184). Thus, an accurate history of Malinche is elusive, and what has been perpetuated for hundreds of years categorizes her within a violent hierarchy of binary opposition. Throughout her textualization in Spanish chronicles and popular mythic conceptions, Malinche is subject to a patriarchal schema of identification that categorizes women as either good or evil. In the Mexican schema, much influenced by Catholicism, a woman is either good like the Virgin Mother Guadalupe, or evil like the Eve-figure Malinche. The evilness of Eve is derived from her disobedience of God the father when she ate of the forbidden fruit. Constructed by imperialist Spanish thinking, Malinche becomes part of a binary opposition that establishes a relation of dominance, whereby Malinche is an inferior colonized being subject to power and authority of the colonizers. In a double bind, she is not only colonized but also female. Hence, Malinche traditionally is subject to Kantian dualistic notions of ethnicity and gender that render her as other.

Masculine constructions introduce Malinche in one of three ways: as part of Cortés' triumphant conquest, as a traitor to her people, and/or as a victim of a tragic love affair (Del Castillo 122). Most historians do view Malinche as primary to Spanish victory

during the conquest because of her essential translation skills. Most will concede that without Malinche, Cortés may not have met with success or certainly would not have met with such quick success. William Prescott (1843) and Jerome R. Adams (1991), historians whose publications occur nearly 150 years apart, view her role in the conquest as significant enough for her name to be consistently coupled with Cortés' name in many of the indigenous codices² and in the Spanish chronicles. For example, the Spanish transliterated her indigenous name Malinal to Malinche—an appellation that stuck through the ages. Both the Spanish and the indigenous people referred to her as la Malinche and to Cortés as el Malinche (Adams 4-5). This coupling illustrates that they were viewed as two parts of the same whole: male and female combined as conqueror. Cortés is the conquistador and, as Jerome Adams entitles his biographical study of her, Malinche is the “Mother of the Conquest.”

Many masculinist chronicles totalize the history of Malinche in terms of binary oppositions that are all too prevalent in colonial writings. Most of these narratives rely upon the Hegelian metaphor of the master/slave relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Cortés and other Spaniards with him, whether soldiers or priests, viewed the indigenous people of Mexico through an ethnocentric lens, as barbaric, pagan, and intellectually inferior. To the Spaniards, these people practiced the atrocity of human sacrifice, knew nothing of the salvation of Catholicism, and were totally unaware of the “glory” of Imperial Spain. Add to this ethnocentric perspective their patriarchal traditions, and women, in particular indigenous women, were nothing more than instruments of male control. Indigenous women were slaves first to their indigenous masters and then to their Spanish masters.

When 34-year-old Hernán Cortés arrived in 1519, Malinche was a fourteen-year-old slave of the *cacique* of the province of Tabasco. The Tabascans were sworn enemies of the Aztecs, and as an astute military strategist, Cortés quickly befriended them and promised them that together they would defeat their Aztec enemies. Malinche and other women were given to Cortés by the Tabascan chiefs to be cooks for the Spanish.³ Cortés distributed these females amongst his officers, first giving the attractive and intelligent Malinche to his good friend, Alonzo Hernandez Puertocarrero. But Puertocarrero soon left camp for Spain. Jerome Adams conjectures that Puertocarrero's quick departure could well have been due to Cortés realization that he made a mistake in "giving her" to another man because he could use Malinche's language skills in the conquest (5). Therefore, Cortés sent him as bearer of his first missive to Carlos V. As further proof of his conjecture, historian Adams then strangely quotes a translator of Cortés' letters, J. Bayard Morris, as stating "women had always had a great affection for him"(5). Adams implies that Cortés purposefully sent Puertocarrero back to Spain and makes it seem as if Malinche found Cortés irresistible and therefore condoned Puertocarrero's dismissal. In any case, once Puertocarrero was gone, Cortés took Malinche for himself as slave, sexual partner, and translator.

While a slave in Tabasco, Malinche learned Mayan dialects used in the Yucatan; knowledge of these dialects coupled with her native Nahuatl made her a valuable commodity to Cortés. He used her as an interpreter at his first meeting with the Aztec chief Moctezuma. Malinche translated Nahuatl into Mayan for Cortés' Spanish translator, the priest Jeronimo de Aguilar, who had learned Mayan while shipwrecked off the coast of Cozumel. It was Aguilar who then translated the information into Spanish (Lenchek;

Prescott; Todorov). However, Malinche soon learned Spanish and became Cortés' main translator. What was lost and what was gained during these translations will never be known.

Just what role Malinche had in securing Cortés' victory is unclear. Historians such as Prescott view Malinche as a willing participant in Cortés' battle: "She always remained faithful to the countrymen of her adoption, and her knowledge of the language and customs of the Mexicans . . . enabled her to extricate the Spaniards more than once, from the most embarrassing and perilous situation" (Prescott 215). A century and a half later, Tzvetan Todorov, writer of The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other (1984), comes to the same conclusion as Prescott and others. He too believes that Malinche was a willing participant: "We can imagine that she retains a certain rancor toward her own people . . . [and] she resolutely chooses to side with the conquistadors" (100). According to Todorov, she "adopts the Spaniard's ideology in order to understand her own culture better" (101). His proof of this assertion is a one-sentence explanation that her character (as often described by chroniclers) and conduct reflect those of a Spanish Christian lady (101). Todorov attempts to understand the indigenous "other" but does so by looking at them through the perception of the Spaniards at the time (4). In a 254-page work about the conquest, Todorov devotes a grand total of three pages (not in sequential order) to Malinche. He concludes, however, that "all agree in recognizing [her] importance" (100). Certainly Malinche helped Cortés to communicate his ideas and to gather strategic information, but simultaneously she helped her own people by protecting them from the Spaniard's ruthless slaughter, which most certainly would have been their fate. Although the Spaniards openly condemned the Aztec practice of human

sacrifice, they slaughtered thousands under the name of Christianity. Moreover, she acted in unison with her village in order to defeat the Aztecs who heavily taxed her people and depended on their subjects for food and as sacrifices. Some Chicana feminists conjecture that Malinche believed she was helping her people to escape the cruelty—which included human sacrifice—of the Aztecs. In addition, her own religion would have seen Cortés' arrival as fulfilling the prophecy of the return of Quetzalcoatl⁴—a savior figure who was supposed to arrive in 1519, the same year Cortés arrived, and who would be light-skinned and would travel across the ocean. Other Chicana feminists posit that Malinche would have found Christianity to be more compassionate to non-Aztec communities (Del Castillo; Hurtado; Alarcón).

Although crucial to Cortés' success and conquest, Malinche is hardly mentioned in his Letters from Mexico. Written to Carlos V in order to ensure continued monetary support for Cortés' New World conquest, the letters mention Malinche very few times. When he does refer to her, he objectifies her by calling her *la lengua*, the tongue. In his writings he refers to her merely as the body part that most benefits him at the time. He speaks of her directly--only in passing--in Letter II and V. Cortés in a nonchalant manner describes her crucial role in Tlaxcala, which led to Spanish victory: "My interpreter, who is an Indian woman from Putunchan, was told by another Indian woman about Moctezuma's men" (73). In this slight reference, Cortés invokes Malinche for personal gain and does not even get her birthplace correct. In Letter V he uses her as proof of his worth when describing his conquests to Carlos V and here refers to her with her Christian name, since Imperial Spain, no doubt, was quite impressed with the Catholic conversions that were taking place in the New World: "I replied that I was the captain of whom the

people of Tabasco had spoken, and that if he wished to learn the truth he had only to ask the interpreter with whom he was speaking, Marina, who traveled always in my company after she had been given to me as a present with twenty other women” (376). The letter continues, “She then told him what I had said was true and spoke to him of how I had conquered Mexico and of all the other lands which I held subject and had placed beneath your majesty’s command” (376). It is clear that he wanted to impress Carlos V and that any liberties that he could take in describing situations that would add to his valor and glory would be within Cortés’ purview. However, the letter does not necessarily tell us what Malinche really said.

The tongue was not the only part of Malinche that satisfied Cortés. There is much conjecture about whether Malinche gave sex freely to Cortés (not that she had much choice), but there is no doubt that she gave birth to his son who was baptized Martín and who stands as the symbol of the first mestizo child (Adams 12). There is also no dispute that Cortés considered her as his possession and therefore his sexual vessel. As was common practice with slaves, she was baptized as Doña Marina, most likely in order to “ameliorate” men “taking [indigenous] women as mistresses, or as in the case of married men like Cortés, adulter[ers]” (Adams 4).

Other Spanish texts of the conquest also show Malinal quickly transformed into Doña Marina. One of the key sources of information about Malinche is Bernal Díaz de Castillo’s The Conquest of New Spain, written in the sixteenth century. Díaz, one of Cortés’ foot soldiers, takes great pleasure in presenting Malinche as a Christianized woman whose background is noble and beauty unsurpassed. His colorful descriptions present her as young, beautiful, and rich: “She was christened Dona Marina, and she was

a great lady and a *Cacique* over towns and vassals since her childhood” (86). It is clear from his description that Díaz takes liberties in his chronicle: In reality, although Malinche was born a daughter to a *cacique*, her mother eventually sold her into slavery and she moved from one slave owner to the next. Díaz’ interest is in creating a proper Spanish woman of the Romance tradition. His story makes it appear that there was genuine affection between Cortés and Malinche, and he continually describes her as being “by his side.” Díaz paints her as a proper Spanish lady, erases any indigenous qualities, and shows that all respected her: “Doña Marina was a person of great importance, and was obeyed without question by all the Indians of New Spain” (86). In addition, he relates the story of her noble birth and her subsequent dismissal by her mother who sells her as a slave to another village in order to protect the inheritance rights of her younger son. But according to Díaz, like the biblical Joseph, Malinche eventually forgave her family and told them that “God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from worship of idols and making her a Christian, and giving her a son by her lord and master Cortés, also in marrying her to such a gentleman as her husband Juan Jarmillo” (86). It is difficult to accept that Malinche believed in a “destined” reward of finding love in the arms of first, Cortés, and second, her husband, a man chosen by Cortés.

Díaz compares Malinche to Joseph in order to validate her by Christianizing her but also by masculinizing her. Either she is a proper Spanish lady or she is manly in her valor, thus likening her to el Malinche. In this way she becomes part and parcel of Cortés’ mission of conquest. In particular, she is used to show that colonization had divine approval. Díaz portrays her as a predestined gift to help the Spaniards in their conquest. Thus, Díaz insists that she becomes a soldier of Christ and a soldier of Cortés:

“But let me say that Doña Marina, although a native woman, possessed such manly valour that though she heard every day that Indians were going to kill us and eat our flesh with chillis, and though she had seen us surrounded in recent battles and knew that we were all wounded and sick, yet she betrayed no weakness but a courage greater than that of a woman” (153). It is only as a man that a woman could be so brave. Chicana feminist Herrera-Sobek provides an interesting perspective about such masculinizations in a discussion of how Spanish conquistadors would have been quite familiar with myths about Greek woman-warrior archetypes, such as Athena, the virgin goddess and soldier. Thus, Díaz employs an archetypal female figure well known by him and his readers. The noble qualities of Malinche that most of the Spanish narratives speak of are those traditionally thought of as masculine: bravery, valor, courage, and strength. On the other hand, Spanish Romantic writers also used Díaz’ writings as the basis of a portrayal of Doña Marina as the “woman of *la noche triste* [the sad night]” when Cortés men suffered great losses in battle. She is depicted as the “the nurse to the defeated soldiers, the comforter of Cortés, drying the tears that stained his lined face” (Adams 11). Haniel Long, in his fictitious work about her, says she is “the simplest and clearest expression in history or mythology of the union and disunion of man and woman”(qtd. in Adams 12).

All of the above writings by male writers manage Malinche in their writings by rendering her static as either *le lengua*, a womb, a Christian, a proper lady, or a woman of manly valor. Postcolonial literary theory provides a means for understanding these masculinist constructions of Malinche. Postcolonial theory claims “that textuality is endemic to the colonial encounter” and that more than any other social and political product, texts are the most “significant instigators and purveyors of colonial power”

(Gandhi 41). For example, Edward Said's discussion of *Orientalism* (1978) makes clear that colonial discourse is a way of knowing the other, a way of maintaining power over it. As a form of discourse and thinking, Orientalism is a way of knowing others, the ultimate example of constructing others in order to maintain control and power over them.

Building on Said's premise, Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* states "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types based on racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (70). In keeping with the colonial tradition of their day, the discourse of Cortés and Díaz maintain Malinche as a foreign object that might only act by being acted upon. Mary Louis Pratt and others would call the texts by Cortés and Díaz ethnographic texts, "those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their other" ("Arts" 35) for their own purposes. In effect, each ethnographic text presents a vision of Malinche that empowers the writer's own story and that, subsequently, disables her own abilities in self-construction by silencing her. In this way Malinche becomes a subaltern figure—denied hegemonic power because of her indigenous status as well as her status as female. As Gayatri Spivak states in the article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), ". . . both as an object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If in the context of colonial production the subaltern has not history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadows" (287). As this chapter illustrates, Malinche is deeply in shadow.

Contemporary historians build upon the Spanish texts and continue to construct Malinche in terms of binarism. She is slave to the master Cortés. She is an inferior Indian

to the superior Spanish. She is a womb not a penetrator. She is a tongue not a voice. She is pagan but then saved as a Catholic. The colonizing texts, including to a certain extent the contemporary histories included in this chapter, manage her by creating a person who fits in with the writer's ideology. Cortés dismisses her importance, as a woman can only serve him, and, of course, exalts his own authority and political agency. Díaz exalts her by placing her within a Romance tradition. Other chronicles make her a tragic victim to a broken heart. Contemporary historians also often refer to Malinche as victim. Ultimately, however, Malinche is rarely mentioned in any of these histories or chronicles. Historical accounts are much more interested in Cortés and the conquest or in the human sacrifices practiced by the Aztecs. Hence, Malinche is objectified and/or dismissed, silenced. The irony of this cannot be overlooked. It is her use of words and voice that aids the colonial mission and what will eventually get her expelled by her own community, who will view her as traitor after her death .

The indigenous codices, most often translated by Spanish priests, also do not show or tell much about Malinche. However, both the Codex Floretino and The Lienzo de Tlaxcala depict her as “standing beside Cortés and translating his words or issuing her own instruction” (qtd. in Adams 4). The indigenous did refer to Malinal as Malintzín, a name ending that indicates respect. Hence, there was a time when her people did not hate her or associate her with a traitor. However, Malinche will eventually be viewed by the indigenous as an extension of the pre-conquest folklore figure of La Llorona, the weeping woman, because both women share a sadness related to lost children, albeit Malinche's loss is a symbolic one—the loss of *mexica* identity in general. There are various versions of the tale of La Llorona but the ending remains the same: La Llorona kills her children

and then dies herself because of her love for a man. One version tells the story of a beautiful but poor girl who married a dashing, young, wealthy ranchero. They had two children and lived happily until he left her for another woman of his socioeconomic class. When she found out about the other woman, she turned against her children and threw them into the river. When she realized what she had done, she went into the water after them, but it was too late and they drowned. The story goes on to relate how then she too died, most likely a suicide. After her death, the villagers claimed that they could see her walking the banks of the river, while crying for her children. Thus she became known as the weeping or wailing woman. Another version of the legend claims that she drowned her own children in order to go off with her own lover and then was sentenced by God to search for her children throughout eternity (Castillo 109). The Medea-like Llorona must suffer the consequences of putting her own desires before that of her family—there can be no greater “sin” for a Mexican mother. Regardless of the version of the tale, the legacy of La Llorona, and because of her association with Malinche, the legacy of Malinche, relates the following moral to the story: any woman “with the audacity to consider her own needs before those of the men of her family” will be considered a traitor (Sternbach 54). Further, according to Ana Castillo, Malinche becomes a “nationalist version [of La Llorona] . . . an Indian woman who is lamenting over her lost race after the conquest” (109). Like Eve, her sexuality is at fault. But since this legend predates the conquest, it is evident that preconquest mythology also sought to control the behavior of women, in particular their sexual behavior. This image of Malinche as nationalist construct is crucial to an understanding of Mexican and Mexican-American identity politics.

What is evident is that Malinche becomes a site whereby Mexicans must locate their nationalistic moment. Her role in the conquest and her giving birth to Cortés' son contribute to her emergence as a symbol of the modern national moment, whereby the Aztec empire will be replaced by European colonial values and hierarchies. Throughout their history, Mexicans must negotiate meaning in this nationalistic site in order to have an understanding of their past and their identity. In the standard national practice, Mexicans assign negative values to the Spanish and to the indigenous figures who aligned themselves with the Spanish. Thus, Malinche as national site is problematic for contemporary Mexicans who are still not comfortable with their European or indigenous roots.

Therefore, contemporary Mexican history often paints a picture of Malinche as a traitor and a whore. The titles of two articles published during the 1990s illustrate this fact: "La Malinche: Harlot or Heroine?" appeared in a 1997 edition of El Ojo Del Lago and "A Historic Figure is Still Hated by Many in Mexico" was published in the March 26, 1997 edition of the New York Times. The latter article states, "La Malinche is for the most part portrayed as the perpetrator of Mexico's original sin and as a cultural metaphor for all that is wrong with Mexico" (Krauss).

No other twentieth-century analysis of Malinche from an indigenous perspective is better known than that of Octavio Paz in The Labyrinth of Solitude (1950). In this book, Paz writes essays that explore "the psychology of a nation," Mexico, by looking at this country's history through his own nationalistic lens. He attempts to negotiate in his own mind and for all Mexicans a national identity with which they can live. His nationalistic goals include both "valorizing" the indigenous and "elevat[ing] the Spanish

contribution by tempering the cruelties and atrocities attributed to them” (Cypess 69). In short, Paz romanticizes the Spanish colonization of Mexico by looking to the Spanish mission as “the best of European civilization” (Cypess 69). Paz does not dismiss the violence, in particular the rape, of Mexico by the Spanish, but attempts, while writing the book in the inherited language of the colonizers, to recover some positive aspects of the event. One such site for his recovery is Malinche. Specifically, in a chapter of the book entitled “The Sons of La Malinche” (“Hijos de La Malinche”) Paz views Malinche as a negative national symbol because her betrayal is both cultural and sexual. With sympathy but nevertheless sexism, Paz sees Malinche as “the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition” (86). His essay stands as the hallmark writing of the century, discussing the conquest as a violation and Malinche as the violated mother—*La Chingada*.

Paz begins the chapter and his discussion of *La Chingada* in an essentialist mode, defining woman as an “enigma” whose duality is evidenced in “her image of both fecundity and death.” He objectifies woman as “the supreme mystery” and further manages her by describing her as female body and mystery: “Despite woman’s full, rounded nakedness, there is always something on guard in her: *Eve and Aphrodite concentrate the mystery of the world’s heart*” (66). Placing *La Chingada* within a masculinist tradition of archetypal goddesses and, in particular, mothers, he claims that “The *Chingada* is the mother who has suffered—metaphorically or actually—the corrosive and defaming action implicit in the verb that gives her name” (Paz 75). The verb *chingar* has many definitions, all with pejorative connotations, including to fail, to annoy, to drink frequently, and to fuck. After enumerating upon these definitions, Paz settles on one: when used in reference to the Mexican woman, *chingar* denotes violence

and “the idea of breaking, of ripping open” (77). He stresses that the verb is masculine: “The verb is masculine, cruel; it stings, wounds, gashes, stains.” In addition, Paz, within a framework of binaries, states that the person who causes this action is male and active and that the person who suffers this action is female and passive: “The *chingón* is the macho⁵, the male; he rips open the *chingada*, the female, who is pure passivity, defenseless against the exterior world” (77). His definition of *la Chingada* reveals his hegemonic philosophy of men as active and women as being acted upon, thus stripping women of any active agency. Moreover, he subscribes to the Spanish colonial mission by making the Spanish conquistadors the active agents and the indigenous females the passive victims. According to Sandra Messinger Cypess in *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (1991), Paz’s “rewriting of the conquest in terms of sexual encounters follows the patriarchal social and cultural view of women as objects of exchange and shows their necessary submission to superior male figures” (89). In this way, Malinche becomes part and parcel of a Mexican national mythology where she functions as the violated mother of the Mexican people, thereby associating betrayal with the female.

Paz’s association of *la Chingada* with Malinche as a metaphor for a violated Mexico links her microcosmic sexual betrayal to a macrocosmic cultural betrayal. He elaborates upon how the word *chingar* itself reveals a dualism of opened and closed, where the verb “signifies the triumph of the closed, the male, the powerful, over the open” (Paz 78). He continues his destructive dualism by associating power with the masculine and passivity with the feminine associations of the verb. He concludes that for the Mexican (and it is clear that he refers to Mexican males, since the title of the chapter

refers to the “sons” of Malinche) there are only two choices, that he inflicts or that he suffers at the hands of others. Paz, then, gives a traditional archetypal reading of woman as tied to the land and, consequently, of the rape of a woman tied to the rape of the entire land of Mexico. Paz extends his metaphor to mean that indigenous Mexicans are viewed as feminine and that conquering Spaniards are viewed as masculine. More particularly, the Indian woman comes to be associated culturally with the passive victim. According to Emma Perez, “For Paz, *la india* personifies the passive whore, who acquiesced to the Spaniard, the conqueror, his symbolic father—the father he despises for choosing an inferior woman who begot an inferior race and the father he fears for his powerful phallus” (qtd. in Hurtado 392). Paz politicizes Malinche’s sexuality, thereby making it the symbolic means to the Spaniard’s conquest.

He is careful, however, to distinguish the Spanish phrase *hijos de puta* (sons of whores), whereby the woman voluntarily gives herself to prostitution, from the Mexican phrase *hijos de la chingada*, whereby the woman is “forcibly opened, violated, or deceived” (79). The *hijos de la chingada*, then, are the offspring of the deceit or the “fruit of a violation” (80). Within the chapter’s analysis he is more concerned with the Mexican male’s identity and subjectivity than with the female’s, which he assumes is a given: she is either virgin or *chingada*. This dichotomy, however, stems from the common denominator of passivity. For Paz, the Virgin (here he refers in particular to the Virgin of Guadalupe) is “pure receptivity,” but is consoling or calming, whereas *la chingada*’s passivity is “abject”: “She does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood, and dust” (85). Chicana feminist Norma Alarcón sees this dichotomy as subjectifying all Mexican and Mexican-American women to being acted upon: “When

our subjection is manifested through devotion we are saints and escape direct insult. When we are disobedient, hence undevout, we are equated with Malintzín; that is the myth of male consciousness, not the historical figure in all her dimensions doomed to live in chains” (“Chicana’s”187). And, of course, to choose between “extant patriarchies” is no choice at all (Alarcón “Chicana’s”187).

Paz does state that this passivity causes the Mexican woman to lose her identity, in particular, to “the outside world,” outside of Mexico, where she is only *la chingada*, who “disappears into nothingness” (85). Although he attempts to explain the struggle of a national Mexican psyche in its construction by outsiders as nothing, Paz too reduces all women to zero. Although he may attempt to show compassion or rather pity, his reductive thinking erases women and their contributions to Mexican culture. Contradicting this premise, however, Paz also claims that Malinche gave herself to Cortés voluntarily, aligning her more with *la puta* than with *la chingada*. He gives no textual/historical documentation for this claim. Further, he insists that Cortés “forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over” (Paz 86).

Paz claims that internal hatred of Malinche stems from the desire for Mexicans to live closed off to the rest of the world. He uses as proof of this assertion the zealous employment by Mexicans of the word *malinchistas* to refer to those who are corrupted by outside influences. Loathing of the outside world causes Mexico to be alone, isolated, in solitude. Within his chapter, Paz states “When he repudiates la Malinche—the Mexican Eve . . .—the Mexican breaks with the past, renounces his origins and lives in isolation and solitude” (87). He concentrates on the Mexican male’s suffering and isolation when he rejects Mother. Additionally, he states that “Solitude, the source of our anxiety, begins

on the day we are deprived of maternal protection and fall into a strange and hostile world” (80). Without Mother, there can be no protection. And since Mother was no match for the Spanish father, then Mexico can only retreat into itself, into isolation, for its protection. He does not offer any solution for this solitude or pain in the chapter. Further, he does not discuss any alternative subjectivity for Mexican women, Mother, or Malinche.

Numerous twentieth-century texts written by Mexican-American males and/or Chicanos are influenced by Paz’s essay “in which Malinche is the image of the passive object manipulated by males in expression of patriarchal ideology” (Cypess 98). In particular, plays written in Spanish and English by males of Mexican origin illustrate how a Mexican or Mexican-American woman whose identity is based on more than the body—virgin or whore—will find nothing but alienation in a patriarchal society. On stage, Malinche depicts what happens to a woman who deviates from the norm by using language and her voice—the power of the word for women brings evil. Mexican plays such as *La Malinche o La lena está verde* (1958 *La Malinche or The Firewood is Green*) by Celestino Gorostiza; *Corona de fuego* (1960, *Crown of Fire*) by Rudolfo Usigli; *Cuautémoc* (1962) by Salvador Novo; and *Todos los gatos son pardos* (1970 *All the Cats are Gray*) continue the paradigm of Malinche as divided into two parts—voice and womb—where references to voice are always negative (Cypess 102)⁶. Each play illustrates that “[a]s a voice [Malinche] had the power of the word, of discourse, and engaged in a nontraditional female role that led to hostilities, atrocities, iniquity—the conquest of her race, her people” (Cypess 103).

Chicano drama continues the Pazian paradigm in plays performed by El Teatro Campesino, a Chicano theater started in 1965 by playwright Luis Valdez in Delano, California, as an artistic arm of support for Cesar Chavez. The goal of these plays is “to represent the collective social vision of Chicanos and to reflect all that is valued in these communities: family ties, preservation of Spanish language, Chicano culture and political mobilization” (Hurtado 385). Valdez thought that El Teatro would be the artistic vision of Chicano community and culture. However, in a 1998 analysis of several plays of El Teatro, Chicana feminist Aída Hurtado explores how this community and culture leaves Chicanas to experience gender subordination. Hurtado exposes that Valdez creates female characters in the plays as still stuck in the virgin/whore binary or in the penetrated woman paradigm that Paz sets up in his 1950 analysis. In Valdez’ plays, sexuality is always the defining factor for women.

El Teatro and Chicano communities assign the categories of virgin or whore largely based on physical characteristics and a woman’s assertiveness. For example, a virgin is small, fair-skinned and pretty and described as “soft,” whereas a whore is an Indian woman who speaks up and is “difficult” (Hurtado 387). However, whores do not give of themselves willingly for money; instead, they are fallen women who are considered traitors. In Paz’ analysis, *la chingada* is the penetrated one who betrays her people, *la cultural*. El Teatro uses the image of Malinche as the ultimate traitor of Mexico as the basis for many of the plays’ antagonists, for example, Miss Jimenez, in Las Vendidas/The Sellouts (1978), who is a tool of the Reagan administration, “the symbolic conqueror Hernán Cortés of California” (Hurtado 392). In each instance the female characters depict that sexual betrayal is equated with cultural betrayal. Beyond the

Malinche myth, Chicana women of these plays must face the cultural materiality that they will not be valued in the society unless they offer to a man their only gifts: virginity and submission.

It is no surprise that in 1980 the Chicanas of El Teatro walked off the stage and ended the dramatic enterprise. Although the theater still exists under Valdez's direction, it now produces more mainstream plays, such as La Bamba. Recently, however, Valdez asked one prominent Chicana actress of El Teatro, Socorro Valdez, to play a role in his award-winning television special "Corridos." Since she wanted to keep an association with the theater community and the Chicano/a community, she agreed but with these conditions:

I didn't want makeup on my face. I didn't want lipstick. I didn't want false eyelashes or fake boobs or nothing. I just wanted myself up there just wanted to be the Indian person that I am No more masks, no more calavera face [skull mask], no more calavera bones on my face. None of that shit. I'll go out there in a plain cotton dress and I'll have those people going. (qtd. In Hurtado 417).

In short, Socorro Valdez wanted to dismiss the stereotypes of Chicana women as Malanchistas and/or "spicy Mexican dishes" who are "seductive" and particularly impressed by Anglo/American men. As evidenced by El Teatro's dramas, the Chicano movement still supported the popular view of Malinche as a traitor, a woman "who took Anglo lovers, got education, or aligned [herself] with feminism" (Pratt "Yo" 862). Valdez and other women of the theater refused to accept this view of Malinche and of themselves.

