

ONE HIGH HEEL ON EACH SIDE OF THE BORDER: A CLOSER LOOK
AT GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN CHICANA AND ANGLO YOUNG
ADULT LITERATURE

by

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Abstract

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There is currently very little analysis of Chicana young adult literature available, and by extension there is almost nothing at hand that compares Anglo and Chicana young adult literature. These fields need to be examined seriously alongside one another in order to give appropriate academic attention to two areas that have been marginalized in academia (Chicana literature and young adult literature). This project uncovers significant similarities between Chicana and Anglo YA literature: I refer to these comparable points as crossover, apex, or collision moments that make experiences of relatability possible within the literature wherein the instability of adolescence can be shared across cultures. Crossover moments are particularly prevalent in Anglo bridge texts that focus on

immigration or inter-species hybridity since these exigencies allow the author to implement a sensitive treatment of the Other both formally and thematically.

In each chapter, I examine 1-3 award-winning or bestselling Chicana YA texts and 1-3 Anglo YA novels from 1990-2010. Drawing from various theoretical lenses, I question the ways certain motifs (such as home, hunger, holiness, and love) function, and can be compared and contrasted, cross-culturally. In Chapter 2, I argue that home in flux, as presented in recent Chicana and certain Anglo young adult literature, is an integral trope that is parallel to girls' search for identity. Due to their cultural hybridity, self-identifying within one or both cultures is an ongoing struggle, and navigation of the patriarchal home is necessary. In Chapter 3, I apply the image of the *vagina dentata* to an exploration of the connection between appetites for food and sex in female characters, and I argue that the literature conveys that "good girls" do not and should not have significant appetites for either. In Chapter 4, I explore sacrifice as a prominent theme in young adult literature where female characters are often sacrificed for the good of male characters or for patriarchal society. Finally, in Chapter 5, I explore heretical texts that are foundational to Chicana and Anglo YA literature, and I identify archetypes distinct to and shared by the texts, including *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and the Crone.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“The pain and joy of the borderlands—perhaps no greater or lesser than the emotions stirred by living anywhere contradictions abound, cultures clash and meld, and life is lived on an edge—come from a wound that will not heal and yet is forever healing. These lands have always been here; the river of people has flowed for centuries. It is only the designation ‘border’ that is relatively new, and along with the term comes the life one lives in this ‘in-between world’ that makes us the ‘other,’ the marginalized. . . .”

-Norma E. Cantú
“1993 Festival of American Folklife”
The Smithsonian Institute

Marginality

In order to understand the nuances within juvenile literature and its status as marginalized, liminal literature, it is important to examine the sticky beginnings of the genre itself. As Seth Lerer explains in *Children’s Literature*, it is difficult to pinpoint the genesis of this particular genre. One possible beginning occurred when the printing press was invented in the 15th century and *The Book of Courtesye* was distributed as a didactic compilation of verse for children. In the 17th century, James Janeway wrote *A Token for Children*, a book on the lives and grisly deaths of several young children which was meant to inspire and to instruct children. However, as Lerer points out, subsequently a shift from didacticism to

entertainment took place in the early Modern period. Due to John Locke's widespread notion of the child as a *tabula rasa*, adults began to view children differently; then, as now, they were viewed as a separate type of human who needed divergent literature better suited to their needs. Thus, many scholars point to Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-book* in 1744 as the first "children's book" since it contains pictures and verses clearly meant to entertain children. It was also sold with a novel marketing idea: a pincushion for girls or a ball for boys, which demonstrates how children's literature began with a reinforcement of gender roles.

Young adult literature is a marginalized, oft contested and sometimes suspect genre existing on the borderlands of the canon of adult literature (Younger). It is a literature obsessed with power relations: "We take so for granted the inequities of power in the relations between adults and children that we often miss seeing that all interactions between adults and children involve negotiations of cultural power" (Morris 4). It is vital to remember that, as Tim Morris points out, young adult literature involves an interaction between an adult author, who has power, speaking to a more marginalized and less powerful young adult reader. Young adult literature is difficult to define, according to one of the leading critics in the field, Perry Nodelman, in *The Hidden Adult*. It bears some similarities to adult literature and other likenesses of children's literature, but Nodelman

maintains that young adult literature, just like children's literature, is a genre whose intrinsic qualities are significant enough to delineate it clearly from other genres.¹ If a definition of children's literature is possible, though, Nodelman asserts that the most pragmatic definition is that which is offered on the children's list of a publisher. "Children's literature" generally refers to literature appropriate for children up to age 12 or 13, although Nodelman uses this term to refer to literature from birth through adolescence, while "young adult literature" usually describes literature for readers aged 14 and older. Sometimes the term "juvenile literature" is used to include both children's and young adult literature. Ultimately, publishers make the final call as to what will be marketed to child readers and what will be targeted toward adults. Juvenile literature is unusual in that it is defined by the age of its readers in addition to its content, although the implication is that certain concepts are appropriate at some ages and inappropriate at others. Juvenile literature is a socializing institution, to be sure.

With such subjective criteria, there have been several noteworthy missteps in the publishing world. As Leonard Marcus points out in *Minders of Make-Believe*, J.D. Salinger's 1951 classic, *The Catcher in the Rye*, was, and still is, marketed as an adult novel. Nonetheless, numerous

¹ Nodelman's paradigm resembles Northrop Frye's position that good literature has recognizable, archetypal qualities

scholars consider this novel to be the beginning of young adult literature since its foul-mouthed, disenfranchised protagonist, Holden Caulfield, has resonated with teen audiences since the book's release. Additionally, *The Catcher in the Rye* is primarily assigned to and read by high school students. Similarly, Judy Blume's revolutionary 1975 text, *Forever*, was initially advertised as an adult novel due to its explicit sexual content.² Blume was infuriated by this maneuver since she wanted to provide realistic, positive imagery about responsible teen sexuality to a teen audience, and the book's status was eventually changed to YA novel. Chicano/a young adult novels are not immune to the phenomenon of having marketing determine their fate as either adult or young adult literature. For example, Sandra Cisneros's widely read 1984 text, *House on Mango Street*, according to Sonia Saldívar-Hull in *Feminism on the Border*, was initially published on the young adult reader list of Arté Público's catalog. Later, Random House republished the book as an adult novel, which opened it up to a broader readership, although it is still assigned primarily to high school students. Also, José Villareal's 1959 novel, *Pocho*, currently inexplicably appears as both a young adult and an adult novel in the same publishing house. The young adult version is in English whereas the adult version is in Spanish, but otherwise the content

² revolutionary because it depicted female orgasm, female self-determination about entering a sexual relationship, and a female on the birth control pill

is exactly the same, although the Spanish version costs five dollars more. Clearly, the decision about how to classify a book is often arbitrary and mutable, although it is also troubling when censoring literature that teaches young adults messages, like those found in *Forever*, which people did not want marketed to young readers. The arbitrary nature of publication classification indicates a difficulty both in defining what young adults are and in pinpointing what they are likely to read.

Chicano/a literature is also a marginalized genre due to the conditions of its emergence as literature for a borderlands Mexican-American, politicized population. The Chicano movement of the 1960s catalyzed a vast wealth of protest literature by writers who embraced some of the indigenous aspects of Mexican culture as they fought against their marginalization in the U.S. Therefore, Chicano/a young adult literature is doubly in shadow as compared to traditionally canonical literature. The epigraph by Norma E. Cantú speaks to the pain often experienced by this “wound” of marginalization. Since protest literature is defined as literature written by or about any disenfranchised group of people with the goal of resisting that hegemonic normalization, it is clear that most Chicano/a young adult literature should be categorized as

protest literature.³ Because postmodern literary studies have promoted the study of literature that was previously on the fringe, more people are critically examining Chicano/a YA literature.

This project is an inquiry into the varying representations of femininity and female sexuality in Chicana/o and Anglo young adult literature from 1990-2010. In each chapter, I examine 1-3 Chicana YA texts and 1-3 Anglo YA novels, some of which are discussed in more than one chapter. I define 'Chicana' literature as works written by Chicana authors for both Chicanas and a broader audience. I have chosen texts that were bestsellers or that experienced other indicators of popular success because I am interested in examining texts that have been consumed by a large quantity of people. I question the ways certain motifs (such as home, hunger, holiness, and love) function, and can be compared and contrasted, cross-culturally. Since young adult literature has such a significant impact on developing adolescent girls, it is important to analyze the messages these teen girls could receive from reading popular literature. Additionally, since the population of the U.S. Southwest, after first being part of Mexico and then part of the U.S., is trending demographically again toward majority Hispanic Americans and minority Anglo Americans, I think it is important to examine the literature

³ Ramón Saldívar makes a similar argument in *Chicano Narrative: Dialectics of Difference*

from these two groups side-by-side. What similarities and differences can be illuminated, and what is their significance? In what ways are different ethnicities represented and addressed within the literature, and to what end? The proximity of the border helps to bring these two types of literature together, but the border as a theoretical concept affords me the opportunity to explore the liminal space between young adult and adult subjects.

There is currently very little analysis of Chicana young adult literature available, and by extension there is almost nothing at hand that compares Anglo and Chicana young adult literature. I believe that these fields need to be examined seriously alongside one another in order to give appropriate academic attention to two areas that have been marginalized in academia (Chicana literature and young adult literature). A cross-cultural endeavor is fruitful because it sheds light on themes in multifaceted ways that a monocultural study does not. Chicana and Anglo texts are in dialogue about issues faced by all adolescents, which provide crossover moments to reach diverse readers. Additionally, it is vital that Chicana and Anglo YA literature be studied side-by-side since they exist alongside one another in present-day culture in a way they never have before. Latino literature is a vital, fast-growing component of American literature, particularly in the 21st century. This study will be an important

step in acknowledging that vitality, and in attempting to fill the gap left in scholarship, which currently elides much Chicana YA literature.

Chicano/a History and Political Activism

In order to understand the nuances in contemporary Chicana literature, it is essential to understand the rich historical and literary traditions in which it is rooted. In this section, I speak in generalities; I pursue more specific cultural and historical nuances in subsequent chapters. Mexico was populated and governed by indigenous people such as the Aztecs and the Maya until Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, conquered the land and the people in the early 16th century. Feminist theologians⁴ discuss how, historically, when Catholic Spanish missionaries arrived after the indigenous peoples of Mexico were conquered, they often erected churches on sites that were already sacred to the population for worshipping pre-Christian gods and goddesses.⁵ Church officials encouraged worship of the Virgin Mary, since that made for an easier transition for people with a tradition of mother goddess worship. However, the Christian doctrine that there is only one God, and that the way to Him is through His son, Jesus, limited the Church's tolerance of earth or

⁴ c.f. Monika Sjoo, Charlene Spretnak, or Barbara Walker

⁵ To build some structures, like the Basilica in Mexico City, materials were taken from destroyed pyramids (Arce)

goddess-focused spirituality.⁶ The indigenous people were forced to work as slaves on what had been their land, which was redistributed to Spaniards, and to convert to Christianity. A new caste system developed with Spaniards born in Spain at the top, followed by *criollos*, Spaniards born in Mexico, then *mestizos*, those with mixed Spanish and Mexican heritage, and *indios*, the indigenous people, at the bottom (Arce). The *mestizos* became a “new” race, that which is considered to be Mexican ethnicity today. In 1820, Mexico became independent from Spain’s rule, which began its postcolonial period. During this time, Mexico had to grapple with its complex, troubled relationship with its mixed Spanish and indigenous heritage. Even today, significant racial and class stratifications remain.

Following the Mexican-American War, what had been Mexico became the southwest United States as the result of the U.S. seizing a sizable portion of Mexico’s land. Mexican-American families endeavored to gain financial and political power as their land and rights were taken away from them by Anglos.⁷ In the following years, numerous Mexican

⁶ c.f. Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba’s *The Black Madonna in Latin America and Europe*

⁷ Fictional accounts detailing these conflicts are found in historical novels like *The Squatter and the Don* by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and *Caballero* by Jovita Gonzalez and Margaret Eimer

and Mexican-American people were forced to work as migrant farmers and other low-paying, back-breaking jobs in order to support themselves.

Frustration over these conditions and other forms of discrimination culminated in the 1960s with the Chicano movement, a political movement coinciding with the 1960s struggle for civil rights for minorities. The term 'Chicano' is a politicized term referring to Mexican-Americans. Mexican-American is a less politicized term referring to people of Mexican ancestry currently living in the U.S., many of whom descended from Mexican nationals who were living in Mexico until 1848.⁸ This movement included activism focused on schools, land rights, political rights, and labor activism. The activist César Chávez, to whom Viramontes dedicated *Under the Feet of Jesus*, started the group which became the United Farm Workers in 1962. They used nonviolent activism to advocate for better treatment and payment of migrant farm workers ("United Farm Workers"). Losing their native soil as a result of war differentiates Chicanos, and the literature they produce, from minorities and minority literature that is the result of immigration or slavery.

Though numerous Chicanas participated in the political movement of the 1960s, they often felt sidelined by male leaders, a phenomenon

⁸ My use of Chicano/a throughout this work mirrors its usage through much scholarship in the field: I use Chicano/a as a more politicized and politically self-aware term for Mexican-American. It is only when the term contradicts content that I utilize "Mexican-American" instead.

which was widespread in several civil rights movements.⁹ Many Chicanas felt silenced and excluded by the patriarchal nature of the Chicano movement, and they responded to this repression politically and artistically. Due to the long-standing tradition of *machismo*, which is the idea that men are stronger and better-equipped to work in the public sphere while women stay primarily inside the home to cook and clean for their husbands and children, the leaders of the Chicano movement, like “Corky” Gonzáles, Reies López Tijerina, and César Chávez, were primarily male. Chicanas worked to find their own unique voice as women within the movement. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga were two vital maverick voices at the forefront of this literary revolution. Another of these Chicanas, Helena María Viramontes, is a part of what Ellen McCracken described, in her comprehensive 1999 work, *New Latina Narrative*, as the post-Chicano movement flood of feminist Chicana voices into literature. Viramontes helped bring the concerns and beliefs of Chicanas into the spotlight where they could be better understood by Chicanos and a broader mainstream audience.

⁹ For example, when one thinks of the African-American civil rights movement, one probably calls to mind names like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Women like Diane Nash were able and willing to lead aspects of the movement as well, but it was usually men who were the figureheads. Dolores Huerta was a noteworthy exception as a leader within the Chicano movement.

Though McCracken is quick to point out that the Chicana authors who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s are not a monolithic group who can or should be “ghettoized,” she does note several similarities among the group. To begin with, Chicana authors like Sandra Cisneros and Helena María Viramontes were welcomed into late 20th century U.S. mainstream culture because, in the postmodern age, difference was more valued than at any previous time. McCracken draws a parallel between this ostensible appreciation of diversity and Edward Said’s observations about Orientalism: the minority becomes a valuable commodity because s/he presents a non-threatening amount of deviation from the white standard (McCracken 6). The New Chicana authors write to mostly English-speaking audiences, but they use “tropicalized” English; they code-switch by inserting Spanish words and phrases into a primarily English text in unusual and sometimes subversive ways, thereby writing back against the colonizer. The concept of “writing back” against an oppressor is a common one in postcolonial studies.¹⁰ Often, the colonized will use the language of the oppressor, along with his or her own tongue, in inventive ways in order to get across an important political or emotional point.

Adolescence as Liminal Space

¹⁰ c.f. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*

Adolescence itself is a borderland, a liminal space in which borders are experienced corporeally in the neither child nor adult female body. This liminal space of teenagerhood provides a range of possibilities for girls. In it, there is room for exploration, crossover, cultural critique, trying on, and discarding. Some characters experience hybridity both in their liminal position between childhood and adolescence and in uprooted upbringings. Other supernatural characters experience a liminal existence—one may or may not survive a transformation—thus, adolescence is posited as a life-or-death experience. Chicana characters experience ethnic hybridity along with their adolescent liminality. Due to their cultural hybridity, self-identifying within one or both cultures is an ongoing struggle. Certain Anglo YA texts with a focus on immigration or inter-species hybridity (vampire-human, for example) serve as bridge texts for Anglo readers to approach the concept of cultural hybridity, and crossover, apex moments that allow for relatability across a wide spectrum of readers. Religious and spiritual syncretism also presents an opening for intercultural crossover moments.

Theoretical Indebtedness

In this undertaking, I am indebted to numerous theorists for providing a theoretical framework within which I can bring together Chicana and Anglo YA texts. To begin with, I build on the work of scholars

like Gloria Anzaldúa who have shed light on Aztlán, which functions in this work as an important spiritual borderland for Chicana thought and creation. Additionally, Anzaldúa's work on borderlands and the New *Mestiza* is also integral to my own scholarship. Her model of cultural back-and-forths and of positive hybridity provides a paradigm for me to encounter and to expand upon similar themes. She not only put woman, *la Chicana*, back into the picture, but she also advocated for radical inclusiveness as a Chicana ideal. The theories on sacrifice of both René Girard and Luce Irigaray are vital for my work on masculine and feminine sacrifice in YA literature. Irigaray's theories about the divine feminine also provide a valuable theoretical lens upon which I inspect other approaches to the sacred within goddess spirituality in this study.

The history of the split between theology and thealogy, or goddess spirituality, is found in the history of the women's movement. In the 19th century, Christian feminists were concerned with placing women in the public religious sphere. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Women's Liberation movement focused on overturning patriarchal institutions. From the mid-1970s on, women realized that they could break away from the mainstream biblical feminist project without giving up spirituality and religion. This "new political stratagem and new 'religion'" was/is Goddess feminism or thealogy (Raphael 14, 15). Naomi Goldenberg coined the

term “thealogy” thirty years ago when referring to feminist discourse on *thea* (the Goddess) instead of *theo* (God) (Raphael 9). In Carol Christ’s “Rebirth of the Goddess,” Christ states that the word “thealogy” comes from the Greek “*thea*,” which means “Goddess,” and “*logos*,” which means “meaning” (Christ xiv). Therefore, thealogy is a reflection on the meaning of the Goddess. Charlotte Caron states that thealogy is “reflection on the divine in feminine and feminist terms” (Raphael 10). Thealogy, the latest manifestation of the Western Goddess movement, has been gaining popularity over the past thirty-five years (Raphael 75). However, this goddess theory lacks the interpretive power of Irigaray; it provides a broad smattering while Irigaray lends a razor-sharp focus.

Finally, my work is indebted to Roberta Trites’s application of Foucauldian power matrices to YA literature; Bachelard and other theorists of space for their groundwork in topoanalysis, and in particular Monika Kaup, for her study of the importance of space in Chicana literature and lives; Bordo, Helwig, and other feminist theorists for their work with the female body; and Ellen McCracken for providing foundational studies of contemporary Latina writers.

An Overview

In Chapter 2, “Home: Building One’s ‘Home’ and One’s Hybridity,” I argue that home in flux, as presented in recent Chicana and certain Anglo

young adult literature, is an integral trope that is parallel to girls' search for identity. Due to their cultural hybridity, self-identifying within one or both cultures is an ongoing struggle, and navigation of the patriarchal home is necessary. I examine *Estrella's Quinceañera* by Malín Alegría along with *Moon Over Manifest* by Clare Vanderpool and *Marked* by P.C. and Kristin Cast in order to explore the ways cultural hybridity impacts the concept of home for characters and thus, by extension, for juvenile readers. The concept of cultural hybridity and the idea of home are integral features to Chicano/a YA literature as it is almost impossible to read a Chicano/a YA novel and not to encounter these themes, which I see as mutually constructive of one another. Because of their prevalence in the literature, it is helpful to explore the effect of cultural hybridity on the characters' sense of home in order to understand how Chicana teenagers experience identity in their transitional world. I also investigate the importance of home and hybridity in Anglo texts with a focus on immigration and/or hybridity, which I argue are crossover texts that address issues of importance to both Chicana and Anglo readers. In this chapter, I first discuss the emergence of Anzaldúa's theory of hybridity in the context of the Chicano political movement. Next, I explore the ways hybridity functions in the texts. I argue that there is a limit to Anzaldúan hybridity as the exemplar for the YA reader and character because of its overly

idealistic portrayal of the New *Mestiza*, which doesn't work when applied to a transitional, teenaged coming-of-age that involves transitioning painfully and often amongst their borderlands identities in ways that do not reflect peaceful coexistence amongst hybrid influences. Finally, I examine 'home' as a trope for cultural hybridity by looking closely at the architectural structures in the texts.

In Chapter 3, "Hunger: Girls Bite Back, Wanting Both Food and Sex," I explore the connection between appetites for food and sex in female characters, and I argue that the literature conveys that "good girls" do not and should not have significant appetites for either. Also, good girls are supposed to maintain an acceptable level of sexual desirability without ever actually desiring or having sex themselves. One innovation to scholarship is my use of the folkloric image of the *vagina dentata* as a symbol to connect hunger for food and for sex as I examine the significance of the male fear of the devouring vagina to young adult literature. I argue that Chicana YA literature focuses more on girls feeding their families and ignoring their sexual appetites than on fulfillment.

In "Real Women Have Curves," ("RWHC") the Chicana text I use in this chapter, food and the characters' relationship to it is central. "RWHC" centers on a disenfranchised Ana railing against her mother's traditionalism, her family's lack of signifying power in U.S. dominant

cultural economy, and ubiquitous societal demands for all women to maintain the rail-thin perfect female body. Ana's hunger for knowledge and her hunger to express herself through written and spoken words are driving forces of the narrative. Food, hunger, and bodies are the concrete representations of the complex intertwining of body image, language, gender, ethnic, and socioeconomically motivated oppression, tradition, and culture in "Real Women Have Curves." Hunger for food, for sex, and for knowledge/self-expression motivate the women throughout the play, but most notably compel Ana along her journey to make peace with her own identity, traditions, and future. In *The Hunger Games*, the Anglo text in this chapter, I explore Katniss's hunger for food, for sex, and for justice. I explore socioeconomic and racial similarities and differences between the texts, and I identify the possibility of covert and overt resistance for adolescent girls' conscription into an adult agenda existing in the interstices of societal demands and the teenagers' own will and desire.

In Chapter 4, "Heart: Love Triangles and Sacrifice," I explore sacrifice as a prominent theme in young adult literature where female characters are often sacrificed for the good of male characters or for their patriarchal society. YA fiction like the subtle suburban dystopian 2006 novel, *Haters*, provides two possible subject positions for emulation by readers: the sacrificing maternal figure or the sacrificing, but desirable,

maiden within a love triangle. The problematic nature of the ever-sacrificing female is often unexplored within YA novels, so that vexing stereotypes are perpetuated unquestioningly. I argue that even though Paski at times writes back against the dominant narrative by enacting masculine sacrifice or by being masculine-identified in behavior, she is more closely identified with the feminine sacrifice of herself. In *The Hunger Games*, I explore a similar pattern: Katniss is identified with both masculine and feminine sacrifice, and she is a vertex on a love triangle.

I build on Girard and Irigaray's theories of masculine-oriented and feminine-oriented sacrifice, respectively, and apply them to love triangles and the lack of maternal sacrifice in the novels. Valdes-Rodriguez purposefully leaves the ever-sacrificing mother stereotype behind; it is a trope she does not accept as part of her more "modern" experience. The lack of maternal sacrifice on the part of Paski's mom is a major genre deviator for Chicano/a literature, as the prototypical Chicana mother is often long-suffering. Paski primarily sacrifices herself by denying her psychic gifts, but her shared psychic heritage with her grandmother, and her special relationship to nature, complicate this character and mark her Chicana heritage. Katniss's mother neglects to sacrifice herself for her daughter at a crucial point, but Katniss enacts a feminine sacrifice of herself by taking her sister's place in the Hunger Games. Katniss and

Peeta both sacrifice themselves for the beloved other, a feminine sacrifice, while Katniss's other love interest, Gale, remains identified with masculine sacrifice.

Building on the themes introduced throughout the project, in Chapter 5, "Holiness: The Sacred, the Feminine, and the Heretical," I highlight the ways that Catholicism and *la Virgen de Guadalupe* are often important in Chicana literature, primarily to the mothers portrayed in the novels. I investigate the significance of the divine feminine in these novels further, applying the relevant work of Luce Irigaray, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Penelope Ingram, among others. Then I inquire into the presence, or lack thereof, of religious themes in Anglo YA literature. I use the Crone archetype as a crossover moment between Chicana and Anglo texts, both of which draw upon a shared heritage of goddess and earth-based spiritual texts.

I begin by examining the reverberations of Rudolfo Anaya's pivotal and oft-banned 1972 novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, to current Chicana YA fiction. Its emphasis on the shamanism of the *curandera* and on a holistic framework serve as a template for interpreting more recent literature like Helena Maria Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus*, in which the protagonist's mother, like the mother in *Bless Me, Ultima*, clings to her faith in Catholicism to protect her and her children from their challenging

lives as Mexican-American immigrants. Anaya hearkens back to Aztec mythology with his leitmotif of the Golden Carp. I argue that Chicana YA literature is more likely to draw on empowering religious imagery that incorporates the divine feminine and earth-based heritage while Anglo YA literature, like Judy Blume's 1970 novel, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* is heretical by juxtaposing sexuality and spirituality. I trace the heretical genealogy of both Chicana and Anglo texts: *Bless Me, Ultima* as foundational for *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Haters* and *Are You There God?* as foundational for the *House of Night* series and *Moon Over Manifest*.

Home: Building One's 'Home' and One's Hybridity

For young adults, “home” is an inescapable, oft troubled, and ubiquitous concept. Whereas “home” is idealized in popular culture—Home is where the heart is; There’s no place like home—the actuality of home for many teenagers, both real and fictional, is often fraught with painful contradictions due to family discord, financial difficulties, and the angst of becoming an adult and preparing to leave the childhood home, among other problems. For young Chicanas, there are additional complicating factors. A prevalent theme in Chicana young adult literature is navigation of the patriarchal home. In exploring this theme, it is helpful to begin with *Living Chicana Theory*, wherein Carla Trujillo reminisces about her own repressive childhood growing up constantly under her father’s thumb. Trujillo, her sister, and her mother were at the beck and call of her father and brother, and this “house doctrine”¹¹ prevented her from discovering who she was until she was able to spend several years in an apartment of her own. Monika Kaup also identifies the importance of deconstructing the home for Chicana theorists and artists. Examining Cisneros’s *House on*

¹¹ “House doctrine” is the patriarchal notion, found in the traditional Latin American practice of *machismo*, that a woman’s place is in the home, cooking, cleaning, and serving the men of the household. This corresponds to the traditional roles of breadwinner husband and stay-at-home wife for Anglos in the U.S. I explore this concept in greater depth later in this chapter. Chicanas’ focus on undoing the oppression of patriarchy at home is a trope from the Chicano Movement of the 1970s.

Mango Street, she asserts that, unlike Chicanos' liberatory focus on the nation, Chicanas must begin with undoing the oppression of the home.

The urtext for examining the trope of home as seen in Chicana literature is Sandra Cisneros's 1984 classic, *The House on Mango Street*. This lyrical pastiche can be used as a jumping off point for discussing crossover moments between Chicana and Anglo fiction due to its widespread popularity across ethnic groups and its status as part of assigned high school curriculum.¹² Itself a borderlands text, *The House on Mango Street* is a hybrid of prose and poetry, and of YA and adult literature. According to Sonia Saldívar-Hull in *Feminism on the Border*, the text was initially published on the young adult reader list of Arté Público's catalog (82). Later, Random House republished the book as an adult novel, which opened it up to a broader readership. In "Bums in the Attic," an especially telling vignette in the novella, Esperanza, the young protagonist, grows tired of circling nice Anglo neighborhoods in the car with her family, perpetually "looking at what we can't have" (Cisneros 86). The dominant motif throughout the text is Esperanza's obsession with having a nice home of her own, a home like the rich (read: Anglo) kids have. In much Anglo literature, topoanalysis reveals the near ubiquity of

¹² Interestingly enough, Cisneros had her own, parallel "house trouble:" she painted her home in an historic San Antonio neighborhood purple. There was much publicity around her neighbors' dislike of Cisneros's choice of color for her home.

the stereotypical two-story, upper-middle class home, which is often a beacon of safety and a socially sanctioned marker of success. As Cisneros did, many Chicano/as seize upon that trope and reflect back to the white reader that they still don't have a home. Their home is in flux; they, like Esperanza, are still circling the block, still seeking safety and security.

In this chapter, I argue that home in flux, as it is presented in recent Chicana young adult literature, is an integral trope that I view as parallel to the girls' search for identity. Due to their cultural hybridity, self-identifying within one or both cultures is an ongoing struggle. Since cultural hybridity has become such a widespread concept for critics of race theory and identity, particularly for scholars of Chicano/a identity, it is important to examine the motifs of home and homelessness in Chicano/a young adult (YA) literature through the lens of cultural hybridity (Beltrán 595). The significance of Chicana YA literature and its meaning for young female readers remains undertheorized as scholars have tended to focus on Chicano YA literature and its importance for young male readers. Therefore, I will examine several YA texts by well-known Chicana and female Anglo authors: *Estrella's Quinceañera* by Malín Alegría, *Moon Over Manifest* by Clare Vanderpool, and *Marked*, the first novel in the bestselling *House of Night* series by P.C. Cast and her daughter, Kristin

Cast, in order to explore the ways cultural hybridity impacts the concept of home for characters and thus, by extension, for juvenile readers. In this chapter, I first discuss the emergence of Anzaldúa's theory of hybridity in the context of the Chicano political movement. Next, I explore the ways hybridity functions in the three YA texts, one Chicana and two Anglo. Finally, I examine 'home' as a trope for cultural hybridity by looking closely at the architectural structures and mentions of home in the texts.

It is clear to me that the concept of cultural hybridity and the idea of home are integral features to Chicano/a YA literature since it is almost impossible to read a Chicano/a YA novel and not to encounter these themes, which I see as mutually constructive of one another. Because of their prevalence in the literature, it is necessary to explore the effect of cultural hybridity on the characters' sense of home in order to understand how Chicana teenagers experience identity in their transitional world. By contrast, I find that home and hybridity are not typically such essential themes in Anglo YA literature and that, when they do appear, they often carry less significance.¹³ However, certain Anglo YA texts with a focus on immigration or inter-species hybridity serve as bridge texts for Anglo readers to approach the concept of cultural hybridity. These collision

¹³ I am referring to series such as *Sweet Valley High* and *Gossip Girls* and *Confessions of Georgia Nicolson*, which tend to focus on fashion and drama with friends or boyfriends. Noteworthy exceptions are dystopian and working class YA fiction.

moments wherein teenage characters in Anglo YA fiction struggle with home in flux allow for an experience of relatability: these are moments to share the instability of adolescence across cultures. Reminiscent of Margrit Shildrick's work on the monstrous and the other, these instances allow for "mutual becomings" that permit readers better to understand the other and themselves in a living, embodied manner (Shildrick 132). Though Chicano/a and Anglo readers encounter different kinds of flux, these apex moments offer a moment to come together in a shared experience of embodied hybridity. Home in flux can thus be viewed not only as a trope for cultural hybridity, but for the hybridity between childhood and adulthood that all teenagers experience, among other hybridities explored in this chapter.

Cultural Hybridity: Anzaldúa's Borderlands

The trope of home and homeland is integral to the genealogy of cultural hybridity in Chicano/a literature because of the progression from Chicano focus on land to Chicana emphasis on borderlands. The patriarchal homeland is presented as ideal in two formative Chicano texts: Corky Gonzales's "Yo Soy Joaquín (I am Joaquín)" and Alurista's *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (both written in the 1960s). Gloria Anzaldúa engages in a feminist reconfiguration of Gonzales's and Alurista's visions of homeland, evolving the motherland into the concept of the borderlands.

