Negotiating Feminisms in *La Familia*:
Intergenerational Women in the Writings of Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros

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Abstract

This thesis explores literary representations of the ways in which Mexican American women negotiate feminisms in the family across generations through the maintenance, contestation, and adaptation of traditional gender roles. Using the lens of negotiation to read the texts of Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros, this thesis analyses the ways in which intergenerational women are active participants in the complex interventions and mediations that make up family life. The term 'negotiation' is used to denote the ways in which intergenerational women resist patriarchal oppression. Negotiation in mothering is central in Chicana feminist writings for as Gloria Anzaldúa states, "*[la] gente Chicana tiene tres madres*. [The Chicana people have three mothers.] All three are *mediators*."[1] In their writings, Cisneros and Castillo explore the complex mediations taking place within the Mexican American family and the various devices and strategies employed by women to reveal the nuances of the Chicana experience. These characters are compelled to negotiate their place in the family on unequal terms, within the confines of a framework that stifles the development of women by prescribing them restrictive and limited roles in their capacity as grandmothers, mothers, and daughters. The writing of Cisneros and Castillo demonstrates a politics of negotiation that critiques the gendered ideologies and roles of the family set-up. Close readings of these texts allow for nuanced analyses of the variety of tactics employed by women to survive, and oftentimes thrive, in the oppressive environment of the patriarchal family. In order to persist in an often misogynist environment they undertake feminist negotiations to forge meaningful identities. Their contestation is further complicated by the desire to remain connected to a Mexican heritage in a hostile Anglo American society. This thesis not only engages with the literary representations of the experiences of women in the family, but connects these experiences to the contexts in which these families are found. In the struggle to realise independent and yet interdependent identities, women look to the stories of the lineage of marginalised women in the family for inspiration, foregrounding the stories of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters. This thesis calls for a rethinking of women characters beyond limited, and limiting, familial roles and uses the framework of feminist negotiation as a means to explore the empowering possibilities of intergenerational female relationships.

[1] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 52.

Contents

Introduction: Negotiating Feminisms in la Familia

> *La gente Chicana tiene tres madres*. [The Chicana/o people have three mothers.] […] *Guadalupe*, the virgin mother who has not abandoned us, *la Chingada (Malinche)*, the raped mother whom we have abandoned, and *La Llorona*, the mother who seeks her lost children. All three are *mediators*. [1]
> Gloria Anzaldúa

Negotiation in mothering is central in Chicana feminist writings. Chicana writer, artist, and theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa, gets to the heart of this by stating that the mothers of the Chicana/o people are mediators. These three women, *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, Malinche (Malintzín), and *La Llorona* are conceptualisations of womanhood that construct the cultural script for mothers and mothering in Mexican and Mexican American communities and mediation is an integral part of this mothering.[2] The stories, myths, and histories of these three women present Mexican American women with an unattainable saintly figure on the one hand, and an all-too-easily achieved traitorous whore on the other. Women, Anzaldúa suggests, are caught in a social bind in which almost no manner of good is ever considered good enough while the slightest error will result in social ostracisation. Consequently, as a result of pressures from the patriarchal framework of family life, Chicanas are compelled to negotiate feminisms in the family in order to forge meaningful identities. As Anzaldúa states, the explicit connection between motherhood and mediation is profound and the role of women in the patriarchal family is therefore often one that necessitates the adoption of negotiation tactics. For Chicanas, the very process of forming an identity involves what Alvina Quintana calls "a series of negotiations and mediation between the past and the future."[3] Quintana's understanding of Chicana identity formation not only highlights the importance of these negotiations but also the

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[1] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 52. N.B. As the terminology employed in studies of Chicana and Mexican American women is politicised and critical to identity creation and perception, an in depth discussion of terminology is provided in section three of this introduction.

[2] Denise A. Segura and Jennifer L. Pierce, "Chicana/o Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited," *Signs* 19 (1993): 77.
In recognition of the reclamation of *La Malinche* by Chicana feminists, in this thesis, she will be referred to as Malintzín, as Anzaldúa does in *Borderlands*. This acknowledges the negative connotations of *La Malinche*'s name and disrupts the patriarchy-driven historical narrative of her life story and her mythological impact. Where *La Malinche* is explicitly used, it marks a distinction between her narrative as described and analysed traditionally by scholars, as opposed to the reappropriation of Malintzín by Chicana feminists. This is explored in more depth below.

[3] Alvina Quintana, "Ana Castillo's *The Mixquiahuala Letters*: The Novelist as Ethnographer," in *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*, ed. Hector Caldéron and José David Saldívar (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 76.

central position of intergenerational relationships in this process. That is to say that identity is relational and constructed via a process of negotiation.[4] In this context of these ideas, this thesis aims to present a framework of negotiation and intergenerational relationships to analyse the negotiations undertaken by women in the Chicana/o family in the texts of two Chicana writers, Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros.

Anzaldúa specifically uses the idea of mediation in relation to the Chicana peoples' three mothers, and this is integrated with the broader concept of negotiation that is outlined in this thesis. As such, mediation is understood as a form of negotiation, and the two concepts are connected in the Chicana context as ways of understanding the strategies employed by women in the family. The actions of mediators in the family are part of a larger negotiation that is specifically connected to the cultural context in Mexican American communities. As Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson state, negotiation and mediation are not discrete activities; each involves a set of related processes involving actors, decisions, resources, and situations.[5] Indeed, Deborah Kolb argues that "the institution of mediation" is "an enduring feature of social organization."[6] Furthermore, these mediations are feminist as they are connected to the activist mothering and family-making found in Chicana/o families. Although much of the theory and praxis surrounding this topic focuses on motherhood, this thesis aims to broaden the scope of research to include different examples of 'family-making' in order to capture the diversity of practice within the Mexican American family. Feminist writers and critics have been engaging with the practical and theoretical relationship between mothering and mediation for some time; for example Sara Ruddick imagines mothers "negotiating with nature on behalf of love, harassed by daily demands, yet glimpsing larger questions."[7] Like Anzaldúa's declaration, this speaks to a recognition that the reasons behind women's negotiations are complex, suggesting that they are actions of love that are nonetheless placed under pressure by the day-to-day realities of mothering in a hostile environment. In the case of Chicanas, this is augmented by their experience of living not only in a sexist environment, but also a racist and classist one. Through the lens of negotiation, included in which is the practice of mediation, it is possible to read the actions and behaviours of women characters in Castillo's and

[4] See also: Ronald L. Jackson II, "Cultural Contracts Theory: Towards an Understanding of Identity Negotiation," *Communication Quarterly* 50 (3-4) (2002): 360.
[5] Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson, "Negotiation or Mediation?: An Exploration of Factors Affecting the Choice of Conflict Management in International Conflict," *Negotiation Journal* 17 (1) (2001): 61.
[6] Deborah M. Kolb, *The Mediators* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), 2.
[7] Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon, 1989), p.78.

Cisneros' writing and to come to a clearer understanding of how and why women negotiate their feminisms within the context of the family.

The term 'negotiation' is used to denote the ways in which intergenerational women resist patriarchal oppression as seen in the works of Castillo and Cisneros. To this end, negotiation is understood here as a feminist praxis and a political act that Chicanas apply in order to understand and assert their place in the family. Thus reading through the frame of negotiation allows us to critically explore representations of women in the family in Chicana literature. Reflecting on Chicanas' negotiation of their place in the family provides a set of sensitive and complex analytical tools for understanding not only the novels of Castillo and Cisneros, but also the experiences of Chicana women more broadly. Reading through a framework of negotiation exposes the complex strategies women adopt as grandmothers, mothers, and daughters in the Mexican American family. Doing so speaks to the multiple meanings of the term 'negotiation' including communication, compromise, and the "action of crossing or getting over, round or through some obstacle by skilful manoeuvring; manipulation."[8] In the case of the Chicana, these obstacles are multiple as they face oppression not only from the patriarchal set up of the traditional family, but also from the realities of living in a racist, sexist, and classist society. Indeed, in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, Elizabeth Martínez states that the Chicana suffers from a "triple oppression," a feature of life shared by "all non-white women in the United States."[9] Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano also claims that the most important principle of Chicana feminist criticism is the realisation that "the Chicana's experience is inextricable from her experience as a member of an oppressed working-class racial minority and a culture which is not the dominant culture."[10] In Chicana/o culture, Scott L. Baugh posits that "within a hierarchy of needs, aligned with survival strategies in abeyance of terror and amidst everyday occurrences of violence and tyranny, remain methodologies (*transitory* yet *revolutionary*) surrounding the pursuit of humanistic consciousness."[11] This thesis suggests that negotiation is one of these methodologies, and one that is explored in the writings of

[8] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "negotiation," accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125879 (unless otherwise stated all websites cited were accessible on February 28, 2017).
[9] Elizabeth Martínez, 'La Chicana,' *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. García (Routledge: New York, 1997), 32.
[10] Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, 'Chicana Literature from a Chicana Feminist Perspective,' *Chicana Creativity and Criticism: Charting New Frontiers in American Literature*, eds. María Herrera-Sobek and Helena María Viramontes (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1988), 214.
[11] Scott L. Baugh, ed., *Mediating Chicana/o Culture: Multicultural American Vernacular* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), x.

Cisneros and Castillo as a constructive approach to nurturing female relationships. The reality of living in an oppressive environment then requires mediation on the part of Chicana women, and Jessica M. Vasquez positions this explicitly with the familial context, stating that the Chicana mother is required to act as a "mediator between children and racial messages from the "outside world" (school, media, interracial social networks)."[12] This recognises that there are underlying structures and institutional forces that regulate the way that women understand and negotiate their roles within the family. In the Chicana context the racial, gender, and class system of the United States largely governs the negotiations performed by women. This thesis examines the ways in which Cisneros and Castillo depict the negotiations of Chicana women and more specifically, how they characterise the grandmothers, mothers, and daughters who manoeuvre themselves in order to get over, around, and through these obstacles. In their novels, I argue, Cisneros and Castillo present women who participate in resisting and altering the system of gender relations in the Mexican American family.

As a result of the interlocking influences of race, gender, and class discrimination in America, Chicanas negotiate their role in the family in ways that link the personal and the political: their negotiations can be read as politically activist tactics of personal and cultural survival. They become part of a bargaining process in which Chicanas, either through compulsion or active choice, balance their needs as women in a patriarchal familial and social structure that works to stifle their development. These negotiations require striking a balance between acquiring what Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury understands as "a strong sense of self and self-definition (emotional survival)" while "challenging oppression (physical survival)."[13] For the Chicana, this balance can be acquired in the adoption of the mestiza consciousness. As Anzaldúa states,

> the new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity. […] She has a plural personality. She operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she survive contradiction, she turns ambivalence into something else.[14]

[12] Jessica M. Vasquez, "Chicana Mothering in the Twenty-First Century: Challenging Stereotypes and Transmitting Culture," *21st Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 23.
[13] Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury, "Navigating, Negotiating, and Advocating: Blacks Mothers, their Young Daughters, and White Schools," *Michigan Family Review* 18 (1) (2014): 62-3.
[14] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 101.

Within her “plural personality” the Chicana has the ability to negotiate the often turbulent political and social environment in which she lives; an environment that has become significantly more tempestuous for brown people since the election of a president who is openly endorsed by white supremacist groups and who publicly denounced Mexican people. In the “pluralistic mode” women in the Mexican American family are able to negotiate a place for themselves in a traditionally patriarchal (and Anglo) system. Furthermore, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out, the mestiza consciousness involves "negotiating these knowledges, not just taking a simple counterstance" and such negotiations can be understood as actively encouraging an “up- rooting of dualistic thinking.”[15] Negotiation can therefore be understood as an important part of the feminist mestiza consciousness of Chicanas.

Yet the stories of the Chicana/o people’s three mothers and mediators, *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, Malintzín, and *La Llorona*, rely upon the imposition of binary identities. Their stories represent the dual construction of womanhood in traditional Mexican culture of the good/bad woman that is framed through the mother/whore opposition. This dichotomisation is played out specifically through the historical and mythical figures of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* on the one hand, and Malintzín and *La Llorona* on the other.[16] These three women, and the stories and myths that surround them, have shaped persistent gender expectations in Mexican and Mexican American life. Within this patriarchal discourse, women are allowed to exist only in strict categories that constrain them in a good/bad woman configuration, denying them the plurality of mestiza consciousness. The Virgin of Guadalupe, Malintzín, and *La Llorona* are all deeply rooted in the nation’s religious expression, history, and folklore. These prototypes of womanhood are artificially created and determine to a great extent the gender identity of women of Mexican heritage, defining them in their expression of their sexuality. These figures enforce feminine colonial passivity, promoting specific subjugated behaviours in women. Anzaldúa argues that *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is there “to make us docile and enduring, la Chingada [Malintzín] to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and La Llorona to make us the long-suffering people.”[17] Further, as the quotation at the beginning of this

[15] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle,” *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991): 36-7.
[16] This is not limited to Mexican and/or Catholic culture and is experienced in many patriarchal societies. Sara Ruddick affirms that “There are probably as many versions of “bad” mothers as there are cultures in which women are held responsible for raising children.” Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 32.
[17] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 31.

introduction emphasises, this is fundamentally connected to motherhood: they are *las tres madres* (the three mothers) of the Chicana/o people.[18] Through these archetypal depictions of femininity, Mexican and Mexican American culture identifies images of the good, *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, versus the bad woman, Malintzín and *La Llorona*, and these value judgements are intimately connected to their role as women in the family.

In their writings, Cisneros and Castillo explore the complex negotiations taking place within the Mexican American family and the various strategies employed by women in order to reveal the nuances of the Chicana experience. As the family has been described as a "suffocating social institution […] that [confines and harnesses] full development," these negotiations are crucial for individual development.[19] The women characters in Castillo's and Cisneros' writings demonstrate the tension between the desire for personal empowerment and the maintenance of familial bonds. The six novels chosen for the study of negotiation in Cisneros and Castillo's writing cover an extensive time period from 1984 to 2007. The diverse range of periods from which these novels emerge demonstrates the cyclical and, indeed, intergenerational nature of the theme of negotiation in Cisneros' and Castillo's writing. Throughout the thesis contextual analysis of the period is therefore integrated into the analysis of the negotiations employed by the characters in these works. In *The House on Mango Street*, *Woman Hollering Creek*, *So Far From God*, *Peel My Love Like an Onion*, *Caramelo*, and *The Guardians* the exploration of the feminist praxis of negotiation is particularly evident, because they focus centrally on interfamilial relationships. It is a theme that recurs in these works and through (re)writing these female characters and their role in the family, neither author proposes a unified solution to the question of negotiation but rather explores the diverse range of tactics employed by intergenerational women. These tactics range from upholding patriarchal rule of law in order to maintain a position of influence in the family, to adopting feminist mothering practices that transform the familial framework, and synthesising the lessons of foremothers in order to discover new independent yet interconnected pathways. Their exploration of this idea is not limited to their novels, nor is it limited to Cisneros and Castillo within Chicana literature, making it a difficult task to select a limited number of texts for analysis. What does connect these texts is their explicit consideration of female intergenerational relationships, a theme that persists across the over twenty year span of these works. As is discussed in the following chapters, Cisneros and

[18] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 30-1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
[19] Francisco A. Lomelí, "Contemporary Chicano Literature, 1959-1990: From Oblivion to Affirmation to the Forefront," *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Literature and Art*, ed. Francisco Lomelí (Arte Público Press: Houston, 1993), 105.

Castillo write about the many and varied ways in which Chicanas act as mediators in the family. The characters in these books demonstrate the complex intergenerational compromises and mediations taking place in the Mexican American family. Their writing demonstrates a politics of negotiation that critiques the gendered ideologies and roles of the family set up. Close readings of these texts allow for nuanced analyses of the variety of tactics employed by women to survive, and oftentimes thrive, in the oppressive environment of the patriarchal family.

Of the three figures described as the three mothers of the Chicana/o people, Malintzín's story, both real and imagined, is the most intrinsically connected to the concept of mediation and negotiation in motherhood. Malintzín, also known as *La Malinche*, was a member of the Aztec nobility named Malinalli Tenépal who was renamed by the Spanish as Doña Marina. Although of noble birth, she was sold as a child into slavery to Mayan merchants, allegedly by her own mother. In 1519 she was one of the women given as a gift to Hernán Cortés when he landed in Mexico. She became Cortés' translator, tactical advisor, and lover. Although Malintzín bore only one son by Cortés, according to Mexican and Chicana/o folklore, she is said to represent the raped Indian woman who produced all of the *mestizo* (mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry) peoples of Mexico.[20] It is through her relationship with Cortés, as a negotiator, that she is remembered, represented, and reviled. Her negative portrayal in history, and thereby in popular belief, can be attributed to "misinterpretation of her role in the conquest of Mexico" and "an unconscious, if not intentional, misogynistic attitude toward women in general, especially toward self-assertive women."[21] As a key negotiator for Cortés, Malintzín had access and influence that was only granted to a very small number of people, least of all a woman. So central was her place in Cortés' negotiations with the indigenous peoples that Cortés himself was often called 'Captain Malinche' or simply 'Malinche' because, according to the seventeenth-century chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo:

> [In] every town we passed through and in other that had only heard of us, they called Cortes [sic] Malinche, and I shall call him this name henceforth in recording any conversations he has with Indians, both in this province and in the city of

[20] Castro, *Chicano Folklore*, 149-50.
[21] Adelaida R. Del Castillo, "Malintzin Tenépal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective," *Essays on la mujer*, ed. Rosa Martinez Cruz (Los Angeles: University of California, 1977), 139.

> Mexico […]. The reason why he received this name was that Doña Marina was always with him, especially when he was visited by ambassadors or *Caciques* […].[22]

From Díaz Del Castillo's account we learn that Malintzín was an important figure in the heart of Cortés' negotiations with the indigenous leaders he encountered. Historians have argued that Cortés' strategic movements in Mexico-Tenochtitlan can be attributed in equal measure to the use of rhetoric as to the use of force, recognising that interpreters were as crucial to the success of Cortés' enterprise as the soldiers and allies who he had conquered.[23] Díaz Del Castillo's account of the 'Conquest of Mexico' reveals how Malintzín positioned herself as a negotiator: "as an agent of intervention and change."[24] Thus in her role as translator and mediator, Malintzín was potentially key to the strategic manoeuvres of Cortés.

Yet misogynistic attitudes towards her role in Cortés' entourage have meant that she is portrayed in a negative light in historical documentation and Malintzín's role as negotiator is a particular target for those who accuse her of betrayal.[25] The misogynistic attitude that dictates that a woman should not have access to influence has tainted Malintzín's history. In particular, soldier's accounts of the so-called Cholula Massacre and Moctezuma's captivity are employed as sources for the cultural construction of Malintzín as a traitor to the Mexican peoples.[26] Since she embodies the betrayal of one's own people or culture, Malintzín as *La Malinche* serves as the female scapegoat for Mexican society. Her 'seduction' of and by Cortés has marked her as a traitor for generations of Mexican and Mexican American peoples, to such an extent that the term *malinchista* has entered the vocabulary to use as a slur to someone who commits an act of betrayal.[27] Imbedded within this term is an inherent sexism for, whether committed by a man or a woman, the betrayal is coded in the language

[22] Bernal Díaz Del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. by John Michael Cohen (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963 [1632]), 172.
[23] See Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 143-5; and María Laura Spoturno, "Revisiting Malinche: A Study of Her Role as an Interpreter," *Translators, Interpreters, and Cultural Negotiators*, ed. Federico M. Federici and Dario Tessicini (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 126.
[24] Spoturno, "Revisiting Malinche," 129.
[25] See: Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1967); and Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
[26] These episodes are found in the following fragments: Bernal Díaz Del Castillo, *Historía verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1984 [1632]): 288-9; 290-1; and 349, and Díaz Del Castillo, *The Conquest* (1963 [1632]): 194; 196-7; and 246-7).
[27] It is also important to note that Malintzín was only a child when she was sold, she is believed to have been around fourteen years old when she met the thirty four year old Cortés (See Del Castillo, "Malintzin Tenépal," 127).

as female because of its feminine noun form in Spanish.[28] The sexist position of many chroniclers of Malintzín's history has resulted in the silencing of her role as a successful negotiator during the Spanish conquest of Mexico.

Malintzín's agency in her role as negotiator has often been dismissed, most famously in Octavio Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude* in which she is described as '*la chingada* [the fucked one/the raped one]".[29] Even in his use of the past participle Paz positions her within the passive voice, effectively rendering her role in the history of Mexico passive as a result.[30] Yet some accounts do detail her active role as a negotiator and reading her story from a feminist perspective demands that her agency be taken into account. Margo Glantz vehemently refutes Paz's description of La Malinche, declaring instead that "*La Malinche no fue, de ningún modo, una mujer pasiva como podríamos deducir de la descripción [de Paz]*." ["La Malinche was not, in any way, the passive women that can be inferred from Paz's description."].[31] Along with other critics who have since debunked Paz's deeply sexist portrayal of Malintzín, Glantz affirms that:

> [Paz] *analiza a la Malinche como mito, la yuxtapone o más bien la integra a la figura de la Chingada, y la transforma en el concepto genérico – porque lo generaliza y por su género – de la traición en México, encarnado en una mujer histórica y a la vez mítica*.
> [[Paz] analyses la Malinche as a myth, he juxtaposes her, or better integrates her, with the figure of la Chingada [the fucked one], and transforms her into the generic concept – through generalisation and because of her gender – of betrayal in Mexico, embodied by a woman who is both historical and mythical.][32]

[28] Mary Louise Pratt, "'Yo Soy La Malinche': Chicana Writers and the Poetics of Ethnonationalism," *Callaloo* 16 (1993): 860.
[29] Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1985), 86. In the essay "Sons of La Malinche" in this collection, Paz goes into detail into what is meant by this word '*chingar*'. One of the various suggestions put forward is that "The *chingón* is the *macho* the male; he rips open the *chingada*, the female, who is pure passivity, defenceless against the exterior world." (77) It is consistently implied that the female's 'openness' is what allows, or even permits, such violation.
[30] This is further emphasised as the masculine alternative, "chingón," uses of the augmentative suffix, thus giving the male form even more power and agency.
[31] Margo Glantz, 'Las hijas de la Malinche,' *Debate Feminista* 6 (1992), www.jstor.org/stable/42625656: 162.
[32] Ibid., 163. See also Roger Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character*, trans. by Christopher J. Hall (New Runswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992); and Angie Chabrám-Dernersesian, "Out of the Labyrinth, Into the Race: The Other Discourse of Chicano/Mexicano Difference," *Frontera Norte* 9 (18) (1997): 127-44.

In Paz's examination it is Malintzín who is blamed for the evils of the Spanish colonisation of Mexico. This indictment not only ignores the often cruel treatment of Malintzín at the hands of Cortés but also discounts his role in events. The misogynist perspective of Paz's work serves to render Malintzín passive while simultaneously blaming her for the violation of the Mexican peoples. Yet her ability to betray actually implies agency; in her role as negotiator Malintzín wielded power, albeit in a limited way, and she was in a position to sway the outcomes of Cortés' political and military campaigns. If she were a man, she might instead be referred to as an astute political strategist. Even still, it is in Paz's analysis that Malintzín the woman is distilled into *La Malinche* the mythic figure, and this view has been preserved in the annals of history. This thesis engages with a reaffirmation of agency within narratives of negotiation. In doing so, it aims to show the ways in which Cisneros and Castillo portray women who are active agents and live an existence more complex and richer than some (hi)stories have suggested.

With Malintzín's (hi)story in mind, the concept of negotiation that underpins this thesis is one that deliberately highlights agency. In the texts by Cisneros and Castillo examined here, women characters are active participants in the complex interventions and mediations that make up family life. Thus these negotiations can be read as feminist acts because they attempt to redefine the limited and limiting roles imposed on them. In their writing, Cisneros and Castillo's depiction of women in the family is not limited to oppression; their grandmothers, mothers, and daughters are not entirely powerless. They allow for a distinct womanist space that involves moving outside of stereotypical thinking.[33] Literary critic Phillippa Kafka's reading of Chicana feminist Yarbro-Bejarano attests to the importance of highlighting agency when reading Chicana texts; she states that the subject (the Chicana) is self-reflexive and can choose how to conduct herself.[34] This resonates with Fiona Green's understanding of agency in mothering; she states that "even when restrained by patriarchy, motherhood can be a site of empowerment and political activism."[35] Expanding this position to include other women's roles in the family, specifically those of grandmother and daughter, allows for a more nuanced analysis of the ways that women reclaim agency under

[33] Rita Bode, "Mother to Daughter: Muted Maternal Feminism in the Fiction of Sandra Cisneros," *Textual Mothers/Maternal Texts: Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literatures*, ed. Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O'Reilly (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), 289. N.B. The term 'womanist' was first coined by Alice Walker, in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1984).
[34] Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women*, xvii; citing Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, "Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*: Cultural Studies, 'Difference,' and the Non-Unitary Subject," *Cultural Critique* 28 (1994): 5-28.
[35] Fiona Green, "Feminist Mothers: Successfully Negotiating the Tensions Between Motherhood and Mothering," *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly (Toronto: Women's Press, 2004), 31.

oppressive conditions. Yet, because as Roberta Villalón asserts, "[agency] does not occur in a vacuum, but is always structurally limited and relative to others' agency," these endeavours require a complex negotiation.[36] Agency, in this analysis, can be understood as the capacity to realise one's own interests despite the encumbrance of tradition, custom, or other obstacles. Furthermore, women's agency in negotiation is consubstantial with resistance to patriarchal domination.

Thus Cisneros and Castillo take part in a re-narrativisation of stories of archetypal Mexican folklore that centralises women, families, and agency. In the Mexican American context, this comprises complex negotiations as the Chicana attempts to "define herself" as she navigates realities that "fail to acknowledge her existence."[37] Responding to this lack of acknowledgment, Chicana writers engage with pre-existing narratives that have marginalised female figures and re-appropriate them and assert their agency. Malintzín, for example, has been re-appropriated by several Chicana feminists, particularly since the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s, and for many she is now a figure of empowerment. In such texts, there is an acknowledgment of the powerful institutional and cultural forces imposed on these women – both historically and through myths – that provokes a re-reading, and re-writing, of their representation. Norma Alarcón asserts that, "[Malintzín's] almost half century of mythic existence [… has] turned her into a handy reference point not only for controlling, interpreting or visualizing women, but also to wage a domestic battle of stifling proportions."[38] Chicana feminists see that diminishing the understanding of, and disparaging these female figures, "and by association denigrating all women, is a political act of a patriarchal system."[39]

Rebolledo underlines this process of re-appropriation and the ways in which the three mothers of the Chicana/o people have been adapted to become useful figures in the lives and works of Chicanas, announcing that "they have incorporated them into contemporary life, dressing them in karate suits, making them talk-show hostesses, making them active and wise."[40] Alicia Gaspar de Alba's book, *[Un]Framing the "Bad Woman"* (2014) takes on this task to fight against what is not "an

[36] Roberta Villalón, "Passage to Citizenship and the Nuances of Agency: Latina Battered Immigrants," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33 (2010): 553.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Alarcón, "A Re-Vision through Malintzin," 182.
[39] Julia de Foor Jay, "(Re)claiming the Race of the Mother: Cherríe Moraga's *Shadow of a Man*, *Giving Up the Ghost*, and *Heroes and Saints*," in *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), 97.
[40] Tey Diana Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow: A Cultural Analysis of Chicana Literature* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1995), 208.

objet d'art created by an artist", but "an artifice of patriarchy created to oppress women and at the same time promote the interests of men."[41] Gaspar de Alba analyses the ways in which archetypal female figures including *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, Malintzín, and *La Llorona* "have all struggled against the cultural logic of capitalist, racist, heterosexist, phallocentric domination, wittingly or by necessity."[42] Challenging this cultural logic is a major undertaking as these tropes of womanhood have become "entrenched in the Mexican and Chicano cultures, providing major stumbling blocks to women in their quest for self-determination."[43] Therefore Chicana writers who challenge these archetypes are committing a political act of re-negotiation that aims to undermine and ultimately dismantle the patriarchal systems forced upon women. These revised images of Mexican motherhood are central to the writings of Castillo and Cisneros and are vital to analysing and understanding the complexities of their female characters.

As a woman Malintzín negotiated within a system that would not recognise her power as a political strategist. Likewise, the negotiations carried out by Chicanas in the family are necessitated by the prevalence and persistence of gendered perceptions of Mexican American women that influence negotiations and can dictate the ways in which women negotiate. As discussed above, agency does not occur in a vacuum and is structurally limited. As such, agency does not always equate resistance and can instead be compliant; that is "expressed by following norms, rules, regulations, ideals, and expectations."[44] Marci R. McMahon explores this concept in relation to the perceived domesticity of Mexicana and Chicana women in her 2013 book, *Domestic Negotiations: Gender, Nation, and Self-Fashioning in US Mexicana and Chicana Literature and Art*. McMahon argues that some domestic representations "may not refuse gendered or racialized hierarchies, [but] instead use dominant ideologies as a route to resistance."[45] Thus, even in the context of negotiating feminisms in the family, the familial framework itself is not always radically altered and the maintenance of patriarchal structures can also be a part of the compound tactics employed by these women. Deborah Kolb states that mediation, as a form of negotiation that is compliant rather than resistant, can serve to "preserve the institutional fabric of the system."[46] Sometimes the negotiations of women in the family, particularly those of the older generations, serve to reinforce the norms and

[41] Gaspar de Alba, *[Un]Framing*, 33.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Jay, "(Re)claiming the Race of the Mother," 98.
[44] Villalón, "Nuances of Agency," 553.
[45] Marci R. McMahon, *Domestic Negotiations: Gender, Nation, and Self-Fashioning in US Mexicana and Chicana Literature and Art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 4.
[46] Kolb, *The Mediators*, 3.

structures that oppress women.[47] Nevertheless, this does not mean that negotiations that seem to maintain the status quo are anti-feminist, rather it opens up the possibility of "recognising the 'empowering' elements of acts that might at first sight appear 'disempowering'."[48] As Andrea Cornwall and Jenny Edwards observe, it is often necessary "to work within existing strictures to achieve some positive gains, with the hope that these may eventually ripple out and bring about wider changes."[49] So by reading these types of negotiations as feminist acts, the critical reader is forced to question why women may behave in a seemingly misogynist way and, in asking this, unearth their resistance and so their agency.