Throughout the writings presented in this chapter, Malinche has been managed so that she becomes victim to a hegemony in which males are more powerful than females and Spaniards more powerful than the indigenous. She is rendered static in each instance as other, with no active agency and, hence, remains a victim of masculine history and myth. However, Paz and the others do provide for Chicana women an opening for re-evaluation, for reinterpretation, for revisioning the Malinche of these myths into someone who is not a negative national symbol, sexually politicized or culturally degraded, but someone who has a voice and a mind of her own. Starting with re-evaluation and reinterpretation of Malinche's history and myth, Chicana women can embark on a journey with "a new awareness of what it means to be Malinche's daughter" (Sternbach 59). This self-construction becomes part of the mission of Chicana writers who seek to free Malinche "from her captivity within the confine of patriarchy's historical and mythological discourse and to restore to la Malinche her integrity and her voice" (Ordóñez qtd. in Cypess 145). Creating texts that encourage a multidimensional Malinche allows Chicana writers a part of constructing history and also contributes to written discourse that equips Chicana women for the life-long task of defining selfhood.

¹ The summary relies on the following sources: Jerome A. Adams, Liberators and Patriots of Latin America; Bernal Díaz, The Conquest of New Spain; William H. Prescott, History of the Conquest of Mexico.

² The most well known codex is the Florentine Codex, a twelve-volume encyclopedia of Aztec life that was compiled by the Spanish priest, Bernardino de Sahagún with the help of some indigenous.

³ The number of slaves is either 19 or 20. Cortés in his Letters states that she was given to him with 20 others. Díaz and Adams state she was one of 20.

⁴ Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, was a Toltec and Aztec god. His human representative was also known as Quetzalcoatl and he changed the ritual tradition of sacrificing humans to instead sacrificing small animals. This provoked anger from his archrival who drove him into exile. He was supposed to return in the year One Reed, which corresponded to 1519, when the Spaniards arrived.

⁵ There are numerous connotations of the word macho. In general, macho means male, manly, virile, strong, and robust. However, the word also has connotations of stupid and foolish. In The Labyrinth of Solitude, Paz defines macho "the masculine pole of life"; "the *gran chigón*"; "aggressiveness, insensitivity, invulnerability"; "power"; "the force without the discipline of any notion of order: arbitrary power, the will without the reins and without a set course" (81).

⁶ Since these plays are all written in Spanish, I will not offer a complete analysis in this dissertation. For a complete discussion of these plays see Chapter Six of Cypess' La Malinche in Mexican Literature.

Chapter Two

“Mother, Do I Hear You?": Malinche's Daughters and Ethnography

As daughters of Malinche, Chicana writers inherit an archetypal role model of Mexico's mother that is problematic in its colonial and patriarchal design. As part of a Chicana feminist mission, Chicana writers redefine and resymbolize Malinche in their works in order to help with the process of formulating a Chicana identity that no longer rejects “the brown woman” and her indigenous roots. Throughout the last several decades, Chicana writers have re-evaluated Malinche as an historical figure and as a cultural symbol in order to unlearn masculinist versions of history and myth. Malinche still remains an historical and cultural site for negotiating meaning and identity for Chicana/os. However, Chicana writers rely on an ever-evolving theoretical base of Chicana feminism in their negotiations. This feminism uses postcolonial tools of historical and psychological recovery to unearth the buried indigenous roots of archetypal figures such as Malinche. These writers use this earth as the clay needed to reconstruct Malinche as a figure with active agency. Chicana writers see reclaiming that agency for her as reclaiming agency for themselves and for all other brown women who struggle with identity politics. Their artistic endeavor is ultimately tied to a political endeavor: the writing becomes a space for negotiating their own identity, a space for the emergence of silenced voices.

Homi Bhabha explains how postcolonial theory envisions this space as one for articulating and revising selfhood:

What is theoretically innovative and politically crucial is the need to think beyond narratives of the original and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide for the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society.

(1)

Chicana writers use these in-between or liminal spaces as openings to create works that revise the figure of Malinche in order to negotiate selfhood for Chicana women. If, as Bhabha suggests, the purpose of colonial discourse is to control indigenous populations by showing their inferiority in order to justify the conquest and to create an education system that perpetuates stereotypes and continues colonial ideology (70), then the Chicana writer must, after dismantling stereotypes provided by that discourse, negotiate meaning and selfhood that allows access to different representations for Chicana women. These representations will help to break the chains of binary construction. According to postcolonial critic Leela Ghandi (1998): “Feminist and postcolonial theory alike begin with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender/culture/race and they have each progressively welcomed the poststructuralist invitation to refuse binary oppositions upon which patriarchal colonial authority constructs itself” (83).

The space for negotiating subjectivity that both Bhabha and Gandhi refer to is the space that Chicana/os refer to as the borderlands or *la frontera*. For Chicana feminists this is a space that deconstructs oppressive binaries and proclaims the arbitrariness of all boundaries, in particular those that place European patriarchs at the center and female

indigenous on the periphery. Border studies are non-linear, postmodern and expose how colonialism constructed the indigenous and their history in order to serve its own needs and justify colonial power and privilege. Border studies, however, expose how there was always already a shifting sphere where multiple voices, experiences, and languages of both the colonizers and the indigenous intermingled. Specifically, border writing is concerned with making new forms that illustrate this intermingling, writing that is not static but shows “resistance and struggle” (Saldivar 14). Thus an underlying element crucial to the Chicana feminist mission is to employ border thinking in order to challenge dualism and allow a space for multiple subjectivities of Chicana women. In particular, Chicana writers search for an articulation of their identity in revised notions of the archetypal figure of Malinche. As many have noted, including Eliana Ortega and Nancy Saptora Steinbach, language and images are key factors in the construction of subjectivity (14). Thus, these writers need to challenge the stereotypes set forth by the dominant ideology in order to free Malinche from a “myth of male consciousness . . . doomed to live in chains” (Alarcón “Chicana’s” 187). Freeing Malinche from masculinist constructions will provide Chicana writers a space for reconstructing her and negotiating their own selfhood.

This process first entails understanding the site of Malinche as palimpsestic in the same way that Mexico, as place, is palimpsestic. Each layer of Mexico’s history reveals something about its culture. For hundreds of years the Aztecs built one pyramid on top of another in order to symbolically note changes in their cultural and social worlds. Then, as part of their colonizing mission, the Spaniards constructed Catholic churches overtop of these layers of pyramids in a symbolic effort to displace “pagan” beliefs with

Christianity. Thus, in present-day Mexico city, the Aztec pyramids of Tenochtitlan peek up through colonial Spanish architecture, that is partially housed in a cool, twentieth-century museum, hidden from the baking noonday sun. The wonder of Mexico's history is exposed in this way: in bits and pieces, still hidden in stones, ancient discs exposed in the walkways of the Metro. Layers reveal more and hide more—archeologists dig and conjecture.

This is the history of Mexico, and this is the history of Malinche. Malinal, Malintzín, Dona Marina, Malinche—each name is a layer of meaning in the history and myth of her. According to Sandra Messinger Cypess, “The sign ‘La Malinche’ functions as continually enlarging palimpsest of Mexican cultural identity whose layers of meaning have accrued through the years” (5). Some layers are exposed and some are still buried. Further, Chicanas must ask “Where is the voice of Malinche?” Gayatri Spivak argues that the precolonial female voice disappears because people can not hear her speak for herself: “She is simply a medium through which competing discourses represent their claims; a palimpsest written over with the text of other desires, other meanings” (qtd. in Gandhi 90). Spivak would argue that Chicana feminists merely textually construct Malinche through expressing their own desires, missions, and meanings. Chicana feminists would in part agree with Spivak but would see their constructions as a necessary part of fulfilling their goal of negotiating selfhood. In a way, they dismiss Spivak's premise and concentrate instead on deconstructing previous versions of Malinche in order to open up possibilities for her reconstruction. It becomes, then, the mission of Chicana writers to dig under the surface and expose and recover Malinche as a

site where some aspects of history, sexuality, and language have been ignored by colonial discourse and tradition.

Many of the writers of this chapter seek to recover active agency for Malinche so that they themselves may also have access to that agency. Essays, stories, and poems that reinterpret and reinvent Malinche vary in their details but share an essential desire to reconstruct her by giving her historical, sexual and/or linguistic agency. These writers, Malinche's daughters, create versions of their historical mother in order to gain models that will help promote their own agency. They do so by writing texts that act as ethnographies written by members of the observed culture. Recent studies in ethnography explore how ethnographies traditionally have been written by outside "scientific" observers and not by native members of the culture. James Clifford, a leader in the field of ethnography and ethnographic writing, explores how early leaders in the field, such as Franz Boas, often separate literary legend from "ethnographic science," notes based on direct observation. More recently, Arnold Krupat in a work entitled Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History and Literature, proposes that ethnography must include ethnohistory, "an interdisciplinary mix of author, history and critical theory" (4) in order to explore how colonial and indigenous cultures encounter each other. Of particular interest to Krupat is the inclusion of indigenous literary texts in a theoretical endeavor he calls ethnocriticism—"an organization of cultural studies which engages otherness and difference in such a way as to provoke an interrogation of and challenge to what [outsiders] ordinarily take as familiar to [their] own" (3). He further postulates that ethnocriticism "rejects all forms of Manichean discourse whether of a traditional and neocolonial kind or of a revisionist 'victimist' kind" (Krupat 26). Ethnocriticism is

concerned with “differences rather than oppositions” and replaces “opposition with dialogic models” (Krupat 26). Chicana feminists often engage in this ethnocritical perspective in their writings in order to expose the binarism established by patriarchy and colonial ideology and to explore different meanings of Malinche as a cultural symbol with access to varying possibilities within the realms of history, sexuality, and language.

According to Gandhi, many postcolonial critics¹ argue that history is the “discourse through which the West has asserted its hegemony over the rest of the world” (170). Most of these critics label Imperial history as universalizing and/or totalizing grand narratives that really have as their subject Europe rather than any colonized places. As we saw in the previous chapter, these Eurocentric narratives are disempowering to the colonized subject, particularly in their use of a binary construction of the colonizer and the colonized, where race, ethnicity, religion and language of the colonizer is viewed as superior to that of the colonized. Moreover, the masculinity of the empire was articulated in symbolic feminizations of conquered locations. Thus the indigenous—both male and female—and their land were viewed as feminine and weak, conquered by the masculine power of the colonizers. Postcolonial criticism, ethnocriticism, and Chicana feminism all focus on these problems with historical discourse and have a concern for the unaccounted voices of the indigenous.

Adelaida Del Castillo, in her 1974 essay “Malintzín Tenepal: A Preliminary Look Into a New Perspective,” was the first Chicana to challenge the notion of Malinche as a figure whereby history, and thus previous literature, constructed her as either a complicit perpetrator in the conquest or as a victim of romantic love. Instead, she posits a perspective of Malinche that takes into account her indigenous roots, in particular Aztec

belief and politics, and her personal life in order to show that she “embodies an effective, decisive action in feminine form” whereby she becomes an “actual force in the making of history” (122). Del Castillo first employs Malinche’s indigenous name Malintzín² Tenepal and identifies her as born to a father who was chief of the province of Coatzacoalcos. In Del Castillo’s telling Malinche is a “young Aztec princess” who was “sold into slavery by her mother” and must have had a “painful” and “confusing” existence in that she goes from being an Aztec princess to a Mayan slave” (123). Del Castillo concentrates not on Spain’s conquest but on Malinche’s personal life and on the Aztec empire at the time, an empire that pillaged other indigenous peoples, taxed them heavily, and also used them as human sacrifices (25). She emphasizes that Malinche is not a traitor but more likely an *india* who viewed Cortés’ arrival as the return of the Aztec savior god, Quetzalcoatl, who was prophesied to return to Mexico in 1519, the same year Cortés landed. Thus, Malinche and others would most likely have viewed Cortés as a god who was there to help them escape the treachery of Aztec rule, in particular human sacrifice, a practice that Quetzalcoatl denounced and which prompted his departure. Therefore, Malinche’s help of Cortés indicates that she “was willing to make great sacrifices for what she believed to be a philanthropic conviction” (123)—one where some of the Tabascan people would be spared the pain of Aztec domination. Del Castillo places the person of Malinche into these historical forces in order to illustrate how she had great faith in the prophecy of Quetzalcoatl. Portraying her within an indigenous religious context, Del Castillo offers a mystical interpretation of Malinche’s historical role.

Del Castillo also deconstructs Malinche's supposed role as victim of a tragic love affair with Cortés—a role textualized in Spanish chronicles, such as the one written by Bernal Díaz. Del Castillo does not envision Malinche in a romantic relationship with Cortés. First, as a slave, she would have no choice but to accept his sexual advances. But more importantly, she would have interpreted his arrival and action as prophecy. In this revised perspective, Del Castillo reveals Malinche as an intelligent woman with excellent language skills and communicative powers who was also “sensitive and loving” (124). Amongst the Spaniards she was known as “the angel of the expedition” because she saved Spanish lives many times, including the fateful night of *la Noche Triste*, when without her warnings to Cortés even more Spaniards would have died in battle with the Aztecs (124). Del Castillo insists that Malinche was not a traitor, that “one woman does not destroy the empire” (125). Further, Del Castillo explains that masculinist texts often misinterpret Malinche's role in the conquest because of not only ignoring her indigenous beliefs but also because these historical writers' “unconscious, if not intentional, misogynistic attitudes towards women” (126). Instead, Del Castillo posits that Malinche actively sought to help the indigenous people as well as the Spaniards to combat the Aztecs and, in doing so, fulfilled the prophecy of Quetzalcoatl's return.

Naomi Quinonez's long poem “Trilogy” (1985) also reverses the myth of Malinche as traitor, as another face that launched a thousand ships. Her poem discusses three figures who have been blamed for the historic downfall of their peoples: Eve, Helen of Troy, and Malinche. Quinonez is bound in the poem to unearth a revised story of Malinche that rescues her from the label traitor. The poem disturbs the ashes of the three dead women, “ashes of vulvas/quietly contained in earthen pots/golden chalices.” She

disturbs the ashes in order to invade the sanctuaries of male history, employing what Alicia Ostriker calls “revisionist mythmaking”—a feminist theory that explains how feminist poets “employ a figure previously accepted and defined by a culture,” but revise that figure and her tale for “altered ends” in order to break gender stereotypes and to make “cultural change possible” (317). Chicana feminist poets often employ revisionist mythmaking in order “to challenge and correct gender stereotypes embodied in myth” (Ostriker 318) and in order to allow for new visions and constructions of archetypal female figures not imprisoned by patriarchal structures. Ostriker states that employing “revisionist mythmaking in women’s poetry may offer us one significant means of redefining ourselves and consequently our culture” (316). Redefining Malinche requires a dismissal of her as traitor and a reconfiguration of her as a mythical figure whose actions may be interpreted from numerous perspectives.

For example, Quinonez’ poem conjectures that Malinche was not a traitor because living in her society at that time provided her with little choice but to comply with her father’s and with Cortés’ wishes:

Often we utter
 the atrocity of Malinche’s sin
 as if she had no father
 who ingrained in her
 absolute obedience
 to men
 as if he had not given her
 to Cortez as a gift.

Even though in actuality it was Malinche's mother who sold her into slavery, Quinonez uses the father image here to illustrate how patriarchal society determines the social behavior of females. Malinche's mother sold her daughter into slavery in order to get the inheritance for her new son by her new husband. Although the poem does not show Malinche as having much active agency, the concluding stanza does show her acting:

She, obeying men
 obeyed her father's wish
 to be given
 obeyed Cortez
 and gave him Mexico.

The conclusion ironically shows Malinche as acting even though she was objectified by both the indigenous and Spanish patriarchy. The irony is that "she was so good in doing what men wanted that she brought down the very patriarchal empires that created her" (Pratt "Yo Soy" 866).

Both Del Castillo and Quinonez offer revisions of traditional historical accounts of Malinche that emphasize her as traitor. Both illustrate that blaming her "leav[es] intact the Manichean (and androcentric) myth of noble Aztec warriors, victimized by ruthless Spanish warriors, a myth that proved useful to Mexican nationalism" (Pratt, "Yo Soy" 861). Pratt's comment exposes the misogynist symbolization of Malinche as ethnonationalist site. She became a site whereby Chicanos often continued to blame her for complicity in the conquest. Chicanos often thought that her definition as the ultimate traitor to the indigenous, should be rejected. However, Chicanas, like Carmen Tafollo in her 1978 poem "La Malinche," invoke the figure of Malinche as a vital site with which to

respond to androcentric ethnonationalism (Pratt “Yo Soy” 861) by giving her active agency and allowing her to speak for herself.

The poem begins with Malinche stating “Yo soy la Malinche” (“I am la Malinche”) which denotes that her language skills (this first line is Spanish, Malinche’s third language) allow her active agency in naming herself. In the poem, Tafolla presents a Malinche who wants to be the founder of her people and who, in first-person voice, will explain how she was sold out by patriarchal culture that referred to her as *la chingada*. The Malinche of the poem discusses her relationship with Cortés in language of progression: She begins “to dream” then “to see” and then “I acted.” Malinche has a vision of a new world that “No one else could see!” She continues,

I saw our world

And I saw yours

And I saw—

another.

That “another” world that she saw was born as Mexico. She reminds readers that history called her chingada, “[b]ut Chingada I was not. / Not tricked, not screwed, not traitor. / For I was not a traitor to myself.” In this poem, Malinche has a vision greater than her family’s, her people’s, or Cortés’ imperial world. Her vision of another world is “la raza,” “la raaaaaaa – zaaaaa . . .”: the creation of the new mestiza race. In this way Malinche establishes herself “as the central world-changing protagonist of the conquest story, not Cortés who was merely ‘playing’ at good and transmitting a ‘fake’ civilization” (Pratt “Yo Soy” 869). She is a visionary with “revolutionary consciousness” (Pratt “Yo Soy” 869) who is the mother of the new mestizo race, “la raza.” Her giving birth is

symbolic not of her rape, as Paz and other Chicanos emphasize, nor of her romantic love, as Diaz and others have chronicled, but of her “political and strategic activity” (Pratt “Yo Soy” 870).

This activity defines her as a site for not only a Chicano nationalist movement but in particular a Chicana nationalist movement. Malinche becomes an active agent in the founding of Mexico. She has a vision for the future, a future that is bound to happen and that she can visualize before all others. In this way, Malinche is guided by the indigenous Aztec beliefs of world-renewing, whereby all acts and activities are ritualistic reproductions of creating the world, rejuvenation (Carrasco). In this spirit of indigenous rejuvenation, Malinche becomes a site for the Chicana nationalist movement where “women are called upon to claim power as world-makers and social and spiritual visionaries” (Pratt “Yo Soy” 870). In this rejuvenation through writing, the ethnographic practices of European histories and chronicles that influenced the nationalist thinking of Paz and Chicanos are challenged by Chicana texts that practice what Mary Louise Pratt calls “autoethnography”: texts that “‘so-defined others’ construct in response to or in dialogue with [ethnographic] texts” (“Arts” 35). Pratt discusses how in autoethnographic texts indigenous idioms and idioms of the conquerors, who she calls metropolitans, merge (“Arts” 35). Therefore, in autoethnographic texts the buried voices emerge; the relatives of the indigenous speak. Thus the autoethnographic texts of Chicanas give voice to Malinche in a language of borderlands, a hybrid voice that simultaneously understands not only the language of the indigenous and the metropolitans but also the culture that emerged from their encounter. Because of this hybridity, autoethnographic texts could address a metropolitan audience, the speaker’s own community, or both (Pratt “Arts” 35).

The process of autoethnography with particular emphasis on creating history is illustrated in three poems that subvert static colonial history by writing poetry that creates multiple shifting voices of Malinche. Lucha Corpi's "The Marina Poems," published in her 1980 poetry collection Noon Words/ Palabras de Mediodia, exposes a history of Malinche written by "outsiders," cosmopolitans who present versions of her subjectivity rooted in Spanish patriarchal ideology as is indicative by the name Marina in the title and throughout the poem. Pat Mora's "Malinche's Tips: Pique from Mexico's Mother" (1995) complicates Corpi's text by providing Malinche with a first-person voice that gives a mother's commands for her mestiza daughters to rethink history and their own identities. Finally, Ina Cumpiano's poem "Yo—la Malinche" that appears in a 1994 edition of The Americas Review unearths Malinche's voice from the rubble of history and makes her voice part of the communal voice of all mestiza women.

Each of the four parts of Lucha Corpi's "Marina Poems" names Malinche as "Mother," "Virgin," "Devil's Daughter," and "She," unveiling the multiplicity of her postconquest historical constructions. The text of the poem simultaneously reappropriates masculinist histories that perpetrate the static nature of Malinche as betrayer. Part I, "Marina Mother," tells the traditional story as written by "the elders," of Malinche's birth and subsequent betrayal of the indigenous. The poem explains that Spanish patriarchal inscriptions, "steeped in tradition," "thinned" Malinche "to a handful of dust." The elders of Corpi's poem refer to traditional ethnographies that emphasize Malinche as negative in body and soul, as la chingada traitor that has become part and parcel of Mexico's history. This traditional construction allows Mexicans and eventually Mexican Americans to deny her as a positive mother figure: "the child who cried out to her

‘mama!’ / grew up and called her ‘whore’.” The first section of the poem “succinctly capitulates the history of La Malinche from the time of her betrayal until now, in which she is still awaiting the dawn of deliverance from her negative reputation” (Cypess 146).

After quickly establishing the negative symbolization of Malinche in the first part of the poem, Part II, “Marina Virgin,” continues in the tradition of Spanish colonial discourse and continues with a third-person voice, most likely to suggest objectivity. Corpi exposes the construction of Marina Virgin as part of the destructive dualism of Spanish patriarchy whereby Malinche with her Spanish appellation Marina can only be identified as Mother or Virgin and subsequently as Devil. However, Corpi attributes agency to Malinche by suggesting that she chooses to convert to Christianity: “of her own accord, before the altar / of the crucified god she knelt.” Corpi supports her suggestion by calling forth Christ’s symbolic connection with Aztec ritual imagery, both relying heavily upon blood as renewal image; therefore, Malinche “only saw / the bleeding man, and loved ... him.” The text’s Christian imagery has Malinche “wash away her sin / with holy water,” suggesting that through her conversion to Catholicism “her brown skin” would not be “damned.” Spanish chroniclers present Malinche as christianized in order to fulfill Queen Isabella’s goal of converting people to Catholicism. However, in the next stanza Corpi questions this imperial construction and suggests, in the same vein as Del Castillo, that Malinche converts of her own accord. Corpi states that Malinche had hidden her soul, “planted it / in the entrails of the earth / her hands had cultivated,” and converts in order to cultivate a new mestiza race.

Although Section II suggests Malinche’s active agency and desire to create a new race, Section III “The Devil’s Daughter” states that upon Malinche’s death she is

remembered as a traitor and as evil, associating her with the devil. Her identity, “[h]er mystic pulsing is “silenced” and her name is “devoured by the wind in one deep growl.” This growl is the curse that masculinist history has placed on Malinche, the curse of traitor. Thus, Corpi suggests that Malinche’s true motives for behavior have been silenced, and the idea of the betrayer, the traitor has been disseminated throughout history and have becomes Malinche’s hallmark. She remains, then, in the final line of the section, “only a half-germinated seed.” Imagery of growing used previously in the poem now is employed to show that she is only partially developed. Thus Corpi illustrates how previous constructions of Malinche appropriated her image for their own politically controlling ends.

Section IV completes a four-season cycle of the poem and is entitled “She (Marina Distant).” Still objectified, and named solely as a pronoun, the Malinche of this section becomes a space for possible renegotiation of meaning: “A flower perhaps, a pool of fresh water” However, this new Malinche does not speak nor is she completely formed. She becomes a bridge figure (Cypess 150) that could be revisioned in the future: “mourning shadow of ancestral memory, / crossing the bridge at daybreak, / her hands full of earth and sun.” Although Corpi’s poem does not present an independently operating Malinche, it opens up a space whereby a Malinche who could contribute to a Chicana identity may be born.

Whereas Corpi’s poem shows liberating possibilities for Malinche within an autoethnographic strategy of *reacting to* cosmopolitan history, Pat Mora’s “Malinche’s Tips: Pique from Mexico’s Mother” acts as autoethnography by having Malinche *speak directly* to an audience of her “daughters,” instructing them to question patriarchally-

inscribed versions of Malinche and to embrace Malinche as mother. This poem gives tips to all of Malinche's female descendants who are readers of the poem that act as a ten-step program for recovering Chicana histories and Chicana voices. Thus, autoethnographic texts respond to masculinist histories and Chicano national voices that have perpetuated the "myth" of Malinche. In particular, two tips of the poem direct Chicanas to question accepted "truths" about Malinche's "history" and to actively design their own stories that will not denounce Mexico's historical mother but rather embrace her.

"Tip 2" instructs Chicanas to "Write / you own rumors / or hire your own historians." In this stanza, in order to give an example to her daughters, Malinche herself deconstructs the accepted truths of her life and calls into question the fairy-tale figure of the evil mother who sells her daughter for benefit of her son. Mora questions Malinche's family history by beginning her version of the story with "They say," suggesting that Malinche's mother may not have sold her daughter into slavery:

They say my father,
 a Nahuatl prince,
 died, and my mother
 remarried, of course.
 we're so redhot
 our skin burns
 in moonlight
 like our eyes, blazing
 cats, blacksilk
 wickedslink.

My mother sold me,
 bundled my body
 off to the Maya
 women and competition
 of piel, the flesh.
 prince of the father,
 witch of the mother,
 bruja.
 Sound familiar?

Malinche sarcastically calls into question the accepted history of her life by claiming that her story is a rumor created by “they” who “of course” portray her mother as selling her into slavery. The final question of the section negates the accuracy and validity of past history, suggesting that this history is composed of “rumors,” written by “monolinguals,” men who knew and were solely interested in knowing, only one language, one culture, one space.

Thus Malinche reminds her daughters that “historians cite themselves” and in “Tip 6” instructs them to “Beware” of these historians. Here Mora invokes Malinche as nationalist site and denounces colonial and indigenous constructions of Malinche that call her “prostitute, puta, hooker, bitch.” Instead, Mora’s Malinche tells her daughters “I’m the proud / mother of mexicanos, / brown as I am.” Calling forth her indigenous color, Malinche becomes an autoethnographic site that taps into a mestiza consciousness: “its energy comes from the continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each paradigm” (Anzaldúa 80). Therefore, previous paradigms of Malinche that

call her “puta” are negated, and Malinche in “Tip 6” states “Try saying mamá.” In this way, Mora has Malinche tell her daughters to acknowledge her as the proud brown mother of Mexico.

Ina Cumpiano’s “Yo, La Malinche” not only creates an independent lyric voice of Malinche, but initiates an autoethnographic text, a history by which Malinche will begin to tell her own versions of not only her life but of the lives of other women whose stories were told inaccurately or incompletely. Gloria Anzaldúa defines these texts as *autohistorias*, texts by Chicanas and other women of color who “write not only about abstract ideas but also bring in their personal history as well as history of their community” (qtd. in Keating 242). Anzaldúa’s definition of history includes the “collective, personal, cultural and racial” (qtd. in Keating 242) and speaks particularly to women of color by questioning the accepted traditional history and also by presenting a cultural history through the writer’s personal experiences. In Cumpiano’s poem, Malinche not only questions the accuracy of her story as written by cosmopolitan outsiders but also questions the accuracy of all tales of other women that have come down via masculinist constructions throughout the ages. Hence, unlike the previous poems, Cumpiano’s Malinche begins to develop communal women’s history not based on absolute interpretation. Cumpiano is telling stories about herself and other Chicanas and mestizas that find their authority not in traditional masculinist texts but in a cultural community that “includes the historical experience of oppression” and a literary tradition based in oral transmission of history (Yarbro-Bejarano 215). Moreover, the poem begins with a note that appears under the title stating that the work is in progress, meaning that it will continue to change and multiply.