Scholars like Rafael Pérez-Torres approach Anzaldúa's work as "the step after nationalism and earlier, more essentialist notions of identity," making the point that Anzaldúa "resolves the problematic Chicano subjectivity produced by the cultural nationalists of the late 1960s and 1970s" (qtd. in Beltrán 602). And what is problematic about Chicano identity in Gonzales's and Alurista's works? In the introduction to the 1972 edition of "Yo Soy Joaquín," Corky Gonzales describes the poem as "a social statement, a conclusion of our *mestizaje*, a welding of the oppressor (Spaniard) and the oppressed (Indian)" where at the end, assimilation is betrayal (qtd. in Beltrán 598). In Joaquín, "mestizaje" is conceived as a form of subjectivity that involves what [Beltrán] calls a 'hierarchy of hybridity.' In the poem, Spanish heritage is acknowledged and recognized, but it is the Indian that is the source of pride and collective identity" (Beltrán 599). One stanza of the poem reads: "I toiled on my Earth and gave my Indian/ sweat and blood/ for the Spanish master who ruled with tyranny/ over man and/ beast and all that he could trample/ But THE GROUND WAS MINE" (emphasis original). A later line reads "I am Emiliano Zapata./ 'This land, this earth is OURS.'" Gonzales prizes Indian sweat and blood over the bloodline of the Spanish conqueror as he simultaneously lauds the ground, the land, the earth of his people. Physical toil on the homeland entitles the Chicano subject to ownership of

that land, and ownership of the patriarchal land is inextricably intertwined with Gonzales's conception of Chicano identity. It is problematic for Chicano activists continually to deny their Spanish heritage since the true Mexican *mestizaje* comes from the violent intersection of Spanish and indigenous cultures. Denial of the actuality of a violent inheritance seems theoretically brutal as well.

In *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, another seminal work from the Chicano movement in the 1960s, Alurista denies his people's European roots. The first line of the manifesto is:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also the brutal 'gringo' invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny.

Alurista does not even pause, like Gonzales, to mention his Spanish heritage in a derogatory sense; rather, he plunges into the Chicano's need to reclaim Aztlán, the mythical origin of the Aztec people correspondent to the southwest United States. His call to action relies on the Chicano's direct connection to his Indian ancestry, an understandable point of pride, and to his homeland of origin. Alurista's interpretation of the Chicano

condition is extremely rigid: Chicanos come from the land, from Aztlán only, and they have been thwarted in pursuing their birthright by gringos.

Gloria Anzaldúa transforms Gonzales's and Alurista's static 'homeland' to an ever-changing 'borderlands,' which she describes as "physically 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, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" rather than as exclusive to Chicano cultural heritage (Preface to *Borderlands*). According to scholars who have taken up her work, Anzaldúa's concept of home "as a discontinuous and unstable region" presents an important divergence from Gonzales's and Alurista's "vision of a homeland where one can live in a state of indigenous purity, free from alienation" (Beltrán 602). Anzaldúa does not envision separatism for her people as a panacea in the manner her predecessors did; instead, she invokes radical inclusion as the Chicano/a cultural ideal, which seems to be a less radical and a more humane approach than that of her forebears. Anzaldúa advocates a movement "that includes rather than excludes. . . where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs" (79). Her "theoretical framework is premised on borders—both the physical border of the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexico border and the psychological, sexual, linguistic, and spiritual borders that function in Anzaldúa's

existence as a lesbian, Chicana-Tejana, working-class academic” (Beltrán 596). She undercuts the Western tendency toward firm boundaries and calls instead for a “radical pluralism of Chicana identity” (Anzaldúa 79). The borderlands are the feminist response to a patriarchal tendency to privilege one part of one’s heritage over another and to prize land ownership above all else.

Anzaldúan hybridity becomes a utopian space wherein Western dualistic thinking is transcended. In the context of the post-Chicano movement, fear of losing Chicano/a identity into a blended identity was the response of many Chicano/as. The concern at the time was: What good is this for the movement? Anzaldúa, though, envisioned a time and space beyond the political movement of the 1960s and 70s; she attempted to recalibrate women in Chicano/a movement and into the future. Chicana young adult literature’s status as a marginalized, contradictory, hybrid art form can be understood with Anzaldúa’s framework in mind—hybridity is a positive, empowering status, for the YA book as an artifact, the YA character in the book, and for the YA reader herself. The borderlands model invites formal experimentation and an all-encompassing acceptance of cultural “back-and-forths” that previously were neither tolerated nor even conceived of. However, there is a limit to Anzaldúan hybridity as the exemplar for the YA reader and character. Although it is

an appealing, all-encompassing ideal, I take issue with the overly idealistic portrayal of the New *Mestiza* as applied to a transitional, teenaged coming-of-age with its accompanying pain and confusion. I argue that the New *Mestiza* works best as a model for adults as most teenagers will have to transition painfully and often amongst their borderlands identities in ways that do not reflect peaceful coexistence amongst hybrid influences.

The hybrid subject became salient in the 1980s because postcolonial, postmodern, and feminist studies were searching for different approaches to theorizing identity and experience at that time; that search was concurrent with Anzaldúa's publication of *Borderlands* (Beltrán 596). Anzaldúa's concept of the borderlands and cultural hybridity is situated within the epistemology of postmodernism, which has had a significant impact on recent theories of the hybrid subject since its "subjectivity is problematized so that every subject position is understood as embedded in networks of power and history" (Beltrán 595). Cultural hybridity itself is a metaphorical extension of the scientific idea of a hybrid, which, though abstract in meaning today, "has rather concrete origins. In Latin the *hibrida* was the offspring of a (female) domestic sow and a (male) wild boarThe cultural hybrid is a metaphorical broadening of this biological definition" (Stross 254). Along with Anzaldúa, Homi K. Bhabha, a prominent postcolonial theorist, is often associated with the term 'cultural

hybridity.’ He theorizes that the power structure between colonizer and colonized is disrupted due to the cultural hybridity of the colonized who, in short, exhibit “native refusal to satisfy the colonizers’ narrative demand” (Bhabha 141). Bhabha states:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal...Hybridity is the reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects...It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (159-60)

Bhabha and Anzaldúa both theorize hybridity as revolutionary and subversive to the colonizer, and I agree. However, I find that hybridity, as applied to female teenaged bodies, often seems more painful and damaging rather than deliberately subversive and/or liberating due to the destabilizing challenges of adolescence.¹⁴

Since Chicanos/as occupy both positions of colonizer and colonized, postcolonial theory often applies to them. For example, Anzaldúa points out that “The infusion of values of the white culture, coupled with the exploitation by that culture, is changing the Mexican way of life” (10). She discusses Mexico’s economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s in which the *peso* was devalued to the extent that throngs of

¹⁴ Bhabha, in discussing hybridity as a disavowal, also addresses the pain of hybridity.

Mexicans crossed into the United States to try to support themselves and their families. Anzaldúa and Bhabha both posit that the relationship between colonizer and colonized is vexed because of the dislocation of the colonizer's power due to the colonized's hybridity; however, she focuses more on hybridity as "a utopian space wherein Western dualistic thinking is transcended" and the hybrid subject as ultimately in a position of overt power (Sánchez 355). The approaches of postcolonialism and postmodernism grapple with this issue: "How do we legitimate and include marginalized subjects and their claims without essentializing them?" (Beltrán 596). This question can be explored through the protagonists of Chicana YA fiction since their characters/subjectivity are continually in flux in their transitioning bodies and positionalities.

Anzaldúa's theory of hybridity and the borderlands focuses "on *mestizaje* and hybridity [and] leads to a woman-centered narrative and feminine mythology;" furthermore, "*mestizaje* may become a representational space and trope for all kinds of hybridity" (Sánchez 355). The New *Mestiza* is an empowered woman who gains her power from engendering the positive aspects of every culture that influences her. In Anzaldúa's own words, the New *Mestiza* develops "a tolerance for ambiguity. . . She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode... Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the

ambivalence into something else” (79). The New *Mestiza* is able to use the stereotypes and the ambivalence of those who criticize and oppress her to make her stronger because she acts for herself with her own agency rather than reacting against negative energy imposed upon her. This *mestiza* realizes that the very cultures she encompasses are, ultimately, constructed categories that are constantly hybridizing themselves with other cultures. Nonetheless, “at any given moment social and cultural categories are naturalized as givens of the social order, and it is these naturalized categories that form the basis for aesthetic, intentional hybrids, often transgressive and oppositional”¹⁵ (Werbner 137). Anzaldúa definitely views the New *Mestiza* as transgressive and sometimes oppositional, but I maintain that she also posits, like other scholars, the idea that “cultures may be grasped as porous, constantly changing and borrowing” in opposition to the discredited idea that cultural hybridity “assumes the prior existence of whole cultures,” though Anzaldúa does at times tend to portray Anglo American culture as somewhat static (Werbner 134).

Anzaldúa’s conception of the *mestiza*, the cultural hybrid, is a helpful lens through which to begin viewing Chicano/a young adult literature, although it is necessary to build upon Anzaldúa’s overly

¹⁵ YA authors like Gene Luen Yang and Sherman Alexie have found a niche in writing about transgressive hybridity.

idealistic vision. Race theorist Rafael Pérez-Torres claims: “A brief glance at some examples of Chicano cultural production reveals a reliance upon creolization and border crossing as both technique and metaphor for aesthetic expression... This type of dynamism makes *mestizaje* durable as both cultural strategy and ethnic identification” (155). Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* is a dynamic model that represents the best of that which is possible within a cultural hybrid; this model is, indeed, an apt metaphor for aesthetic idylls in Chicano/a young adult literature. As useful as the Anzaldúan model is, though, I find it has its limits. As many empowering possibilities as are presented by *mestizaje*, I argue equal inclusion of its challenges is a necessary component of a realistic paradigm. I argue that a more realistic paradigm discusses the painful aspects of hybridity alongside its empowering components. A more realistic paradigm is just that: less idealistic. I don’t find a fully self-actualized New *Mestiza* to be a realistic paragon for teenage readers and characters unless her self-actualization lauds the pain of hybridity alongside its triumph.

Hybridity in the Texts

In *Estrella’s Quinceañera*, the popular, award-winning 2006 novel by Malín Alegría, the protagonist, Estrella Alvarez, is a teenage Mexican-American who is embarrassed of the *barrio* she lives in once she begins attending an Anglo private school. The novel focuses on tensions

surrounding Estrella's upcoming *quinceañera*, over which Estrella clashes primarily with her mother: Estrella's mother has long dreamt of providing her daughter with the elaborate coming-of-age celebration which she and Estrella's aunt had been denied due to financial constraints, while Estrella longs to avoid the fuss and the ethnic marking that would distinguish her from her peers at the majority Anglo private school she attends far from her *barrio*. Estrella is in transition in this novel: between childhood and adulthood, and between her childhood friends from her Chicano/a neighborhood and her new rich Anglo friends from school. Estrella is dragged against her will throughout the beginning preparations for the party, and during her first obligatory meeting with her DJ, Grand Master D, the DJ shows great insight into Estrella's situation. He says, "Now, people, I've been doing *quinceañeras* for a long time. . . Each one has its own unique style and flavor. Now for you, Estrella my dear...I see lots of lasers and smoke, drums and high-energy beats with a traditional flair. It'll be a clash of cultures, a true *mestizaje*. I'll call it a *waltzteca*. Yes, yes, that's it!" (77, 78). The DJ seems to sense the hybrid nature of Estrella's existence, although he describes her transition in more idealistic, Anzaldúan terms than the angsty, ashamed clash of cultures the teenager experiences at this point in the novel. As Estrella struggles with her liminal existence as girl/woman and Mexican/American, the DJ glosses over the melding of the

European waltz with Aztec dance, envisioning the union of traditional and contemporary with more fluidity than Estrella can see or experience.

Anzaldúa argues that plural ethnic identities can be encapsulated happily within one borderlands identity; therefore the potential borderland territory created by the novel juxtaposition of a European waltz and an indigenous dance creates the potentiality of *mestizaje* in a Chicana's life. But, at this point, Estrella cannot manage to reconcile her staid private school life with her rich white friends, Sheila and Christie, and her rollicking *barrio* home life with her big family, busy streets full of *chulos*, and concomitant chaos.

Estrella avoids telling her privileged classmates, Sheila and Christie, about her upcoming *quince* because of embarrassment about the ritual and, by extension, internalized shame about her culture. When she finally fills her friends in, one of them asks her why she doesn't want the party. Estrella, known as Star in her Anglo world, responds: "Well, my mom's out of control. She's making me wear this god-awful dress with a crown. It's really tacky" (137). Estrella rolls her eyes as her friends laugh and joke about the inanity of wearing a crown and having mariachis at one's birthday party. When Sheila reminds her, "This is your birthday," Estrella "nod[s] feeling relieved that [she'd] finally told [her] friends the truth. But [she] also felt strangely annoyed. Sure, [she] was allowed to think [her] *quince* was dumb, but for some reason, it really bothered [her]"

that they were agreeing” (137). For perhaps the first time of which she is aware, Estrella begins to feel cognitive dissonance with her two realms of existence. She has finally risked sharing part of her culture with her white friends, and she is not pleased with the results. It is painful to her to have a longstanding folkloric tradition mocked by outsiders, even though she feels comfortable criticizing the ritual from her position as an insider.

The nearly imperceptible rupture that the preceding conversation creates in Estrella’s relationship with her Anglo friends is the catalyst for her eventual reclamation of cultural pride and her ability to incorporate both worlds into her life. Following the typical pattern established in a *bildungsroman*, this novel leads to the predictable enfranchisement of the protagonist into the adult world.¹⁶ Since Estrella’s *quinceañera* is meant to do just that, perhaps her initial rebellion, though futile, has both to do with her resistance to her culture and to the adult world in general. As she celebrates her fifteenth birthday at a low-key *quince* befitting her personality, with Sheila and Christie in attendance along with Estrella’s friends and family from the *barrio*, she muses:

I used to think my happiness depended on my never disagreeing with anyone. But what I’ve come to realize is that you have to be yourself, because you can never be anyone else. If people truly care about you, they will accept all the different pieces and parts of

¹⁶ In *Disturbing the Universe*, Rebecca Trites argues that this is the typical pattern of a *bildungsroman*. However, in many female *bildungsromane*, like Roth’s *Allegiant* or Anderson’s *Speak*, the protagonist ends up insane, abused, raped, and/or dead.

you and love you for exactly who you are. I want us all to fit in, together, as one big family. (253)

The dénouement strikes me as a young adult-friendly version of Anzaldúa's vision of the pluralistic Chicana identity as well as a subset of a more generic YA 'life lesson' to 'be yourself.' Although this overly idealistic, saccharine ending wherein the characters from all cultures and families surround the protagonist with unfettered love and acceptance is somewhat typical, appearing in the conclusion of *Haters*, another Chicana YA novel studied in Chapter 4, I find it to be yet another iteration of the "happily ever after" fairy tale ending which is largely unattainable in actual life. And then, in the closing words of novel, when Estrella is dancing with Speedy, the boy from the barrio who opened her eyes to her cultural inheritance so that she no longer hides from the beauty of her Chicana borderlands heritage, she says: "*Este día no podía ser más perfecto*. This day couldn't be more perfect" (254). She makes this statement first in Spanish and then in English to emphasize the achievement of balance and parallelism with both worlds. This sentence merits mention since, up until this point of the novel, the Spanish language has functioned in two primary ways: with a different significant Spanish slang word defined with several personal subdefinitions and interpretations as an epigraph to each chapter, and as tropicalized 'authenticity' as various characters speak one

or two words of Spanish slang intermingled with their predominantly English usage. However, at the end, the Spanish language is granted predominance by being formulated in a complete sentence and by being stated before its English equivalent. This final structure seems deliberate in its attempt to restore balance between two cultures and to validate the primacy of the Spanish language and Estrella's appreciation of her Mexican-American roots.

Another character in transition dealing with shame regarding her origin is Abilene Tucker, the 12 year-old protagonist of Clare Vanderpool's Newbery Award-Winning 2010 novel, *Moon Over Manifest*. Abilene has been raised on the road in the 1920s and 30s, and she does not know her roots. The novel is structured as a mystery with Abilene attempting to uncover who her laconic father, Gideon, really was in his youth and what his role was in the town in which she finds herself shortly after her twelfth birthday. Abilene worries that her father will not return for her after he sends her to Manifest, Kansas to live with his preacher/moonshiner acquaintance, Shady, while her father works on the railroad for the summer. The circumstances of Abilene's relocation bear examination because they are illustrative of a hybridity many young readers can relate to since many worry about coming of age, moving to new towns, and potential or actual abandonment by a parent. A medical scare, along with

Abilene's position as a pre-teen, create a crisis for her father. While illegally riding on a railroad car, as she and her father often do, Abilene dangles her legs outside the car and is cut by a passing tree branch:

The infection and the fever had lasted three days. . . When I finally came out of it, he looked at me like I was a different person from the little girl he'd known before. He kept saying I was growing up. I was becoming a young lady and other nonsense. I told him I hadn't seen the branch coming and it was just a scratch, but I guess he figured it would be easier traveling without me along to get into trouble. (153)

I interpret this passage as showcasing Gideon's fear and uncertainty around his daughter's blossoming womanhood and his perceived ineptitude in raising her on the road and without roots. The blood on her leg is a visible reminder of the invisible menstrual blood that Gideon must know will soon be a part of his daughter's experience. Fearing that his young daughter could die, and that he could be to blame due to their itinerant lifestyle, is a crisis moment that compels Gideon to make a drastic choice. When he looks closely at his daughter during her several days of illness, it is as though Gideon's eyes are opened for the first time to the fact that she is becoming a young woman. Somehow, for him, ceaselessly traveling the country with one's small child in tow is acceptable, but a young woman, in his estimation, requires a different lifestyle. He seems surprised that his daughter is not invincible—she is felled by a painful scratch that marks her transition to adulthood— as well

as that she will not be a child forever. Abilene interprets all of these musings on the part of her father as rejection of herself and her changing body as troublesome.

Although Abilene is privileged as an Anglo in a time in which discrimination against people of color is still institutionally ubiquitous, she experiences hybridity both in her liminal position between childhood and adolescence and in her amalgamated, rootless upbringing. I do not wish to oversimplify hybridity by equating racial hybridity with other hybridities. Abilene cannot be read as having the same experience as Estrella; Estrella's positionality as a Chicana marks her in a way that Abilene is not marked. However, Estrella and Abilene both experience coming of age as being marked in hybrid bodies transitioning between childhood and womanhood. Estrella's public ritual *quinceañera* marks her and Abilene's cut leg and changing body mark her. They also both struggle with their painful origin stories which, in both cases, involve being raised in working-class environments. Abilene says of herself, "I was all middle. I'd always been between the last place and the next" (246). She feels the palpability of her "placelessness." Importantly, the place where Abilene eventually discovers her heritage, Manifest, Kansas,¹⁷ is an immigrant destination; numerous distinct ethnic groups traveled there to work in the coal mine.

¹⁷ Clare Vanderpool describes Manifest, Kansas as "both fact and fiction" since it is based largely on the town of Frontenac, Kansas, where her grandparents are from (343).

Abilene remarks, when learning about a common struggle that the immigrant community joins together to fight, that the citizens of Manifest “shared the same blood. Immigrant blood” (190). Later, when the hodgepodge group prepares to embark on its quest to retain control over their land, they pray together; “these citizens of the world, and they held their breath as the many and varied ingredients that had been simmered and stewed, distilled and chilled, were combined to make something new. Something greater than the sum of its parts” (224). Even though the protagonist is not part of an ethnic minority group, the novel’s focus on and positive portrayal of immigrant communities introduces a sensitivity to race and ethnicity that is often missing in Anglo YA literature. I view these overlaps as opportunities for the young adult reader to investigate hybridity in a constructive, cross-cultural manner.

A second Anglo text that investigates issues of shame, race, and identity is *Marked*, the opening novel of the 11-novel (at present, although 12 novels are planned) *House of Night* series. Although the primary author, P.C. Cast,¹⁸ is Anglo, she creates a 16 year-old protagonist who is, at the beginning, a hybrid of Anglo and Cherokee Indian, and then later in

¹⁸ Although her daughter, Kristin, is listed as co-author, P.C. Cast has stated that she writes the novels, and her daughter, Kristin, edits them for authenticity of the teen voice (Blasingame 85).

the novel also a human/vampyre¹⁹ hybrid called a fledgling. *Marked* tells the story of the spiritually gifted Zoey's marking as a fledgling and her first year battling forces of evil at the House of Night, a finishing school for vampyres. Cast overlays Zoey's Native American marginality with another misunderstood Other: the author's rendering of a goddess-centered, matriarchal vampyre community which Zoey joins with much aplomb. Zoey's grandmother, Sylvia Redbird, is Cherokee, and the teenager becomes more identified with her Cherokee heritage as her Change to being a vampyre occurs. She notices that her emerging Mark, a facial tattoo, emphasizes her Native American features:

It made everything that was ethnic about [her] features stand out: the darkness of [her] eyes, [her] high Cherokee cheekbones, [her] proud, straight nose, and even the olive color of [her] skin that was like [her] grandma's. The sapphire Mark of the Goddess seemed to have flipped a switch and spotlighted those features; it had freed the Cherokee girl within [her] and allowed her to shine. (101)

Zoey's Native American blood and her emerging vampyre status both share an affinity for an earth-based, spiritual, goddess-oriented epistemology, and the author highlights this affinity by juxtaposing the two and by having them form an overtly synergistic syncretism. This sensitivity, both toward the Native American Other, and the vampyre/goddess-centered Other, positions this text as another crossover

¹⁹ Cast uses this spelling of vampire throughout her novels

Anglo text offering moments of connection for readers of varying hybrid identities. Cast also includes an interesting hybridity and racial crossover moment in the best friend/roommate pair, Erin and Shaunee, whom everyone refers to as “the Twins.” Calling one another “Twin” as well, Erin and Shaunee are soul twins rather than actual twins. Erin is a blond Anglo from Oklahoma while Shaunee is a New Englander of Jamaican descent. Nonetheless, the two finish one another’s sentences and are constantly around one another.

The intersectionality of Zoey’s marked hybrid status as a teenage girl, a Native American, and a vampyre (with distinctive facial and body tattoos, which are painful when the goddess bestows them on the vampyres—part of the vampire mythos Cast creates), two of which are obviously realistic marginalized depictions while one is a fantasy, creates an interesting space within which to explore hybridity. The inclusion of an ethnic minority to correlate to the interspecies hybridity grounds the author’s depiction of her protagonist in real-world ethnic sensibilities. At the beginning of *Marked*, Zoey is depicted as a fairly conventional Anglo. She’s a smart high school student with a gossipy best friend and a football star boyfriend who drinks too much alcohol.

As soon as Zoey is marked as a vampyre fledgling, she begins a frightening, dangerous, and painful journey that is similar to the painful

moments of being marked and subsequent difficult journeys experienced by Estrella and Abilene. Once a fledgling is marked, s/he must move into a House of Night immediately in order to be strengthened by the presence of adult vampyres or her/his body will sicken and then die. Thereafter, during any of the several years of vampyre finishing school, the fledgling's body could unexpectedly reject the Change at any moment, leading to her/his bloody, painful death. Being a vampyre fledgling is a liminal existence—one may or may not survive to become an adult vampyre—thus, adolescence is posited as a life-or-death experience. Zoey begins being racked by coughing fits shortly after being marked, and she is fearful and uncomfortable as she packs her belongings and attempts to get to the House of Night. However, as her parents impede her leaving, she finds refuge at her Cherokee grandmother's home, the lavender farm, where she has her first of many visions of a protective goddess. Zoey stumbles up into the bluffs searching for her grandmother: coughing, sore, sick to her stomach, and dizzy. What she knows is that she "need[s] to find Grandma Redbird" since her grandma hasn't "lost touch with her Cherokee heritage and the tribal knowledge of the ancestral Wise Women she carrie[s] in her blood" (33). As she climbs, Zoey has fond memories of picnicking with her grandmother on this land and of learning Cherokee traditions and language from her. Her pleasant memories contrast starkly

with the excruciating pain she feels after being marked. In her weakened condition, Zoey begins hearing drums and chanting as she notices Cherokee spirits surrounding her. She runs, trips near the edge of the bluff, and falls into a vision: she leaves her body and follows her grandmother's voice, which tells her to throw her spirit into a crevasse. Zoey then encounters the beautiful goddess, Nyx, who speaks Cherokee to her and details Zoey's special hybrid status, explaining that Zoey is "a unique mixture of the Old Ways and the New World—of ancient tribal blood and the heartbeat of outsiders" (39). For this reason, the goddess has chosen Zoey to be her "eyes and ears in the world today" as a battle between good and evil brews (40). Zoey feels her selection as special to the goddess in the form of pain: her Mark burns on her forehead, and of confusion. She is on the verge of tears as she explains to the Goddess that she just wants to be well and to find a place to fit in rather than finding her destiny (40). This is the beginning of Zoey's series-long journey of special gifts, inner conflict, great responsibility, and inordinate pain. Zoey's grandmother identifies with her granddaughter's vision; it falls within her Native American system of belief. Sylvia Redbird supports Zoey's transition to vampyre while Zoey's mother and stepfather reject it; Sylvia is the one who takes the fledgling vampyre to the House of Night so Zoey doesn't grow ill. Upon arrival, the new fledgling makes her identification

with her grandmother official by choosing the name Zoey Redbird to go by from that point forward instead of Zoey Montgomery, which has been her name until that point (47). The way her grandmother smells of lavender, calls Zoey "*u-we-tsi-a-ge-ya*," the Cherokee word for daughter, and supports her granddaughter's visions, instincts, and change to being a vampyre makes Sylvia a vital support figure for Zoey, and her peaceful lavender farm, Zoey's home.

What is Home?

In beginning an examination of the trope of home, I find it important to commence with the understanding, accepted by most scholars of geography and summed up by Linda McDowell, that "spatial patterns are the outcome of social processes" (29). Scholars of architectural theory and cultural geography note, "house forms, the structures of buildings, settlement patterns, and city plans are manifestations of cultural, social, and national character" (Kaup 361). The forms of houses, and, more often, apartments, in Chicano/a young adult literature are representations of the unique Mexican-American culture in which the young people live as well as a projection of the characters' feelings about their culture and their families. Laura Gutierrez asserts:

The notion of home (or homeland) is among the most important preoccupations for diasporic communities residing permanently in the United States. In the different discursive practices of racialized

and minoritized subjects in the United States, the nation of origin, however indirectly, is always present in their different creative expression. (65)

Home is a trope, an obsession, and an inescapable quandary within Chicano/a YA literature; as such, I examine the trope of home in Chicana YA literature in a more in-depth fashion than I do Anglo YA literature, although I emphasize the complex borderlands identities in certain Anglo YA literature as providing crossover moments between Anglo and Chicana literature. Comparative literature scholar Monika Kaup explains the relevance of architecture and the idea of home to Chicano/a literature: “Mexican American cultural discourse—in particular, Chicano literature—has used architectural forms to express a Mexican American subjectivity as it was constituted in the cultural border zone between Mexican, indigenous, and American influences” (363). Kaup analyzes the “built environment” of Cisneros’s *House on Mango Street* and Rodriguez’s *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father*, making the point that these authors, due to their feminism and homosexuality, respectively, hold “an enhanced sense of the architecture of ethnicity, its artifice” which they illustrate in their novels by suggesting “that moves from original to new homes are essential for the formation of Chicana feminist and Chicano gay identities” (366). Kaup points out that Rodriguez views his homosexuality, just as Cisneros views her feminism, as a migration of

sorts from the home of origin into a new or substitute home (384). Their positions as outsiders to 'traditional Chicano culture' give Rodriguez and Cisneros unique perspectives on the constructed nature of identity as well as distinctive abilities to build new identities that function better for their authentic selves. Migration from one home to another and from one homeland to another is an integral theme in Chicano/a YA literature that is expressed in the physical descriptions of characters' various homes.

The forms of houses, both in literature and in life, are indicative of socioeconomic background, cultural identity, and myriad other tangible and intangible characteristics of their inhabitants. Alicia Gaspar de Alba notably reconceived the notion, proposed in Nachbar and Lause's *The Popular Culture*, that a middle-class Anglo bungalow is an apt metaphor for U.S. popular culture, with each discrete room representative of a different aspect of pop cultural artifacts (the basement is the bedrock—beliefs and values upon which the house is constructed, the event floor has one room for arts and another for rituals). Gaspar de Alba proposes a new model for Chicano/a pop culture: a *solar*,²⁰ "with its enclosed open space upon which all of the rooms look out—signified traditional Chicano/a values of *familia*, community, and homeland across class lines, expressed

²⁰ The *solar* is a metaphor; most Chicanos don't live in *solars* in the U.S. due to housing and economic constraints, although there is a rich tradition of this type of housing in Mexico.

and embodied in three-dimensional form in the various rooms of the house” (VB xxi). Gaspar de Alba argues for unity: the “common space—represented by the patio in the *solar*—is our identity because it is the one place in which all of us are the same” regardless of “what we call ourselves and where our roots are planted” (CA 213). It is clear that Chicana pop culture, like the homes of many Chicanos/as, maintains fundamental differences from Anglo pop culture and architecture. Chicano/a homes are often noted for being painted bright colors, whereas Anglo homes are often painted muted colors. Chicano/a homes often showcase an altar to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* in their front yard while Anglo homes usually avoid overt displays of religion on the outside of the home. Chicano/a homes might be smaller and filled with more people—a ubiquitous community—while Anglo homes might be more associated with gated communities: isolation and demarcation. As Bachelard noted, “It [i]s reasonable to say we ‘read a house,’ or ‘read a room,’ since both room and house are psychological diagrams that guide writers and poets in their analysis of intimacy” (38). Hence, the reader conducts topoanalysis, “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives,” in order to discern key components of the Chicano/a existence (Bachelard 8).

In *Estrella’s Quinceañera*, Malín Alegría includes a detailed description of each main character’s house; for the author, it is not

possible to understand people without knowing what space they inhabit. This novel is similar to most other Chicana/o novels in this respect; as Mary Pat Brady points out, “Given the prevalence of the spatial in Chicana literature—its thematic privileging, as it were— attention to the spatial broadens understanding of this literature by indicating its layers of aesthetic complexity and theoretical insight” (12). Space is thematically predominant in Chicana/o literature since it is an integral component of character development. Space has agency and co-creative powers because it is “not a transparent or irrelevant backdrop for history; the production of space is part of the production of history” (Brady 112). In *Estrella’s Quinceañera*, the author devotes two thirds more text to describing the homes and surroundings of Anglo characters than those of their Chicano counterparts, which is interesting in light of the fact that there are only two Anglo main characters while there are roughly a dozen noteworthy Chicano/a characters. The space associated with the Anglo characters is grand and opulent; Alegría waxes poetic about the “templelike entrance” to Christie’s majestic three-story house in the historic Rose Garden district and about Sheila’s two-story house, which is “hidden behind a cluster of willow trees and beautifully landscaped bushes” (83, 13). Paragraphs are devoted to descriptions of gardens, furniture, and decorative items. In stark contrast to Sheila and Christie, the

Chicana/o characters call the noisy, dilapidated East Side barrio of San Jose home. Whereas every architectural detail affiliated with an Anglo character is elegant and desirable, almost every description of a Chicano home space represents brokenness and poverty. Estrella notices that, in her *barrio*, “the cracked sidewalks with shards of broken glass contrasted sharply with the pristine, silent streets of Willow Glen [where her friends reside]” (26). Alegría dedicates pages to details of apartments and small houses on the East Side “painted in gaudy carnival colors” and surrounded by weedy front lawns, streets “lined with broken-down cars,” crowded rooms, graffitied buildings, and general disrepair (29, 28). Estrella draws a clear demarcation between “home me”, who “wore her favorite fleece sweats (with the hole just slightly below the crotch), a white tee, and her old dirty sneakers” and “school me”, who “wore makeup, styled hair, and had a cool disposition” (106). Estrella’s home, like her home self, is comfortable and rundown, whereas her Anglo private school, like her friends’ impeccable homes, is attractive on the outside but lacking, in her perception, vibrancy and authenticity. A parallel exists here with *Haters*, another Chicana novel examined in Chapter 4, wherein the Anglo characters live in opulent Southern California mansions while the Chicana protagonist resides in an apartment. It is vital to realize that, as Monika Kaup ascertains, the geopolitical locations of Chicana texts are “not a

globalized and spatially vague postmodernism, but one lodged on the margin of two nations, and on the seams between the first and third worlds” (Kaup 37). In other words, the economic and political disparities between a home in the *barrio* and a home in the rich part of town are concrete encapsulations of social injustice that is perpetrated daily. Alegría addresses these social injustices in the monologues of Estrella’s love interest, Speedy, who is politically active and disenchanted about unequal allocation of resources between the Anglo and Chicano/a parts of town.