As Castillo writes in *Peel My Love*, "[people] think of silence as passive, but as good warriors, tough government and mediators or high stakes everywhere know, silence is a special method of negotiation."[50] Silence should not be perceived simply as acquiescence, nor should apparent compliance be read as capitulation. While Cisneros and Castillo represent those women who oppose yet sometimes uphold the specific gendered ideologies of their generation, it is nonetheless through perceiving their negotiations as feminist that the agency of these characters is asserted. This approach pushes against assumptions that women are the passive victims of domination and recognises their individual power. In this thesis, negotiation is therefore understood as a form of feminist defiance and endurance. It also acknowledges the plurality of the Mexican American experience by providing space for the many and varied tactics adopted by intergenerational women. The tensions that exist between perceived compliance on the one hand and radical resistance on the other mark out one of the important spaces that has not been addressed in the scholarship on Castillo and Cisneros. Therefore, negotiation is understood not as mere submission to the mainstream, mere assimilation or concession but a strategy that encompasses a wide range of feminist tactics that include resistance and subversion along with mediation and accommodation. This makes it a particularly useful tool for examining not only the characters in the novels of Cisneros

[47] Kolb notes that: "Anthropologists have shown a keen interested in the societal mechanisms by which order and structure are maintained in a culture. Mediators are viewed as a kind of complement to the formal structural fabric of the society and, indeed, their actions are essential to its maintenance" (197). With reference to these foundational works: Edward W. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); Roy F. Barton, *The Kalingas: Their Institutions and Custom Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Family and Marriage in Singapore* (London: HMSO, 1957); Philip H. Gulliver, "On Mediators," *Social Anthropology and Law*, ed. Ian Hammett (New York: Academic Press, 1977); and Philip H. Gulliver, *Disputes and Negotiations: A Cross Cultural Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).
[48] Andrea Cornwall and Jenny Edwards, "Introduction: Negotiating Empowerment," *IDS Bulletin: Transforming Development Knowledge* 47 (1A) (2016): 7.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 29. Debra Castillo also explores this idea in *Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

and Castillo, but also the lived realities of Mexican American women and explicitly connects analysis with actuality.

The type of negotiating that women undertake in the family has generally been framed in their roles as wives and mothers and understood as mediation on behalf of others in the family or on behalf of the family unit as a whole. Indeed, one of the definitions of 'mediation' states that it specifically refers to "intercession on behalf of another;" while 'negotiation' more broadly means "an act of dealing with another person."[51] This is particularly important for intergenerational women in the Mexican American family as it is generally assumed that they work in the best interests of the family, while their own individual needs are often ignored. As Chicana scholar Aída Hurtado notes, women are expected to demonstrate a high degree of concern for others and may pay a social price when they do not do so.[52] In the wider context, gender-linked stereotypes make it difficult for women to advocate freely for themselves as individuals, but negotiating on behalf of others is seen as more consistent with the gender schema.[53] Furthermore, early studies into gender and negotiation in the 1970s and '80s tended to rely on the premise that gender was a stable and reliable predictor of bargaining behaviour and performance.[54] However, in the 1990s, feminist researchers in the field of negotiation offered an alternative conceptualisation that viewed the role of gender as "a belief system that structures and gives meaning to social interactions."[55] They argued that previous studies of negotiation had used an androcentric bias to understand what was deemed successful in negotiation.[56] By reifying the image of the effective negotiator in masculine terms, any feminine model would fail to fit the model for success.[57] Subsequent feminist studies in the field of

[51] *OED*, s.v. "mediation," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115665; s.v. "negotiation," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125879.
[52] Aída Hurtado, "Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Color," *Signs* 14 (3) (1989): 833-55.
[53] Mary E. Wade, "Women and Salary Negotiation: The Costs of Self-Advocacy," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 25 (1) (2001): 65-76. See also: Deborah Kolb, Joyce K. Fletcher, Debra Meyerson, Deborah Merrill-Sands, and Robin J. Ely, "Making Change: A Framework for Promoting Gender Equity," *Reader in Gender, Work, and Organization*, ed. R. J. Ely, E. G. Foldy, and M. A. Scully (Victoria, Australia: Blackwell, 2002), 204–10.
[54] Hannah Riley and Kathleen L. McGinn, "When Does Gender Matter in Negotiation?", Faculty Research Working Paper Series, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2002), http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP02036?OpenDocument.
[55] Deborah M. Kolb and Linda L. Putnam, "Through the Looking Glass: Negotiation Theory Refracted Through the Lens of Gender," *Workplace Dispute Resolution: Directions for the Twenty-First Century* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 238.
[56] Barbara Gray, "The Gender-Based Foundations of Negotiation Theory," *Research on Negotiations in Organizations* 4 (1994): 3-36; and Sandra L. Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).
[57] Robin J. Ely and Debra E. Meyerson, "Theories of Gender in Organizations: A New Approach to Organizational Analysis and Change," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22 (2000): 105-53.

negotiation have moved away from the androcentric model that gauges success in terms of transactional advantage, to models that bring social and relational dynamics to the fore.[58] It is to this scholarly perspective that the activist feminist concept of negotiation used in this thesis connects. By focusing on the social and relational dynamics of women in the family, the negotiations of the women in Cisneros and Castillo's texts can be understood as successful negotiators, negotiators who look beyond immediate individual gain in order to secure futures for themselves and their families.

A key influence on women's behaviour in negotiations and mediations in the family is the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which dictates and polices the subservient position of women in society, assuming that women will act in support of the family over their own interests. In the family, the institutional and cultural influence of the Catholic Church is profound; as Castillo states: "[one] of the guiding principles in our life is Catholicism. […] [It is] completely permeated into our psyche."[59] Cherríe Moraga also states that the legacies of archetypal Mexican womanhood as well as that of the Catholic Church influence the writings and feminisms of many Chicanas, arguing that, "Chicanas' negative perceptions of ourselves as sexual persons and our consequential betrayal of each other finds its roots in four-hundred year long Mexican history and mythology."[60] Thus, understanding the context in which Mexican American women are brought up is critical to a robust analysis of their roles in the family. As the ultimate Catholic mother, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is representative of the sacred and holy position afforded to motherhood in the Mexican and Mexican American family.[61] However, the combination of those values for

[58] See: Patricia A. Gwartney-Gibbs, "Gender and Workplace Dispute Resolution: A Conceptual and Theoretical Model," *Law & Society Review*, 28 (2) (1994): 265-96; Deborah M. Kolb, "Women's Work: Peacemaking in Organizations," *Hidden Conflict in Organizations: Uncovering Behind-the-Scenes Disputes*, ed. Deborah M. Kolb, and Jean M. Bartunek (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), 63-91; Deborah M. Kolb, and Gloria Coolidge, "Her Place at the Table," *Negotiation Theory and Practice*, ed. J. William Breslin, and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (Cambridge, MA: Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, 1991). 261-77; Linda L. Putnam, and Deborah M. Kolb, "Rethinking Negotiation: Feminist Views of Communication and Exchange," *Rethinking Organizational and Managerial Communication from Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Patrice M. Buzzanell (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 1-52; and Anita Taylor, and Judi Beinstein Miller, ed., *Conflict and Gender* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 1994).

[59] Ana Castillo, "Interview with Ana Castillo by Marta A. Navarro," in *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1991), 11.

[60] Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 99.

[61] *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is the Catholic patroness of Mexico who appeared to Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin in 1531. According to Mexican folklore, she identified herself as the Virgin Mary and, speaking in the pre-Columbian indigenous language Nahuatl, she asked Juan Diego to go to the Spanish bishop and ask that a temple be built there where she stood on the mount of Tepeyac. When Juan Diego told the bishop, he was sceptical and asked that the Virgin Mary give some kind of sign to prove that it was her speaking through this indigenous man. The Virgin sent Juan Diego to the top of Tepeyac where he found beautiful Castilian roses

which she is most revered, namely her asexual femininity, virgin status, and motherhood, immediately make her an impossible role model. Cisneros laments the impossibility of *La Virgen*'s version of femininity, testifying that "I was angry for so many years every time I saw la Virgen de Guadalupe, my culture's role model for brown women like me. She was damn dangerous, an ideal so lofty and unrealistic it was laughable."[62] Yet Mexican American women are held accountable to a self-sacrificing and pure image of femininity that is unattainable but still stands as the exemplar. Over and above the biological impossibility of virgin motherhood, there is the added incongruity of ideal motherhood contrasted with the reality for most women. As philosopher and mother Sara Ruddick candidly states "our days include few if any perfect moments, [or] perfect children perfectly cared for."[63] Cisneros addresses the impossibility of negotiating on these terms, highlighting the disparity between ideal motherhood and the reality in *Caramelo* when her character, the Awful Grandmother, unequivocally notes, "[everyone] said motherhood was sacred, but all the everyones who said it were men."[64] In the novel, Cisneros reveals that the Awful Grandmother did not feel sacred during her pregnancy. Rather, she felt "more human than ever" and could not wait to "have her body back."[65] The Awful Grandmother viscerally feels the distinction between the myth of idealised motherhood and the physical reality.

Chicana feminist Consuelo Nieto interprets the role of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* in Mexican American culture as being fundamental to hierarchies found in Chicana/o family life as a result of the Spanish and Catholic influence in Mexico at the time of the conquest, hierarchies that reverberate to this day. She quotes the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians to emphasise this pervasive attitude in Catholic Mexican culture:

> Wives, should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the

never before seen in this part of the world. He cut them and arranged them in his *tilma*, a type of cloak, and took them to the bishop as proof of the Virgin's appearance. When he unfolded his *tilma* in front of the bishop, the roses fell to the floor and there on the cloth was an image of the Virgin Mary. Now the Spanish bishop believed Juan Diego and ordered for a church to be built on the mount of Tepeyac, where a shrine still stands. See: "Juan Diego," The Vatican, http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20020731_juan-diego_en.html.

[62] Sandra Cisneros, "Guadalupe the Sex Goddess," *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, ed. Ana Castillo (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 48.

[63] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 31.

[64] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 190.

[65] Ibid.

> body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.[66]

As written into Catholic doctrine, submission of the woman to the man is expected in Catholic families, and Nieto points out that while not all Chicanas/os are Catholic or participate actively in the Church, "the values, traditions, and social patterns of the Church are tightly interwoven in [secular] Chicano family life."[67] The influence of the Church is far reaching, and, as Luis Leal states, "[not] only are many Latinos Catholic, but many Catholics are Latinos."[68] The hierarchical nature of this institution calls for women "to be subservient to men and to serve as devoted daughters, wives, and mothers."[69] Within this system women are forced to negotiate their female identity in an oppressive context.

In order to gain fulfilment, according to these principles, women must emulate the Virgin Mary as devoted wife and mother, and then they will receive adoration in this maternal role. Castillo laments that "we have been forced into believing that we, as women, only existed to serve man under the guise of serving a Father God."[70] This misogynist message is reinforced by official Church declarations on the role of the Virgin Mary in religious belief and practice. For example, Pope Paul VI declared that,

> [the] Virgin Mary […] is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer. *Redeemed by reason of the merits of her son* and united to him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit.[71]

Castillo has spoken about the Pope's attitude to, and doctrine regarding, women, stating in an interview that "[with] the Catholic Church, culture and tradition are mixed with religion. Most of the

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[66] Ephesians, 5:2, 22-25: emphasis added.
[67] Consuelo Nieto, "The Chicana and the Women's Rights Movement," *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 208.
[68] Leal, "Religion and Political and Civic Lives of Latinos," 313.
[69] Williams, *Mexican American Family,* 22.
[70] Castillo, *Massacre*, 13.
[71] Pope Paul VI, "Chapter VIII: The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church," *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church: Lumen Gentium*, Second Vatican Council (November 21, 1964), section 53, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (emphasis added).

pope's strictest edicts are against – well, I think they are against – but they have dealt with females."[72] In this doctrinal decree, the Pope explicitly stated that Mary's redeeming qualities are endowed by virtue of her being mother to her son, Jesus Christ. Hence *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, as an embodiment or representation of Jesus' mother Mary, is revered in her role as serving a Father God through the immaculate conception of his son, Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that the Virgin Mary's role as care-giving and nurturing mother, rather than just biological pro-genitor, is in fact undocumented in the Bible. Jesus' childhood years, from his birth until his twelfth year, are entirely absent from the narrative.[73] Thus, although the Virgin Mary's motherhood is revered, the daily tasks of child-rearing are notably excluded; this further alienates real mothering practices and reinforces the impossibility of living up the *La Virgen de Guadalupe*'s example. It is the imbalance between the idea of the mother as revered and venerated on the one hand, and on the other, the reality that mothers contend with. As Castillo succinctly put in, "while the concept of *mother* is idealized, mother in society is denigrated."[74]

The traditional Mexican American family is patriarchal in structure, based on "asymmetrical social and gender relations," creating a hierarchy in which men are superior to women.[75] In the traditional Mexican American family, rule of the father is foremost and the family structure is explicitly connected to the framework of patriarchy in the Latin American context. As Susana Beatriz Gamba states,

> *En su sentido literal significa gobierno de los padres. Históricamente el término ha sido utilizado para designar un tipo de organización social en el que la autoridad la ejerce el varón jefe de familia, dueño del patrimonio, del que formaban parte los hijos, la esposa, los esclavos y los bienes. La familia es, claro está, una de las instituciones básicas de este orden social.*
> [In its literal sense it signifies the rule of the father. Historically the term has been used to designate a type of social organisation in which authority is exercised by the male head of the family, master of the estate, which is made up of the children,

[72] "An Interview with Ana Castillo," by Bryce Milligan, *South Central Review* 16, (1999): 20.
[73] After his nativity, the next mention of Jesus is not until Luke 2:6, 41-52 when he is twelve years old. In this section, Luke recounts how Mary and Joseph lose Jesus for three days at the temple, only to find him later amongst teachers.
[74] Castillo, *Massacre*, 15.
[75] Adelaida R. Del Castillo, "Gender and its Discontinuities in Male/Female Domestic Relations: Mexicans in Cross-Cultural Context," in *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic, and Political Change*, ed. D. R. Maciel and I. D. Ortiz (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 212.

the wife, slaves and goods. The family is clearly one of the basic institutions of this social order.][76]

Chicana feminist theory and praxis acknowledges the centrality of the family in the overall patriarchal framework. In Mexican American and American society, patriarchal privilege in the family is deep-rooted and works on structural, ideological, and interpersonal levels.[77] Raymund Paredes emphasises the place of patriarchy in the Mexican American context, stating that their cultural traditions are "often described as among the most patriarchal in the world."[78]

The teachings of the Church influence the family set up more generally, outlining a hierarchical system in which women are presumed to take subservient roles, working on behalf of others and discounting their own needs and desires. The family has been described as the first agent of gender socialisation, and it is vital to understand its role in the development of identity.[79] Family is the crucible in which identities are formed, adapted, and matured. The family plays an integral part in Mexican American society, and it shapes and moulds the value systems by which many Chicanas/os live. As critic Richard T. Rodríguez states, "the family is a crucial symbol and organizing principle that by and large frames the history of Mexican Americans in the United States."[80] Jessica Vasquez concurs with this, arguing that "family remains a critical site of racial identity development because it is the locale where intergenerational biography-based teaching occurs."[81] In the writings of Cisneros and Castillo there are tensions between the recognition of the importance of familial

[76] Susana Beatriz Gamba, con la colaboración de Tania Diz, Dora Barrancos, Eva Giberti, y Diana Maffía, *Diccionario de estudios de género y feminismos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2009), 258. See also: Gerda Lerner, *La creación del patriarcado* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1990); and María Milagros Rivera Garretas, *Nombrar el mundo femenino* (Madrid: Icaria, 1994)

[77] This thesis uses the term 'patriarchal' both to mean specifically "the rule of the father", and also more generally "any system of male superiority and female inferiority." *OED*, s.v. "patriarchy," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138873; and Barbara Katz Rothman, *Recreating Motherhood: Ideology and Technology in a Patriarchal Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 29. See also: Valerie Bryson, "Patriarchy: A Concept Too Useful to Lose," *Contemporary Politics* 5 (1999): 311-24; Jeff Hearn, "Patriarchies, Transpatriarchies and Intersectionalities" in *Intimate Citizenships: Gender, Sexuality, Politics*, ed. Elzbieta H. Oleksy (London: Routledge, 2009); Norma Williams, *The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change* (New York: General Hall, 1990); and Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[78] Raymund Paredes, "The Evolution of Daughter-Father Relationships in Mexican-American Culture," *Daughters and Fathers*, ed. Lynda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 136.

[79] Shirley A. Hill and Joey Sprague, "Parenting in Black and White Families: The Interaction of Gender with Race and Class," *Gender and Society* 13 (1999): 480-502.

[80] Richard T. Rodríguez, *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 2.

[81] Vasquez, "Chicana Mothering in the Twenty-First Century," 23.

heritage and the acknowledgment that the traditional family framework oppresses women. By analysing and contextualising the roles of women in the family through the writing of Castillo and Cisneros, this thesis studies specific examples that are then explored as representations of the wider contexts of Mexican American and (Anglo) American society. This approach builds upon Dorsía Smith Silva's book *Latina/Chicana Mothering* (2011), a collection of essays and reflections that challenge the traditional roles and models of Chicana and Latina mothering.[82] The collected narratives interweave historical, cultural, and political factors that affect the lives of mothers, and provide examples of the complexities of mothering in Chicana/Latina contexts. Contributions from Chicanas, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Salvadorans demonstrate the diversity of mothering for Latina communities in their countries of origin and in diaspora populations, while also drawing together shared experiences. The insight provided by these narratives of motherhood greatly aids the study of female familial relations discussed in this thesis by revealing the lived experiences of Latina/Chicana mothers alongside literary ones. Furthermore, the focus on praxis, the connection of theory and practice, is integral to the approach that this thesis takes. As Kafka states, Chicana writers attempt "to frame their characters' problems so as to convey them as primarily the results of social issues, as situating their character and their major concerns in a sociohistorical context."[83] Similarly, Maria Herrera-Sobek asserts that pragmatism and concern for social issues are two of the most crucial components of Chicana literature.[84] Cisneros and Castillo critique the patriarchal familial structures that stifle and repress the development of Chicanas and Mexican American women, engaging with the distinct context in which these families are found. African American theorist, Patricia Hill Collins, understands that "racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context, not only for racial ethnic women in the United States, but for all women."[85] Hence the wider social and cultural context is taken into account in order to understand the network of influences affecting the feminisms of Mexican American women.

While patriarchy operates at the structural level of government, law, and bureaucracy, it also functions at the interpersonal level between individual men and women.[86] This is intrinsically connected to roles in the family. Patriarchy, as Zillah R. Eisenstein argues, "divides men and women

[82] Dorsía Smith Silva, ed., *Latina/Chicana Mothering* (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2011).
[83] Phillpa Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women: Contemporary Chicana Writer on Inequitable Gendered Power Relations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), xiv.
[84] Maria Herrera-Sobek, "Introduction," *Chicana Creativity and Criticism*, 10.
[85] Patricia Hill Collins, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood," in *American Families: A Multicultural Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Stephanie Coontz (London: Routledge, 2008), 173.
[86] Gwen Hunnicutt, "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women: Resurrecting "Patriarchy" as a Theoretical Tool," *Violence Against Women* 15 (2009): 553-73.

into their respective hierarchical sex roles and structures their related duties in the family domain."[87] Carla Trujillo contends that in the Chicana context, women grow up "defined, and subsequently confined, in a male context; daddy's girl, some guy's sister, girlfriend, wife, or mother."[88]
In the United States, in an environment where Mexican American institutions are "rendered subordinate and dependent," the family, argues Alfredo Mirandé, is the "only institution to escape colonial intrusion."[89] Speaking to the strength of the family, Mirandé's view on the family promotes "political familism"- that is, the phenomenon in which "the continuity of family groups and the adherence to family ideology provide[s] the basis for struggle."[90] Yet this "political familism" also idealises constructions of Mexican American women as mothers, configuring women as reproducers of traditional and normative constructions of culture and family.[91]

Although negotiations do not just occur between men and women, the gendering of male/female relationships are crucial within the patriarchal familial framework. Alma M. García focuses on the manifestation of patriarchal influence on gender relations, highlighting the fact that Chicana writers and critics tend to focus on the patterns exposed in dysfunctional relationships between men and women as significant sites of inequitable power relations.[92] Suzanna Danuta Walters understands the notion of authority in patriarchy as constructing women "in power relations."[93] This concept of "power relations" when applied in the context of the Mexican American community recognises that power and authority are experienced differently by men and women. For men, power and authority is what Kafka calls "a direct exercise" involving their own subjectivity.[94] As is discussed throughout this thesis, the impact of patriarchal culture on familial relationships is complex; however, it always results in the lowering of women's status in the family, as well as in other institutions.

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[87] Zillah R. Eisenstein, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 27.
[88] Carla Trujillo, ed., *Chicana Lesbians: the Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman, 1991), ix.
[89] Alfredo Mirandé, "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 39 (4) (1977), 775.
[90] Maxine Baca Zinn, "Political Familism: Toward Sex Role Equity in Chicano Families," Aztlán (8) (1979): 16.
[91] Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 98.
[92] Alma M. García, "Studying Chicanas: Bringing Women into the Frame of Chicano Studies," *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*, ed. Teresa Córdova *et al.* (Albuquerque, NM: New Mexico University Press, 1986): 24.
[93] Suzanna Danuta Walters, "From Here to Queer: Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Lesbian Menace (Or, Why Can't Women Be More Like a Fag?)," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 21 (4) (1996): 851.
[94] Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women*, xv.

In the Catholic patriarchal set up of the family, the powerful amalgamation of doctrinal and institutional values keep women limited to prescribed gender roles. Women in the Church, for example, are prohibited from being ordained as priests, preventing them from attaining leadership roles within the Church.[95] At a doctrinal and at an institutional level, the Church curtails the roles of women in ways that reflect and actively construct wider social and cultural assumptions about women's place in society. Many Chicana writers attack Catholicism as "an arbitrary male enclave" that makes participation impossible for women.[96] In societies where myth and religion, social and legal institutions, and family organisation work together to entrench gendered roles, it is difficult to "create spaces within which to articulate experiences of motherhood [and womanhood more widely] that do not conform to […] rigid and […] oppressive dominant images and expectations."[97] In this way, the influence from the highest offices in the Church affects the hierarchy found in individual Catholic families. Linda Feyder explicitly states the important connection between family and Catholicism in the Americas asserting that "familial restrictions share close covenant with the Catholic faith."[98] For women of Mexican heritage in the United States, this covenant entails "a distinctive system of Mexican [Catholic] patriarchy [which] controlled the private sphere activities of females. As both daughters and wives, Mexican women were instructed to be obedient and submissive to their parents and husbands. Domesticity and motherhood were primary virtues."[99] The emphasis on domesticity and motherhood in the Catholic Church is rooted in the central role that Mary, as the mother of Jesus, plays in its doctrine.

[95] In May 2016, Pope Francis called for a study on 'reinstating' female deacons, potentially signalling a historic shift for the role of women in the ministry of the Catholic Church. In August he announced the member of a new Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women, whose examinations take into account both church and tradition and also possibly take stock of contemporary views and needs among Catholic clergy and worshipers. See: Michelle Boorstein, Anthony Faiola, and Julie Zauzmer, "Pope Francis calls for study on 'reinstating' female deacons," *Washington Post*, May 12 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/05/12/pope-francis-will-reportedly-study-the-possibility-of-female-deacons/; and Julie Zauzmer, "'It could be a world-changing decision,' member of new Vatican committee on female deacons says," *Washington Post*, August 2 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/08/02/this-new-committee-will-study-female-deacons-in-the-catholic-church/.

[96] Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women*, 3.

[97] Mary Lou Babineau, "Counternarratives in the Literary Works of Mexican Author Ángeles Mastretta and Chilean Author Pía Barros," in *Latina/Chicana Mothering*, 179.

[98] Linda Feyder, ed., "Introduction," *Shattering the Myth: Plays by Hispanic Women* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1992), 5.

[99] Maxine Baca Zinn and Angela H. Y. Pok, "Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families," in *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Ronald A. Taylor (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2002), 85.

Irrespective of the overwhelmingly patriarchal nature of the institutional Catholic Church, it can also be a site for feminist activism where Mexican American women negotiate their place as Church affiliates, community leaders and activists. This is characteristic of the Church in Latin America, where the tenets of liberation theology have carved out a place for marginalised groups.[100] Since the late 1980s "poor women in Latin America […] received considerable support from the church."[101] Initiatives like the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (Ecclesiastic Base Communities, or CEBs) in Latin American support social justice efforts, and women play a crucial role in these groups. Helen Icken Safa states that, although often confined to traditional gendered roles, "the church often provided the only legitimate umbrella under which women […] could organize."[102] Furthermore, in these CEBs, women use their roles as mothers to "[legitimise] their protest."[103] Like other mother-lead protest movements, these women take advantage of the culturally-ingrained reverence for self-sacrificing mothers to lend their protest an added moral weight.[104] In the United States, the move to afford women positions of importance within religious organisations is apparent. In a recent survey, Robert Putnam and David Campbell find that seventy-five percent of Anglo Catholics believe in a need for women's influence in the Churches, and that a majority of Latina/o Catholics (fifty-seven percent) also support female influence.[105]

Women can hold important roles in the Church, predominantly in communities that practise what Orlando Espín calls 'popular Catholicism,' which is described as an expression of the people, and particularly of marginalised people.[106] It is important to notes however that this version of Catholicism comes from within the community and is not under the complete control of clerics or liturgical experts.[107] Although not permitted official roles within the clerical hierarchy of the Church, women carry influence within the religious community, particularly as the laity are more important

[100] For more on Liberation Theologies in the Chicana/o context, see: Alma Rosa Alvarez, *Liberation Theology in Chicana/o Literature: Manifestations of Feminist and Gay Identities* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Nancy Pineda-Madrid, "Latina Theology," *Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn (New York: New York University Press, 2010): 61-86; and Benjamin Valentín, "Hispanic/Latino(a) Theology," *Liberation Theologies*: 86-115.
[101] Sonia Alvarez, "Women Movements in Gender Politics in the Brazilian Transition," *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy*, ed. Jane Jaquette (Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 20-26.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Castillo, *Talking Back*, 18.
[105] Robert Putnam and David Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us* (Simon & Schuster, Kindle edition, 2010): Kindle locations 3818-3825.
[106] Orlando Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 161-62.
[107] Ibid., 112-13.

in Chicano Catholic practice than is the case in many other demographic groups.[108] Latina/o scholars who study popular Catholicism recognise both the strengths and the limits of popular devotions and choose to focus on those elements that are both supportive of culture and liberating.[109] Consequently, sociologists Ana María Díaz-Stevens and Milagros Peña believe that in Latina/o Catholicism, women do exercise power and are able to transform and subvert the dominant values and power structures.[110] Several women use their place as community leaders to push for change; for example Latinas created organisations such as Las Hermanas (1971), which was established to counter the patriarchal bias and Eurocentrism of the Catholic Church.[111] This corresponds with the work of Chicana scholars Karen Mary Davalos and Lara Medina who have documented the ways that religion and ethnic identity are central in the lives of Latinas and give meaning to the expression of their activism and empowerment.[112] As Theresa Torres notes, Medina's research on Las Hermanas and Ada María Isasi-Díaz's work on religious lay Latina leaders in the Catholic Church reveals both "the complexity and the agency of women who struggle against dominant forces within Catholicism and society."[113]

Yet the agency of women in the Catholic Church is elusive and most often requires intricate mediations on the part of the women as well as the (often disapproving) institutional leaders of the Church. Theresa L. Torres explores this in the aptly titled *The Paradox of Latina Religious Leadership in the Catholic Church: Las Guadalupanas of Kansas City* (2013). The paradox that Torres identifies reveals the complexity inherent in the "problem of the women's leadership" within the patriarchal

[108] Jane Duran, *Worlds of Knowing: Global Feminist Epistemologies* (London: Routledge, 2001), 199.
[109] See for example: Thomas Bamat and Jean-Paul Wiest, ed., *Popular Catholicism in a World Church: Seven Case Studies in Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); Robert Orsi, "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion," *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3-21; Alberto L. Pulido, "Mexican American Catholicism in the Southwest: The Transformation of a Popular Religion," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 4 (1993): 93-108; and Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Andres I Pérez y Mena, ed., *Enigmatic Powers: Syncretism with African and Indigenous Peoples' Religions Among Latinos* (New York: Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, 1995).
[110] Ana María Díaz-Stevens and Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, *Recognizing the Latino Resurgence in U.S. Religion: The Emmaus Paradigm* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); and Milagros Peña, *Latina Activists Across Borders: Women's Grassroots Organizing in Mexico and Texas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
[111] Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).
[112] Karen Mary Davalos, "La quinceañera: making gender and ethnic identities," *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture & Chicana/o Sexualities, New Directions in Latino American Cultures*, ed. Alicia Gaspar de Alba (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Medina, *Las Hermanas*.
[113] Theresa L. Torres, *The Paradox of Latina Religious Leadership in the Catholic Church: Las Guadalupanas of Kansas City* (New York: Springer, 2013), 18. With reference to Medina, *Las Hermanas*; and Ada María Isasi-Díaz *En la Lucha/In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

Church that "ultimately controls and diminishes any counter resistance."[114] Although the studies cited above focus on the possibility for empowerment within the religious community and institution, they all recognise the need to negotiate for this empowerment within the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church. Women can have influence within the Church, however their influence has limitations; a form of subordinate power that is permitted only on certain terms, terms most often dictated in the end by the institutional hierarchy of the patriarchal Church. As is explored throughout this thesis, negotiations like those adopted by women in the Church mirror those undertaken in the traditional familial structure in Mexican American Catholic communities.