In Cumpiano's poem Malinche states that she performs in multiple ways. She says she has "no one name" and lists that she is "la lengua," "Teclé's voice," "la chingada," Cortés' whore," (46); however, she also names herself as "wing," "loud silence," "spring-fed brook," "unknowing," and finally "My name" (47). Through this naming Malinche establishes her own voice and not only questions the "European codes" but the indigenous tales of her as traitor: "Who will say she spoke as women speak, / in another's language / so that even when the eagle Cuauhtemoc / was caged that one last time, / she had no words of her own that could warn him" (47). Section 2, entitled "Translating Woman," continues to question the codes of Cortés and other European males, "When I say *woman*, whose word is that / if not his?" (47). In so doing, Malinche of the poem exposes how the language of the conquerors fail to describe her body and soul; thus, she must "make a language from stones" (47). This creation of a new language is part of an autoethnographic process in which the indigenous tries to define herself in her own language

"Martín's Birth," section 3, is written in the third-person and refers to Malinche by her original indigenous name, Mallinali. The description of the birth of the first mestizo child is described in Aztec terms, not Spanish terms, but makes it clear that Malinche was on her own since "no ancient *ticitl* would midwife his birth" (48). Aztec fertility symbols of feathers and snakes are called forth to describe the birth of the child who "will be a bird called quecholli" (48). These symbols indicate the Chicana feminist's desire to reinstate the indigenous qualities of Malinche's life. However, this Aztec ritual would end as soon as Cortés' soldiers would take the child to his father who would name him Martín.

Section 4, “My Dream of Ciuacoatl,” moves from Malinche’s personal history to a communal history steeped in the legends of other women who lost their children, in particular, *La Llorona*, traditionally known as the wailing women who killed or abandoned her children so that she could live a single life. However, contemporary Chicana writers like Cumpiano, write versions of her story in which she kills her children in order to spare them from what would have been a cruel world of slavery and servitude. Since the section is entitled “My Dreams of Ciuacoatl,” it represents Malinche’s dream that connects her to her ancestors, an accepted indigenous concept—calling forth one’s ancestors in times of need. This dream links Malinche with the past myths of her indigenous peoples.

The final section of the poem goes one step further and has Malinche write the history of Bacalan, a Mayan woman who commits suicide. Fray Diego de Landa—a priest who writes one of the earliest descriptions of the Maya after he destroys all the original Mayan accounts because they were, in his estimation, works of the devil—writes the story of Bacalan. He writes his history *Relación de las cosas de Yucatan* while imprisoned in Spain because of his cruelty to the Indians. This is the history that remains in print, but the poem asks readers to question its veracity and states that de Landa “gets the [story] wrong” (50). De Landa claims that Bacalan kills herself because she has had sexual relations with another man, most likely a Spanish soldier, after promising her husband “not to have relations with any other man,” (50). But the Bacalan of the poem questions this history that has become the accepted history of all women who were the mestizo mothers of the new race:

Was it fidelity, I wonder,

or did you see the chance for once
 to call your body back
 as a *palomera* might welcome her pigeons
 to their cote and settle them in
 after their too-long flight over the battlefield. (50)

Cumpiano posits that mestiza women should not accept masculinist history's tales of women. In this way the masculine battlefield where Spaniards and indigenous fought is also a battlefield where mestiza women fought and must continue to fight their own gender subjugation and come to terms with their own definitions of women and mother. Further, her text does not privilege merely one Chicana voice but creates a collective subject meant to denounce exploitation of patriarchal culture's rigid gender roles, especially sexual roles.

Cumpiano challenges de Landa and all male, cosmopolitan, ethnographic authority. Feminist anthropologist Faye Harrison in an essay which appears in Women Writing Culture posits that "ethnography is often a kind of fiction" and that the converse --"fiction is a kind of ethnography"--is also true (qtd. in Behar and Gordon 19). To Harrison and other feminist anthropologists fiction "can be an ideal genre for putting flesh back on the anthropological subject and on ourselves as women" (Behar and Gordon 21). Cumpiano's poem calls attention to the "fiction" of cosmopolitan ethnography and acts instead as a literary text that gives words to the subaltern voices who have been "rendered mute or have been appropriated as . . . commodities in ethnographic representation and writing" (Behar and Gordon 24). In Cumpiano's poem Bacalan and Malinche are subaltern voices who talk back and are no longer buried on the

periphery. Further, their voices comprise a collective history for all subaltern women, and specifically Chicana women whose legacy has come to them in cosmopolitan ethnographies written by males. Chicana women reading the poem understand how the “I”s of the poem become “we’s,” the Chicana community.

In this poem Cumpiano questions all of the accepted history of the indigenous women, asking readers to question the subjective nature of stories that underlie the objective claims of History. Cumpiano’s poem acts as a means to place Chicana subjectivity within the dimension of relationships among women of the past and present. She creates communal women’s history that allows for agency and self-understanding. Like the pyramids, the lives of women are layers of stories, but which layers tell their own tales? These three poems attempt to call into question the masculinist constructions that have created the mythology of Malinche and attempt to show that Malinche does not have to be rendered static. For such writers, she can become that “in-between” space who performs liminally, operating within traditional constructs while simultaneously escaping their totalizing and confining grasp.

Chicana writers reveal the many layers of Malinche, attempting to give her plural dimensions that rescue her from monolithic renderings. Like the pyramids of Tenochtitlan buried under Mexico City’s *zocalo* of Spanish ministry buildings and the grand *Catedral*, Malinche emerges in bits and pieces in these writing. Each word becomes a piece of her, each poem becomes a different image of her, allowing Chicana women to reinvent themselves by “reclaiming [their] indigenismo” and inserting female consciousness (Castillo 12) into new stories of Malinche that counter monolithic representations of her.

Any Chicana feminist's challenge to patriarchal and monolithic representations of Malinche must include challenging masculinist representations of Malinche's sexuality. Postcolonial feminist critics Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Jacqui M. Alexander understand that women's bodies are primary grounds for patriarchal control, especially during colonization because "sexual politics are central to processes and practices of governance" (xxvii). Chicana feminists also see women's bodies as a site used by patriarchy for political, sexual, social, and psychological control. Thus, Chicana women must wrestle with Malinche as sexual site in order to achieve agency in their psycho-social sexual identity.

Historical representations of Malinche's sexuality concentrate on women's bodies as a site for negotiating power. Malinche's historical betrayal is viewed as not only a cultural betrayal but as sexual betrayal. Malinche is a traitor to her people in part because of the sexual union of her and Cortés whereupon she becomes, as Paz calls her, *la chingada*. As chingada, Malinche is violated and a traitor because she opens up sexually to the colonizers. In this way "the male myth of Malintzin is made to see betrayal first of all in her very sexuality" (Alarcón "Chicana's" 183). Moreover, the masculinist history of Malinche is a history of sexuality whereby as model for Chicana women she is passive. As Norma Alarcón posits, the Malinche story gives to women only certain sexual possibilities that are informed by patriarchy, including that all patriarchy views women as "rapeable," and "sexually exploitable" because "woman is sexually passive, and hence at all times open to potential use by men whether it be seduction or rape" ("Chicana's" 184).

Patriarchal Catholic Mexico viewed and in many ways still does view sex for women as only procreation. For women, sex in and of itself, for pleasure, is viewed as evil, as a sin of Eve. Thus, a culture defined by Catholicism and patriarchy would negate a woman's sexuality and emphasize her role as mother and womb. Both Corpi and Mora in the poems previously discussed in this chapter open the poems by describing Malinche in terms of body, specifically, womb. Corpi refers to her as a "womb of sacked fruit" suggesting that she was robbed or looted; however, this act of violence upon her eventually becomes her own fault as she will be referred to as "whore." Although Mora attempts to offer a more positive view, she still employs a Catholic tradition of the female body undercutting Malinche's agency by having Malinche refer to her children as "blessed fruit of my warm red womb." This blessed fruit is a clear reference to the Virgin Mary. Both writers expose how masculinist constructions reveal women's bodies as stuck in a binary opposition where the womb is either blessed as mother and virgin or sacked as whore. For Mexican-American women who overwhelmingly have been reared in a Catholic tradition, sexual fulfillment becomes an issue better left denied than explored. According to Ana Castillo, this upbringing causes Chicana women consistently to associate sexuality with Eve and sin:

But delivered as children into the grips of medieval nuns and priests who warned us against auto-stimulation and its many horrendous punishments and who regularly reminded us of our relation to Evil Eve, how could we acknowledge sexual desire to each other? A sexual woman was begging rape, begging vulnerability to society, begging to be treated as nothing more than as what she was born: a female who merits no respect

for her emotions, her mind, her person. No, if one admitted sexuality, she was discarding the disguise she alone had worn as the “decent” woman, the “good girl,” and was revealing that underneath she was nothing more than a bitch in heat. (122-23)

Chicana writers understand that in order to liberate Chicana women’s sexuality, they must attempt to liberate Malinche’s sexuality.

Mora’s poem, however, goes one step further than Corpi’s by illustrating how Chicana creative revision should acknowledge Catholic as well as indigenous religious beliefs. Her poem exemplifies how Chicana women cannot simply obliterate Catholic traditions of the female body and instead need to come to terms with these traditions and form new views of the female body that also consider indigenous traditions. For example, Mora refers to Aztec goddesses and utilizes, in particular, the Aztec cultural idea of Coatlicue³—the goddess of birth and death, the one who gives and takes away life. Metaphorically, Coatlicue symbolizes what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as the contradictory state, an acknowledgement for Chicana women of both the negative and positive traditions and images that have contributed to the formation of their cultural identities. Mora and other Chicana writers must grapple with the Coatlicue state, must come to terms with the contradictory cultures, in order to reconfigure identity. In the above two poems, it becomes clear that a Chicana woman cannot deny a tradition of negative sexuality; instead, she must understand that it has played an important role in establishing her identity.

Sandra Cisneros’ Women Hollering Creek (1991) explores a Chicana woman’s identity within a patriarchal Chicano and United States culture and also explores how

Chicana women must confront the Coatlicue state of being. In Cisneros' work "the effort to negotiate a cross-cultural identity is complicated by the need to challenge the deeply rooted patriarchal values of both Mexican and American cultures" (Madsen 108). Within Women Hollering Creek, the story "Never Marry a Mexican" specifically explores the above theme by looking at how the male myth of Malinche negatively influences a Chicana woman's sexual identity. This myth reduces women to whores within the virgin/whore dichotomy. If a woman is not a virgin or a mother, then her only other choice is to be *la chingada*. In either case, a woman remains passive. However, Cisneros presents in the story a character named Clemencia who attempts to have sexual agency but does so by adopting a masculine role. As the following analysis will explore, if a Chicana woman simply reverses her binary role and adopts masculine behaviors, she will still be chained to patriarchal ideology. But more importantly than this simple reversal, Cisneros' story depicts Clemencia's struggle within the Coatlicue state. This struggle for a new identity and complication with a current identity is part of the Coatlicue state. To Anzaldúa, the Coatlicue state means emerging from *nepantla*, "a birthing stage where you feel like you're reconfiguring your identity and don't know where you are" (qtd. in Keating 225). *Nepantla* is also "a metaphor for forbidden knowledges, new perspectives on reality, alternate ways of thinking" (Keating 5). Going through the Coatlicue state happens when a Chicana woman is "gestating or giving birth to [her]self" (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 226). For Anzaldúa, the passageway through the birth canal is *nepantla*. The state that follows birth is *la conciencia mestiza*—the crossing over, the liminal space of hybridity, where a mestiza woman can develop a tolerance for ambiguity. Cisneros' story explores how Clemencia operates within a Coatlicue state, but the story stops short of

Clemencia tapping into a mestiza consciousness, where “nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned” (Anzaldúa 79).

In order to achieve mestiza consciousness, a woman must acknowledge within the Coatlicue state both a female-centered heritage and a male-centered heritage. Clemencia must understand her hybrid culture in terms of both Mexican and American and matriarchal and patriarchal. The Coatlicue state will explore borderland existence; Clemencia struggles within that existence and struggles with images from her cultural past. Specifically the site of the struggle is the archetype Malinche. Cisneros clearly links Clemencia to the Malinche myth by defining Clemencia as a translator, a traitor, and a sexual object. Although Clemencia considers herself a painter, she earns a living by substitute teaching and translating Spanish and English. Her job as translator likens her to Malinche. Further, Clemencia establishes herself as a traitor in the second paragraph of the story by discussing how she is a traitor to other women through her sexuality. She has made a habit of sleeping with married men, in particular when their wives are giving birth. She describes herself as an “accomplice” who “committed premeditated crimes” (68). Moreover, she is aware that she is “guilty of having caused deliberate pain to other women” (68). Most apparent, “Never Marry a Mexican” concentrates on Clemencia’s relationship with her married Anglo lover Drew, a relationship which parallels Malinche’s relationship with Cortés. In her description of them, Clemencia defines herself as a Malinche, “my dark skin against yours,” and Drew as Cortés, “you looked like a Cortez with that beard of yours” (74). She defines their sexual relationship in conquest imagery associated with the Malinche myth: “My Malinalli, Malinche, my courtesan, you said, and yanked my head back by the braid. Calling me that name in

between little gulps of breath the raw kisses that you gave me” (74). Finally, Clemencia’s family life is parallel to Malinche’s in that Clemencia’s mother is likened to Malinche’s mother. Clemencia’s mother marries an Anglo man after Clemencia’s Mexican father dies. Clemencia then envisions herself as rejected by her own mother as Malinche was rejected: “When she [Clemencia’s mother] married that white man, and he and his boys moved into my father’s house, it was as if she stopped being my mother. Like I never even had one” (73). This last link to Malinche illustrates the struggle of the Coatlicue state—Clemencia accepts the patriarchal definition of Malinche’s sexuality, but she will not embrace her mother nor her female heritage by understanding that her mother was also trapped in patriarchy by defining herself through relationships, sexual and otherwise, with men.

Struggling with this contradiction in identity, Clemencia attempts “to subvert her role as *la india*, the passive whore, who acquiesced to the Spaniard, the conqueror” (Perez qtd. in Hurtado 392). Clemencia will not subscribe to the passive role of *chingada* as defined by Octavio Paz. She refuses to be “the fucked one,” the raped one, the one who is ripped open. Instead, she takes on the masculine role as Paz describes it, the role of *chingón*, the one who does the acting; the violator; the one who rips open. In her relationship with Drew, Clemencia becomes the *chingón*, the violator, who “leap[s] inside” of Drew in order to “split” him “like an apple” (78). Clemencia envisions Drew in the role of *chingada* and says that he “opened” himself for her. Clemencia describes sex with Drew in terms that reverse the traditional role of Malinche as passive victim of European rape. In this way, she believes that she has power, but this is a masculine power.

Clemencia inverts the Malinche myth and becomes the sexual aggressor in order to “appropriate the power”, to “control” and to “possess” (Wyatt 249) Drew’s body, making him victim. Clemencia states that during sex, it was Drew that “was ashamed to be so naked,” and that it was she that “saw [Drew] for what you are, when you opened yourself to me” (78). Even though Clemencia believes that she has subverted the sexual power structure, she is still stuck in the power structure, enchained by binarism. For by assuming a masculine role and employing the language of the chingón, Clemencia still leaves the “gender dynamic of violence” in place (Wyatt 249).

Clemencia’s relationship with Drew fails because he does not leave his wife and marry her. Her sexual “rape” leaves her depressed, lonely, and filled with vengeance for years. This painful experience brings on the Coatlicue state. According to Anzaldúa, “Our greatest disappointments and painful experiences—if we can make meaning out of them—can lead us toward becoming more of who we are. Or they can remain meaningless. The Coatlicue state can be a way station or a way of life”(46). In the story, Clemencia’s eventual acknowledgment that she has refused to know something about herself and her beliefs about ethnicity, men and marriage brings on the Coatlicue state—she grapples with her mother and mother’s advice about marriage. What she ironically realizes is that her Mother’s advice for her never to marry a Mexican also applies to her. Clemencia believes that in having relationships with Anglo men she has fulfilled her mother’s warning. Clemencia follows this advice to such an extent that she says “I’ll never marry ... I’ve never married and I never will” (68-9). Although Clemencia believes that she has actively made the choice not to marry, she finally realizes some eighteen years after her relationship with Drew, that she has become the victim of her

mother's warning: She is the Mexican that Drew will never marry. In fact, "[s]he and Drew went on playing out the Malinche script: after exploiting her talents and her sexuality, Drew abandoned her as Cortez abandoned la Malinche after the conquest" (Wyatt 253). Even though Clemencia realizes the final irony, she does not reject the role of chingón or embrace her mother's wisdom. Instead, she further immerses herself in that role and waits for eighteen years to seduce Drew's son, the son that was born while his father was in Clemencia's bed:

I sleep with this boy, their son. To make the boy love me the way I love his father. To make him want me, hunger, twist in his sleep, as if he'd swallowed glass. I put him in my mouth. Here, little piece of my *corazón*. Boy with hard thighs and just a bit of down and small hard downy ass like his father's, and that back like a valentine. Come here, *mi carinito*. Come to *mamita*. Here's a bit of toast.

I can tell by the way he looks at me, I have him in my power. Come, sparrow. I have the patience of eternity. Come to *mamita*. My stupid little bird. I don't move. I don't startle him. I let him nibble. All, all for you. Rub his belly. Stroke him. Before I snap my teeth. (82).

Instead of emerging from the Coatlicue state, Clemencia continues to act out the horrid drama of the evil mother and vengeful woman combined. She does not break the pattern. According to Anzaldúa, "An addiction (a repetitious act) is a ritual to help one through a trying time; its repetition safeguards the passage, it becomes one's talisman, one's touchstone. If it sticks around after having outlived its usefulness, we become

‘stuck’ in it and it takes possession of us” (46) Clemencia is possessed by her vengeance and re-enacts her pain by sexually taking control over Drew’s son.

In continuing to play the *chingón*, Clemencia denies the possibility of completing the birthing stage of her selfhood and entering into a *mestiza* consciousness. We see that she is confused—she wants to take possession of Drew’s son by seducing him but also by “mothering” him; she feeds him, gives him milk, strokes him. On one hand, Clemencia seems to reject everything about motherhood. She rejects her own mother and will not forgive her for getting remarried. She will not get married and have children. Instead, she takes on the role of the *femme-macho*—a woman who is sexually active but remains emotionally uninvolved (Hurtado). The *femme-macho* tries to overpower men and not show any emotion. But Clemencia fails in this role as well since she does show emotion; she is hurt, vengeful, angry, and ultimately unfulfilled because she does not marry Drew and possibly because she does not become a mother. She cannot embrace the contradictory; she repeatedly acts out a ritual of pain, a false birth. First, she claims that Drew’s son would not have even been born without her, “I’m the one who gave him [Drew] permission for it to happen” (75). And subsequently, she sleeps with Drew in his and his wife’s bed, while his wife gives birth. The culminating false birthing occurs that night when she is in Drew’s house. She ritualistically places baby gummy bears that she has in her purse throughout the house where Drew’s wife will find them. She puts them in her lipsticks, in her nail polish bottles, and even in her diaphragm case. Finally, she finds a nesting doll and removes the tiniest baby and replaces it with a gummy bear. However, she leaves Drew’s house with the tiny baby in her pocket and throws it over a

bridge into “that muddy creek where winos piss and rats swim” (82), symbolically tossing away her own birthing possibilities.

Two decades after that scene, Clemencia is still stuck in the ritualistic pattern. She cannot get through the passageway of *nepantla*. In the last scene of the story, she continues to harbor vengeance and anger and continues to want Drew. She calls him in the middle of the night and hangs up and torturously imagines him sleeping next to his wife. In this way, the Coatlicue state does not become the positive way station but the negative way of life. Clemencia has no agency, sexual or otherwise. However, the final passage of the story reveals that Clemencia may possibly reach *mestiza* consciousness: “Human beings pass me on the street, and I want to reach out and strum them as if they were guitars. Sometimes all humanity strikes me as lonely. I just want to reach out and stroke someone, and say There, there, it’s all right, honey. There, there, there” (83). The inconclusive ending leaves readers to wonder if she will let go of her anger and fear and embrace the positive aspect of Malinche—the symbolic mother of the *mestizas*, whose “rape” gave birth to *la raza* in the borderlands. Cisneros story illustrates the difficulty of crossing the border.

Cisneros story stresses that Clemencia or any Chicana woman cannot escape the myth of Malinche by becoming a *chingón*. A Chicana woman’s self-construction depends upon not rejecting Malinche as mother but embracing her. If Clemencia merely acts out against the Malinche of patriarchal tradition, she is still stuck within Manichean chains of existence and will not be able to transcend the virgin/whore duality. Clemencia cannot embrace the *mestiza* consciousness that will “break down the subject-object duality that

keeps her a prisoner” (Anzaldúa 80). And in this way, like the Malinche of male myth, Clemencia is devoid of sexual agency.

Most likely the possibility of sexual agency did not exist for the historical Malinche. As a slave, she most likely would have been forced to have sex with any of her male owners, including Cortés. According to Norma Alarcón, a Chicana must recognize that Malinche may have had no choice when it came to sexuality. Alarcón posits that too many Chicana writers will not deal with this reality because they are too interested in separating themselves from the masculine tradition of rape that Paz and others find paramount to an understanding of Mexican identity (“Tradutora” 82). However, Alarcón insists that Chicanas must look at the rape and see that their beginnings “were drenched in violence” (83). Ignoring this fact will not “free women of color from ‘the service’ of violence against themselves” (87). Clemencia’s behavior is chained in violence against others and herself. She is not freed. Thus, Alarcón understands like Anzaldúa that in order to become whole, to tap into the mestiza consciousness, a Chicana woman can not reject the past; she must “operate where nothing is thrust out, the good and the bad” (Anzaldúa 79). Understanding that Malinche was raped by her own people and by the Spaniards is a necessary part of understanding a Chicana woman’s sexual history and identity. Thus for many Chicana feminists, including Ana Castillo, sexuality is still the “last frontier to liberation” (174).

A prevalent theme in Chicana literature, crossing borders entails understanding that there are vague and undetermined places and spaces that have not been explored. Ana Castillo suggests that for Chicanas sexuality is such a border space that needs to be more fully explored. Another border space that Chicanas have crossed and explored is the

act of writing and language use. Writing in and of the border means managing a number of different linguistic codes. For most Chicanas this includes using English and Spanish, as well as particular variations of each, such as Spanglish or Chicano Spanish.⁴

Perhaps the originator of border language was Malinche. Although we have no printed texts written by Malinche, she herself becomes a border text in that she spoke Nahuatl, other Mexica dialects, and Spanish. Although as translator Malinche was controlled by others, both Spanish and indigenous, she had a greater access to different languages than all of the men surrounding her, including Cortés and Moctezuma. Her facility with language most likely saved her life, and the cruel irony is that the chronicles of the conquest leave her silent. The only indigenous text that shows her speaking is the Florentine Codex that depicts her in one frame as standing between Moctezuma and the Spaniards while translating. Small hyphen lines are drawn from her mouth to the ears of both Moctezuma and Cortés. It is interesting to note that the picture illustrates Malinche as standing on equal ground with Moctezuma, not a usual practice, and therefore suggests some respect. We can conclude then that the indigenous most likely respected Malinche for her linguistic capabilities. And as the previous chapter discusses, although Cortés often referred to her as *la lengua*, she was much more than simply a tongue but rather a crucial player in military strategy. Thus, even monolithic history must acknowledge Malinche's linguistic talents. Nevertheless, we have no record of her actual words and thoughts.

Thus, Chicana writers often give voice to the process of recovering Malinche in order to free her from silence or from colonial constructions and in order to allow plural dimensions of her character to emerge from darkness. Malinche as linguistic site opens

up a space for understanding hybrid identity. She becomes a transcultural linguistic site, Bhabha's liminal space, in which the burden and meaning of Chicana culture and identity may be explored. When Chicana writers give voice to Malinche, they attempt to open that space and allow multiple constructions of Malinche that employ multiple languages and multiple cultures. These multiplicities suggest *una cultura mestiza* meant to challenge earlier constructions of her by dominant ideologies. Thus the speaking Malinche was always already there; it becomes the role of Chicana writers to uncover her voice in order to help shed the image of Malinche as solely a figure of betrayal. When Chicanas give her voice they follow the words, the desire of Gloria Anzaldúa: "I write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become" (71).

In addition to instructing Malinche's daughters to write their own histories, Pat Mora's "Malinche's Tips" instructs them to give voice to their own ideas by celebrating their bilingualism: "Remember: / monolinguals know / about linguistics / like atheists know / about theology." Chicana feminists Ortega and Sternbach discuss how bilingualism is "often devalued in that it is viewed as the product of a schizophrenic mind straddling two cultures" (15). However, they make clear that this premise is false and that bilingualism is the "linguistic expression of a hybrid reality" that is the "epitome of cultural mestizaje" (15). This cultural mestizaje is illustrated in Tip 3 of Mora's poem whereby women, snakes, and tongues are typologically linked in order to suggest that Malinche's voice goes back to indigenous roots available long before Spanish colonial discourse silenced it. In an Aztec mythological schema, women and snakes are linked in through the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, Lady of the Serpent Skirt. Aztec sculpture depicts Coatlicue wearing a skirt of serpents in order to symbolize the female birthing process.

To the Aztecs, snakes visually represented streams of blood, and thus become symbols of creation. Thus, Coatlicue is an image of intense creativity, as is evidenced in her giving birth to one of the Aztecs most powerful gods, Huitzilopochtli, the god of tribute and war. Gloria Anzaldúa explains that Coatlicue depicts the contradictory aspects of creation and destruction and is the “incarnation of cosmic process” (47). What Anzaldúa calls the Coatlicue state of consciousness is a necessary mental state for Chicanas that will allow for a wholeness of self to occur, a state of inhabiting a border space where one may tap into *la conciencia mestiza*. Mora’s Malinche taps into the Coatlicue state in order to suggest that silent women must speak. Using the Aztec symbols of women and snakes, Malinche asks her daughters to no longer be silent and to “alter the altared women,” who like the Virgin Mary of Catholic iconography crushes the snake that seduced Eve.

Moreover, “Tip 4” instructs them to follow her and speak bilingually: “I became bilingual / learned to roll / palabras in my mouth / just to taste them.” She continues by saying that “Eva, Sor Juana, and I remember / words’ velvet in our mothers.” She reminds her daughters that words had “power” and “red / sting,” “long before / “English only, fearssss / of contagion from / tangled lenguas.” Mora’s Malinche calls forth the power of bilingualism and speaking and that this power is part of her daughters’ inheritance; they have within them the power of the Coatlicue state of existence. Malinche further reminds her daughters in “Tip 5” that the power of language carried Cortés and his men into history, and she emphatically reminds them that his victory was “fueled by my historic lengua.” By sharing this information with her daughters, the Malinche of the poem wants to create a matriarchal tradition of language and a community of Chicana women who have the capacity for border thinking though

linguaging in English, Spanish, and Nahuatl. Linguaging, according to postcolonial theorist Walter Mignolo, means to “draw on something that is beyond sound, syntax, and lexicon” (264), something that is no longer only idiomatic but is also ethnic, sexual and gendered” (269). Mora’s poem allows a Chicana woman’s community to understand how linguaging is necessary to a reconfiguration of self and of all Chicana women’s cultural history.

Communal women’s history explored in Cumpiano’s poem “Yo, La Malinche” reveals itself through exploration of language use. The beginning sections of the poem, “Native Tongue” and “Translating Woman” clearly explore how Malinche has been defined by language and how in the poem she must redefine herself using her own hybrid language. After section 1 explores the various appellations given to Malinche in colonial discourse, from *lengua* to *chingada*, Malinche proceeds to list names for herself and culminates the process by defining herself, stating “My name is My Name.” After this line, a third person narration begins. It is possible that these are just Malinche’s thoughts not verbally uttered, but more likely, since the poem is concerned with women’s communal history, this the voice of all the forsaken indigenous women who have been left out of history. This voice questions accepted masculinist colonial history:

Who will speak up for Malinche?
 Who will say she spoke as women speak,
 in another’s language
 so that even when the eagle Cuauhtémoc
 was caged that one last time
 she had no words of her own that could warn him.

How could she have save him?

How would you have saved him?

Would you have saved him?

How can we save ourselves?

The section ends with a series of questions that ask contemporary Chicanas to put themselves in Malinche's place and try to understand her situation. The section does not end with a decisive account of Malinche as traitor. It ends with questions that lead to possibilities. One answer to how Chicanas may save themselves involves understanding their communal history. Chicana writers must find "that the self she seeks to define and love is not merely an individual self, but a collective one. . . . the power, the permission, the authority to tell stories about herself and other Chicanas comes from her cultural, racial/ethnic and linguistic community" (Yarbro-Bejarano 215).

The next section of the poem, "Translating Woman," emphasizes linguistics in order to expose how "everything" Malinche says is in a "foreign language," "a code that he has taught me." Nevertheless, Malinche continues in this short section, to have linguistic agency by creating a language that is hers:

I will make a language from stones.

One stone lifted from wet earth will mean *everything*.

The mark the stone leaves will mean *night*.