Houses are especially challenging sites for Chicanas. Nationalistic focus on the homeland over the home, as Monika Kaup observes, obscures the constructed nature of culture identity while “houses call attention to matters of design, modification, artifice, construction, (wo)man-made changes in the environment” (198). Topoanalysis of Chicana/o homes must consider the socially constructed nature of identity and cultural hybridity. Kaup insists that feminism, as differentiated from nationalism discussed previously in this chapter, must not forget the house. Whereas “nationalism is about home’s connotations[,] feminism is about the home’s denotations—domesticity, *familia*, the sphere of the home, are the stages where the feminist project originates” (Kaup 198). Home is a vexed concept for Chicanas due, at least in part, to what Carla

Trujillo terms “the house doctrine,” which is the *machista* tradition that a woman’s role is to cook, serve, and clean after the men in the household every day while the man’s role is to support the family by working outside the home.²¹ Most Chicana YA novels, including *Estrella’s Quinceañera*, reflect the reality of Mexican-American mothers, and sometimes daughters, spending much of their time in the kitchen while Mexican-American fathers watch TV in the living room or tinker with cars in the yard. Estrella tells the reader, “our family life revolved around her [Mom’s] kitchen” whereas “the backyard was Dad’s domain” (66, 62). In this sense, home is embodied: “Whether or not embodiment is explicitly recognized—whether or not a disembodied, allegedly objective perspective is claimed—the spatial and social situatedness which comes from necessary corporeality is inescapable” (Duncan 135). Women’s place within their homes depends on their place as embodied women within their culture.

Whether or not Mexican-American characters have security, a sense of being heimlich,²² in their physical space is open to interpretation. If they are always caught between at least two physical and emotional

²¹ In *Living Chicana Theory*, Trujillo discusses this phenomenon in depth. Like many Chicanas, Trujillo felt like a victim to the house doctrine throughout her childhood, and she couldn’t wait to escape the prison of the home. Even now, she finds herself serving her husband and brothers when she visits, though now she views her actions as done out of respect to her mother.

²² c.f. Sigmund Freud’s article, “The Uncanny,” for his theory of heimlich (canny, homelike) and unheimlich (uncanny)

homes, is it possible for Mexican-American youth to feel at home anywhere? Chicano/as are no longer able to call Mexico, the “authentic culture that all Chicanas/os inherit. . . the mythical homeland” home, nor are they able to participate fully in U.S. culture and to call the U.S. home since they are “alienize[d] from within; Chicanas/os are excluded (as they are made to be foreigners) and thus prohibited from participating collectively in the United States sociohistorical process” (Gutierrez 64). Gaspar de Alba sums up the problem thus: “Chicano identity is, ultimately, a border identity; neither side wants you and you can’t go home” (VB 200). Estrella’s mother tells her, “Just because we don’t live in Mexico doesn’t mean we’re not Mexican” (Alegría 10). The problem is that “neither place can adequately represent home any more, in the full symbolic sense of rootedness and belonging. For both places have been deprived of the anchoring quality of autonomous homes by the intervention of the outside economic and social forces of late capitalism” (Kaup 180-1). Estrella receives mixed messages about whether Mexico, the U.S., or the borderlands are her home. Her mother wants her to be present more around the house as well as to participate in cultural traditions like her *quinceañera*, her boyfriend wants her to acknowledge the social injustice of the Chicano/a plight, and her Anglo friends want her to shop, to visit

high-end restaurants, and to have frequent sleepovers with them to participate in their upper class Anglo worlds.

Racial components, along with the representation of the teenage girl's body as a fraught borderland between girlhood and womanhood, are present in both *Moon Over Manifest* and the *House of Night* series. I argue that the inclusion of well-developed minority characters in these Anglo narratives, from representatives of several different oppressed immigrant populations in the former to a mystical, earth-connected grandmother/granddaughter dyad in the latter, highlights a sensitivity about the formation of a complex borderlands identity similar to what is found in *Estrella's Quinceañera*. As such, the trope of home is highlighted in both texts as well, although to a lesser extent than in the former text since home and homeland are not as important as tropes in Anglo fiction as they are in Chicano/a fiction. Nonetheless, topoanalysis can be utilized to investigate messages about racial identity in Anglo texts. The corporeality of the teenage girl protagonists in all three novels runs as a parallel trope: transitional, difficult, marked, and judged by outsiders.

In *Moon Over Manifest*, Abilene, whose very name connotes a place, albeit a place, regarding either the town in Texas or in Kansas, with which she tellingly has no connection, spends the entirety of the novel searching for her home. Her only home thus far in her life has been “tracks

and trains” as she has wandered around the United States with her nomadic father(175). Abilene’s father, Gideon, whose name calls to mind the Biblical story of a judge and warrior who, like the character in the novel, undergoes a change of name,²³ has instilled a strong dose of wariness in his progeny. As Abilene prepares to jump off the train her father has sent her on before the train has reached the Manifest depot, she reflects, “But as anyone worth his salt knows, it’s best to get a look at a place before it gets a look at you” (3). Abilene is suspicious about the town she’s going to and her father’s motivations for sending her there. One of the first landmarks she notices is a paint-chipped, bullet-riddled sign that reads: “Manifest: A town with a past” (4). The significance of this sign is layered: Abilene is searching for her roots in this town by trying to uncover the parallel mysteries of the identity of a World War 2 spy she finds mention of alongside the true identity of her father. Her father has not told her stories about his past, and she also does not hear much about him as she spends time in the town. The double meaning of “Manifest” is significant as well; on her first day at her new school, which is the last day of the school year, Abilene is given an assignment to write a story of her own over the summer. When she encounters Sister Redempta, the nun

²³ Abilene’s father has gone back to using his birth name, Gideon, after going by Jinx for much of his youth in order to sever his ties with the town of Manifest and with the guilt he feels about his friend Ned’s death. In Judges, Chapter 6, the Biblical Gideon’s name is changed to Jerubbaal after he destroys an altar to Baal.

who has given the assignment, in town over the summer and admits her difficulty in writing a story, the teacher advises Abilene to “start with a dictionary. . . Start with the word *manifest*. It’s a verb as well as a noun” (112). When the girl finally finds a dictionary and looks up the word, she makes a connection between a ship’s manifest and the population of Manifest being immigrants who had arrived on ships, but then she struggles with the verb definition “to reveal, to make known” (238). This is an instance of dramatic irony where the reader understands that the significance of the past is gradually being revealed, both to Abilene and to the reader her/himself. The reader might also make a connection between the town name and Manifest Destiny, the notion, not accepted by everyone at the time it was practiced, that American settlers had a God-given mandate to expand settlements across the country. With its sensitive portrayals of the immigrant community, the novel implicates characters who maintain racial superiority.

The form of the novel is a pastiche, a hybrid text, just like Abilene’s identity. The author intertwines letters, newspaper columns, advertisements, and revelations from a psychic throughout the text, which shifts between 1918 and 1936, as it manifests Abilene’s origin story.²⁴ In

²⁴ In her detailed author’s note, Clare Vanderpool explains how she based many of the characters, along with the town of Manifest, on her own origin story: her grandparents’ lives and experiences in Frontenac, Kansas.

this novel, learning about a place, and learning about a key character, has to be done using more than one person, time period, and perspective. The formal hybridity of the text, along with its thematic focus on hybridity with locations such as Shady's bar/church/saloon and characters like the Hungarian mother/not mother, is reminiscent of Donna Haraway's theories about cyborgs: boundaries are blurred because there is no essential identity. However, blurred boundaries are often painful rather than being all-encompassing in a joyful Anzaldúan fashion: for example, Miss Sadie, the Hungarian mother/not mother, spends the majority of the novel deep in both physical and emotional pain as she struggles with two losses of her son, Ned. First, she is forced to allow him to be raised by another family after a difficult immigration to the United States, and then she suffers from his death after he goes to fight in a war at a young age. After her painful injury and separation from her father which marks her transition to adolescence, the young protagonist, Abilene, spends much of the novel in continuous emotional discord as well. Boundaries are blurred for the hybrid characters, and pain is a constant.

Abilene's first "home" in the novel is "Shady's place," which she walks to, alone, after jumping off of the train. En route to her destination, she passes an iron gate with crooked, welded letters that seem to spell "Perdition." As Abilene later discovers, this gate leads to the home/divining

parlor of a Hungarian psychic named Miss Sadie, whose earth-based wisdom and spirituality links her to several other wise older women who appear in Chicana and Anglo texts in this project.²⁵ At first, Abilene is alarmed by her connotations of perdition with preachers' warnings about the path to hell. Much later, Abilene discovers that the letters actually spell "Redizon," Miss Sadie's Hungarian last name, rather than "Perdition." Her easy misinterpretation and judgment of the Other in this case serves as the action which the narrative appears to be warning readers against. After encountering Shady on the road, Abilene arrives at his home, "a weathered establishment that appeared to be a safe distance from the respectable part of town" and that "was like a jigsaw puzzle. . . one part saloon, one part carpenter's shop, and—could it be?— one part church" (18). Since she's used to washing in a stream, the pitcher of water next to the bed in Abilene's upstairs bedroom seem luxurious. Not only does she have a room to herself but Abilene is also invited to use the "conglomeration of half-nailed boards [that] could hardly be called a tree house" behind Shady's house to have friends over (33).²⁶ Shady's home and the tree house, like Shady himself, are run-down conglomerations with multiple purposes, but they are comfortable. Unlike the upper class

²⁵ Zoey's American Indian grandmother in *Marked*, Ultima in *Bless Me, Ultima*, and Paski's grandmother in *Haters* all portray the wise elder/crone archetype.

²⁶ The allusion to Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" and the necessity of this type of space for young women comes to mind

Anglo homes in many Anglo texts, Shady's home contains indicators of poverty. Since Abilene is more rootless than many protagonists in Anglo YA literature, she needs a reliable, well-worn in space to give her the confidence safely to explore her own heritage. The hybrid nature of Shady's place is an outward projection of Abilene's hybridity.

On Abilene's first day at her new school, she is asked the inevitable: "Well where are you from? Where's your home?" (29). She reflects: "That question always came up real quick. It was a universal. And I was ready for it," and responds: "All over. My daddy says it's not down in any map. True places never are" (29). Abilene is quoting her father, but Sister Redempta, upon entering the classroom, points out that this line is actually a quote from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Identifying home as outside of a geographic location, but as a "true" place that involves being with her father, gives Abilene both a quick response as well as a more abiding sense of comfort. Her physical home, like the psychic homes of many young Chicanas, is continually in flux, which is a reflection of their unsettled, disoriented positionality of hybridity. The reader uncovers the root of Gideon's usage of Melville's quote much later in the narrative at a critical point when Abilene is on the verge of uncovering Gideon's true identity. She reads the Melville line in a letter from Ned, her father's close childhood friend, whose death in the war Gideon feels responsible for. She

then reads it again in the library's copy of *Moby Dick*, which was checked out both by Ned and by Gideon Tucker. When she sees her father's name on the library card at the front of *Moby Dick*, Abilene cries, realizing that she "had found him. [She'd] found [her] daddy. And [she] would find him again" (337). Shortly thereafter, when Gideon arrives in Manifest to check on his daughter, Abilene embraces him, realizing that she "knew. And he knew. We were home" (339). Abilene and her father finally find a more permanent home in the ramshackle, but loving, hometown of Gideon's past. Similarly to the ending of *Estrella's Quinceañera*, loose ends are tied up and difficult struggles with "home" are resolved. Although the conclusion of both novels is Anzaldúan, I maintain that an adequate model of young adult hybridity must take into account the painful journey the girls endure for most of the novel in addition to the sometimes integrated conclusion.

Home is a significant trope in *Marked* as well; the word "home" appears over 25 times in the novel. Similarly to the Anglo characters in *Estrella's Quinceañera*, Zoey lives in a "big, beautiful house" which her mother associates with "security and a bright future," although it comes at the cost of Zoey's mother being remarried to a controlling religious zealot whom Zoey abhors (19). When her mother refuses to help Zoey temporarily hide her mark from her stepfather and to aid her through her

transition from human to vampyre fledgling, Zoey screams, “They call that vampyre school the House of Night, but it can’t be any darker than this perfect home!” (19). The protagonist feels stifled and misunderstood in her “perfect home,” but she has an escape valve built in which is not available to readers: a *deus ex machina* in the form of a vampyre Tracker appears, marks her as a vampyre, and leaves her with no choice but to leave her home of origin in order to begin transitioning into another species at a vampyre-only school. It is now the House of Night itself which becomes home to Zoey. There, she feels “like [she] belonged, like [she] might be home” (123). The school itself is opulent, intimidating, and steeped in tradition:

It was three stories tall and had a weirdly high roof that pointed and then flattened off at the top. . . A round tower was attached to the front of the main building, furthering the illusion that the place was much more castle-like than school-like. . . Behind. . .the old oaks that shaded the schoolyard [she] could see the shadow of the enormous stone wall that surrounded the entire school. (61)

Also on the school grounds are a statue of the vampyre goddess of the night, Nyx, alongside her temple. The large, forbidding nature of the school reflects the unknown, dangerous facets of becoming a vampyre. It is physically isolated from the human town, as there is animosity and fear between the vampyres and humans in the novel. The inclusion of a temple to a goddess features prominently in the storyline: the novel is overtly

goddess-oriented and matriarchal. In spite of the dangerous, intimidating aspects of vampyrism, Zoey finds a loyal group of friends at the House of Night, and she excels as a neophyte vampyre with special gifts that were given to her by the goddess, Nyx. The aristocratic design of the House of Night corresponds to the vampyres' power and wealth, although these are not the aspects of the school that cause Zoey to feel at home. Reflecting a commonality in all three texts, it is Zoey's sense of finally belonging and of being surrounded by people who accept her for who she is which cause the protagonist to find her long-sought home. She concludes: "School was the only place I really felt at home anymore; my friends were my only family," a sentiment which is repeated several times throughout the novel (27).

Are Chicana adolescents able, as Gloria Anzaldúa recommends, to embody *mestizaje* as the new cultural hybrid? Children's literature author and scholar George Shannon states that "when two cultures cross, the nexus is most often a homeless land with its children feeling less than whole" since "cross-cultural children are caught between two mirrors—two ways of seeing—each presenting a different image of the self" (14). Though Shannon's view of cultural hybridity is more pessimistic than Anzaldúa's, it also seems much more representative of a realistic paradigm than hers.

Throughout *Estrella's Quinceañera*, as in many Chicano/a YA novels²⁷, it is clear that the protagonist feels caught between different ways of seeing herself because of her sense of belonging simultaneously to two different worlds.²⁸ Shannon notes that cross-cultural children may go through four stages while developing their identity: "(1) rejection by both of their conflicting cultures; (2) the acceptance of or by one culture while denying the other; (3) the attempt to be both conflicting cultures at once; and (4) the acknowledgement and acceptance of one's individual and evolving identity as a collage of cultures" (Shannon 14). Shannon's notion of the most evolved stage of cross-cultural identity functioning as a collage of cultures bears many similarities to Anzaldúa's conception of *mestiza*/borderlands identity as an all-encompassing, powerful position, although Anzaldúa points out that "the struggle of identities continues, the struggle of borders is our reality still" (63). For Anzaldúa, even the self-actualized *mestiza* carries an awareness of borders within herself. The characters in the novels studied here find themselves in different stages. Often, the novel chronicles their journey from one stage, or part of the identity acceptance continuum, to another. However, I would argue that the stages, though accurate, are more of a spiraling journey back and

²⁷ For example, see *Trino's Choice* by Diane Gonzales Bertrand, *Mexican White Boy* by Matt de la Peña, *Taking Sides* by Gary Soto, or *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan

²⁸ Further information on belonging simultaneously to two different worlds can be found in W.E.B. Du Bois's, and later Franz Fanon's, scholarship on double consciousness.

forth than a march toward an integrated identity. Teenagers would be likely to reside in one of the earlier stages for years, perhaps progressing and then regressing, or perhaps not moving forward at all. Females might be particularly vulnerable to self-loathing and rejection of their culture/s since girls receive such strong media messages that their bodies are not close to the desirable perfection of models and celebrities.

Estrella's Quinceañera allows for the application of Shannon's identity continuum within the framework of Anzaldúa's borderlands theory, although it seems to be overly prescriptive and idealistic. Stage One involves being rejected by both cultures: Estrella's childhood friends from the barrio, Izzy and Teresa, are not on speaking terms with her at the beginning of the novel because they feel deserted by Estrella's move to a private school and decision to spend time with her new white friends. Also, Estrella's love interest, Speedy, is disappointed by Estrella's disparaging comments about her *barrio*. Estrella tells Speedy how beautiful her white friends' homes and neighborhoods are, and Speedy retorts: "You talk about your home as if it were trash. . . do you need me to spell it out for you? This *barrio* is your home. . . I just hate it when people put down my *barrio*" (146). Speedy has crucial insight into the injustice of the sociopolitical system. He points out to Estrella, "You know, there's a reason your homegirl's neighborhood is so clean. Do you know that street

sweepers clean some streets on a daily basis? These same city employees come to the East Side once a week. Does that sound fair to you?" (146). This is another key developmental point for Estrella as she realizes that the discriminatory priorities of the city do not seem fair. At this moment, she "felt like something else was opening up inside [her] head" (146). The author uses Speedy as a catalyst for political awareness, self-pride and re-awakening for Estrella. Speedy's uncle is introduced as having protested with César Chávez, which stirs dim memories of Estrella's mother not letting her family cross the picket line (192). When Speedy explains, "I'm mad at the system. I'm mad at this country that says that everyone is equal and then treats some people one way and some people a totally different way. That's all," the reader gets the sense that Alegría might be voicing her perspective on the current situation in which many Chicanos/as find themselves (146).

Estrella experiences self-imposed rejection by the rich white culture whose identity she assumes. It is not until nearer the end of the novel that she feels overtly rejected by her white friends, because she consciously tries not to stand out and not to voice any discomfort in assuming an identity that does not fit her well. For much of the novel, she lingers in Stage Two as she is accepted by her white friends while denying her culture of origin, although she also exists in Stage Three by trying to

participate in both cultures at once. She feels largely unsuccessful balancing the two. Estrella's turning point occurs toward the end of the novel when everything has reached its nadir: she is getting along with neither her Chicano/a nor her white friends, which causes her tremendous emotional pain, and her family life is in chaos as the *quinceañera* has been called off due to financial problems along with Estrella's lack of enthusiastic participation in the event. At this point, Estrella is filled with a desire to bring her family back together, to express how much they mean to her, and "to show myself that I can be me—the real me" (207). This is the beginning of her journey into Stage Four in Shannon's scheme and Anzaldúa's vision of the New *Mestiza*. She returns to her *barrio* and asks several family friends to be *padrinos* in her *quince*, which means that they will make a financial contribution to the event. The first family friend she asks tells Estrella how proud she is of the private school scholarship Estrella won. She offers to cater the *quince* and responds, "*Mija*, I've known you since before you can even remember. I might not be related to you by blood, but still you are part of my community and therefore a part of my *familia*. I, along with everyone else in *el barrio*, have watched you grow up. And I like to think that in some small way, just by being here, I've been a part of that" (222). Estrella is overjoyed; no longer nervous about asking for contributions for the celebration, she comments that "something was

growing inside of me, a feeling I hadn't had in a long time— I was part of something bigger. I truly belonged” (222). Estrella comes to understand that her family and friends never left her because they are part of her no matter what she does or where she goes; she is an embodied, corporeal borderland where Anglo and Chicana coexist. She moves beyond the either/or dichotomy of Anglo/Chicano and integrates both into her life. Her childhood friends, Teresa and Izzy, are by her side at her casual *quince*, along with her Anglo friends, Sheila and Christie. Once she understands that her family and neighborhood friends are proud of her scholastic achievement and that her Anglo friends are open to accepting the real her as well, Estrella comfortably inhabits both of her worlds without conflict. The *quinceañera* crisis is resolved as Estrella takes renewed pride in her heritage and learns to tailor the time-honored tradition to fit her own personality and situation.

Moon Over Manifest and *Marked* offer similar happy endings for their protagonists: Abilene is able to see her father again and to know that the two of them are home, and their home includes a diverse and loving community of friends and neighbors who will care for the pair. The last word of *Marked* is “home;” its last line is, “Surrounded by my friends, we all went home” (306). At the conclusion of the novel, Zoey is surrounded by her tight group of friends: her best friend and roommate, the Twins, and

Damien, the sage of the group. The group is a specially gifted bunch who have been selected by the goddess, Nyx, to manifest special powers which bind them together even more strongly. Estrella, Abilene, and Zoey all find “home” after arduous journeys of self-discovery. Their homes in flux: Estrella’s vacillation between the rich Anglo part of town and her noisy barrio, Abilene’s itinerant life riding trains around the country and eventual inhabitation of Shady’s place and then, presumably, a different home with her father, and Zoey’s journey from her stepfather’s cold but beautiful home back and forth to her grandmother’s welcoming lavender farm and then ultimately to the vampyres’ House of Night, mirror the characters’ search for identity. The girls’ hybrid identities appear to be projected onto their outwardly hybrid homes, and vice versa. Thematic focus on ethnic minorities in these two Anglo novels allows for crossover moments to examine home and hybridity sensitively among Chicana as well as Anglo YA literature. Despite the idealistic dénouements of the novels, attention must be paid to the painful journeys as well. A realistic paradigm for exploration of young adult hybridity would look like a patchwork architectural structure: old and new identities are perpetually superimposed upon one another in ways that are sometimes judged as inadequate by outsiders. This judgment can be painful, and even though the building stands, it may never “belong” in its neighborhood. The search

for belonging allows for collision moments between Chicana and Anglo texts wherein teenage characters and their changing home environments reflect the instability of adolescence, which is a constant across cultures.

Hunger: Girls Bite Back, Wanting Both Food and Sex

Girls' bodies are commodities in today's cultural landscape. This is evident when turning on the television and viewing programming such as *16 and Pregnant* and *American Idol*, among many others, in addition to the commercials that run in between. Girls flounce about, generally scantily clad, and we consume them. Significant sub-genres in the pornography industry are devoted to young women in pigtails and schoolgirl outfits who are "barely legal," and here there is no pretense about the purpose of the girl's body. I am reminded of the words of John Lennon and Paul McCartney: "She was just seventeen/ and you know what I mean/ The way she looked was way beyond compare." This 1964 hit stands out because then, as now, the audience did, in fact, know what the Beatles meant: there's something inexplicably sexy and desirable about a teenaged girl. Society hungers for the bodies of adolescent girls, but the girls themselves are not supposed to have their own appetites. It is at the intersection of society's hunger for them and simultaneous insistence that girls not have their own hunger with ambivalent expressions about appetite from girls themselves where girls are able to find resistance and agency.

Examination of young adult novels illustrates the cultural script that young girls should not be hungry for either food or sex. This is especially significant since YA literature is “the only genre that portrays and is consumed by a young and primarily female readership,” so girls are seeing themselves on the page and learning, to some extent, how they are supposed to behave (Younger 1). As Roberta Trites and Beth Younger²⁹ discuss, young adult novels often portray the young women’s sexuality as a menacing and overwhelmingly negative component of their lives. For young girls, “sexual desire is often viewed as a primitive, taboo drive that must be regulated,” and the pregnancy problem genre is widespread (Younger 2).³⁰ Additionally, girls are not typically portrayed as having notable appetites for food. Quite to the contrary, a girl on the pages is more likely to have an eating disorder than to take pleasure in food. I have chosen to examine the types of hunger found in “Real Women Have Curves” and *The Hunger Games* trilogy and to explore the significance of hunger to the girls’ sense of agency and reclamation of their bodies.

Both protagonists, Ana and Katniss, find power during intermittent moments of rebellion against the dominant culture’s expectations of them.

²⁹ in *Disturbing the Universe* and *Learning Curves: Body Image and Female Sexuality in YA Literature*, respectively

³⁰ The pregnancy problem novel depicts young women becoming pregnant the first time she has intercourse; pregnancy is a punishment for sex in these typically sex-negative, didactic novels.

These moments of rebellion exist at the intersection of society's appetite for young girls and the appetites of the girls themselves. An apt symbol for this interstitial tension is the *vagina dentata*, a widespread, obscure, and fearsome motif primarily from American Indian folklore in which a man is unable to have intercourse with a woman due to her toothed vagina (Leach 1152). This symbol shows men's widespread "fear that in intercourse with women they may be castrated, that they may be laughed at, that they may die. The woman's power must therefore be neutralized by 'pulling the teeth' from her vagina or by killing her first and then remaking her as a nonthreatening, procreative partner" (Raitt 418). Society tends to fear women and women's sexuality, and yet society is obsessed with what it fears. Man is drawn to a woman's sexual organs, but he has longstanding trepidation of those very organs. In my interpretation, a hungry, toothed vagina represents a woman with her own sexual drives and appetites, but women are conditioned not to discuss their appetites forthrightly. As adolescent girls are on the outskirts of human sexuality since they are recently developed, they are even more desirable and even less able to take ownership of their appetites. Reframing the symbol of the *vagina dentata* is one way to understand and to embrace the connections between different types of female hunger and avenues of resistance for young women.

In this chapter, I will utilize the *vagina dentata* as an overarching metaphor for the resistance of the young female protagonists of “Real Women Have Curves” and *The Hunger Games*. I will begin by examining the relationship between power and generic conventions in both texts, and then I will discuss the function of class in both. Following that, I will inquire into the relationship between food, bodies, and sexuality in both texts. I will then delve in-depth into the types of hunger apparent in “Real Women Have Curves” followed by the types of hunger particular to *The Hunger Games*.

Recent YA literary texts show hungry young women utilizing their bodies in various ways to achieve their goals. Regarding YA literature, as Perry Nodelman asserts in *The Hidden Adult*, most scholars are hard-pressed to define children’s literature—Nodelman himself finally concedes that a pragmatic working definition of the genre is any book found on the child reader list of a publishing house (146). Another more ambiguous definition of young adult literature, a subset of children’s literature for the older teenaged audience, is any literature that is about teenagers or is read by teenagers. Somewhere in between these two definitions is where we find Josefina López’s 1990 play, “Real Women Have Curves (RWHC),” which is listed by one publisher for the “undergraduate/scholarly” audience, an audience that exists in the borderlands between young adult

and adult literature. The play features a Chicana high school senior's struggle to take charge of her identity: Ana is a bright student who is forced to work in a sewing factory one summer while saving money for university. She and her mother, who also works in the factory, clash over the role of women, sex, and tradition as Ana struggles to express her creativity and her ambition. López co-wrote the screenplay for the 2002 HBO independent movie of the same name, though I will focus here on the play that centers on the coming of age of Ana, the protagonist.

As Ana emerges into a more authentic selfhood during her last year of high school, the last year under her parents' roof, she finds herself in almost perpetual conflict with various apparatuses of power. The presence of these apparatuses of power merits further discussion since power is a central motif of this play. The interrelationship between power and repression is analyzed by Roberta Trites in *Disturbing the Universe*, which highlights the Young Adult genre-specific aspect of postmodernism. In postmodern YA fiction, the individual character is both comprised by institutional forces and compromised by them. Trites maintains that there are Foucauldian above/below matrices of power at work in the development of the *Entwicklungsroman* genre, which she takes great care to define as a subgenre of bildungsroman, the classic coming-of-age tale. Trites asserts that the *Entwicklungsroman*, the novel of growth or

development over a truncated period of time that does not culminate in the adolescent's enfranchisement into the adult world, would not have developed if adolescents did not possess a threatening power that adults felt the need to regulate. In "RWHC," Ana's mother, Carmen, continually attempts to regulate Ana's subversive voice and her new generational independence, which clearly threatens Carmen's traditional paradigm and her old-world Mexican universe. "RWHC" is an interesting blend of bildungsroman and *Entwicklungsroman* since the majority of the play centers on a disenfranchised Ana railing against her mother's traditionalism, her family's lack of signifying power in U.S. dominant cultural economy, and ubiquitous societal demands for all women to maintain the rail-thin perfect female body. During the last scene, Ana finds community with some of the women, but it is only in the postscript to the play where Ana becomes enfranchised into the adult world by moving to New York alone, working, and attending university. Ana's enfranchisement feels "unfinished"—it is not acted out on the page or the stage; it is merely mentioned in a few lines of voiceover reflection from an older Ana after the final scene— which leaves this play as categorizable as both bildungsroman and *Entwicklungsroman*.

Similarly to "RWHC," *The Hunger Games* series is also a blend of bildungsroman and *Entwicklungsroman* in which struggles for power are

central. In this dystopian series, Katniss, the teenage protagonist, lives in a post-apocalyptic North America in which one overfed district, the Capitol, governs the outlying districts, which are in varying states of poverty and starvation. The Capitol exerts its control over the districts by forcing them to send randomly selected children to fight to the death in an arena during annual Hunger Games.³¹ Trites's interpretation of the importance of Foucauldian above/below matrices of power at work in the development of the *Entwicklungsroman* genre is once again central; President Snow is terrified of Katniss's power, of which even she is unaware. Unknowingly, she begins becoming the symbol of a revolution as she volunteers to take her beloved sister's place in the Hunger Games. Snow's authoritarian apparatus of power is brutal and seemingly omnipotent, yet it can be unhinged by one determined young woman.

Also similarly to "RWHC," Katniss is not enfranchised into the adult world until the brief epilogue of the last book, which takes place several years in the future when Katniss is uneasily married with children. Both young women are community activists and rabble-rousers, and it is worth noting that each character preserves her rebel outsider status throughout the entire text, but the authors wrap up the loose ends and provide a more

³¹ The actual hunger of unwilling participants of these "games" is used to pit teenagers against one another to create entertainment for the audience of the Capitol. The "games" are viewed as far less entertaining to starving members of the outlying districts as they watch their own young people killed for sport.

socially acceptable existence at the end. In this sense, the authors remove the teeth from the *vaginas dentatas* of their protagonists only in the last few pages of the texts. Ana goes to university, and Katniss marries Peeta and has children. Perhaps López, the author, consciously counteracted Latina traditional house doctrine by sending her female protagonist to pursue her education whereas Collins did not have this additional ethnic expectation to address. Race and ethnicity are not connected to socioeconomic struggles in *The Hunger Games* series in the way that they are in “RWHC.” Collins mentions that the inhabitants of District 11 have darker skin than those of other districts, but the descriptions of Katniss’s family and most of the main characters fit descriptions of Anglo-Americans. Race in *The Hunger Games* is therefore treated from a dominant culture perspective while minority ethnic experience is at the center of “RWHC.” Class is a motivating and limiting factor for both young women as both of them strive for better lives available to those in higher classes. Ana’s reality mirrors the real lives of many Chicana young people while Katniss’s is a hodgepodge of myth, gladiator-era Rome, and a futuristic imaginary dystopia. In that sense, “RWHC” seems more directly applicable as a political piece. Oppression of Chicanas is an actual component of the real world, whereas oppression by the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* requires analysis to sort out its applicability in our world.