Chicana feminists tackle this in their work, and endeavour to "lift the veil of(f) the Virgin's face to show a real woman who is not exempt from the trials of life."[115] In their writings, Castillo and Cisneros show how women negotiate these "trials of life". As a result of the central position that the oppressive patriarchal makeup of the family takes, it is "the single most critiqued institution in the works of Latina writers."[116] In both the theoretical and empirical terrain, Chicana feminists fight against the institution of the family and experience it, and therefore describe it, in largely monolithic terms. Kafka observes this in Chicana literature through the lens of Judith Resnik's theoretical construction of gendered hierarchies, stating that: "of all the multitude of "arenas and practices of [male] domination" over women, an overwhelming number of Chicana writers view "women's conceptual location" as forcibly situated by men in constrained home spaces, involving only "certain forms of family life."[117] The patriarchal family is a pillar that stands imposingly in Chicana/o society and, as García writes in the introduction to *Chicana Feminist Thought*, Chicana feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, the period from which Castillo and Cisneros emerge as writers, "[expresses] a concern with traditional gender roles within Chicano families that relegated women into secondary roles."[118] Moreover, as Rodríguez asserts, Chicana feminist criticism "unravels the threads that bind *la familia*."[119] His image is particularly useful in understanding the complexity of a familial structure that binds in ways that both secure and ensnare women. Furthermore, as the familial context is intimately connected to economic, social, and cultural circumstances, as a system of sexual oppression it is closely imbricated with other systems of human oppression, such as imperialism,

[114] Torres, *The Paradox of Latina Religious Leadership*, 3.
[115] Anna NietoGomez, "Chicanas: Perspective for Education," *Encuentro Femenil* 1 (1) (1973): 59.
[116] Phillipa Kafka, *Saddling La Gringa: Gatekeeping in Literature by Contemporary Latina Writers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), xvii-xix.
[117] Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women*, xvi; citing Judith Resnik "Asking About Gender in Courts," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 21 (4) (1996): 965.
[118] Alma M. García, 'Introduction,' *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 5.
[119] Rodríguez, *Next of Kin*, 2.

racism, capitalism, and classism.[120] As Maxine Baca Zinn states, it is "[the] conjunction [of] class and race inequalities [and the] ubiquitous gender order [that results in] Latino family arrangements that constrain women in particular ways."[121] Both Castillo and Cisneros tackle this central symbol of Mexican American culture in order to evaluate its overwhelming influence on the lives of the women living within it. Fellow Chicana author, Moraga, also candidly argues that, "[the] family is the place where, for better or worse, we learn how to love."[122] In their writing Cisneros and Castillo balance a recognition of the importance of familial heritage with an acknowledgment of the oppression of women within the family setup.

While at odds with the traditional patriarchal make-up of the family, the role of women in the Mexican American family is crucial as they are said to be the guardians and transmitters of culture; they are described as "the 'glue' that keeps the Chicano family together."[123] Historically this includes an important role in passing on Mexican traditions such as folklore, traditional religious celebrations, cooking, and storytelling.[124] Yet female relationships in the family have been, as Adrienne Rich outlines in her *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, "minimized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy."[125] So while women play a vital role in the family, and the community more widely, their stories and experiences have been marginalised. The assumption that a traditional Mexican American woman will maintain and perpetuate patriarchal role expectations, as mothers, wives, and daughters, undermines the individual development potential for women. As the editors of the collection *Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community* (1980) explain, many women "moved from being daughters to being wives and mothers, with little if any, time in between."[126] This is vital to a deeper understanding of the writings of Cisneros and Castillo, for, as Cristina Herrera declares, "prescribed gender roles must be transcended in order to liberate

[120] Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 58.
[121] Maxine Baca Zinn, "Social Science Theorizing for Latino Families in the Age of Diversity," in Ruth E. Zambrana, ed., *Understanding Latino Families* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), 182.
[122] Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (Boston: South End Press, 1983)
[123] George Sánchez, "'Go After Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Vicki L. Ruíz and Ellen Carol Du Bois (New York: Routledge, 1990), 251.
[124] Mario T. Garcia, "The Chicana in American History: The Mexican Women of El Paso, 1880-1920 – A Case Study," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (2) (1980): 322.
[125] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 236.
[126] Nan Elsasser, Kyle Mackenzie, and Yvonne Tixier y Vigil, *Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1980), 9.

Chicanas."[127] Herrera explores this theme further in her book *Contemporary Chicana Literature: (Re)Writing the Maternal Script* (2014), arguing that mother-daughter relationships are central to understanding the shaping of Chicana identity amidst the interconnecting forces of sexism, racism, and classism within dominant U.S. culture. Through analysis of the novels of Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros, as well as those of Denise Chávez, Carla Trujillo, and Melinda Palacio, Herrera discusses the ways in which Chicana writers re-write the maternal script, moving outside of existing discourses that typically situate Chicana mothers as silent and passive and the mother-daughter relationship as one characterised by tension and angst. Like this thesis, Herrera's study calls for a rethinking of women characters beyond limited, and limiting, familial roles as a means to explore the empowering possibilities of female relationships. In fact, this thesis works in dialogue with Herrera's research and speaks to her invitation that questions about female familial relationships in Chicana literature will "be taken up by scholars […] [and] will fuel more engaging debates and conversations in the near future."[128] Hearing this call, this thesis analyses texts by Castillo and Cisneros through a lens of negotiation to explore female relationships in the family and expands the scope of study to include a wider range of female relationships in the family and not just the mother-daughter relationship.

This study takes an intergenerational approach as women preserve and pass on their foremothers' stories in an effort to resist patriarchal conventions of womanhood that position women as submissive and subservient to men. Intergenerational relationships are therefore central to interpreting the ways in which women negotiate their roles in the family. As Jocelyn Hollander elucidates, social relations and interactions play an important role in providing understanding of the perpetuation of and resistance to gender expectations.[129] In the Mexican American context, Vasquez argues that, just as racial stereotypes pass from one generation to another, so too do resistance strategies.[130] The communication between generations and the fluidity of the roles of daughter, mother, and grandmother respectively mean that identity formation for women in the family often takes place in dialogue with female relatives. Yi-Lin Lu states that this is an integral part of matrilineal narratives as the "triadic relation of grandmother-mother-daughter […] transforms the

[127] Cristina Herrera, "The Rejected and Reclaimed Mother in Sandra Cisneros' *Caramelo*," *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 10 (2008): 187.
[128] Cristina Herrera, *Contemporary Chicana Literature: (Re)Writing the Maternal Script* (New York: Cambria Press, 2014), 5.
[129] Jocelyn A. Hollander, "Resisting Vulnerability: The Social Reconstruction of Gender in Interaction," *Social Problems* 49 (2002): 491.
[130] Vasquez, "Chicana Mothering in the Twenty-First Century," 23.

concept of mother into fluid and flexible identities."[131] The reclamation of the female story through intergenerational communication is a central part of feminist theories that contest and challenge patriarchal dominance in the family. The passing on of these stories is essential and is a feminist act of recovery and empowerment. Trinh T. Minh-ha highlights the significance and consequence of this transmission between generations of women. As an example, Minh-ha relates how her mother would introduce each story she told to her daughter:

> Tell me and let me tell my hearers what I have heard from you who heard it from your mother and your grandmother, so that what is said may be guarded and unfailingly transmitted to the women of tomorrow, who will be our children and the children of our children.[132]

Minh-ha goes on to assert the meaning of her mother's introductions to each story stating that the purpose of her introductions is not to "validate the voice of an authority […] but to evoke her and sing."[133] Furthermore, the form of oral storytelling by its very nature allows a person to give the story their own viewpoint, permitting personalisation and adaptation to the stories as they are told through generations. The recognition and naming of these women through intergenerational storytelling is a vital part of the feminist act that resists and defies patriarchal conventions of familial roles for women. Lu and Minh-ha's understanding of the importance of intergenerational storytelling connects to Mexican American literature as it speaks to the concerns of postcolonial and women of colour feminisms with which marginalised groups engage. For Chicanas, the transmission of these stories is vitally important. Tey Diana Rebolledo underlines the importance of this connection, stating that "[there] are many references to the chain of women who came before them and who supported them, evidence of the bonding with other women through which Chicana writers find their sustenance and their strength."[134] This thesis follows this model of intergenerational transmission by assigning each chapter a generation in turn (grandmothers, mothers, daughters), while also acknowledging the connection between each chapter by weaving analysis from each generation throughout the thesis as a whole.[135]

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[131] Yi-Lin Lu, *Mother, She Wrote: Matrilineal Narratives in Contemporary Women's Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 6.
[132] Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Grandma's Story," *Woman, Native Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 122.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, x.
[135] See 'Intergenerational Chapter Outline' section below.

In a hostile environment, Chicanas are often dependent on other women for support, guidance, and strength. The connectedness and interdependence of women in the family is a prominent theme in Chicana writing. Through maintaining intergenerational connections with their foremothers, Chicanas are able to "keep forms of maternal knowledge that are conducive to the achievement of agency and subjectivity," taking part in a process of negotiation with the long line of women who came before them, and who "supported them" in finding "their sustenance and their strength."[136] Matrilineal narratives are characteristic of Chicana writing more generally, as Barbara Brinson-Pineda attests,

> [collectively], many of us have looked back to our mothers and grandmothers for artistic force, affirmation of our cultural selves for reinforcement of our identities as women and as writers. Our stories, poems and essays are frequently peopled by these women in an attempt to understand our connection to history, to our people.[137]

Tess Cosslett defines a matrilineal narrative as "one which either tells the stories of several generations of women at once, or which shows how the identity of a central character is crucially formed by her female ancestors."[138] The matrilineal narratives found in Castillo's and Cisneros' novels correspond with Cosslett's description as the authors integrate the stories of many generations of women and interrogate the ways in which these stories affect the negotiations of womanhood adopted by subsequent generations. As Madhu Dubey rightfully asserts, theorists of matrilineage "have created an enabling critical context in which these texts may be read and interconnected."[139] Within the equally patriarchal institutions of family and literary production, matrilineal writing acknowledges and authorises a female literary tradition.[140] Crucially, this

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[136] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 201; and Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, x.
[137] Barbara Brinson-Pineda, "'Onde Estas Grandma: Chicana Writers and the Rejection of Silence," *Intercambios Femeniles* 2 (1984): 1.
[138] Tess Cosslett, "Feminism, Matrilinealism, and the 'House of Women' in Contemporary Women's Fiction," *Journal of Gender Studies* 5 (1997): 7.
[139] Madhu Dubey, "Gayl Jones and the Matrilineal Metaphor of Tradition," *Signs* 20 (1995): 248.
[140] Dubey, "Matrilineal Metaphor of Tradition," 245. See also: Joanne M. Braxton, "Afra-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance," in *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afra-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance*, ed. Joanne M. Braxton and Andree Nicola McLaughlin (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Gil Zehava Hichberg, "Mother, Memory, History: Maternal Genealogies in Gayl Jones's "Corregidora" and Simone Schwarz-Bart's "Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle," *Research in African Literatures* 34 (2003): 1-12; Marjorie Pryse, "Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and the "Ancient Power" of Black Women," in *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction and Literary Tradition*, ed. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense

centralises women's agency in the negotiation for authority in the historically patriarchal literary tradition.

Until the 1980s, the traditional Chicana/o canon was male-dominated and authorising a female literary tradition required its own negotiation of the field. Through the act of writing, Cisneros and Castillo are part of a Chicana community exploring and sharing the stories of women's lives, negotiating the literary landscape by refusing to assimilate to traditional literary practices. Annie O. Eysturoy explores this in her book *Daughters of Self-creation: The Contemporary Chicana Novel* (1996) in which she argues that despite its Euro- and androcentric traditions, the Bildungsroman is a viable form of representation for Chicanas. Eysturoy states that the Bildungsroman form is transformed by Chicana writers to make visible the "simultaneous experience of gender, ethnicity and class and its effect on the Chicana developmental process."[141] Thus it can be said that Chicana writers negotiate with traditional literary practices like the Bildungsroman form and this process of negotiation is transformative. Indeed, Raymond L. Williams states that writers like Cisneros and Castillo are "involved in a variety of *negotiations*: between mainstream and marginal cultural groups as well as between more established and popular forms of writing."[142] As women of colour feminist writers, they are compelled to make these negotiations in the often oppressive environments of literary production and academia: and in doing so, enrich and diversify the so-called 'American' canon that was, and arguably still is, exclusionary.[143]

So it is that Chicana writers negotiate their place in the literary field not only for recognition, but also in order to "use their own writing for self-analysis; their cultural self-ethnographies or self-representation provide an indispensable means for deconstructing Chicana cultural experience(s)."[144] The need for self-analysis and self-representation comes from the historic legacy of omission both in the literary scene and in society more generally. Castillo and Cisneros are

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Spillers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); and Dianna F. Sadoff, "Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture in Society* 11 (1985): 4-26.

[141] Annie E. Eysturoy, *Daughters of Self-creation: The Contemporary Chicana Novel* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 27.

[142] Raymond L. Williams, *The Columbia Guide to the Latin American Novel Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 41 (my emphasis).

[143] See: Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez, "The Formation of a Latino/a Canon," *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*, ed. Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio (London: Routledge, 2013), 385-95. See also: Lázaro Lima, "The Institutionalization of Latino Literature in the Academy," *The Latino Body: Crisis Identities in American Literary and Cultural Memory* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 91-126.

[144] Alvina Quintana, *Home Girls: Literary Voices* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010), 34.

amongst a group of Chicana authors who write within, and against, the Chicana/o literary canon. Rebolledo notes that during the 1970s and 1980s, Chicanas began writing "yo soy" ("I am") texts, establishing their presence within the literary field and representing the Chicana where previously she had been neglected, hidden, and marginalised.[145] The active, activist process of writing for Chicanas combats essentialist readings of the Mexican American and Chicana woman, defying patriarchal expectations of deference and submissiveness both on the page and off it. For, as Quintana states,

> unlike both the conventional anthropologist and the classical Chicano writer of fiction, the Chicana feminist is also interested in scrutinizing the assumptions that root her own cultural influences, unpacking so-called tradition and political institutions that shape patriarchal ways of seeing.[146]

It is through the unpacking of tradition and political institutions that Chicana writers, artists, and activists take part in redefining the revisioning of not only the Chicana/o literary canon, but also broader Chicana/o culture. It is important to note that not all Chicana writing is reactionary and only responding to the male-dominated literary canon of the 1960s and 1970s. As Rebolledo clarifies, "some [of the "yo soy" (I am) narratives] *were* responses to the male identity narratives, some to negative cultural definitions, but many were affirmative celebrations of being female and Chicana."[147] Thus Chicana literary production cannot be seen solely as a response to male-dominated discourses, for it is also part of a larger women-led feminist movement. It is a project of asserting that Chicana identities as worthy of literary attention

A common factor connecting Chicana writing is the need for women to "articulate her own identity on her own terms since the language of patriarchal discourse is the key factor of her previous

[145] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow,* 97.
[146] Quintana, "Novelist as Ethnographer," 74.
[147] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, 100. See for example Lorenza Calvillo-Craig, 'Soy hija de mis padres,' *El Grito* 7 (1973): 1; Veronica Cunningham, 'ever since,' *Capirotada* (Los Angeles: Fronteras, 1976); La Chrisx, 'La Loca de la Raza Cósmica,' *Comadre* 2 (1978): 5-9; Lorna Dee Cervantes, 'Para un revoluncionario,' *The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States*, ed. Dexter Fisher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980): 381-82; Lydia Camarillo, 'Mi reflejo,' *La palabra* 2 (1980): 2; Pat Mora, 'Legal Alien,' *Chants* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1984); and Margarita Cota-Cárdenas, *Marchitas de Mayo (Sones pa'l pueblo)* (Austin, TX: Relámpago Books Press, 1989).

exclusion."[148] Cisneros and Castillo are part of a generation of female writers challenging the "ego-driven one-man cult-shows" that characterises early Chicano literature.[149] Emerging in the 1980s, Cisneros and Castillo changed the Chicano literary scene with their works, demanding the inclusion of the 'a/o' marker in Chicana/o literature that forces the inclusion of works by female as well as male authors. This is part of a larger social and cultural endeavour seeking representation in both Chicana/o society and mainstream American society. As Yarbro-Bejarano states, "Chicana writers' […] struggle to claim the "I" of literary discourse is inseparable from their struggle for empowerment in the economic, social and political spheres."[150] Cisneros and Castillo claim the "I" of literary discourse while also engaging with the ongoing struggle for the empowerment of Chicana women in wider society. The act of writing for Castillo and Cisneros is an instrument of synchronised deconstruction and reconstruction: deconstructing oppressive ideologies, while reconstructing identities that better reflect their realities.

Just as the women characters discussed in this thesis enact an extension of their roles within the family and the community, Castillo and Cisneros actively take part in an expansion not only of the Chicana/o literary canon, but also feminist discourses in the United States. Chicana feminism is absent from most case studies of second-wave feminism, in which the racial composition of the United States is seen as white and black, without shades of brown.[151] As well as being confronted with racism within second-wave feminism, Chicanas also found themselves marginalised within the Chicano Student Movement of the 1960s. The emphasis of the movement was on the representation of political and social identity, and often perpetuated gendered role constructions for men and women. Angie Chabrám draws attention to the gender inequality apparent in some of the central texts of the Chicano movement, including Armando Rendón's *The Chicano Manifesto*. In her critique, Chabrám outlines the way in which Chicana women were effectively removed or distanced from full-

[148] W. D. Neate, "Rewriting, Rereading Ethnicity: The Lesson of Contemporary Chicana Poetry" (unpublished manuscript), quoted in Patrick D. Murphy, "Grandmother Borderland: Placing Identity and Ethnicity," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 1 (1993): 39.
[149] Francisco A. Lomelí and Maria Herrera-Sobek, "Trends and Themes in Chicana/o writing in Postmodern Times," in *Chicano Renaissance: Contemporary Cultural Trends*, ed. David R. Maciel, Isidro D. Ortiz, and Maria Herrera-Sobek (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 291.
[150] Yarbro-Bejarano, "The Multiple Subject," 72.
[151] Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130. See also: Sherna Berger Gluck, et al., "Whose Feminism, Whose History? Reflections on Excavating the History of (the) US Women's Movement(s)", *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*: 31-57.

scale participation in the Movement.[152] More specifically, Chabrám states that "without the possibility of inscribing viable Mexicana/Chicana female subjects with which to identify at the center of Chicana/o practices of resistance, Chicanas were denied cultural authenticity and independent self-affirmation."[153] Women within the Chicano Movement were side-lined, expected to perform what were deemed culturally appropriate roles for women; this included taking on the job of receptionists, secretaries, cooks *etc*. The rationale of those involved emphasised that this was for the maintenance of traditional culture. As a result of this, women were compelled to negotiate their place within the movement in order to be part of the cause. As the slogan goes, they were 'Chicano Primero' ('Chicano First'), and Chicana women later. Both in reaction to these relegations from social movements and in order to represent authentic experiences, Castillo's and Cisneros' works focus on the lives of Chicana and Mexican American women living in the United States. Cisneros and Castillo are, I argue, agents of change; through writing and community activism, they, along with a larger community of women of colour in the United States, take an active role in changing society.

The marginalisation of Chicanas in mainstream feminism and the Chicano Student Movement permeated the literary scene in the 1960s and '70s: women writers as well as women characters struggled to find a place in this predominately male-centred realm. In the *testimonio* (testimonial) that begins *Cuentos* (1983), the first published bilingual story collection by Latinas, one of the editors, Mariana Romo-Carmona, writes:

> Mi abuelita constantamente en la cocina, con la cuchara en la olla [My grandmother was always in the kitchen, with the spoon in the pot]. Mi mami [My mummy] planning what we're going to do. […] There were those centers in our lives. But when you read stories, none of that was there.[154]

Cuentos was published by Women of Color Press in response to the absence of these grandmothers and mothers, and on behalf of Latinas across the United States, who recognised that their stories had been neglected in Latino literature. The focus of the vast majority of Chicano and Latino literature of the early twentieth century was the coming-of-age narratives of young Mexican

[152] Angie Chambrám-Dernersian, "'I Throw Punches for My Race, But I Don't Want To Be a Man' Writing Us-Chica-nos (Girl, Us)/ Chicanos-Into the Movement Script," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992): 81-95.
[153] Chambrám-Dernersian, "I Throw Punches," 95.
[154] Mariana Romo-Carmona, "Testimonio," *Cuentos*, vii.

American men. As Alma García recollects, Chicanas in the 1970s were "very disappointed to discover that neither Chicano history, Mexican history, nor Chicano literature included any measurable material on la mujer [the woman]."[155] As Herrera-Sobek points out, "male control of Chicano publication enterprises is a most important element in the analysis of Chicana literary production."[156]

A look back to what the ""official" story-tellers" were writing provides insight into both the Chicano literary landscape of the early twentieth century and context for the literary field that Castillo and Cisneros had to break into.[157] By the second half of the twentieth century both the civil rights movements and the entrance of a broad sector of Latinas/os into universities helped to usher in a flourishing period of Latina/o literature.[158] In the late 1950s and '60s, the "official story-tellers" were predominantly Chicano/Mexican American men, usually first generation (im)migrants who had access to education.[159] This group includes writers such as José Antonio Villareal, Ernesto Galarza,

[155] Alma M. García, "Introduction to Encuentro Femenil," *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 114.
[156] María Herrera-Sobek, *Beyond Stereotypes: A Critical Analysis of Chicana Literature* (Binghampton, NY: Bilingual Press, 1985), 11.
[157] Gómez, Moraga, and Romo-Carmona, *Cuentos*, viii.
It is important to note that the literature of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States did not suddenly appear in the mid-twentieth century; as Juan Bruce-Novoa states, "[it] was the first literature in a European language to be written on the continent" (Juan Bruce-Novoa, "Hispanic Literatures in the United States," in *RetroSpace: Collected Essays on Chicano Literature, Theory, and History* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1990), 25). For a comprehensive history of "Hispanic" literature in the United States, see Nicolás Kanellos, *Hispanic Literature of the United States: A Comprehensive Reference* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003). Bruce-Novoa and Raymund Paredes both attest that Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's sixteenth century account of his journey from Florida to Mexico was one of the first published texts of "Hispanic peoples" in the U.S. (Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Narrative of Cabeza De Vaca*, translation of *La Relación*, ed. Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press 2003). See also: Bruce-Novoa, *Hispanic Literatures*, 25; Raymund A. Paredes, "The Evolution of Chicano Literature," *MELUS* 5 (2) (1978): 73; Spencer R. Herrera, "Chicano Writers," in World Literature in Spanish: An Encyclopedia, ed. Maureen Ihrie and Salvador A. Oropesa, Vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 183-4. Paredes maintains that the literary folklore of the Chicana/o is over four hundred years in the making and that folkloric materials such as drama, legends, songs, tales, and proverbs are the building blocks of Chicana/o fiction (Paredes, "Evolution of Chicano Literature," 73).
[158] Kanellos, *Hispanic Literature*, 15.
[159] The use of brackets to disrupt the word 'immigrant' is used to problematise the politicisation and denigration of (im)migrants in the United States. In the context of the Mexican American population in the U.S. this is particularly pertinent because of the separation of territory that took place under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 which effectively alienated the Mexican peoples living in the southwest of what is now the United States: hence the Mexican American saying, "we didn't cross the border, the border crossed us." The use of terms like '(im)migrant' and 'im/migrant' are not uncommon in social science research and their use aims to destabilise assumptions about the immigration trajectory, as well as noting that terms such as 'immigrant', 'migrant', 'transnational worker', and 'refugee' are not always mutually exclusive or permanent. See: Angela E. Arzubiaga, Silvia C. Noguerón, and Amanda L. Sullivan, "The Education of Children in Im/migrant Families," *Review of Research in Education* 33 (1) (2009): 246-71; and Paul A. Woby, and Kurt C. Organista, "Alcohol Use and Problem Drinking Among Male Mexican and Central American Im/migrant Laborers," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 9 (4) (2007): 413-55.

Richard Rodriguez, Américo Paredes, Oscar Zeta Acosta, Rudolfo Anaya, Tomás Rivera, Luis Alberto Urrea, and Rolando Hinojosa to name a selection. José F. Aranda delineates the generic trends of fiction at this time in the book *When We Arrive: A New Literary History of Mexican America* (2003), stating that the literature of this period – not specified but roughly 1950-1980 – mirrored the social realities of people of Mexican descent living in the United States.[160] Narratives focused on feelings of cultural dislocation, nationalism, Chicanismo, and acculturation. As critic Ramón Saldívar posits, during this time the "truth of the real world that Chicanos experience has thus been made to inhabit literature."[161]

In the 1970s, literature reviews and teacher aids began to be produced both within and without the Chicana/o community to highlight the variety and depth of the Chicana/o literary canon. However, it is essential to underline that at this time the 'a/o' (Chicana/Chicano) distinction was rarely made and this canon was created almost exclusively by male writers and critics.[162] For example, in Rolando Hinojosa's 'Mexican-American Literature: Towards an Identification' (1975) all of the writers and critics mentioned by name are male and there is a pervasive male-centric view to his 'identification' of what is considered 'Mexican-American literature.'[163] This is common in such essays and reviews from the 1970s in which the lists of Chicano literature, from poetry, to prose, folklore and music, is dominated by the works of Mexican American men. [164] In addition to descriptions of the Chicano canon in reviews, the critical approach to this literature is also exclusively male. In an essay 'Defining Chicano Literature, or the Perimeters of Literary Space' (1977), Ricardo Valdes states that the critic

[160] José F. Aranda, *When We Arrive: A New Literary History of Mexican America* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2003), xix.
[161] Ramón Saldívar, "Chicano Literature and Ideology: Prospectus for the '80s," *MELUS* 8 (2) (1981), www.jstor.org/stable/467146: 35.
[162] With this in mind, there is deliberate use of the word Chicano without its feminine grammatical alternative (Chicana) throughout this section.
[163] Rolando Hinojosa, "Mexican-American Literature: Toward an Identification," *Books Abroad* 49 (3) (1975), www.jstor.org/stable/40129504: 422-30.
[164] In 1975, noted Chicano critic Charles M. Tatum provided a useful teaching aid for those wishing to teach a course on Mexican American culture and suggests reading the works of Rudolfo Acuña, Raymond Barrio, John Burma, Ernesto Galarza, Ed Ludwig, Octavio Romano, Stan Steiner, and Richard Vásquez (Charles M. Tatum, "Mexican American Culture: A Model Program," *Hispania* 58 (2) (1975), www.jstor.org/stable/338958: 317-22.) Tatum's 'Model Program' is thus populated with the works of male writers exclusively. Furthermore, Tatum's 1975 essay 'Contemporary Chicano Prose Fiction: Its Ties to Mexican Literature' describes the connections between Mexican American and Mexican literature, however only the works of men are mentioned in this historical literary relationship. See also: Lewis M. Baldwin, "Pick of the Paperbacks: Chicano Literature in Paperback," *The English Journal* 65 (1976), www.jstor.org/stable/814507: 78-80; Gerald Haslam, "¡Por La Causa! Mexican-American Literature," *College English* 31 (7) (1970), www.jstor.org/stable/374613: 695-709; Raymond J. Rodrigues, "A Few Directions in Chicano Literature," *The English Journal* 62, no 5 (1973), www.jstor.org/stable/814280: 724-9.

should view "*his* role as one of explicator, interpreter and evaluator" and should not "tell the author what *he* should write."[165] Valdes clearly defines both critic and author as male in this description. The omission of women from the Chicana/o canon continued into more recent anthologising and critical commentary. Take for example Ilan Stavans article in *The Nation* in 1993, 'Labyrinth of Plenitude', in which Stavans describes the historical movement of Latina/o literature "from periphery to the center of culture" without mentioning any women writers.[166]

In an article published in 2000, Edwina Barvosa-Carter traces the publications of Chicana writers between 1973 and 1998, outlining some of the reasons that they were excluded from the publishing world. Barvosa-Carter first quotes Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano's comment that at a general level "the exclusion of Chicanas from literary authority is intimately linked to the exclusion of Chicanas from other kinds of power monopolized by privileged white males."[167] Thus their marginalisation in the literary world is part of their overall disempowerment as Chicanas, and more generally as women of colour, in a white patriarchal society. Secondly, Barvosa-Carter points to a lack of institutional support for their writing, as well as emotional obstacles that have undermined the publication of Chicana works. Beverly Silva, for example, stresses that for her, "the high cost of living keeps me away from my writing. All my work has been done without support and in spare moments in my life."[168] Thirdly, Barvosa-Carter highlights the central role of the Chicano Movement and its effect on the creation of a Chicana/o canon, stating that "overt political expression and the portrayal of a standard Chicano identity became the hallmarks of the preferred texts in the growing Chicano canon."[169] The attempted standardisation of a singular Chicano identity meant that there was little room for those who did not fit the model, including women writers. Thus there were, and arguably continue to be, a wide range of obstacles that had to be negotiated by Chicana writers. As a result of this, and to reiterate Herrera-Sobek's assertions, analysis of the ways Chicano publication enterprises were controlled is crucial to understanding Chicana literary production.

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[165] Ricardo Valdes, "Defining Chicano Literature, or the Perimeters of Literary Space," *Latin American Literary Review* 5 (10) (1977), www.jstor.org/stable/20119057: 18: emphasis added.
[166] Ilan Stavans, "Labyrinth of Plenitude," *The Nation* 256 (1993): 66. Stavans does mention three Latina writers that are published, including Sandra Cisneros, however he neglects to integrate them into the wider discussion of the acceptance of Latina/o literature in the mainstream canon.
[167] Yarbro-Bejarano, "Chicana Literature," 139.
[168] Beverly Silva quoted in Bryan Ryan, *Hispanic Writers: A Selection of Sketched from Contemporary Authors* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Inc., 1991), 443.
[169] Edwina Barvosa Carter, "Breaking the Silence: Developments in the Publication and Politics of Chicana Creative Writing, 1973-1998," in *Chicano Renaissance*, 267.