In this poem, Cumpiano attributes linguistic agency to Malinche, who unlike Cortés or Moctezuma, emerges from the contact zone of "the conquest" by creating a new transcultural form: the language of the mestiza that is symbolic, made of earth and stone,

tapped into the Coatlicue state. This transcultural language still exists in Mexico today, where although Spanish is the official language, most all places, all locations, are called by their original Mexica names, in particular their Aztec names. In this way, then, Malinche becomes the linguistic hybrid site for Chicana women, and Mora and Cumpiano create autoethnographic texts that explore hybridity and border culture as evidenced in language use.

It is important to note that both poets write in English, even though they frequently code switch to Spanish, as do most Chicana writers.⁵ Hence, Malinche adds another language to her repertoire in this poem—English. Anzaldúa and Saldívar-Hull discuss how Chicanas are multilingual border speakers. This border discourse is a “mestizaje of English, Spanish, Chicana/o dialect, and even some Nahuatl, the Aztec mother tongue” (Saldívar-Hull 67). Anzaldúa insists on the legitimacy of a border language for “a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country where Spanish is the first language” (55) and “for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo” (55). Chicanas, then, like the Malinche of Cumpiano’s poem, create their own language that includes using many languages including Standard English, Working class English, Standard Spanish, Standard Mexican Spanish, Chicano Spanish, and Tex-Mex (Anzaldúa 55).

Malinche was indeed the original hybrid linguistic moment for Chicanas, but masculinist and colonial histories silenced her. Anzaldúa and other Chicanas will no longer allow her to be silent and will no longer be silent themselves: “I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will

have my serpent tongue—my woman’s voice, my sexual voice, my poet’s voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence” (59).

¹ Hegel was the first to introduce this concept of history and many contemporary postcolonial critics such as Robert Young and Dipesh Chakrabarty as well as Leela Gandhi have continued his premise.

² In the Nahuatl language the *tzin* ending denotes respect.

³ In the matriarchal Olmec culture, a *coatl*, meaning womb and/or serpent, was sacred. After patriarchal Aztec rule, Coatlicue became a symbol of conflict and contradiction, representing both the Eagle or the father and spirit and the Serpent or the mother and soul.

⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera* defines Chicano Spanish as border language, *un nuevo lenguaje*, that is a living language used by contemporary Chicanas that relies on variations of Spanish and English, both standard and working class versions.

⁵ Although this dissertation explores works written by Chicanas in English with code switching to Spanish, there are Chicana writers, such as Angela de Hoyos, who write totally in Spanish. In “La Malinche a Cortez y Vice Versa” (1985), de Hoyos imagines a conversation between Malinche and Cortés that concentrates on their relationship. After each one’s verbal remark, there are parentheses containing what they really think about each other, as opposed to what they actually say in the poem to each other. Hybridity in this instance also includes the unspoken as well as the spoken.

Chapter Three

The Construction of Mexico's Spiritual Mother, La Virgen de Guadalupe

Do not be troubled or weighed down with grief,
 Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain,
 Am I not here who am your mother?
 Are you not under my shadow and protection?
 Am I not your fountain of life?
 Are you not in the folds of my mantle?
 In the crossing of my arms?
 Is there anything else you need?

-The Virgin Mary to Juan Diego 1531 (Jensen i)

When La Virgen de Guadalupe reportedly appeared to the Indian Juan Diego on December 8, 1531, on the hill of Tepeyacac (now Tepeyac) located north of present-day Mexico City, Mexico's spiritual mother was born. Known as *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Our Lady of Guadalupe), she is Mexico's major female spiritual archetypal figure, the protectress of Mexicans and the mother of the Americas. More than four and half centuries after her appearance, men and women still drop to their knees before the image of Nuestra Señora that supposedly appeared on the *tilma* (cape) of Juan Diego on that fateful December morning of 1531. An average of fifteen thousand people a day still flock to her Basilica in Mexico City (Rengers 6) in order to find assurance, comfort and hope and in order to pay homage to "Our Mother." She remains one of the most venerated images in Chicano/a culture, appearing on both sides of the border in churches, schools, houses, and on candles, magnets, tattoos, and even mouse pads. As Gloria Anzaldúa remarks, Guadalupe is "the single most potent religious, political, and cultural

image of the Chicano/ Mexicano As a symbol of hope and faith she sustains and ensures our survival” (30).

Both historical and political influences contribute to the formation of Guadalupe from the time of colonization until the current day. This chapter explores the historical process of Guadalupe’s symbolization that culminates in her becoming a postmodern, postcolonial cultural site that represents hope for Mexicans and Mexican Americans and a postcolonial spiritual site for Chicanas. In order to understand how Guadalupe becomes this spiritual site, this chapter is descriptive in nature, presenting a history of Guadalupe that illustrates the plural dimensions of the figure. For example, this chapter, in part, defines the archetype of Guadalupe as an emblem of a particular brand of popular Catholicism: a syncretism of Spanish folk Catholicism and indigenous beliefs and practices. Therefore, this chapter begins with the historical origins of Guadalupe located in the figure of the Virgin Mary, particularly in Catholic Spain’s reverence for her, and also in the historical origins of Guadalupe in the matriarchal goddesses of the pre-conquest Aztec world, in particular the mother goddess Tonantzin. Next, I will discuss the political construction of Guadalupe as a nationalist emblem, as the protectress of the nation of Mexico. As a nationalist emblem, Guadalupe represents the intersection of the criollo population (Mexican-born Spaniards) with the indigenous population. This intersection reveals itself in both visual images and literary texts. As a visual image, Guadalupe becomes a hieroglyphic representation of the Nahuatl world. This image is accompanied by an oral tradition of Guadalupe that emerges in legend, song, and also in ritual performances, such as festivals and petitions. In addition, texts written mostly by Spanish clergy explore the historicity of her apparition and her miracles. Both traditions

find a home in Mexico's criollo and mestiza population that will eventually embrace Guadalupe as a cultural symbol of nationalism and as a religious symbol of faith. This postcolonial religion is based in popular Catholicism, a practice of mainly the working class and women that emphasizes Guadalupe's role as a spiritual healer of the downtrodden and oppressed, as a means of survival for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. I will end the chapter by analyzing Guadalupe as a postcolonial text, in particular a postcolonial spiritual symbol that provides an avenue of exploration for Chicana women's psychological and spiritual identities.

Mary Goes to Mexico

The previous chapters explain that people of Mexican descent recognize Malinche as their historical mother, the mother of la raza mestiza, whose legacy produces a mestiza cultural history that includes the mixing of languages, traditions, and perhaps most influentially, religion and/or belief systems. In particular, the encounter between Spanish folk Catholicism and indigenous beliefs and practices produces a postcolonial religion, or better, a postcolonial spiritual site of exploration: Mary/Guadalupe as Spiritual Mother. Postcolonial religion is a product of syncretic fusion, accommodation, and negotiation that results in a belief that relies less on religious orthodoxy and more on religious practices of peoples who have confronted a history of colonization and various beliefs and practices. In Mexico, as in parts of the United States and other parts of Latin America, postcolonial religion can be called popular religion. The popular religion of Mexico and Mexican Americans is popular Catholicism—multicultural, of the working class, ritualistic, and practiced mainly by minorities and women. Popular Catholicism is a

result of Catholic European colonization, and in Mexico and environs, it is a result of a Spanish Catholicism that held in high regard ritual and conversion. Spanish colonization of the New World was motivated by the desire to conquer through the acquisition of wealth but also through the conversion of the indigenous people to Catholicism. Moreover, most Catholics come from a tradition whereby they were “conquered” and “colonized” by Europeans.

Along with the conquistadors, the warriors for control of land and wealth, Imperial Spain also sent Franciscan friars to solidify its colonial efforts. It was up to the Franciscans to make Queen Isabella’s personal mission complete—the indigenous must convert to Catholicism. Isabella was a fervent Catholic, and all the explorers and conquistadors from Columbus to Cortés understood that continued funding for expeditions depended greatly upon converting “the natives” to Catholicism. When the Spaniards set sail for the New World, Spain had finally regained political power after seven centuries of Islamic control. Isabella’s most pressing political concerns included ongoing wars with the Moors and forcing the substantial Jewish population of Spain who were very important to the economic structure of the country to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. However, the possibility of the inhabitants of New World converting to Catholicism greatly appealed to her.

To Imperial minds, native conversion to Catholicism was necessary in order to make Indians intelligible, which would, in turn, make them more exploitable by controlling their religious belief system in order for assimilation to occur. Catholicism in the New World, however, was not the Catholicism of the Vatican but the Catholicism of Castile and towns such as Extremadura, where people practiced a folk Catholicism based

primarily on ritual and the idea of confession. The Catholic religion of Castile was local, “centered around village with festivals and tradition” (Poole 20) and “concerned more with devotion than dogma” (Poole 20). Specifically, devotion in Castile was primarily directed to the Virgin and other local patron saints (Poole 20). Cortés and other colonizers transported this devotion to the new world. The clergy also carried with them these ritual practices but added an orthodox Christian mission to convert the indigenous. Although the Franciscans, at varying levels of intensity, were concerned that the indigenous subscribe to orthodoxy, many of the early friars concentrated initial conversion efforts in practice rather than orthodoxy, mainly because of language differences. The friars made conversion possible through two tangible practices: ritual and confession. The indigenous did not have to believe or to understand the orthodoxy of Roman Catholicism, but they did have to practice visual public ceremony and ritual. Thus, the Franciscans focused on retraining the indigenous through ritual practices, such as baptism and devotion to saints. Moreover, the friars working with the conquistadors, forced the indigenous to either destroy their worship sites or to erect colonial Catholic churches directly on top of specific worship sites, such as pyramids or summits. Finally, many of the friars insisted upon either destroying indigenous codices (pictorial histories) or rewriting them with an eye for deleting pagan practice and incorporating Christian ideology (Klor de Alva).

Numerous contemporary historians and religious scholars believe that similarities between Catholicism and Precolumbian indigenous beliefs allowed for a transculturation of the indigenous and a birth of a folk Mexican Catholicism. For example, the hierarchy in the Aztec culture, with an elite priestly class at the top, resembled the hierarchy in the

Catholic Church. In addition, community of the family and of the church was extremely important to Catholicism, as was the idea of community to the Aztec culture. But probably the similarity that had the most impact on native conversion to Catholicism was the religion's iconography, replete with saints, statues, immaculate hearts on fire, and a bleeding Jesus. These visual conduits impacted an Aztec population that relied heavily on the visual aspects of ritual in their own belief system. The Catholic collection resembled the Aztec spiritual world of polytheism. Saints were likened to different gods and goddesses, the immaculate heart to the hearts of human sacrifice. Blood was a key element in both beliefs and ideology (Martinez 98-100). Finally, the visualization and ritual were accepted by Aztecs who historically had a tradition of incorporating alien elements from other indigenous tribes into their religion (Cervantes).

More difficult in the conversion process was the idea of confession. The Franciscans taught the indigenous that conversion hinged upon coming to terms with the battle of the inner self—the freedom of choice between good and evil. This was difficult for the indigenous for several reasons. First, their idea of self was divided but the nature of the parts was different. The self did not, as the Christian self, worry about having evil desire but instead worried about how to balance desires through ritual acts. To the Aztecs, no one desire was evil; all desire must be kept in harmony with the cosmos (Klor de Alva). Second, ideas of salvation differed. The friars taught that Jesus died so all might live. For the indigenous, many had to die in battle or through sacrifice, so that one could live (Rodriguez 7). Finally, the nature of sin also differed. To the Spanish the greatest sins included heresy and idolatry; for the indigenous the greatest sins included greed and turning from the elders of the community or from ancestors (Rodriguez 7-8).

Furthermore, “Whereas the Europeans saw the concepts of order and chaos as antithetical, the Nahuas saw them as part of an ongoing dialectical process. The idea of sin, as a personal, willful, violation of divine law that merited punishment was alien to their belief system” (Poole 21). The crux of the dilemma evidenced itself in the friars banning native human sacrifice. This, of course, was a horrific sin in the eyes of Christians, but to many Aztecs (the ruling peoples of Mesoamerica of the time) stopping human sacrifice¹ meant destroying their Mesoamerican concept of harmony in the cosmos and their control of outsiders who were often the victims of sacrifice. The friars then employed the visually symbolic sacrifice of Jesus in order to placate Aztec concerns and to introduce them to confessing in order to understand the sacrifice of Jesus and salvation of the individual soul.

The Franciscans were somewhat tolerant of the indigenous identifying Christian saints with native deities² in order to ease the assimilation of Catholicism into indigenous culture. Therefore, “The idea that Christianity sat in its purity like a layer of oil over Mesoamerican magic is a highly misleading one” (Cervantes). Catholicism with its lighting of candles and burning of incense appealed to the indigenous. Thus, a “symbiotic relationship between the official orthodox remedies and the apparently superstitious practices” (Cervantes) developed. This symbiosis coupled with the fact that the Mesoamerican civilization was in decline because of illness and death (most of which was caused by the influx of European viruses such as small pox, and from battles) led the Indians to accept Catholicism, but on their own terms.

The conversion was not easy or totally successful for the friars. In spite of their zealous reprogramming, by the time of the first Mexican Church Council in 1555,

“failure to eradicate paganism had become patently clear” (Peterson). The Indians resisted overtly in the form of uprisings and covertly in persistence of traditional beliefs—for the most part, minus human sacrifice. All colonial churches were built on the backs of the indigenous and their covert persistence in traditional belief is evidenced in their inclusion of Aztec symbols such as rays of light or particular kinds of snakes on church buildings. Often the indigenous would draw pictures of their native symbols and then cover them up with traditional Catholic colonial designs. In essence, this practice was familiar to them since they often erected new pyramids on top of old ones creating a palimpsestic history of their beliefs in devotional shrines. Consequently, the friars intensified their methods of indoctrination and tried to substitute new Christian saints for the old gods in parallel rituals. The hallmark substitution accepted by some of the friars and the indigenous is the syncretic figure of La Virgen de Guadalupe, a fusion of the Catholic mother of God and the native Mother goddesses (Peterson). Although the friars may not have been directly responsible for the following myth/story of Guadalupe, they did, as Catholics, understand the power of storytelling.

*The Story*³

Ten years after the fall of the city of Mexico, early in the morning on December 9, 1531, a Christian Indian Juan Diego⁴, is walking to mass at Tlateloco when he hears music, like the song of birds. He wonders if he is dreaming or in heaven. The source of the beautiful singing is at the top of a hill named Tepeyac. He climbs the hill and sees a beautiful glowing lady with a face of love and compassion.

She speaks to him, “Juanito, my dearest small son, where are you going?” He replies that he is on his way to church.

She identifies herself as the Virgin Holy Mary and Mother of God, the merciful mother of Juan Diego and his people. She makes a request of him to build a temple upon the summit on which he stands so that she will hear the weeping, complaints, and sufferings of all the people of this land. She instructs Juan Diego to go to Bishop Zumárraga and tell him that she has requested a temple.

The Bishop does not believe Juan Diego and so Juan Diego returns to Tepeyac to tell The Lady of his failure.

She tells him not to despair and urges him to again go to the Bishop and say that it is the Mother of God who sends him.

This time the Bishop asks for more specifics, and although he listens intently to Juan Diego, he tells him that he needs a sign that this request has come from the Lady of Heaven herself.

Once the Holy Mother hears this, she instructs Juan Diego to return the next day, for a third time, and she will provide him with a sign. However, Juan Diego does not return because his uncle, Juan Bernardino, is gravely ill and Juan Diego spends all day seeking medical help for him. He is unsuccessful in his search for a doctor, and so the next day he decides to find a priest. On his way to the priest, he consciously tries to skirt the path of the summit so that he will not be seen by the Virgin.

But she sees him. She comes down from the hill and confronts him. She listens to his explanation and says “Don’t worry about your uncle. He will be healthy.” Thus on his fourth encounter with The Lady she tells him to go up the hill and gather the flowers that he will find. He is astounded to find roses that never grow during December. She takes

the roses from him and arranges them in his tilma (coat) and instructs him to open his tilma only in the presence of the Bishop.

Juan Diego has to fight his way into see the Bishop but eventually sees him and tells him the story of the roses. When he unfolds his tilma, the roses drop to the ground and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appears on the tilma. At the same time, his uncle is restored to complete health.

The day of the miracle was December 12, 1531. Soon after a temple was built at Tepeyac in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Catholic Roots of the Story: Marian Imagery

The most significant female religious figure in Western civilization is the Virgin Mary. Because Mary is mentioned so few times in the Bible, little is known about her history. Perhaps for this reason, Protestants—concerned with biblical reference and fundamentals—downplay the significance of Mary. From the time of the Reformation on, Protestants negated the importance of Mary that Catholics bestowed upon her. So hated was she, that in 1645, the House of Commons ordered all pictures of Mary as Queen of Heaven to be burned (Cuneen 205). However, Mary's popularity with Catholics never waned, even despite efforts of the Vatican to show her role as non-equal to Christ by calling her a mediator to Christ and His understanding. The little known history of Mary allowed for numerous stories of her life to arise in popular Catholic lore. The mystery of Mary has inspired not only stories but also beautiful paintings, iconography, sculptures, statues—images. Andrew Greely, a Catholic writer, posits that Catholics love their heritage because it is more than institutional authority and doctrine; it is “experience,

image, and story, before it is anything else and after it is anything else” (38). And the stories and the icons of Mary abound and continue.

As a Catholic symbol Mary stands first and foremost as an image of Mother. Marian devotion stems mainly from Catholics’ discovery of her as love and compassion (Cuneen 262). Marian devotion consoles the oppressed. The Cult of Mary, substantiated by the “story,” found comfort in a woman who would listen to suffering, console the pained, and protect the weak:

I have a living desire that there be built a temple, so that in it
I can show and give forth all my love, compassion, help and
defense, because I am your loving mother: to you, all who
are with you, to all the inhabitants of this land and to all who
love me, call upon me, and trust me. I will hear their lamentations
and will remedy their miseries, pains, and sufferings. (Rodriguez 31)

Although Guadalupe will be the protectress of the poor, she does ask Juan Diego to go to the Bishop in order to have the church built, an act that symbolizes her role as mediator. The institutional church realized her popularity but tried to keep her below the divinity of God and Christ by making her a mediator. In this way, she is kept within a hierarchical position, inferior to Jesus Christ as sanctioned by the institutionalized church. She is an intercessor who works through Christ, not alone, which denies her independent active agency. However, mediation is crucial to Catholicism: Priests mediate, and communion is an act of mediation. Therefore, Mary as mediatrix fits the Catholic model (Hamington 90).

Although the Virgin's popularity has its roots in her symbolic representation as Mother, it is important to acknowledge that Mary "has been molded over time by the Catholic hierarchy's social and theological agenda" (Hamington 3). This hierarchy recognizes the importance of a mother image but stresses that her image is submissive to God the Father and Jesus the Son. As symbolic mother, Mary becomes a model for women as mother and wife who more than anything else would be a comforter to the family, compliant and humble. Moreover, as a symbol of the church, Mary's role as mediator gave to Catholic women a model of how they should be mediators within the family, for example between the father and the children. As a mediator, as a mother, as a wife, the symbol of the Virgin Mary is often viewed as passive—merely receptive. Consequently, many Catholic women who follow this model did not explore an independent life.

Moreover, Mary becomes a "model of the Church's moral control over Catholic women" (Hamington 4) in that Catholicism refers to her as a perpetual virgin—a biological impossibility for women. Mary's virginity is a function of her constructed nature created "to meet social, political and theological needs of . . . males" (Hamington 65) of the church. Sexual purity is the hallmark of Mary, who represents the polar opposite of Eve, the sexual woman who "caused" the fall from paradise. The Catholic Church emphasizes Mary's role as the New Eve, emphasizing in particular her sexual purity and goodness. Thus, the reality of Mary's virginity is of less consequence than the perpetuation of the virginal myth as a model of womanhood. The binary construction of women as either virgin or sinner/whore left little agency for Mary and little agency for Catholic women who follow this model as their means to salvation. Moreover, Mary as

perpetual virgin is “an anomaly of humanity” that is “elevated in Catholic dogma as model of womanhood. The integration of the fantastic and the exemplary creates the impossible for women”⁵ (Hamington 78-9). Thus, the Virgin Mary, despite her divine origins, is very much socially constructed. This historical and social construction emphasizes her as passive and dependent. Because of this, many feminists have rejected the Marian image because of the extent to which the patriarchal Catholic Church has constructed her as perpetuating the oppression of women.⁶

However, Mary remains popular for women of Catholic background because of her positive role as mother and intercessor. Mary was a mother who suffered, suffered the greatest loss of a Mother, the loss of her child. Catholic women throughout the ages find comfort in that she understood female suffering. Further, Catholic women as mothers often took on the role of protectress of the family, sacrificing personal growth for the benefit of the family. Her importance in countries such as Spain and in the Americas makes her the symbolic mother of all—from infants to conquistadors—a mother who will listen and protect. Thus Spain’s and Latin America’s particular Marian devotion stresses Mary as the ultimate example of compassion, a consoler of the masses, but it also “oppresses women by insisting their individuality be sacrificed for the family” (Cuneen 261).

As a model of Catholic women, the construction of Mary by the church has kept her in subservient role as comforter, controlled her sexually by emphasizing virgin purity, and emphasized her humility to God the Father and the Son. Yet the popularity of Mary throughout the ages reveals that she is the consolation for the suffering, the poor, the

weak, the distraught. In helping the oppressed, she stands for more than religious law; she stands for love. How does this idea of love and protection emerge?

The origins of the Virgin Mary as a loving protectress are clearly illustrated in Guadalupe's story. To begin, the first apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe occurred on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated at that time throughout the Spanish empire on December 9 (Rengers 3). She acts as mother, calling Juan Diego her "youngest child," most likely referring to the Nahuatl people's recent conversion to Catholicism. She appears as a mediatrix, willing to intercess on behalf of the oppressed Indians in order to rescue them from obliteration and aid in their conversion to Catholicism. She becomes the site of religious negotiation for the indigenous. By having them embrace Catholicism, she saves them from persecution. Moreover, she performs a miracle with Spanish props—Castillean roses—and identifies herself as "the perfect and ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, of truth, through whom everything lives I am your merciful mother . . . [who] will heal all sorrows, hardships, and suffering" (Rengers 8).

Although Guadalupe may appear to act independently, a traditional Catholic reading interprets Guadalupe within a Marian tradition, as one who is submissive and humble and remains in her place within the hierarchy. Her request is as mediator; she asks for a church to be built and asks Juan Diego to go the proper authorities in order to get this request granted. The Bishop will not grant this request until he gets a sign, a necessary emblem for the church. Interpreted through orthodox Catholic lenses, the Virgin shows that submission to the church is necessary.

Indigenous Elements in The Story

Most Mexicans and Mexican-Americans recognize Guadalupe as the Aztec Mother goddess, Tonantzin, also known as “Our Mother.” In the Nahuatl language, *inninatzin* means mother and *ton* is the name given to several mountains where earth mother goddesses were worshipped, including Tonantzin. Guadalupe comes from a long line of mother goddesses and reflects aspects of each of these figures. For example, another ancient mother goddess is also Guadalupe’s ancestor; she is called Coatlapopeuh, a descendant of a Mesoamerican fertility and earth goddess. It may have been that the Spaniards heard the Nahuatl name of Coatlapopeuh as homophonous with Guadalupe⁷ (Anzaldúa 29). Most important to an understanding of the indigenous roots of Guadalupe is the earliest known earth goddess Coatlicue⁸, goddess of the Serpent Skirt. Coatlicue is a counter part of Tonantzin. The Aztec religious system is based on duality, and although Tonantzin is the Great Mother, in particular, she is the Good Mother, a mother goddess who the people worshipped not by human sacrifice but by the sacrifice of small animals. Her companion part, Coatlicue, “Woman of the Serpent Skirt,” is the “darker” power of the creative mother goddess (Anzaldúa 29). Tonantzin, then, is the Mother of gods, as Mary is the Mother of God. But simultaneously Guadalupe is also a product of Coatlicue, who is the mother of Huitzilopochtli, great sun god of the Aztecs. Huitzilopochtli, after slaying his sister, symbolically replaces mother goddess worship with patriarchal warrior worship. In addition, the hill of Tepeyac was the site of worship for Tonantzin⁹. It is very important to an Aztec belief system that Juan Diego witnesses the appearance of Guadalupe at this indigenous holy site where the people had worshipped (Castillo 111). When Juan Diego met Guadalupe at this site, he most likely called her Coatlapopeuh¹⁰,

which means “One who has dominion over or crushes the serpents.” Given the site of Guadalupe’s appearance, Juan Diego and other indigenous would make a strong association between Guadalupe and Tonantzin.

At the time of the conquest, Aztec mother goddesses had already been barred by the Aztec society who had replaced goddess worship with a reverence for male warrior gods, such as Huitzilopochtli. However, during and after the conquest, the Mother Goddess is reborn since the people believed that their male gods had died during the loss in battle. The emergence of the Mother Goddess would indicate to the indigenous that their protector Mother had returned. In the Nahuatl version of Guadalupe’s story from the Nican Mopohua, Guadalupe calls herself Mother of Great Truth, Mother of Giver of Life, Mother of the Inventory of Humanity, Mother of the Lord of Near and Close by, and Mother of Heaven and Earth (Rodriguez 41). These names suggest the reverence that the people had for the Mother Goddess who they believed had come to rescue them from despair and annihilation.

In addition, the culture of the time believed in numerology. The numbers four and five are particularly significant: Four symbolizes completion¹¹, as in the four directions on earth, and five symbolizes the center of completion, a human standing in the center of the four directions. Within the story, Juan Diego asks four questions, and Guadalupe appears to him four times. He is the center of the cycle; he sees her four times. Thus, the cycle is complete. Moreover, when Juan Diego releases the flowers and the image of Guadalupe appears on the tilma, the apparition cycle is complete since the tilma image is the fifth appearance. Finally, Guadalupe asks five questions (those that appear in the

introductory quote of this chapter). This numerology suggests that the Aztecs viewed Guadalupe's appearance as a completion of a new cycle of belief.

There are other indigenous symbols in the story, including music and flowers. In a Nahuatl belief system, music was half of the dual expression for truth, beauty, philosophy, and divinity. The other half of the expression was flowers. Juan Diego hears music before Guadalupe's first appearance. He hears it and wonders if he is dreaming or is in heaven. When he hears the music, he looks to the East, the direction from which the Nahuatls believed life came. Finally, the flowers that Guadalupe produces would complete the expression of truth and beauty and divinity (Rodriguez 44).

Guadalupe as Syncretistic Symbol

Sincretismo is a complex process by which rituals, beliefs, and symbols from different religions are combined to create new meaning. Catholic theologian Jeannette Rodriguez points out that the significance of the Guadalupe story is two-fold: it provides a foundation for Mexican Christianity and it provides a connection between the Spanish and Aztec cultures (45). The story and image of Guadalupe are syncretic in that they fuse different cultures' religious practices: the Aztec worship of mother goddesses and Catholic devotion to Mary. In particular, the fusion combines localized practices of particular indigenous groups living in Tepeyac at the time and a particular kind of folk Catholicism practiced by Cortés and other Spaniards from the Extremadura region. Since Guadalupe, a clear Marian apparition, appears to Juan Diego on the sacred hill of Tonantzin, Tepeyac, she becomes the syncretic moment for the birth of a new culture, the Mexican culture.

According to Yale historical scholar and theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, “One of the most profound and most persistent roles of the Virgin Mother in history has been her function as a bridge builder to other traditions, other cultures and other religions” (67). Like the image of Black Madonnas, Guadalupe’s image invokes a symbol of multiculturalism (Pelikan 78). “Within the Roman Catholic tradition Our Lady of Guadalupe is a Marian image, and within the hispanic culture she is a mestiza, a mixture of both Spanish and Indian blood” (Rodriguez 155). Guadalupe unites people of different races, religions, and languages. In her, the Catholic mother of God and the mother goddess of the indigenous unite; she mediates between humans and the divine, and between Spanish and Indian culture; she is the bridge that connects the suffering, defeated Aztecs with the Catholic, victorious Spaniards. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, “*La Virgen de Guadalupe*, is the symbol of ethnic identity and of the tolerance for ambiguity that the Chicanos-mexicanos, people of mixed race, people who have Indian blood, people who cross cultures, by necessity possess” (30).