Socioeconomic status is a dominant factor in both “Real Women Have Curves” and *The Hunger Games*. “Real Women Have Curves” focuses on challenges faced by the women in a working-class Chicano family in East L.A. Even though the working-class setting of the play is significant, I disagree with Christie Launius, who argues that the challenges are largely working-class in nature and that the play should be read primarily through that lens as the characters struggle to keep Estela’s sewing factory, a small sweatshop she has purchased, open for business. Instead, I argue that López has integrated questions of gender, ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation on a continuum without necessarily emphasizing one factor over the others. In *New Latina Narrative*, Ellen McCracken discusses one similarity held by several Latina writers in the 1990s: their view of Latina identity as multidimensional with divergent configurations of gender, ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation. McCracken continues that there are three approaches Latina writers take to deal with all of these axes: 1) they integrate them on a continuum, 2) they emphasize one factor without overpowering the others or 3) they “shout” or “scream” by emphasizing one element unidimensionally, often creating aesthetic dissonance (200). Launius seems to assert that López takes the second approach, emphasizing class without overpowering the

other themes, while I find that López integrates several axes on a continuum without necessarily drawing attention to one over the others.

Class is a salient factor in *The Hunger Games* as well. Katniss sees the daily machinations around her with clear eyes, saying, “I could be shot on a daily basis for hunting, but the appetites of those in charge protect me” (HG 17). She and her hunting companion, Gale, bring meat, seafood, and berries into District 12, and everyone wants their goods, although only more well-off citizens are able to afford the purchases. Katniss understands that while the people in the Seam would be grateful to eat dog, the Peacekeepers can afford to be pickier (HG 11). The class structure places those who work in the mines at the very bottom, with those who live and work in town noticeably better off. The Peacekeepers and government officials are at the top of the pecking order. One encounter toward the beginning of the first novel brings society’s injustice into sharp focus: Katniss and Gale stop by the Mayor’s house to sell him strawberries they’ve gathered illegally, and they’re greeted at the door by his daughter, Madge. Gale immediately and bitterly notices the gold pin on Madge’s dress that “could keep a family in bread for months” (HG 12). Compounding this injustice is the reason for Madge’s finery: all district children aged 12-18 have to dress up and put their names into selection for The Reaping, an annual event during which a boy and a girl from each

district are selected and sent to fight to the death in the Hunger Games. The Hunger Games are designed for the dual purpose of reminding the people in the districts that they are commodities of the Capitol and for entertaining the Capitol's population. Yet another layer of injustice is that poorer citizens are often forced to put their names up for consideration more than once a year in exchange for tesserae, a meager supply of food and oil. The system "is unfair, with the poor getting the worst of it," but Katniss and Gale realize that "it's no one's fault, Just the way it is" (HG 13, 12). Even more insidiously, Gale believes that the primary purpose of tesserae is to divide the starving inhabitants of the Seam from the merchant class to ensure that they don't join ranks to rise up against the Capitol. Layers upon layers of corruption and injustice comprise the world in which Katniss is raised, and she rails against these forces from childhood on. Since Katniss's world is imaginary, class issues in District 12 can be viewed as metaphors for the struggles working-class people in our world, like the Chicanas in "RWHC," face. However, race is glossed over in *The Hunger Games* series, almost as though the dystopia is set in post-racial times.

Working-class people are often forced to maintain a vigilant focus on food in order to assure their survival. Food and the characters' relationship to it are central to both "RWHC" and *The Hunger Games*,

although the starvation present in “RWHC” is self-imposed rather than levied by the government. “RWHC” offers readers and viewers the opportunity to delve into whichever aspect most intrigues them; I have chosen to investigate further the axis of gender and, in particular, the function of hunger as a trope for the female characters. Three types of hunger are predominant in this work: hunger for food, for sex, and for knowledge/self-expression. Investigating the relationship among these three types of hunger lends insight into the complexity of the character of Ana and, by extension, the lives of many ‘New *Mestizas*’ in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.³²

In the play, the text itself is framed by food; a majority of the scenes begin and/or end with a discussion of food and the reality of the women’s hunger. The opening scene depicts Carmen and Ana entering the sewing factory and Carmen placing her lunch on the table before giving Ana money to go to the bakery to buy *pan dulce* for the seamstresses. Ana doesn’t want to run the errand, and her mother responds: “That’s good, at least you won’t get fatter. . . I only tell you for your own good. *Bueno*, I’ll go get the bread myself, but you better not get any when I bring it” (3). The first lines of the play encapsulate the

³² Gloria Anzaldúa coined this term in *Borderlands* to envision her ideal of a Chicana identity that is innovative and that pushes boundaries, encompassing multiple identities while excluding none of them

mother/daughter relationship: Carmen, who is overweight herself, constantly criticizes her daughter's appetite and body. Also in this scene, as in many that follow, a level of humor is present when discussing food and bodies. Here, though, it is the audience members who will laugh rather than Ana herself.

The communal aspect of food is highlighted later in the same scene when the other workers enter the factory. As each enters, Carmen informs the worker that she has brought her famous *mole* to share. The first seamstress, Pancha, is interested, but the second worker, Rosali, refuses since she is on a diet in her attempt to be a smaller size. Maria Figueroa notes that food functions in the play on both an individual and a collective level:

The connection between food and survival becomes a central motif existing in conjunction with their abject bodies, labor and material production. The act of eating or not eating occurs in the same space as the act of working and sacrificing of the body. Ironically, although the body (of each individual and of the group) seeks to sustain a collective energy for production, food becomes salvation for some, and destruction for others. (276)

Food is Doña Carmen's manifestation of love, social connection, and control, and Ana's battleground in a war for independence. It is Rosali's source of self-destruction: her anorexia is discovered by the audience toward the end of the play.

Food is a consistent, communal, and more primal motivator in *The Hunger Games* as well since, in District 12, the majority of the population exists at near starvation levels at all times. Some Peacekeepers and higher ranking officials are better fed, but citizens die regularly of starvation, although that is never listed as their official cause of death. Katniss remembers her mother, a healer, diagnosing wasted children with undernourishment and prescribing “what the parents can’t give. More food” (CF 80). While she is touring the other districts, Katniss sees that poverty and starvation are rampant in most of them as well. During the Games, she learns that the people from District 11, the agricultural district, are not allowed to eat what they harvest and are subject to brutal enforcement of food restrictions. President Snow keeps the majority of his populace in a state of submission by default since most of them are too malnourished to foment rebellion. As is the case in the world around us, hunger in Panem is not a result of scarcity of food. Rather, hunger mirrors reality as being caused by “differential access to scarce resources and power” (Jenkins et al. 824).³³ There is enough food for all citizens, but not all citizens have the power to access the food.

Focus on food in both novels serves as a gateway to examining the bodies that crave that food. In “RWHC,” Rosali and Ana exist on opposite

³³ c.f. “Military Famine, Human Rights, and Child Hunger: A Cross-National Analysis, 1990-2000” by J. Craig Jenkins et al.

ends of the continuum of abject Chicana bodies: Ana exhibits self-pride in her larger body while Rosali pines to fit into the size 7 dresses that the factory makes for Bloomingdales. Ana eats and Rosali doesn't, though we know by the growling stomach of the latter character that she experiences intense hunger, despite her protestations that drinking eight glasses of water a day helps her not feel hungry (32). Rosali's desire for a socially acceptable, thin body outweighs her desire to eat. The character's anorexia doesn't appear to be deeply shocking either to the other women in the play or to the viewer. Carmen even asks Rosali for the details of her secret diet so that she can try it to lose weight as well. A woman starving herself to achieve a perfect body is status quo since, according to Maggie Helwig, "we have normalized anorexia and bulimia, even turned them into an industry" (199). However, this is not, Helwig continues, "just a problem of proportion. This is the nightmare of consumerism acted out in women's bodies" (199). Women want to consume food to nourish their bodies, but they are discouraged from doing so; instead, they are encouraged to spend copious amounts of money on perfect clothing and beauty products for their, ideally, shrinking bodies.

Along the same lines, in *Unbearable Weight*, Susan Bordo asserts that eating disorders aren't anomalous but are continuous with the experience of being female in this culture; she sees women using eating

disorders as an attempt to create a body that will speak for the self in a meaningful and powerful way. Helwig furthers this line of thinking: “To be skeletally, horribly thin makes one strong statement. It says, I am hungry. What I have been given is not sufficient, not real, not true, not acceptable. I am starving. To reject food, whether by refusing it or by vomiting it back, says simply, I will not consume. I will not participate, This is not real” (201). Rosali can be seen as rejecting her surroundings to some extent; she is poor, she toils endlessly, and she never gets ahead. Perhaps she starves herself away from the Latina body ideal, which is more accepting of larger hips and thighs in order to meld with a more upwardly mobile Anglo “American Dream.”³⁴

Even though she doesn’t have an eating disorder, Ana also speaks powerfully through her body. Susie Orbach discusses the phenomenon of women speaking through their bodies, noting that food and body-image issues are “the language of women’s inner experience,” and arguing that “food is a metaphor through which women speak of their inner experiences. Until we have a real voice in the body politic, individual women are likely to use their bodies as their mouthpieces to express the forbidden and secluded feelings we carry inside” (qtd. in Heller and Moran 26). A scene illustrating Ana’s use of her body as a mouthpiece occurs

³⁴ c.f. Deborah Schooler’s 2008 article, “Real Women Have Curves: A Longitudinal Investigation of TV and the Body Image Development of Latina Adolescents”

when Ana's mother asks her, yet again, "Why don't you lose weight? Last time you lost weight you were so thin and beautiful," Ana responds that she likes herself the way she is (74). The other women chime in that Ana is pretty as she is, but Carmen will not drop the subject, insisting that her daughter needs to make herself as attractive as possible in order to catch a husband. Ana replies, "I do want to lose weight. But part of me doesn't because my weight says to everyone, 'Fuck you!' ... It says, 'How dare you try to define me and tell me what I have to be and look like!' So I keep it on. I don't want to be a sex object" (74). For Ana, her body speaks. Her weight speaks. When she is silenced by school, work, parents, and society, she fights back from below, daring to disturb the universe, as Trites would say. Indeed, Ana's universe is more disturbed by her larger body than is Rosali's by her diminishing body because Ana's refusal to attempt to have the right sized body, and by extension a husband, children, and a happy American life, is a conscious rebellion against everything that she is supposed to want to attain. Josefina López addressed this very issue when discussing the film *Real Women Have Curves*, though the same treatment applies to her play:

Films have the positive power to inspire and transform people, but they also have the ability to make little children believe that there is something wrong with them because they are not the right color and little girls to believe they are not the right size and should do

whatever it takes to be thin and beautiful 'so you can be loved,' as the song goes. (7)

Ana is railing against this message and claiming agency in her own life.

In this scene, Ana appears to be more self-possessed than Rosali. Though Ana is still in the process of self-discovery, she is not necessarily searching "for reality, for the irreducible need that lies beyond all imaginary satisfactions," which is what Rosali is doing with her self-imposed starvation (Helwig 200). As much as Bordo and others reject Cartesian dualism and the equation of women with body and men with mind, these associations are engrained in Western society. Therefore, it is women with eating disorders who embody the "monster," by acting out "the equation of food and sin, who deny hunger and yet embody endless, unfulfilled appetite" (Helwig 202). Good girls aren't supposed to be hungry, but sometimes they eat.

Similarly, good girls are supposed to maintain an acceptable level of sexual desirability without ever actually desiring or having sex themselves. Throughout the play, there are numerous instances of the conflation of two types of hunger: for food and for sex. This conflation makes the guiding motif of the *vagina dentata* applicable. For example, in the first scene, while the women talk about whether or not they will partake of Carmen's *mole*, Ana laughs when her mother starts complaining about

her own body. Carmen angrily turns the attention back to Ana's body, grabbing Ana's breasts and proclaiming, "When I was your age I wasn't as fat as you. And look at your *chichis* . . . They must weigh five pounds each" (7). Ana's large breasts, noticeable symbols of her emerging sexuality, her sexual desirability, and her potential status as a mother, are singled out as exemplars of her too-fat body in another exchange that might cause the audience to chuckle out of discomfort because they identify with the daughter's humiliation. Appetites for food and sexuality are juxtaposed to highlight their similarities.

As explored previously, Ana attempts to enter the signifying economy by inscribing meaning on her body, and this meaning contains her various appetites. Reminiscent of Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One*, Ana has two sets of lips and two corresponding appetites: a horizontal and a vertical one, although her sexuality in the play is much more understated than in the movie. The film devotes a significant amount of time to Ana's choice to lose her virginity with a classmate who is preparing to leave for college, but in the play it is her older sister, Estela, rather than Ana, who has a romantic interest. During one scene, Estela sees the man she's interested in, nicknamed "Tormento," washing his car outside the shop, and she quickly primps before running outside to try to talk to him. She puts perfume on three different spots on her body in case

Tormento comes into physical contact with her, and Ana mocks each step of Estela's beauty ritual. First Estela sprays her wrist in case Tormento hugs her, saying what she's doing in Spanish while Ana translates and mocks the gesture in front of the other women. Then the elder sister sprays her neck in case she is kissed; finally, she sprays under her skirt "por si se pasa," which means in case he goes under her skirt (9). Ana translates this as "And here in case he . . . you know what" (9). Ana is uncomfortable directly translating this phrase as she did the two previous ones, possibly because she doesn't want to discuss her sister's sexuality in front of this group of women.

Since she is the youngest woman present, Ana is shielded from the older women's uncensored discussion of sex. In one scene, Carmen waits until her daughter has gone outside to the *lonchera*, the lunch truck, to get them food before bringing out a "dirty book" she says she found in her garage. The book, *Two Hundred Sexual Positions Illustrated*, has one picture of a large woman having sex, and the women express varying levels of shock and disgust at the fact that a fat woman is photographed nude. Like most women in U.S. society, they are conditioned to be disgusted by larger women's bodies and to believe that big women can't and shouldn't desire sex themselves or be desired by men. When Ana arrives with the food, the women hide the book from her. Pancha says,

“We don't want to pervert you” and Carmen objects to Ana seeing the book because she’s “too young to be looking at these things” (28). Ana retorts: “Fine. You've seen them once, you've seen it all,” which horrifies her mother (28). This begins an open conversation about sex where Ana assures all the women that she knows more than they do about the act, not because she’s experienced it but because she reads a lot. Ana challenges the women to ask her any question about sex that they’ve always wanted answered, and they are all tempted to take her up on it. Rosali finally asks Ana about masturbation, but Carmen ends the Q&A by invoking the father: “¡*Hijole!* If your *Apá* [dad] were to hear you...¡*Hijole!*” (29). Again in this scene, appetites for food and sex are juxtaposed as the women *chisme* about sex on their lunch break. Interestingly, in this scene, Ana, the young and supposedly sheltered member of the group, becomes the sage on the topic since she has read more about it than the others.

As this scene continues, the viewer may notice several derogatory references to Ana being a “know-it-all”: Pancha, after instructing Ana that “a girl shouldn’t know so much,” calls her “*la* Miss Know-it-all” (30). Ana rebels forcefully against this notion as well as against being called a girl instead of a woman; she is proud of the knowledge she has gleaned from reading, and she is triumphant in being the well-informed member of the

group. Her knowledge does not stop there, however; at the beginning of the next scene, Ana takes the next step toward being a community activist and rabble-rouser. A radio show playing in the background as the women work features a woman who is abused by her husband, and Carmen makes the comment that she's lucky that her husband doesn't hit her. Ana contradicts her, stating that it should be expected that a husband not hit his wife, and that the woman on the radio should leave her husband. The workers counter that the woman probably loves her husband, and Ana retorts that she's sure the woman does love her husband, but that "we can't allow ourselves to be abused anymore. We have to assert ourselves. We have to realize that we have rights! We have the right to control our bodies. The right to exercise our sexuality. And the right to take control of our destiny. But it all begins when we start saying..." (39). At this point Ana climbs on top of a sewing machine, and López's stage directions state that she "continue[s] *preaching*" (emphasis added). Ana gives herself the appearance of being on a stage or a platform like a performer or a preacher, and she exhorts the women to say "¡*Ya basta!* No more! We should learn how to say no! Come on, *Amá*, say it! Say it!" (39). Pancha responds, adding that Ana "thinks and acts like she knows everything" (40). When one of their own urges change within the community, she is treated in a suspect fashion. Ana again defends herself, saying that she

doesn't know everything but she knows a lot because she reads; she is dismayed that the women act like a women's liberation movement did not happen 20 years prior. This comment evokes Pancha's response that "all those *gringas* shouting about liberation hasn't done a thing for me," which is reflective of the common critique that second wave feminism focused on Anglo women's rights to the exclusion of consideration of the lives of women of color (41). Pancha snidely asks Ana why she is not in college if she is so smart, and Ana informs her that she is waiting to be eligible for financial aid so that she can go. It is clear that Ana would rather be at university than working a menial job, and that she has aspirations to make something grand of her life.

In *The Hunger Games*, bodies are often overtly ignored while sexuality is treated largely as a commodity. Katniss often hungers for love, but she very rarely desires sex. Clearly, a link exists between hunger, the injustice of her life, and Katniss's decision not to marry or to have children. She does not hunger for sexual pleasure in the manner of many YA protagonists because she is too occupied with survival.³⁵ In the first pages of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss declares her decision not to have children by musing, "Who would fill those mouths that are always asking for more?"

³⁵ According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if a person is devoted to hunger and thirst (first level), s/he will not be able to progress to the third level dealing with love and belonging.

(9). She can barely keep herself, her mother, and her younger sister alive, and she understands that life becomes increasingly difficult the more mouths that are added to a family. She also refuses to send any future children to the Reaping, and since not having children is the only way to ensure this, she vows several times throughout the novels never to have them. Promising not to bring children into an unjust world is one way Katniss is able to exercise agency in a life where agency is not often possible. Katniss is closed off to love while she, at the same time, hungers for love and affection.

Overtly, Katniss does not fixate on her body in the manner that Ana from “RWHC” does. Katniss feigns an interest in fashion because she is supposed to have a hobby, and she can not divulge her actual hobby of hunting game illegally, while the characters in “RWHC” work in and have an actual relationship with the fashion industry. Katniss is a tomboy with an athletic, semi-starved body, whereas Ana has a curvier body. The covert message here seems to be that thin, white, bodies are standard and desirable; therefore, they necessitate little commentary. On the other hand, non-white, larger bodies demand commentary in a society where they are not accepted as normative. Although Katniss’s body is not described in detail, the bodies of others are traded as commodities. Sexual appetites have an uglier side in Panem, and it is the well-off

citizens who are able to exploit the bodies of the poor. Cray, the head Peacekeeper in District 12, regularly has dozens of starving women line up outside his house hoping to be paid to have sex with him. He is described as salivating over these women, driving home the link between sexuality and food. Katniss reflects that if she had been older when her father died, she would have probably been one of these sad, hungry women trying to feed her family. Instead, she learns to hunt, and she is able to be a predator instead of prey. In this way, she is able to reclaim some of her agency as a lower-class female and to invert gender roles by becoming a hunter-provider. Finnick, another Hunger Games champion, was forced by President Snow to sell his body to wealthy citizens in the Capitol. He describes his sexual slavery in terms of the “strange sexual appetites” of the people who were eager to devour him (MJ 170). Katniss’s pure, intimate encounters with Peeta stand in stark contrast to these exchanges that treat the body as a commodity to be bought, used, and discarded.

Since Ana in “RWHC” values her mind and her body, her hunger for knowledge and her hunger to express herself through both written and spoken words are driving forces of the narrative. Throughout the play, she hides her notebook and pen behind the toilet after ensconcing herself in the bathroom to journal her innermost thoughts; Ana is forced to hide her

creativity and her true self from her mother. She muses: "I'm happy to finally be legal, but I thought things would be different...What I really want to do is write..." (3). Ana doesn't want to work at the factory—she only comes out of her bedroom in the opening scene because Carmen practically drags her out of bed by pounding on the wall. Ana thinks it's an earthquake—panic, disaster—and runs out; admitting temporary defeat, she says, "Then she catches me and I become her prisoner" (3). Ana is a prisoner of her mother, a prisoner of socioeconomic conditions, and a prisoner in her own body. Ana retreats to the toilet to write two other times in the play: once to question why she doesn't just leave, and once to bemoan the sexist catcalls she receives when going to the store and to release the sadness she feels about running into a young pregnant friend. Her writing is her refuge and her companion, but she is conflicted about keeping it hidden. Similarly, sex and eating are hidden at times throughout the play.

The difficulties Ana faces in finding time and a private space in which to express herself through the written word are an encapsulation of the challenges most women have faced when putting pen to paper, as is extensively documented in Gilbert and Gubar's famous 1979 study, *Madwoman in the Attic*. They point out that the pen has historically been equated with the penis and ask the question: "Where does such an

implicitly or explicitly patriarchal theory of literature leave literary women? If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?" (489). Therein, according to Gilbert and Gubar, lies woman's anxiety of authorship. Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran follow up on this study with their 2003 text, *Scenes of the Apple*, in which they build on Gilbert and Gubar's identification of the poisonous apple motif in Eve's Garden of Eden story and in the Snow White fairy tale as, in Hélène Cixous' assessment, "the guiding myth of Western culture, a fable about the subjection of female 'oral pleasure' to the regulation of patriarchal law" (1). The message that appetite is dangerous and that to "shake [words] like apple trees" is both a repetition of Eve's transgression and an unpardonable questioning of cultural law is inescapable for women in Western culture (Cixous qtd. in Heller and Moran 1-2).

In addition to facing cultural opposition to self-expression along the axis of gender, Ana also faces opposition to creativity along the axis of ethnicity. Heller and Moran note that:

The kinds of ideological tensions that we have identified in women's literature—where daughters are caught up in changing beliefs about gender roles—are exacerbated when cultural dislocation is part of the brew. For instance, in ethnic and postcolonial narratives, while women can feel nostalgia for an originary culture threatened by assimilation or colonization, they can also feel alienated from a traditional role for women within the originary culture; such dissatisfaction with traditional gender roles, however, does not mean that they can easily find an alternative substitute in the

colonizing or assimilating culture which is obliterating or diluting their cultural heritage. (15)

Ana's attempts to formulate her hybrid identity are evident in the interactions she has with her mother and with her mother's food: she rejects and retreats, but then she feels remorse and she approaches again only to retreat once more. The cycle repeats itself, illustrative of the dynamic Carmen and Ana share. Ana does not want to be a victim of what Carla Trujillo refers to as the "house doctrine." She does not want to marry young, have children, and be trapped within the home cooking and cleaning for them. When her sister confronts Ana with her knowledge that Ana writes in the bathroom, Ana replies: "Come on, Estela. Where else can I write? I come here and all it is, is 'work, work, work' from you and *Amá*. I go home and then she still wants me to help her cook, and clean..." (43). Though she views domesticity as a potential prison, on the other hand, Ana feels an abiding love for her mother and other family members and a connection to her cultural heritage. The repetition of traditional Mexican food as a motif throughout the play addresses the "tension between a native and a colonizing culture abound[ing] with nostalgic evocations of traditional food, an association strengthened by the role of women (mothers, grandmothers, aunts) in food preparation" (Heller and Moran 7). Ana's mother is consistently linked with traditional

food preparation, and Ana consistently loathes and appreciates her simultaneously. Ethnic food does not appear in the same way in *The Hunger Games*, although regional food is significant. Each district is known for its own crops and goods, but the characters do not seem to be linked by cultural traditions involving food in the way that the characters in “RWHC” do.

Ana’s hunger to express herself through writing is also interesting to view through the lens of Julia Kristeva’s work on role of the abject within the mother-daughter relationship. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva identifies the mother’s body as the first “thing” to be abjected in the infant’s process to gain a concept of self, although it (the *chora* and the realm of semiotics) continually returns by rupturing through the borders of selfhood and phallogocentric language. Per Kristeva, the creation of the subject occurs through the processes of exclusion and violence. The centrality of the mother-daughter dyad in “RWHC” highlights the importance of the mother-daughter dynamic in the creative process: Ana struggles to find words and meaning within the phallic economy while at the same time struggling against the maternal force which she finds smothering and inhibitive of growth. The daughter attempts to spit her mother, the abject, out, and to establish her selfhood, but she finds herself spitting herself out as well since the abject is not an object. Just as Esperanza in *House on Mango*

Street famously leaves Mango Street in order to return more whole and able to contribute to her community, so does the audience watch Ana grapple with finding her place within her family and her community with the understanding, in the postscript, that Ana eventually leaves to go to university, and subsequently returns to find that her sister has opened up her own boutique for plus-size women.

The scene that occurs before the postscript, however, is over the top, inspirational, and an encapsulation of the play at the same time. After complaining repeatedly about the excessive heat in the factory, Ana decides to take off her shirt and pants to be cooler. At first she is met with shock, horror, and negative comments about her body, but eventually the other women, including Carmen, decide to disrobe as well. The ostensible reason to remove their clothing is to make self-deprecating remarks about their bodies and to compare their own to the other women's bodies, all the while revealing their secrets about avoiding sex with their husbands due to negative body image, their disgust at being viewed as mere sex objects, their fears about infertility, and their struggles with eating disorders. As they take off their outer protection, the women become more vulnerable with one another, sharing hidden worries about sex, their bodies, and food. The women eventually "all hug in a semicircle laughing triumphantly" as they appreciate one another and themselves (79). The viewer of the

play is likely shocked to see so many larger semi-nude bodies on display since fat is usually a cause of shame which is kept hidden whenever possible and since women, in general, are not usually exposed to the nude bodies of women from multiple generations. Additionally, there is an element of humor as a troupe of conservative women tromps around the stage in their underwear. López “performs ‘fatness’ openly . . . liberat[ing] the subject from the confines of the private and the abject, from the unlivable and pathological” (Figueroa 274). Though the scene feels a bit forced and overly idyllic to me, it springs, at the same time, from a somewhat revolutionary perspective: let’s bring women’s bodies back into the spotlight and celebrate them in all shapes and sizes. Following this epiphanic moment, the women then finally get paid after finishing their large order for Bloomingdale’s on time, which empowers Estela to quit working for that client and to find work under fairer conditions, dreaming of making dresses in larger sizes for bodies like theirs.

Food, hunger, and bodies are the concrete representations of the complex intertwining of body image, language, gender, ethnic, and socioeconomically motivated oppression, tradition, and culture in “Real Women Have Curves.” Hunger for food, for sex, and for knowledge/self-expression motivate the women throughout the play, but most notably compel Ana along her journey to make peace with her own identity,

traditions, and future. Ana is able to take charge of her body and her life; she helps the women around her to accept their bodies as they are and to envision a world where their bodies are welcome. Although studies show that Latina/o culture can be more accepting of having curves and being “thick” or “*buen cuerpo*,” Latinas have similar occurrences of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction as their Anglo peers, a phenomenon which is clearly reflected in this play (Schooler). As Maria Figueroa puts it: “To become beautiful one must conform to the systematic formation of beauty, which historically in Western culture has been a ‘normative’ white beauty” (266). Though thickness has historically been valued by Latino/as, ‘normative’ white beauty standards are inescapable. New *Mestizas*, like Ana, living in the borderlands of Anglo mainstream culture and Mexican traditionalism face unique challenges when crafting an identity that will serve them in the borderlands. López creates Ana as an almost unachievable paragon: she loves herself as she is, which is an ideal most women within Western culture are unable to attain. She hungers for more knowledge and for self-expression through writing, and her writing earns her a fellowship to NYU and status as a “starving writer” before she comes back home. As Ana manages her appetites, she serves as a Chicana success story if one measures success in equal measures of self-love and achievement of the American dream.

Appetites are driving forces in *The Hunger Games* also, where three types of hunger are predominant: hunger for food/survival, for justice, and for love. A formative experience in Katniss's life involves her near death from starvation and her subsequent hunger for both food and survival after her father is killed in a mine explosion. Her mother suffers from a psychotic break that puts her in a near catatonic trance, and she is completely incapable of caring for or even acknowledging her two young daughters. This type of hunger is more immediate and more desperate than the self-imposed hunger of some of the characters in "RWHC." Katniss, only 11 years old at the time, tries to keep up appearances to avoid having herself and her beloved younger sister sent to a notoriously abusive community home, but she is not having much luck. On one particularly bleak day, after having eaten only boiled water with mint leaves for three days straight, Katniss unsuccessfully attempts to sell some of Prim's old baby clothes for food money. Wandering desperately through town, she then tries to scavenge in the bakery dumpster, but she is driven off by the baker's mean-spirited wife. This could have been the end of the heroine who was destined for greatness if not for the intervention of the boy with the bread. Katniss partially collapses due to hunger and hopelessness when Peeta Mellark emerges from the bakery, a red welt on his cheek, followed by the echoes of a screaming mother

chastising him for burning the bread. Peeta throws the loaves of hearty bread at Katniss's feet. Katniss grabs the bread and hides it under her father's hunting jacket, "clinging to life" and mindful of Peeta's "enormous kindness" (HG 31). From that point forward, Peeta is consistently linked with bread in Katniss's mind. She continually refers to him as the boy with the bread when she calls him to mind throughout the course of the novels, having thoughts like, "I do not want to lose the boy with the bread" (HG 297). Bread and Peeta, Peeta and bread: Peeta saves Katniss from desperate hunger at a crucial moment in her life.³⁶

Peeta gives Katniss the bread of life and the bread of hope. Katniss's pivotal encounter with him leads her to the revelation that she can hunt and gather in the forbidden woods to provide food for her family. After eating the delicious bread for dinner and for breakfast the next day, Katniss goes to school, passes Peeta with a swollen, black eye in the halls, and then later sees him staring at her across the school yard. After breaking eye contact with Peeta, Katniss glances down and sees the first dandelion of the season growing at her feet. She suddenly remembers gathering dandelions and other edible plants with her dad, and that night she and her family eat dandelion salad along with the bread. Katniss recalls: "To this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy,

³⁶ Of course, Peeta (pita) is also a type of bread

Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, and the dandelion that reminded me that I was not doomed” (HG 32). The next day, Katniss gathers the courage to go under the district’s boundary fence and into the woods where she remembers hunting with her father. She finds the bow and arrow he made her and kills a rabbit, the sight of which begins to pull her mother out of her months-long trance. For Katniss’s family, “the woods became our savior,” but Katniss never loses sight of Peeta, her first savior (HG 51). She feels that she’ll never be able to get over owing him for the bread in their childhood (HG 293). Peeta serves as a catalyst to ease Katniss’s hunger for food and to trigger her hunger for survival.