However, Chicana writers did not meekly take their place on the side-lines but fought for recognition of their place within the canon. In tandem with other women struggling for identification in literature at this time, these writers addressed this male domination in order to "know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us."[170] The editors of *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* acknowledged this declaring that "[Latinas] need una literatura [a literature] that testifies to our lives, provides acknowledgement of who we are: an exiled people, a migrant people, *mujeres en lucha* [fighting women]."[171] In another anthology of women's stories, *Las Mujeres*, one editor in particular, Yvonne Tixier y Vigil focuses on the marginalisation of women in the Chicano canon in the introduction to the collection. In the 1970s, the perception was that "only Hispanic men struggled with conflicts, whether internal or external."[172] In response, Tixier y Vigil explicitly asks "[what] about me? What about women? What were our problems? What were our lives?"[173] Alarcón expresses a similar frustration with the relegation of women in favour of the dominant male figure in the literature of this period, stating that the female characters were "shadowy and muted".[174] Women were rarely present in these novels, and when they did appear, Tixier y Vigil emphasises, "it was as a mythological, faceless, submissive, helping, supporting, no-real-life-to-her woman. She was just there. I did not think of myself as a "just there" sort of person."[175] In the same vein, Anzaldúa contends that "[as] long as *los hombres* [men] think they have to *chingar mujeres* [fuck women] and each other to be men, as long as men are taught that they are superior and therefore culturally favored over *la mujer* [the woman], as long as to be a *vieja* [old woman] is a thing of derision, there can be no real healing of our psyches."[176] As Chicana writers, Cisneros and Castillo take up Anzaldúa's call to fight the feminist fight of the mestiza (mixed-race woman), and in their work, like that of many of their Chicana contemporaries, seek to redress the imbalance both within the literary canon and more broadly in Chicana/o communities generally.

[170] Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," *College English* 34 (1) (1972), www.jstor.org/stable/675215: 19.
[171] Gómez, Moraga, and Romo-Carmona, *Cuentos*, vii.
[172] Elsasser, Mackenzie, and Tixier y Vigil, *Las Mujeres,* xxi.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Norma Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover Have You Made Me, Mother?: Towards a Theory of Chicanas' Feminism and Cultural Identity Through Poetry," in *Women of Color: Perspectives on Feminism and Identity*, ed. Audrey T. McCluskey (Indiana: Women's Studies Program, Indiana University, 1985), 104.
[175] Elsasser, Mackenzie, and Tixier y Vigil, *Las Mujeres,* xxi.
[176] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 106.

Several Chicana writers looked to small presses for publication, as part of the desire, and need, to have their work acknowledged. For example, poet Alma Villanueva formed an alliance with Place of Herons Press, publishing *Bloodroot* in 1977. Founded in 1974, Place of Herons Press described itself as an "ethnic publisher," and its founder, James Cody, took an interest in Villanueva's work and subsequently published *Life Span* in 1984, and a reprint of *Bloodroot* in 1982.[177] However, as noted by Barvosa-Carter in her article tracing the trajectory of Chicana publications, writings published by these small presses remain difficult to find, and their scarcity contributes to "the limited critical and popular attention given to many excellent works by Chicanas."[178] Castillo herself stresses the important role that small presses had for many Chicana writers, remembering that "small presses offer[ed] a long-desired trap-door to the larger world."[179] However, such opportunities were still limited so some writers, including Castillo, found it necessary to publish their work themselves. Castillo's first two chapbooks of poetry, *Otro Canto* (1977) and *The Invitation* (1979) were both self-published.[180] In 1986, Castillo sought to re-print *The Invitation* and sent letters to friends to invest in the project. She wrote:

> Since I am unemployed, and since I don't have a grant or an organization backing up this project, it looks pretty grim as far as being able to take advantage of this opportunity. […] I was thinking that perhaps if I asked a few individuals who have been involved in some form or another with THE INVITATION to invest in these costs, it could get done.[181]

The successful re-publication of *The Invitation* in 1986 suggests that her pleas were heard and with the support of friends she was able to re-print this collection as hoped. Against many difficulties, Chicana writers were still able to publish and share their prose, poetry, and drama throughout the 1970s. A steady stream of publications continued into the 1980s, including the publication of Cisneros' chapbook of poetry *Bad Boys* in 1980 – published by fellow poet Lorna Dee Cervantes' Mango Publications.[182] By 1984, the annual rate of Chicana literature publication had increased and more Chicana writing was anthologised and given critical attention alongside their Chicano

[177] Len Fulton, ed., *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, 27th edition (Paradise, CA: Dustbooks, 1991).
[178] Barvosa-Carter, "Breaking the Silence," 268.
[179] Ana Castillo, *My Father Was a Toltec and Selected Poems 1973-1988* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), xviii.
[180] Barvosa-Carter, "Breaking the Silence," 269.
[181] Ana Castillo, Personal Correspondence, January 20, 1986. Box 12, Folder 4, Ana Castillo Papers, California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives, UC Santa Barbara. Thanks to Leona Blair for sharing this letter from her archival research with me.
[182] Barvosa-Carter, "Breaking the Silence," 269.

colleagues. Publishing houses such as The Women's Press, Third Woman, Kitchen Table Press, Bilingual Press, West End Press, and Arte Público Press, contributed to the dissemination of works by Chicanas.[183] The year 1985 marks the date of the rise of what has been termed the "Contemporary Chicana Generation."[184] The initial success of "vanguard writers such as Alma Villanueva, Bernice Zamora, Lucha Corpi, and Lorna Dee Cervantes in the late 1970s and early 1980s," Herrera-Sobek notes, "encouraged Chicano-oriented publishing houses to 'risk' investing in Mexican American women writers."[185]

In the 1990s, Chicana writers gained greater commercial success. Although predominantly supported by small presses, wider acknowledgment came as larger mainstream presses became gradually more willing to publish Chicana works.[186] During this time, documents Ellen McCracken, Chicana writing rose "to the status of desirable and profitable postmodern ethnic commodity."[187] Despite this complex relationship with the U.S. publishing industry, in some cases Chicana writers "[used] postmodernism's complicity with the dominant order to critique that very order," as McCracken states, the text "works against containment even as it is being contained."[188] So writers like Cisneros and Castillo were in a position to become agents of change from within the publishing industry and used this position to make their political agenda known. As Patsy J. Daniels notes, they "do more than simply protest; they suggest a way to transform the world through the use of words."[189] With the backing of these mainstream publishers, the 1990s became the first successful decade for the publication of Chicana creative writing. This has continued into the 2000s with the publication of several works by Cisneros, including *Caramelo* (2002) and *A House of My Own* (2015) by Knopf, as well as *Vintage Cisneros* (2004) and *Have You Seen Marie?* (2012) by Vintage; as well as several works by Castillo, including *Watercolor Women, Opaque Men: A Novel in Verse* (2005) by Curbstone Press, *The Guardians* (2007) with Random House, and *Give It to Me* (2014) published by the Feminist Press. By the 2000s both authors are published by mainstream presses as well as by smaller activist presses.

[183] Oliver-Rotger, *Battlegrounds and Crossroads*, 111.
[184] Lomelí, Márquez and Herrera-Sobek, "Trends and Themes," 288.
[185] María Herrera-Sobek, "Introduction," *Chicana Creativity and Criticism*, 9.
[186] Barvosa-Carter, "Breaking the Silence," 272.
[187] Ellen McCracken, *New Latina Narrative: The Feminine Space of Postmodern Ethnicity* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1999), 4.
[188] McCracken, *New Latina Narrative*, 17.
[189] Patsy Daniels, "Chapter VIII: Cisneros and Castillo: Resisting the Oppressor, Writing a Liberation," *Voice of the Oppressed in the Language of the Oppressor* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 233.

As writers, Cisneros and Castillo are representative figures of what is known as the Decade of the Chicanas, the 1980s, when they actively took part in negotiating the literary and feminist landscapes of this period.[190] Their influence continued through the 1990s and into the 2000s and the works of Castillo and Cisneros are the most widely available Chicana texts in bookstores across the United States, and indeed the world. They are described as two of the "the most prominent and influential spokespersons within the Chicana/o literary movement today."[191] Together, Castillo and Cisneros have generated the most interest and provided visibility for Chicana literature in the U.S. and further afield.[192] Both authors acknowledge their central place within the Chicana canon and the wider American canon. They have developed different approaches to engage with these canons but both recognise their significance as Chicana writers representing the cultural and political concerns of the Mexican American population. In 1982, at the beginning of her writing career, Castillo stated that for her writing "satisfied a need concerning [her] conviction. In [her] own modest and small fashion, [she] was making a contribution to the Movement."[193] Castillo's writing has a political motivation that is connected to her sense of a Chicana identity. Conversely, in an autobiographical piece in the same collection, Cisneros writes that "I am not attempting to write a political manifesto. I am simply writing from the heart."[194] That is not to say that Cisneros' writing does not have a Chicana social, political, and cultural perspective, but rather that for Cisneros, "to be a Chicano artist does not mean that one must write only about issues that Chicanos understand. […] We can write a poem about a rose and yes, that too, is Chicano poetry."[195] Through their writing, Cisneros and Castillo both defend their right "to express and assert the validity of women-space and the textured zone of women's experience."[196] The early awareness of their role as Chicana artists, and the recognition that their writing is read socially and culturally, as well as literarily, is crucial in understanding their development as artists and as influential figures within both the Chicana/o community and American society more widely and informs the direction of this thesis.

[190] Lomelí, Márquez, and Herrera-Sobek, "Trends and Themes," 291.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Lomelí, Márquez, and Herrera-Sobek, "Trends and Themes," 294.
[193] Ana Castillo, in Wolfgang Binder, ed., *Partial Autobiographies: Interviews with Twenty Chicano Poets* (Erlangen, Germany: Verlag Palm & Enke Erlangen, 1985), 30.
[194] Sandra Cisneros, *Partial Autobiographies*, 69.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Cordelia Candelaria Chávez, "The "Wild Zone" Thesis as Gloss in Chicana Literary Study," in *Chicana Critical Issues*, ed. Norma Alarcón (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1993), 26.

Castillo and Cisneros, both Mexican heritage and native to Chicago, began writing from an early age, and their novels were first published in the 1980s. Although Castillo and Cisneros share some history, they had very different pathways into writing. Neither took the traditional route to writing, barred as they were as women of colour from a distinctly white, male, and middle-class institution. Cisneros received a BA in English from Loyola University in 1976 and then went on to study at the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop (IWW) in 1978. Despite following a somewhat conventional route for a writer, Cisneros' experienced racism and sexism at the IWW and this profoundly shaped her writing. In 2009, on the 25th anniversary of the publication of *The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros was interviewed by WNYC Radio and stated that she became a writer "despite the Iowa Writers Workshop" and that the experience "taught [her] what [she] didn't want to be as a writer."[197] After the IWW, Cisneros moved away from the institutionalised establishments of creative writing and went to teach at the Latino Youth Alternative High School in Chicago, and later became the Literature Director at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio. Castillo's experience has much in common with Cisneros' and she too received discrimination and discouragement from Anglo art instructors. This made her to vow never to seek formal training in writing and decided instead to "carve out for [herself] the definition of 'good'."[198] Castillo similarly taught in a variety of schools, community colleges, and universities throughout the 1970s and '80s. Her own formal education had a broader focus than Cisneros', graduating as she did with a BA in Art and Secondary Education from Northern Illinois University in 1975. After teaching in the Ethnic Studies Department at Santa Rosa Jr. College, she became the writer in residence for the Illinois Art Council from 1977 to '79. Castillo then went on to study for an MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Chicago in 1979, and in 1991 was awarded a PhD in American Studies from the University of Bremen.

Both writers have won numerous awards that establish their place as influential writers in America. Amongst others, Cisneros has been given the MacArthur Fellowship (1995), two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships (1981 and 1988), the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation (1985), and a Texas Medal for the Arts (2003). In 2016, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill awarded Cisneros an honorary Doctor of Letters. Castillo also received the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation (1987), as well as fellowships from the

[197] Sandra Cisneros, Interview on WNYC Radio, 23 April 2009, http://www.wnyc.org/story/58246-the-house-on-mango-street/.
[198] Ana Castillo, *My Father Was a Toltec and Selected Poems 1973-1988* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), xvii-xviii.

National Endowment for the Arts (1993 and 1995), in addition to the American Studies Association Gloria Anzaldúa Prize (2013). In 2015 Castillo was given the Lambda Award for Bisexual Fiction in 2015 for *Give it to Me*, as well as the Lifetime Achievement Award in literature for her "literary contributions to the Latino/a community, and commitment to the betterment of our younger generations" by Latina Plus, an activist organisation based in New York. As Gillian Roberts explains, the awarding of prizes to writers is important in understanding their popularity as well as their place within the canon, as these prizes influence the ways a writer can be considered integral to American culture.[199] Yet despite all the awards and achievements of these two writers, and the fact that Cisneros and Castillo have been described as two of "the most prominent and influential spokespersons within the Chicana/o literary movement," there is a limited amount of scholarship that directly connects the two authors.[200]

It is for this reason that this thesis focuses on these two authors in particular. It argues that the writings of Castillo and Cisneros need to be given more attention in American literary scholarship for "in the new millennium, literature by Chicana writers is closer than ever to taking a central place in the U.S. literary landscape."[201] As Francisco Lomelí puts it, the "literature written by Chicanas not only has become a significant voice of the Chicano experience but also a mainstay in more contemporary trends with the purpose of breaking new ground and exploring new areas of human experience."[202] The thesis intervenes in the UK-based American Studies and Latin American Studies research that is only slowly adapting to the central place that Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies research will have in all future studies of the Americas, both historically and contemporaneously. With the U.S. Census Bureau predicting that "Hispanics" will account for over one quarter of the population of the US by 2050, the growing importance of studying the diverse and rich Latina/o culture is evident. Furthermore, as David Leal anticipates, this demographic shift will require more scholarly attention to Latinas/os and it will "necessitate a change in the traditional black-white paradigm of understanding racial and ethnic politics."[203] The works of Castillo and Cisneros engage with the current political and social situation of Mexican Americans and are profoundly influential

[199] Gillian Roberts, *Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation and National Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 3
[200] Lomelí, Márquez, and Herrera-Sobek, "Trends and Themes," 291.
[201] Barvosa-Carter, "Breaking the Silence," 261.
[202] Francisco Lomelí, "Chicana Novelists in the Process of Creating Fictive Voices," in *Beyond Stereotypes: A Critical Analysis of Chicana Literature*, ed. María Herrera-Sobek (Binghampton, NY: Bilingual Press, 1985), 30.
[203] David L. Leal, "Religion and Political and Civic Lives of Latinos," in *Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity?*, ed. Alan Wolfe and Ira Katznelson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 312.

not only for Latinas/os but also for American society more widely. As there is rapid growth of the Mexican American population in the United States, one might assume that this should result in a corresponding increase in research and awareness in the academy; and yet, as David E. Hayes-Bautista noted at the turn of the millennium, "academia serenely continues on, curiously untouched by these demographic changes."[204] Although since this declaration there has been some improvement in the growth of, for example, Chicana/o Studies departments in the United States, it does not reflect the real time demographic changes.[205] So scholarship focusing on the Chicana/o experience is a burgeoning field of academic enquiry. In his 2011 book *The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe*, Rodolfo Acuña candidly states the need for Chicana/o Studies departments in the United States, maintaining that it "is a matter of justice, but it is also a matter of self-interest for everyone to know more about Mexican Americans and Latinos."[206] The same need is apparent in departments interested in the study of the Americas in the UK and Europe. As addressed in the 2013 volume *International Perspectives on Chicana/o Studies: "The World Is My Place"*, Chicana/o Studies has become significant outside of the United States and is influential across borders, featuring in the teaching and research of universities worldwide.[207]

Cisneros and Castillo's writing resonates with the transnational and multicultural interests that have emerged within the field of Latin American Studies. In *The Columbia Guide to the Latin American Novel Since 1945*, Raymond L. Williams includes both authors in the Latin American canon, stating that they are in "significant dialogue with the Latin American novel."[208] Their inclusion in this compendium broadens the concept of literature of the Américas. Furthermore, both Cisneros and Castillo have said that they are influenced by writers from Latin America such as Elena Poniatowska, Juan Rolfo, Maunel Puig, and Julio Cortázar. Indeed, Castillo dedicated her 1986 book *The Mixquiahuala Letters* to Cortázar because of the impact *Rayuela* (1963) had on her writing. Maya Socolovsky also recognises the importance of Latin American connections, asserting that Castillo's *Sapogonia* and Cisneros' *Caramelo* contain examples of a remapping of national identity in the Midwest of the United States. Socolovsky argues that Latina writers have challenged the rhetoric of

[204] David E. Hayes-Bautista, "Chicano Studies and the Academy: The Opportunities Missed," *Aztlán* 25 (2000): 184.
[205] Chicana/o Studies has existed in the United States since the 1960s, its growth coinciding with the Civil Rights and students' movements across the country. See: Rodolfo F. Acuña, *The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 2011).
[206] Acuña, *Chicana/o Studies*, xxviii.
[207] Catherine Leen and Niamh Thornton, ed., *International Perspectives on Chicana/o Studies: "The World Is My Place"* (London: Routledge, 2013).
[208] Williams, *The Columbia Guide to the Latin American Novel*, 13.

'unbelonging' in their narratives.[209] Her chapter on Castillo and Cisneros is directed at the concept of "thickening borderlands" and she traces the movement of borderland conditions from the southwest of the country into America's heartlands in the Midwest.[210] With these thickened borderlands, Castillo and Cisneros remap Latin America as part of the United States. Socolovsky uses mestizaje as the "predominant geopolitical strategy, displacing and deconstructing the political borders of the United States, relocating them throughout the nation, and thus engaging in a new nation-building activity."[211] In this argument she cites Ilan Stavans' understanding of mestizaje, both in terms of a "pluralistic identity" and the "physical, social, religious, political, and cultural miscegenation of foreign and indigenous elements."[212] She also connects it to Anzaldúa's theory of mestiza consciousness, as explored in *Borderlands*, recognising the border area as a porous fluid space.[213] Although not explicitly present in Socolovsky's argument, the idea of negotiation resonates with this analysis. Her reading of Castillo's 'Sapogonia' as a borderland Aztlán, can be read as the negotiation of a mythical homeland within the U.S. She asserts that the southwestern borderlands are re-placed in a new context by Castillo and Cisneros; they extend mestizaje into the Midwest and in doing so "[disrupt] and [rewrite] narratives that determine the nation's ethnic identity, dislocating its myths of origin, race, geography, and homeland."[214] Her book, *Troubling Nationhood*, responds to the gap in scholarship for a more nuanced understanding of Chicana experiences across the U.S., such as the migrations and mediations that are expressed by Chicana writers. As the population of Latinas/os in the U.S. increases, issues affecting their culture will no longer be restricted to their impact on members of the Latina/o community but will come to affect American and Latin American people more broadly.

With all this in mind, this thesis builds upon the small number of chapters and articles that specifically analyse the writings of Castillo and Cisneros together. For example, in *Battlegrounds and Crossroads: Social and Imaginary Space in Writings by Chicanas* (2003), Maria Antònia Oliver-Rotger dedicates a chapter to Cisneros and Castillo in order to discuss what she terms 'Mexicanness' found in Mexican American writing. Oliver-Rotger draws attention to Chicana writers' "demythification of ethnicity" and explores the ways in which Cisneros and Castillo's characters negotiate their Mexican

[209] Maya Socolovsky, *Troubling Nationhood in U.S. Latina Literature: Explorations of Place and Belonging* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2013).
[210] Ibid., 61.
[211] Ibid., 63.
[212] Ilan Stavans, "Introduction: The Search for Wholeness," *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*, ed. Ilan Stavans (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), p.lxix.
[213] Sovolovsky, *Troubling Nationhood*, 63.
[214] Ibid., 66.

American identities.[215] Although not expressed using the term 'negotiation', Oliver-Rotger's analysis speaks to the mediation of identities, the key concept explored in this thesis. She sees the characters in Cisneros and Castillo's writing as claiming and asserting their 'Mexicanness' in "a self-conscious effort to define their opposition, anti-American attitude, their difference from the rest of American society, or to come to terms with their parents' and their own culture."[216] In addition, mention of the role of parents' culture implicitly ties this analysis with the family and places their assertion of 'Mexicanness' firmly in the familial framework. Meanwhile, Adriana Estill's "In Father's Footsteps: Bad Girls in Ana Castillo's and Sandra Cisneros's Poetry" (2001) discusses father-daughter relationships in *My Wicked Ways* and *My Father was a Toltec*.[217] As part of this study, Estill reasserts the tendency for Chicana writers to write about the female relationships in the family. Her article uses this as a departure point to then consider the development of father-daughter relationships stating that "Cisneros and Castillo present us with daughters who use their ability as shadows to both imitate and distort their father's images in order to transgress the limitations forced upon them."[218] Estill's focus on this often absent relationship further complicates the study of Chicana literature and familial connections in a very useful and productive way. Beyond this, in "Gritos desde la Frontera: Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Postmodernism" (2000) Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak uses Castillo and Cisneros as a distinct pair in order to demonstrate the connection between Chicana literature and postmodernism. Mermann-Jozwiak suggests that postmodernism is a cultural politics that exposes the constructed nature of literary and social conventions.[219] Focusing on *So Far From God* and 'Little Miracle, Kept Promises,' this article investigates the ways in which Castillo and Cisneros use an aesthetics of appropriation and pastiche to stage a dialogue between Mexican and Anglo-American traditions, and uses the examples of the family saga and the *telenovela* as well as the short story form and Mexican American oral tradition to make this point. Of particular interest is the fact that Mermann-Jozwiak explicitly uses 'negotiation' in order to understand Cisneros and Castillo's writing, stating that *So Far From God* and 'Little Miracle, Kept Promises' "illustrate the constant process of revision, mediation, negotiation, and transformation dictated by life on the

[215] Maria Antònia Oliver-Rotger, "'Mericans' and 'Mechicanas': Sandra Cisneros with Ana Castillo," *Battlegrounds and Crossroads: Social and Imaginary Space in Writings by Chicanas* (New York: Rodolfi, 2003), 246.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Adriana Estill, "In Father's Footsteps: Bad Girls in Ana Castillo's and Sandra Cisneros's Poetry," *Confluencia* 16 (2) (2001): 46-60.
[218] Ibid., 47.
[219] Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak, "Gritos desde la Frontera: Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Postmodernism," *MELUS* 25 (2) (2000): 100-18.

border."[220] This provides a very useful connection to the use of negotiation in this thesis and encourages further exploration of this idea in the analysis of Chicana literature.

In the field of Social Sciences, this thesis intends to add to existing research on the Mexican American family emerging from a wide variety of disciplines from the 1980s to the present day. In the 1980s, specific research on the Mexican American family began to appear, starting with the publication of David Alvirez, Frank D. Bean, and Dorie Williams' 'The Mexican American Family' in the 1981 collection *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations*.[221] In this chapter, Alvirez, Bean, and Williams analyse the ways in which the historical experience of Mexican Americans in the Southwest shapes their social position and family patterns, citing Spanish colonisation, the Mexican American war of 1846-48, and migration to the United States as major determining factors. This was followed by Richard Griswold Del Castillo's book-length study entitled *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the present*, published in 1984.[222] Griswold Del Castillo takes a regional approach and focuses on the four urban centres of Los Angeles, Tucson, Santa Fe, and San Antonio to study the economic, social, and cultural factors of these places that have influenced family life, from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1980s. Building on these interventions, Norma Williams' book *The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change*, published in 1990, is an ethnographic study of the changing patterns found in the family relationships of Mexican Americans. Williams examines the ways in which the extended family is reconstructed in the context of the United States, as well as exploring the role-making and decision-making strategies employed by Mexican American husbands and wives. Williams' path-breaking study engages with questions of gender and familial hierarchies and is the first to analyse the gendered role divisions in the twentieth-century Mexican American family. Through the 1990s, Williams' work was followed by more explorations of the family dynamic, however mostly now from the perspective of the broader Latina/o family setup. Moreover, since the 1980s, a wide range of research exploring the experiences of Mexican American women in the family in particular has slowly been on the increase. For the most part, this has consisted of articles in journals as diverse as *Social Science Quarterly*, *The Journal of Women's Health*, *MELUS*, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, and *The New Mexico Law Review*. These articles are wide-ranging in their scope and, when collected together, can begin

[220] Ibid., 113.
[221] David Alvirez, Frank D. Bean, and Dorie Williams, "The Mexican American Family," *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations*, ed. Charles H Mindel and Robert Wesley Habenstein (New York: Elsevier, 1981), 271-92.
[222] Richard Griswold Del Castillo, *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the present* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1984).

to help to illuminate the complexity of the varied and nuanced experiences of Mexican American women living in the United States.

There is a general consensus among scholars within the social science field, which view the shifts in beliefs about gender among Mexican Americans as a by-product of migration, class mobility, and so-called 'period effects.' International migration between the United States and Mexico results in alterations in gender norms and behaviours in new national contexts, largely through the effects of adaptation and assimilation to the new environment.[223] In addition, changes in socioeconomic status impact upon gender norms.[224] 'Period effects' are defined in Sociology as "the consequences of influences that vary through time."[225] Arlie R. Hochschild describes how 'period effects' influence gender dynamics in complex ways, particularly with reference to the impact of the Civil Rights movement and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s.[226] In a 2014 article, Vasquez addresses the question of how shifting beliefs in gender norms operate in and are transmitted across multiple family generations. [227] This thesis adds to current research through its multidisciplinary analysis of the feminist strategies employed by women in different generations. Cisneros and Castillo critically engage with the reasons for, and impacts of, shifting beliefs in gender roles. In addressing questions of intergenerational developments in the role of women in the family, this thesis adds to a growing field of study engaging with the changing gender dynamics among Mexican American populations.

As evidenced in the wide variety of research used in this study, the focus on literary representations of women in the family is always interconnected with an understanding of lived experiences in Chicana/o families. Studies such as David T. Abalos' *The Latino Family and the Politics of Transformation* (1993), and Ruth E. Zambrana's *Understanding Latina Families: Scholarship, Policy, and Practice* (1995) develop the field and use the study of familial relationships to analyse the

[223] See: Joanna Dreby, *Divided by Borders: Mexican Migrants and Their Children* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010); Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); and Robert C. Smith, *Mexican New York: The Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).
[224] See: Scott Coltrane, Ross D. Parke, and Michele Adams, "Complexity of Father Involvement in Low-Income Mexican American Families," *Family Relations* 53 (2004): 179-189.
[225] Norval D. Glenn, "Age, Period, and Cohort Effects," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 52.
[226] See: Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking, 1989).
[227] Jessica M. Vasquez, "Gender Across Family Generations: Change in Mexican American Masculinities and Femininities," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 21 (2014): 532-50.

changing dynamics of the ever-growing Latina/o population of the United States.[228] Like this thesis, both Abalos and Zambrana understand the centrality of the family in Latina/o culture and connect familial negotiations with broader political implications for these populations. Abalos' book elucidates the transformative potential of the Latina/o family, outlining a model for change and improvement by emphasising the potential for individual and political empowerment found in the family, while Zambrana presents a persuasive argument for federal government policies that support Latina/o families. In addition, Zambrana's collection provides a theoretical overview of existing research, while also discussing the role of community-based programmes in strengthening Latina/o families and positing policy issues affecting these communities. More recently, there have been two significant studies on the Mexican American and Chicana/o family written by Christina Chavez (2007) and Richard T. Rodríguez (2009) respectively.[229] Chavez's book is a collection of oral histories gathered by interviewing thirty members of the Fuentes family, spanning five generations. *The Fuentes Story* explores the reasons why the majority of Mexican American students continue to be working class and receive limited schooling despite, in the case of the Fuentes family, having lived in the United States for over one hundred years. Meanwhile Rodríguez unpacks the genealogy of the family in Chicana/o cultural politics in *Next of Kin*, persuasively illustrating the reproduction and disruption of the patriarchal and heteronormative family in Chicana/o cultural production. Rodríguez's close readings of famous works such a Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzalez's 'I am Joaquín' (1972), alongside analysis of works such as the low-riding magazine *Firme* (1978-2010) successfully destabilise traditional study of the Chicana/o family, and in doing so, make it unfamiliar. These texts inform the focus on praxis in this thesis and ground the analysis of literary representations of women in lived reality.

The theories applied in this thesis are sourced from a variety of cultural, political, and ethnic backgrounds, employing what Rebolledo calls the "*salpicón* analysis of literature: a bit of this, a bit of that."[230] Particular attention is paid to Chicana feminisms and women of colour feminisms, as well as recognition of the work of several foundational Anglo and white American feminists. This speaks to the plurality and fluidity of both the Mexican American experience and the methodology for this thesis, as is discussed throughout this introduction. Although from diverse fields, the works

[228] David T. Abalos, *The Latino Family and the Politics of Transformation* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1993); and Ruth E. Zambrana, *Understanding Latino Families: Scholarship, Policy, and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995).
[229] Christina Chávez, *Five Generations of a Mexican American Family in Los Angeles: The Fuentes Story* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007); and Rodríguez, *Next of Kin*.
[230] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, 5.

mentioned above are all connected by the pluralist approach to scholarship that acknowledges and emphasises the multiple ideologies that form the Chicana experience. By engaging with a variety of disciplines, this thesis also recognises the complex influences that affect the negotiations of intergenerational women in the Mexican American family. Indeed, much of the theoretical scholarship on negotiation practices is adapted from the fields of Business and Social Studies and its application in this thesis, in Literary and Cultural Studies, creates interesting new connections between often disparate disciplines. This blurring of disciplinary boundaries is itself part of the negotiation of the academy undertaken by this project. What is more, this does not necessarily result in conflict within analysis, rather it encourages the reader to find synergy: "a politics of invitation, a politics of community" that resonates with Latina/o feminist movements.[231] In Cisneros and Castillo's work female relationships in the family are represented as vital while also being complicated, messy, and demanding; analysis of their works therefore calls for a nuanced approach that attempts to encapsulate the complexity of Chicana experiences. This requires a negotiation of the academic terrain, a negotiation that has to make space for a variety of disciplines and a wide breadth of scholarship. In line with much of the innovative scholarship in the field of American Studies and Latin American Studies discussed above, this thesis uses a multi- and interdisciplinary methodology to study the women characters in the writings of Castillo and Cisneros.