Iconographically, Guadalupe illustrates this ethnic and religious multiculturalism. Although the tilma reflects an indigenous image of Guadalupe with dark or olive-skinned and straight black hair, her features, a small aquiline nose, for example, are more European than indigenous, and her small indigenous hands are in the posture of Marian humility--prayer and deference to God. Like the Virgin Mary, Guadalupe is depicted with an aureole, a luminous area surrounding her figure (Hawkins 65). In Catholic iconography the aureole indicates supreme power exalted to the highest degree. The aureole includes the pointed rays of the sun, an image that appears in numerous Aztec works of art and that represents fertility. Guadalupe’s garments also illustrate syncretic

symbolism. Guadalupe dons a typical Indian woman's mantle whose blue color symbolizes eternity and human immortality, as it often does in religious art of the medieval period (Hawkins 65). Because the Virgin Mary is thought of as the protectress of the sea, she wears blue to indicate water. The blue mantle is decorated with stars, suggesting the Catholic significance of her as the Queen of Heaven and is also a model of the apocalyptic woman who appears in Revelation 12:1, "as clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet" and who is to be the mother of the savior (Peterson). Interestingly, the Aztecs also looked to the sky for divine revelation. The Aztec Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon at Tenochtitlan (north of present-day Mexico city) were erected to parallel the positions of the sun and the moon in the sky. Certainly the imagery suggests more from a Catholic iconographic perspective: Guadalupe wears at her waist a *cingulum*, which was worn by unmarried women as a symbol of their perfect chastity (Hawkins 66). Under Guadalupe's feet sits a crescent moon, the symbol of perpetual virginity which is often found in European and Byzantine representations of the Immaculate Conception (Hawkins 65). It is also, as Marina Warner explains, "pagan" lunar symbolism connoting feminine power and creative force (257). In addition, the crescent moon is held by a winged cherub angel, a medieval image that suggests heaven and speed and "unweariedness" (Hawkins 66).

Although some say that the Catholic Church co-opted "the undereducated superstitious indigenous" by having them accept the figure of Guadalupe (Cuneen 22), the indigenous cult of feminine spirituality lives in her image. She arrives as a rebirth of Tonantzin at a time when the Aztec male warrior gods have been defeated by the Spanish. As Mary Daly posits, not only is Guadalupe a "vindication . . . of Indian

resistance,” but also a vindication of “female self image in resistance to patriarchal dominance” (180). This patriarchal dominance is represented by not only the Aztec male warrior gods but by the Spanish conquistadors and the Franciscan missionaries.

Guadalupe becomes an affirmation of the “humanness of the indigenous population” and a means to forging a “new culture . . . out of Spanish and Indian elements” (Rodriguez 46).

Militant Mother: Guadalupe as National Emblem and Text

As a syncretic symbol, “the little dark one” becomes not only a symbol of the Spanish Catholic virgin or the Indian mother goddess but also a combination of the two that stands as a representation of a new nation, Mexico. Richard Rodrigues states, “[the] Virgin of Guadalupe symbolizes the entire coherence of Mexico, body and soul [She] becomes the unofficial, the private flag of Mexicans” (qtd. in Pelikan 2). Not only religious instability but also political instability helps to nurture the cult of Guadalupe and her eventual emergence as a nationalist symbol.

When the Catholic Hernán Cortés left Extremadura, Spain, he needed a mediator for protection. He came armed with more than weapons and horses; he came armed with the Virgin Mary¹², his protectress across the sea and on the mission of the conquest. Spain’s militant Catholicism arrived with Cortés, and the figure of the Virgin was the symbolic representation of Spain’s Catholicism. The Virgin Mary was protectress and mediator in Spain, and after she journeyed across the ocean, these roles continued to develop in the figure of Guadalupe.

Certainly the Virgin Mary was often employed as a militant protectress by Spain and thus by the Spanish conquistadors during colonization. Mary was used by Spain not

only as protectress but also as religious legitimation for the conquest and colonization of Mexico (Hamington 16). The apparition of Mary in Mexico as well as in other places at later dates signified rebellion of oppressed forces. For example, when Mary appeared at Fatima in Portugal from 1915-1917, the Republican government of Portugal had just passed harsh anti-clerical laws and made a clear separation between church and state (Cuneen 243). Anthropologists Edith and Victor Turner emphasize that Marian apparitions often occurred during times when the oppressed or poor community was weak or vulnerable and needed to stress some sort of power (Cuneen 237). When Guadalupe appeared, she appears as a “symbol of power for a population in seemingly powerless situation” (Rodriguez 121). The Aztec people were under threat of losing their entire indigenous belief system when Guadalupe arrived. She became a symbol of their hope, their own special protectress, eventually a fusion of the Virgin Mary with Tonantzin, becoming the ultimate mother of mercy and understanding. Studies of messianic movements by Italian scholar Vittorio Lanternari (1963) report that two motivating factors give rise to cults and messianic movements: the oppressed population’s desire for salvation and also for freedom (Herrera-Sobek, The Mexican 38). As the very fabric of Aztec society is ripped apart, Guadalupe arrives as means to salvation and as means to living rather than dying. Since the indigenous people believed their warrior gods had forsaken them, and the Spanish did not allow “pagan worship,” Guadalupe emerges as an answer to their oppression.

Thus, within the colonization process, Guadalupe emerges as the indigenous people’s way to salvation and to the retention of indigeneity, but also becomes part of the new Mexican nation, not a New Spain. Throughout the 1600s and early 1700s, chapels to

Our Lady are built on indigenous holy ground, Tepeyac. The Catholic Church seized opportunities to dedicate churches to Guadalupe and eventually, the church proclaimed her Patron of New Spain in 1737. It is interesting to note that the plague of 1736 that killed forty thousand people in Mexico City ceases immediately after she is declared patron (Handbook 220). Also in 1737, December 12, is proclaimed a holy day as well as a civil holiday. In 1754, a papal bull approved Our Lady of Guadalupe as Patroness of Mexico. Thus, some one hundred years after Juan Diego's "private ecstatic experience," the cult of Guadalupe became a "communal experience whereby a whole people is blessed" (Warner 30) and an entire nation is well on its way to formation, declaring as its national emblems an eagle, a cactus, and the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Guadalupe is the symbol of *Guadalupanismo*, the popular religious devotion of the Mexican people. However, Stafford Poole, Vincentian priest and author of Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a National Symbol (1995), does not find any documentary evidence that Guadalupe was accepted by the indigenous. Because most indigenous history is based in oral tradition, Poole, a historiographer who gives primary importance to written evidence, is skeptical about the apparition, miracles, and indigenous worship of her. Poole researches documentary evidence, mainly histories and sermons written by clergy. From this evidence, he claims that the fusion of Guadalupe with Mexican identity began not in Tepeyac in 1531 but in Mexico City in 1648 (Poole 101). In 1648, the first published accounts of the apparition appear—two works written by criollo priests—Miguel Sanchez and Luis Laso de la Vega (Poole 100). Criollos were Spaniards who were born in the New World. They saw themselves as marginalists because the *Penisulares* (those born in Spain) remained in the highest positions of the

social and political hierarchy of New Spain. The criollos were often excluded from the high-level positions of the local government of New Spain. Therefore, “they reacted by developing a strong sense of group and regional identity” (Poole 1). According to Poole, the apparition stories coincide with the “flowering of criollismo”: “In the story of the apparitions criollismo found its legitimacy” (100). In Poole’s opinion, the seventeenth century began the long process whereby Guadalupe was fused with Mexican identity, and he offers as proof of his conjecture that the most prominent theme of seventeenth-century sermons was Guadalupe as divine gift to criollos (Poole 152). Moreover, Poole conjectures that Guadalupe helped criollo self-esteem, by empowering them with an emblem of their own identity, somewhat rooted in peninsular religious ideology (a brand of folk Catholicism) but simultaneously in something new. Finally, in the eighteenth century, devotion to Guadalupe continued to spread, encouraged by archbishops and clergy—all of whom were criollos (Poole 172).

Thus, Poole claims that there is not evidence of a strong native devotion to Guadalupe before the eighteenth century. According to him, the friars were opposed to indigenous worship of Tonantzin-Guadalupe and thought of the worship as idolatry. He further states that although there was baptism of natives after 1531, no written textual evidence of their actual conversion exists. By the 1700s, however, Laso de la Vega’s account pictures Guadalupe as the mother and protectress of Indians. His account gives a message of Guadalupe as compassion and consolation for the Indians (Poole 126). Even so, Poole does not hold oral tradition or supposed testimonies in the highest historical regard. Moreover, the Guadalupe event is a mythos of enormous importance that should be studied in an interdisciplinary manner from a historical, cultural, and theological

perspective. Poole does, however, conclude his study with the following: “Eventually Guadalupe became identified with both criollismo and indianismo that embraced the entire future nation. It was the one thing that could unite criollos, Indians, mestizos, even though they found different meanings in it” (218).

The criollos, considered as second class by European-born Spaniards, seized Guadalupe as a symbol in their ambition to create an independent Mexico distinct from a New Spain¹³ (Peterson). One of the most prevalent and important nationalistic meanings assigned to Guadalupe was a militant function. Like the archangel Michael, Guadalupe comes to aid an oppressed people in battle. This symbol of Guadalupe emerged during wars for Mexican independence. During the 1810 War of Independence, a criollo priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo, employed Guadalupe’s image “to move el pueblo Mexican toward freedom” (Anzaldúa 29). Hidalgo called Guadalupe by the name “General Captain,” and flew banners of her, of the last Aztec ruler Cuauhtemoc, and of the Mexican eagle, as part of his nationalist agenda (Peterson). His successor, a mestizo priest, Father Jose Maria Morelo, required all Mexican patriots to wear the emblem of Guadalupe. One hundred years later, both Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata employed the image of Guadalupe as a protectress of their rebel armies. Zapatistas wore wide-brimmed hats emblazoned with Guadalupe’s image around the hats’ bands. They seized Guadalupe as legitimacy for their fighting for a just cause. Even within the United States, Mexican Americans maintained Guadalupe as a “powerful symbol to create communal solidarity” (Peterson). Dolores Huerta and César Chávez used the symbol of Guadalupe in their struggle to organize California migrant farm workers into the United Farm

Workers. All of the above examples illustrate how Guadalupe acted as symbolic text, an image that connotes nationalism and resistance.

Texts written about Guadalupe also support her as a symbol of criollo nationalism and religion. Written documents establish history for Poole and for other masculine historiographers who place primacy on texts written mostly by male clergy. For example, historian, Jesuit priest and Guadalupe devotee, Francisco de Florencia wrote a mammoth history of Guadalupe entitled “La estrella del Norte de Mexico” (1688), a work that contains written, oral and visual testimonies. Critic of the work, Sylvia Santabella, agrees with Poole that Florencia’s study is “part of a movement spearheaded by Creole patriots in the seventeenth century to codify in writing the history and myths . . . that make the virgin a . . . multivocal symbol . . . of Mexican cultural identity.”

Like Poole, Florencia’s main concern is the validity of the apparitions. Therefore, he spends much of his work either reporting testimonies and miracles performed by Guadalupe or apologizing for the silences of his forbearers about the apparition. However, an interesting addition in his work is the inclusion of female testimony. He uses numerous nuns’ testimonies in order to give his text and conjectures legitimacy. Santabella reports “This historiographic ‘fathering’ of outside texts, a common practice of Baroque historiography, means that male authorities . . . use female texts to further their own ideological, rhetorical, and patriotic program.” Florencia uses nuns’ testimonies that had already been modified by a male author or confessor. Santabella concludes that Florencia’s work is symbolically “a mother[ed] text” since the work glorifies that mother and the Virgin Mary, but she also calls it a “fathered” text since “without Florencia’s authorial and authoritarian presence—he is a priest, a member of the Mexican hierarchy,

and he rewrites the nuns' discourse—the plea for the official sanction of the Mexican Virgin's cult cannot be made manifest." Unfortunately for Florencia, it would take sixty more years for official recognition.

Since most of the popular indigenous stories of Guadalupe take oral form, there are few written texts of the indigenous or the mestizos that refer to her. However, Guadalupe does appear as a frequent character in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corridos—ballads that encompass epic, lyric and narrative. Most often corridos narrate the life of a male protagonist, often a hero and eventually a national hero such as Emiliano Zapata. According to Maria Herrera-Sobek in The Mexican Corrido (1993), corridos can be viewed as social and historical texts that were written mostly by men (most likely criollos) who “incorporated mostly masculine-oriented themes and a strongly patriarchal ideology” (xviii). Herrera-Sobek traces the religious and political thought that gave form to the cult of Guadalupe and then gives examples of how Guadalupe is repeatedly invoked in the corrido. Using feminist archetypal criticism, “a type of analysis that views archetypes as recurrent patterns in art, literature, film, songs, and other artistic endeavors, depending on historical, political, and social forces in their formations” (Herrera-Sobek xiii), she discusses the archetypal appearances of this feminine deity in a supposedly masculine genre of the corrido.

In part she places Guadalupe in the tradition of protective mother goddess archetypes that have been popular since classical antiquity. Since the protagonist of the corrido is often undertaking danger, prayer to Guadalupe becomes an oral-formulaic device. Numerous corridos invoke the spiritual help and protection of Guadalupe. The following is Herrera-Sobek's translation of part of one such corrido:

Mother of Guadalupe

My Lady of San Juan

Have mercy on our souls

For they are in your hands!

Long live Mexico, Gentlemen!

Long live Guadalupe!

And may always live

The Mexican flag.

Oh Virgin of Guadalupe!

Our mother of consolation

In less time than I can relate this

Alberto was dead on the ground.

The twenty-second of February

Will always be remembered

The Virgin of Guadalupe

And God may forgive him.

Long live Guadalupe!

Long live illustrious Mexico!

Long live the socialist leagues!

And also the confederates. (45)

In this corrido as with many others, the Virgin of Guadalupe archetype assumes “the function of helper on the hero’s journey to self-knowledge” (51) and is called for as the proctress and the comforter. In most of the depictions, however, she is conceived as a “warrior . . . who can aid the various battalions to achieve victory over their enemies” (51). Because Herrera-Sobek from a feminist archetypal perspective views “the vectors of gender and patriarchal ideology as of paramount importance in archetypal image construction” (xiii), she concludes that just as Malinche was masculinized during the conquest, so too is Guadalupe masculinized by male writers of the corridos for nationalist military efforts.

As we see, criollo nationalists during war times or social upheavals employ Guadalupe as their patron, their justification for battle by textualizing her in image, song, or sermon. However, Ana Castillo points out that Guadalupe has been “manipulated by men to serve nationalism, and historically this has ultimately implied violent action” (98). In each of the above examples Guadalupe is meant to condone war and sanction nationalism. She is masculinized as a warrior, an emblem of battle. She becomes “a deity who blesses men’s aggression against enemies and provides her devotees alone with her nurture, comfort and protection” (Castillo 98). As a nationalist symbol, she is either masculinized in battle or appropriated as a mother figure for men who see themselves as orphans. Octavio Paz believes Mexican nationalism becomes “the return to mother” (Pérez Decolonial 122) and La Virgen de Guadalupe is the spiritual mother of the nationalist dream. Moreover, to Paz, Guadalupe, like Malinche, is “passive”: “Guadalupe is pure receptivity, and the benefits that she bestows are of the same order: she consoles,

quiets, dries tears, calms passions” (85). Paz states that the Mexican people return to Guadalupe because they are returning to “the womb” (84); they are looking for a home because they are orphans. However, his discussion of Guadalupe, in the “Sons of Malinche,” is addressed to Mexican males who are “born disinherited” and need “an intermediary messenger, between disinherited man and the unknown, inscrutable power” (85). Paz posits that Guadalupe as a national symbol for men is equivalent to an Oedipal return to mother in times of trouble and need.

Contemporary writings by Chicanos continue the Pazian analysis of return to mother. Guillermo Gómez-Pena writes in a 1996 essay, “Like every other Mexican, whether I like it or not, I may suffer from an acute Oedipal complex” (181). For years, he was critical of Guadalupe because of her use by many conservative movements, such as the pro-life movement. However, his need to claim her as mother led him to go to the Basilica at midnight every December 11th in order to worship her, and return to the womb. He claims that the numerous recent sightings of Guadalupe stem from “[t]he sense of orphanhood and fragility currently experienced by the Mexican population in the United States [that] has increased the faith in her” (Gomez-Pena 183). Moreover, he states that worshipers of Guadalupe in both Mexico and the United States are “looking for a highly politicized virgin” (Gomez Pena 183). He was surprised on December 12, 1995, to see, in his estimation, the capitalist Mexican President Zedillo in the front row of the Basilica, “the masses behind [him] hoping to fight everything he stands for through her” (183). He ends his essay by using battle imagery, masculinizing motherhood: “She stands next to me on every battlefield. And like my mother, she has the unique capability of making me feel extremely guilty when I fuck up” (183).

Likewise, Luis J. Rodriguez, a Chicano activist, reports how males employ Guadalupe during situations of violence. He reports how Chicano 1990s gang members in Los Angeles and Chicago often have Guadalupe tattooed on their bodies, illustrating how “she is carried by the oppressed, the dispossessed, the outlawed, and the repressed” (L. Rodriguez 128). The gang members employ Guadalupe as protection from violence. As one young gang member explains, “She makes sure the bullets won’t claim me” (qtd. in L. Rodriguez 129). He too claims that the male gang members suffer from an oedipal complex by seeking the feminine to heal them: “While men can take other men to the edges of their psyche, it is women who can take them to their depths”(130). Luis Rodriguez continues, “Violent males honor la Virgin de Guadalupe with proper respect and clarity” in order to enter a “new phase of life” found through a “significant representation of the Mother through ritual” (130). He concludes by stating that in this way Guadalupe is “eternal proof [that] we are never truly conquered or defeated” (131).

In all of the above examples, men seek mother to heal their own violence, to protect them during violence, or to use as an emblem for their violent actions. Chicana feminists claim that this masculinization of Guadalupe does not allow for a positive active agency in that her message of love and her active female agency is claimed for male militaristic causes. Chicana feminists, however, believe that her actions of love are overwhelmingly present in Popular Catholicism, practiced mostly by women.

Guadalupe and Popular Catholicism

Popular religion is a multicultural phenomenon, “bound up with the negotiation of identities and hegemonies in any context surrounding the meeting of different cultural traditions, via trade, migration or conquestation” (Norget). Most people who currently

identify as Catholics inhabit lands that were once colonized by European powers. A direct result of “the conquest” of Mexico is a religious tradition that intermingles different cultural belief systems that are held somewhat constant by an idea of Catholicism. It is impossible to arrive at a universal definition of popular religion and/or popular Catholicism since the local social and historical context determines the particulars of the religious practice. However, in Mexico and for people of Mexican descent *Religiosidad Popular* can be defined as a syncretism of “Catholic piety and indigenous religious practices” (Howden) which borrows much from liberation theology and a progressive Catholicism wherein clergy are informed by liberation theology but as a practice it exists mostly outside of the official church’s control (Norget).

Liberation theology is defined by one of its founders, Peruvian Gustavo Gutierrez, as a “theology of the people whose focus is the struggle of the poor to overcome oppression” (qtd. in Rodriguez 48). At its core, liberation theology is a belief that the Christian gospel¹⁴ demands a preferential option for the poor and that the church should be involved in the struggle for economic and political justice, particularly in Latin America. Its roots are scriptural as well as Marxist, and it “reinterprets scripture with a bias toward the poor” (Rhodes). M. Candelaria in Popular Religion and Liberation (1981) defines Latin American popular Catholicism as “a system of values and ideals, and a complex of symbolic practices . . . enacted in ritual drama and materialized in visual images, all relating the human being to the sacred, originated and maintained by the poor and oppressed” (qtd. in Norget). Mexico’s history provides a breeding ground for liberation theology, since in Mexico economic class separation was directly related to religious separation. For example, in Oaxaca, Mexico, the mestizo population provides a

spectrum of Catholicisms: “Socioeconomic class distinctions intersect with significant narrations in religious practice” (Norget). For the poor of indigenous origin, religiosity includes Catholic rituals as well as practices that pre-date the arrival of Catholicism. However, upper class mestizos tend toward more of a Catholic orthodoxy. In short for the poor and working class indigenous, it is a double counterculture expression: one against the orthodoxy of Catholicism and one against the orthodoxy practiced by the upper classes. Perhaps, liberation theology in this instance and others like it should be thought of as “not resistance but rather as defense of an independent field of practices, symbols, and significance” (Norget).

More than anything else, popular Catholicism is a religiosity “which is predominantly felt and lived” (Norget). Since praxis is essential to liberation theology, popular Catholicism also is more concerned with social injustice than with the salvation of the individual soul. Liberationists see, for example, Jesus’ death not as a vicarious experience for followers’ salvation, but instead see his death as a result of his upsetting the religious and political situations of his time—including responsibility for the poor (Rhodes). Within the poor community liberation theology focuses on prayer, devotion, and fellowship in order to empower the oppressed by showing workers how to organize for social welfare, and unfortunately in some instances, by influencing violent revolution (Rhodes). In its daily practice, popular Catholicism exists in rites and devotion, pilgrimages and fiestas. At base level, it is concerned with practice that relies on an object as an instrument for interacting with the sacred. Although masses may be subject to official control, much of popular Catholicism’s religious activities go on outside of the church, thereby transporting spirituality to materiality. A huge part of ritual activity is

concerned with the fulfillment of vows, pledges, and requests made to statues of saints, flowers, shrines, and “plastic symbols that are clothed, visited, talked to, kissed, sung to and offered food” (Norget).

The most venerated saint of Mexico is Our Lady of Guadalupe who has been the driving force behind many collective struggles for justice from the Mexican Revolution to the California migrant farm workers movement. Guadalupe is also the driving force behind personal petition, especially requests from women for their families. Popular Catholicism is practiced mainly by women and is intimately connected to the family. Family ceremonies, prayers, and rituals help the oppressed to sustain hope in hopeless situations. In this way popular Catholicism, is part of liberation theology that “should be understood as a family of theologies—including the Latin American, Black, and feminist varieties . . . that all respond to oppression”: poverty, racism, and male-dominated society (Rhodes). Certain female theologians, such as Rosemary Radford Reuther, think that some forms of liberation theology “had not considered spirituality from the perspective of the indigenous” and also had not considered it for Catholicism’s largest group—women who often pray to Guadalupe (“Are Liberation”). According to Reuther, Gutierrez and others incorrectly see feminism “as foreign to Latin American thinking and distracts people from the fundamental concern for the poor” (“Are Liberation”). However, Reuther and other feminist theologians like Jeannette Rodriguez, see Guadalupe as a popular Catholic symbol used especially by women to aid them in their suffering and to lead them out of oppression. In this way Guadalupe becomes the product of liberating the Virgin Mary from patriarchy and orthodox Catholicism.

A public opinion poll in 1969 by Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Sociales revealed that 43.8 percent of working class Mexicans considered the Virgin Mary the most important deity and 23 percent considered her to be God (Herrera-Sobek The Mexican 43). In 1983 liberation theologian Virgil Elizondo reports, “devotion to Mary is the most popular, persistent, and original characteristic of Latin American Christianity” (qtd. in Hamington 16). Marianismo is the Latin American belief in feminine spiritual superiority (Hamington 16) and this reverence for Mary is particularly popular in Mexico and with Mexican Americans because of the apparition of La Virgen de Guadalupe. Her popularity endures because of her spiritual power and that spiritual power is often called Marianismo.

However, for contemporary Chicanas, Marianismo is a double bind. Although it provides reverence for feminine spirituality, Marianismo also arises in a culture that practices machismo. This practice emphasizes the passivity and moral responsibility of Mary, and subsequently all Catholic women, rather than the spiritual power and agency that can be associated with her. So, what are Chicana women to do with “the little dark one”? Does she continue the oppression of women? Does she empower women? Answers can be found in a feminist questioning and understanding of devotion to Mary that reinterprets Marianismo not as an historical or ecclesiastical premise but in as popular religiosity, or how devotion to Mary is actually lived and experienced by people, in particular, by women. Since popular religiosity is “rooted in marginality and oppression, it uses symbols that will express the people’s marginality” (Rodriguez 148). Guadalupe is that symbolic representation of a Mexican-American woman in a double bind: marginalized as a woman in a culture of machismo and patriarchal Catholicism and as a

person of mestiza background. Marianismo as evident in the cult of Guadalupe is popular religion that quests for a “more simple, more direct, and more profitable relationship with God” (Maldonado qtd. in Hamington 34).

Thus, a feminist interpretation of Marianismo seeks to liberate Mary, and subsequently Mexican-American women, from the confines of patriarchy and Eurocentrism. For Marian devotion “consoles and also oppresses women, insisting their individuality be sacrificed for family” (Cuneen 266). For contemporary Chicana women the image of Mary contributes to their psychological development as women who attempt to model themselves after a religious figure who “make[s] oppression a religious obligation” (Nieto-Gomez 48). Thus, the goal of a feminist revision of Mary relies upon deconstructing a patriarchal definition of her, that has operated in all Catholic cultures, but in particular within cultures with a tradition of machismo, as keeping women down. The patriarchal construction of Mary perpetuated by the Catholic Church emphasizes her as a figure of sexual purity, humility, passivity, and sacrificial nature. Feminist scholar Gail Paterson Corrington points out that patriarchal religion employs a pattern of “male inversion of female symbols and myth” that give the impression that the female experience is highly valued but actually is devalued (qtd. in Hamington 160). For example, a patriarchal construction of Mary hails her for her virginity but virgin birth is a biological impossibility. She is hailed for her role as intercessor but that means that she is subordinate to God the Father and Son. She is hailed for her sinlessness, which translates into her submissiveness and nurturing others (Hamington 160). Thus, feminist theology must “deconstruct the link between images and their implications for women” (Hamington 160), meaning that it is necessary to acknowledge Mary’s male construction

in order to remove misogynist elements of that construction and instead emphasize her as a symbol of female autonomy and power (Christ qtd. in Hamington 45).

Some feminist theologians argue that it is impossible to do this because Mariology is a male construct whereby subordination of women is so highly ingrained in Catholicism that it is impossible to break from it.¹⁵ For example, Mary Daly thinks that a Christian Mary should not be reinstated but instead women should return to original Mother goddess worship for the basis of their faith. Others, like Marina Warner, think that Mary will eventually recede into legend, as did Ishtar and other goddesses (Hamington 162). However, some Catholic feminist theologians¹⁶ think it possible to keep a Marian presence. Many of these feminist theologians believe that Mary should be viewed through a lens of praxis-oriented theology, a theology that is “intimately concerned with the lived experience of the faith community, particularly those who are oppressed by social structures” (Hamington 165).

Elizabeth Johnson thinks that Mary has become increasingly removed from women’s experience because of the disfranchisement of her by the patriarchal hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Therefore, Johnson thinks that Catholic women need to recover imagery of Mary that reflect and value women’s experience, and that can “become an effective rubric with which to begin and to situate an understanding of Mary within praxis-oriented theology” (qtd. in Hamington 165). Images of Mary as an outsider and as a poor member of the people who finds justice and strength may serve as a source of solidarity for women who find themselves in similar circumstances.

Likewise, Rosemary Radford Ruether believes it is possible to create alternatives to traditional Mariology. She creates alternatives through a system she calls “Liberation

Mariology”: “Mariology becomes a liberating symbol for women only when seen as a radical symbol of new humanity freed from hierarchical power relations, including that of God and humanity” (qtd in Hamington 167). Thus, for Ruether, Liberation Mariology works to eliminate sexism and female subordination within Catholic Church structure. Both Johnson and Ruether employ liberation theology in order to create a new interpretation of Mary that shows her as an active agent in faith and an active agent in her own salvation—she chose to say yes to the Angel who appeared before her, even though she knew that she would be ostracized from her society.

Finally, Latin American feminist theologians Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer apply a liberation model to the cult of Mary and attempt to draw upon the following themes. First, Marian imagery must move from a male-oriented anthropology to a Human-Centered anthropology so that women’s experiences are included. In this way, Marian imagery would also move from a dualistic to a unifying anthropology so that gender considerations would not be stratified. By doing this a realistic anthropology would be formed that could “balance the subjective and objective by transforming ideal religious concepts into concepts that are not static but are defined by history and cultural setting” (Hamington 169). All of the above would help to transform Mary from a one-dimensional symbol to a pluri-dimensional symbol, allowing for constructs of Mary other than Virgin, Mediatrix, and New Eve (Hamington 169).

Thus, recasting Marian imagery includes first and foremost thinking of her as a symbol that reflects women’s experiences and second as a symbol of hope for the poor and working class. Mary must therefore be a symbol in process rather than a static entity of misogynist history. This symbol would allow for greater plurality in its ability for

women worldwide to identify with Mary's womanhood (Hamington 172). In this way, Mary could be a site for understanding female creative power. In particular, Guadalupe is a site for women of Mexican descent to understand their female creative power.