Bread is a food laden with significance, both in the series and in culture at large. Although it doesn’t hold the ethnic marking of *mole* and other traditional Mexican foods prevalent in “RWHC,” bread does maintain cultural and communal connotative values. In addition to its ongoing implication for Katniss and Peeta, bread takes center stage several other times in the novels. In *Catching Fire*, escaping rebels show Katniss a wafer of bread with a mockingjay, her symbol during the Hunger Games and later the symbol of the rebellion, emblazoned on it. This bread shows rebels who is on their side, and it can be eaten in a moment if its discovery would bring harm to the carrier. During the Hunger Games and the Quarter Quell themselves, bread is used as a meaning-laden gift for the

tributes. In the arena, after she allies herself with sweet Rue, attempts to save the younger girl's life, and then sings to her as she dies and covers her with flowers after another tribute kills her, Katniss receives an expensive gift of bread easily identifiable as being a product of District 11, Rue's district, from the impoverished but appreciative citizens there. During the next games, certain numbers of loaves of bread are sent to Katniss's group of tributes as a code to tell them at what time the final rebellion will occur. District 12's tender wedding ritual, which Peeta falsely says he and Katniss have completed in a bid to win their safety, involves the new couple lighting their first fire together in their home, toasting some bread, and sharing it. Additionally, the name of the post-apocalyptic country in which the characters reside is Panem, which the reader later learns, if s/he didn't previously know, is the Latin word for bread. At the end of the series, Plutarch Heavensbee, Head Gamemaker turned rebel leader, explains the metaphor to Katniss: "In the Capitol, all they've known is *Panem et Circenses*. . . It's a saying from thousands of years ago. . . [that] translates into 'Bread and Circuses.' The writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power" (MJ 223). Katniss realizes that "that's what the districts are for. To provide the bread and circuses" for the overindulged citizens of the Capitol (MJ 224). The Hunger

Games serve as an integral part of the circuses which are needed to distract Panem's citizens from the corruption of its leader.

President Snow's autocratic rule is built upon a foundation of injustice, but Katniss hungers for justice. Once she finds herself an unwitting participant in the Hunger Games themselves, Katniss's indignation about the injustice of her society grows. She is forced to play a dangerous game in order to survive: dress up in various costumes, curry favor with those in the Capitol, and maintain awareness of survival strategies at every turn. She reflects, "All I can think is how unjust the whole thing is, the Hunger Games. Why am I hopping around like some trained dog trying to please people I hate?" (HG 117). Katniss longs to live in a just society, but her insight into the layers of unfairness in her current world evolve as her involvement in the Games deepens. When Katniss is on the Victory Tour after winning the Hunger Games, President Snow threatens her family and everyone she loves because Katniss tricked the Gamemakers in order to escape with both herself and Peeta alive. After living in fear for several weeks, she makes a decision while attending a celebratory banquet. Katniss recognizes, "My appetite has returned with my desire to fight back. After weeks of feeling too worried to eat, I'm famished. 'I want to taste everything in the room,' I tell Peeta" (CF 77). Hunger for food and hunger for justice are physically linked in

Katniss's body; once she decides to fight back against President Snow, her body hungers for the food necessary to sustain the fight. It is at this same party where the gluttony of Capitol citizens is highlighted; Katniss's prep team explains the presence of trays of glasses filled with a clear liquid to induce vomiting so that the people can continue eating for hours. The juxtaposition of scrappy Katniss, who has starved for most of her life, alongside greedy, binging Capitol citizens cements the link between hunger for food and hunger for justice. Interestingly, the slogan that is picked for Katniss in the third book of the series is: "People of Panem, we fight, we dare, we end our hunger for justice!" (MJ 71). Katniss's hunger for justice is known throughout the entire country.

Katniss also hungers for love, but she does not kiss a boy for the first time until she kisses Peeta during the Hunger Games. Kissing is the extent of sexual acts detailed since sexuality is largely in shadow in this series. Katniss initiates this first kiss primarily because she is pretending to be deeply in love with him in order to win gifts necessary for survival from sponsors of the Games, but she also leans forward to kiss Peeta to interrupt him from saying his goodbyes to her in case he dies of his infected leg wound. Since it is her first kiss, Katniss is aware that it should have some meaning to her, but all she thinks about is how hot Peeta's lips are because of his fever. This first moment of affection and physical

contact is also linked with Katniss's and Peeta's near starvation at this point in the games; immediately after the kiss, a gift of broth arrives. Katniss understands: "Haymitch couldn't be sending me a clearer message. One kiss equals one pot of broth" (HG 261). Her body is a commodity, and she can choose to engage in physical contact with Peeta to sell the audience the love story in order to feed herself. Katniss has never been in love, though, so her actions are a performance of love she remembers her mother and father displaying. At this point in the novels, she cares about Peeta on some level, but she does not love him romantically.

However, it is Peeta, the boy with the bread, who causes Katniss to feel her first stirrings of sexual hunger. Food and sexuality are linked, which calls to mind the ravenous, toothed vagina image. The scene begins again with a performance on Katniss's part: after Peeta sincerely begs her not to die on his behalf, she, "startled by his intensity but recogniz[ing] an excellent opportunity for getting food," tries to give a good performance so that the sponsors will be moved to send more food to the pair (HG 297). While she is acting, the idea of losing Peeta hits Katniss, and she realizes that she really does care for him and want him with her. The moment shifts for her, and she wants to block the rest of this conversation "from the prying eyes of Panem. Even if it means losing

food” (HG 298). She and Peeta are honestly expressing their feelings for one another, and they share the first kiss that they’re both completely aware of since this is the first kiss they’ve shared where neither one of them is feverish or freshly injured. Katniss realizes that “this is the first kiss where I actually feel stirring inside my chest. Warm and curious. This is the first kiss that makes me want another” (HG 298). This is the first time that Katniss hungers for anyone sexually. That night, she curls up inside Peeta’s arms in the cold cave, and she realizes that no one’s arms have made her feel this safe since her father was killed. Shortly thereafter, her hunger pangs intrude on the moment. During the Quarter Quell, after another emotional conversation in which they both try to sacrifice themselves for the other, Katniss kisses Peeta and “feel[s] that thing again;” the thing she felt during her first meaningful kiss with Peeta (CF 352). This time, she realizes that “instead of satisfying me, the kisses have the opposite effect, of making my need greater. I thought I was something of an expert on hunger, but this is an entirely new kind” (CF 352, 3). Katniss learns to hunger for intimacy with Peeta, but needing another person in this way is confusing and unsettling for her. Physical hunger, emotional reassurance, and sexual hunger are integrally linked in Katniss’s life.

Her relationship with Peeta notwithstanding, Katniss's body is continually commodified throughout the series in a manner that, though exaggerated, highlights the commodification of adolescent female bodies like Ana's from "RWHC," along with teenage girls in general. Katniss's body belongs to the Capitol from the time she is born since it is the Capitol who keeps her and her community poor and hungry. However, their ownership of and ability to brand her body becomes much more clear once Katniss is selected as a tribute in the Hunger Games. At that point, she is assigned to a committee of stylists who follow her throughout the novels, manipulating her body in order to impact various audiences. Cinna, her sympathetic chief stylist, begins her makeover with flair: after years of terrible coal-related costumes for the opening ceremonies of the Hunger Games, Cinna designs dramatic outfits for Katniss and Peeta which make them look like they are being engulfed by flames, although they also resemble food being cooked. This look makes an impression on the citizens of the Capitol, which means that Katniss and Peeta are in a better position to be sponsored throughout the Games. So begins Katniss's moniker as "the girl who was on fire," which I see as representative of the plight of adolescent girls. The metaphor of fire as a consuming and catalytic force is used throughout the novels; Katniss starts a revolution, but she is unaware that she is doing so. Katniss is on

fire, but she does not have consistent agency in that role. The power that she does have is what Lili Wilkinson terms “the power of the Watched, [which] lies in her ability to influence the Watchers” (71). Reminiscent of Trites’s explanation of the ubiquity of Foucauldian above-below matrices of power in YA fiction, Katniss wields immense power from her subordinate position as the watched pawn of the Games, but she is consistently unaware of the ramifications of her actions. Fire, like Katniss, and like adolescent girls in general, is a powerful force that is difficult to contain and that lacks focused and willful agency. *The Hunger Games* critic Renee Curry says that “girls are continuously resisting both patriarchy’s constraints as well as the constraints of feminist portrayals of them as victims,” but I argue that ignoring the pervasive component of victimization and commodification of girls is dangerous (97). Resistance is present and possible for girls, but their resistance is multivalent and complex as it is found in the interstices of their individual appetites and society’s appetite for them. This overt commodification of Katniss’s body is similar to the covert commodification of Ana’s body in “RWHC,” which is marked as larger than desirable and as ethnic. Designers do not literally attempt to inscribe Ana’s body as the designers do in *The Hunger Games*, but she feels the inscription of designers who make clothes for size 2 women, along with the inscription of her mother’s projected self-hatred.

Although the fire costume is a pivotal part of Katniss's image, Cinna and the stylists help manipulate Katniss's image in several other key scenes as well. For her first on-screen interview with Caesar Flickerman, Katniss is clad in a dress which appears, when she stands and twirls on Cinna's signal, like a shimmery fire. This cements the connection for the audience between the girl on fire from the opening ceremonies and Katniss Everdeen, the tribute who is in need of their support in order to survive. Then, in an even more crucial moment after Katniss returns from the Games, Cinna dresses her like a little girl in a soft pink dress and minimal make-up in order to counteract the damage she has done by defying the Gamemakers to save herself and Peeta. Katniss's "cultural 'value' as young female body remains crucial," as does the importance of the young female body and its concomitant "engagement in or denial of sex," for girls in general (Saxton xi). Cinna understands that Katniss needs to appear like an innocent child for the purpose of convincing President Snow that she did not willfully undermine his Games and his regime. After Katniss behaves shrewdly, it is important to reestablish her status as a child. As Jacqueline Rose asserts, desire and fetishization of the child, wanting to contain the child or remain the child, are emblematic of adults' desire for the child and hope that the child can return our innocence to us (8-9). Even though President Snow is not convinced of Katniss's

innocence, he wants her to restore innocence to the Capitol and the districts and to stop the rebellion she is fueling.

Since she is ultimately unsuccessful at stopping the rebellion, Katniss's body is appropriated once again by the rebels as their unifying symbol: the mockingjay. Cinna has a hand in this changing of the guard; he designs one final costume to make Katniss appear like a strong, beautiful bird in flight. Katniss is not completely oblivious to the way outside forces attempt to manipulate her as she thinks about Coin, the leader of the rebellion:

Another force to contend with. Another power player who has decided to use me as a piece in her games, although things never seem to go according to plan. First there were the Gamemakers, making me their star and then scrambling to recover from that handful of poisonous berries. Then President Snow, trying to use me to put out the flames of rebellion, only to have my every move become inflammatory. Next, the rebels ensnaring me in the metal claw that lifted me from the arena, designating me to be their Mockingjay, and then having to recover from the shock that I might not want the wings. And now Coin, with her fistful of precious nukes and her well-oiled machine of a district, finding it's even harder to groom a Mockingjay than to catch one. (MJ 59)

Many critics portray Katniss as someone who is out of touch with herself and clueless about the impact she has on others, but I disagree with this assessment of her. In this same passage, Katniss discusses how she has "an agenda of [her] own," which, at this point, involves ensuring immunity for Peeta and the other Hunger Games participants who have been

captured by the Capitol. Although she does not always understand the far-reaching implications of her actions, Katniss has some agency. She is aware of her appetites and takes action to take care of herself and those she loves. She is cognizant of outside forces attempting to appropriate her, and she finds the resistance she can on a case-by-case basis.

In order to turn Katniss into the Mockingjay, her beauty team has much to overcome. The protagonist has just returned from her second torturous time inside the arena, and her body bears the scars from her travails. An order is given to remake Katniss to Beauty Base Zero, which is “what a person would look like if they stepped out of bed looking flawless but natural” (MJ 60). It is interesting that a zero, or neutral ground, for a girl’s appearance entails looking both natural and flawless, as if those two characteristics can and do exist side-by-side. The Capitol sees perfection as a pre-condition for embellishment and beauty, and clearly the rebel agenda has not changed that perception of adolescent female beauty. Katniss does not fit easily into this mold, and she acknowledges that “it’s no simple job getting me back to Beauty Base Zero” (MJ 61). She is scarred and burned, which hampers the design team’s desire to make her into a slick and formidable mass-marketed Mockingjay image to be distributed in order to inspire the fighting rebel forces. Katniss is eventually able to wash some of the layers of make-up

off and to enter into actual battle instead of staged, inauthentic promotional spots. She goes into a hospital to encourage the wounded, and she is such an inspiration to the suffering people there that, as she walks around, she feels “hungry fingers devour [her], wanting to feel [her] flesh” (MJ 90). It is at this moment that she realizes how out of place the mask-like makeup of the Capitol would have been in such a challenging setting since “the damage, the fatigue, the imperfections. That’s how they recognize me, why I belong to them” (MJ 90). In eschewing an outside beauty agenda in this particular instance, Katniss is able to reclaim a personal sense of autonomy and partial ownership over her own body. She is still being used as a pawn of Coin and the rebel forces at this moment and throughout the novel, but key moments of resistance are necessary in order for the protagonist to maintain her sense of authenticity.

Although both Ana and Katniss are protagonists with intelligence and grit, they each must grapple with authentic representation in a society that is fixated on their outward appearance. They both have to marshal their appetites in order to find moments of agency in an unjust world. The *vagina dentata* serves as a symbol for uniting the young women’s sexual hunger and hunger for food, along with their hunger for self-expression and for justice. The authors of both texts model the possibilities of female

hunger and female resistance for readers. For the majority of both pieces, the authors convey the idea that overt and covert resistance are possible in the interstices of society's demands for young teens and the teens' own will and desire. Perhaps López and Collins fall short of their ideals by removing the *dentata* from their protagonists in respective epilogues that provide the protagonists with traditional 'happy endings,' or perhaps they are merely pragmatically packaging their characters in a manner that is palatable for publishers and audiences alike. Nonetheless, hunger is an important motif in both texts since it helps crystallize the intersection of society's hunger for the bodies of girls and the girls' individual appetites.

Heart: Love Triangles and Sacrifice

Dystopian novels and films are increasingly popular in the beginning of the 21st century. As daily reports of bombings, shooting rampages, and social and economic instability dominate the news, a predominant creative response is to question, via dystopian fiction, the government's ability to control and to ameliorate intrusive destructive forces. In this chapter, I examine *The Hunger Games* trilogy (wherein I will be focusing on the books rather than the film adaptations), alongside the more subtle suburban dystopian Chicana novel, *Haters*, by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez. Best-selling female authors Collins and Valdes-Rodriguez have developed female characters who are generally interpreted as strong but who are modeling a troubling sacrifice that undercuts their strength. Sacrifice is a prominent theme in young adult literature, and female or feminized characters are often sacrificed for the good of particular male characters or for the good of their patriarchal society at large. Each of these dystopian texts touts a strong, athletic female protagonist who is perceived, particularly in the case of Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games*, as an ideal feminist role model for readers. An article in *Bitch*, a feminist response to pop culture, typifies this feminist embrace of Katniss, lauding her "value as a feminist heroine—her engagement with her

surroundings, and her ultimate decision to stand up for more people than herself” (Seltzer 40). Similarly, Paski from *Haters* takes a stance against malevolent forces while maintaining an ostensibly strong sense of self. However, neither Katniss nor Paski are unequivocally feminist heroines. Upon closer reflection, these supposedly strong, complex female figures are troublingly self-sacrificing to the point of anti-feminist self-abnegation.

Dystopian YA fiction provides two possible subject positions for emulation: the sacrificing maternal figure or the sacrificing, but desirable, maiden within a love triangle. Another binary that presents itself is that of a female character who is either armed and dangerous or who is a passive sacrificial victim. The problematic nature of the ever-sacrificing female is often unexplored within YA novels, so that vexing stereotypes are perpetuated unquestioningly. I argue that even though Katniss and Paski at times write back against the dominant narrative by enacting masculine sacrifice or by being masculine-identified in behavior, both characters are more closely identified with feminine sacrifice. Even though their authors extol characters like Katniss and Paski as a feminist ideal, both of them appropriate masculine sacrifice and strength at points, making them a repackaged masculine trope, even as both story lines progress to hold feminine sacrifice as the best choice for young women.

Sacrifice, gendered as masculine and feminine, is different both in orientation and in outcome. In this chapter, I will build on René Girard and Luce Irigaray's theories of masculine-oriented and feminine-oriented sacrifice, respectively, and I will apply them to love triangles and to instances of maternal sacrifice within selected YA literature. As Girard notes, "violence and the sacred are inseparable," and he discusses violence as seminal fluid, a clearly masculine identifier, which, like violence itself, is "eminently communicable" (19, 28, 30). Girard observes a very masculine-oriented sacrifice— that which involves killing a member of society in order to deflect violence from other members of the community, and he purports that society is built on this type of sacrifice. Irigaray, on the other hand, uses the male-controlled and female-exclusive sacrifice ritual of Holy Communion within Christianity as a starting point, and she moves from there to assess the hidden sacrifice of woman within society. As Irigaray points out, women are perceived only in the limiting role of mother. Women are reduced to their fertility, but even that "is sacrificed by the socially constructed fertility of the sacrificial culture of the Father. The sacrificial economy of the Father sacrifices the mother" (Keenan 170). Maternal sacrifice is a feminine sacrifice; as such, it is different in nature. It involves not seminal fluid, but the blood of the mother. Since women are excluded, by and large, from religious ritual and

from religious power, Irigaray expounds that the sacrifice of woman is hidden underneath the eucharistic sacrifice (Irigaray 78). Therefore, Irigaray argues that “the sacrifice of natural fertility is the original sacrifice” since Mary was denied her generative power with the creation of the virgin birth (Irigaray 80). In other words, the sacrifice of woman’s power and fertility within patriarchy is a given– it is a foundational truth, albeit an obscured one, that is necessary for the construction of current society. Additionally, since we live in sacrificial societies, deciding who is the victim or the sacrificed and how the sacrifice ritual is conducted is of paramount importance (Irigaray 78). Women do not typically participate in either of these decisions, and so they find themselves being victimized and sacrificed perpetually.

Maternal sacrifice and sacrifice within a love triangle bear a commonality not found in masculine sacrifice: they are done for the benefit of a private, intimate family member or loved one. In motherhood, as Irigaray asserts, women become socially valuable (84). However, maternal sacrifice and feminine sacrifice within a love triangle are still often inextricably intertwined with violence, as Girard asserts. Even though maternal sacrifice is necessary and expected, it often leads to dysfunction within families as the mother’s creativity, individuality, and sexuality can be stifled. In this chapter, I examine the theme of sacrifice in dysfunctional

families and sacrifice for romantic love in the ubiquitous trope of the love triangle within *The Hunger Games* trilogy and within *Haters*. I argue that even though, and perhaps because, it is often unhealthy for the mother, maternal sacrifice is the backbone of society and the mirror that is held up for young females to see their future selves in. The sacrifice of the mother has come to be expected, understood, and pragmatically necessary for families to function and for successful children to grow and to individuate. It is clear “that our society assumes that the mother should feed her child for free and that she should remain the nurse of man and society” (Irigaray 83). Maternal sacrifice, which serves as the exemplar for all feminine sacrifice, models free and expected emptying of the self in service of others without valorization or recognition. I also argue that authorial projection of models of female sacrifice held as ideal, strong, and empowering is problematic because it offers female readers an opportunity to read their own future selves as naturally sacrificial and to see sacrifice as flowing from their gendered selves. Such models also offer male readers a model wherein they expect sacrifices from their mothers and lovers as a sign of their love.

Families of origin play a vital formative role for the protagonists in both *The Hunger Games* and in *Haters*. The importance of the mother’s role and maternal sacrifice in children’s development is widely understood

from Freud through systems theory, and applying a psychological critical lens to Katniss's and Peeta's, along with Paski's, families of origin offers insight into their behaviors and character arcs as they navigate sacrifice and dysfunction as learning and coping mechanisms. In *The Hunger Games*, both Katniss and Peeta, one of the key vertices in Katniss's love triangle, come from dysfunctional families wherein difficulties with their mothers are paramount. A pivotal moment in Katniss's childhood is the death of her father. Following his death, Katniss's mother sinks into a depression from which she is unable to emerge, not even to feed and clothe her two young daughters. Because of her mother's inability to function, Katniss is forced to assume the role of parent to her younger sister, Prim. The necessity of providing for her family drives Katniss to hunt illegally with bow and arrow in order to put food on the table, and this skill becomes an integral survival tool during the hunger games. Peeta, on the other hand, has an overbearing, abusive mother who punishes her nurturing, feminized son for giving food to Katniss. Her attempted interference serves to concretize a younger Peeta's undying love for and need to protect Katniss. The strength of his love, which overcomes first his mother and later myriad other obstacles, is a driving force of the novel. In *Haters*, Pasquala (Paski) has a dysfunctional relationship with her father after her mother abandons the family when Paski is ten years old. A

critical and character-forming event in Paski's childhood is this abandonment by her drug-abusing, promiscuous mother. At that point, the parent-child dynamic between Paski and her youthful, often immature father reverses. Paski observes, "sometimes the whole parent/kid thing gets blurred in our house" (7). Even though she does not have younger siblings to care for, as Katniss does, Paski is forced at an early age to take care of not only her own physical and emotional needs, but also to provide emotional support to her often incompetent father. This dynamic begins to reverse again as the novel progresses and Paski's father begins to devote himself more to his parental role, but Paski still ends up largely as part of a sacrifice as she becomes more and more enmeshed in an unhealthy Southern California ideal.

In both *The Hunger Games* series and in *Haters*, the protagonists' mothers, along with other women in the novels, are sacrificed to their patriarchal society, which is important because it illustrates the ubiquity of maternal sacrifice. In *The Hunger Games*, most of the female characters suffer from depression. Society's sacrifice of women is evident in Panem, where President Snow is, in essence, the controlling, abusive father figure for all of the districts. He has his favorite children, Districts 1 and 2, and his least favorite, including the 'black sheep,' District 13, who rebelled and left the 'family' altogether. Viewing Snow as the authoritarian *pater familias*

adds another layer to the reader's understanding of Katniss's and Peeta's dysfunctional upbringing and unusually destructive conscription by a dysfunctional society. Daily sacrifice to the father is mandatory for the Seam workers in District 12; they lead bleak lives on the brink of poverty and starvation while their counterparts in the Capitol thrive on excess. The ritual annual sacrifice of two of each district's children, a Girardian Eucharistic/masculine sacrifice, brings additional unimaginable horror and violence on top of the daily violence of totalitarian oppression. Many women, like Katniss's mother, who have already lost their husbands, the breadwinners, within this gender stratified system stand to lose the providing capacity of a child as well. Children are able to be providers by taking tesserae, an additional supply of grain and oil that means the difference between surviving and perishing for their starving families, but the rations are in exchange for the children putting their names in extra times for the Reaping, the drawing that determines who is sent from each district, thus increasing their risk of being chosen for the hunger games. Both males and females are sacrificed in the arena, but it is the mothers back at home who bear an extra burden attempting to feed their children. Many turn to prostitution at the hands of a corrupt Peacekeeper— women's bodies have negligible value in this society, and prostitution also can result in children, which means more mouths to feed. Women with more financial

means are not spared: Madge's mother, the mayor's wife, suffers from crippling, migraine-inducing depression after losing her twin sister in a previous hunger game.

Within patriarchy, mothers are provided with few options: they can sacrifice themselves with the slight hope that their sacrifice will help their children, or they can succumb to their depression, as Katniss's mother does at the beginning of the series. In a world where women have never had a divinity of their own, their desires and forms have never been symbolized and their becoming has never eventuated. Instead, 'woman' has sacrificed her own life in order that 'man' may become divine.

Goddess spiritualists and Irigaray argue that Christianity is based not on the sacrifice of Christ, but on the sacrifice of woman in the figure of the mother (Ingram 51).

When maternal sacrifice is the only option modeled for and acceptable to women, and when there is no alternative society to which they can withdraw, how is a woman to resist? Perhaps Katniss's mother's refusal to sacrifice herself in order to care for her children, and her insistence instead on isolating herself with the memories of her beloved deceased husband, is actually an act of self-assertion within her sexist society. She cannot join another society, but she retreats from her own and exists within herself, committing the socially unforgivable sin of ignoring her

children's needs. Katniss is never truly able to move beyond this maternal betrayal, even later when her mother displays extraordinary strength under pressure in healing Gale from his whip wounds in *Catching Fire*, the second novel. The mother's character undergoes a specific arc throughout the series from being withdrawn and, in Katniss's view, weak, in the first book to being fully enfranchised as a healer in a newly free society in the last book. However, in *Mockingjay*, Mrs. Everdeen still chooses herself over her daughter when she decides against accompanying the suicidal Katniss back to their home in District 12 since the memories of Prim and their former life are too painful for her there. She devotes herself to helping other people, but she fails her oldest daughter yet again. Katniss's mother repeatedly refuses to engage in maternal sacrifice, which could be read as an empowering, feminist choice, but, in doing so, she enacts a masculine sacrifice of her own children. Within the current bipartite patriarchal framework, opting out of sacrificing or being sacrificed appears untenable.

Similarly, in *Haters*, Paski's mother refuses to enact the maternal sacrifice for her daughter's good; instead, the mother is sacrificed by a patriarchal society that offers her few options. Her creativity is stunted by her life; she is, in Paski's words, "sort of an art groupie who wanted to be a singer, had her midlife crisis and took off with a biker dude" (6). I read

Paski's judgment as overly harsh; she is deeply wounded by abandonment by her mother, but I read between the text to unearth her mother's journey of self-discovery. Paski's mother acts out sexually while Paski's father objectifies women by drawing "voluptuous female cartoons that he drools over" and eventually becomes famous for (19). Paski's mother is unfulfilled by her role as wife to an eternally immature man and mother to a young daughter, and the only escape she sees is to abandon the family. Paski's reflections on her mother indicate that her mother's life is riddled with addiction and dissatisfaction; perhaps her inability to fulfill her maternal role with its requisite self-sacrifice has left her unrooted within a patriarchal society. Her portrayal within the novel indicates that she is meant to be judged by the reader as a bad mother and, by extension, a bad person; she serves as an example of what not to do. Perhaps, as with Katniss's mother, a reading against the grain is possible; perhaps Paski's mother finds a way to remain true to her creative side by living an unfettered existence. Being reduced to being a "mother-woman"³⁷ is not an acceptable option for her, and she claims agency by leaving. In Paski's eyes, she is a failure, just as Katniss's mother is a failure from her daughter's perspective. Watching their mothers fail to sacrifice themselves for their daughters' good, and instead observing them as victims of their

³⁷ term coined in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

patriarchal societies to some extent, emboldens the daughters to do better. Katniss picks up a bow and arrow and sets off to use her memories of her father to help her hunt and gather food for her family rather than becoming numb and incapable of action due to her depression and memories. Paski makes a conscious decision not to be promiscuous like her mother in order not to be overtly used by men. But then, both characters find themselves enmeshed in sacrificial relationships within love triangles, which is not a more empowered subject position for a female, even though it is touted as such by fans of these books.

The lack of maternal sacrifice on the part of Paski's mom is a major genre deviator for Chicano/a literature, as the prototypical Chicana mother is often long-suffering.³⁸ Writing against the grain is part of Valdes-Rodriguez's portrayal of an "ambivalent Latinidad;" she said that she could not relate to

most 'Latinas' in American fiction [who] were culturally isolated women who, as an editor once joked, 'always seemed to wash their clothes on a rock in the river,' . . . [she] knew nothing of the things 'Latina' writers were supposed to know about: immigration, making tortillas, loving Pedro Infante [so she] wrote the book [she] wanted to read but could never find—a book [she] hope[s] will prove that all of us, regardless of our family trees, skin color, politics, religion, sexual orientation, language, or nation, are best defined by who, not what, we are. (qtd. in Hurt 133)

³⁸ c.f. the mothers in *House on Mango Street*, *Bless Me*, *Ultima*, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, and Cherie Moraga's mother in *Loving in the War Years*. Also c.f. Sandra Cisneros's author's note for *HOMS* that she is "nobody's mother, and nobody's wife," which demonstrates her attempt to avoid maternal self-sacrifice. Also, Cisneros is unequivocally unambivalent about her Latinidad, as it is a source of great pride for her.

It is vital to explore the lack of maternal sacrifice, which is an integral assumption of how the Chicano family is “supposed” to be. Valdes-Rodriguez appears to leave the ever-sacrificing mother stereotype behind on purpose; it is a trope she does not accept as part of her more “modern” experience. As Erin Hurt skillfully points out in an article about another of Valdes-Rodriguez’s novels, although the criticism is applicable to *Haters* as well, “The contradiction between the content’s complex work of exploring and redefining identity and the genre’s need to produce and sell the literary equivalent of cotton candy produces an ambivalent Latinidad that argues for a common American sameness, but also insists on a distinct ethnicity” (134). Hurt maintains that Valdes-Rodriguez wants the best of both worlds: she writes Latina characters who offer “two narratives that never quite reconcile (we are all the same versus we are Latinas and we are different)” (148). Valdes-Rodriguez portrays an ambivalent Latinidad, which appears to minimize the differences between Paski and characters of other races. She grapples with what many Chicana authors confront, according to Ellen McCracken, in attempting to find the acceptable amount of “tropicalization,” the deviation from the white standard that is celebrated as postmodern difference in a “minority commodity” that is not overwhelming to the dominant culture (5-6). Some readers argue that Valdes-Rodriguez overcorrects in her attempt to

minimize differences: Paski is just a girl struggling to fit in, to wear the right clothes to the big party and to date the cute guy, just like any other girl of any race. However, in minimizing racial distinctions, the author also abandons maternal sacrifice for her child as an outmoded trope. Whether Paski's mother is able to find joy in her post-maternal life or whether she is simply sacrificed to her patriarchal society appears, like much else in Valdes-Rodriguez's writing, to be ambivalent. However, Valdes-Rodriguez offers the reader an unambivalent strong female in the character of Paski's grandmother, who is in touch with her own and Paski's psychic gifts. The majority of Paski's strength and depth as a character are revealed when she aligns herself with her grandmother and with her spiritual side. Paski's grandmother is at peace with her spiritual Chicana heritage, and Valdes-Rodriguez's presentation of her as the unsung heroine of the novel demonstrates less ambivalence than some critics give her credit for.

Early entrenchment in dysfunctional families in the modality of formative exposure to a damaging mother figure leads the characters to develop complex, somewhat unhealthy attitudes about love. *The Hunger Games* opens with Katniss's meditations on her mother and younger sister, the latter of whom is the most important person to her. The older sister wakes up and reaches over to the cold side of the bed she shares

with Prim only to find that she is not there. Katniss immediately surmises that Prim “must have had bad dreams and climbed in with our mother” (HG 3). Since it is the day of the reaping, Katniss is not surprised that her sister is troubled and seeking their mother’s comfort. As she explains later in the novel, “I protect Prim in every way I can, but I’m powerless against the reaping” (HG 15). This opening scene illuminates the close relationship between Katniss and her sister, along with Katniss’s default role as Prim’s surrogate mother. The brief opening paragraph also foreshadows for the reader that, try though she might, Katniss will ultimately fall short in her role of defender and protector of Prim. She is impotent as all women are in such a system.

The reader joins Katniss’s life after the worst of her family trauma is behind her. She and her mother are taking small steps back toward one another after her mother’s devastating breakdown and abandonment of her caregiving responsibilities. As the girls get cleaned and dressed up for the reaping, Katniss sees that, as a gesture of peace, her mother has put out one of her own prized dresses from her past for her oldest daughter. Katniss asks her whether she’s sure about lending the dress, while remembering, “For a while, I was so angry, I wouldn’t allow her to do anything for me” (HG 15). Due to her intense anger at her mother and her premature responsibility for her family’s survival, Katniss has “taken a step

back from [her] mother, put up a wall to protect [herself] from needing her” (HG 53). This emotional wall extends to almost everyone else: she has very few friends, and she is closed off to the idea of having a romantic partner and a family in the future. In fact, the only person Katniss is sure she loves is Prim (HG 10). She tells the Capitol audience that she loves Prim “more than anything” (129). Katniss is perhaps overly attached to her sister, and she is willing to do anything to take care of Prim.