Chicano historian Ramón Gutiérrez emphasises the need for such a method as it represents the dynamic nature of Mexican American identities and the worlds in which they are created.[232] A pluralistic approach acknowledges the intersection of various factors, including race, class, gender, and historical change, that affect the lives of writers such as Castillo and Cisneros and the characters that they depict. Furthermore, as a result of these intersecting factors, a multidisciplinary project necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that brings together and synthesises a variety of methods and styles of research. In applying a multi- and interdisciplinary mode of analysis, this thesis acknowledges and engages with the "competing and overlapping ideologies [that] interpellate Chicanas in the United States."[233] This methodology also corresponds with feminist scholarship that emphasises the need to study the full context of women's lives to better analyse and understand

[231] Diana Taylor, and Juan Villegas, ed., *Negotiating Performance: Gender, Sexuality, and Theatricality in Latin/o America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 15.
[232] Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Chicano History: Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Boundaries," *Voices of a New Chicana/o History*, ed. Refugio I. Rochín and Dennis N. Valdés (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 91-114.
[233] Quintana, *Home Girls*, 13.

them.[234] This also coincides with the Chicana/o Studies ethic of academic and scholarly pluralism. The majority of research projects within the Chicana/o Studies field explicitly connect their theoretical frameworks with the lived experiences within these communities. Although exploring the roles of women in the family through a literary lens, this thesis also relies on the tools of analysis from a variety of fields, such as Feminist Studies, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies. As Beatríz M. Pesquera and Adela de la Torre outline in the introduction to *Building With Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* (1993), this is the style of research adopted by Chicana scholars whose approach is influenced by advocacy scholarship, which links research to community concerns and social change.[235]

The methodology chosen for this thesis acknowledges and speaks to criticism of linear academic models and takes part in a process of adopting new approaches to studying the Latina/o experience in the United States.[236] This is also occurring in the field of literary studies, for example in her book *Voice of the Oppressed in the Language of the Oppressor: A Discussion of Selected Postcolonial Literature from Ireland, Africa and America* (2013), Patsy J. Daniels situates Cisneros and Castillo's writing in a wide-ranging discussion of postcolonial literature extending from W.B. Yeats and James Joyce to Louise Erdrich and Leslie Marmon Silko.[237] Daniels' text opens the analysis of Cisneros and Castillo's writing to a broader theoretical field of study by insisting on the connections between such a wide-ranging group of postcolonial authors. In this way, and like this thesis, it is part of the endeavour to move away from linear academic studies of literature. With this in mind, an intersectional approach is implemented here, in line with other studies from a variety of fields analysing the Chicana/o experience.[238] It speaks to the *mestiza* consciousness outlined by Anzaldúa

[234] Marianne Hirsch, "Mothers and Daughters." *Signs* 7 (1) (1981), http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173518: 202.
[235] Beatríz M. Pesquera and Adela de la Torre, "Introduction," *Building With Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, ed. Beatríz M. Pesquera and Adela de la Torre (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 1.
[236] See: Rodolfo F. Acuña, "Truth and Objectivity in Chicana/o History," *Voices of a New Chicana/o History*, 23-51; Irene Blea, *Chicano Communities: Social, Historical, Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Space* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); Gutiérrez, "Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Boundaries"; Martha Menchaca, "Beyond Internal Colonialism: Class, Gender, and Culture as Challenges to Chicano Identity," in *Voices of a New Chicana/o History*, 183-95; Alfredo Mirandé, *The Chicano Experience: An Alternative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); Marcos Pizarro, *Chicanas and Chicanos in School: Racial Profiling, Identity Battles, and Empowerment* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005); and Henry Trueba, *Latinos Unidos: From Cultural Diversity to the Politics of Solidarity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).
[237] Patsy J. Daniels, "Cisneros and Castillo: Resisting the Oppressor, Writing a Liberation," *Voice of the Oppressed in the Language of the Oppressor: A Discussion of Selected Postcolonial Literature from Ireland, Africa and America* (Taylor and Francis, 2013).
[238] See for example: Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks and Poor Whites in the Cotton Culture of Central Texas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); and Richard Garcia,

that moves away from dualistic thinking and towards a methodology that explores how, as Brian Fay states, subjects "positively respond to knowledge or, and interaction with, those who are different."[239] C. Alejandra Elenes underlines the importance of this in Chicana scholarship, stating that studies that embrace a multidisciplinary methodology capture "the complex ways in which Chicanas negotiate and make sense of their position in society."[240] This pluralistic approach to learning contains the possibility of enhancing "collectively constituted thought and action which seeks to transform the relations of power that constrict people's lives."[241] So it is that this methodology is a negotiation in itself; a practice in which plural, sometimes opposing, ideas can be addressed and understood.

Intergenerational Chapter Outline

Following the intergenerational framework of the family, this thesis analyses each generation in separate but interconnected chapters, moving from grandmothers, to mothers, and daughters. As discussed previously, the relationships between women across generations are vital for the understanding of Chicana selfhood; for, as Lucy Guerrero states, "no matter how different a mother and a daughter thought they were, in a profound way they really were not. Both share an intricate thread as Hispanic women."[242] So while each generation is analysed in turn, many of the themes and ideas that surface in one chapter re-emerge in subsequent chapters, since the struggles and negotiations of these women, irrespective of their place in the generational line, are inherently interconnected. As such, the works of Cisneros and Castillo demand flexible analysis as the intergenerational relationships portrayed in their novels are unstable and (inter)changeable. Throughout the thesis, the literary and cultural analysis undertaken therefore draws on a variety of

Rise of the Mexican-American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941 (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 1991).

[239] Fay, Brian, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 239. See also: Cindy Cruz, "Toward an Epistemology of a Brown Body," *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*, ed. Dolores Delgado Bernal et al. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 59-76.

[240] C. Alejandra Elenes, "Borderlands, Pedagogies, and Epistemologies," *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life*, 216.

[241] Roger I. Simon, and Henry A. Giroux, *Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life* (Gransby, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1989), 196.

[242] Lucy Guerrero, "Tu Eres Mujer: The Chicana Mother-Daughter Relationship," in *Palabras Chicanas*, 38.

theories and practices that, as I demonstrate, inform and influence, and are in turn informed and influenced by, the writings of Castillo and Cisneros.

In this context, the focus on intergenerational women emphasises the flexibility and plurality of the characters in Cisneros and Castillo's novels. In this thesis intergenerational women are described by their roles in the familial framework, as grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, and yet also by the fluidity between these generations and their adaptability within these often prescriptive roles. Acknowledging this allows for a more nuanced understanding of women who are simultaneously both mothers and daughters, or, indeed, daughters and not mothers. This resonates with Anzaldúa's idea of the *mestiza* consciousness which highlights the ability of women to "speak from a multiplicity of positions."[243] Furthermore, this thesis highlights the extent to which these women are not just defined by their biological roles in the family, but also by their cultural and social roles. This encompassing definition is found in Castillo's essay 'Toward the Mother-Bond Principle,' which moves beyond an analysis of motherhood as a strictly biological role and uses it as a way to understand social relations.[244] It is their *nuevo mestizaje*, their plurality, that makes them intergenerational women. This understanding of the characters in Castillo's and Cisneros' fiction also allows for a more nuanced exploration of women's role in the family, one that moves away from analysis that focuses solely on motherhood and mothering in Chicana writing. In addition, by emphasising their intergenerationality, this thesis centralises the importance of communication across generations as seen in feminist matrilineal writings. Indeed, one of the reviews included on the back cover of the 2003 edition of *Caramelo* highlights this, stating that it is a "multigenerational epic."[245] Additionally, Castillo's latest book tour for her memoir *Black Dove: Mamá, M'ijo, and Me* (2016) includes 'intergenerational book signings' as members of her family are accompanying her on tour; for example at the Unabridged Bookstore in Chicago, Castillo was joined by her son Marcello and her granddaughter Mariana.[246] Castillo has deliberately asked her agent and those organising the book tour to include her family in these events, highlighting the importance of the "[weave of] intergenerational stories" that make up her latest publication.[247] Furthermore, the title itself, *Mamá,*

[243] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* 102; and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, "The Multiple Subject in the Writing of Ana Castillo," *The Americas Review: A Review of Hispanic Literature and Art of the USA* 20 (1992): 65-66.
[244] Ana Castillo, 'Toward the Mother-Bond Principle,' *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (Lanham, MD: PLUME, 1995), 181-204.
[245] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, back cover.
[246] "News," anacastillo.com, http://www.anacastillo.com/content/?paged=3.
[247] The Feminist Press, '*Black Dove: Mamá, Mi'jo and Me* by Ana Castillo,' http://www.feministpress.org/books/ana-castillo/black-dove.

M'ijo, and Me, emphasises intergenerationality and resonates with the interchangeability of roles in the family as Castillo also speaks from her role as a (grand)mother to her son's child.

In particular, the theory of negotiation outlined in this thesis allows the reader to see how women are connected across generations by their various and diverse feminist negotiations in the family. Framing analysis of these narratives using the concept of negotiation links the apparent compliance of one generation to the radical feminist activism of another. By reading these types of negotiation as feminist, it becomes possible to see how these intergenerational women remain connected despite their different approaches to negotiation in the family. As such negotiations are fluid and must evolve dependent on circumstance and situation, the frameworks of negotiation and intergenerationality complement one another and allow for a nuanced understanding of the Chicana experience. This echoes women of colour feminist approaches to negotiation more broadly, for, as Geraldine Heng notes, "Third World feminism, by virtue of its vexed historical origins and complicated negotiations with contemporary states apparatuses, is necessarily a chimerical, hydra-headed creature, surviving in a plethora of lives and guises."[248] The intergenerational network that makes up the Mexican American family reveals a chimerical, mestiza conscious, approach to surviving "in a plethora of lives and guises" across generations. This connects the intergenerational structure explicitly with the concept of negotiation.

As discussed above, the interconnectedness of negotiation and intergenerationality corresponds with the intersectionality and multiplicity of scholarship implemented by those studying Mexican American communities. While this fluidity makes studying them challenging, it reveals the complexity of female familial relationships and allows them to be explored in distinct and nuanced ways. Thus both the method of study and the content of study reflect the mutability of Chicana identities and the various theories used to analyse them. Consequently, many of the theories and terminologies employed are difficult to pin down in absolutes as the terms of analysis are interchangeable across generations. The disruption of the linear generational model of grandmother, mother, daughter is indicated by the inclusion of the terms '(grand)mother' and '(grand)daughter' as these women are simultaneously grandmothers and mothers, daughters and

[248] Geraldine Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism," *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jaqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), 30.

granddaughters. The roles of women in the family do not develop in a singular linear pattern, but rather return and repeat throughout the generations. The repetition of behaviours across intergenerational lines is therefore as much a question of attitude as it is generation. Any of these women may exhibit characteristics of another generation, as shown in their attitudes to the role of women in the family. With this in mind, theoretical and critical works used to describe and analyse mothers, for example, can also be applied to grandmothers and daughters of different generations. Accordingly, this thesis implements an adaptable approach to the exploration and analysis of Cisneros and Castillo's representations of women in the Mexican American family.

Following this introduction, Chapter One analyses the tactics of survival employed by women of the (grand)mother generation in Castillo's and Cisneros' texts. A discussion of Amá in Castillo's *Peel My Love Like an Onion* and Cisneros' the Awful Grandmother from *Caramelo* demonstrates the ways in which women of the older generations in Mexican American families continue to operate under the rules of patriarchy both in order to maintain tradition and to cling obstinately to the only source of power they have access to in a system that fundamentally oppresses women. Reading through the theory of negotiation, this chapter aims to understand the nuance and complexity of the participation of these women in a system that ultimately denigrates them. These women are typically first generation (im)migrants, who preserve the patriarchal family setup through their relationships with their sons and daughters in particular. The result of this is both an adherence to, and subsequent propagation of, oppressive traditions and role expectations for women in the family. Yet their actions can be understood as feminist negotiations, as Cisneros and Castillo are invested in contextualising and therefore revealing the motivations of their behaviour. This chapter analyses the ways in which both Amá and the Awful Grandmother are compelled to propagate a patriarchal system that fragments their relationships with their daughter and daughter-in-law respectively. In doing so, the chapter reveals why both (grand)mothers negotiate their relationships in the family in order to insinuate themselves, somewhat forcefully, into their children's lives, in order to ensure their survival.

In Chapter Two I focus on the role of mothers and their negotiations as feminists in a patriarchal familial framework. In Cisneros' short story 'Woman Hollering Creek' (1991) and Castillo's novels *So Far From God* (1994) and *The Guardians* (2007), women characters adopt feminist mothering practices that allow them to move beyond their limited prescribed roles as women in the family.

Unlike their (grand)mothers before them, these women seek to break away from the stifling and belittling confines of patriarchal womanhood and develop a sense of flexibility in their roles in the family. *Compadrazgo*, motherwork, and second-mothering all serve to renegotiate the familial framework, placing the needs and concerns of mestiza conscious women at its centre. Through resistance and contention these women reclaim their place in the family on feminist terms, negotiating in ways that link the personal and the political; they thereby function as feminist activists who live out their commitment to social justice by developing alternative roles as wives and mothers. Through their social activism, women negotiate change in the familial structure in order to create spaces of resistance within the family. An important part of this negotiation and political activism is collaboration. Through these collectivist negotiations in the traditional patriarchal framework of the family, Cisneros and Castillo reveal the ways in which the family can become a potential space for collective empowerment and social change.

The final chapter explores the negotiation tactics of daughters and how they work to synthesise the strategies of their foremothers to find their identities both as part of the Mexican American family and as individuals. Through discussion of Cisneros' short story 'My Name' (1984) and the novel *Caramelo* (2002), as well as Castillo's *So Far From God* (1993), this chapter shows how granddaughters engage with and interpret their (grand)mothers' stories in order to find their own place, their own thread(s), within the complex weave of Mexican American family life. Using the theory of the 'motherline' in the Chicana context, this chapter explores the ways in which daughters negotiate their identities through disconnections and connections to their foremothers. This involves a complex and difficult process of negotiation that simultaneously acknowledges the stories of their foremothers and seeks to rewrite them in order to establish a meaningful place for the (grand)daughters themselves. Furthermore, in the process of writing, Chicana daughter-writers recover their foremothers who have previously been marginalised, degraded, or simply ignored in the past. Cisneros and Castillo's texts demonstrate the ways which women of this generation have to struggle with the tension between the search for an individual identity and the connection to their communal maternal heritage through the motherline. As intergenerational feminist development should not simply be understood on a linear continuum, this does not mark a moment of completion but rather this chapter understands that negotiations will continuously adapt based on individual motivation and circumstance.

In the writings of Cisneros and Castillo these generations of Mexican American and Chicana women demonstrate resilience and courage in an often oppressive familial and cultural system. Through their strategies of negotiation, these women, and Cisneros and Castillo in writing their narratives, reclaim what Audre Lorde calls "the elegantly strong triad of grandmother mother daughter."[249] Their feminist acts connect them to the struggle to claim the "I" of literary discourse, and, as Yarbro-Bejarano stresses, the struggle for economic, social and political empowerment. [250] The women depicted in the writings of Cisneros and Castillo are compelled to negotiate their place within the family in order to thrive, or at least survive, in what is often a misogynist and racist environment. This is a process that takes time and does not progress in a strictly linear fashion. Therefore I do not read these novels to establish a scale of more or less successful negotiations.[251] As is discussed in the following chapter, the institutional, doctrinal, and cultural obstacles of patriarchy are not easily overcome, and their influences exert great pressure on Mexican American women.

These gendered constructions are replicated in the lived experience of family life, and are both descriptive and prescriptive of Mexican American culture. The familial framework, upheld by traditions and cultural hierarchies that keep women under the subjugation of men, is highly influential and affects the whole of Mexican American society in a variety of complex ways. For women in the Mexican American family, it translates into gendered behaviours in which the ideal woman is expected to suffer without protesting, and to place the needs of her husband and children before her own. For those women of the (grand)mother generation discussed in the following chapter, the patriarchal structure of the family dictates their roles and severely limits their individual development. These women are entrenched in the patriarchal order of family life. The following chapter analyses the portrayal of (grand)mothers in Castillo's *Peel My Love Like An Onion* and Cisneros' *Caramelo* by demonstrating how the authors acknowledge the prevalence of gendered behaviours in the family, while also revealing the agency of these women in their negotiation of familial roles.

[249] Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (London: Sheba, 1982), 7.
[250] Yarbro-Bejarano, "The Multiple Subject," 72.
[251] See Elaine Neil Orr, *Subject to Negotiation: Reading Feminist Criticism and American Women's Fictions* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 23.

A Note on Terminology and Translation

As the terminology employed in studies of Chicana and Mexican American women is politicised and critical to identity creation and perception, an in depth discussion of the terminology employed in this thesis is pertinent. The use of 'Latina/o' and 'Chicana/o' will be adopted throughout, with the slash interrupting the flow of the word and problematising the androcentrism of such terms. This highlights the historical normalisation of the masculine and the othering of the female grammatical form, drawing attention to the text to which the default term for a group of men and women from Latin America is the masculine form of the word, 'Latinos'. This is particularly apparent in the Spanish language with regard to words that denominate roles in the family: the word for 'parents' is '*padres'*, which is the plural of 'father'; '*abuelos*' means grandparents, again favouring the masculine form; and the word '*hijos*' means 'children' and 'sons' simultaneously – something that has personally vexed Cisneros over the years, as discussed later. Thus the terms 'Latino' and 'Chicano', and their pluralised forms, will be used when exclusively referring to men; and the terms 'Latina' and 'Chicana', and their pluralised forms, will be used when referring exclusively to women. When groups of men and women are being discussed the less exclusionary terms 'Latina/o' and 'Chicana/o' will be used, with the feminine form preceding the masculine in alphabetical order to again destabilise grammatical and social assumptions about the predominance of the masculine form.

The terms Chicana and Chicano refer, respectively, to a woman and a man of Mexican descent living in the United States. More specifically, however, Chicana/o are political and politicised terms of identification. Their usage recognises the colonial domination of Mexican Americans following the annexation of Mexico by the United States in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As a result of the annexation of these lands, people who lived there for generations now found themselves with limited access to education, employment, representation, and political influence.[252] Rodolfo Alvarez also attests to the importance of the term 'Chicana/o' as a symbolic representation of self-determination during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s; conveying a commitment to political

[252] See: Tomás Almaguer, "Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism," *Aztlán: Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and Arts* 2 (1971): 7-22; Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz, and Charles Ornelas, "The Barrio as an Internal Colony," in *People and Politics in Urban Society*, ed. Harlan H. Hahn (California: Sage, 1972), 465-99; Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); and Leobardo F. Estrada, Chris Garcia, Reynaldo Flores Macias, and Lionel Maldonado, "Chicanos in the United States: A History of Exploitation and Resistance," *Daedalus* 110 (1981): 103-13.

activism and the drive to improve the lives of those in the Mexican American community.[253] Included in other definitions of Chicana and Chicano is the acknowledgement of the mix of Mexican indigenous (Aztec, Mayan), and European colonialist cultural heritage that makes the Chicana/o mestiza/o – a person of mixed cultural ancestry.[254] This aspect of the Chicana/o identity is particularly important to both Cisneros and Castillo, who not only acknowledge but celebrate the indigenous in their work.

The less politicised term 'Mexican American' will also be used to refer more generally to those of Mexican heritage living in the United States. It is often also written as a hyphenated form, Mexican-American, however, unless written thus in original texts, the hyphen will be deliberately omitted in this thesis. This is as a response to the writings of Chicana activist, feminist, and artist, Moraga's assertion regarding identity: "I think: what is my responsibility to my roots – both white and brown, Spanish-speaking and English? I am a woman with a foot in both worlds; and *I refuse the split*."[255] Where both the terms Chicana and Mexican American women are used together, it is in recognition of generational and political differences between these two terms. Thus, for example, the Awful Grandmother in *Caramelo* is described as Mexican American whereas Sofi in *So Far From God* is Chicana because of the political motivations driving her.

Latina/o is short for 'latinoamericana/o,' which means Latin American in Spanish. The term 'latinoamericana/o' refers to the people who come from the territory in the Americas colonized by nations such as Portugal, Spain, and France, whose languages are derived from Latin. In the context of the United States, Latina/o generally refers to people from these countries who now live in the U.S. To Ángel Oquendo, 'Latina/o' is preferable to 'latinoamericana/o' as "it calls to mind the Latino/a struggle for empowerment in the United States."[256] Latina/o is a term that came from the community, not from a "christening by the Anglo majority" and is therefore part of a process of self-definition and self-assertion.[257]

[253] Rodolfo Alvarez, "'The Unique Psycho-Historical Experience of the Mexican American," *Social Science Quarterly* 52 (1) (1971): 15-29.
[254] Deborah Madsen, *Understanding Contemporary Chicana Literature* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 7.
[255] Cherríe Moraga, "La Güera," *This Bridge Called My Back*, 34: emphasis added.
[256] Ángel R. Oquendo, "Re-imagining the Latino/o Race," in *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 37.
[257] Oquendo, "Re-imagining the Latino/o Race", 37.

The United States Government Census Bureau defines the term 'Hispanic' as denoting "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race."[258] The designation 'Hispanic' is intrinsically connected to the historic Spanish colonisation of these countries, and gives prominence to a colonial legacy over the many indigenous histories of these Caribbean, Central, and South American lands. As Portes and Truelove have noted, until recently, the term 'Hispanic' did not exist as a self-designation for those people now included under this label; it was "essentially a term of convenience for administrative agencies and scholarly researchers."[259] As Rubén G. Rumbaut comments, the ethnic groups subsumed under the label of 'Hispanic' – the "Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, and the other nationalities from Latin America and from Spain itself – were not 'Hispanics' in their countries of origin; rather, they become so only in the United States."[260] Castillo herself fights against the 'Hispanic' denomination, stating that it is "a gross misnomer."[261] Castillo describes the term as a "concession made by the U.S. legislature when they saw they couldn't get rid of us. If we won't go away, why not at least Europeanize us, make us presentable guests at the dinner table, take away our feathers and rattles and civilize us once and for all."[262] The connection between the term 'Hispanic' and attempts to Europeanise Latinas/os in the United States corresponds to Elizabeth Martinez's assertion that it encouraged the assimilation attempts of "wannabe whites/don't wannabe Indians."[263] It is for these reasons that the term 'Hispanic' will be used only in this thesis with reference to United States Governmental data and when citing the work of other scholars who use this term.

All of these terms are fluid and subject to multiple interpretations. In every case where known, when citing and quoting directly, the self-identifier of the speaker/author will be used to avoid the imposition of terminology on any individual. As Portes and Truelove have noted, it is crucial to be vigilant to the fact that all of these populations are not consolidated minorities, but rather a "group-in-formation whose boundaries and self-definitions are still in a state of flux."[264] As Alma Gómez,

[258] "Hispanic Population," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/cspan/hispanic/.
[259] Alejandro Portes and Cynthia Truelove, "Making Sense of Diversity: Recent Research on Hispanic Minorities in the U.S.," *Annual Review of Sociology* 13 (1987): 359.
[260] Rubén G. Rumbaut, "The Making of a People," in *Hispanics and the Future of America*, ed. Marta Tienda and Faith Mitchell (Washington DC: The National Academics Press, 2006), 18.
[261] Castillo, "A Countryless Woman," *Massacre*, 27.
[262] Castillo, "A Countryless Woman," *Massacre,* 28.
[263] Elizabeth Martinez, "Beyond Black/White: The Racisms of Our Time," *Social Justice* 20 (1993): 28.
[264] Portes and Truelove, "Making Sense of Diversity," 359.

Cherríe Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona stated powerfully when putting together the 1983 collection *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, there are divisions and unities connected to all these terms, however:

> In working together, certain things didn't need explaining, including the fact that we all look different from each other and are still Latina. There *are* issues that divide Latinos – color, class, language: "Los cubanos son así. Los puertoriqueños no saben hablar," etc. But in working together, we tried to be respectful and sensitive to the cultural differences between us in the hope that it would make us more sensitive editors in terms of working with the wide variety of expression in the material we selected.[265]

This thesis endeavours to follow this lead and treat any terminology and identity markers as sensitively and accurately as possible.

Although many Chicana/o authors write in both Spanish and English, this thesis is written in English with translations provided for quotations in Spanish and any additional vocabulary. This is in part to fulfil the conventions of a thesis in American Studies in the UK, but also mirrors the tendency to write mostly in English by both Castillo and Cisneros. Asunción Horno-Delgado and the editorial team of *Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings* explain that much Latina writing is in English as it speaks to the Latina/o and Anglo communities. Furthermore, they state that the need to translate the Spanish in these texts "underscores the unfortunate monolingual nature of U.S. society."[266] Although still predominantly written in English, much work in the Chicana/o Studies field allows fluidity between languages as it assumes a level of multilingualism in its readership. As even though the use of English accommodates non-Spanish speakers, Yarbro Bejarano asserts that the "search is for a language that consciously opposes the dominant culture."[267] This not only reflects the lived experience of many Chicanas/os and Latinas/os, but also, as Cherríe Moraga states, lies at the heart of redefining the concept of 'América, *con acento*' (America, with an accent).[268] When

[265] Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona, "Introduction," *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, ed. Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), x.
[266] Asunción Horno-Delgado, et al, eds., "Preliminary Considerations," *Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), xii.
[267] Yarbro-Bejarano, "Chicana Literature," 142.
[268] Cherríe Moraga, 'Art in America, Con Acento,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 12 (3) (1992): 154-60, www.jstor.org/stable/3346648.

discussing *The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros stated in interview on National Public Radio in 2004 that she uses structures, word choices, and syntax that communicate to the reader that the dialogue is in Spanish, that "even though I'd written it in English the characters were speaking Spanish."[269] In their works, both Cisneros and Castillo integrate syntactical structures of the Spanish language with English syntax, thus aggravating any definition of 'American' literature as being exclusively monolingual and limited by geopolitical or linguistic borders.[270] In *Living in Spanglish* Ed Morales persuasively argues that writing in English and Spanish reflects the Mexican American identity because "it [expresses] what we are doing rather than where we have come from."[271] It is a living language that reflects an active process of identification and development for those who use it. Furthermore, both authors have works translated into Spanish and are widely read in countries across the Americas. Castillo has worked as a translator English/Spanish translator herself, and translated *The Bridge Called My Back* into Spanish with Norma Alarcón: *Esta puente, mi espalda: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos*.[272] A polyglot approach will, I believe, become more common as the multiculturalism and multilingualism of the populace permeates (and productively disrupts) the academic terrain. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the body of the text is in English and translations are provided where necessary. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated in the citation, and may have a tendency towards peninsular Castellano Spanish as this is what I have been educated in.

[269] Cisneros, in interview with Felix Contreras, 'Intersections: When Languages Collide: Stylized Fairy Tales Inspired Sandra Cisneros' Cross-Cultural Voice,' *National Public Radio* (4 May 2004), http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1866475.

[270] Williams directly connects Castillo's style of writing with Frank Martinus Arion of Caração and Saúl Ibargoyen of Uruguay, whose writing, in their respective languages "is affected by other local languages." Williams, *Columbia Guide to the Latin American Novel*, p.153.

[271] Ed Morales, *Living in Spanglish: The Search for Identity in America* (St Martin's Press: New York, 2002), 2.

[272] Norma Alarcón and Ana Castillo (trans.), *Esta puente, mi espalda: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos* (ISM Press, California: 1989).

Chapter One

Las Abuelas and the Tricks of Surviving as a Woman in the Patriarchal Family

> Women must be *willing* slaves, for the maintenance of patriarchal order depends upon the consensus of women. It depends upon women playing their part as a muted group, voluntarily suppressing the evidence that exposes the false and arbitrary nature of man-made categories and the reality which is built on those categories.[1]
> John Stuart Mill

The Mexican American family structure and archetypes of womanhood discussed in the introduction are consistent with a patriarchal pattern whereby women are expected to be subservient to men. These cultural practices, that serve to maintain the power of the dominant male group through the subordination of women, are fundamentally misogynistic and impact the lives of women profoundly. The epigraph above is from nineteenth century philosopher and women's rights advocate, John Stuart Mill, who observed that women themselves play an integral role in the preservation of patriarchal order when he wrote about the apparent complicity of women in the maintenance of patriarchal structures of power. Mill proposes that this pattern is found across many patriarchal cultures and relies upon the participation of women in the perpetuation of these social hierarchies. In Castillo's novel *Peel My Love Like an Onion* (1999) and Cisneros' *Caramelo: Or Puro Cuento* (2002), the effects of the dominating patriarchal social and cultural influences are seen to persist in the Mexican American context with women of older familial generations. These women are typically first generation (im)migrants, who preserve the patriarchal family setup through their relationships with their sons and daughters in particular. The result of this is both an adherence to, and subsequent propagation of, oppressive traditions and role expectations for women in the family. Yet by reading through a framework of negotiation, it becomes clear that while Cisneros and Castillo's characters maintain these structures, they do so in order to strengthen their own place in the family and, as a result, better guarantee their survival and that of their family. Thus, although Mill argues that women are complicit in the perpetuation of patriarchal order, by understanding their apparent complicity as part of a complex negotiation, it is revealed that the characters in Cisneros and Castillo demonstrate feminist behaviours. Rather than lay blame at the feet of women who apparently condone the oppression of women in the traditional familial hierarchy, Castillo and Cisneros reveal their negotiations as acts of cultural and individual survival. In the context of the traditional

[1] John Stuart Mill, as quoted by Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1980), 101-2.

patriarchal Mexican American family, these negotiations require a balance between preserving patriarchal hierarchies, while also performing nuanced subversions of women's traditional roles in the family.