Toward a Chicana Spirituality

For many Mexican and Mexican-American women, Guadalupe is a symbol that provides the means for understanding their own social, psychological, and spiritual identity. Guadalupe, re-imaged and reconstructed through a Chicana vision, becomes a postmodern religious symbol. In postmodern theology, no grand narrative of meaning exists (Moore). Instead, a postmodern theology argues for a respect of all narratives—both Eurocentric and indigenous: “Postmodernism has allowed for the insistence in theology to cease Eurocentric ways and learn to interpret the polycentric theologies of a global [Catholic] church” (Tracy 551). Understanding religion from a postmodern perspective transforms the idea of religion into a broader notion of spirituality that includes personal reflections of belief.

It is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of religion and spirituality. Professors of Psychology at Wheaton College, Mark R. McMinn and Todd W. Hall report that from a psychological and theological perspective it is the institutional element that distinguishes both concepts (252). In order for something to be considered religious, “the means and methods (e.g., rituals and prescribed behaviors) of the search receive validation and support from within an identifiable group of people” (Hill qtd. in McMinn and Hall 252). Spirituality is certainly influenced by religion, but it is also different from religion, since it is not validated by an official church institution. According to

postmodern theorist David Ray Griffin, spirituality is “the ultimate values, meanings, and commitments in terms of which [people] live” (qtd. in Thomas). Societal values and customs do influence spirituality; therefore, institutionalized religion can influence spiritual understanding. However, as McMinn and Hall state, spirituality spans across not only theology but also psychology (251). An individual’s spirituality is related to her individually defined psychological identity and subjective feelings in a search for spiritual dimensions. Moreover, Griffin posits that a postmodern spirituality emphasizes “internal relations, organicism, human self-determination, a new respect for the past, . . . and a post-patriarchal vision” (qtd. in Thomas).

The above definition provides the postmodern elements for identifying a Chicana spirituality as an individual psychological pursuit that has its roots in pluralism and community. Chicana feminists operate within a postcolonial feminist framework of exploring spiritual beliefs that include female power associated with indigenous goddesses and a re-imaged figure of Guadalupe that can help women to overcome oppression that is defined as “the lack of choices that deprives women of active agency” (hooks qtd. in Schutte 51). Although acknowledging the commonality of oppression, Chicana feminists seek to keep female agency while simultaneously deconstructing the construct of woman evident in patriarchal texts of history and religion. In particular, Chicana feminist spiritualities seek out the spiritual in a post-patriarchal understanding of the religious figure of Guadalupe, and in a re-understanding of her socio-historic past that includes exploration of plural cultural dimensions—Spanish, indigenous, catholicisms, and folk beliefs. Chicana spirituality when expressed in writing is multilingual and multicultural and is filtered simultaneously through an individual psychic exploration and

commitment to a community of women. According to Professor Lara Medina in “Los Espíritus Siguen Hablando: Chicana Spiritualities,” “[t]he spiritual practices of many Chicanas emerge from a purposeful integration of their creative inner resources and the diverse cultural influences that feed their souls and their psyches” (189).

Chicana feminists find a cultural and textual site for spiritual exploration in the figure of Guadalupe, the mother of mestizas. The next chapter will analyze specific Chicana writings about Guadalupe in order to examine the ways in which Chicana spiritualities contribute to a re-understanding of her as a spiritual mother who influences a Chicana’s psychological and social identity, in particular how spiritualities inspire the “the power of energy behind creative, sexual, [and] political activism” (Medina 195).

¹ Human sacrifice and ritualistic cannibalism are perhaps the most problematic and widely analyzed aspects of the Aztec world. These practices have been interpreted, misinterpreted and reinterpreted since the encounter between the Spanish and the indigenous. The Spaniards, of course, were horrified and sought to Christianize the indigenous and forbid the practice, saving them from eternal damnation. Many

contemporary historians view human sacrifice as a means for the Aztec to maintain their belief cycle in world renewal—continuing cycles of life and death. A good summary of the issue appears in Knab and Sullivan’s *A Scattering of Jades*. Other sources include Inga Clendinnen’s *Aztecs: An Interpretation* and Robert C. Padden’s *The Hummingbird and the Hawk*.

² Poole reports that documentary evidence of the friar’s acceptance of indigenous idolatry is scant. In fact, he finds that the silence of the friars about Guadalupe in documentary histories or in sermons as evidence of a “positive hostility to the shrine and devotion at Guadalupe as they existed in the first half of the sixteenth century” (40). He further finds no evidence of Guadalupe’s acceptance in Nahuatl song.

³ This summary of the story is based on two sources: the original *Nican Mopohua*, English translation by Janet Barber (*Handbook* 193-204) and Virgilio Elizondo’s version, translated into English by Jeanette Rodriguez.

⁴ Juan Diego’s original name was Cuantlaohua (He who speaks like an eagle). He was born of the tribe of Chichimeca Indians (Trujillo 228). Some accounts of his life conjecture that he was born a poor peasant; others insist that he was a cacique of his people; even others think that he was born part of a large middle class known as the macehuals (Wahlig 44). He was christianized and named Juan Diego some time shortly before Guadalupe’s appearance to him (Peterson; Rodriguez; Wahlig).

⁵ This is not, however, a problem exclusive to women. The ideal of “imitatio Christi” is similarly impossible for men.

⁶ See Daly, Warner, and chapter 6 of Hamington, which lists numerous feminist critiques.

⁷ Much conjecture exists concerning the origins of the name Guadalupe. Poole, and numerous others, point out that Guadalupe is of Arabic origin. The name is a Spanish corruption of an Arabic word meaning water, specifically water of love. Moreover, there is no d or g in Nahuatl, so that the word Guadalupe itself would be difficult for them to pronounce. Another historian, Becerra Tanco claims that the natives would have pronounced it as Tetuatlope (Origin Miracle) (Poole 242).

⁸ Coatlicue is also the mother of the warrior god, Huitzilopochtli and his sister Coyoxauhqui.

⁹ When the Spaniards arrived at the sacred hill of Tepeyac, they found the temple and statue of the goddess Tonantzin. As was standard practice, they destroyed the indigenous statues and most of the worship site and instead erected Spanish shrines on that spot. In the instance of Tepeyac, the Spanish erected a large cross on the hill of Tepeyac. Thus, reconstructing the visual aspects of Tonantzin is tricky. Sahagun said that Tonantzin was also the goddess Cihuacoatl, “Snake Woman,” attired in white, carrying a child on her back. This image does relate her to a Marian image. Other historians, however, disagree, with his position (Gonzalez-Crussi 5).

¹⁰ Other scholars, such as Sally Cunneen, suggest that Juan Diego’s Nahuatl name for Guadalupe was Tlecuauhtlacupeu, “One who appeared on a rocky summit,” a name that is also homophonous to Guadalupe (220). Still others say the name was Tecuauhtlacuepeuh, “She who comes flying from the region of light like an eagle on fire.”

¹¹ Paula Gunn Allen conjectures that “four is a categorical symbol-statement about the primacy of female power in the tribal ritual life” (qtd. in Delgado 894).

¹² The history of the Virgin Mary in the village of Guadalupe, Spain is as follows. Pope St. Gregory (590-604 C.E.) gave a statue of the Virgin Mary to the Bishop of Seville. When Moslems took possession of most of Spain in 711, they imposed the Moslem religion and thus the statue of the Virgin Mary was taken to Asturias, where it was buried in the province of Extremadura. It remained hidden there for centuries until it was rediscovered by a cowherd who claimed he was directed by the Virgin Mary to dig and find the statue. She also instructed him to build a chapel there. This miracle occurred in the village of Guadalupe. By 1340 the royalty of Spain regularly came to the shrine to give thanks to the Virgin for their victory over the Moslems. Queen Isabella, Columbus, and Cortes often visited and prayed at the shrine. Cortes was born near the shrine, made frequent visits to her site, and carried her as his protectress on his voyage to the New World (*Handbook* 24-26).

¹³ It is interesting to note that the Spanish Peninsulares employ the Virgin of Remedios as their patron symbol, while Guadalupe is employed by the American Criollos (Herrera-Sobek, *The Mexican* 36).

¹⁴ See Lev. 19:9-10, Prov. 19:1-17, and Ex. 22:22-23.

¹⁵ A traditional understanding of honor in Catholic ideology explains that the highest honor possible goes to God alone—this honor is called *latria*. The second highest, *hyperdulia*, goes to the Blessed Virgin Mother, and the third, *dulia*, to angels and saints in heaven.

¹⁶ These feminist theologians include Elizabeth Johnson, Catharine Halkes, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ivone Gebara, and Maria Clara Bingemer.

Chapter 4

The Mosaic Mother: Reconstructing the
 Spirituality of Guadalupe through *Escritas Ceremonias*

The power is my inner self the entity that is the sum total
 of all my reincarnations, the god woman in me I call Antigua,
 mi Diosa, the divine within, Coatlicue—Cihuacoatl—Tlazolteotl—
 Tonantzin—Coatlalopeuh—Guadalupe—they are one. (Anzaldua 50)

Writing Spirituality: Ceremonia

Gloria Anzaldúa understands that memories are an important part of people's conceptions of self and their culture. For a Chicana, to lose her memory—individual memory inextricably linked to a matriarchal collective memory—is to lose her identity and her cultural past. Using a postcolonial border ideology, Chicana writers attempt to recover a matriarchal collective memory by uncovering indigenous roots not necessarily found in documented history but found primarily in an oral tradition, stories told by women about their individual lives and their collective multicultural pasts. Chicana writers would agree with Susan Stanford Friedman's definition of identity as "a site of multiple subject positions, as the intersection of different often competing cultural formations of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, and national origin . . ." (21). This chapter looks specifically at how multiple spiritual beliefs contribute to the formation of Chicana identities that emphasize mestizaje. For the Chicana, spirituality is "a force and

energy for bringing change” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 73)—a personal awakening and also a political endeavor in that it opens up a space for deconstructing a one-dimensional concept of a totalizing religion. Spirituality is not static and is often the “ultimate resort of people who are . . . oppressed” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 288).

This chapter explores Chicana spiritualities by examining Chicana texts that deconstruct orthodox Catholic and patriarchal models of Guadalupe and/or recover a matriarchal tradition of her that is anecdotal, of an oral tradition, and that is a hybrid site of spirituality. I will explore how Chicana texts recover lost matrilineal aspects of Guadalupe in order to reconstruct a mosaic figure of her that provides spiritual agency for Chicana women. The recovery is two-fold. First, the writers deconstruct numerous elements of Guadalupe’s “traditional” religious construction that claim submission, passivity, and virginity as spiritual roots for Chicana women. However, Chicanas do not replace one set of religious elements with another. Instead, they seek to understand how multiple religious practices of *indigenismo* have influenced the popular devotion to Guadalupe. Second, then, Chicana writers create alternative constructions of Guadalupe that offer models of multicultural spiritual dimensions to all Chicana women. These dimensions are concerned in particular with a matrilineal legacy of hybrid spiritual practice, an oral tradition that emerges through multiple language use, and a re-imaging of sexual identity that resembles women’s actual sexual selves. Chicanas construct a Guadalupe that is representative of their lived spiritualities. Their spiritualities are ever evolving, multicultural, multi-lingual, emerging from a breakdown of duality, a movement from patriarchy to matriarchy, from historiography to anecdotal storytelling.

In terms of institutionalized religions, many Chicanas believe that Catholicism rather than fundamentalist Protestant Christianity provides an easier means to develop hybrid and localized religious practice. According to Anzaldúa, “Catholicism has survived because it’s so loose and has incorporated indigenous religions. Everybody has their own brand of Catholicism” (qtd. in Keating 95). Ana Castillo further explains that for a Chicana, Catholicism is the religion “she has been taught and [has been] sanctified by society” (95). However, Castillo believes there has always been an “undercurrent of spirituality which has been with women since pre-conquest times and which precedes Christianity in Europe—it is the unspoken key to her strength and endurance” (95). Chicana spirituality includes a combination of Christianity, Amerindian belief systems, and African influences that “passed through the filter of Mexican Catholicism” (Castillo 95). Thus, Chicana spirituality contains elements of orthodox Catholicism but is not limited to a documented historiography and dogma that analysts such as Stafford Poole insist on as primary. Xicanistas¹, such as Castillo, must understand the religious and social hybridity of Guadalupe. She is not only a product of a certain kind of materiality, such as patriarchal nationalism, Catholic orthodox hierarchy, or even machismo—she is simultaneously a spiritual mother who knows the Christian God and knows Aztec worship.

How then do Chicana writers recover Guadalupe? They write the stories of Guadalupe told by their mothers and grandmothers and great grandmothers. They write these stories as ritual acts of healing, ways of putting back together their memories of mother and the indigenous past and of reclaiming their spiritual power. Chicana writings also affect the social and political spheres: “Spirituality no longer remains a non-rational

aspect of life, but rather the power of energy behind creative, sexual, and political activism” (Medina 195). Creating through writing becomes an avenue for Chicana identity exploration and definition of their spiritualities. “The process of creating alternative spaces for expressing a mestiza-inspired spirituality demands that we ask ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, transform our world views, and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad” (bell hooks qtd. in Medina 210).

Because Chicana writers view their world from a postcolonial, borderlands perspective, their writings emphasize hybridity and plurality. Specifically, the Chicana writers in this chapter create works in which Guadalupe as a Chicana spiritual site represents a larger movement in Chicana spirituality that illustrates a breaking down of duality through liberating la Virgen from patriarchal and orthodox Catholic and Mexican nationalist chains. In addition, Chicana spirituality gives active agency to Guadalupe by empowering her with a matriarchal history that is based in multiculturalism, a female conception of community that emphasizes an oral tradition of storytelling, and what Walter Mignolo calls bilanguaging, “where both languages are maintained in purity at the same time in their asymmetry” (Mignolo 231). Bilanguaging is a component part of a matriarchal oral tradition of Chicana women who grew up listening to and speaking English and Spanish, as well as hybrid conglomerates of both, such as Spanglish or Chicana Spanish. According to Anzaldúa, Chicano Spanish sprang out of a need for Chicanas and Chicanos to “identify ourselves as a distinct people” by including a daily use of a mix of English, Spanish, Mexican Spanish, and Tex-Mex (55). Multiple language use is akin to multiple ethnic identity and a pluralistic version of spirituality.

Through their written endeavors, then, Chicanas tell stories of Guadalupe that may influence women to have a personal awakening to their spiritual progress and identity development.

Guadalupe's "history" has not only been a history of documentation and written words, papal dictums, and clerical analysis. Her construction even more distinctly lies in myth and oral tradition. The stories of Guadalupe form her tradition. Reclaiming the oral elements of Guadalupe's construction also means embracing bilanguaging. Bilanguaging is "not a grammatical concern but a political concern . . . [because] it redress[es] the asymmetry of languages and denounc[es] the coloniality of power and knowledge" (Mignolo 231). Anzaldúa and others code switch from Nahuatl to Spanish to English, injecting languages into each other. According to Mignolo, Anzaldúa contributes to "the ability to reveal languages and bilanguaging as a fundamental condition of border thinking" (253). In the use of bilanguaging, Chicana writers can reclaim their historical past, in particular indigenismo, and inject it into the present. For Chicanas, indigenismo rejects hierarchies of power and is committed to deconstructing duality in culture, language, thinking, and personal lives.

Through writing and storytelling, Chicanas provide words as the means to a spiritual concept known as *ceremonia*, rituals that exemplify "the process mestizas engage in as they participate in the making of meaning and the production of knowledge" (Medina 203). Chicana women active in the process of *ceremonia* combine "knowledge of traditional ways learned through oral history and archival research with their own intuition, experience, values and objectives" (Medina 203). Ceremonias performed by a female community—building altars, sharing food, lighting candles, and reciting chants—

that combine elements of folk Catholicism, indigenismo, shamanism, etc., give Chicanas the “tools or strategies of resistance for personal and communal healing” challenging the “norms of dominant culture” (Medina 203). Most often, for women of Mexican descent, these norms are established by the Catholic Church that “sanctions only its own sacraments and rites” (Anzaldúa 37). Native religions according to Anzaldúa are considered “cults and their beliefs are called mythologies” (37). She continues to explain that “Catholic and Protestant religions encourage fear and distrust of life; they encourage a split between the body and spirit . . . they encourage [Chicanas] to kill off part of [themselves]” (Anzaldúa 37). Therefore, according to Chicana theorist Lara Medina, Chicanas create ceremonias that articulate “not only a spirituality but an identity and the ritual itself becomes a political act” (203). Thus in creating and participating in ceremonias, Chicanas “desire to create expressions for their spirituality rooted in a quest for self-determination and the liberation of their communities” (Medina 206). These rituals “serve as models for other Chicanas in their search for their own healing” by injecting “mestiza ways” into their culture (Medina 208).

Both Anzaldúa and Medina believe *ceremonia* is a process “of creating alternative spaces for expressing a mestiza-inspired spirituality [that] demands that [Chicanas] ask [themselves] questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, transform [their] world views and move [them] away from dualistic thinking . . .” (Medina 210). Guadalupe is one such image that allows a space for expressing spirituality and becomes then a site of *ceremonia*, a site Chicana writers of this chapter seize in order to recover and subsequently reform Guadalupe in terms of their own imaginations. As the previous chapter illustrated, Guadalupe has been masculinized,

nationalized, and used as a means whereby colonial and patriarchal ideology replaces indigenous and matriarchal ideology. For Chicana writers, the figure of Guadalupe must be liberated from dualistic thinking, from totalizing and often masculinist history, and from orthodox Catholicism. Guadalupe should be understood, instead, as a figure that has always already been a subversive figure, a multidimensional construction—one not only formed by documented history but also formed by oral accounts, in particular, stories passed down often from women to other women. Thus, constructing Guadalupe is a ceremonial activity, a ritual: Ceremonia is a ritual that “articulates not only a spirituality but an identity, and the ritual itself becomes . . . a tool for daily survival within a society that seeks to silence us [Chicana women]” (Medina 203). Thus, ceremonia becomes a way of challenging the norms of society and simultaneously “create[s] religious spaces, implementing their [Chicana’s] own language and gestures to name what has deepest meaning to them, express[ing] a language of defiance and ultimate resistance” (Medina 204). Ceremonia is an act of resistance that may express itself through writing, one kind of creative expression. According to Anzaldúa, indigenous ritual practices did not think of creating art and living a spiritual life as two separate entities: “In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life” (qtd. in Keating 66).

Gloria Anzaldúa believes that stories and other art forms “enact psychological healing that’s much like that performed by traditional shamans” (qtd. in Keating 251). No matter the society, shamans believe that “their souls, their spirits, leave the body, travel long distances, and have encounters with other spirits” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 284). For Anzaldúa and other Chicanas, writing is shamanistic in its attempt to transform

personal awareness and to create a personal spirituality. Through writing prose and poetry, the storyteller transforms herself and the listener into “something or someone else The writer as shape changer, is a Nahuatl, a shaman” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 66). In particular, transforming spirituality means exploring consciousness and reality in order to discover alternative possibilities of knowing one’s self. The creative self is directly tied to spirituality and finds expression of this connection in and through writing. Anzaldúa names her writing process as “*compustura*,” a “seaming together fragments to make a garment which you wear, which represents your own identity and reality” (qtd. in Keating 256). The interconnection between writing and spirituality for Chicanas in this chapter reveals how language attempts to create their spiritual selves. The act of ceremonial writing does not merely shape spirituality and also reality but also creates it by connecting it with “pre-Colombian histories, values, and systems with the postcolonial twentieth century” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 227).

With a statue of Guadalupe atop her computer, Anzaldúa creates ceremonias to share with other Chicanas hoping that the transformation begins.

We have to first put the changes that we want to make into words or images. We have to visualize them, write them, communicate them to other people and stick with committing to those intentions, those goals, those visions. Before any changes can take place you have to say and intend them. It’s like a prayer, you have to connect yourself to your visions. (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 290)

The remainder of this chapter explores ceremonial writing by tracing the images of Guadalupe that Chicana writers create by transforming her through storytelling within a

matriarchal tradition, reconstructing her through a method of bilanguaging, and revising her sexuality identity.

Ceremonia de Madre

Ceremonial writing includes creating alternate constructions of Guadalupe that have their roots in a matriarchal tradition. “Guadalupe represents the spiritual shift, within the most patriarchal of structures, from male control to a feminist vision of power, what the more secular like to call democracy” (Randall 117). In this shift, Chicana writers give more prominence to Guadalupe’s roots in indigenous female goddesses, such as Tonantzin², the female protector of all Aztec people. For example, Chicana poet Angela de Hoyas in “Tonantzín Morena,” published in her collection Woman Woman (1985), writes a poem “*a la memoria de mi madre, a mis hermanas de sangre y de raza* [to the memory of my mother and blood sisters of la raza]” whereby she calls forth the indigenous Tonantzín as the great mother, “amor materno,” to show how Tonantzín like Guadalupe was the matriarchal center, the one who held the family together, protected that family and showed love:

en la casa de mi madre
no se perdía nada:
when the milk went sour
she made us corn bread.

Within this poem, de Hoyas uses the Nahuatl reference to Tonantzín as Mother goddess as part of Guadalupe, and writes simultaneously in Spanish and English without pause. This illustrates Chicana border thinking concerning the historical past. The personal

history of her mother is linked to the collective history of all Chicana women who must recall the indigenous mother as part of Guadalupe's and their own undocumented historical roots that have been told to them in various languages.

The undocumented history of Guadalupe includes an understanding of her as what writer and political activist Margaret Randall calls a "subversive virgin." Randall defines subversion in the following passage:

Subversion is about putting something over on a person or a system that abuses power in order to keep you down. It may be about rerouting an image back upon itself, creating an unexpected boomerang. Or fighting against an oppressor with weapons or tools taken from the oppressor. Historically, it has often meant turning symbols of inequality against structures of control, thereby facilitating a victim's journey to survival. Within Christianity, the iconography and discourse of the Virgin Mary have traditionally urged women to submit, obey, accept. But with experience comes questions, and not all virgins have been willing to play the oppressor's game. (113-114)

One Chicana who illustrates the always/already spirit of subversion in Guadalupe is Pat Mora. Pat Mora's Agua Santa Holy Water (1995) is a collection of poetry deeply rooted in an oral tradition that explores the personal and spiritual dimensions of the borderland, of the women who have lived there and who do live there. Mora's subversive tactics include deconstructing the documented masculine history of Guadalupe and emphasizing the matriarchal oral tradition of Guadalupe in order to illustrate a Chicana symbolic interpretation of her that is influential in Chicana women's daily lives, in

particular their spirituality. Mora's poems, then, are the holy water that hydrates Chicanas' spiritual development.

Within Mora's collection is a section of poetry entitled "Cuarteto Mexicano, Where We Were Born": four poems that deconstruct masculinist history of Mexico's mothers Coatlicue, Malinche, Guadalupe, and La Llorona. In an act of ceremonia, Mora gathers the community of Chicanas in a ritual of honoring the four mothers that may be likened to the indigenous ritual of honoring the four directions of the universe. In this section Mora challenges the documented "history of the La Virgen de Guadalupe" by creating a complete Aztec cycle in four poems that are directed to an audience of Chicanas as talk show interviews. Using this popular format and an oral tradition, Mora has Mexico's mothers create their own accounts in which each figure offers practical advice to her daughters. Mora challenges masculinist historical constructions through the subversive use of satire that asks Chicanas to pay attention to an oral tradition, not only to the documented history of Guadalupe. She claims that the historical past renderings of each figure influence the present and therefore must be revised:

Past is present remember. Men carved me [Coatlicue]
 Wrote my story, and Eve's, Malinche's, Guadalupe's,
 Llorona's, snakes everywhere, even in our mothers.

The third poem in the "Cuarteto Mexicano," "Consejos de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe: Counsel from the Brown Virgin," has Guadalupe speaking to her "hijas," appearing before them, recalling how "Holy men altered me." The poem calls for Chicanas to use their own imaginations to come to terms with their own identities:

“You gape like Juan Diego as I hovered in a cloud/that December morning above dry Tepeyac.” Diego was surprised by Guadalupe’s apparition, but in this poem Guadalupe tells the surprised women to be unpredictable and to not fear the unknown energy. After each stanza appears a chorus of four lines:

Como la flor de la rosa [Like the rose]

Como el arco iris [Like the rainbow]

Como las nubes de Gloria [Like the glorious clouds]

Como la luna espléndida [Like the splendid moon]

These lines instruct Chicana daughters to be beautiful like nature—celestial, unpredictable—in order to be able to do “internal work,” “to write your legends,” in order to understand their creative power. Thus, Mora revises the traditional Guadalupe myth that was written by priests of the Catholic Church by empowering Chicana women with a voice in the formation of their own legends and spirituality.

In order to do so, las hijas de Guadalupe must rely less on scientific knowledge and more on spirituality that lies within each Chicana: “You analyze the persistence of my image, how I don’t fade./ Too much analysis inhibits wisdom, hijas.” Guadalupe continues,

Hijas, beware of altars and rumors of legends.

Holy men altered me, Aztec goddess to Reina de las Américas,

pyramid to Cathedral. They say I called sweet as birdsong

to Juan Diego rushing to the curling hum of holy incense.

In this stanza, Guadalupe makes reference to Catholic friars and the Catholic tradition of the story of Juan Diego that dismisses indigenous elements and gives primacy to Catholic ritualistic symbols such as incense, or as in the next stanza, Castillian roses.

Send men clear signs. They need them, hijas.

In deserts, I favor scarlet roses. Come.

Rise. Practice solitary levitation. Rise,

But ignore halos, hovering men who look like angelitos.

The above signs may be necessary for male understanding but not for female spirituality. Instead Chicana daughters should “value contemplation. Alone I write/ my own legends. My lines improve. Play the symbols.” Mora plays the symbols by subverting traditional legend and reinventing the Guadalupe’s story through their own imaginations and reality.

The final stanza of the poem reverses the Juan Diego story by saying silence can be pregnant with meaning—spiritual faith and imagination are the sources of creativity: “Hijas, silence can be pregnant./ My voice rose like a beam / of sunlight, entered Juan. Remember, conceptions,/immaculate and otherwise, happen. He knelt full of me.” Here the gender reversal of the traditional story is clear. Instead of women kneeling like Mary to the masculine divine power, Mora institutes gender reversal by having the male Juan Diego kneel full of the female power of Guadalupe, a power that for Mora illustrates a matriarchal tradition, a ceremonia of women’s spiritual power. This power is emphasized by having Chicanas concentrate not on doctrine but on matriarchal oral tradition infused with imagination.

In deconstructing the primacy of historiography, Chicana writers open up a space that allows for the inclusion of other methods of exploring spiritual constructions of Guadalupe. One such method is an oral tradition that emphasizes transmission of culture by word of mouth and memory, as well as multiple language use that reflects the daily communication of contemporary Chicana women and that dismantles the colonizers' mode of communication as the only sanctioned and valid method of expressing history and spiritual belief. According to Walter Mignolo and other cultural studies scholars, in order for colonizers to build "homogenous imagined communities," they use the "weapon" of implementing a national language to contribute to a national culture (Mignolo 218).

For example, during "the conquest," the Spanish destroyed many of the Aztec codices and insisted upon the indigenous learning Spanish and not using Nahuatl. Subsequently, after the Mexican-American War, new territories acquired by the United States according to the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848) illustrate another language displacement: English replaced Spanish as the primary language. As a result, people living in areas of the Southwestern United States began using a language that reflected what Walter Mignolo calls "creoleness" (242). In particular, creoleness is evident in language use because the "crossing of peoples, territories, nationalities, memories, religions all come back to language as the basic component of 'creoleness'" (Mignolo 243). In short, creoleness annihilates the imagined universality of purity in monolingualism. More specifically, literary creoleness takes the place of historiography, since "historiography, as a disciplinary practice, can not reach the source of creoleness" (Mignolo 245). In a way, then, literary creoleness transcends the distinction between

history and literature by providing another methodology—border thinking that emphasizes bilanguaging.

Bilanguaging includes bilingualism (or multilingualism) but is also more than multiple language use because “it redresses the asymmetry of languages and denoun[ces] the coloniality of power and knowledge” (Mignolo 231). As people speak more than one language, their history and culture are in a constant process of change and discovery. In the borderlands, bilanguaging is a daily occurrence. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa calls Chicano Spanish a “living language,” “un language que corresponde a un modo de vivir”³ (qtd. in Keating 55). Chicano Spanish is bilanguaging not only in its use of Spanish, English and Spanglish, but also in that it connects a Chicana’s identity to the communication that she uses in real life; it validates her values and communications on a daily basis. Bilanguaging deconstructs the idea of the purity of Spanish and/or the purity of English by emphasizing the oral language use of a living people rather than a formal written language of a colonizer or those in power. The orality of Chicano language includes English, Spanish, Nahuatl, Tex-Mex, Spanglish, etc.— most significantly, this orality is an essential ingredient of building community.