Katniss’s devotion to her sister is enmeshed with self-sacrifice, the maternal abnegation detailed by Irigaray, because the inciting moment of the novel involves Katniss volunteering to take her younger sister’s place in the hunger games. Since she has acted as Prim’s mother figure, Katniss’s martyring act on behalf of her sister can be seen through the lens of how a “healthier” mothering instinct than what was modeled for her should function. As Mary Borsellino observes, “On live television, all over Panem, she introduces a radical new idea: that it is important to care about other people; that it is the most important thing in the world” (31). Although we read of the people of Panem caring for one another, Katniss, in offering her life in exchange for her sister’s, is taking caring to a new level. Of course, the radical notion of caring for other people was not learned from her mother during her breakdown. Perhaps women’s mothering is, as Nancy Chodorow asserts in *Reproduction of Mothering*,

passed down systemically, and as such, it is unavoidable for mothering to be taught as central to division of labor in a society. As motherhood is entrenched in social construction, so is the idea of maternal sacrifice. Mothers in Panem sacrifice themselves for their children continually by prostituting themselves, by scrounging for sewing and housekeeping work, like Gale's mother, that keeps them working late into the night, and by feeding their children before they feed themselves. Since her mother's pivotal lack of self-sacrifice, Katniss has overcompensated for the dearth of love by shining the full force of her own love and protection on her sister. Most would agree that a mother should be willing to sacrifice her own life to save her child's life. Although Katniss's mother did the opposite of this, it seems logical for Katniss, who has learned to be the surrogate mother, to volunteer as a tribute so that her sister can stay safely at home.

Peeta's family doesn't contain the fierce love Katniss has for Prim, and neither of his brothers responds to Effie Trinkett when she asks for volunteers to take his place. They have not learned maternal sacrifice. Katniss's sacrifice is the anomaly; as such, it creates quite a stir throughout Panem. Peeta, on the other hand, steps to the podium, and Katniss notices that his "blue eyes show the alarm [she's] seen so often in prey" (HG 26). The reader later learns that Peeta's father had been in love with Katniss's mother, but she married for love rather than money in

marrying Katniss's father. Peeta's father married a shrill, overbearing woman instead of his softer, gentler first love. Peeta's father shows kindness toward Katniss in sending home-baked cookies with her when she leaves for the Capitol and in telling Katniss that he will help ensure that Prim has food, but he does not show a similar love to his own son by giving him food. Perhaps his caring gesture is all that remains of the untarnished love he had for Katniss's mother. Peeta's mother never shows any kindness or love to Peeta, Katniss, or anyone else. In fact, when she is saying goodbye to her son, presumably for the last time, she tells him, "Maybe District Twelve will finally have a winner" (90). Peeta realizes that she is not referring to her faith in her son's victory; rather, she believes that Katniss might have the temerity to win. Peeta, in this scene along with many others, is feminized; he is continually associated with softness, baking, and hearth. Katniss, on the other hand, is often masculinized with her tough persona and her adeptness at hunting. This fluidity in gender often elides simple categorization into masculine and feminine tropes.

Perhaps Peeta's struggle to maintain his identity, which is drawn into sharp focus in the pre-hunger games night on the rooftop with Katniss, is rooted in his birth order as the youngest child and in his trying relationship with his controlling mother. As the baby of the family, Peeta has probably had to work harder than his two older brothers to find a niche

in the family system. The youngest in a family typically rails against what the other siblings have done in order to focus attention on his or her unique identity. This struggle for individuation is even more pronounced with the presence of an overbearing mother who is intent on bending her family members to her will. This explains Peeta's fixation on not losing his sense of self in the hunger games arena—he focuses his pre-games energy on thinking “of a way to . . . to show the Capitol they don't own [him]. That [he's] more than just a piece in their Games” (HG 142). Katniss, who is not preoccupied with a struggle for identity, responds to Peeta by telling him that he, just like the rest of the tributes, *is* just a piece in the Capitol's games. Peeta replies: “Okay, but within that framework, there's still you, there's still me. . . Don't you see?” (HG 142). Peeta wants to spend his time in the arena in a manner that is consistent with his sense of self; even though he knows he will fight to the death, he does not want to lose his humanity. The rooftop conversation comes to a close with Peeta's bitter reference to his mother's hurtful comment about Katniss's prospects of winning the Games: he snidely requests to Katniss, “Give my mother my best when you make it back will you?” (HG 142). The hurt inflicted by his mother's lack of faith in his abilities is obvious. While he wrestles with his likely impending death and his desire to stay true to himself until the end, Peeta is constantly reminded of his mother. The

damage inflicted by his dysfunctional family is clear, but Peeta also, despite having inadequate mothering modeled at home, has learned to show love, protection, and self-sacrifice for another. In Panem, choosing one's own sacrifice is a type of rebellion and empowerment. The reader sees the steadiness, or the obsessiveness, of Peeta's love for Katniss unfold throughout the series. Since the series is a trilogy, characters' relationships with one other deepen, grow, and undergo tremendous change from the beginning through the end.

Haters also maintains a focus on identity. Its opening epigraph includes the lines: "Do I want to. . . invent a whole new me?. . . No one, no one/ Don't want to be no one but me." This line introduces the novel with a similar identity struggle and a desire to remain true to oneself with which Peeta struggles. However, *Haters* includes a dimension that is elided almost entirely within The *Hunger Games* series: that of race. Paski's father is portrayed as having an intense identification with 'La Raza,' even though he can't speak Spanish. Paski is bewildered about this apparent contradiction, and the opening scene in the novel details her embarrassment and annoyance about her ethnic name (Pasquala Rumalda Quintana de Archuleta) and the way her dad says it in a thick Spanish accent only when "he thinks there are lots of 'gringos' around" (5). Paski's father is preoccupied with "Mexican power;" Paski, on the other

hand, doesn't "care one way or the other about Mexican power. . . To [her], people are people, and some get better names than others" (5,6). Later in the novel, the author entertains an extended discussion of the difference between the terms Mexican and Mexican-American. Paski's friend, Tina, who is also Mexican-American, is dating an older, Spanish-speaking man who is a recent immigrant from Mexico. At first, Paski thinks Tina is making disparaging remarks about Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, and she says, "I'm Mexican," even though she doesn't usually identify herself as such (123). Tina delineates the differences between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans before stating that her Mexican-American parents do not like Mexicans, a phenomenon which, according to Paski, is fairly common in the Mexican-American community. Paski reflects that her dad taught her not to distinguish between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, but she remembers that some people in Taos considered themselves above the Mexican-American community and identified themselves as 'Spanish' (124). This distinction is representative of the centuries-old postcolonial caste system within Mexico that prizes the 'white' colonizer above the indigenous people. Paski is mostly cavalier regarding racial identity throughout the novel, but her Mexican-American identity nonetheless surfaces at several key moments.

Probably due to her dysfunctional relationship with her father, who neglects to sacrifice himself for his daughter at the beginning of the novel, instead choosing to pursue his dream in Hollywood along with spending inordinate amounts of time behaving like an adolescent and attending parties, Paski does not seem to be emotionally healthy in her pursuit of romantic love. Her dad continually fails to have time for her, and he forgets to provide for her basic needs. She has to sacrifice some essential well-being to be with him in California, and she no longer has her grandmother living nearby to help fill in the gaps. Paski reflects on her dysfunctional family, and on her decision to wait to lose her virginity, explaining: “When you have a promiscuous, crazy mother and a dad who draws voluptuous female cartoons that he drools over, um, let’s just say you take your time. Rebellion takes many forms” (19). This seems to be a healthy decision, made in conscious rebellion of the lack of sacrifice modeled by her parents. Interestingly, virginity is a topic which is not broached in *The Hunger Games*. Perhaps this is more typical of dystopian Anglo YA fiction, or perhaps it is reflective of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and *The Hunger Games*’ characters’ need to focus on daily survival without having time for sexual exploration. Maturing female bodies are also not mentioned in *The Hunger Games* series, whereas Paski’s dad takes her out for ice cream and had the staff sing congratulations when she gets her first period (29).

Periods are not mentioned in *The Hunger Games*. *Haters* also includes a sex talk between Paski and her dad where, much to her chagrin, he salutes her “blossoming adulthood”, tells her that girls have just as strong of a sex drive as boys do, and informs her that he has set up an appointment with Planned Parenthood for her to obtain birth control (209-11). This enlightened moment, along with Paski’s father’s decision to ask for her permission before continuing his new romantic relationship, show that, by the end of the novel, he has evolved away from complete self-absorption and into a more genuine, empathetic connection with his daughter. *The Hunger Games* includes no details on sexuality, and parents are not depicted having these types of discussions with their children.³⁹

Sexual violence against women is prominent in *Haters* just as it is in *The Hunger Games* series. Girls and women are sacrificed in the dystopian Southern California high school in a similar manner to women in Panem. Paski’s and other female characters’ bodily integrity is devalued and endangered in *Haters*. At Aliso Niguel High School, the popular, rich students are the ruling class. It is similar to the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* series with its cruel ruling elite, with the students’ manipulation of their bodies with surgery (Paski tells her friend from back home about

³⁹ As seen in much YA literature, violence, and even sexual violence, is acceptable, but sex among consenting teenagers is not.

another student's breast enhancement surgery), and with skimpy, designer clothing. After Andrew, one of the ruling elite, puts a date rape drug in Paski's soda at a party, it becomes clear that he regularly forces drugs on young women whom he then rapes, and that many other students are aware of and complicit with his actions. Young women's bodies are of little enough value to the community that a rich, white perpetrator is permitted to take advantage of them for an extended period of time without fear of retribution. Andrew enacts a public, masculine sacrifice of Paski; in her drugged state, she is pushed into a pool by Jessica, where she hits her head and is rescued by Chris. Jessica participates in the sacrifice of Paski, and although Jessica is a ruthless, vindictive character, her implied sexual abuse at the hands of an English teacher is also mentioned in the text. Jessica enacts violence on other women besides Paski: she sabotages the bike of a talented female motocross rider to eliminate competition, possibly perpetuating the abuse that she has herself been the victim of. As another product of a dysfunctional upbringing, Jessica has been raised in a home that is built as a shrine to her: her mother worships her, but her adoration and permissiveness provide the conditions for her daughter to grow into a sociopath. Female bodies appear to have value only in terms of the harm that is inflicted on them. Paski's body is ogled by her dad's friends as well,

and at the end of the novel, she chooses to dress in a skin-tight motocross outfit that she thinks Chris will like. She is sexualized by others, and she intermittently chooses to participate in that sexualization.

Family dysfunction has also set the stage for Katniss and Peeta to have complex, and, at times, unhealthy attitudes toward romantic love. A prevalent trope regarding romantic love in this novel, along with much young adult literature, is the love triangle, which in general, as in this particular case, involves one female character and two competing males.⁴⁰ Within the love triangle, various characters also attempt to sacrifice themselves in order to save the one/s they love. Of course, there is more to the characters than their place within the love triangle. Jennifer Lynn Barnes observes:

But Katniss Everdeen—like a variety of her literary predecessors—is far more than a vertex on some love triangle. She is interesting and flawed and completely three-dimensional all on her own. She’s a sister, a daughter, a friend, a hero, and—above all—a survivor. She’s defined by her compassion, her loyalty, and her perseverance, and those are all traits she has independent of the boys. (18)

While I agree that Katniss is a well-developed, competent, and capable heroine, I still maintain that her main identification is reduced to her sacrificial presence within the love triangle. The focus of Katniss’s affections shifts throughout the series while Peeta’s feelings remain

⁴⁰ c.f. *Twilight*, *House of Night*, *The Vampire Diaries*

transfixed on Katniss. Applying the theories of René Girard to the love triangle in the series illuminates the complexities of Katniss's, Peeta's, and Gale's motivations. Love and sacrifice are intertwined for all of the characters, and they appear to be mimicked from one character to the other.

Girard explores the triangulation of desire and its mimetic nature. He explains that a subject "will desire any object so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires. The mediator here is a rival, brought into existence as a rival by vanity, and that same vanity demands his defeat" (7). Whether Gale or Peeta is the originator for love for Katniss is difficult to discern, but I argue that Peeta is established as the mentor for Gale's eventual romantic feelings toward Katniss. Peeta falls in love with Katniss early in their childhood, and he steadfastly carries that love forward from the pivotal moment when he intentionally burns bread so that he can give it to the starving young Katniss. Then, Peeta makes Katniss desirable not only to Gale but to the entire viewing public of Panem by declaring his love for her during his televised interview before the hunger games (HG 130-6). Haymitch clarifies the significance of Peeta's actions for Katniss: "You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do" (HG 135). At this point, to Gale, Peeta, the mentor, "becomes the obstacle, as well as

the idol, and the rivals become doubles. They become equally powerful, more and more indistinguishable from each other” (Culbertson 39). After Gale sees romantic love for Katniss modeled by Peeta on television, he and Peeta become doubled in the love triangle. Gale imitates the affections of Peeta, and he and Peeta begin to become interchangeable as objects of Katniss’s oft-changing affections.

Katniss clarifies very early in the series that “there’s never been anything romantic between Gale and me” (HG 10). However, this sentiment is destined to change as the vertices of the triangle come into sharper relief. Katniss equivocates, at times choosing Peeta while at other moments choosing Gale. She opts potentially to sacrifice her own life for Peeta’s several times throughout *The Hunger Games*, most notably when she devises the ‘double suicide by poisonous berry’ plot to avoid Peeta’s attempt to sacrifice his life for hers. But is this sacrifice really for his good instead of hers? The heroine reflects: “If he dies, I’ll never go home, not really. I’ll spend the rest of my life in this arena trying to think my way out” (343). Katniss opts also to save herself from future pain and guilt should she fail to bring Peeta home with her. She and Peeta both offer their lives up for the other, and ultimately Katniss is willing to kill herself instead of murdering Peeta if her plan does not work as anticipated. Opportunities to sacrifice and to be sacrificed for come fewer and farther between with

Gale: Katniss puts herself in harm's way to attempt to rescue him from a brutal whipping by a Peacekeeper. For his part, Gale presumably goes without more food for his family in order to keep his promise to Katniss that her mother and sister will not starve while she's in the arena. Apart from those instances, Gale and Katniss do not have the type of self-sacrificing relationship that Peeta and Katniss do. When it matters the most, Gale refuses to sacrifice his killer instinct in order to, ultimately, save Prim, along with saving his own humanity. Perhaps because it was what she was denied in a pivotal period of her childhood, Katniss is drawn to the man who sacrifices the most for her, and for whom she is compelled to sacrifice. Peeta is also a more feminized character than Gale is: Peeta is doughy and round, and he is associated with bread and hearth throughout the novel. He challenges gendered stereotypes further by abnegating himself and enacting maternal self-sacrifice for the good of Katniss, while Gale is masculine to a fault, easily sacrificing the lives of others for his own and even murdering a few people for what he perceives as the greater good. Gale embodies Girard's masculine sacrifice while Peeta evokes Irigaray's feminine sacrifice. Katniss challenges gender stereotypes as well, as she appears to be nearly as comfortable with masculine modes of sacrifice like killing animals and then competitors in

the hunger games, as feminine, maternal ones. At the end of the series,

Katniss explains her final choice of Peeta as her mate:

I know this would have happened anyway. That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. (CF 388)

Katniss chooses the feminized love, the man who is connected to the earth, as her partner. The masculine choice destroyed land and people, whereas the feminized man plants primrose bushes for Katniss to memorialize her sister.

The love triangle in *Haters* involves Chris, Jessica, and Paski, all of whom are athletes in the dystopia of a Southern California high school. Jessica is selfish and vicious, even criminal in her hatred and jealousy. She is Machiavellian in a manner that is reminiscent of President Snow from *The Hunger Games*. Paski briefly sacrifices herself by accepting Jessica's prohibition against Paski's participation in motocross and by behaving superficially before the big party in order to fit into the wealthy school. She also sacrifices herself by avoiding dating Chris for a short time after he breaks up with Jessica because her dad doesn't like him and has forbidden her to see him. When she pursues her romantic relationship with

Chris, she falls for him quickly, trusting the good feeling she has about him even though he's dating the cruelest girl at the school.

Paski primarily sacrifices herself by denying her psychic gifts—for example, she neglects wearing the protective amulet given to her by her grandmother because she's embarrassed of it and of her connection to the spiritual realm and because she doesn't want to stand out. She blames herself for Jessica's accident since she had visions of it before it happened, and she carries that self-blame through the end of the novel. Paski shares her unique spiritual gift in common with her grandmother. Much of the novel focuses on her coming to accept that her intuitions and premonitions are valuable and reliable, as her grandmother often advises her. Paski ignores her intuition at several crucial points because she wants male approval and popularity, possibly due to her family dysfunction. Paski is tormented by a recurring premonition of Jessica's impending motocross accident. She feels compelled to try to stop the accident from happening, while at the same time she struggles to make Jessica and others take her seriously. At other times, she wants not to warn Jessica since Jessica is such a despicable person. Paski makes a feminine, intimate sacrifice by continuing to make a connection with Jessica in order to warn her, at the cost of her own pride, popularity, and emotional health.

Paski's shared psychic heritage with her grandmother, and her special relationship to nature, complicate this character and mark her Chicana heritage. She is a strong athlete who has never fallen off of her bicycle while "bike-dancing" because she feels the earth under her at all times (49). Instead of looking around, she "just feel[s] where to go," and she "never feel[s] as alive as [she does] when [she's] taking on the world this way" (49). In another scene in the novel, Paski has an intense vision while she's out riding her bike. Her amulet warms and vibrates, and she stops and feels "a tugging at [her] from the spirit world" which she is unable to resist (115). She feels like she is in a dream state as she looks around, knowing that she's awake. She hears howling and sees a herd of buffalo come over the hill in front of her. The herd stops in front of her, and she and the leader look at one another. As it stares "into [her] eyes for another thirty or forty seconds, filling [her] with peace and strength," the coyotes howl again, and the buffalo run off (116). All of Paski's fears about being in California leave her, and then she has another encounter with the herd of coyote. After that encounter, she is "filled with a vibration that is impossible to name, connected to the many layers of the universe we inhabit in a clear and certain way that is impossible to explain to people. . ." (118). Paski finishes her ride, feeling like a powerful, graceful, fearless coyote on her bike. This scene is a turning point in Paski's eventual

acceptance of her psychic gift. She is connected with the earth and with the spirit world, and she knows this connection brings her power and rootedness.

Chris does not really sacrifice himself for Paski, and Jessica certainly doesn't sacrifice herself for anyone. However, the mimetic nature of desire is apparent as Paski desires Chris as soon as she sees him, although his status as a prize goes up when she realizes (albeit with a sinking feeling) that he is Jessica's boyfriend. Then, Chris's desirability level is raised again once he begins dating Paski: Jessica is so overcome by her desire for him that she crosses into criminal territory in order to achieve her goal. The novel does not resolve itself in the end; Chris and Paski are together romantically, but Jessica goes unpunished for her crimes, and it is clear that she will not sit idly by while Chris and Paski enjoy their relationship. All other loose ends are resolved satisfactorily at the end of the novel, though: Paski resolves her spiritual crisis by accepting her psychic gift and wearing her magical amulet with pride. Her best friends from "back home" fly in to surprise her after she wins a big motocross race, and she's able to be with Chris, her new friends, and her grandmother all together for the first time. Paski has seamlessly taken Jessica's position as the sexily dressed motocross champion who is dating Chris and adored by friends, family, and the community. Is it for the

best that she is in this position, or will she now fall victim to even worse treachery at the hands of Jessica and dystopian Southern California? Is she just a new and improved Jessica, and is her transformation worth it? I find that the reader is supposed to feel happy for the protagonist, but I maintain that her inscription into her Barbie-fied world is an unsettling example of feminine sacrifice.

A dénouement is more clearly evident in *The Hunger Games* series. Throughout *Mockingjay*, it becomes clear that Alma Coin, the leader of the rebellious District 13 and eventual ouster of President Snow, is just as controlling and evil as Snow himself. Her name indicates that she and President Snow are two sides of the same “coin,” and Katniss is aware of this fact (Woolston 173). Her final act of evil, and the one which causes a seismic shift in Katniss, occurs just before Katniss is set to deliver the final blow of the war by publicly executing former President Snow with a bow and arrow. Before she is escorted to the execution site, she is led to a surprise meeting of the seven living Hunger Games victors. No one knows why they are gathered there until President Coin enters and offers the victors a chance to vote on whether or not a final Hunger Games should be held where the descendants of powerful Capitol citizens would compete to the death. She explains that this symbolic Hunger Games would assuage the need for vengeance felt by the still-suffering

citizens. The vote comes down to Katniss and Haymitch; Peeta has voiced a strong 'no.' Katniss then does something which has proven vexing to many readers: she pauses, weighing her "options carefully, think[ing] everything through" (MJ 370). She wonders whether this is how the Hunger Games were started in the first place, and she realizes that "Nothing has changed. *Nothing will ever change now*" (MJ 370, emphasis added). Katniss then votes to continue the Hunger Games. In my reading, this vote is just a charade; Katniss has absolutely no intention of perpetuating the Hunger Games. I argue that Katniss realizes, in that moment, that she has to kill Coin instead of Snow, since the horrors of an autocratic society are destined to continue under Coin's rule. She knows that Coin and Snow are the same, and she sees the Girardian seminal, contagious nature of violence as an unending cycle. She chooses to buy herself the time and confidence needed to continue the deception that she will execute Snow by casting her vote with Coin. Later, when Katniss is imprisoned and awaiting trial for killing Coin, she reflects:

Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences. You can spin it any way you like. Snow thought the Hunger Games were an efficient means of control. Coin thought the parachutes would expedite the war. But in the end, who does it benefit? No one. The truth is, it benefits no one to live in a world where these things happen. (MJ 377)

I argue that Katniss made the decision that she could not live in a world where the Hunger Games continued when she was in the secret meeting of Hunger Games victors. She understood that she could prevent the horrors of this world from continuing most effectively by appearing to be on the side of President Coin in order to ensure that she could assassinate Coin instead of participating in the ceremonial execution of Snow. Snow, at this point, is impotent: he is removed from power and imprisoned where he can no longer inflict harm upon others. Coin, on the other hand, is an active threat to a newly recovering society. Katniss is put in a position of choosing whether to kill the Father or the Mother, and she kills the Mother. Shortly thereafter, her own mother chooses to abandon her yet again by electing to live across the country from her daughter where they will not be in substantial contact with one another. Katniss participates in masculine sacrifice: she takes Coin's life to allow the people of Panem to have the chance to live in peace. The object of this sacrifice is, as it always is, according to Irigaray, the mother. Coin embodies many masculine traits, and she does not appear to have an actual family of her own, but the symbolism of sacrificing a woman is interesting nonetheless. Coin has been an ineffective mother to her people and to Katniss, and so she is eliminated. In taking Coin's life, Katniss's fully expects to lose her own as well. She attempts to take a suicide pill inside her uniform instead

of being taken prisoner by Coin's soldiers, but Peeta thwarts her. She yells for Gale to shoot her, and then she opts to starve herself to death when none of the aforementioned plans end her life. In taking the Mother's life, Katniss understands that, on some level, she is taking her own life as well. This is further support for the idea that the only subject position available for a female is self-sacrifice.

Katniss is found not to be guilty of her crime because her psychologist portrays her as a "hopeless, shell-shocked lunatic" (MJ 378). As one critic points out, Katniss is clearly suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): she has memory-related problems, avoidance, hyperawareness avoidance, and emotional numbing (Woolston 147-51). I argue that Katniss's sacrifice, at the end of the novel, is not worthwhile for her. Throughout the series, her female body ends up having significantly more value than the average female citizen of Panem. For that reason, she is not permitted by the power apparatus of the Gamekeepers to sacrifice herself and Peeta at the end of the first games. In this particular situation, sacrifice is effective, if not self-loving. At the end of the first novel, all of Katniss's and Peeta's sacrifices pay off as they both make it out of the arena alive. At the end of the series, I believe the question of whether or not the sacrifices are merited is more difficult to answer. Katniss loses the person who is most precious to her, her sister Prim, and

she is unable to recover. Peeta loses all of his family, although he does finally attain the object of his affection, the damaged Katniss. Dysfunction is the training ground for both main characters, and it is also present in the resolution. Katniss is even more closed off than before, and she is barely functional due to her post-traumatic stress. She sacrifices to bring Peeta back into his right mind, and he helps give her some semblance of a life. Katniss does not want to have children, but she eventually enacts the maternal sacrifice because “Peeta wanted them so badly” (389). She worries that she will never be able to impart the reality and the import of the Hunger Games to her children in a way that will not scare them. While watching her children play in the meadow that is also the graveyard for the majority of District 12’s citizens, Katniss reflects on the fact that she still has nightmares that will never go away. She notes, “On bad mornings, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I’m afraid it could be taken away” (MJ 390). Even after 20 years, Katniss is still enveloped by her depression and associated reactions to her trauma. She sacrifices her will to Peeta’s and bears children for his sake, but I find that this sacrifice is not worthwhile for her because it is not a decision she makes with her own well-being in mind. Katniss’s sacrifice also presents to the reader, in a handy epilogue, the reinforcement that there are two primary subject positions which a woman can inhabit: that of sacrificing mother, or that of

sacrificing maiden within a love triangle. Eventually, the girl in love becomes the mother who will sacrifice for her children and for her husband. This is a twisted “happily ever after” ending in which there is a marriage and children, but very little happiness.

While some critics believe that “for those readers who struggle to find their own voice beneath the weight of social and familial burdens, Katniss’s story is an inspiration,” I find both Katniss’s and Paski’s embodiment of feminine sacrifice to set a troubling example for young adult readers (Seltzer 42). Katniss, in particular, transitions between feminine and masculine modes: she hunts animals and people, actions that can be described as Girard’s masculine sacrifice, but she does it all for Prim, which reflects Irigaray’s description of maternal/feminine sacrifice. The televised nature of the Hunger Games throughout Panem provides a juncture of public and private that Katniss is continuously aware of. Katniss has a private connection with and eventual mourning for Rue, which is feminine, but she also sends a public, masculine message of resistance by covering Rue’s body with flowers so that all of Panem can viscerally feel the tragedy of this loss of innocence and become motivated to begin a revolt. When she kisses Peeta to manipulate sponsors in the public sphere, she privately worries about Gale’s response to the kiss.

She often appropriates masculine sacrifice to benefit her personal/intimate sphere.

I argue that Katniss's and Paski's fluidity between masculine and feminine modes of being and forms of sacrifice are empowering steps in a positive direction. Katniss's fire costumes, designed by Cinna, are both feminine and dangerous weapons. When she and Peeta are paraded in front of the Capitol in a chariot, they are fierce and on fire at the same time that they tenderly hold hands, although that is for the purpose of manipulating the viewing audience. Paski's athleticism and her rootedness to nature give her the potential to be a powerful individual. I find that both Katniss and Paski are lacking, ultimately, as strong female role models because they both submit to pressure to enact the feminine sacrifice of themselves at the end of the novels. It is the ending that will undercut the images of strength and power that occur earlier in the books. Katniss becomes a depressed mother, observing her children playing outside from behind a window. Paski becomes an overly glamorized sex symbol.

I believe it would be beneficial if more young adult novels moved toward a consideration of post-gender sacrifice. It is probably impossible to imagine a world that exists outside of sacrificial modes or that exists outside of gender, but perhaps more fluidity between gendered modes of sacrifice could be modeled. Katniss and Peeta complicate traditional

gender roles throughout the series only to end up in traditional nuclear families. How would a post-gender sacrifice ending have read instead? I would like to have seen Katniss keep her power all the way through the end of the series rather than defaulting to feminine, maternal self-sacrifice at the end. Paski complicates traditional gender roles and Anglo modes of spirituality, only to end the novel with a brief nod toward her connection to her spiritual gift and a more overt focus on her “winning” of the love triangle. How would a post-gender sacrifice ending have read here? I would like to have seen Paski portrayed as spiritually powerful and iconoclastic in a refusal to participate in the materialistic Southern California culture and in opting out of a sexualized position within a love triangle.

Holiness: The Sacred, the Feminine, and the Heretical

Recent resurgence in interest in goddess spirituality and faces of the divine feminine is apparent in myriad avenues of culture: film, fiction, goddess retreats, yoga programs, magazines, and college courses, to name a few. In this chapter, I argue that inclusion of the divine feminine and goddess culture in Chicana and Anglo YA literature is heretical, meaning that it illustrates “theological or religious opinion or doctrine maintained in opposition, or held to be contrary, to the ‘catholic’ or orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church, or, by extension, to that of any church, creed, or religious system, considered as orthodox” (Oxford English Dictionary). I build on the heretical tradition of embodied spirituality being particularly present in the female body that began with the first statute encouraging the burning of heretics in England in 1401 (“Introduction” 18). Margery Kempe, among other women, faced charges of heresy due to her emotionally charged, romantic, and sexual connection to God in the form of Jesus, which followed her own interpretation of the Bible and fell outside the orthodox doctrine of the Church. Kempe was a Christian woman whose bodily experience of God and writings about God challenged, and continue to challenge, orthodox

understandings of women's spirituality.⁴¹ In a similar vein, the women's movement and the Chicano/a movement of the 1970s took issue with the idea of a patriarchal God removed from daily life and the body. I inquire into the heretical genealogy of feminist Chicana and Anglo YA literature, investigating their portrayal of the nature of spirituality in formative texts. I trace a heretical tradition that is earth-based in Chicana literature and another that intertwines sexuality, the body, and spirituality within Anglo literature. This subversive protest literature gives young women a voice within spiritual texts and works as a partial counter to white, patriarchal capitalist culture.

One vitally important Chicano protest writer was Rudolfo Anaya, whose spiritually subversive novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, simultaneously emerged from and sparked the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Another complex Chicana writer who treats similar themes is Helena María Viramontes, who released *Under the Feet of Jesus* in 1995. Viramontes both draws inspiration from and expands Anaya's vision of an indigenous Chicano/a literary tradition by moving beyond Chicano focus on Aztlán and creating a feminist model characterized by its focus on female characters and its formal experimentation. A 2006 author who picks up the mantle is Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, who subverts conventional

⁴¹ Since Kempe herself couldn't read or write, she dictated her autobiography to several scribes

spirituality both subtly and glaringly in *Haters*. In the first section of this chapter, I will give an overview of Chicano/a literary approaches, an explanation of the marginalized role of Chicana literature as well as young adult literature in general, and an in-depth exploration of *Bless Me, Ultima* as an important precursor to both *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Haters*. I will explore three prominent feminine archetypes that have been identified as both spiritual and heretical and that are significant to the three Chicano/a novels: *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Llorona*, and *La Malinche*. I argue that the authors' reconfiguration of these cultural icons alongside their presentation of earth-based spirituality, along with their inclusion of powerful female characters and exploration of the injustice of poverty, are methods of protesting the dominant culture, which, in this case, was oppressive to Chicano/as in late 20th century U.S. culture.