This chapter focuses on the roles of the (grand)mother figures of Amá in *Peel My Love* and the Awful Grandmother in *Caramelo* and demonstrates the ways in which their negotiations of their place in the family can be read as feminist despite apparent adherence to patriarchal social value structures.[2] In *Peel My Love*, Carmen's mother Amá demonstrates the classic traits of a 'good' Mexican American mother (and woman), doting on her sons and working hard to please her husband: "[during] all kinds of weather, just like the mailman, nothing would keep my Amá from having my father's clothes ready for work."[3] While Amá remains mostly peripheral to the central story between Carmen and her two lovers Manolo, and Agustín, she obtrudes in her daughter's life constantly throughout the novel, pestering Carmen to do her chores, housekeeping, and other daughterly duties. Parallels can be seen in Cisneros' *Caramelo* which documents the intergenerational stories of the Reyes family. The character of the Awful Grandmother is an all-too pervasive figure in the life of her daughter-in-law, Zoila. The fraught relationship between mother and daughter-in-law is summed up in the titles of one of the Awful Grandmother's favourite *fotonovelas*: "Wives There Are Plenty, But Mothers – Only One!"[4] The first section of *Caramelo* is focused on the ways that the Awful Grandmother clashes with Zoila in her attempt to retain her central position in the Reyes family.[5] Interestingly, in the novels both Amá and the Awful Grandmother are predominantly addressed and referred to in terms that explicitly connect them to their role in the family – 'Amá' being an endearing term for mother (Mamá), and the Awful Grandmother having her role capitalised to form her name. Although this is in part because they are defined by their relationships to the narrators of each novel, it also reifies the limitations imposed on them as women, and Cisneros and Castillo draw attention to the fact that women of this familial generation are known and understood in their capacities as (grand)mothers. This chapter analyses the ways in which both Amá and the Awful Grandmother are compelled to propagate a patriarchal system at the expense of their personal relationships with their daughter and daughter-in-law respectively. In doing so, it reveals why both (grand)mothers

[2] Published only three years apart, the two novels explored in this chapter emerge from the time of popularisation of Chicana literature that began in the 1990s and which persists into the 2000s.
[3] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 32.
[4] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 63. A *fotonovela* is a story illustrated with photographs, usually in the romance or crime genre.
[5] The two other sections of the novel focus on other relationships in the Reyes family, and the relationship between the Awful Grandmother and her granddaughter Celaya is explored in chapter three of this thesis.

negotiate their relationships in the family in order to insinuate themselves, somewhat forcefully, into their children's lives, to ensure their survival.

The cultural and social legacy of the structures and myths of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the influence of archetypal maternal figures in Mexican folklore have an overwhelming effect on the roles of women in the Mexican American family and because of the unique central position of the lauded yet disenfranchised mother in the Mexican American family, it is the mothers who most often embody and communicate these sexist practices. Consequently, the traits and behaviours of patriarchal dominance over women are imposed not only by men but also by women and this knowledge is often transmitted intergenerationally.[6] As Rebolledo notes, in Mexican American society (grand)mothers "function at times to stifle growth and development" and they "serve as symbols of repression, of a tradition that stifles."[7] Feminist scholarship has sought to understand and address the power of patriarchy within the family unit, discussing the ways in which it subjugated women into specific familial roles and the stifling effect it had on female development.[8] In her ground-breaking work of 1976, American feminist, poet, and essayist Adrienne Rich developed the idea of motherhood as an institution, and most crucially as a patriarchal institution. Rich sought to distinguish between the "two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control."[9] As a mother herself, Rich clarifies that motherhood in and of itself is not what is being criticised, but rather the ways in which motherhood comes under male control within the patriarchy. Through the acts of Amá and the Awful Grandmother, Castillo and Cisneros present characters that facilitate the strictest patriarchal oppression over women. Yet even though both authors acknowledge the often cruel behaviours of these (grand)mothers towards their daughters, they are invested in contextualising and therefore understanding the motivation of these characters. Castillo and Cisneros reveal the ways in which motherhood falls under the control of patriarchy and refuse to comfortably accept the perpetuation of these attitudes without critique. They critique the overall patriarchal structures rather than simply lay blame at the feet of individual characters. By adding context and complexity to these characters, Cisneros and Castillo re-write these (grand)mothers and

[6] See: Diana Taylor, *The Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 26.
[7] Tey Diana Rebolledo, "Abuelitas: Mythology and Integration in Chicana Literature," in *Woman of her Word: Hispanic Women Write*, ed. Evangelina Vigil (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1987), 150.
[8] N.B. The feminists involved in this endeavour in the 1970s in the United States were largely Anglo.
[9] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 13.

affirm agency in these roles and the negotiations that are undertaken. Thus, although both *Peel My Love* and *Caramelo* present often conflicted relationships between (grand)mother and daughter, or daughter-in-law, they also highlight the complex negotiations taking place under the oppressive rule of the patriarchal family framework.

For this generation of first generation (im)migrants, the successful execution of negotiating their place in the patriarchal family has great value as it can secure survival for themselves and their children. In the patriarchal world order, (grand)mothers are compelled to learn how to manipulate the system in order to ensure a place for their children, even if this means reinforcing a world order that oppresses women. So it is that Carmen in *Peel My Love* wryly complains that "[sons] inherit acres and wealth. Women get to make bread [… and] keep a low profile."[10] Therefore, as Steph Lawler notes, "mothers are represented as the guarantors of a patriarchal social order."[11] In other words, a mother's job is to "properly" socialise her children, but for some Chicana mothers, "maternal survival tactics may constitute simply accepting sexism rather than challenging it."[12] In order to understand these survival tactics as feminist, Amá and the Awful Grandmother must be read as what Elaine Neil Orr calls "the go-between subject" who knows that her survival, and that of her children, depends on "the negotiation of opposing positions."[13] As is discussed throughout this chapter, in the Chicana context this is a particularly useful way of thinking about the writing of Castillo and Cisneros as it reveals in their characters what "may appear in one light as a timid or underdeveloped feminism" to be "a more complex, more advanced feminist method."[14] The characters of Amá and the Awful Grandmother show the complex negotiations taking place in a hostile environment that can be read as acts of feminist resistance.

In these two novels Amá and the Awful Grandmother often appear to comply with patriarchal social conventions and this is typical of the older generation in the Chicana/o family that tend to hold most strongly onto traditional notions of familial organisation.[15] As a result, they are complicit in the

[10] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 32.
[11] Steph Lawler, *Mothering the Self: Mothers, Daughters, Subjects* (London: Routledge, 2000), 15.
[12] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 13.
[13] Elaine Neil Orr, *Subject to Negotiation: Reading Feminist Criticism and American Women's Fictions* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 3-4.
[14] Ibid., 4.
[15] The conservative strain in this traditional outlook has been noted in social science and political literature which states that first-generation Latina/o (im)migrants are less liberal than later generations. See Christina E. Bejarano, *The Latino Gender Gap in US Politics* (New York: Taylor Francis, 2014).

repression of their daughters in particular. Their strong connection to Mexico, where Amá and the Awful Grandmother spent the formative part of their lives, feeds ideas and ideals of family life that are strongly defined by Catholic patriarchal society and its inherent values. These values of sacrifice, compassion, and purity manifest themselves in traditions that demand the subservience of women. In particular, this creates tension in female relationships in the family, and, as Tina Benítez stresses, for many Chicanas "the mother is not only a source of sustenance. Since she is the primary transmitter of a patriarchal culture she is also a source of oppression."[16] The perpetuation of patriarchal norms by women is sometimes labelled as 'internalised sexism', which describes the internalisation of negative and limiting messages about being a woman.[17] One conceptualisation of internalised sexism is the passive acceptance of traditional gender roles and women of this older familial generation comply by obeying the patriarchal structure of the family and adhering to the traditional roles of wife and mother.[18]

The women in Cisneros and Castillo's novels do not simply passively accept their place in the family; instead they work to actively secure their futures through a series of complex negotiations. These negotiations are witnessed predominantly in their relationships with their sons and daughters. Driven by their subjugation in the patriarchal family system, these women "lavish attention on their sons, ignore daughters, and help create conditions for the neurotic social complex to begin again."[19] This process is cyclical and affects intergenerational women who are compelled to repeat the pattern when the fundamental conditions of patriarchal family life are not changed. Thus the negotiations employed by these women have to be understood within the framework of a patriarchy that presumes and prescribes the favouritism of sons over daughters. Additionally, in order to protect and preserve their place in the family hierarchy these (grand)mothers are compelled to undermine the position of their son's wife in order to maintain influence over their sons: as the

[16] Tina Benítez, "The Mother Daughter Relationship," in *Palabras Chicanas*, 23.
[17] Steve Bearman, Neill Korobov, and Avril Thorne, "The Fabric of Internalized Sexism," *Journal of Integrated Social Sciences* 1 (1) (2009): 10-47; and Dawn M. Szymanski, Arpana Gupta, Erika R. Carr, and Destin Stewart, "Internalized Misogyny as a Moderator of the Link between Sexist Events and Women's Psychological Distress," *Sex Roles* 61 (2009): 101-9.
[18] Adena Bargad and Janet Shibley Hyde, "Women's Studies: A Study of Feminist Identity Development in Women," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15 (1991): 181–201; Nancy E. Downing and Kristen L. Roush, "From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development for Women," *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13 (1985): 695–709; Ann R. Fischer, *et al.*, "Assessing Women's Feminist Identity Development: Studies of Convergent, Discriminant, and Structural validity," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 24 (2000): 15–29; and Judith Worell and Pam Remer, *Feminist Perspectives in Therapy: Empowering Diverse Women*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003).
[19] Paul Wickelson, "Shaking Awake the Memory: The Gothic Quest for Place in Sandra Cisneros' *Caramelo*," *Western American Literature* 48 (1-2) (2013): 102.

Awful Grandmother proclaims in *Caramelo*, "[wives] come and go, but mothers, you have only one!"[20] In their novels, Cisneros and Castillo explore the nuances of these often destructive relationships between (grand)mothers and their daughters and daughters-in-law and seek to critique the overall patriarchal structures that create this tension rather than the individuals complicit in them. The motivations for the perpetuation of patriarchal structures are complex and understanding them is important when analysing the negotiation techniques of women of this familial generation.

While much of the feminist scholarship on this topic discusses the patriarchal control over motherhood in relation solely to the mother-daughter dyad, motherhood is not in stasis and grandmothers are also mothers. Indeed, the character of the grandmother is often where the patriarchal tradition is most visible in the writing of Cisneros and Castillo often as result of the transmission of cultural practices carried over from Mexico by these first generation (im)migrants. In the case of the Mexican American family, for example, the role of the grandmother in the promotion and maintenance of patriarchal values is a facet of the mother/daughter conflict that merits exploration. Outside of the Mexican American context, literary scholar Kathleen Woodward suggests that the mother/daughter dyad should be expanded to include grandmothers, stating that the grandmother represents change through the passage of biological and historical time, while also being a figure of attachment and continuity across the generations.[21] Therefore, when discussing the relationships of (grand)mothers and their (grand)daughters as patriarchal, a certain amount of flexibility is required within these terms. In the works discussed below, the (grand)mothers are thus grouped together as grandmothers and mothers and are connected by a generational association as much as a familial one. The two (grand)mothers discussed here, the Awful Grandmother and Amá, are first generation (im)migrants to the United States and are linked because of similar behaviours in their relationships as (grand)mothers in the family. So therefore even though Amá in *Peel My Love* does not have a grandchild, she is included in this discussion. As intergenerational women, these maternal/filial relationships recur and the framework of this thesis reflects this fluidity. Therefore, the specific grandmother/granddaughter connection is explored later in this thesis, in chapter three. This chapter deals with Amá and the Awful Grandmother in their capacities as mothers. It will explore ideas about their generation and status rather than their role as a grandmother to grandchildren within the family. With this in mind, much of the literature and theory discusses the

[20] Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo: or Puro Cuento* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 85.
[21] Karen Woodward, "Inventing Generational Models: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Literature," in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, ed. Karen Woodward (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 149-171.

relationship between mother and daughter and this is expanded here to include these (grand)mothers.

(Grand)Mothers: The Maintenance of the Traditional Family and the Perpetuation of the Patriarchal Hierarchy in *Peel My Love Like an Onion* and *Caramelo*

In the Mexican and Mexican American context, as Maria Gonzalez states, the traditional view is that "the male defines what is good and the female transmits the cultural values to the next generation without contributing to the meaning."[22] It is in their traditional role as cultural transmitters that some women are complicit in the maintenance of the patriarchal hierarchy in the family. The power of patriarchy influences the roles and relationships of women in the family. The institution of motherhood in particular is a "keystone of the most diverse social and political systems."[23] Rich illuminates the ways in which motherhood is controlled by the rules of patriarchy through the:

> familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure or through ritual tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.[24]

In *Peel My Love* and *Caramelo*, the (grand)mother characters can be read as transmitters of patriarchal culture. In their work, Castillo and Cisneros reveal that the version of motherhood that Amá and the Awful Grandmother adhere to reinforces limited and limiting roles for women in the family. Amá's attitude towards women, for instance, is based on the traditional framework that insists on their achievement in the role of wife and mother, an insistence that leaves no room for individual development outwith these roles. Amá's restrictive view of women as mothers is demonstrated most explicitly when she moans about her son's wife, complaining, "what good is she anyway since she can't have children."[25] With this offhand comment, Amá exposes her belief that the ultimate goal of any women ought to be reproduction, and dismisses his son's (unnamed) wife

[22] Maria Gonzalez, "Love and Conflict: Mexican American Women Writers as Daughters," in Brown-Guillory, 155.
[23] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 13.
[24] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 57.
[25] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 25.

because she is not fulfilling this aspect of her function. For Amá, a woman's worth is achieved only in motherhood. Castillo thusly demonstrates the extent to which women of this familial generation have predetermined ideas about what part women shall or shall not play. As result of the systematic oppression of women in the patriarchal family and in the Roman Catholic Church, perpetuated both conspicuously and inconspicuously through normalised traditional expectations of passivity, women must therefore work hard to negotiate their place or risk being ostracised from their families and deemed invaluable. By reading the actions of Amá and the Awful Grandmother as feminist negotiations, it is possible to critically analyse how and why women are compelled to act in these ways and, in doing so, observe how Cisneros and Castillo critique the institution of the traditional patriarchal family.

The traditional Mexican American family, influenced by the powerful influence of the Catholic family structure and the archetypes discussed in the introduction, stipulates that the only possible and valuable roles for women are that of wife and mother. As editors Yvonne Tixier y Vigil, Kyle Mackenzie, and Nan Elssaser observed in their collection of oral histories *Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community*, these women "moved from being daughters to being wives and mothers, with little if any, time in between."[26] Tixier y Vigil, Mackenzie, and Elssaser recognise the limitations placed on women in their prescribed roles, noting that many women of this generation were only ever defined by their positions in the family. This generation of mothers belongs to a group that Castillo has defined as "women who may not have wanted to be mothers but who believed they had no choice" or "who thought they wanted to be mothers because they believed that was what they had to be to be seen as grown women."[27] The cultural and social assumption is that women will become mothers and there are expectations connected to how they will perform this role. Sara Ruddick defines three demands that constitute mothering in her book *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*.[28] Along with the preservation and growth of the family unit, the third demand is that of 'social acceptability' and it is this demand that stifles the growth and development of female children. Ruddick states that social acceptability is based not on what the children may need, but on the needs of the social group of which the mother is a member.[29] It is in this way that the patriarchal Catholic framework is implicated in influencing the roles of women in the Mexican American family. As Margaret Torres, a participant in this *Las Mujeres* project,

[26] Elsasser, Mackenzie, and Tixier y Vigil, *Las Mujeres*, 9.
[27] Castillo, *Massacre*, 187.
[28] Ruddick, *Maternal* Thinking, 17.
[29] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 21.

recollects: “I have a hard time thinking of myself as an individual. It seems I’ve always been a daughter, a wife, or a mother. I’ve always been working and raising children.”[30] The instruction of social acceptability by mothers to their children is determined by the social and cultural context in which the mothering occurs, and social groups require that mothers shape their children’s growth in “acceptable” ways.[31] In the case of the Mexican American woman this results in forced adherence to the archetypes of Mexican womanhood, discussed in the introduction, and women feeling constrained, as Torres does, to fulfilling predetermined gendered roles in the family. As Ruddick further suggests, mothers want their children to grow into people that will be “acceptable” to the community and this demand “gives an urgency – sometimes exhilarating, sometimes painful – to mother’s daily lives.”[32] As is explored throughout this chapter, it is this demand of rearing children to fit into the patriarchal mould that is explored in the familial relationships between Cisneros and Castillo’s (grand)mothers and their children, both sons and daughters.

Central to understanding the negotiations of (grand)mothers in the traditional patriarchal family is the knowledge that they are working within a system in which they have very little power and control. Therefore, in their writing, Castillo and Cisneros do not criticise the (grand)mothers of the family, rather they critique the patriarchal system that they have been brought up in, and indoctrinated by. In doing so they destabilise the view that the limitation of women in the family is the mother’s doing rather than the result of patriarchy.[33] As Denise Kandiyoti states, women's strategies are always played out in the context of identifiable patriarchal bargains that act as implicit scripts that define, limit, and inflect their options.[34] Amá and the Awful Grandmother are compelled to negotiate with this patriarchal script. The lack of resources and opportunities afforded to women in a strictly patriarchal setting greatly curtails their abilities to promote anything more than the role of wife and mother to their daughters. As Rich asserts, women have “neither power nor wealth to hand on to their daughters.[…] The most they can do is teach their daughters the tricks of surviving in the patriarchy by pleasing, and attaching themselves to, powerful and economically viable men.”[35] Women have to become *maestras* (masters) of the tricks to get by in a society that fundamentally values them less than their husbands, fathers, and sons. Kandiyoti notes that in a ‘classic patriarchy’,

[30] Elsasser, Mackenzie, and Tixier y Vigil, *Las Mujeres*, 73.
[31] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 21.
[32] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 21.
[33] Shelley Phillips, *Beyond the Myths: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Psychology, History, and Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1996), 5.
[34] Deniz Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society* 2 (3) (1988), www.jstor.org/stable/190357: 285.
[35] Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1979), 91.

women would rather maximize their security and life chances through the manipulation of the affection of her sons and husband than risk unsettling the overall structure of patriarchy, however unfavourable the terms may be for women within this structure.[36] Some women are willing to claim their part of the patriarchal bargain "in exchange for submissiveness and propriety."[37] As Julia Jay states, in the Chicana/o context, women "are socialized to betray each other because of the culture's directive to put the male first."[38] Such a 'betrayal' in the Mexican American context is connected to the figure of *Malinche*, the traitorous female figure in Mexican culture. Placing the onus on women in this way further entrenches the myth of this treachery. However, it is the patriarchal structure that forces women into the apparent 'betrayal' of their own sex.

In *Peel My Love*, Amá, the mother of Carmen, the novel's protagonist, attempts to instruct her daughter in the patriarchal mould of acceptable daughterhood. This is part of an intergenerational negotiation in which the (grand)mother is tasked with the transmission of behaviours that aim to secure a husband for the daughter: the only viable future for an 'acceptable' woman. This resonates with what feminist scholar Marianna Hirsch calls "the mother/daughter plot", in which the role of the maternal figure is to initiate the next generation of females into the familial framework by teaching them the lessons of patriarchy and by providing them with a 'good example'. This initiation includes the promotion of heterosexual pursuit of a mate, marriage, motherhood, and the passing of this same framework on to the next generation. In this patriarchy-driven "mother/daughter plot", woman's identity is established in relationship to the masculine and the familial, she is empowered by her alliance to and complicity with patriarchal power.[39] In *Peel My Love*, Amá, attempts to instruct her daughter in the mother/daughter plot. Early in the novel Amá forces her daughter to be part of the Saturday ritual of attention for the men in the Santos family, with tasks of laundry, cleaning, cooking, and tortilla-making to be completed: tasks that Carmen is sure must be her "penance."[40]

> Apá [Pa], being from El Paso – el Norte [the North] – prefers flour tortillas to the corn. Now my mother is adamant again about turning that task over to me, I guess as punishment for not having married or for not having a son for whom I would have to make tortillas one day. La jefita says if I had a man of my own I'd be

[36] Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 280.
[37] Ibid., 282-3.
[38] Jay, "(Re)claiming the Race of the Mother," 105.
[39] Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989).
[40] Ana Castillo, *Peel My Love Like an Onion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 32.

> able to do things right by now, make good tortillas, press pants with a decent crease, and for sure know how to pair socks by rolling them up in neat balls like she does for the men each week.[41]

In this domestic tableau, the initiation of the daughter in the mother/daughter plot is being enacted through the teaching of the skills Amá thinks integral to the job of a woman – as wife, daughter, and potential mother. The centrality of the domestic duties in this scene reflects a common relationship between (grand)mother and daughter for Mexican American women. As shown in a study by Marlene Zepeda, the domestic responsibilities passed on to female relatives is crucial in these intergenerational relationships. One grandmother in the study stated that her role was to:

> *Enseñarles a ser limpias. Enseñarles a enhebrar una aguja. Enseñarles a que levanten sus trastes… que los laven. Y de repente hacerlos que hagan un guiso… Eso es lo que yo llamo actividades domésticas.*
> Teach them to be clean. Teach them to thread a needle. Teach them to pick up their dishes… and wash them. And then have them suddenly whip up a meal…. That's what I call domestic chores.[42]

Castillo thus represents a familiar relationship found in the Mexican American family in which women share the lessons of patriarchal womanhood intergenerationally. However, in this case, Amá has evidently been unsuccessful in her attempt at negotiating the mother/daughter plot with Carmen, as her daughter is neither married nor a mother. Amá's desire to turn the task of spousal and motherly duties over to Carmen, as part of the requirement to pass on the lessons of patriarchal femininity to the next generation, is therefore frustrated.

Written from Carmen's perspective the tone of this short section is insolent and invites derision. The focus on Carmen's proficiency in pressing pants and rolling socks as demonstrative of her ability to "do things right" is rendered ridiculous. However, despite Castillo's impudent tone, this inability to perform 'feminine' duties, albeit duties that may seem absurd, is a source of constant anxiety for Carmen throughout the novel.[43] Castillo balances the very real feelings of angst at the pressure of living up to a mother's image of femininity with those of frustration and defiance towards the

[41] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 33.
[42] Marlene Zepeda, "Las Abuelitas," *Agenda* 6 (1979), 12.
[43] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 28.

injustice of being reduced to living a life valued by the ability to make a decent crease and good tortillas. In Amá and Carmen, Castillo captures the tension between mothers and their daughters involved in negotiations as part of the mother/daughter plot. This reflects a stress that Lucy Guerrero identifies as common among Chicanas, as "many young women feel pressure from their mothers to conform to traditional Hispanic values for women, even if they don't acknowledge these traditional values as their own."[44] Thus while at times presenting Amá's view of what a 'good daughter' ought to be as ridiculous, Castillo portrays the complicated nuances of growing up with a traditional Mexican mother. This corresponds with Guerrero's finding that "many Chicanas find it difficult to be outwardly rebellious against the traditional cultural norms, simply because they would not only be going against tradition, but they would ultimately disappoint, insult and disgrace their mothers."[45] For, despite the snide comments, Carmen does ultimately try her best to be a good daughter.

Part of the reasoning behind Amá's attempts to indoctrinate her daughter in the mother/daughter plot is the internalisation of the belief that men are superior to women and that women are there to serve them. By attempting to indoctrinate her daughter in the mother/daughter plot, Amá believes she is passing on the lessons required for Carmen to become a good wife and mother. This causes women to treat the men of the family with greater respect and deference than the women, perpetuating a dualistic gendered behaviour system. Likewise, the devotion that the Awful Grandmother pours on her sons in Cisneros' *Caramelo* is typical of the Mexican and Mexican American patriarchal social structure in which sons are viewed as more important than daughters. Cisneros describes the bond between the Awful Grandmother and her favourite son, Inocencio, as a "fierce love uniting mother and son."[46] The fierceness of this love not only affects the mother-son relationship, but profoundly affects female relationships in the family also. Gonzalez attests that "[feminists] have been arguing for years that a mother who favors her sons over her daughters destroys the self-worth of the daughters."[47] In the novel this is made apparent when the Awful Grandmother speaks of her boys with doting affection:

> [all] my sons are my sons. They're just as they were when they were little. I love them all the same, just enough but not too much. She uses the Spanish word *hijos*,

[44] Guerrerro, "Tu Eres Mujer," 38.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 205.
[47] Gonzalez, "Love and Conflict," 163.

> which means sons and children all at once. – And your daughter? I ask. – What about her? The Awful Grandmother gives me a look, as if I'm a pebble in her shoe.[48]

The Awful Grandmother's adoration of her sons is put in marked contrast to her feelings about her daughter which provokes a look of physical pain. Celaya's reminder to her grandmother that she also has a daughter amongst all those sons jolts the Awful Grandmother, eliciting a disdainful glare. It is clear that the Awful Grandmother does not consider her daughter when she speaks of her children, emphasising the marginalisation of girls in patriarchal families. This is not limited to Mexican American patriarchal society; indeed, Rich states that this is common to any patriarchal society in which the mother "exists for one purpose: to bear and nourish the son."[49] This resonates with how Mexican Americans perceive the privileged positions of males in the family. This phenomenon is widespread and Cherríe Moraga avows that if you ask any Mexican American mother about her children, "she is quick to tell you she loves them all the same, but she doesn't. *The boys are different*."[50] Sociologist Irene I. Blea supports this assertion, stating that "[even] at birth Chicano females and males do not start out the same. Boy babies are still preferred."[51] Both Amá and the Awful Grandmother have been socially conditioned to consider their male children more important than their female children.

Steeped in the lessons of traditional patriarchal culture, women of this generation have internalised assumptions about female nature as defined by patriarchy. This is what Elaine Showalter describes as the "feminine phase," of feminist poetics in which women accept the limitations imposed on them by patriarchal culture; in the family, this most often manifests in traditional gender roles in which the mother looks after the sons more than the daughters.[52] Amá and the Awful Grandmother have internalised the culture's assumption for femininity and masculinity and this defines their roles in the family: as doting mothers to their sons. In *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga states that a mother's favouring of the son over the daughter comes from the mother's desire to receive all the rights and privileges afforded men through her relationship with her son.[53] The Awful Grandmother's caustic look when she is reminded that she has a daughter as well as sons demonstrates the

[48] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 29.
[49] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 186.
[50] Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 101-2.
[51] Irene I. Blea, *La Chicana and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 127.
[52] Elaine Showalter, ed., *New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 137.
[53] Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 93-4.

inequality in the value she places on her relationships with male children over female children. Her daughter is a "pebble in her shoe," at best an irritation, at worst a crippling impediment. Furthermore, Herrera attests that women who show this preference for sons overs daughters are considered "loyal to their culture."[54] As part of the negotiation of their place in the family, Amá and the Awful Grandmother chose to demonstrate fidelity to the traditional hierarchy and therefore perpetuate the unequal position of women in the patriarchal family.

Cisneros draws from personal experience in her characterisation of the Awful Grandmother for in her own life she experienced the disparity between her father's apparent preference for his sons over her as his daughter. She explains in the essay 'Only Daughter' how this affected her writing:

> Once, several years ago, when I was just starting out my writing career, I was asked to write my own contributor's note for an anthology I was part of. I wrote: "I am the only daughter in a family of six sons. *That* explains everything. […]
>
> I was/am the only daughter and *only* a daughter. Being an only daughter in a family of six sons forced me by circumstance to spend a lot of time by myself because my brothers felt it beneath them to play with a *girl* in public. But that aloneness, that loneliness, was good for a would-be writer – it allowed me time to think and think, to imagine, to read and prepare myself.[55]

She goes on to disclose that her father used to boast to people that he had "*siete hijos*" and Cisneros would have to clarify that when he said "*hijos*" here, he meant, seven children, not seven sons; six boys and one girl. Just like the Awful Grandmother's dismissal of her daughter above, the explicit gendering of words makes the nullification of the daughter more obvious and somewhat inevitable. In Spanish, the androgenisation of nouns in the plural if one male is present literally erases the female presence. So, for example, if there are a group of children playing in the park and they are all girls, this group will be described as '*un grupo de chicas*' (a group of children) – using the feminine plural form of the word 'children'. If, however, a boy joins in this group, then the declension changes and the group is described as '*un grupo de chicos*' (a group of children) – using the masculine plural form of the word 'children'. The presence of one male in the group nullifies the feminine form in favour of the grammatically 'stronger' masculine form. Thus the feminine and the female is not only

[54] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 23.
[55] Sandra Cisneros, "Only Daughter," *Latina Women's Voices From the Borderlands*, ed. Lillian Castillo-Speed (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1995), 157.

hidden but denied through the gendering of language: the male is the universal and the female is therefore 'other'. Due to the conspicuousness of gendered language in Spanish, the negation of the female in the plural *hijos* (children) accentuates the social and cultural preference for sons over daughters in Spanish-speaking Latina/o cultures.

The tendency to favour boys over girls is part of a complicated negotiation process in which, through her relationship with the son, the mother is allowed access to the power, albeit a power restrained within the strict confines of the patriarchal system. As part of this process, the tension between motherhood and patriarchal dominance must be addressed. Deniz Kandiyoti's theory of 'patriarchal bargaining' is particularly useful here as it describes a tactic used by women in which they choose to accommodate and uphold patriarchal norms, accepting gender roles that disadvantage women overall in order to maximize their own options. Kandiyoti states that since sons are a woman's most critical resource, ensuring their life-long loyalty is an enduring preoccupation.[56] As Cisneros articulates in *Caramelo*: "there is nothing Mexican men revere more than their mamas; they are the most devoted of sons, perhaps because their mamas are the most devoted of mamas… when it comes to their boys."[57] Castillo similarly illuminates the disparity between the treatment of sons and daughters in *Peel My Love Like An Onion*, when speaking of Amá's relationship with her son: "[Amá] confides in Joseph and believes in her firstborn son like Jesus but she doesn't expect him to drive into the city to do her any favors, she says, like taking her to the doctor."[58] In this case, the firstborn son is revered but never asked to do the day-to-day care giving like Amá expects of her daughter, Carmen. Yet in these negotiations, Amá and the Awful Grandmother can find agency and even within the constraints of the patriarchal familial regime, they create opportunities for themselves as a method of securing their place in the family.