When Chicana writers such as Sandra Cisneros employ bilanguaging strategies in their ceremonial writings, they want to emphasize the borderlands ideology that they embrace in their community every day. Cisneros’ story “Little Miracles, Kept Promises” in Women Hollering Creek illustrates bilanguaging in several ways: in its postmodern strategies of plotlessness and provisionality, in its reliance on both an oral tradition and a pictographic tradition of the Aztec culture, in its autoethnographic exploration of life in the spiritual borderlands, and in its reconstruction of the figure of Guadalupe to

emphasize the power of community and love. The story illustrates that bilanguaging as part of community building becomes “an act of love and a longing for surpassing the system of values” (Mignolo 272) of any of the dominant powers, whether they be colonizers, patriarchy, orthodox religion, etc. Thus, “Little Miracles, Kept Promises” is a story of bilanguaging love—it is Cisneros’ ceremonial act that builds community amongst Chicana women that is based on love and faith rather than on doctrine and dogma. Further, community is illustrated through the numerous voices used in the story. Specifically, love and spirituality are illustrated in the revelations of one character, Rosario, who reclaims the figure of Guadalupe through the methodology of bilanguaging: she uses her as a site, a fertile ground, for negotiating a new identity and spiritual understanding.

In the story, Cisneros uses postmodern strategies of writing that illustrate “a constant process of negotiating two cultures while simultaneously countering Eurocentric notions in prose fictions”(Mermann-Jozwiak). The story does not include a single point of view or a narrative commentary. Instead, it has a plotless construction—whereby each of 23 individual voices is given agency in their *peticiones* of thanks and/or requests to spiritual beings. Each is written in an experimental type: italics, all caps, lack of grammatical structure, lack of punctuation, and/or code switching between English and Spanish. One petition written completely in English and all caps is an emphatic plea for a cancer healing. Another completely in Spanish gives thanks. Some illustrate grammatical problems for dual language speakers: “We need anything that don’t eat” (117).

Moreover, numerous petitions illustrate code switching or the use of different codes which “are more accessible to readers familiar with various insider codes and

cryptographic devices deployed in the text” (Mullen). For readers who understand both English and Spanish, it is easy to translate a petition to Milagroso Cristo Negro that states “Thank you por el milagro de haber graduado de high school. Aquí le regalo mi retrato de graduation” (123). Some English speakers who know some Spanish can guess at this petition’s meaning. However, some readers must struggle to figure out the codes. English speakers who do not know Spanish will be left in the dark, even more so in some instances when the petitions become more linguistically complex. The reader’s ignorance and frustration parallels the experiences of many of the working class people in Texas, for example, who struggle to understand a language that was not their primary one. Cisneros emphasizes the struggle for meaning by taking code switching to another level: using a combination of letters and numbers that represent the vowels a,e,i,o,u, respectively. This use of numbers imitates the ancient Aztec codices that were pictographic communications. Further, readers either struggle or use some extra effort in order to de-code the following message: “3 1sk y45, L4rd, w3th 1ll my h21rt pl21s2 w1tch 4v2r M1nny B2nlv3d2s wh4 3s 4v2rs21s” (122-23). This example also illustrates a third language displacement that resulted from colonization—the codices were either destroyed or translated into Spanish by priests with little cultural understanding of the indigenous. Cisneros’ strategy hallmarks the bilanguaging of borderland existence and emphasizes cryptography in order to make all readers aware of the struggles of linguistic difference.

Further, although Cisneros writes the petitions, the petitions themselves employ an oral quality. “The story’s focus on voice and its creation of Mexican-American characters through their linguistic habits constitutes an attempt at Chicano/a vernacular

speech and infuses the text with an oral quality” (Mermann-Jozwiak). By doing this, Cisneros displaces the primacy of Catholic doctrinal prayer that would be written in either grammatically correct English or Spanish with the language of a living religion that people of the borderlands practice on a daily basis. Thus, a prayer to La Virgen de Guadalupe is written as it would be spoken with intervening pleas and repetition:

I promise to walk to your shrine on my knees the very first day
that I get back, I swear, if you will only get the Torillería la Casa
de la Masa to pay me the \$253.72 they owe me for the two weeks
work I’m already behind, and the other guys have loaned me as
much as they’re able, and I don’t know what I’m going to do, I don’t
know what I’m going to do. (120)

In addition, Cisneros’ emphasis on orality simultaneously displaces the Eurocentric notions of prose writing and displaces doctrinal Catholic prayer by having petitions directed to Jesus Christ or Cristo Negro, San Antonio de Padua, the 7 African Powers That Surround Our Savior, and, of course, La Virgen de Guadalupe.

Cisneros’ story culminates with a petition written by a Chicana named Rosario to La Virgencita that illustrates the community of love that is housed in the image of Guadalupe as Rosario has learned to construct her from “straddling both” (125) her Spanish and indigenous roots. Through bilanguaging, Cisneros creates the character of Rosario who learns to embrace a Guadalupe that is more than just “all that self-sacrifice, all that silent suffering” (127) and that is partly an indigenous female image who is “bare-breasted” with “snakes in [her] hands” (127). The story culminates in Rosario’s ceremonial act—one that explores a Chicana spirituality by dismantling the traditional

archetypal Chicana identity as represented by Guadalupe the sufferer, the one who sacrifices and is passive, and by reconstructing her as a figure created by matriarchal and indigenous elements that embrace action, community, and love.

The ceremonial act begins with Rosario offering to “La Virgencita” her braid of hair, a traditional Mexican symbol of femininity. Rosario’s cutting of her hair is an act that parallels seventeenth-century Mexican nun, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s. Poet, thinker and the first Latin American feminist, Sor Juana attempted to live not only the life of a faithful Catholic nun but also one of a theological scholar and intellectual. Her intellectual pursuits caused her to be severely criticized by numerous Catholic bishops and priests. Her polemical work entitled “A Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz,”⁴ defends women’s intellectual rights and asserts her desire to be educated in theological and intellectual topics not usually studied by nuns. She insists that her mind is a gift from God and that God would want her to develop it. In order to begin her studies, she decides to cut her hair as a symbol of giving up her life of feminine adornment:

I began to study Latin grammar ... and so intense was my concern that though among women (especially a woman in the flower of her youth) the natural adornment of one’s hair is held in such high esteem, I cut off mine to the breadth of some four to six fingers, measuring the place it had reached, and imposing upon myself the condition that if by the time it had again grown to that length I had not learned ... a thing I had set for myself to learn ... I would again cut it off as punishment for being slow-witted.... for there seemed to me no cause for a head to be adorned with hair and naked of learning—which was the more desired embellishment. (405)

Like Sor Juana, Rosario desires to live a life of the mind and not be held captive by a life of beauty as defined by patriarchal society.

Therefore, Rosario's offering is her first attempt to let go of her constructed subjectivity and to create her own identity that is inclusive rather than exclusive in terms of behaviors, career choices, and love. Rosario's hair symbolizes for her the life that she has been taught to lead—one that requires sacrifice and traditional notions of femininity that culminate in becoming a good wife and mother. Her cut hair is a disgrace, hurtful to her family. Her mother says "Chayito, how could you ruin in one second what your mother took years to create?" (125). She cuts her hair as a way to let go of the old self and traditional female identity and instead embrace a new self that is influenced by the old but also allows for more multidimensional ideas of self and spirituality. She does not have to be ONLY a good wife and mother. She may choose not to be a wife and mother at all or she may choose to combine those roles with other personal desires. Rosario of the story is an educated person who likes to think, be by herself with her thoughts, and wants to live alone as an artist. These desires are frowned upon by the traditional community, in particular her family of both men and women who do not understand her and think she is a *malinchista*, because in their opinion, she denies her roots: "No one else in my family, no other woman, neither friend nor relative, no one I know, not even the heroine in the *telenovelas*, no woman wants to live alone" (127)

However, Rosario takes the braid and she places her offering amongst all of the other offerings, which indicates that although she discards the old construction she still wants to be part of the community, one she has felt excluded from in the past. Because of this separation from community, she has distanced herself from all of the women in her

family, including and in particular, her mother, her grandmother, and their favorite saint—La Virgen de Guadalupe. She rejected Guadalupe because she associated that figure with her female relatives who suffered silently and were complacent in their familial and social spheres: “For a long time I wouldn’t let you [Guadalupe] into my house. I couldn’t see you without seeing my ma each time my father came home drunk and yelling, blaming everything that ever went wrong in his life on her” (127). She blamed Guadalupe for “all the pain my mother and her mother and all our mother’s mothers have put up with in the name of God” (127).

But then Rosario heals the split, enters the borderlands of spirituality, and comes to an understanding of Guadalupe that is based on an all-embracing love and that includes Aztec roots and other spiritual dimensions. She realizes that Guadalupe always had plural dimensions; she was not passive but a leader—she empowered people, such as the California farm workers, to action. Like Clemencia of “Never Marry A Mexican,” Rosario enters the place in between--the Coatlicue state--when she learns that her roots include not only “Mary the mild, but our mother Tonantzín,” just as Clemencia learns her indigenous roots, but unlike Clemencia, Rosario emerges from the Coatlicue state of consciousness and starts to build an understanding of self. According to Anzaldúa, “When you come out of the Coatlicue state you come out of nepantla, this birthing stage where you feel like you’re reconfiguring your identity and don’t know where you are” (qtd in Keating 225-26). Rosario emerges from nepantla and begins to reconfigure self which simultaneously involves refiguring the archetypal role model of Guadalupe. Rosario is not really able to explain “how it [her revised understanding of Guadalupe] all fell in place” (128), but eventually she finds her way to mestizaje-- “a conscious rupture

with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions. She communicates the rupture, documents the struggle. She reinterprets history and, using symbols, she shapes new myths” (Anzaldúa 82) in order to transform into a “total self” (Anzaldúa 83). That total self now understands suffering in a new way—not suffering as a mode of living in self sacrifice but understanding that those “who suffer have a special power” (128)—“[t]he power of understanding someone else’s pain. And understanding is the beginning of healing” (128).

Rosario then constructs Guadalupe as a mestiza woman. She incorporates Coatlxopeuh, She Who Has Dominion over the Snakes, with Tonantzin, Coatlicue, and the Spanish Nuestra Señora de Soledad. Through bilanguaging, Rosario is able to create a Guadalupe that speaks English, Spanish, Nahuatl, a Guadalupe that is “bare-breasted” with “two snakes in her hands” as she prays at the church altar, a Guadalupe who loves all and acts on that love by helping those in need. Then, Rosario “wasn’t ashamed to be my mother’s daughter, my grandmother’s granddaughter, my ancestor’s child” (128). She allows Guadalupe’s love and understanding to incorporate more than just Catholic doctrine but also the faces of “Buddah, the Tao, the true Messiah, Yahweh, Allah, the Heart of the Sky, the Heart of the Earth, the Lord of Near and Far, the Spirit, the Light, the Universe” (128). Through re-construction, Rosario could love Guadalupe and “finally learn to love me” (128).

The ceremony ends with Rosario’s prayer not to “La Virgencita” but to “Mighty Guadalupana Coatlazopeuh Tonatzin.” She reconstructs Guadalupe in love and then is able to see herself as part of the community—the “braid of hair is in its place” (129)--but

also as an individual who can pursue art and education and not be bitter but instead say “thank you” (129).

Guadalupe y la Sexualidad

This chapter emphasizes how the liberation of Guadalupe as a symbol includes cultural decolonization. This segment of the chapter concentrates on how that decolonization process addresses the culturally inscribed notion of Guadalupe as Virgin. According to Chicana theorist Cherie Moraga, “it is historically evident that the female body, like the Chicano people, has been colonized. And any movement to decolonize them must be culturally and sexually specific” (qtd. in Mignolo 267). In particular, Guadalupe must be liberated from orthodox Catholicism in order for a liberation of Chicana female sexuality. The Catholic image of the Beloved Virgin reflects the traditional religious notion that beatitude for women is equivalent to repudiating sex. Moreover, Catholic doctrine states that the sole purpose of sex is for reproduction. Reconstruction means dismantling the Church’s indoctrination to repress female desire through the rule of “sex only for procreation.” Guadalupe has been used in Mexican and Mexican-American cultures as a means of controlling the roles and behaviors of women, in particular their sexual behavior. Because young Catholic girls were taught to emulate her purity, early Chicana feminists of the 1960s and 1970s often criticized Guadalupe as a symbol of oppression and of victimhood at the hands of machismo. Throughout the centuries, she has been either desexualized with emphasis on her purity and mothering or she has been masculinized as a battle image⁵. However, in the last decade or so, numerous Chicana writers have questioned these patriarchally-inscribed images of

Guadalupe in order to create new images of her that do not deny her sexuality but celebrate it.

Female sexuality was not discussed in the traditional Mexican and Mexican-American women's circle. This silence continued the legacy of sexuality repression. According to Ana Castillo,

In the public sphere, sexuality (just like our spiritual beliefs) remains an impolite and inappropriate subject. Failing to accept sexuality as a topic of discussion that affects our personal and professional lives is a reflection of the hierarchical fragmentation of the self in society. All of our conflicts with dominant society, all of the backlashes we suffer when attempting to seek some kind of justice from society are traceable to the repression of our sexuality and our spiritual energies as human beings—which are at no time during our breathing existence on Earth apart from the rest of who we are. They are, in fact, who we are: spiritual and sexual beings. (136)

Thus, part of Chicana ceremonial writing includes not only discussing sexuality but also reclaiming lost elements of spirituality that are connected to sexuality. Chicana spirituality attempts to breathe new life into a brown body that has not explored sexuality outside of prescribed social and moral codes. Reclaiming the spiritual and the sexual begins when Chicana women realize that each one of them “houses multiple identities” (Cruz 663) and has her own story to tell about these identities. In order for the stories of sexuality to emerge, the tradition of Guadalupe's virginity must be deconstructed for the “possibility of revealing how identities are discursively created and how the brown body

is constructed through the narratives and social mores of [Chicana] communities” (Cruz 664).

Since colonization, indigenous women historically have been associated with a brown body that is perishable and of no value. The Catholic Church reinforces that image by claiming women as “men’s property” (Castillo 128) and by claiming women’s children “belong to men and the church” (Castillo 129). Chicanas must understand how orthodox Catholicism has stigmatized women so they “can not see the link between eroticism and spirituality” (Castillo 143). Ana Castillo believes that the reclamation of sexuality and spirituality must begin with an integration of “the mind and soul and body” (143). Reclaiming female indigenous spiritual practices can help with the integration. In particular, Chicana writers must construct Guadalupe with this integration in mind. Understanding the practices of *curanderas* (indigenous female healers) also may help Chicanas to create an integrated Guadalupe. Curanderismo uses “mental, spiritual, and material expertise from Native American, European, Eastern, and Middle Eastern philosophies and knowledge” (Castillo 154) that cure the person from fragmentation by curing the person as a whole—body, mind, and spirit. Recalling the folkways of their spiritual grandmothers, Chicanas develop spiritual agency. When Chicanas construct Guadalupe they need to give her the healing powers of the curandera so that she and they are healed of the mind, body, spirit division: “The curandera . . . is a specialized healer, learned in the knowledge of specifically healing the body. However, in non-Western thinking, the body is never separate from the spirit or mind and all curative recommendations always consider the ailing person as a whole” (Castillo 156).

Chicana writers often become curanderas by creating works that illustrate their own healing processes or act as catalysts for the reader's healing process. Specifically, Chicana writers may create Guadalupe with sexual agency, creating her in their sexual likeness, or creating her as a vehicle by which others may explore sexuality. Three Chicana writers, Sandra Cisneros, Maria Amparo Escandon, and Carla Trujillo recover the indigenous roots of Guadalupe in order to revise the traditional image of her as a static entity that is desexualized, virginal, and pure; instead, they create new myths that reveal her identity as a whole, in particular, that do not deny her sexuality but celebrate it. These writers contend that a Chicana identity is grounded in a history of active agency and that Guadalupe is a figure that may contribute positively to Chicana women's sexual identity.

Sandra Cisneros, in an essay entitled "Guadalupe the Sex Goddess," describes her personal celebration of Guadalupe as a sexual symbol who positively influenced Cisneros' sexual identity. However, she begins by explaining that she was angry at Guadalupe for many years because "she was damn dangerous, an ideal so lofty and unrealistic it was laughable. Did boys have to aspire to be Jesus? I never saw any evidence of it. They were fornicating like rabbits while the church ignored them and pointed us toward our destiny of marriage and motherhood" (48). She continues, "La Lupe was nothing but a goody two shoes meant to doom me to a life of unhappiness" (48) because she kept women ignorant of their bodies and their sexuality. But, ironically, Cisneros changes her idea of Guadalupe when she discovers sex. In the text, she likens discovering sex to discovering writing because "you had to go beyond guilt and shame to get to anything good" (49). To get to any good writing about Guadalupe, Cisneros

searches for information about her in “the rubble of history” (49) and finds “lost” information that contributes to Cisneros’ understanding of Guadalupe as a sex goddess “who makes me feel good about my sexual power, my sexual history” (49). Specifically, her research led her to discover Guadalupe’s pre-Columbian antecedents before the Catholic Church desexed her. She discovered a pantheon of mother goddesses like Tonantzin and Tlazolteotl—the goddess of fertility and sex and known as the goddess of the rump. She found Coatlicue the creative/destructive goddess who is not passive but is “silently gathering force” (50). To Cisneros, Coatlicue, Tlazolteotl, Tonantzin and the Virgin of Guadalupe are “telescoped one into the other, into who I am . . . the one inside each Chicana and mexicana . . . [the one] who inspires me to leap into the swimming pool naked or dance on a table with a skirt on my head” (50). Once Cisneros redefined the image of Guadalupe in her own terms—ones that promoted active agency--then she could liberate and eventually celebrate her own sexuality.

The death of the virgin is an evident theme in Cisneros’ essay. Cisneros dismantles the traditional Virgin Mary figure by creating a sex goddess figure whose roots are pre-Columbian. In constructing Guadalupe as a sex goddess with Aztec roots, Cisneros also dismantles the image of the Aztec sacrificial virgin. Cisneros’ revision of Guadalupe sacrifices Guadalupe’s socially and religiously constructed virginity so that she becomes a figure with alternative sexual potentials. In this way, Cisneros provides a mother figure that transmits a new cultural paradigm: a mother figure who emanates an empowering image of the female body that enjoys sexuality as part of the gift of life. In creating Guadalupe as Sex Goddess, Cisneros symbolically kills the virgin figure, and,

then gives birth to La Lupe, a figure that gives to Chicana women a model of possible sexual agency and possible sexual fulfillment.

Liberating female sexuality is also a theme in Maria Amparo Escandón's Esperanza's Box of Saints (1999), a novel that illustrates the heroine's ceremonial journey that specifically centers on connecting the spiritual and the sexual. For Chicanas, the merging of the spiritual and the sexual is an important connection: "Spirituality and sexual behavior are not in conflict with each other, but it takes a lot of soul searching to bring the two together" (Medina 194). In Escandón's novel, the fictitious heroine, Esperanza, must liberate herself from the confines of a body defined by the Mexican Catholic society in which she was born and reared. Esperanza's journey is a ceremonial ritual in that it explores border culture and identity issues, redefines sexual mores and their relationship to faith and spirituality, and illustrates personal relationships between women and images of Mexican Catholic saints, in particular Guadalupe. Esperanza like other Chicana women "journey on paths previously prohibited by patriarchal religions... and define and decide from themselves what images, rituals, myths, and deities nourish and give expression to their deepest values" (Medina 189). Esperanza's ceremonial journey forms a spirituality that relies on her own authority and her personal experiences with different cultures and sexuality.

Set in both Mexico and the United States, this novel explores border culture and border consciousness and a woman's identity, in particular her religious and sexual identity, within borders and between borders. The novel, written in the tradition of magic realism, is a comedic odyssey about a beautiful young widow, Esperanza, and her search for her missing twelve-year-old daughter, Blanca. Although Esperanza had been told that

her daughter has died suddenly from a mysterious disease, she will not accept that her daughter is really dead because doctors and officials will not allow Esperanza to see the possibly infectious body. By looking at the official's desk that is crammed with information about missing people (including Esperanza) as well as a host of pornographic magazines, Esperanza determines that her daughter has turned to a life of prostitution. She believes her daughter would certainly flee from the family because of this social disgrace. Esperanza decides, however, that she will save her daughter by taking a journey into the seedy sections of Mexico and the United States to see if she can locate her. Esperanza will journey not only into the physical borderlands of Mexico and the United States but also the cultural borderlands where one can explore the construction of women's sexual behavior. In particular, Esperanza must face the cultural binary of the virgin and the whore. The mother/daughter situation in the novel symbolizes the cultural dichotomy of the virgin and the whore. Symbolically, Esperanza's unmarried daughter is dead because she is no longer a virgin. Because she is no longer a virgin, her mother as well as most of the Mexicans and Catholics of the community conclude in the only way they know: they think she becomes a whore. There is no in-between. However, Esperanza's journey dismantles this dichotomy: Esperanza learns not to model her life solely after the Virgin Mother and transforms the stereotypical images and experiences of a "whore" throughout her experiences in the novel. Esperanza begins by wanting to rescue her sinful daughter, but she ends by discovering that the "death of the virgin" is simultaneously the death of her own static identity of a chaste widow whose only purpose in life is to care for her child and mourn the passing of her husband. In the death of the virgin, Esperanza's search for ceremonial sexual identity begins.

Esperanza's search takes her from her humble, Catholic, Mexican village to the seedy brothels of Tijuana and finally to a dangerous Los Angeles barrio. Throughout her journey, the devoutly Catholic Esperanza ironically goes undercover as a prostitute to find her daughter whom she believes has fallen into the abyss of prostitution. Moreover, throughout the novel it becomes apparent that while Esperanza searches for her daughter, she also is in the process of discovering her own sexual identity. The symbolic movement from her safe homeland to seedy Tijuana and then crossing the border into the United States illustrates her spiritual movement from an innocent, chaste Catholic widow to a knowledgeable woman of the carnal world. Her journey, then, is an attempt to heal the split between sexuality and faith that she has learned from her Catholic upbringing. Her journey allows her to heal what Castillo calls "the fragmented self" caused from the "repression of . . . sexuality and . . . spirituality" (136). She must heal the split between the patriarchal and orthodox Catholic construction of the virgin and the whore and the spiritual woman who celebrates sexuality. She needs to find the liminal space wherein both her sexual and spiritual identity can become one, become whole. This space is the travel—the ceremonial journey—that she performs in order to find her "lost daughter" or that last part of her self, the sexual, sensual woman. Her ceremonial journey has at its core Esperanza's attempt to connect the body and the spirit. For many Chicana women this connection is difficult since cultural ideas about body have been formed by the patriarchal Catholic church. However, Chicana women must see that "spirituality is about connection, connecting to [their] feelings, emotions, [their] own bodies, [their] own sexuality, and [their] own intellect" (Medina 192).

Esperanza discovers much about herself in the journey, but more than anything her journey becomes a ceremony of healing the split between the spirit and the body. Chicana spirituality as a force for bringing about change becomes evident as Esperanza must heal the split between her spiritual faith and Catholic beliefs of chastity that have led to her naiveté about sex and her unexplored sexuality. In seeking her daughter in houses of ill repute, she is forced to face realities about sexual practice that she never has known. Although the novel is a comedic look at the seedier sides of life as a means to finding spirituality, simultaneously its message to Chicana women is a serious one: It is necessary to face more than adherence to Catholic doctrine in order to find the spiritual self. As law, the doctrine of the church can only be followed, whether blindly or devoutly, but as love, represented in and encompassed by Guadalupe, the heart of spirituality can be embraced. Specifically in this novel, Esperanza must step into the borderlands in order to embrace sexuality's connection to spirituality. Guadalupe will contribute guidance to her as she travels the unknown territory.

Esperanza, the Spanish word for hope, has a faith that is not merely one of orthodox Catholicism but also the folk Catholicism found in the everyday life of a person who speaks daily to her box of saints⁶, in particular, one of her favorite saints, San Judas Tadeo, patron saint of hopeless causes. It is San Judas Tadeo who humorously and miraculously appears to Esperanza in the grease of her kitchen stove and tells her that her daughter is not dead. After attempts at explaining this message to her friend Soledad, another widow who has remained chaste since her husband's death, and to Father Salvador, a priest who listens to Esperanza's adventures and throughout her "confession" confronts some of his repressed, sexual desire, Esperanza decides to search for her

daughter in prostitution rings within Mexico. She comes to this decision because the Birth and Death Certificate Official will not allow her to see the body nor the death certificate of her daughter; thus, she concludes that the pile of pornographic magazines on his desk is the clue to finding her daughter. After she is forced to leave the office, and has no one to turn to except her saints, she packs a bag and her box and leaves for Tijuana—the border city where young prostitutes are regular residents. Armed with saints, including Guadalupe, Esperanza begins her sexual odyssey into unknown borderland territory.

Through numerous contacts with people of ill repute who Esperanza believes have been sent by the saints, she gets a job at a prostitution house in Tijuana known as the Pink Palace, an image that ironically suggests a virgin uterus. As soon as she is given her room and the costly bodily conditions of her employment, she sets up her altar that includes “Blanca’s picture, her late husband’s, a picture of a wrestling angel from a magazine, the Virgin of Guadalupe, San Judas Tadeo, and a couple of candles that she carefully took from her box” (98-99). Immediately, Esperanza’s actions are ceremonial—she creates the mosaic altar as a means of protection. However, the other prostitutes and the Madame of the house at first think that she is insane but then consider her clever because she devises, in their estimation, a religious gimmick to attract male customers who are intrigued by her simultaneous virgin and whore appearance.

Even though she dresses in an outfit where “her breasts wanted to spill out” (101), she prays at the altar while waiting for her first client: “ ‘Oh, dear Virgen de Guadalupe,’ she said to the stranger in the mirror, ‘I know that road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Please help me!’” (101). One of the suspect people she met along the

way to the Pink Palace, a pimp, enters the room and begins to attack her, but with “an acrobatic ability she didn’t know she had,” (102) she jumps on him and makes him fall. He hits his head on the edge of the night table and thus she escapes his attack. La Virgen has protected her from his “reptile’s poison” (103)—his attempted rape.

Thus begins a pattern whereby her saints continue to protect her from violence and sexual advances. Esperanza believes the saints send to her Mr. Haynes, an American who wants to pay much money to the Madam for Esperanza’s sole service to him. He is impotent and merely wants to be near her and her altar. Haynes has come to the Pink Place for years, “crossing the border, every other day, always looking for his mother. Not his real mother, but a woman who can make him feel loved and nurtured” (123-24). In this way Esperanza melds the nurturing mother image with the sexual woman image. They lie in bed and talk and caress. Haynes falls in love with her and protects her from other clients.

Soon after their relationship begins, Esperanza begins to transform her identity by healing the sexual and spiritual split that she has lived with most of her life. One example of the healing reveals itself in the sensual image of hair. Like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Rosario of Cisneros’ “Little Miracles, Kept Promises,” she decides to cut her hair in order to establish a new identity that is not exclusively tied to beauty as defined by a patriarchal society. Specifically, she had not cut her hair since her husband’s death.

Her hair had been the feature [her husband] had adored the most. But he was dead. Now she looked in the mirror and she didn’t see a widow anymore. Flaca had cut her waist-long black hair and parted it down the right side instead of the middle. Esperanza rediscovered her neck, longer

than she had thought. . . . The image reflected in the mirror was of a woman Esperanza didn't know existed, or could. A fragile glow on her face made her look vaporous and airy. . . . She took the braid of black hair Flaca had cut off, tied a red ribbon around it, and brought it back to the altar in her room. (136).

When she arrives in her room she prays to Guadalupe: "Dear Virgin de Guadalupe, here is my braid. It's for you. Millions of women must have already offered you their braids. But this has been a part of me since Blanca was born. It means a lot to me. Please help me find my daughter. I am begging you" (136-37). By offering her braid to Guadalupe she rejects an image of sexuality that she has linked only to her relations with her husband—her hair. Esperanza has gone through the first part of her identity change, a change that requires she leave behind the celibate widow role dictated by the Church and begin a new search for her self, in particular her sexual and religious self.