One of the most well-known names in Anglo YA literature is Judy Blume, another prototypical protest writer, in the sense that she was a Jewish woman writing about interfaith marriages along with positive, informative messages about sex outside of marriage and the presence of a personal spirituality that exists outside of doctrine. She has sold over 82 million copies worldwide of her 28 books (Lee). She, like Anaya, is oft-banned, as can be expected of heretical protest literature. I argue that Blume paves the way for later authors, like P.C. and Kristin Cast and

Clare Vanderpool, to integrate the body and sexuality with spirituality. *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* was revolutionary when it was published in 1970 for several reasons. Among them is that the protagonist not only speaks familiarly to God, but she talks to God about menstruation and developing breasts. Also, Blume includes a vibrant grandmother/crone archetype as integral to the protagonist's spiritual journey and eventual discovery of her own voice and identity, which opens the door for the the 2007 *House of Night* series and *Moon Over Manifest* (2010) to take similar approaches. The lively crone archetype works against dominant U.S. culture where, past a certain point, women are invisible since they are no longer sexualized and they are no longer making or spending large sums of money.⁴² I argue that the integration of sexuality (and the body) and spirituality and the use of the crone archetype are part of a lineage of heretical Anglo literature that gives voice and identity to adolescent girls. I see these two literary threads, that of Chicana earth-based spiritual literature and Anglo sex- and body-based spiritual literature, as parallel and intersecting because they both honor

⁴² Recent feminist theory has focused more and more on the topic of ageism as a feminist issue and the idea that “all of us who live will eventually belong to the ‘Othered’ category that is old age” (Marshall vii).

the sacred feminine and give the female reader an image of the divine feminine to emulate.⁴³

Chicano/a YA literature draws from a cultural background with a rich dual tradition of Catholicism, with its focus on the feminine face of God in the Virgin Mary, and earth-based spirituality and worship of the mother goddess Tonantzin from its indigenous roots—what is known as “Mesoamerican Catholicism, an inextricable blending of Pre-Hispanic religion with the symbols and tenets of Christianity” wherein “the Indians in Mexico simply transferred their beliefs and practices from Tonantzin, the Goddess of the Earth, to Mary, the Mother of God” (Barnett). Anglo YA literature, on the other hand, does not emerge from a female-centric, spiritual, earth-based syncretism of two traditions. Rather, it springs from varying traditions, most of which are patriarchal and not earth-based. Therefore, the inheritance of the three culturally specific feminine archetypes found in Chicana literature is noticeably missing in Anglo literature. The significance of this paucity of faces of the divine feminine is explored in depth by Irigaray, who states the problem thus: “Woman has no mirror wherewith to become woman. Having a God and becoming one’s gender go hand in hand” (*Sexes and Genealogies* 67). If women do

⁴³ An expansion of this idea, which is based on Irigaray’s theory, follows later in the chapter

not see feminine faces of God reflected around them, they do not have an image of the divine to evolve toward. Penelope Ingram explains:

Thus while other religious traditions have representations of sacred women, representations which enable the possibility for women to imagine a divine horizon, Judeo-Christian women have been robbed of powerful female divinities by a patriarchal Church. Accordingly, Judeo-Christian women need a series of representations of their own to counter those in the male imaginary, representations which do not only figure woman as the dwelling place for man's becoming. (50).

Judeo-Christian ancestry, unlike Mesoamerican Catholicism, does not offer women the image of the divine feminine to reflect their own becoming. Accordingly, Anglo YA literature does not generally include powerful spiritual archetypes that reflect the divine feminine.

Within the past several decades, however, there has been a surge in interest in goddess spirituality. Margot Adler writes that "the women's spirituality movement is now so large and indefinable that it is like an ocean whose waves push against all shores" (qtd. in Raphael 20). Goddess spirituality has included renewed interest in goddess myths and their concurrent focus on the fertility of both the earth and the female body. Thus, "it is in the creation and fertility of nature that woman glimpses her horizon, her godhead," according to Ingram's comparison of Irigaray and goddess spiritualists (Ingram 51). I argue that it is this conflation of spirituality and sexuality that is the marker of the heretical in Anglo YA

literature. As Irigaray explains, “Nothing more spiritual, in this regard, than female sexuality” where women find a “place of transcendence for the sensible” (*Ethics* 46). Women, according to Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One*, could live in love/self-love indefinitely due to their “two lips;” their sexual and spiritual multiplicity (24). It is in the self-sustaining feminine sexual/spiritual where the seeds of both heresy and of authentic voice for adolescents in Anglo YA literature are planted. Regarding their archetypes, images of the divine on the horizon, some would argue that the Virgin/Maiden, Mother, Crone triad provides a similar archetypal pattern for Anglo literature as the three Chicana archetypes discussed earlier in this chapter, and I would agree; however, I find the images representing natural stages of life to be less distinctive and spiritually significant to literature than the three Chicana archetypes. Nonetheless, the crone archetype, in these cases envisioned as a grandmother, is integral to both Anglo and Chicana YA texts for the passing down of maternal and earth wisdom from one generation to another. This is important, particularly to the Anglo texts, because they feature mothers who are missing or inadequate, so the grandmother/crone steps in as an uber-maternal character.

Chicana Literary Approaches

As I noted in Chapter 2, Chicano literary approaches tend to have a masculine, land-based focus while Chicana literary approaches often eschew the land in favor of relationships and self-determination. As discussed previously in greater depth, for many Chicanos, cultural pride was tied up with reclaiming the ancestral land of the Southwest, Aztlán, from its unlawful current proprietor. A literary example of this phenomenon appears in *Under the Feet of Jesus*: Perfecto's desire to return to a specific homeland, which is so strong that it feels like "a tumor lodged under the muscle of [his] heart" which gets "larger with every passing day" is reminiscent of the nationalistic stance from the Chicano movement exemplified by Corky Gonzales's "Yo Soy Joaquín" and Alurista's *Aztlán*, although Viramontes seems to critique Perfecto's land-focused position (Viramontes 82-3). Signaling a change in focus from a homeland to borderlands, Gloria redefined the landscape for Chicanas and showed them how to use the ubiquity of border consciousness in their lives both formally and thematically in their works (Kaup 199). Anzaldúa integrates numerous languages and styles in her book, which is innovative in a poststructural fashion (Kaup 208). Anzaldúa's study makes no effort to disguise the fact that her text, like many texts, is constantly spilling out of its conventional borders.

In order to unpack Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* or any work by a Chicana author, it is helpful to have an understanding of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and McCracken's *New Latina Narrative*. These two theorists set a foundation for analyzing Chicana narrative structure according to its distinctive patterns. The status of Chicana young adult literature as a marginalized, contradictory, hybrid art form is best understood with Anzaldúa's framework in mind—for her, hybridity is a positive, empowering status. The borderlands model invites formal experimentation and an all-encompassing acceptance of cultural “back-and-forths” that previously were neither tolerated nor even conceived of. Viramontes fits into this tradition with her unique poetic, dischronological style. Since race and ethnicity are such important themes in Chicano/a YA literature, McCracken is helpful for creating a framework to analyze the appearance of race and ethnicity, along with class, sexual orientation, and gender on various axes. She provides pointed analysis of Viramontes's works, along with several others, in order to situate Viramontes's writing among her peers. Both Anzaldúa and McCracken are vital to a thorough understanding of the themes of cultural hybridity, power, gender norms and traditions, religion, and sexuality which emerge in Viramontes's work in addition to most youth literature written for young adult Latinas. Though these themes are not entirely unique to Chicana literature, their

predominance in the literature and their distinct manifestations, detailed throughout this chapter, make them helpful markers for distinction from non-Chicana literature.

Following in Anzaldúa's tradition, Viramontes encapsulates a borderlands mentality with her shifting formal approach, her positioning of Estrella on the boundary between childhood and adulthood, and her placement of Estrella's feet in both U.S. and Mexican cultures. The 13 year-old migrant farm worker attends school occasionally when she is able to do so, but Anglo teachers rudely observe that she is poorly dressed and that her hygiene is sub-standard. Similar to Donna Haraway's characterization of cyborgs in "A Cyborg Manifesto," Estrella is both/and (both Mexican and American, both young and old, both powerful and powerless), but she, as Haraway urges all of us to do, uses the tools she has at her disposal to make the most of her current situation rather than trying to return to an Edenic garden.⁴⁴ Estrella, like all Chicanos/as, is a hybrid subject. As explored in greater depth in Chapter 2, cultural hybridity is a vital and prevalent theme in Chicano/a YA literature because it addresses how a young Chicano/a can function in a dominant culture that is different from his/her heritage.

⁴⁴ The Edenic garden in this case could be Aztlán or it could be an earlier time in her life when she was more carefree.

Viramontes falls in Anaya's tradition while Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez takes a different approach to her text. She writes in a more traditional, less experimental format as she appears more interested in participating in the mainstream than in participating in a Chicana lineage. As I discuss at greater length in Chapter 2, Valdes-Rodriguez displays what one critic calls an "ambivalent Latinidad" (Hurt). Seemingly speaking for the author herself, the protagonist of *Haters* says, "Me? I don't care one way or the other about Mexican power. I don't know why my dad is all 'I'm Mexican' when he doesn't even know how to speak Spanish, but you can't argue with him about it. To me, people are people, and some get better names than others" (5, 6). Valdes-Rodriguez has a tendency to sweep both cultural differences and formal experimentations under the rug.

Another formal experimentation utilized by Viramontes is the insertion of tropicalized English. For example, in one scene in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Alejo and his cousin, Gumecindo are picking fruit from an orchard when they start discussing Plato. Gumecindo is unfamiliar with the famous Greek philosopher; he thinks Plato is "'plate' in *gringo* Spanish" (5). When Alejo explains the misunderstanding, the two lose themselves in hysterical laughter. Viramontes uses a moment of cultural and linguistic disconnect to highlight the slippery nature of biculturalism and bilingualism, even though the interaction takes place mainly in English.

Hence, the deviation from the Anglo norm is small and easily accepted by the Anglo reader. Similarly, in *Haters*, the Spanish language is used sparingly in a manner likely to be easily understood by a non Spanish-speaking reader, although toward a different end. It is Paski's father, who is portrayed as old-fashioned and worthy of ridicule, who sprinkles an occasional Spanish word into his dialogue. After bringing home fast food for his daughter, he calls her by her long, ethnically marked name and tells her, "your *delicioso* burger is getting cold, *Chinita!*" (39).⁴⁵ It is the older generation rather than the young one who uses the Spanish language.

Bilingualism is one type of formal experimentation utilized by New Chicana authors; another is their frequent desire to separate themselves from the master text narrative by experimenting with stream of consciousness and dischronology, as Viramontes does. Her writing is sometimes difficult to follow as her stories move back and forth through time without transitions. For example, in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Perfecto, the much older boyfriend of 13 year-old Estrella's beleaguered mother, Petra, seems to begin deteriorating in mental capacity toward the end of the novel. His mind jumps around more and more to the past, and the reader is immersed in various scenes from Perfecto's first marriage along with his somewhat incoherent articulations about his desire to return

⁴⁵ Paski's dad calls her *Chinita*, meaning little Chinese one, because he says she looked Chinese when she was born.

home, which may be attributed to his rising panic about his inability to provide for his and Petra's growing family. Perfecto wants to leave the migrant farms of California and return to his ancestral land to die, and he is contemplating leaving Petra, who is pregnant by him, and her five young children to whom he has been a stepfather. At the end of the novel, Petra stands in a doorway watching Perfecto out by his car. She senses that he might leave her and she "embrace[s] Estrella so firmly [that] Estrella felt as if the mother was trying to hide her back in her body" (171). The teenaged Estrella is her mother's real source of strength. This closing image of female strength through the mother-daughter bond is comforting to the reader since the narrative does not indicate whether or not Perfecto will leave; regardless, the reader is assured that Petra and Estrella have one another. Novels written by Chicanas often feature strong mothers and their equally daunting daughters. This is important because female characters tended to be less prevalent in works by Chicano authors, and it can be helpful for female readers to see themselves on the page.

The Three Chicana Archetypes:

Featuring *La Virgen*, *la Llorona*, and *la Malinche*, and reconfiguring them in a more positive, accepting, Anzaldúan manner, is a decisive 'protest literature' element of Chicano/a literature. Unapologetically integrating one's unique cultural heritage into the dominant culture

requires a certain amount of rebellion and pride. Additionally, highlighting earth-based spirituality alongside traditional religious customs is a way of “writing back” against the dominant culture. Anaya’s, Viramontes’s, and Valdes-Rodriguez’s inclusion of strong female characters, particularly in a culture renowned for *machismo*, is another element of protest. Finally, helping readers see the injustice in ways of life like migrant farming that are endemic to the Chicano/a population is a prominent element of protest literature. In *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Haters*, Helena María Viramontes and Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez follow in the heretical footsteps of Rudolfo Anaya in utilizing all of these elements in order to connect with and possibly to inspire their readers, Chicano/a and non-Chicano/a alike.

One force that provides stability and hope to many Chicano/a families is religion. In order to make it through the difficult days, the mothers in Chicana YA literature, much more often than the fathers and children, turn to their Catholic and/or indigenous faith.⁴⁶ Emblematic of the blending of Catholicism and indigenous religions is *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, one of three female archetypes that appears throughout much Chicano/a literature. She is a specifically Mexican and Mexican-American goddess figure because she is said to have appeared to an Indian peasant to perform miracles in 1531. Now known as “the patron Saint of

⁴⁶ This is seen in mothers in Anaya’s, Viramontes’s, Cisneros’s, and Ana Castillo’s fiction, along with the writings of Cherie Moraga.

Mexico and the Americas,” *La Virgen* has been embraced by most Mexicans as a loving guardian who understands them and their unique needs. Her iconography is significant in that it consists of indigenous symbols along with Mexican and Spanish ones (the blue, star-covered mantle and belt that signifies that she is pregnant, the serpent, and the moon) so that she serves as a figure of love and unity for the diverse peoples of Mexican heritage. The other two important Mexican female archetypes are *la Llorona* and *la Malinche*.⁴⁷ *La Llorona* is a bogeyman figure who is said to wander at night, often by water, searching for her children, whom she has drowned. Often, parents warn their children to be careful in the evening lest they be abducted by *la Llorona*, who is likely to take them to ease her pain of missing her own children. Finally, *la Malinche* is the historical Malintzin Tenepal, who is often thought of as a traitor for her role as the indigenous woman who translated for and had a sexual relationship with Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who invaded and conquered Mexico. Many feminist theorists and artists⁴⁸ have worked to modernize and re-vision these figures: *La Virgen* is depicted in more sensual and worldly portrayals; *la Llorona* is embraced for her ability to vocalize her feelings; and *la Malinche* is viewed more sympathetically

⁴⁷ For further information on these two archetypes, see Debra Blake’s *Chicana Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

as the multilingual mother of modern-day Mexico who did what she had to do in order to survive.

La Virgen

References to *La Virgen* and religious themes abound in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, and they are subtle but no less important in *Haters*. In order to understand the more contemporary texts fully, I find that it is important to harken back to Rudolfo Anaya's 1972 young adult novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, which laid the foundation for modern-day Chicano/a young adult literature. *Bless Me, Ultima* has been extremely controversial and often banned since its publication; the American Library Association reports that it was one of the 10 most banned or challenged books in 2008 ("Attempts to Ban"). In the novel, Antonio, the young protagonist, is a tender-hearted mama's boy who forms a special bond with a visiting friend of the family, a *curandera*, or holistic healer, named Ultima. Antonio's spiritual influences are diverse: Ultima teaches Antonio about the mysteries of the earth's healing powers, his mother inculcates in him her love for *la Virgen*, the priest preaches about appropriate ways to worship Jesus, and a local boy reveals to him an indigenous god which manifests itself as a golden carp. Antonio is confused about these seemingly contradictory religious ideologies, saying, after he sees the golden carp for the first time, "It made me shiver, not because it was cold but because the roots of everything I

had ever believed in seemed shaken. If the golden carp was a god, who was the man on the cross? The Virgin? Was my mother praying to the wrong God?" (75). After a family friend is murdered in front of him, Antonio begins going to church after school to pray to God for answers about why tragedies occur. He hears no answer from and feels no connection with God, and so he begins praying in front of the altar of the Virgin instead, "because when I talked to Her I felt as if she listened, like my mother listened" (180). There is a conflation of the Virgin Mary and his mother in Antonio's mind because his mother continually prays to her two-foot tall statue of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and invokes the Virgin's name throughout the family's daily life. Antonio feels protected and comforted by both his mother and the Virgin along with Ultima and Mother Earth. He learns, at the end, that his church-based and earth-based beliefs can coexist and that he can work toward unity rather than separation.

Antonio's connection to and respect for both the earth and for religion are mirrored by the characters in *Under the Feet of Jesus*. Half of Antonio's family, the Luna side of his mother's relatives, are farmers with a spiritual connection to the land. Similarly, in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Perfecto has dreams of his native soil, the land to which he feels his spirit is bound. In the first novel, Ultima uses plants and herbs to heal Antonio and others around her just as, in the second, Petra uses an egg and

various home remedies to attempt to cure Alejo when he is poisoned by pesticides. The fact that Petra fails to cure Alejo where Ultima succeeded in healing others represents Viramontes's portrayal of the maternal role as more complex and troubled than Anaya's depiction of female characters. The mothers in both novels are connected to Catholicism and to *La Virgen*: while Antonio's mother prays daily at her altar with its prominent statue of *La Virgen*, Petra has a large statue of Jesus, along with a smaller statue of *La Virgen*, on an altar that she erects the moment she moves into a new home. Petra's children's legal papers are literally "under the feet of Jesus" if they are ever threatened by INS, and she prays at her altar during times of crisis. Toward the end of the novel, Petra's treasured statue of *Jesucristo* breaks, which is a metaphor for her broken relationship with Perfecto and her broken life in general.

Even though *Under the Feet of Jesus* is more clearly a feminist text with its focus on female protagonists, *Bless Me, Ultima* is its heretical precursor, since the 1972 text paved the way for a contemporary Chicano/a spiritual literary tradition that integrates goddess and earth-based spirituality with Catholicism.⁴⁹ Given the monotheistic history and focus of Christianity, Rudolfo Anaya's presentation of witchcraft,

⁴⁹ The *mezcla* of two or more cultures, Spanish and indigenous, is, of course, at the very heart of Mexico's history. Since Cortez's conquest of the Aztecs, there has been a blending of earth-based and Catholic traditions, although the Catholic tradition was given primacy through violent and suppressive means.

pantheism, premonitory dreams, the Virgin Mary, magic, and Catholicism as forces that coexist in the world has been troubling or offensive to some readers. Similarly, in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, magic, premonitions, and religion exist alongside of one another. For example, when Petra is trying to prevent her husband, Estrella's father, from abandoning the family, she puts "a few drops of menstrual blood in his coffee" (23). This type of magical, spiritual remedy is reminiscent of Ultima's use of voodoo dolls to kill the Trementina sisters, although here also Petra fails while Ultima succeeds. At another point in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Petra believes Estrella to be a victim of the Evil Eye. Similarly, dark magic is present in *Bless Me, Ultima* with the evil actions of Tenorio Trementina and his three *bruja* daughters.

In *Haters*, the protagonist does not have a mother to model religious devotion. Traditional Catholicism is not featured in the novel; Paski explains: "We're not your typical religious family, so there is no church or anything like that" (202). However, the spiritual connection to the land modeled by Ultima and Antonio in *Bless Me, Ultima* and by Petra in *Under the Feet of Jesus* is vital to *Haters*, where Paski's grandmother teaches her the wisdom of the earth as Ultima taught Antonio. An added dimension to the earth wisdom in *Haters* is its connection to the psychic gift Paski and her grandmother share, which falls in a clear line after its

heretical predecessor, *Bless Me Ultima*. Paski observes, when “bike dancing” down a hill on her mountain bike, that her “ability to see things in [her] mind helps [her] do this kind of thing without disaster, because [she] just *feel[s]* where to go. [She] doesn’t *look*, exactly. . . . But [she does] know for sure that [she] never feel[s] as alive as [she does] when [she’s] taking on the world this way” (49 emphasis in original). This connection Paski has to the earth ensures that she never falls while mountain biking. Paski notes that she’s most likely to “be in touch with [her] spiritual side” while riding her bike (312). Her grandmother, “a local celebrity astrologer, tarot-card queen, witch doctor, communicator with the dead” believes, to Paski’s chagrin, that Paski is “psychic like her, just because [Paski’s] had a couple of dreams that came true” (9). Although she enjoys her connection to the earth, Paski resists the implications of her psychic premonitions. Her grandmother warns her: “You’ve forgotten what a great gift you were born with, just like your mother forgot about the gift of you You don’t want to believe what I’m telling you, Pasquala. But if you continue to reject your powers, there’s no telling how badly things might turn out” (27). As the story unfolds, Paski experiences a trance and a spiritual revelation in nature and then several obstacles regarding her premonitions, both of which I explore in greater depth in Chapter 4. Due to her grandmother’s teaching and her own spiritual experiences, Paski

eventually understands that “the earth is alive and [she’s] a part of it” and that her inevitable psychic gifts can be used for good (235).

A re-visioned, embodied *La Virgen* is seen in characters in both *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Haters*. A powerful scene toward the end of *Under the Feet of Jesus* of the entwined mother and daughter on the porch watching Perfecto stand by the car as he considers deserting the family, lends itself to an interpretation of the Petra-Estrella dyad as two sides of an embodied *La Virgen*. Throughout the novel, Petra is consistently referred to as “the mother” rather than “my mom” or another more personal and possessive term. This general modifier, along with Petra’s perpetual status as pregnant and/or tending to small children, is correlative to *La Virgen*’s revered status of mother to Jesus and to all of the church’s followers. Also, in Perfecto’s mind, Petra, who eats several cloves of garlic a day, and *La Virgen* are almost synonymous; he longs for his inner demons to stop torturing him so that he can “enjoy the tenderness of a woman who wore an aura of garlic as brilliant as the aura circling *La Virgen*” (101). While Petra encapsulates *La Virgen*’s mothering side, Estrella represents her youthful, virginal qualities. Throughout the novel, she is portrayed as sexually innocent. When the ill but lovestruck Alejo cuddles up with her in his sick bed, she makes room for him platonically as she would make room for a younger brother or sister. After

she stands next to her mother on the porch, in the final scene of the novel, Estrella runs to the crumbling barn near her house and climbs onto the roof. There, “the termite-softened shakes crouched beneath her bare feet like the serpent under the feet of Jesus” while Estrella feels her heart beating as strongly as church bells in order “to summon home all those who strayed” (175, 176). This imagery of Estrella likens her to a religious statue as she embodies the love and strength of *La Virgen* for her people. I interpret this ending as Viramontes’s subversion of religious iconography; she protests a static, unreachable goddess figure and roots her *Virgen* in a flawed but lovable young girl in an impoverished modern setting.

As Viramontes subverts religious iconography, Valdes-Rodriguez eschews it almost entirely. While Viramontes actively participates in Chicana cultural and literary practices, Valdes-Rodriguez, as I discuss in Chapter 4, portrays a much more “ambivalent Latinidad” (Hurt). Leaving behind the image of the long-suffering Chicana mothers who “always seemed to wash their clothes on a rock in the river,” Valdes-Rodriguez “presents a conflicted portrait of Latinidad, offering two narratives that never quite reconcile (we are all the same versus we are Latinas and we are different)” (Hurt 133, 147).⁵⁰ Just as she leaves behind the image of a mother beating her clothing against a rock in a river, Valdes-Rodriguez

⁵⁰ Erin Hurt writes this criticism about another of Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez’s novels, *The Dirty Girls Social Club*. However, I find the insight to be directly applicable to *Haters* as well.

leaves behind the mother kneeling at her statue of Jesus or Mary in the home. Instead, she includes a young female protagonist who is athletic as well as firmly rooted to the earth. In this way, I see Paski as a modern revision of *La Virgen*. Paski is virginal, physically strong, and spiritual. Instead of being cloaked with a blue mantle, Paski wears, for the penultimate scene in the novel, a sexy hot pink and white motocross outfit with “white leather pants [that] lace up the front like a football with hot pink laces” and a “jacket [with] cutouts that accent the shape of [her] breasts” (336). For the motocross race, in which she is racing much to the chagrin of the athletic villain of the novel, Jessica, Paski must protect herself spiritually. Therefore, she “finish[es] off the outfit with Grandma’s amulet, tucked into [her] shirt beneath the racing jacket” (336). Throughout the novel, Paski often forgets her amulet, going expressly against her grandmother’s warnings and wishes, and therefore falls into dangerous situations. At other times, she remembers the amulet, feels it heat up against her skin in order to warn her of danger or relay key information, and is thus kept safe. The amulet is her spiritual heartbeat, and this re-*visioned Virgen* keeps it under her modern mantle while she plants her feet on the ground, feels the power of the earth, and wins the motocross race.

La Llorona

La Virgen de Guadalupe and religious themes, including heresy, are some of the most prominent motifs in both *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Under the Feet of Jesus*, and spiritual themes figure strongly in *Haters* as well. However, just as they appear in much Chicano/a literature, the other two primary feminine archetypes are also evident in all three novels. *La Llorona* is prominently featured in one of Antonio's dreams, in which he hears "the tormented cry of a lonely goddess . . . ma[ke] the blood of men run cold" (23). In the dream, Antonio's brothers, full of fear, tell Antonio that the lonely goddess is *la Llorona*. Antonio re-interprets the cry as the presence of the river itself, which is a powerful but beneficent force that, outside of his dream, Antonio feels on several occasions. Antonio refuses to live in fear of the river and of *la Llorona*, which is consistent with his holistic, integrated approach to life. In *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Gumecindo hears screaming he attributes to *la Llorona* when he and his cousin, Alejo, illegally pick fruit from the fields to sell for a profit. Even though he had previously believed *la Llorona* to be a myth, when he hears the noise, Gumecindo becomes uneasy and urges his cousin to get out of the tree so that they can leave. In *Haters*, Valdes-Rodriguez again deviates from the pattern set by her predecessors by incorporating the Chicana archetype in a more subtle manner: *la Llorona* appears, but she

is not called by her name. Instead, the narrative includes a crying female spirit who, in this case, is a Japanese victim of the World War 2 internment camps. The spirit hovers around Paski, who is the only one who can hear her, and cries and pleads in Japanese.⁵¹ As she hears the voices that are “like listening to people talking in another room, only that room is in a different universe,” Paski wonders, “What is that crying? It’s awful” (37, 6). At the end of the novel, Paski realizes that the Japanese woman is the deceased grandmother of her neighbors, and she is able to pass the grandmother’s message along to its intended audience.

The incident in *Under the Feet of Jesus* where a scream is heard in the field, along with a subsequent fruit-picking expedition in which Gumecindo cannot stop fearfully mentioning *la Llorona* each time Alejo ascends a tree, foreshadows Alejo’s later spraying by pesticides. After his cousin falls ill, Gumecindo remarks, “I knew something was coming down’ . . . [He] remember[s] the premonition of the screams. ‘I just knew it. I could feel it in my bones’” (95). Petra replies, “When you feel it that deep, you should listen” (95). Listening to intuition is often characterized as feminine, as in the common phrase ‘woman’s intuition,’ so it is interesting to see intuition and a female archetype aligned the way they are in this scene. In *Haters*, Paski has strong intuitions, also, which her grandmother

⁵¹ Paski’s need to translate the Japanese grandmother’s pleas in order to comprehend them calls to mind *la Malinche*’s primary job

urges her not to ignore. After she has a premonition about Jessica's impending motocross accident, Paski feels "an intense urgency to tell Jessica about the accident, knowing the race is only three hours away. [She] feel[s] it the way you feel like you need to pee after drinking a huge bottle of water" (263). Paski does tell Jessica, who ignores and belittles Paski at her peril; indeed, she does crash just as Paski foretold. For Antonio, Ultima, the female shaman and *curandera*, helps him listen to and follow his dreams and his intuition. *La Llorona*, the earth, and the river are all thought of traditionally as feminine forces, and Antonio is near to all of them in addition to the close relationship he maintains with his mother and with Ultima. *Bless Me, Ultima* sets the precedent, which is later followed in *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Haters*, of recasting in a positive light feminine archetypes and attributes that are often looked down upon in a patriarchal society.

Another important motif from the three novels that merits further investigation is death, which bears a strong association with *la Llorona*. For Roberta Trites, one of the primary markers of young adult literature is the way its protagonists grapple with their own mortality. Death, she asserts is the *sine qua non* of young adult literature. In children's literature like E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, death often takes place offstage, whereas in adult literature, death takes its inevitable, somewhat humdrum

place within the framework of the story. For young adults, however, death is onstage and laden with the significance of the adolescent coming to terms with her mortality and accepting the limitations of her body. *Bless Me, Ultima* appears to make evident this trend in Chicano/a YA literature as well. In it, a series of deaths and near deaths shape Antonio's worldview. The novel opens with his witnessing the death of an acquaintance, climaxes with the murder of Antonio's family friend, Narciso, and concludes with the death of his beloved mentor, Ultima. Each of these deaths serves as a marker for Antonio's further initiation into the world of young adulthood. He loses innocence witnessing the first death, separates psychologically from his family with the second one, and finally emerges into a new, unified understanding of his agency in the world around him with the passing of Ultima. In *Under the Feet of Jesus*, actual deaths, like the passing of Perfecto's first child and the death of an unidentified person in the barn near Perfecto and Petra's bungalow, are more peripheral than the near-death state in which two main characters spend a significant portion of the novel. Perfecto senses that he is close to the end of his days, and for this reason, he longs to leave Petra and his children in order to die on Mexican soil. His closeness to death alters his memory, and his thoughts and actions jumble together between the past and the present. While preparing to abandon the family, Perfecto receives the last sign that

it is time to go: Petra insists that the family take Alejo in because, if her children were sick in the fields with no one to care for them, she would want someone to tend to them. Perfecto strenuously objects, but eventually ends up transporting Alejo to their house. While bringing him in, the older man “could feel the boy’s death under his bare feet” (101). Alejo’s illness, and Perfecto’s impending desertion of the family, lead to Estrella’s defining coming-of-age moments. Alejo’s illness sets the stage for Estrella’s recognition of her stronger self and her ability to defend herself and her family against injustice. Perfecto’s approaching absence leads her to embrace her braver persona again in order to climb on top of the roof of the barn, where she feels empowered and loving. In *Haters*, the crying spirit/*la Llorona* turns out to have been a Japanese woman who was killed in an internment camp. This death is important primarily because it highlights Paski’s spiritual gifts and enables her to learn how to use them to help the suffering spirit and the family she left behind. The use of this situation could also be interpreted as another critique of the treatment of minorities in Southern California culture. Other than the actual death of *la Llorona* figure in the text, it is primarily close encounters with death which are important: mainly Paski’s near death when she hits her head and almost drowns after being pushed into a pool by Jessica, and Jessica’s near death after a catastrophic motocross accident which Paski

foresaw. Both brushes with death serve as catalysts—the first for Paski’s long and difficult journey in resigning herself to her spiritual gifts, and the second as the resolution to her journey. Paski tried to warn Jessica about her inevitable accident, but Jessica ignored her. Paski is able to win a race and her love interest because of Jessica’s accident, and she also accepts her spiritual gifts. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, it is actual death which shapes Antonio’s character, while proximity to death refines Estrella’s sense of self in *Under the Feet of Jesus* and Paski’s resignation to the importance of her spiritual gifts in *Haters*, but all three novels feature death as an integral part of an adolescent’s emergence into the adult world.