However, there is a more nuanced scheme at work than simply preference for one particular son over one particular daughter. These Mexican American mothers have to be devoted to their sons as it is through this relationship that they will have access to influence in the family; and indeed more basically, for survival. Elisa Facio's study of the Chicana elderly underlines the importance of such negotiations for women of this generation, stressing that it is "imperative for these women to find a

[56] Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 279.
[57] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 128.
[58] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 27.

sense of self-worth and a means of […] survival."[59] This, again, is not confined to the Mexican American case, for as Ruddick states in *Maternal Thinking*, "[if] a mother didn't have this control, her life would be unbearable."[60] Thus the control these women have access to through their sons, albeit limited by patriarchal conditions of femininity and motherhood, cannot be underrated. The hierarchy produced by this system clearly favours male domination over women and yet by ingratiating herself with her son, a mother may still position herself higher up the hierarchy and ensure the long-term benefits of this relationship. Heidi Hartmann recognises the importance of these hierarchies within the patriarchal system, claiming that hierarchies work "at least in part because they create vested interest in the status quo."[61] In the case of the hierarchy within the Mexican American family, the status quo relies on male dominance over women and therefore the mothers who buy into that setup are required to take part in this system of oppression to guarantee themselves ongoing advantages and in doing so maintain the status quo.

Thus a woman's power in the mothering context has to be more subtle and their negotiations rely on influence and manipulation. In a study of the village of Tonalá in Mexico, May Díaz finds that the power of women in the community is "implicit and hidden," resulting in informal and manipulative power. Women must manipulate "accepted roles of behavior and role expectations" to get their way because they have little overt authority.[62] So it is that Amá in *Peel My Love* is described as needling her son Abel, pestering and hassling him about getting a 'proper' job.[63] Her attempts to control her son through small manipulations are in direct contrast to her dealings with her daughter which are candid and at times cruel. For instance, when Amá realises that the unwed Carmen is pregnant, she throws her out the house for an entire year, refusing to visit her or allow her to come home even when she has a dangerous miscarriage.[64] Amá directly controls Carmen's place in the family by this action, distancing her 'shamed' daughter from the family for fear of social ostracism. In contrast, Amá's relationship with her son is less antagonistic and less judgemental. Her son's romantic and sexual liaisons are his own business and Amá would not dare interfere in this part of

[59] Elisa Facio, "Gender and the Life Course: A Case Study of Chicana Elderly," in *Building With Our Hands*, 219-20.
[60] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 35.
[61] Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," *Capital and Class* 3 (2) (1979): 11.
[62] May N. Díaz, *Tonalá: Conservatism, Responsibility, and Authority in a Mexican Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 85-90. See also Beverley Chiñas' study on the Zapotec women of Mexico, *The Isthmus Zapotecs: Women's Roles in Cultural Context* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Wilson, 1973), 101-8.
[63] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 28.
[64] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 68.

her son's life. In the mother-son relationship, there are different parameters within which to exert her influence and her negotiations with him come through persuasive needling, rather than overt control. Yet the result of her attempted manipulation of her son only causes him to move downstairs with his father, moving away from his nagging mother and therefore outside her limited sphere of influence. This underlines how little influence Amá actually has in her son's life.

The power, or powerlessness, in the mothering context is particularly interesting as Ruddick points out that "from a mother's point of view, maternal powerlessness is very real indeed. Yet adults are not hallucinating when they remember their mothers as having immense power over their physical and emotional lives."[65] From the children's point of view, mothers seem to have power over their lives and yet mothers feel powerless. Furthermore, as Adelaida Del Castillo underlines when analysing May Díaz's foundational work exploring authority in the Mexican town of Tonalá, women's roles are "filled with responsibilities without power."[66] If the maternal powerlessness is felt profoundly by mothers then where does the perceived 'power' over their children come from? Louise Lamphere attempts to address this paradox by emphasising the importance of influence, stating that since "women are often not in positions of authority, a key concept in understanding their strategies is that of influence, one of the most important forms of persuasion."[67] In *Caramelo*, the Awful Grandmother negotiates with her son using persuasion to insinuate herself into a central position in the family. Throughout the first part of the novel, the Awful Grandmother employs tactics of manipulation to strengthen her role in her son's family. When the family come and stay with her in Mexico City for their long summer holiday, the Awful Grandmother complains about the sacrifices she makes to accommodate them all:

> No, I'm not complaining. Of course, I'd rather have family near. What's money compared to the joy of having one's family close by? You have to make sacrifices. Family always comes first. Remember that.[68]

[65] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 35.
[66] Del Castillo, "Gender and its Discontinuities," 218.
[67] Louise Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation, and Conflict Among Women in Domestic Groups," *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 99. For Lamphere's understanding of the concept of influence, she relies on Talcott Parsons' "On the Concept of Influence," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 27 (1963).
[68] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 67.

This is a lesson for her son in which the Awful Grandmother seeks to demonstrate how benevolent a mother she is by choosing her family over money. She emphasises the self-sacrificing nature of her behaviour, emulating the archetypal Mexican mother *La Virgen de Guadalupe*.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the strength of family bonds shows that she values family above all else and that this is an example she is passing on to her sons, in the hope that they will return the favour when the family dynamics shift and she is in need of their hospitality. The Awful Grandmother shows her commitment to familial duty, planting the seeds of this obligation that will come to fruition in the future when she will rely on this sense of duty for herself, when she needs the family to step in on her behalf. These dynamics are bargained in a series of negotiations in which "a woman (in her role as wife, mother, or sister) may be able to influence a man's decision […] by persuading him that such a decision is in his own interests or perhaps in the interests of his children or other kin."[69] In her moral lesson to her son, the Awful Grandmother impresses on him that in order to be a good man, he must always remember the strength of family bonds, bonds that will in turn keep her tied to him. So it is, for example, that the Awful Grandmother negotiates a place for herself on the family trip to Acapulco, through guilt-inducing sighs and her loan of money to her son's family to help cover the costs of the holiday. She surely knows this will guarantee her a place on the trip. In response, her son Inocencio shrugs, "How could I say no to my own mother?"[70] Inocencio's capitulation marks a victory for the Awful Grandmother in her attempts to negotiate a place in her son's family.

Yet the Awful Grandmother's negotiations with her son and his family result in the perpetuation of the very system that represses women in the family. The result of the favouritism for sons sustained by the traditional patriarchal family is the creation of what has been described as the 'uterine family', in which women are able to have influence by strengthening the mother-child bond and instilling in male offspring a "fierce loyalty and devotion to them."[71] As it is the relationship with the male child that gives access to power and influence, the (grand)mother in the uterine family is compelled to strengthen bonds with her sons rather than with her daughters. This has a profound effect on intergenerational women as they find themselves caught in a cycle of oppression, propagated by their mothers and then subsequently adopted by themselves when they become

[69] Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation, and Conflict," 100.
[70] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 68.
[71] Del Castillo, "Gender and its Discontinuities," 214.

mothers in turn. Castillo and Cisneros' narratives explore the consequences of the persistence of these traditions with particular regard for the destructive effects on relationships between women. The concept of the uterine family was first proposed by Margery Wolf in relation to Taiwanese families in her 1972 article 'Uterine Families and the Women's Community.'[72] In Wolf's account, the uterine family is the small, cohesive unit that centres on the mother. Wolf describes the unsteady relationship a daughter has in the uterine family, side-lined as she is by the needs of her brother from whom the mother ultimately obtains stability. When the daughter is ritually cut off from her biological family through marriage, the now daughter-in-law must compete with the bonds her mother-in-law has built with her son, now the daughter-in-law's husband. To regain a sense of belonging, the daughter-in-law must therefore aim to build her own uterine family.

In *Caramelo*, the Awful Grandmother attempts to set up a version of the uterine family, in which, by strengthening the mother-son relationship, the mother attempts to destroy her son Inocencio's relationship with the other women in his life. This is particularly evident when the Awful Grandmother meddles in Inocencio and Zoila's marriage in her efforts to expose Zoila as a 'bad woman' who will tear apart the precious mother-son bond. Through lessons of loyalty and devotion she has instilled in her son over time, the Awful Grandmother exerts great influence over Inocencio and attempts to undermine his relationship with his wife. On holiday in Acapulco (the same trip that the Awful Grandmother has negotiated her place on), the Awful Grandmother reveals to Zoila that Inocencio has been unfaithful in the past and had a child with another woman. Part of the Awful Grandmother's motivations for this revelation may be to break apart Zoila and Inocencio's relationship and thus re-establish herself as the central woman in her son's life. When Zoila confronts her husband Inocencio refuses to respond and she attacks him, the Awful Grandmother protects and shields him from her "*trancazos* [blows]".[73] Zoila jumps out of the car while it is still moving and runs away. When the family finally catch up with her, Inocencio is confronted with a choice between his mother and his wife as each shouts across him, starting with Zoila:

> – Inocencio, if you let that cow turd in our car, you can forget about ever seeing me or your kids again. Put her on a bus with her address pinned on her slip for all I care.

[72] Marjory Wolf, "Uterine Families and the Women's Community," *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 32-42.
[73] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 83.

> […] – What stupidities you talk. My son would never dare to put his own mother on a bus, you little *cualquiera* [hussy]. […]
> – Well, I'm not getting in that car with you even if they tie you on the luggage rack. You're a witch, I hate you!
> […] – *Mijo*, [says the Grandmother] you'll have to choose... Her… […] Or me.[74]

The choice that the Awful Grandmother gives to Inocencio at the end of this argument is the central conflict of the uterine family setup. For in the Awful Grandmother's uterine family, Zoila is a threat; she is someone who can undermine the loyalty of Inocencio that the Awful Grandmother has worked hard to secure. The Awful Grandmother wants to secure her central position in Inocencio's life by destroying his relationship with his wife who threatens to setup her own, new, uterine family. The Awful Grandmother recognises that Zoila, as Inocencio's wife and the mother of his children, is in a position to usurp her place as the central female figure in her son's life. Thus, the Awful Grandmother here expresses a deep rooted fear that Zoila will destroy the only stability left for a woman in her position.

The Awful Grandmother herself may have experienced the ostracism of marrying into a uterine family and fought hard to win over the influence of her husband from her own mother-in-law. As Louise Lamphere posits "[women's] strategies revolve around "working through men," either their husbands or their sons. Women's interests never coincide; competition and conflict are to be expected."[75] The key word here is 'strategies', a word Kandiyoti also uses in her article 'Bargaining with Patriarchy.' Kandiyoti's article acknowledges the manoeuvring required by women in order to survive. Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'strategy' as the "art of a commander-in-chief; the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign."[76] The word originates from the Greek 'strategus' meaning "office or command of a general" and is specifically connected to military office.[77] In more recent times, the word has evolved to include fields outwith the military and more generally is used in "circumstances of competition or conflict."[78] Both definitions acknowledge the skill and expertise required to successfully implement tactics to achieve success. While these women perhaps do not have the authority of a commander-

[74] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 85-6.
[75] Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation, and Conflict," 105.
[76] *OED*, s.v. "strategy," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191319.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

in-chief, they nonetheless endeavour to use what influence they do have, as mothers to their sons, to ensure the security of their own uterine family. In so doing, women often perpetuate the cycle as they will be forced to favour the needs of their sons to secure their own future under the rules of patriarchy.

On the other hand, Wolf also describes the "ambiguity of a man's position in relation to the uterine families," alluding to the potential undermining of the authority and power of the patriarchal husband.[79] This implies that the mother-son relationship could result in the erosion of the patriarchal configuration of the family through stronger female-male relationships that reject the need for a father figure. However, in *Caramelo*, the uterine family propagated by the Awful Grandmother strengthens the mother-son relationship between the Awful Grandmother and Inocencio, while continuing to perpetuate the patriarchal male power by undermining all other female relationships. This is apparent in the scene discussed above in which the argument is shut down when Inocencio orders his wife and mother to stop, "Quiet! Stop already. Both of you! Father orders."[80] Thus the Awful Grandmother does less to destabilise the authority and power of the patriarch and more to ensure her own power and influence within the family at the expense of, in this case, her daughter-in-law, Zoila. In the case of the Reyes family depicted in *Caramelo*, therefore, the uterine family can only be a partial model because, as Del Castillo posits, it can only be sustained for as long as the contradiction between simultaneously undermining patriarchal power and depending on it remains unthreatened. This contradiction requires the balance of a group of elder women (mothers) having control over men (sons); a balance that is compromised when a son chooses to marry.[81]

Tragically lost in the creation of a uterine family is the potentially meaningful relationship between mothers and their daughters. The reliance on sons requires mothers to sacrifice their relationships with their daughters. Furthermore, this reliance is multi-faceted and, depending on circumstances, can be financial, logistical (i.e. relating to mobility and access to services), domestic, and cultural. The (grand)mothers are compelled to sacrifice their relationships with their daughters because of a patriarchal system that limits their power and control so that they seek to secure influence

[79] Wolf, "Uterine Families," 36; see also Lu Hwei-syin, "Women's Self-Growth Groups and Empowerment of the "Uterine Family" in Taiwan," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica* 71 (1991), 29-62.
[80] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 86.
[81] Del Castillo, "Gender and its Discontinuities," 25.

vicariously through their relationships with their sons. In a patriarchal context, the relationship between mother and daughter is "charged with ambiguities" because of the lack of significant opportunities for women outside the confines of the familial roles of wife, mother, and daughter.[82] In *Caramelo*, amidst the insults and condemnations of an argument between the Awful Grandmother and her daughter (Norma, the "pebble in her shoe" mentioned above), Cisneros tenderly and agonisingly writes that her daughter "has only wanted what the Grandmother has wanted. Love. Is that too much to ask one's mother?"[83] With these three sentences, Cisneros comes to the centre of the tragedy of losing the mother-daughter bond in a culture obsessed and driven by male-dominance. The Grandmother's 'Awful' prefix is dropped as these two women become, just that, two women whose relationship has been poisoned by rules and unmanageable expectations. In her 1973 work *Beyond God the Father*, Mary Daly highlights this destruction of the mother-daughter relationship stating that "mothers in our culture are cajoled into killing off the self-actualization of their daughters, and daughters learn to hate them for it, instead of seeing the real enemy."[84] In a social context in which women are characterised as "engaged in a war among themselves over men" and "incapable of sustained friendships with each other" both Amá and the Awful Grandmother lose out on a relationship with their daughters (and daughter-in-law).[85] In her attempt to create a uterine family for herself, the Awful Grandmother puts herself in direct competition with Zoila, underscoring that women living with a patriarchal structure "are encouraged to view the other as enemy rather than ally."[86] In writing these conflictive and competitive relationships, Cisneros and Castillo reveal how patriarchal structures maintain a hierarchy in which the female is subsumed in the male through the disruption of relationships between women, relationships that if allowed to flourish threaten the patriarchal hierarchy.

Similarly, Carmen, in *Peel My Love*, realises that her relationship with her mother has been inhibited because of their confined roles that have stifled any meaningful relationship between them. However, in this case, it is a realisation that not only lightens the burden on Carmen of having been the "defective daughter" but also starts a process of acknowledgment of her own agency in a life literally crippled by patriarchal expectation.[87] The revelation is that she:

[82] Annie O. Eysturoy, *Daughters of Self-Creation: The Contemporary Chicana Novel* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 116-17.
[83] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 263.
[84] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985), 149.
[85] Anne Cranny-Francis, *et al.*, *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 28.
[86] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 14-15.
[87] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 108.

> [must] let go of the guilt for having failed her [mother] now, failed her so well without even trying, without even knowing how I did it, while she still sleeps soundly in the next room. And the following morning I come to terms with myself, the defective daughter that I am, inside and out, and realize that if I have not always felt Amá's love, I've loved myself enough for the two of us.[88]

Castillo thus focuses on the power and determination of Carmen's character who, despite her mother's disapproval and censure, fulfils her own self, for herself and by herself. As an independent woman who has avoided involvement in the mother/daughter plot and escaped the travails of in-fighting in a uterine family, Carmen embarks on self-love. Yet it is still her relationship with her mother that has helped Carmen come to this point. Seeing the way her mother lived her life, a life of sacrifice and little love, crystallises the reality for Carmen. In this way, Castillo makes space for a positive outcome from the fraught relationship between mother and daughter, representing what Rita Bode calls a "muted maternal feminism."[89] Bode argues that maternal figures that do not themselves live feminist lives can positively impact the lives of their daughters, stating that, "they display a muted feminism that leads them to recognize and nurture, consciously as well as instinctively, the possibilities for independence and self-fulfillment in their daughters."[90] Amá, with her perhaps unconscious awareness of her own unrealised potential, displays a muted feminism that leads Carmen to understand her own possibilities for independence, allowing her to "come to terms with [herself]."[91] Carmen also acknowledges and admires her mother's "indomitable will to live"; a will that has clearly been passed on to her daughter.[92] It is the comparison between her own life and that of her mother that allows Carmen to choose to move away from the stifling life her mother has, unsuccessfully, tried to instruct her in.

Thus, despite the patriarchal behaviour often exhibited by women of this familial generation, Castillo also highlights their strength. In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, for example, she argues that they are "formidable in the sense of prevailing over every kind of seemingly insurmountable obstacle that

[88] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 108-9.
[89] Rita Bode, "Mother to Daughter: Muted Maternal Feminism in the Fiction of Sandra Cisneros," *Textual Mothers/Maternal Texts: Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literatures*, ed. by Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O'Reilly (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010).
[90] Ibid., 287.
[91] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 108-9.
[92] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 96.

society can impose on its members."[93] In the same way, in *Peel My Love*, Amá is described as having "endless reserve".[94] Castillo and Cisneros do not condemn the (grand)mothers of the family, rather they critique the patriarchal system that compels them to undermine their relationships with their daughters. In their writing they subvert the view that the limitation of women is the fault of the mother, rather than the result of the patriarchal influence on women's in the family.[95] Amá and the Awful Grandmother negotiate within a script that defines, limits, and inflects their options, thus restricting their ability to promote anything more than the role of wife and mother to their daughters.[96] They must teach their daughters the tricks of survival in a society that values them less than their brothers, husbands, fathers, and sons. The hierarchy of the patriarchal family setup relies on maintenance of the status quo, and under these conditions, those at the "higher levels can 'buy off' those at the lower levels by offering them power over those still lower."[97] Thus women 'betray' the other women in the family in an attempt to negotiate their own place within the familial hierarchy.

Participation in the Patriarchal Game: Negotiations for Survival

In the figures of Amá and the Awful Grandmother, Castillo and Cisneros portray women who strengthen and perpetuate the strength of the Mexican American family and in doing so also serve as gatekeepers of traditional patriarchal culture.[98] So it may seem that the women of this generation live as "[intermediaries] for men but never as […] active agent[s] of [their] own [lives] or that of [their] descendants."[99] Kafka argues that women who behave in this way, do so "in order to do the right thing, according to how their gatekeepers indoctrinated them when they themselves were young into the values they have internalized and now embody."[100] The behaviours adopted by the Awful Grandmother and Amá are part of an intergenerational transmission of patriarchal culture that is instilled in the traditional family framework. Yet reading these characters through the lens of negotiation, a negotiation that emphasises agency, it is possible to uncover the resistance in their

[93] Castillo, *Massacre*, 187.
[94] Castillo, *Peel My Love*, 119.
[95] Phillips, *Beyond the Myths*, 5.
[96] Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 285.
[97] Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage," 11.
[98] Vicki L. Ruíz, ""Star Struck": Acculturation, Adolescence, and the Mexican American Woman, 1920-50," *Building with Our Hands*, 115.
[99] Eliana Ortega, "Poetic Discourse of the Puerto Rican Women in the U.S.: New Voices of Anaconian Liberation," *Breaking Boundaries*, 127-28.
[100] Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women*, 13.

actions and show that Amá and the Awful Grandmother are more than just agents of patriarchal tradition. In a social context that enforces the subordination of women to men, negotiations are beset with obstacles because of unequal gender relations. With this in mind, the concept of negotiating feminisms in the family must take into account the realities for women of this generation who oftentimes appear to be acquiescing to the status quo but are in fact undertaking subtle feminist negotiations within a system that denies them agency. In Ann Snitow's essay 'A Gender Diary,' this idea of 'restricted' negotiation is explored. Although Snitow's reflections do not include the Chicana experience, her ideas resonate with the theory of negotiation that is explored in this chapter. Snitow observes that women negotiate gender on a daily basis, stating that "[from] moment to moment [women] perform subtle psychological and social negotiations."[101] Snitow's critical juxtapositioning of feminist goals and the daily realities of an historically oppressive gender system can be used effectively to understand the seemingly anti-feminist behaviours of women of this familial generation. In the traditionally oppressive familial system these Mexican American (grand)mothers are compelled to negotiate their places, and the places of their children, with certain imposed restrictions. In this way, the daily realities experienced by these women seem to push against the potential for feminist goals. Yet within the context of an oppressive social system, the subtle negotiations of women seen in the writings of Castillo and Cisneros can be read as feminist acts. These acts, when understood in the context of the Mexican American family, ensure the survival of both the (grand)mothers and their sons and daughters in a hostile environment.

Through the characters of Amá and the Awful Grandmother, both Castillo and Cisneros recognise the importance of grounding the behaviours of the (grand)mother figures in their specific contexts. The oppression of Mexican American women, both within the patriarchal family framework and in a racist, classist, and sexist society, means that opportunities for negotiation are severely restricted. As Judith Gerson and Nancy Peiss candidly state "given their relative lack of structural power, women have fewer resources with which to negotiate, experience fewer situations in which they can set up negotiations, and derive fewer advantages from their negotiations."[102] For the Mexican American woman this is amplified as the context in which the Awful Grandmother and Amá find themselves in the United States is one of hostility towards people of Mexican heritage. People of this generation were part of a massive movement of individuals and families who came to the United States in the

[101] Ann Snitow, "A Gender Diary," *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed. by Marianna Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), 9.
[102] Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness: Reconceptualizing Gender Relations," *Social Problems* 32 (4) (1985): 323.

early part of the twentieth century. George Sánchez records that approximately one and a half million Mexicans migrated northward between 1900 and 1930, making Mexico one of the largest single sources of (im)migration to the United States.[103] This large influx of people caused tension and many (im)migrants were made to feel unwelcome: signs reading "No Mexicans Allowed" were not uncommon in the early twentieth century, right into the 1950s.[104] David E. Hayes-Bautista, and Jorge Chapa note that domestic policy regarding Mexicans and Mexican Americans at this time was "viciously exclusionary" as demonstrated by the massive roundups and deportations of 'Mexican-looking persons', school segregation, and the denial of service in private institutions.[105] Thus, for the Chicana and Mexican American woman, as with many other women of colour, there is a further negotiation on ethnic terms required. The combined effect of these anti-Mexican policies disrupted Mexican and Mexican American communities, and all were "made keenly aware of the fragility of their social position."[106] Sánchez remarks that the so-called 'Zoot Suit Riots' in Los Angeles in 1943 were only the most outward manifestation of the racism people of this generation experienced.[107] The Awful Grandmother and Amá are part of the generation entering adulthood during the late 1930s and early 1940s who were "acutely sensitive to America's lack of tolerance."[108]

To succeed in the United States, these mothers also had to teach their daughters how to survive in a racist as well as patriarchal society. In her essay 'La Chicana', Elizabeth Martínez puts forward the concept that the Chicana "suffers from a triple oppression" comprised of racism, imperialism, and

[103] Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 18. For more on the push and pull factors of this migration, see David G. Gutiérrez, "An Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States," National Park Service, www.nps.gov/history/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/immigration.htm.

[104] Although the signs may have been taken down, the racist opinions that fuelled such sentiments are still very much present to this day,

[105] David E. Hayes-Bautista, and Jorge Chapa, "Latino Terminology: Conceptual Bases for Standardized Terminology," *American Journal of Public Health* 77 (1) (1987): 63. For more on segregations of Mexican and Mexican American children in schools, see: Vicki L. Ruíz, "We always tell our children they are Americans: *Méndez v. Westminster* and the California road to *Brown v. Board of Education*," *The College Board Review* 200 (2003): 21–27; Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr, "The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation, 1950s to 1980s," *Journal of Latinos and Education* 4 (4) (2005): 221-36; and Richard R. Valencia, "The Mexican American Struggle for Equal Educational Opportunity in *Méndez v. Westminster*: Helping Pave the Way for *Brown v. Board of Education*," *Teachers College Record* 107 (3) (2005): 389-423. For details of the Mexican repatriation campaigns of the 1930s, see Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

[106] Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican* American, 13.

[107] Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican* American, 14.

[108] Ibid. This intolerance of Mexican Americans, and many other communities of colour, has not disappeared from portions of the American population and is today seen manifested in the hate speech employed by the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump and his supporters. For one example of many, see: Tim Rogers, "67 Hispanic intellectuals blast Trump's 'hate speech,' ask voters to 'no longer tolerate his absurdities'," *Fusion.Net*, http://fusion.net/story/226400/donald-trump-boycotted-by-hispanic-intellectuals/.

sexism.[109] Mexican American mothers, therefore, must undertake their negotiations in the family in a hostile environment. Castillo expresses the oppression of Mexican American women in *Massacre of the Dreamers*, stating that

> we are daughters of women who have been subject to a social system – compounded doubly by Mexican traditions and U.S. WASP dominance that prohibited them from opportunities that may have challenged their creative and intellectual potential in more ways than being wife, mother, and assembly line worker.[110]

The result of this triple oppression on women of this (grand)mother generation is an inability to push through institutional and cultural barriers imposed on women. It is the combination of forces working against women of colour that blocks their potential. As Chicana scholar Denise Segura stresses

> consideration of any one aspect of the triple oppression of women of color is insufficient to explain the pervasiveness of their social inequality. Triple oppression, then, refers to the interplay of class, race, and gender, whose cumulative effects place women of color in subordinate social and economic positions relative to men of color and the majority white population.[111]

Through evaluating the roles patriarchy, racism, and imperialism play in the lives of these women, the Chicana writer can begin to understand the roots of her mother's and grandmother's behaviour.

The potentially destructive nature of these kinds of maternal/filial relationships is particularly threatening among communities of colour. It is necessary to focus not only on the power of patriarchy in dictating the role of women, but also "power and powerlessness [of women of colour] within an array of social institutions that frame their lives."[112] While the theoretical frameworks proposed by Mary Daly, Marianna Hirsch, and Adrienne Rich, are useful in discussing the ways in

[109] Elizabeth Martínez, "La Chicana," *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 32.
[110] Castillo, *Massacre*, 188.
[111] Denise Segura, "Chicanas and Triple Oppression in the Labor Force," *National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Annual Conference*, San José State University (1984), http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/1984/Proceedings/9/.
[112] Collins, "Shifting the Center," 178.

which motherhood is a patriarchal institution, they too often ignore the critical influences of class and race. As Patricia Hill Collins underlines, while these theories of motherhood are valid perspectives, they are only partial as they come from an Anglo point of view and "cannot be seen as *theories* of motherhood generalizable to all women."[113] It is through understanding the whole array of social institutions affecting Mexican American family life that the reasons why these grandmothers may act in these ways is made apparent. In the face of Anglo oppression and cultural dislocation, *la familia* has often been depicted as a place of support and stability in a time of great upheaval. The strengthening of familial ties in the face of an unfamiliar society – both in the sense of unknown, and non-family oriented – is a theme present in much writing by people of colour in the United States. Collins emphasises that racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context for people of colour.[114] In the face of these converging oppressive forces, some women deem it more important to maintain relationships within the family even if they limit women's options. So the negotiations that these (grand)mothers perform are constrained by an overall patriarchal framework, that in the case of Mexican American women is also racist, and the result is therefore not necessarily one that will overturn the system as a whole. In fact, their negotiations may permit the system to continue in what Gerson and Peiss describe as "dynamic stasis" in which women reify the structural boundaries that already exist.[115] So the patriarchal system may be strengthened and the rules do not change from generation to generation. Carla Trujillo emphasises the negative effects this has on all women who take part in the patriarchal system, stating that "women who participate in the privileges of a male sexual alliance may often do so at the cost of their own sense of self, since they must often subvert their needs, voice, intellect, and personal development in these alliances."[116] The sexual alliance is important to the perpetuation of this system, so too, however, is the familial alliance. The different relationships between mothers and their sons, and mothers and their daughters, as well as the subsequent intergenerational effects of these types of mothering practices are profoundly important.

Yet, rather than simply blame these women, Castillo's and Cisneros' writing provokes discussion of the underlying reasons for mothers to pass on the lessons, or tricks, of patriarchy to their daughters.

[113] Ibid., 185.
[114] Ibid., 173.
[115] Gerson and Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness," 323.
[116] Carla Trujillo, "Chicana Lesbians: Fear and Loathing in the Chicano Community," *Chicana Critical Issues*, ed. Norma Alarcón *et al.* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1993), 119.

In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo stresses the importance of acknowledging that children are being taught in a world "that women did not create. The impoverished, the working poor, and single mothers have lifestyles with their children that most did not elect intentionally. In fact, many mothers did not get pregnant intentionally."[117] This recognition is crucial in understanding the actions of these mothers towards their children, sons, daughters, and daughters-in-law. Indeed, in *Caramelo*, Cisneros further complicates the character of the Awful Grandmother through her relationship with her granddaughter, Celaya, as will be discussed in chapter three. Alicia Gaspar de Alba acknowledges the importance of this realisation in relation to her own family experience. She recalls that:

> At the time, the historical materialist facts of my grandmother's life did not mean anything to me, certainly they did not explain the way that mothers and grandmothers are prime collaborators with their own oppression, not of their own choice, but because of a lack of knowledge and agency that are the very consequence of patriarchal proscriptions of the female body.[118]

Gaspar de Alba stresses the imposition of patriarchal rules of society upon the family setup. For Gaspar de Alba, although mothers and grandmothers appear to be "prime collaborators" in their own, and by association and interaction their daughters', oppression, it is the "patriarchal proscriptions" that are fundamentally responsible. While the continuation and preservation of patriarchal customs and behaviours does have a detrimental effect on the development of daughters, this has to be understood within the context of a society that places women, and women of colour in particular, in the lowest position in the social hierarchy. The strategies employed, therefore, are done within an oppressive system and are sometimes tactics for survival as much as for the continuance of traditional practices.