In addition, after her hair is cut, the lines of communication with Haynes are opened. She talks to him as she has never talked with any man before and explains her journey and her apparition. She asks Haynes to take her to the United States to seek her daughter in the prostitution houses of Los Angeles. The ceremonial act of prayer to Guadalupe provides the means for open communication and a change of identity. The search for her daughter is simultaneously a search for her own identity, in particular her sexual identity.

Esperanza's quest allows her to experience more than the confining role of the traditional Catholic wife and devout mother and to express her love in nontraditional ways. Father Salvador and her devout friends are horrified by her journey into the

denizens of carnal “sin” and, thus, do not support the endeavor. Esperanza feels tremendous guilt because she believes she sins in her pursuit of her daughter but will not seek absolution from Father Salvador; she only informs him of her progress. However, it is not sin but the love of her child that takes her on the journey, a love that Esperanza believes only La Virgen could understand. When the doctrine fails, Esperanza goes to Guadalupe for support and encouragement.

When she enters the city of Los Angeles, she comes across a mural of Guadalupe who is “glowing on a field of roses, guarding a grave splattered with blood” (188). On top of the painting are the words “We don’t forget you, Filiberto Esparza, fallen homeboy and friend” (188). Moved by the image of loss and love, she falls to her knees and speaks to Guadalupe, “It’s amazing what one will do for one’s children, right?” (188). And then, “The Virgen of Guadalupe stared back at Esperanza and a smell of roses suddenly, emanated from the wall” (188). Esperanza now believes that Guadalupe will protect her in Los Angeles. With renewed trust, she finds a job at the Fiesta Theatre where she will act in a peep show.

Her new job in the “Sex-o-scope” is dangerous, but she takes it because she thinks that maybe she can find some information about her only child who she still believes “must have done something wrong, something dirty,” in order to be punished with the claim of death. Lustful male eyes look at Esperanza through the sex-o-scope. However, she dresses in a rather proper nightgown and simply reads or eats in her bed that is surrounded by a huge altar that displays saints in framed pictures, crucifixes, 42 novena candles, 68 prayer cards, 19 statuettes of different holy figures, 3 vases of carnations, a glow-in-the-dark San Miguel Arcangel and, of course, a framed image of Virgen de

Guadalupe. Ironically, Esperanza creates an act of ceremonia by creating a multidimensional altar of worship in a whorehouse. According to Lara Medina, “the work of creating ritual articulates not only a spirituality but an identity, and the ritual becomes a political act” (203). Her club act is a political act: although her image as the combination virgin/whore attracts men and she becomes the most popular act of the club, she realizes that she must grow in her personal development—outside of the established cultural binary—in particular in her understanding of sexuality.

Esperanza realizes that Blanca must have learned much about men, much that she herself never knew until her own journey. “She had wanted her daughter to believe that sex and love were the same thing, as in her marriage with Luis. But now Esperanza knew better” (191). She now realizes that the Catholic ideas of love and sex that she had learned as a child are not the only ways of the world. Her “ritual is an act of resistance” (Medina 204) and a way to “navigate across cultural boundaries” (Medina 210), especially those boundaries concerning a woman’s body and her sexual behavior.

According to Medina, “when intimacy, trust, respect, and commitment are present in sexual behavior then the sexual act can be a spiritual experience” (194). Esperanza will find all of the above qualities in her healthy albeit unconventional relationship with a wrestler. During her hours in the sex-o-scope, Esperanza begins to read wrestling magazines and decides to go see a match. Amidst the violence of the match, she sees one wrestler known as Angel, the same one she had found in a magazine and placed on her altar back in Mexico. She and Angel meet and begin an intimate sexual relationship—a pivotal point in Esperanza’s ceremonial journey. She is not afraid of loving him or making love with him because she believes that “she has known him her whole life”

(210). On the third day of their lovemaking, a number significant for its importance to the Catholic notion of trinity and its reference to resurrection, the two begin to perform an act of sex that is likened to an indigenous ceremony. "Lying on the mat, Esperanza and Angel first made love facing west. Then south. Then east and finally north (216). This is an important part of her sexual exploration since she follows the indigenous life cycle, making love in four directions, an act that brings new life. And it is Esperanza who is about to find new life since she has healed the split between the Catholic and the indigenous by symbolically joining with Angel in a sexual and spiritual ceremonial healing act.

After numerous escapes from minor dangers, the day after her ceremonial sex act, a man breaks through the protective wall of the Sex-o-Scope and begins to beat her. Although she escapes rape, she is hurt and quits the job, almost ready to give up the search for her missing daughter. Quite distraught, she finds a church whose main image is the Virgen de Guadalupe. She enters to pray for help. As she kneels, she remembers her own wedding day when she, of course a virgin, offered a bouquet of roses to La Virgen and asked for a long, loving marriage. In this church, she stands in front of bouquets that sit under an image of Guadalupe made from "a composite of snapshots of the original painting ... of the shrine in Mexico City. The snapshots were glued side by side. It looked fragmented but whole at the same time. Certain parts were bit off, maybe on purpose. A modern interpretation, different from what she had seen, but she liked it" (229). It is looking at this mosaic, this "new image of her beloved Virgin" that she realizes that "she has taken a wrong turn and had gotten lost among the clouds on the way to Heaven" (230). Guadalupe provides her with the means to change and to accept that her daughter

is not to be found at the Fiesta. Throughout her initiation into the world of sordid sexuality and violence, Guadalupe protects Esperanza and ultimately provides her with a vision of acceptance and love. She understands that “sometimes saints made people go through Hell so they could appreciate Heaven” (230) and her rediscovery allows her to realize that San Judas Tadeo will not appear to her again until she returns home.

When she returns home, she finds that her friend Soledad has cleaned her oven. She is outraged that she will not be able to see an apparition in the grease. She hides herself in the bathroom, cries, but through her tears hears the voice of her daughter telling her that they will always be together. It is then she realizes what the vision in the stove means: “I finally know what San Judas Tadeo meant. Blanca is not dead. Blanca is not alive. She is in that little space in between. That’s where I was supposed to look for her” (245). She tells this to Father Salvador who wants her to notify the Vatican about the sanctification. But Esperanza states, “Blanca’s apparitions are not important to the rest of the world.... This is just between the two of us. She’s my own little saint, my little santita. So, please don’t start any paperwork” (245). She finds her daughter and herself in the borderlands, in the space in between, in between Mexico and the United States, in between life and death, in between Catholicism and indigenismo, in between virgin and whore. Further, an understanding of her personal spirituality comes from an understanding of the link between sexuality and spirituality—love and trust. The novel ends with Angel coming to Mexico and taking her across the border to live with him in Los Angeles. She packs up her saints and takes them with her; she will need them for continued ceremonial acts.

Both of the previous examples show how reconstructing Guadalupe helps women to revise notions of heterosexuality that have been created by patriarchal structures and perpetuated by masculinist histories and chronicles. However, in a 1998 essay entitled “La Virgen de Guadalupe—Her Reconstruction in Chicana Lesbian Desire,” Carla Trujillo makes a case that the redefined Virgin can be “validated in our culture without the benediction of men or the pope” (223) by being “the all-accepting mother who replaces the church’s eyes of judgment and scorn with those of acceptance and love,” (223) including the acceptance of differences of sexuality. Trujillo and other Chicana lesbians expose the politics of sexuality that attempt to keep women trapped in traditional gender roles and also offer several reinterpretations of Guadalupe that are created in sexual likeness to themselves. These artists do not suppress Guadalupe’s sexuality and further, they liberate it from traditional heterosexual constructs. She no longer remains the model of purity and self-sacrifice but becomes “a symbol/source of power, a sympathizer” (Trujillo 220). Further, Trujillo states:

Chicana painters, sculptors, and writers claim La Virgen as our own and shatter predefined images. We disengage, in our possession, the aura of passivity her image brings forth, and create the possibility of sexual agency. Thus La Virgen de Guadalupe is retained and functions as a means of validation for a sexualized Chicana body and an altered belief system. (127)

Lara Medina expands Trujillo’s notion of sexual agency: “The erotic/spiritual redefined becomes that which moves us, tantalizes us, that which brings forth our energy, our power, our creativity. Settling for nothing less, our work, our relations, our art

become sites holding erotic spiritual power” (193). Since the 1970s, Chicana painters and sculptors have been transforming the traditional visual depiction of Guadalupe into portraits of self, portraits of female friends, or of women in their families. The traditional icon’s passivity and submission is replaced by Guadalupes who are active, mobile, hardworking, and assertive. For example, in 1976 Ester Hernandez created the painting entitled *La Virgen de Guadalupe Defendiendo los Derechos de los Xicanos*, a painting of a physically powerful Guadalupe who is a black belt in martial arts. In 1978, Yolanda M. Lopez’ *Guadalupe Triptych* represents la Virgen as a marathon runner, a seamstress and grandmother. The marathon runner image is entitled *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe*. In it Lopez depicts herself as a Guadalupe marathon runner with a snake in one hand and the Virgin’s cloak in the other. This tradition of giving Guadalupe active agency continues into the 1980s and 1990s. By 1999, one painter, Alma Lopez, used Cisneros’ essay entitled “Guadalupe the Sex Goddess” as her inspiration for creating *Lupe Loves Sirena*, a painting that illustrates Guadalupe in a series of “sexualized Sapphic poses” (Calvo).

Trujillo’s essay refers to numerous paintings by Chicana artists that reconstruct Guadalupe into “a corporeal, sexual rendering” of their imaginations. Trujillo discusses works by Chicana lesbians like herself who “disengage in our possession the aura of passivity her image brings forth and create the possibility of sexual agency” (227). In particular, Trujillo highlights the controversial situation of depicting Ester Hernandez’ painting entitled *La Ofrenda* (1990) on the cover of a 1991 book Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned us About. This work depicts a woman, with “La Virgen” tattooed on her back, looking over her shoulder at another woman who offers her a rose.

To Trujillo, this offering is symbolic because it reverses the traditional image of Guadalupe offering roses to Juan Diego by showing a woman offering a rose to Guadalupe, a “counteroffer” of “validation and credence to the lives of women, Chicanas, and lesbians” (217). The depiction caused differing reactions in the community, some quite hostile. In fact, Norma Alarcón, publisher of the books’ press, was threatened by people in the Mexican community who did not want *their* virgin depicted in unconventional ways.

However, Trujillo and others see this depiction as “not a rejection of the Virgin Mary but, in recognition of her power and cultural significance, a reclamation and reconstruction of La Virgen in our way and not as historically ascribed” (219). Trujillo continues, “In this way, La Virgen de Guadalupe is as much ours as anyone else’s” (227). Trujillo concludes, “La Virgen de Guadalupe, whom we identify and transform, doesn’t become our virgin. She remains it” (227). Creating art, then, becomes a ceremonial act that heals the split between the spiritual and the physical for all Chicana women—no matter what their sexual orientation. In particular, Guadalupe will remain “our virgin” not by stressing her physical virginity but by stressing her importance and role as mother, mother of all creativity, including sexuality and spirituality.

Ceremonias dedicated to La Virgen often mark the beginning of a new year. The ceremonias performed by the numerous artists in this chapter mark a new beginning for many Chicana women who want to connect body and spirit by navigating across cultural borders of gender, language, and sexuality. The writings of Chicanas included in this chapter help to transform not only the writer’s but also the reader’s personal spirituality. Many of these writers realize that they need not deny Guadalupe as solely a masculinist

construct, but instead, can embrace her in new ways that emphasize matrilineal origins, multiple languages, and physical as well as spiritual agency. The search for mother comes full circle; it returns to the beginning: to the stories of the great grandmothers, the great great grandmothers. Chicanas must go back into the familial past and the cultural past in order to relearn and renew what the matriarchs knew, believed, and embraced in love.

¹ Ana Castillo in Massacre of the Dreamers defines Xicanisma as Chicana feminism that includes both academic feminism and social activist feminism.

² Some writers include an accent in this name, Tonantzín, while others do not. I have kept the accent only when specific writers have used it in their original works.

³ Translation: “A language that corresponds to a mode of living.”

⁴ Sor Filotea de la Cruz is a pseudonym used by the bishop of Puebla who writes a letter to Sor Juana in order to rebuke her for publishing comments against a Jesuit priest’s sermon about the nature of Christ’s expression of love at the end of his life. In particular, the bishop faults her for pursuing “masculine” topics of theology and instructs her to keep to the “feminine” duties of prayer and help for the poor.

⁵ See discussion in the previous chapter of her masculinization during Mexico’s formation of Nationalism.

⁶ Included in her box of saints is San Judas Tadeo, La Virgen de Guadalupe, San Antonio of Padua, San Rafael Arcangel—all of them are associated with protection and lost things, people, or causes.

Conclusion

En Busca de la Casa de Abuela: Chicana Matrilineal Gardens

I kneel to gather my distracted self,
 Eyes closed. Ay, Virgencita y Abuelita,
 all heavenly mothers, help me live faith,
 a woman whose prayers dance and sing.

- Pat Mora, from “Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe” in Aunt Carmen’s Book of Practical Saints (1997)

The previous chapters explore how constructions of the archetypal mother figures of Malinche and Guadalupe influence Chicana identity. Both Chapter One, an explanation of the textualization of Malinche in historical writings, and Chapter Three, an explanation of the textualization of Guadalupe in many religious works, reveal that these archetypal constructions are steeped in colonial ideology, patriarchal renderings, nationalistic missions, and/or Catholic doctrine. Chapters Two and Four illustrate how Chicana writers not only deconstruct these textualizations but also reinvent both archetypes with active agency so that they provide contemporary Chicana women with models that promote empowering cultural and personal images of motherhood and selfhood. In their revisions of both figures, Chicana writers give voice to alternative stories about the two figures that recover through oral tradition lost aspects of both and stories that influence new constructions of them that are particularly influenced by matriarchal renderings. Thus, when Chicana writers employ *la conciencia mestiza* in their

thinking about Malinche and Guadalupe, they often write works that challenge traditional masculinist interpretations of each figure, recover lost indigenous aspects of both figures, and renew figures by creating them as women with active agency who act as role models for contemporary Chicana women.

This dissertation, then, explores how Chicana writers search for their matrilineal ancestors, in the rubble of history and in between the bricks of Catholic churches and Aztec pyramids. Chicana writers build their own altar to mother by first removing layers of pyramids to expose the ancient goddess worship, and then by picking up lost fragments in the deconstruction, and finally by building altars made of the old, the new, the lost, the forgotten, the challenged. Throughout their creative efforts, Chicana writers search for their collective female ancestors and most often simultaneously explore their personal female relationships that have contributed to their understanding of self. As a conclusion to this dissertation, I will concentrate on how one Chicana writer embraces the Coatlicue state by searching not only for archetypes of mother but also for her female relatives, including the grandmother. The figure of the grandmother, *la abuela*, is an archetypal site that reveals how the matrilineal line contributes to an understanding of a Chicana's idea of self. This conclusion will concentrate on Pat Mora's House of Houses (1997) in order to illustrate how Mora employs the Coatlicue state by recovering what was lost in her own family history. Mora creates an autoethnographic text that explores collective Chicana history through the personal familial experiences of Mora and her female ancestors, in particular her two grandmothers. Just as the previous chapters explore the historical constructions of Malinche and the religious constructions of Guadalupe, this conclusion demonstrates how Mora's work also explores historical and

religious constructions but of her own female ancestors. In effect, Mora's autohistoria is ceremonial act that summons the power of her female ancestors in order to tell a story of survival and love that impacts her own understanding of self. In particular, the house is a symbol of Mora's self that presents layers of her past and present life, her memories and experiences of both her real and imagined relationships with family members.

House of Houses chronicles Mora's Mexican-American family over several generations by relying not on historical documents such as birth certificates and immigration papers but rather through oral tradition, stories told to her by the women in her family: her mother, aunts, and grandmothers. The book presents historical information about her family in a stream of consciousness style, blending fiction with fact in the tradition of magic realism, in order to get at the heart and soul of her family not simply the recorded facts of her family in linear time. Mora concentrates on memory and storytelling to share with her readers the recipes, prayers, and daily events of her female relatives in order to explore "where past and present braid as they do with each of us" (4). Unlike her father who desperately holds on to printed documents, such as his citizenship papers and his judicial license, as written testament of his worth and thus his family's, Mora understands that her family history more poignantly is revealed through memories that are planted in the fecundity of stories told to her by her female relatives who live in the family house that sits by the Rio Grande. For it is in this structural house and also this house of memory that Mora encounters her family history through stories told to her by brown women who "washed in it, planted in it, slept with its voice, long before *conquistadors*, historians, and politicians divided the land into countries and states, directed the river to become a border" (3). In particular, the storytelling by and about

both grandmothers contributes to Mora's understanding of the family's lost past and also provides the seeds for understanding self. House of Houses, then, is ceremonial work that uncovers, in part, the matrilineal legacy of the Mora family.

Alice Walker in In Search of Our Mother's Gardens (1983) examines the importance of black female models in a black female writer's life. Walker realized at the beginning of her search, that there were few published black female models, so she dug deeper and "discovered" one such model that had not been published with frequency, Zora Neale Hurston. Walker's search not only gave to Walker an influential model for her own writing but also culminated in Hurston becoming an accepted member of the American literary canon. Walker also realizes throughout her search that there have always been other models for her to follow even though they were not published writers or writers yet to be discovered. These models were/are the creative female spirits in her own family that establish what Walker calls her own community. This community is comprised of her female relatives, in particular her mother and grandmother, who are "a walking history of our community" (77). Walker begins to tell the stories of her mother and other female relatives that contribute to her understanding of self and her own creative spirits. For it was her mother who tells her "that when each of her children was born the midwife accepted as payment such home-grown or homemade items as a pig, a quilt, jars of canned fruits, and vegetables" (77). This information can not be found in documents or on birth certificates; this information is the matriarchal oral history of the family. In an exploration of the oral tradition of her family's storytelling or in their creative arts such as quilting or gardening, Walker finds that her female relatives, "these grandmothers and mothers of our were Artists," (233) whose creations were biscuits and

quilts and flowers and vegetable gardens and stories that they told to each other while they worked the fields or tended to the children.

Like Alice Walker searching for not only her mothers' gardens but her own writer's voice, Mora, in House of Houses, creates her own ceremonial garden in words. She realizes that the women in her family can provide the seeds and the water for her growth, seeds that have not been acknowledged previously. "And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read" (Walker 240). Mora's garden in words is an extension of the garden behind her family house where her female ancestors, in particular her maternal and paternal grandmothers, planted and tended to beautiful flowers, trees, herbs and vegetables.

Specifically, Mora's stories about Mamande, her maternal grandmother, and Mama Cleta, her paternal great grandmother, contribute to Mora's understanding of her mother, her sisters, and her self. Mamande and Mama Cleta illustrate the female legacy of the family, a legacy that had been heretofore silent, buried behind the male members of the family's words and actions. Although Mora pays tribute to the males in her family, in particular to her father, Raul, she realizes that it has been the women who have held things together through the wars, the immigration, the family quarrels, the family worries. Mora, then, gives to other Chicana a women a first-hand account of her female relatives in order to help all Chicanas understand that they no longer have to rely solely on "higher status, powerful authorities in the public domain" but should "consider turning for answers to people closer to their own experiences—female peers, mothers, sisters,

grandmothers” (Belenky et al. 60) by listening to their stories of real life, experienced wisdom. Although Mora presents to the reader actual photos of her grandmothers and a diagram of their family trees, she concentrates more on stories that highlight their main characteristics. Mora concentrates on Mamande’s particular brand of faith and belief that contribute to Mora’s spiritual understanding of her family and self, and she concentrates on Mama Cleto’s understanding of the spiritual power of nature, in particular her gardening practices that act as the ritualistic symbol of understanding the history of Mora’s family.

Through the stories of Mamande’s life, Mora learns to always have faith and to believe in miracles. As the second wife of Juan Domingo Landavazo, a Mexican doctor who because of his political beliefs lost his job as a judge and was forced to move to the United States after the war, Mamande not only struggles with a new homeland and a new language that she never quite masters, but also with a ready-made family who is not happy with their new, very young, red-headed stepmother. Mamande’s story is one of a woman who suffers the role of mother to her stepchildren and celebrates the role of mother for her biological children by relying on her spiritual faith, a brand of folk Catholicism that practices daily worship rituals. Everyday, with prayer book and rosary in hand, she prays to the statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe that sits on her bedroom dresser and also sits in the family garden calling forth a range of saints for her daily prayers. Mora’s memories of Mamande often concentrate on her work behind the scenes of the family dynamics, “silent behind the scenes, gently hold[ing] her daughter and later [her granddaughters]” (54). “It is more her hands than her voice that we remember” (66). For it is those hands that heal all of the children when they are ill and that feed them in

comfort and love. Mora's mother describes Mamande as "kindness itself," and the family is devastated when Mamande in her 70s is diagnosed with terminal cancer and is given by doctors only three months to live. Mamande stays in the family house through her illness and continues her rituals of prayer and love, praying her rosary each day, while she digs in the family garden.

Six months after her illness is diagnosed, Mamande tells the family that a *negrito* visited her room last night and told her not to be afraid, that she would be healed. The family dismisses this report as a rant, as foolish hope of a dying woman. But Mora, a young woman at the time, embraces Mamande's story and continues to watch her tend to her garden and pray to La Virgen and to the dark-skinned Peruvian saint, San Martín, who she believed was the *negrito* who came to her in her vision. The next week, her doctors report in stunned amazement that her cancer is completely gone, and Mamande lives for eight more years—a testament to her miracle.

Mora thinks of Mamande's miracle when she tends to her own garden and thinks that a "gardener is a creature who digs himself into the earth" (67). She remembers Mamande's devout faith, her miracle cure, and when Mamande is buried in 1962 at 82 years old, Mora relates:

We probably dig some of ourselves into all that we pursue, but
There's something eerie or maybe appealing—about all that
Catholic dust-to-dust stuff—about digging ourselves into earth,
loosening the soil and burying some of our essence, our breath,
even while we're alive becoming part of the compost. (66-67)

If Mamande provides Mora with the living example of a miracle and the power of love and faith in times of struggle, then her great grandmother Mama Cleta provides Mora with an example that she can only imagine, since Mama Cleta dies when Mora is but a baby. Mora constructs Mama Cleta as a living, breathing woman by piecing together all of the stories that she has learned about her from her mother and aunts. Mora imagines Mama Cleta's conversations and draws a picture of Mama Cleta as Mora's own matrilineal mentor who teaches her about life through recipes and prayers and gardening practices. Mora draws Mama Cleta as a woman who is the supreme gardener, the one most responsible for creating the garden behind the family house.

Mama Cleta rises early every day to work in her garden before anyone else awakens. Often, during her morning rituals there, Mama Cleta invites her private saints to share breakfast. Most often she invites La Virgen and San Rafael into her garden to share with her some café con leche and to admire the beauty of the garden. In one encounter, La Virgen moves toward Mama Cleta, "picks her up from her knees and gently hugs her, the scent of roses thick velvet on my great grandmother's palms" (231). Mora presents Mama Cleta as embracing both the "Lady in the Garden" (reminiscent of Guadalupe's miraculous act of making roses appear out of season as a sign for Juan Diego of her divine nature) while greeting the nature elements of Aztec ritual worship: "birds of every color that cover the trees, their songs a morning serenade" that provides "feathered music" (231). The image of feathers calls forth the feathers of fertility that the mother of the Aztec gods and goddesses embrace before she becomes pregnant. Mama Cleta hears the sweeping noises that Coatlicue hears prior to the appearance of feathers that signify her becoming pregnant with the Aztec God, Huitzilopochtli.¹ When La Virgen leaves,

Mama Cleto picks up a remaining feather and “strokes it and tastes a delicate whiteness on her tongue, like a host” (232). Mora’s retelling of the story illustrates how her great grandmother created her own myths by pulling together Catholic myths and Aztec myths and embracing them in her own creative garden.

Furthermore, Mama Cleto knows the garden and all its inhabitants intimately, and Mora reports that Mama Cleto teaches her to “listen to the secret life of spiders, to beetles burrowing, pods swaying in the trees” (139) and to “*planta flores con nombres religiosas como vantas de San José*”² (9). Mora believes that Mama Cleto hopes that her grandchildren and great grandchildren will remember what she has taught them about gardening and the effects of the moon on the garden and life: Mora learns to work the earth from Mama Cleto, who is patient and loving in her garden, and tells Mora “Gardens, like families, can be timeless, if they’re tended” (143). Mora likens Mama Cleto’s work in the garden to her own work as a writer. Creating Mama Cleto is a ceremonial act to celebrate the spirituality and wisdom of her female ancestors that should not be forgotten:

The gardener/writer works alone in old clothes, the solitude allowing the listening, ear to the earth, hands busy planting, digging, mulching, weeding, fingers cultivating a feel for the soul, the clay, its moods, seasons, demands, never in total control; annually surprised by what burst through. (267)

Directly after this explanation, Mora recalls an Aztec poet’s song: “Our body is a plant in flower, it gives flowers/and it dies away” (267). Thus, Mora in her ceremonial act of creating Mama Cleto relies on the memory of Mora’s female relatives alive during

Mora's life, Mama Clela's historical ancestors, the Aztecs, and Mama Clela's famous gardening methods.

The last chapter of the book is an imagined recreation of all of Mora's relatives alive in the house to celebrate the first day of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mora imagines the creative activities of the women in the house on that day. For example, Mama Clela hands the younger women of the family orange rinds and herb stems tied in a bundle that symbolize the fire of continued life. In addition, "[t]he family of women drifts into the dining room, chatting, and helping Mama Clela bring *café* and sweet breads—capechancas y laberinto—to the table" (273). Mora's aunts sing hymns in Spanish, while Mamande hides homemade gifts for the children. Mora attempts to collect the recipes of all the women in her family, struggling to write them down correctly, because these women operate by feel and touch not by accurate recordable measurements. Finally, Mora conjures all of the family saints; they all arrive to share the family meal. Her grandmother reads a special prayer to Guadalupe and roses appear in Mama Clela's hands—"the roses tasted round. . . . They were red. They perfumed the desert. . . . They were smooth as velvet" (274). Thus Mora becomes the family mythmaker, the ceremonial writer, creating her own archetypal figures who contribute to her own identity:

I shape what I inherit into what I need, shape what shaped me, a place not mine physically, and yet a place in which I dwell, a body of stories large enough to hold the family, an earth blanket like Abuela's long cloth, Composed of useful scraps, never finished, with faith, *santa fe*, an unexpected home cure. (272)

Mora imagines the meal preparation, the prayers, the love, the conversations of her female ancestors and realizes that in writing House of Houses “gradually, our breaths become one” (291).

Chicana feminists, like Pat Mora, reconfigure cultural female archetypes such as Malinche and Guadalupe, in part to describe Chicana thought and experiences that reflect both their cultural historical pasts and personal pasts as well as their ever-changing relationships to those pasts. Their writings illustrate not so much a search for identity but a reconfiguration of identity, a relational process that “doesn’t only depend on [the writer]” but “also depends on the people around her” (Anzaldúa qtd. in Keating 239). These people include both cultural ancestors and personal ancestors. According to Anzaldúa, “Identity is not just what happens to me in my present lifetime but also involves my family history, my racial history, my collective history...” (qtd. in Keating 240). All of the writers of this dissertation define identity not as static but as a process that grows as it encounters different relationships and historical circumstances. As the previous chapters illustrate, re-seeing and re-constructing the archetypal figures of Malinche and Guadalupe often inspire alternative versions of their “histories” that provide models of sexual and linguistic agency and that also promote uplifting “lived” spiritualities. The writers of this dissertation concentrate on recovering a matrilineal legacy in not only their collective cultural history but also in their personal pasts. In particular, Mora’s work reveals a multiplicity of female voices from the past, including female indigenous voices from an oral tradition, voices of female family members’ lived spiritualities, and voices of the women—both dead and alive--in her family who contribute to her idea of self and the world. Through telling stories of their cultural

Mothers and their personal mothers and grandmothers, Chicana writers create a reality that embraces the mestiza consciousness by seaming together the fragments of collective cultural history and their personal pasts. Their writings reveal and contribute to matrilineal legacies, and their words create gardens *sin fronteras* from which not only the writer but the reader may grow.

¹ Coatlicue, known as both the Mother of Gods and the Lady of Serpent Skirt, was sweeping the temple at Tenochtitlan when feathers descended up on her. She places feathers upon her bosom to realize her pregnancy. The legend follows with her giving birth to the Aztec god of tribute and war, Huitzilopochtli, who slays all of the enemies of the Aztecs. Like Christ, his life symbolizes that sacrifice and sanctity are embedded in violence.

² Translation of phrase: To plant flowers with religious names such as Saint Joseph.

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