La Malinche

In much the same way as the third archetype of *la Malinche* is a contradictory figure, sexuality is a theme that manifests itself in Chicana YA literature in interesting, contradictory ways. *La Malinche* is often viewed as a sexual and treasonous woman who betrayed her people for self-serving, material reasons. Nodelman asserts that sexuality is often in shadow in the children’s literature genre; he claims that the “hidden adult” author uses the text to share her/his knowledge of the shadow with the young reader. Trites, on the other hand, contends that since YA literature centers on adolescents who are developing sexually, the genre maintains a consistent focus on sexuality. Trites and Beth Younger both maintain

that, as Adrienne Rich points out in “Compulsory Heterosexuality,” heteronormative, monogamous relationships are didactically portrayed as the best choice for teens, and sex is often viewed as dangerous physically and emotionally, especially for girls. The *House of Night* series serves as an important example of this phenomenon. For much Chicana young adult literature, Nodelman’s thesis of sexuality being in the shadow is more applicable, while Trites and Younger’s theories have greater bearing on the Anglo-American YA literature. For example, in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, several scenes involving sexuality come to mind, but they are, by and large, subtle, leaving much content in the shadow, or unexplained and unexplored, for the young adult reader. For example, during a sweet encounter underneath the shade of a truck on a scorching day, Estrella and Alejo hold hands and talk. There are sexual undertones to their dialogue, but they are young and the reader understands that their relationship will be sexually innocent. Another moment occurs when Petra and Perfecto are in bed early one morning; Viramontes subtly describes the mother’s admiration of Perfecto’s arms as she reaches over him to touch his stomach. He rebuffs her advances, and then her attention is drawn to a somewhat romantic dialogue between Estrella and Alejo, which she promptly interrupts. A younger reader would probably not have understood that Petra was attempting to have intercourse with Perfecto;

thus, that part of the text is in shadow. In another scene, Petra remembers how her first husband's and her "bodies were once like two fingers crisscrossing for good luck" (19). This sexual memory is subtle enough to be missed by younger readers. Finally, Perfecto recalls the first time he had sex with his first wife. This is the most overtly sexual scene in the novel, but even its somewhat lengthy description is told in a poetic, stream-of-consciousness style that appears to avoid open carnality. Compared to Anglo-American novels like Judy Blume's ground-breaking, sex-positive novel, *Forever*, and Paul Ruditis's *Rainbow Party*, which details oral sex parties, there is a clear difference in the level of sexuality put on display. Much like Chicano/a literature itself, though, this assertion is replete with contradictions and possibilities for deconstruction.

Sexuality in *Bless Me, Ultima* seems more correlated to *la Malinche* than sexuality in *Under the Feet of Jesus*. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio feels betrayed by his emerging sexual knowledge. He recalls a situation in which his father and another man, while breeding livestock, made some obscene remarks that he did not understand at the time. Later, when Antonio hides behind a building and observes one of his brothers, Andrew, refusing to leave a brothel, Andrew's actions unleash a series of events that leads to the murder of a trusted family friend. At this point, Antonio connects Rosie's house (the brothel) with his father's prior jokes. He is

able to understand what occurs inside the brothel in a way he was previously unable to grasp. Then, the young boy has a nightmare in which the prostitute from Rosie's dances nude and wraps Andrew up with her long hair in order to prevent him from leaving to help the family friend. She pulls Antonio's brother away, "and he follow[s] her into the frightful fires of hell" (165). Antonio hears the voice of God condemn Andrew for sinning with a prostitute, and then he hears the soft, forgiving voice of *La Virgen*. Antonio feels betrayed by his brother's choice to stay with a prostitute rather than to help the family. In the young boy's estimation, the prostitute is a *Malinche* figure who causes the downfall of Antonio's family. This type of depiction of *la Malinche* is the more typical one in Mexican and Mexican-American culture.

Similarly, in *Haters*, sexuality is correlated to the *Malinche* archetype. In this novel, who the *Malinche* figure is and how she functions is open to varying interpretations. Paski's mother fits the archetype since she, like *la Malinche*, betrays her "people" (in this case her husband and young daughter) for self-serving purposes: she is "an art groupie who wanted to be a singer, had midlife crisis and took off with a biker dude" (6). Paski's perception is that her mother "did care, but not about [Paski.] She cared about boyfriends and pot and drinking. And that's about it" (6). In this case, Paski feels betrayed by her mother's choice of her sexual

partners and a partying lifestyle over her daughter. However, as I argue in Chapter 4, another possible interpretation is that Paski's mother is a character who, though seemingly portrayed as a traitor like *la Malinche* in the text itself, could be interpreted as an artist who maintains integrity to her herself above all else. Although the sex act does not assume a prominent onstage position in the novel, with most sexual encounters being alluded to rather than described in depth, sexual integrity is an important theme. From Paski's foiled attempted rape near the beginning of the novel to her father's speech saluting her blossoming adulthood, his description of sex in the absence of love as scary, and his subsequent booking of a Planned Parenthood appointment for his daughter to protect her health and to give her an opportunity to select birth control before becoming sexually active, the importance of choice and bodily integrity is highlighted throughout the novel. Because, at the end of the novel, Paski is still a virgin who is considering becoming sexually active with her boyfriend, the reader does not encounter sex scenes. Thus, sexuality, although it is featured more prominently and positively in this more contemporary novel than in its predecessors, is still largely in the shadows in this Chicana novel.

The Anglo Archetypes (or Lack Thereof)

The Crone

The crone is a central figure to Judy Blume's 1970 classic, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (hereafter referred to as *Are You There*), where she appears as 12 year-old Margaret's persistent Jewish grandmother, Sylvia Simon. *Are You There* juxtaposes Margaret's spiritual journey—her attempt to reconcile her mother's Christian heritage and her father's Jewish background— and her development into a sexually mature adolescent. It is this juxtaposition of sexuality and spirituality, along with the then-controversial interfaith marriage and the protagonist's affiliation as being “no religion,” that make *Are You There* a heretical text. Grandma is one of Margaret's favorite people; the crone and the maiden have a special bond. Margaret's parents find Sylvia's presence to be meddlesome in their upbringing of their daughter. When the family moves to New Jersey and leaves Grandma behind in New York, Margaret muses, “I think we left the city because of my grandmother, Sylvia Simon. I can't figure out any other reason for the move. Especially since my mother says Grandma is too much of an influence on me” (2). Margaret's Christian mother, in particular, might be concerned about Grandma Sylvia's influence since Sylvia does things like “always asking [Margaret] if [she has] boyfriends and if they're Jewish” (3). Grandma is a major proponent

of Margaret's Jewish ancestry, and she frequently expresses her vested interest in Margaret's choosing Judaism as her religion. Upon making a surprise visit to the family's new home, Grandma assures everyone that she'll visit "once or twice a month" because she's "got to keep an eye on [her] Margaret" (23). It is on this visit, too, that Sylvia conspires with her granddaughter, assuring her that they'll still be as close as they have been, and telling Margaret that she'll call every night, but instructing her: "You answer the phone. Your mother and father might not like me calling so much. This is just between you and me" (23). The pair have a special relationship, but Grandma becomes overly intrusive in a key scene toward the end of the novel. Margaret's maternal grandparents have visited her family for the first time since they disowned their daughter when she married a Jewish man. The visit is awkward, and the grandparents eventually bring up religion, even though Margaret's parents have made it clear that they're "letting Margaret choose her own religion when she's grown . . . if she wants to" (133). A fight ensues, and Margaret's maternal grandparents leave just before Grandma Sylvia pays another surprise visit. She interrogates Margaret about her grandparents' visit, knowing that they would try "church business" while they were at the house (140). When Margaret confirms Grandma's suspicions, Sylvia says, "Just remember Margaret . . . no matter what they said . . . you're a Jewish girl"

(140). This infuriates Margaret, who explodes: “No I’m not! I’m nothing, and you know it! I don’t even believe in God!” (140). Her grandmother scolds her, but Margaret doesn’t back down, and the first rift between them is in place.

Despite her confusion about religion and her conflicting influences, Margaret develops her own personal spirituality throughout the novel. The opening words of the book are a prayer, the first of nineteen italicized prayers that all begin with the iconic titular question: “Are you there, God? It’s me, Margaret.” Margaret adopts a personal tone while asking God questions, telling God about her feelings, and urging God to speed up her physical development. She reflects, “My parents don’t know I actually talk to God. I mean, if I told them they’d think I was some kind of religious fanatic or something. So I keep it very private. I can talk to him without moving my lips if I have to” (14). Most of Margaret’s short prayers juxtapose her body/sexuality and spirituality: she petitions God to help her grow breasts immediately before asking God whether she should go to the [Christian] YMCA or the Jewish Community Center; she worries about being the only sixth grader who doesn’t get her period just as she’s “the only one without a religion” (37, 101). Margaret shares her quotidian concerns alongside deeply troubling and spiritual worries as she converses with God. She feels her connection to the divine in a real way,

but as she makes disappointing visits to different churches and temples on her spiritual quest, she worries, “Why God? Why do I only feel you when I’m alone?” (120). Margaret expects to have this same spiritual connection to God when she visits religious institutions, and she is puzzled when that does not occur.

Are You There God lays the groundwork for a heretical YA novel: sexuality and spirituality are intertwined, and God is an integral part of both the body and the spirit. It also puts forth the prototypical grandmother character, although in this case, the grandmother serves, at times, as an impediment to the granddaughter’s growth, although at other times she is a font of love and support. After the religious explosion when the grandparents’ influences collide, Margaret temporarily abandons her belief in a God who could cause so much conflict. At this point, she reflects: “Sometimes Grandma is almost as bad as everyone else. As long as I love her and she loves me, what difference does religion make?” (141). Instead of shepherding her granddaughter through this spiritual trial as the crone figures in later YA novels do, Grandma temporarily adds to the problem, which ultimately puts the onus on Margaret to solve her own quandary. At first, she refuses to pray anymore; she misses God, “but [she] wasn’t about to let him know that” (144). But then, at the conclusion of the text, Margaret finally gets her long-awaited period. The closing

words of the novel, just like the opening ones, are a prayer: “Are you still there God? It’s me, Margaret. I know you’re there God. I know you wouldn’t have missed this for anything! Thank you God. Thanks an awful lot . . .” (149). Margaret believes that God has given her her menstrual cycle; this is such an important gift to the young woman who has worried for months about when her period would come that she overlooks the religious conflicts instigated by others and falls back into her own personal spiritual relationship with the divine. To Margaret, the experience of God is an embodied one; the potent force of menstrual blood serves to reconnect her to her divinity.

Interfaith marriages, which were scandalous in the 1970s, look mild in comparison to the heresy that manifests itself in later texts in *Are You There’s* genealogy. P.C. and Kristin Cast’s bestselling 2007-present *House of Night* series presents an unabashedly matriarchal and goddess-centered vampyre society that is devoted to the goddess of night, Nyx. Pagan and Wiccan customs appear in this series when vampyres and vampyre fledglings cast circles, positioning a representative of each of the four elements at the northern, southern, eastern, and western positions on the earth. High priestesses light candles and incense, drink blood, and lead goddess-centered rituals. Additionally, as I discuss in Chapter 2, a Native American earth-based spirituality also has a strong presence in the

novels; this minority spirituality manifests itself in similar ways to the earth-based practices in the three Chicana YA novels discussed in this chapter. Zoey's Cherokee grandmother, Sylvia Redbird, the pivotal crone figure in these novels, teaches Zoey about Cherokee legends and practices. One of the key villains in the series emerges from the Cherokee underworld. In the fourth novel of the series, *Untamed*, a further heretical element is introduced: the kind Benedictine nun, Sister Mary Angela, another crone archetype who becomes pivotal to the plot, promotes a syncretism between goddess spirituality and Catholicism. When Zoey asks Sister Mary Angela if she, like most religious people, believes that vampires are evil because they worship a goddess, the nun answers, "Child, what I believe is that your Nyx is just another incarnation of our Blessed Mother, Mary. I also believe devoutly in Matthew 7:1, which says 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'" (148). The nun relays love and acceptance to the spiritually attuned Zoey when she expresses the belief that there are many faces and names for the divine feminine. When Zoey is denied permission to bring a medicine man into a Catholic hospital to sit with her ailing grandmother, Sister Mary Angela fills the vacant position.

Additionally, the nun runs a charity called Street Cats that takes care of homeless cats. Her association with cats is also heretical since, as Zoey's friend, Aphrodite points out: Cats have "been killed for being

witches' familiars and in league with the devil" (146). There is a traditional link between women's wisdom and cats; the cat was sacred in ancient, earth-based religions (Leach 197). Sister Mary Angela offers, "Cats are very spiritual creatures, don't you think?" (146). Here there is another conflation between earth and goddess-based traditional practices and Catholicism. In the *House of Night*, cats are treated as sacred: they are given free rein on campus, and they are entitled to choose their own owners. They are not viewed as belongings but as participants in vampyre life. The *House of Night* series is, in some regards, a panoply of goddess religions; it contains a smattering of female divinities from numerous origins and traditions. Although this radical inclusion of matriarchal political structure and goddess tradition is heretical and empowering for women on the one hand, I also find that the almost frantic inclusion of goddesses from myriad cultures is superficial and somewhat lacking in substance.

Another interesting heretical syncretism in *Untamed* is the inclusion of the high priestess of the Vampyre Council, whose name is Shekinah. This name is the same as that found in Judaism, where the Shekinah is interpreted by some to be the feminine face of God. Shekinah means "dwelling or presence" in Hebrew, cementing the association between the divine and the body ("Shekinah"). The high priestess herself is not particularly sexual, although she is one of the wisest and most ancient

vampyres. Similarly to the Hebrew conflation of in-dwelling and the divine in the Shekinah, *Untamed* does present several noteworthy conflations of sexuality and spirituality. Zoey, who has been given by Nyx the gift of an affinity with Spirit, is also very in touch with her sexuality. In this novel, she begins falling in love with James Stark, a new student to the House of Night who has the gift of archery/not being able to miss his target. Stark knows about Zoey's spiritual powers, and he asks her to help protect the other vampyres and vampyre fledglings from him, since his gift can sometimes be dangerous. During this conversation, the sexual chemistry between the two is almost palpable. When Zoey walks away, Stark's body begins rejecting the Change, and he dies in her arms. Zoey kisses Stark as he dies and later wonders if "those few minutes in the field house had been enough to have [their] souls recognize each other" due to the intense connection she feels with him (124). Also, Aphrodite, whose name is taken from the Greek goddess of love, has a reputation for being promiscuous. She is overtly sexual many times throughout the novel, and she also has the spiritual gift of prophecy bestowed on her by the goddess, Nyx. In *Untamed*, she has an important vision of Sylvia Redbird's house, and she channels a poem, in Grandma's handwriting, that is key to battling the emerging evil forces. Another juxtaposition of the sexual and the spiritual is seen in Neferet, the high priestess of the Tulsa House of Night, who

takes on several vampyre consorts in this novel only to culminate in becoming the lover of an immortal figure, Kalona, whom she raises from the depths of the earth by enacting a complex ritual that manifests dark spiritual forces. Their overtly sexual union is of primary importance in her manifestation of evil spirituality.

Just as *Untamed* introduces a dual crone archetype (the earth-based Sylvia Redbird and the Catholic Sister Mary Angela), so does Vanderpool's 2010 bestseller, *Moon Over Manifest*, include similar dual crone figures: the earth-based diviner, Miss Sadie, and the Catholic nun, Sister Redempta. Miss Sadie seems at first to twelve year-old Abilene to be a scary witch-like woman, but she eventually begins to mentor the youngster about the wisdom of the earth and, concurrently, to teach her about the history of both the town and of Abilene's father. In Abilene's apprenticeship, Miss Sadie has her "do all manner of divining, as she called it. Things like venturing out at dusk to collect blue moss from under a fallen sycamore tree, and getting up at sunrise to gather a handful of dandelions before the morning dew burned off" (136). Abilene helps Miss Sadie gather ingredients for different medicines the diviner delivers to townspeople, and during the process, Abilene sees the authenticity of the diviner's psychic gifts. In the stories Miss Sadie tells Abilene about the history of the town of Manifest, she refers to herself as "The Hungarian

Woman.” Again, in an Anglo novel, it is the minority character who is endowed with earth-based spirituality and wisdom, just as the Cherokee character, Sylvia Redbird, is in the *House of Night* series. It is the Other who maintains a link to the ancient and divine feminine and who passes that knowledge down to the Anglo protagonist. The archetype of the crone who is connected to earth-based spirituality serves as a crossover moment between Anglo and Chicana YA literature, where this archetype is a staple.

Sister Redempta, Abilene’s Catholic schoolteacher and the town’s midwife, shares some of Miss Sadie’s connection to earth-based wisdom. History illustrates that midwives are often shamans and, conversely, “women shamans are nearly always midwives “(Tedlock 206). Tedlock states, for example, that “in a number of traditions in Siberia, Southeast Asia, and China women shamans. . . serve as midwives in their communities. . .” (203). She also explains, “In many cultures midwives may enlist spiritual aid before, during, and after birth. Thus they are shamanic healers in their own right” (208). Midwives, in standing at the liminal threshold of birth, must be anchored in both the spiritual and the physical planes. Hence, this spiritual healing form falls within the category of shamanism. Although Sister Redempta and Miss Sadie inhabit different social and economic spheres in the town where racism against the

Hungarian woman is still alive and well, the two share covert communication and actions connected to the well-being of the town's inhabitants. When Abilene suspects that the nun and the diviner have been working together to help a woman who has recently delivered a newborn, Abilene muses: "Maybe these were two women who lived far enough off the beaten path that there was some strange common ground between them" (113). Just as Sister Mary Angela and Sylvia Redbird respect and even integrate one another's belief systems in order to help Zoey in *Untamed*, so do Sister Redempta and Miss Sadie work together within a fluid, woman-centered framework that recognizes both Catholicism and earth-based wisdom and spirituality. Sister Redempta and Miss Sadie are both vital figures in transmitting wisdom to the younger generation as they both usher Abilene along in her journey of self-discovery. *Moon Over Manifest*, in featuring a younger adolescent protagonist than *Untamed*, does not reference the intertwining of sexuality and spirituality that *Untamed* does. Nonetheless, it follows in the heretical tradition of *Are You There, God* and *Untamed* by being a proponent of earth-based, goddess wisdom and reverence for women alongside of traditional religion.

Power, Protest, and the Heretical Voice

Characters' struggles to maintain power in their lives are ubiquitous in young adult literature since, as Roberta Trites argues in *Disturbing the Universe*, the genre itself is designed to repress adolescent readers while teaching them to negotiate the oppressive institutions around them in a manner that is socially acceptable to adults. The literature is written by adults but aimed toward teenagers to instruct them how to behave. The added dynamics of race and class often distinguish the types of power struggles that appear in Chicano/a young adult literature. In other words, power and repression are integral forces in both Chicano/a YA and Anglo-American YA literature, but Chicano/a characters have several added layers of repression to struggle against due to their marginalized position in a hegemonic society. This distinction is evident in Viramontes's work. In *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Viramontes explores the difficult life of the Chicano/a migrant farm worker who lives in poverty, works from young childhood to elderly adulthood in harsh weather conditions doing manual labor, and then is not allowed to eat the produce s/he picks. Working around pesticides causes some migrant workers' infants to be born disfigured while other healthy workers, like Alejo, are sprayed or maimed with farm equipment. Casual racism is part of life, as evidenced in the scene where Maxine asks Estrella, "You talk 'merican?" (29). Some

Mexican-Americans are legal residents of the U.S. while others are not, so worries about *la Migra* abound. This is daily life until, after a few days, weeks, or months, migrant families pack up their meager belongings and move to the next *pisca* to start the cycle over again. Estrella sums up the life of the migrant farm worker: "People just use you until you're all used up, then rip you into pieces when they're finished using you" (75). Such is the unfair life of a young Chicana, which is held up under a microscope in this novel in order to inform the reader and perhaps inspire her or him to change the injustice.

Power is a key component of feminist criticism; because of her poverty, race, gender, and young age, Estrella is set up to lead a life of little advantage and power. She could be viewed by readers as an inspirational character, though, because she functions daily by finding ways to regain her power and to protest her oppression. Embodying the *La Virgen* archetype, a heretical act, gives Estrella her power and her voice. Two significant scenes typify Estrella's determination to push back against the matrices of power that surround her. In one flashback to her earlier life, Estrella recollects a poor, Anglo friend she had in a previous migrant community. Maxine can't read, so she asks Estrella to read some of her brothers' comic books to her. Estrella loves the comic books, and the two girls often relax by enjoying this pastime together. One day they

have a disagreement based on racial and sexual undertones they didn't even understand at the time: Maxine asks Estrella why Estrella's father is so old, and Estrella clarifies that he's not her father. Maxine then wonders, "Then why you let your grandpa fuck your ma fo'?" and Estrella asserts that her mother and Perfecto don't do that (34). The battle of words escalates to an all-out brawl in the middle of the neighborhood after Maxine implies that Estrella "don't know nothin'" if she thinks that her mother and Perfecto aren't sexually active (35). Estrella doesn't back down— she refuses to accept Maxine's crude assessment of sexuality— even though her participation in the altercation means that her family has to pull up stakes and move on to the next migrant farm, since the white family would receive the benefit of the doubt and the family of color would receive all blame for any incidents of this kind. When a supervisor informs Estrella's family that they need to move since "he wasn't responsible for harm or bodily affliction caused by the devil-sucking vengeful Devridges," the reader may wonder at the injustice of the "devil-sucking" white family being permitted to stay (36). The balance of power in this scene is interesting, though: Estrella can read and her Anglo counterpart cannot. Estrella embodies Anzaldúa's New *Mestiza* in this scene as she claims the marginal: she crosses back and forth over boundaries of language, gender, and education in order to get what she needs.

Another scene which showcases Estrella's rebellious spirit is the confrontation between the young girl and the white nurse at a remote clinic where Estrella's family takes her love interest, Alejo, after he is sprayed with pesticides while picking fruit. The family struggles to acquire enough money to put gas in the car and to pay for medical attention for Alejo, who is inching closer to death with each passing day, but they finally gather approximately ten dollars together and decide, at Estrella's urging, to seek help before the young man dies. When they first pull up to the ramshackle trailer serving as a clinic, Perfecto immediately begins to assess all of the problems with the building with the hope that he can trade his handyman services for Alejo's treatment. The family is forced to wait alone for several minutes in the stuffy waiting room before an indifferent nurse finally appears to attend to them. She briefly examines Alejo, proclaims that he is dehydrated and sick, informs the family that they will need to take him into town to the hospital to be treated, and then charges them ten dollars for the visit. Perfecto offers to fix the toilet instead, but the nurse declines. After she hands over all the money the family has and starts walking back to the car, Estrella becomes incensed at the injustice of the whole situation; now there is no money to buy enough gas to get Alejo to the hospital. She tells her family she will fix everything and promptly turns around, grabs a crowbar, and hits the counter, inadvertently smashing the

nurse's family photos. Threatening more drastic action, Estrella demands a refund, and the terrified, disheveled nurse hands the money back so that the family is able to take Alejo to the hospital. At this moment, the protagonist says that she feels like two Estrellas: one who is a "silent phantom . . . while the other held the crowbar and the money" (150). Making the pivotal decision to confront an unjust power structure releases Estrella from her status of silent shadow and teaches her how to have agency in her own life. Estrella is no longer the pawn of an unfair system; she has figured out how to use her voice to speak up for what is wrong and her body, and violence, to effect change. At this point, her cultural hybridity is no longer a stumbling block in her life. Rather, as Anzaldúa suggests Chicanas should, Estrella uses all the tools at her disposal to become a fully developed, complex, individual who integrates all of the parts of herself in order to find her source of power.

In keeping with her decision to distance herself from traditional Chicano/a themes and characters, Valdes-Rodriguez does not address such sweeping social issues relevant to Chicanos/as as directly as Viramontes. Instead of having her protagonist be aware of racial discrimination, she presents concerns about "*La Raza*" as outdated: it is Paski's father, whom Paski perceives as out of touch and tacky, who is concerned with registering Latinos to vote and with other Chicano/a social

issues rather than Paski. When she uncharacteristically makes a pro-Mexican comment within a conversation with a Mexican-American friend, Paski reflects: "Usually I'm lecturing my dad about how we're not really Mexican because we don't speak Spanish, and he's always, like, lecturing me back about how 'Mexican is cultural, not linguistic'" (123). Mexican-American concerns in this novel are treated with an eye roll, not with the serious, pressing tone found in Viramontes's work. The didactic tone of the older generation is presented, but it is far less prominent than Paski's youthful, nearly apathetic paradigm. Paski is much better integrated with the dominant culture than Estrella, even though Paski is discriminated against for her economic disadvantage in the socially elite Southern California high school she attends. The matrix of power which most vexes her is this ruling class of upper-class students: the overindulged, wealthy Andrew who attempts to rape her and who has been permitted to date-rape other girls and the network of "mean girls" led by Jessica, who go beyond the pale in causing physical harm and even potentially death to their enemies. Nonetheless, Paski too eventually benefits from her heresy: her spiritual connection to the earth and her psychic gift help her uncover her authentic identity and voice and to triumph over the forces that oppress her. The epigraph to the novel asks the perennial adolescent question: "Who do I want to be? / Do I want to throw away the key/ And

invent a whole new me?” The poem provides an important answer to that question: “And I tell myself, no one, no one/ Don’t want to be no one/ But me. . .” Approximately one third of the way through the novel, Paski begins reconciling her heretical heritage and her unique identity. As she rides her bike, she reflects, “Then, with the quirky solitude that comes with being Pasquala Archuleta, daughter of an artist, granddaughter of a psychic. . .” (118). With this thought, Paski identifies herself by her ethnic name rather than her nickname, embraces her solitude, and draws her genealogy as gifted, spiritual, and creative. Toward the end of the novel, after mistakenly ignoring her spiritual gift many times, Paski chooses to embrace it instead. She is “filled with a peace and understanding that [she’s] not felt before, and [she] realize[s] [she] must never again be irresponsible with [her] gift” (281). Then, Paski wins the big race, gets the guy, and is reunited with her best friends. Her wholehearted acceptance of her heretical lineage and identity gives Paski her happy ending.

Just as I discuss in Chapter 2 the ways in which the trope of hybridity in Anglo YA texts allows for crossover moments for minority readers, so do I argue that heresy providing an opening for adolescent girls to have a voice permits further crossover moments between Chicana and Anglo YA texts. In the Chicana texts, racialized politics and spiritual traditions are more ostensibly linked to heretical voice than in the Anglo

texts, wherein the adolescents struggle against matrices of power but without the additional challenge of racial discrimination. As I explore in Chapter 2, the inclusion of racial concerns in both the *House of Night* series, where Zoey is part Native American, and in *Moon Over Manifest*, where the town is comprised largely of recent immigrants to the United States, makes the texts more sensitive to and inclusive of racial concerns than many Anglo YA novels. Additionally, the inclusion of earth-based, goddess-centered spiritual heretical traditions in Anglo texts draws upon a similar shared heritage that the Chicana texts are built on and therefore offers another bridge between the two traditions.

Zoey and Abilene both find their voice in the midst of spiritual turmoil. In *Untamed*, Zoey is forced to fight against her powerful former mentor and the High Priestess of the Tulsa House of Night, Neferet, since the latter has turned to evil. Zoey must convince first her friends and then the rest of the school and the Vampyre High Council that Neferet is allied with evil, and Zoey has to lead the chaotic battle against dark forces that unfolds. Zoey has become alienated from her close-knit group of friends and her boyfriends, and she finds herself dangerously alone. However, she is able to reconnect with her friends and with her spiritual gifts. She embraces her heretical power; toward the end of the novel, Zoey tells Sister Mary Angela, “Grandma reminded me that magic is real. And that

her ancestors, who were really [Zoey's] ancestors, too, weren't any more or less believable than a girl who can summon and command all five of the elements" (Cast 293). Using her gifts and the power and support of her friends, Zoey resolves her worries about her identity, finds her authoritative voice, and overthrows the evil forces in her world. In *Moon Over Manifest*, Abilene's worries about her identity consume her. Her journey is more self-based and local than Zoey's, which ranges over the entire world and into spiritual planes. Abilene has to struggle against a closed-off town population: no one seems willing or able to explain her origin story to her. The young girl continually wonders: "What was my place?" (239). Without the spiritual guidance of a Hungarian diviner who lives on the outskirts of town, Abilene cannot uncover her own story and her own sense of place. At the end of the novel, Abilene discovers that both Miss Sadie, who has a strong sense of self and a "rich voice," and Sister Redempta saved her young father at a critical point in his youth; they each "had done [their] part in tending Jinx's wound" (85, 341). Because he was saved then, and because Abilene brings the town together again in the present, Abilene and her father are able to establish a home at last. The heretical force of the diviner/nun pair empowers young Abilene, and it is she who finds her voice: the last page of the novel is a newspaper entry written by Abilene Tucker, "Reporter About Town," who

has taken over a popular news column in the town's newspaper (342). In fact, Sister Redempta herself has assured the previous columnist that Abilene "has an eye for the interesting and a nose for the news" (342). With her heretical mentor's endorsement, Abilene's identity is uncovered and her place within the town is cemented.

Conclusion

This project uncovers significant similarities between Chicana and Anglo YA literature: I refer to these comparable points as crossover, apex, or collision moments that make experiences of relatability possible within the literature wherein the instability of adolescence can be shared across cultures. Crossover moments are particularly prevalent in Anglo bridge texts that focus on immigration or inter-species hybridity since these exigencies allow the author to implement a sensitive treatment of the Other both formally and thematically. These collision moments are especially noteworthy in novels like *Moon Over Manifest* and the *House of Night* series, which include wise crone characters that connect to earth-based, spiritual archetypes in Chicana literature. These novels also address home and hybrid identities as primary themes, which allow for collision moments with Chicana YA literature since home in flux and hybridity are ubiquitous themes in that genre.

The liminality of adolescence itself and the marginality of the adolescent female body provide further ground for investigation of hybridity as a painful, corporeal borderland. I argue that overt and covert resistance is possible for girls in the interstices of society's demands for their bodies and appetites and their own will and desire. The folkloric image of the *vagina dentata* can be seen as an empowering image for the teen girl's re-appropriation of her own hunger for both food and for sex. Rather than passively being used by her society, she can find a way, like Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, to resist by marshaling her own appetites and image. Like Ana in "Real Women Have Curves," she can write back against dominant culture by inscribing a body-positive message on her own, satisfied body.

Masculine and feminine forms of sacrifice abound in Chicana and Anglo YA literature, particularly in the popular dystopian genre. Often feminine sacrifice masquerades as masculine sacrifice, as is the case in *The Hunger Games* and in *Haters*, which feature strong, athletic female protagonists. Just as maternal (feminine) sacrifice is the backbone of society, so does feminine sacrifice form the backbone of these novels, where both protagonists sacrifice themselves for the good of others. I speculate about the possibility of post-gender sacrifice, where, even

though sacrificial modes are probably inescapable, more fluidity between modes of sacrifice could be modeled.

Both Chicana and Anglo YA fiction include genealogies of heretical literature, and the heretical teenage voice also permits crossover moments. Inclusion of the divine feminine and goddess culture in the literature is heretical since both cultures accept a patriarchal, male-centered orthodoxy. A heretical tradition that is earth-based in Chicana literature and that is sex and body-based in Anglo literature gives readers of both genres a divine feminine on the horizon with the use of female archetypes, though archetypes are more broad-based and focused on the divine feminine in Chicana literature.

Although differences between Chicana and Anglo YA literature abound, I have been surprised by the prevalence of similar themes and forms between the two. I have found home and the hybrid body to be more significant to Chicana literature, along with a focus on Catholicism and its inclusion of the divine feminine in the form of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. However, in the bridge Anglo texts studied in this project, home, hybridity, and the divine feminine are also significant. I have argued that the painful liminality of adolescence provides a common ground for teenage girls from diverse cultures, although I endeavor never to paint all teenage girls with the same broad brush. Chicana YA literature needs to

be analyzed with certain theoretical and historical frameworks in mind, like that of Aztlán and Anzaldúa, but those particularities do not detract from the possibility of collision moments that provide an experience of relatability across cultures

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