Furthermore, women of this first (inter)generation rely heavily on their familial roles as they are marginalised in wider society and the late-adulthood period for women is often characterised by poverty and isolation. As a result of this, they are compelled to adopt survival strategies in order to secure their position in the one place they have some influence, the family. Without the support network of family, these women are exposed to a largely hostile environment, and, as Gail Sheehy

[117] Castillo, *Massacre*, 194-5.
[118] Gaspar de Alba, *[Un]Framing*, 6.

states, older women are "not so much imperiled by heart attacks as by widowhood."[119] Facio's study of older Chicana/o people underlines the subsequent importance of survival mechanisms for women of this generation, underlining that it is vital for these women to find a place in the family as a means of survival.[120] Although the traditional family setup is frequently a site of repression for women, it is also the only option remaining for some women. Thus it is often necessity that dictates the behaviours of these women as they insinuate themselves within a familial system that ultimately oppresses them. In Cisneros' and Castillo's writing it is made clear that this not only affects their own sense of self but also has a profound impact on intergenerational relationships within the family. These women must operate within the patriarchal system and are forced to initiate their daughters within this system as well. Furthermore, as discussed above, they often adopt fiercely patriarchal behaviours to protect their fragile situation in the family by securing their place in the extended family through the male line. As men control the patriarchal family, these women must choose to obey the male-dominant hierarchy and bind themselves to its most powerful members in order to fortify their own positions.

It is thus the institution of motherhood as dictated by patriarchal culture that compels women to perpetuate misogynist traditions rather than the individual women indoctrinated and inculcated in the system. Tina Benítez attests that "[she] does not blame her mother […] instead she sees her mother as part of a bigger picture – as part of a patriarchal culture that needs to be changed." [121] Benítez's understanding of the frameworks under which her mother lives disrupts the mother-blaming culture that is ingrained in patriarchal structures.[122] As discussed in the introduction, in the Mexican and Mexican American context this is particularly true for the treatment of Malintzín, Mexico's ultimate "bad" mother. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky acknowledge that the "bad" mother "serves as a scapegoat, a repository for social or physical ills that resist easy explanation or solution."[123] Thus it is important to look further than any individual "bad" mother and explore the socio-political and cultural frameworks that operate to oppress women in the family. Yet blaming the mother for the failings of her children is also an undercurrent of some feminist writing that assumes the role of the mother as all-powerful. Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto criticise feminist writers such as Nancy Friday, Judith Arcana, and Dorothy Dinnerstein for describing the

[119] Gail Sheehy, *Passages* (New York: Bantam Books, 1978), 498.
[120] Elisa Facio, "Gender and the Life Course: A Case Study of Chicana Elderly," *Building With Our Hands*, 219-20.
[121] Tina Benítez, "Mother Daughter Relationship," 28.
[122] See Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, ed. *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).
[123] Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, *"Bad"* Mothers, 22.

mother as omnipotent when it comes to the perceived successes or failures of her children.[124] Chodorow and Contratto point out that "feminist writing on motherhood assumes an all-powerful mother who, because she is totally responsible for how her children turn out, is blamed for everything from her daughter's limitations to the crisis of human existence."[125] This can be extended to the Chicana mother in particular as she is a woman operating not only in a sexist society, but also in a racist and classist society that stifles her development institutionally, socially, and politically.

Certainly, when applied to the mothering context of women of colour, the danger of blaming an all-powerful mother is particularly compelling. Collins addresses this directly when she argues against the stereotyping of black mothers as matriarchs. She contests that using the term matriarchy in relation to African American families ignores and erases a history of oppression in which the black family had no power at all. In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2002), Collins emphasises that the positions of women and men within slave political economies "make it unlikely that either patriarchal or matriarchal domination could take root."[126] Although not sharing the same enslaved past, Chicanas, as a result of their oppression as women of colour, as well as the influential role of the Catholic Church's strict beliefs on motherhood, cannot be called 'matriarchs' either. As Collins states, matriarchy assumes that someone must "rule" in order for households to function effectively, and this rule under patriarchy is so limited for women that it cannot be labelled thus without qualification. Jill McLean Taylor, Carol Gilligan, and Amy M. Sullivan conclude that the tragedy of the mother-blaming view, according to which women have influence without power, is that this view "is believed and internalized by many women, who then see themselves as "bad" mothers if their lives and the lives of their children do not measure up to an image of perfection that is in fact impossible to achieve."[127] Thus a wider consideration of the context in which these (grand)mothers are parenting is crucial in gaining a more nuanced understanding of their strategies for mothering. In the work of Castillo and Cisneros, there is an understanding and awareness of the roles that women of this generation, and in traditional families of subsequent generations, were forced to play.

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[124] Judith Arcana, *Our Mothers' Daughters* (Berkeley: Shameless Hussy Press, 1979); Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); and Nancy Friday, *My Mother/My Self* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977).
[125] Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto, "The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother," *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, ed. Thorne, Barrie (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 192.
[126] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 52.
[127] Jill McLean Taylor, Carol Gilligan, and Amy M. Sullivan, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 74.

When understood in context, the negotiations of Amá and the Awful Grandmother are feminist acts that reveal strength and resilience. As Elizabeth Brown-Guillory states, "a close reading of texts by women of color invariably leads to the discovery of mothers who go to extremes to protect their children, particularly daughters, from forces in society that would destroy them."[128] The Mexican American (grand)mother's attempts to train her daughters in the ways of an unequal and prejudicial environment and the strength that they demonstrate in surviving such hostile circumstances can therefore be better understood. Cisneros and Castillo challenge how women have been subservient to men and complicit in transmitting the rules of these more powerful men.[129] They are among a group of Chicana writers who are "riddled with ambivalence" about these (grand)mother characters.[130] Amá and the Awful Grandmother play a crucial role in perpetuating patriarchal culture, acting as cultural censors and "guides in the prison house of adult womanhood."[131] And yet they also demonstrate fortitude and resistance in their survival and the survival of their families. They carry the burden of responsibility for upholding cultural values, while also finding ways to resist those who oppress them.[132] In 'Mi Madre, Mi Hija y Yo', Chicana writer Michelle Tévez writes of her mother's great strength in dealing with the murder of her husband, the death of her son at an early age, and the challenges and hardships of migration to the United States. Tévez's mother was often very strict with her daughter and adopted traditional mothering practices to maintain family stability. Tévez acknowledges that these struggles, and the strength required to overcome them, tarnished their mother-daughter relationship, disclosing that "it was also this very strength that became the barrier that kept her from getting too close to her daughters."[133] Tévez recognises the strength of her mother and understands why her mother treated her daughters as she did. The barrier between mothers and their daughters is part of the patriarchal oppression of women in the family. Yet Gerson and Peiss note that "changes in consciousness and shifts in boundaries arising from negotiations, however small, may have real and direct consequences in people's lives, even if they do not result in a major change in women's status or in the system of gender relations."[134] That is to say that while the negotiations of these women may not result in the abolition of the

[128] Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, "Disrupted Motherlines: Mothers and Daughters in a Genderized, Sexualized, and Racialization World," *Women of Color*, ed. Brown-Guillory, 188.
[129] See also: Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 38-39.
[130] Kafka, *(Out)Classed Women*, 10.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Leen and Thornton, ed., *International Perspectives*, 7.
[133] Michelle Téllez, "Mi Madre, Mi Hija y Yo: Chicana Mothering through Memory, Culture and Place," *Latina/Chicana Mothering*, 59.
[134] Gerson and Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness," 323.

patriarchal family order, they do affect the next generation of women. So, although some daughters perpetuate the behaviours exhibited by their own mothers, there are many women who refuse to participate in their own repression and that of their daughters and, as will be explored in the following chapter, break away from the traditional mould.

Chapter Two

The Mothers: Negotiating Feminist Activism in/with the Family

> I have found a sense of place among la Chicanada. It is not always a safe place, but it is unequivocally the original *familial place* from which I am compelled to write, which I reach toward in my audiences, and which serves as my source of inspiration, voice, and lucha [fight].[1]
> Cherríe Moraga

Unlike their (grand)mothers before them, the next familial generation of women characters in Castillo and Cisneros' writings endeavour to operate outside of the stifling and belittling confines of patriarchal womanhood and develop a sense of fluidity in their roles within the family. Understanding the family as a site of social activism is an integral part of Chicana feminism and is explored in the work of Cisneros and Castillo. This chapter examines the ways in which characters in Cisneros' short story, 'Woman Hollering Creek' (1991), and Castillo's novels *So Far From God* (1993) and *The Guardians* (2007) use alternative familial networks to negotiate their roles as women in the family and society more widely. Through negotiations in the traditional patriarchal framework of the family, the family can become a space for collective empowerment and social change. As Cherríe Moraga states, as quoted in the epigraph, from her essay 'Queer Aztlán,' although family is not always a safe place it is the place from which she is compelled to write.[2] She cites this "familial place" as the source of her inspiration as a Chicana feminist, and as the place from which she raises her voice for the *lucha* (fight) of social activism. Recognising the accuracy of Moraga's statement, Richard T. Rodríguez argues that her declaration "amplifies [the] family relationship and recasts it within the public sphere as a strategy for contesting the inequalities" faced by the Mexican American community.[3] The family thus becomes a site of social activism. The collaborative negotiating strategies employed by women of this generation exemplify how the family can become a space of feminist empowerment. As such, rather than being compelled to negotiate their roles within the rules dictated by patriarchal familial life, through resistance and contention, the second set of women analysed in this thesis set out to reclaim their place in the family on more explicitly feministic terms. These women negotiate in ways that link the personal and the political and as

[1] Cherríe Moraga, "Queer Aztlán: The Reformation of the Chicano Tribe," *The Last Generation* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 147 (emphasis added).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Richard T. Rodríguez, "Making Queer *Familia*," *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter (New York: Routledge, 2013), 325.

feminist activists they live out their commitment to social justice by developing alternative roles as wives and mothers.

Through their social activism, this second generation of women negotiate change in the familial structure to create spaces of resistance within the family. In doing so they refuse the role of "custodians or gatekeepers" of patriarchal dominance that rigidly determines and limits the lives of Chicana mothers and daughters.[4] An important part of this negotiation and political activism is collaboration and the use of collaboration as a negotiating tool. Unlike the women discussed in the previous chapter who adopt competitive negotiating tools such as those found in the uterine family set up, the women of this generation use cooperative and collaborative tools as a method of negotiating not only their place in the family, but also for social change in the larger community. As Deborah Kolb and Judith Williams argue in their study of everyday negotiation, collaboration can be a useful tool in negotiation when the collective needs of the group are centralised rather than individual demands.[5] In their writing, Cisneros and Castillo explore the ways that women can adopt these collaborative and collective techniques in order to negotiate and thereby create social change. In 'Woman Hollering Creek' by Cisneros and Castillo's *So Far From God* and *The Guardians*, the characters have social activist roles in the family that not only affect their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters, but also as community members.

In their writing, Cisneros and Castillo reveal characters that engage with 'activist mothering' as a way to resist traditional role expectations in the family. Activist mothering is a concept that encompasses a wide range of woman's work in the family and in the community.[6] In her introduction to *The 21st Century Motherhood Movement: Mothers Speak Out on Why We Need to Change the World and How to Do It*, Andrea O'Reilly explains that 'mothering' refers to "women's lived experiences of childrearing as they both conform to and/or resist the patriarchal institution of motherhood and its oppressive ideology."[7] Here O'Reilly recognises the multifaceted nature of women's activism in the

[4] Kafka, *(Out)Classes Women*, 10.
[5] Deborah M. Kolb and Judith Williams, *Everyday Negotiation: Navigating the Hidden Agendas in Bargaining* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 195.
[6] The term 'activist mothering' was coined by Nancy Naples in her 1988 work, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War on Poverty* (New York: Routledge, 1988).
[7] Andrea O'Reilly, "Introduction: Maternal Activism as Matricentric Feminism: The History, Ideological Frameworks, Political Strategies and Activist Practices of the 21st Century Motherhood Movement," *The 21st Century Motherhood Movement: Mothers Speak Out on Why We Need to Change the World and How to Do It*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly (Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2011), 2.

family and proposes a theoretical framework that she names 'matricentric feminism.'[8] This theory combines aspects of maternalism, liberal feminism, and feminist care theories into "a distinct motherhood politic and theory specific to its twenty-first century context."[9] Matricentric feminism recognises that mothers (and motherhood organisations) tend to blend a variety of activist frameworks in order to pick and choose what strategies and politics work best for their objectives within their contexts.[10] Activist mothering is multifaceted and although it covers a wide range of social issues, the connecting factor across social groups is that women use their roles in the family to engage in social issues and effect change. The adoption of the language of 'activist mothering' to explore the roles of women in the family is particularly useful for scholars interested in the complexity of mothering in a patriarchal and racist context, such as that experienced by Mexican American women. Jessica M. Vasquez recognises that in the Chicana context, activist mothering is necessary when mothers "observe or fear institutional or interpersonal discrimination."[11] Activist mothering therefore is overtly political in its practice.

Traditional definitions of mothering, as simply nurturing work with children who are biologically (or legally) related and cared for within the family unit, fails to capture the mothering of Chicana community members, as well as other marginalised communities.[12] Furthermore, as Nancy Naples remarks, women's community work has often been framed as 'maternalism' or 'social housekeeping' – "a political claims-making strategy that served as a justification for white middle- and upper-income social reformers to transcend the ideological barrier between women's 'proper place' in the home and the so-called public sphere."[13] Historians Seth Koven and Sonya Michel define maternalism as "ideologies and discourses that exalted women's capacity to mother and

[8] O'Reilly, "Introduction," *21st Century Motherhood*, 1-36.
[9] Ibid., 24-25. See also: Judith Stadtman Tucker, "Motherhood and its Discontents: The Political and Ideological Grounding of the 21st Century Mothers Movement," *Mothers Movement Online*, October 23, 2004, http://www.mothersmovement.org/features/Copy/jst_arm_presentation_10-04.pdf.
[10] Susan Conradsen, "Activist Mothering," *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, ed. Nancy Naples *et al.* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 17-19.
[11] Vasquez, "Chicana Mothering in the Twenty-First Century," 27.
[12] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Glenn, Chang, and Forcey, *Mothering*; Linda Gordon, *Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945* (Madison: WI: Institute for Research on Poverty, 1991); Stanlie M. James, "Mothering: A Possible Black Feminist Link to Social Transformation?," *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, ed. Stanlie M. James and Abena P. A. Busia (New York: Routledge, 1993); Mary Pardo, "Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists: Mothers of East Los Angeles," *Frontiers* 11 (1) (1990); and Dorothy Roberts, "Race, Gender, and the Value of Mother's Work," *Social Politics* 2 (1995).
[13] Nancy A. Naples, "Women's Community Activism and Feminist Activist Research," *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*, 23.

applies to society as a whole the values they attached to the role: care, nurturance, and morality."[14] The framing of women's community work as 'maternalist' undermines the work of activist women by reducing their work to solely an extension of their women's roles as mothers. Naples finds that while many women draw on their gender identities to describe their activism, they do not stick to a traditional gender division of labour ideology, nor, crucially, do they believe that all women could unite homogenously as a group of mothers.[15] To unite all women under the umbrella of motherhood denies the important influences of race and class as powerful dimensions in mothering, artificially fusing the mothering experiences of Chicanas with all other mothers living in the United States, not to mention across the world. Thus new, broader descriptions of women's family and community work must be developed. As Chicana/o Studies scholar Mary Pardo emphasises, "the unpaid work that women do in meeting their socially assigned responsibilities extends beyond nurturing and reproducing families: it creates community and the conditions necessary for life."[16]

In their activist negotiations women of this familial generation perform what Anzaldúa terms "*mestiza* consciousness", whereby individuals "speak from a multiplicity of positions."[17] Although not specifically applied by Anzaldúa in the mothering context, this theory can be used to analyse how Chicana women negotiate their role in the family. Indeed, in Cisneros and Castillo's texts, women speaking from a multiplicity of positions is a crucial part of negotiating activism and family life. Felice and Graciela in 'Woman Hollering Creek', Sofi in *So Far From God*, and Tía Regina in *The Guardians* all represent the ways that women negotiate feminist activism and adapt the familial framework. With this in mind, adaptations in the family set up are directly connected to the negotiation techniques employed by these women and correspond with the definition of the term 'adaptation' that describes the process of making something suitable for a new purpose, or to a different context or environment.[18] Furthermore, this is understood as "the action of applying one thing to another or of bringing two things together so as to effect a change in the nature of the objects."[19] In the context of this thesis, therefore, the application of negotiation techniques by

[14] Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, ed., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 4.
[15] Naples, *Community Activism and Feminist*, 23.
[16] Mary Pardo, "Creating Community: Mexican American Women in Eastside Los Angeles," in *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Nancy Naples (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 275.
[17] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 102; and Yarbro-Bejarano, "The Multiple Subject," 65-66.
[18] *OED*, s.v. "adapt," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/2110.
[19] *OED*, s.v. "adaptation," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/2115.

women in the family, effects change on the familial framework itself.[20] In addition, the mestiza consciousness that informs the activist negotiations of Chicana women allows them to break through the strict confines of the prescribed roles of women in the patriarchal family, and uncover alternative mothering practices that benefit women. Cisneros and Castillo write women who engage with the potentialities for those who take part in active feminist/womanist mothering. As the driving forces behind social change in the novels, the women discussed in this chapter live in what Anzaldúa has called the "pluralistic mode", moving beyond binary oppositions in an effort to reconcile the "split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts."[21] This is part of an activist approach to mothering that recognises the danger of accepting and submitting to definitions of motherhood that privilege the traditional and patriarchal framework and "pushes women to dichotomize their lives rather than develop a sense of fluidity across roles, responsibilities, and preferences."[22]

The women characters discussed in this chapter establish alternative strategies for negotiating the mothering role in Chicana culture and Castillo and Cisneros' writing explores this moment of intergenerational transition. Characters in Cisneros' short story 'Woman Hollering Creek' and Castillo's novels *So Far From God* and *The Guardians* demonstrate how women negotiate their commitment to social activism within traditional familial frameworks. They do so by loosening the patriarchal framework and adopting feminist praxes in the family and extended kinship networks. 'Women Hollering Creek' and *So Far From God* were both published in the early 1990s, a time in which Chicana writers "declared independence from the male themes of war, conquest, *carnalismo* (brotherhood) and other public rituals of domination."[23] Focusing on the lives of women, these stories are examples of the feminist Chicana literature of this time, writing that comes out of the social activism of the preceding decade. Published over ten years later, *The Guardians* explores these themes from a new perspective, one heavily influenced by the increasing politicisation of (im)migration across the U.S.-Mexico border. All three texts explore the concept of activist mothering through the negotiation of traditional familial networks. The exploration of alternative family structures within the Mexican American community emphasises the importance of

[20] This is a reciprocal process by which the negotiation techniques employed influence the adaptations, just as the adaptations then influence the types of negotiation techniques employed.
[21] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 101-2.
[22] Denise A. Segura, "Working at Motherhood: Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Mothers and Employment," in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, 227.
[23] Yolanda Flores Niemann, *Chicana Leadership: The Frontiers Reader* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 45.

negotiating extended kinship networks and the central role of women as *comadres* (co-mothers) within these groups. The shift in familial and community frameworks and the reliance on *comadre* networks breaks down traditional power relations within the patriarchal family, particularly between generations of women. Furthermore, through writing about alternative mothering practices Castillo and Cisneros expand definitions of "what constitutes 'resistance,' of what is 'political,' and of who is capable of effecting social change" by focusing on the defiance that characterises women and the "insurgency that erupts as they engage in ongoing battles."[24] For Chicanas, and women of colour more generally, the expansion of traditional definitions of motherhood allows for a richer understanding of negotiations taking place within the family. Patricia Hill Collins develops theories of motherhood that integrate this resistance and these practices are born from the acknowledgement that motherhood "occurs in specific historical situations framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender."[25] Such an understanding of motherhood enriches theorising about the family by disrupting the public/private dichotomy so often imposed on women's work in the family, home, and community. Since work and family have rarely functioned as separate spheres for women of colour, examining the experiences of Chicanas' mothering practices through a feminist lens reveals how interconnected these two spheres are.[26]

The negotiations and adaptations exercised by women of this familial generation are as much about celebrating female kinship as about using tactics necessary to survive in a patriarchal society that consistently denigrates women. Both Cisneros and Castillo work to expand definitions of motherhood and womanhood in their writing, and in doing so explore new ways of thinking about the role of women in the family providing examples of survival tactics adopted by women – albeit tactics that are at times only successful to a relative degree. Cisneros and Castillo engage in and with Chicana feminisms that are, as Alvina Quintana states, "interested in scrutinizing the assumptions that root her own cultural influences, unpacking so called traditions and political institutions that shape patriarchal ways of seeing."[27] Thus, the family as a site of social activism is central to Chicana feminisms. In 'Making Queer *Familia*,' Rodríguez emphasises the importance of these adaptations and negotiations taking place in the Mexican American family. He states that 'chosen families' lie at

[24] Theresa Delgadillo, ''Forms of Chicana Feminist Resistance: Hybrid Spirituality in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 44 (4) (1998): 893.
[25] Collins, "Shifting the Center," 173.
[26] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Our Mothers' Grief: Racial Ethnic Women and the Maintenance of Families," *Journal of Family History* 13 (4) (1988): 415-31; and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor: The Intersection of Race, Gender and Class Oppression," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 17 (3) (1985): 86-108.
[27] Quintana, "The Novelist as Ethnographer," 74.

the heart of Chicana/o politics and that notions of community cannot articulated without signalling their import.[28] In this essay Rodríguez refers to Kath Weston's concept of the 'chosen family' that "undercut[s] procreation's status as a master term imagined to provide the template for all possible kinship relations."[29]

In contrast to the strategies of patriarchal bargaining and the uterine family discussed in chapter one, the mother characters of this second generation adopt practices of collaborative negotiation in their activist mothering. Women's community-based activism breaks down the divisions between the sociological categorisations of 'family', 'work', and 'politics' and reconceptualises these categories, creating an interconnected weave of all three.[30] Mary Pardo's study of Eastside Los Angelinas is exemplary of the disintegration of such rigid categorisations within the Chicana/o community. Pardo found that the gendered natured of women's community work informed the strategies they employed to improve the quality of life in their communities, asserting that the women "implicitly expressed their conception of civic membership as they bridged the spaces between their homes and the community."[31] Unlike the white, middle-class mothers of second-wave feminism who were described by Linda La Rue in 1970 as having suffered "little more than boredom, genteel repression, and dishpan hands," mothering for Chicanas entails taking on multiple and varied roles within the home and the community.[32] Furthermore, this is a distinct difference from the negotiations described in chapter two in which women are forced to work against other women to ensure their place within the family. The practices of activist mothering take away the need to compete with other women in the family by emphasising the shared benefits to be secured through a collectivist approach. As is discussed throughout this chapter, activist mothering serves to redefine the familial framework, they are feminist negotiations that place the needs and concerns of mestiza conscious women at the centre.

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[28] Rodríguez, "Making Queer *Familia*," 325.
[29] Kath Weston, "The Politics of Gay Families," *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, ed. Barrie Thorn and Marilyn Yalom (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 137.
[30] See Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "'If It Wasn't for the Women…': African American Women, Community Work, and Social Change," in *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, ed. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994).
[31] Pardo, "Creating Community," 298.
[32] Linda La Rue, "The Black Movement and Women's Liberation," *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverley Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 164. See also, Eilidh A. B. Hall, "We Called Ourselves 'Feministas:' A Reading of Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*," *History of Women in the Americas* 3 (2015): 77-87.

The Intervention of Feminist Activism in the Patriarchal Family: Negotiating Change in 'Woman Hollering Creek'

Cisneros' short story 'Woman Hollering Creek' in the collection of the same name (1991) provides a useful example of the perpetuating influence of patriarchal conventions in the family on the one hand, and the intervention of feminist activist support on the other. The main characters of the story illustrate the cyclical nature of generational transition and emphasise the idea that mothering practices are not passed on in a linear manner but rather are negotiated through a process of repetition, recycling, and adaptation in each generation. 'Woman Hollering Creek' tells the story of Cleófilas, the 'ideal' Mexican wife who has learned how to be a woman from the *telenovelas* that she devotedly watches. Cleófilas is influenced by the consumer culture presented on television and when she marries Juan Pedro she believes that her new life in Texas will be glamorous and leaves her family home with high hopes. However, in Texas she finds no community or family to support her and lives in isolation without means of independent transportation or her own money. In an attempt to live like the ideal wife of the *telenovelas* she does not complain and soon fulfils her role expectation and bears a son, Juan Pedrito. When her husband becomes abusive, she maintains the role of the *mujer sufrida* (suffering wife), never complaining and always comforting him. During a neo-natal appointment at the clinic, she meets Graciela who offers her an escape from her abusive marriage. Graciela and her friend Felice arrange to help Cleófilas move back to Mexico to live with her family. Thanks to the intervention of these women, Cleófilas is able to get away from the abusive relationship and look after her children back home in Mexico.

In 'Woman Hollering Creek', Cleófilas is an example of a woman who looks to lessons of the previous generation, while Felice and Graciela illustrate the potential to look to new opportunities for women in the Mexican American family. Cleófilas' story reminds us that the lessons learned from a generation of traditional (grand)mothers are not easily avoided. Many daughters carry on the legacy of patriarchal womanhood, continuing to try to live up to the exacting standards of a culture that values virgin mothers and denigrates any and all who fail to meet this impossible archetype. 'Woman Hollering Creek' illustrates both the ways in which the lessons of patriarchy can perpetuate and gives an example of an alternative feminist path. The alternative path portrayed by Cisneros relies on female kinship, undermining the patriarchal structure of the traditional family and the principles that dictate that women ought to be doting wives.

Cleófilas begins her story naively thinking like the heroines of the *telenovelas* and magazines, and many Mexican American women, that "to suffer for love is good."[33] Cleófilas' attitude to this resonate with the traditional gender stereotypes that include the long-suffering woman, preserved and praised within the patriarchal family setup. This outlook is incredibly dangerous and encourages passivity in women, even when a relationship becomes abusive.

> But when the moment came, and he slapped her once, and then again, and again; until the lip split and bled an orchid of blood, she didn't fight back, she didn't break into tears, she didn't run away as she imagined she might when she saw such things in the *telenovelas*.[34]

The repetition of "didn't" emphasises Cleófilas' inability to act, underlining the submissiveness of her position. By listing the things that Cleófilas does not do, Cisneros draws attention to the disconnect between an assumption of resistance and the reality of passivity when confronted with abuse. Yet this passivity cannot be too easily criticised for Cleófilas risks further, potentially life-threatening, violent abuse if she confronts her husband. She also relies entirely upon her husband for her financial and domestic security (with tragic irony as her domestic situation is far from secure). Furthermore, the fact that Cleófilas has witnessed the abuse of women many times before in the *telenovelas* suggests that she has become inured to the violence, it has been normalised by repeated viewing. In this way, Cleófilas' projection of her life narrative is, as Deborah Madsen states, "a romantic fantasy that supports patriarchal structures."[35] Stuck in an abusive marriage, her husband continues to beat her and she continues to tolerate it, treating him like a child when he comes begging for forgiveness and granting it because she sees it as her wifely duty and thus the fulfilment of her role as the long-suffering woman.

In the end, it is women who can rescue Cleófilas; it is through finding help from within the female Mexican American community that she has strength to become an active agent in her own life.

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[33] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 45.
[34] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 47.
[35] Deborah Madsen, "Over Her Dead Body: Talking About Violence Against Women in Recent Chicana Writing," *Violence and Gender in the Globalised World: The Intimate and Extimate*, ed. Sanja Bahun-Radunović and V. G. Julie Rajan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 200.

Unlike the uterine family discussed in chapter one in which women are forced to work against the other women in the family, this takes the form of a negotiation that moves towards a collectivist approach that benefits women rather than making them compete against one another. Cisneros presents communities of women and figures of resistance as "alternatives to the culturally accepted oppression that her characters face."[36] Anna Marie Sandoval states that this is part of Cisneros' "theorizing method" that makes women "aware of their situation and [offers] them new options for living as independent and powerful people."[37] Cleófilas' liberators come in the form of Felice and Graciela – whose names cannot help but be significant, derived as they are from the Latin for happy (*felix, felicis*); and 'kindness' (*gratia*).[38] Cleófilas meets Graciela, a medical technician, at the doctor's surgery where she has an anti-natal appointment. Juan Pedro has already warned his wife to keep quiet about the bruises that cover her body and she is most anxious to please her husband and she dutifully reaffirms that she and their son, "won't make [him] ashamed."[39] Importantly, until this point the narrative has been from Cleófilas' point of view and the reader is compelled to fill in the gaps in her silences to understand the severity of the violence and abuse being inflicted upon her: "No, she won't mention it. She promises. If the doctor asks she can say she fell down from the steps or slipped when she was out in the backyard, slipped out back, she could tell them."[40] So Graciela's third-person description of Cleófilas' injuries interrupts the narrative to give the reader the first clear indication of the abuse that Cleófilas has endured.[41] When she gets to the clinic, Graciela sees the black and blue bruises all over Cleófilas' body and phones her friend Felice to explain the situation and ask for her help to remove Cleófilas and her son from this abusive marriage. Through this example of female-lead caregiving, Cisneros insists on establishing that other women are a support for one another instead of in competition with one another. Felice agrees to deliver Cleófilas to the bus stop with her son so she can escape back to Mexico and away from her cruel husband.

It is important to mention that Cleófilas' role as a mother is a critical part of her making the decision to go back to Mexico. Unlike the "man [she] had waited [her] whole life for," her deep maternal love for her children allows her to overcome the fear of leaving her husband.[42] This fear is complex as it is

[36] Anna Marie Sandoval, *Towards a Latina Feminism of the Americas: Repression and Resistance in Chicana and Mexicana Literature* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), 33.
[37] Ibid., 34.
[38] LatDict Online, s.v. "felix, felicis," and "gratia, gratiae," http://latin-dictionary.net/search/latin/felix, and http://latin-dictionary.net/search/latin/gratia.
[39] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 53.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 54.
[42] Ibid., 49.

connected not only to a fear of reprisal from Juan Pedro, who has already demonstrated his violent behaviour, but also fear of social ostracism upon return to her home village in Mexico. Cleófilas knows that people back home will wonder where her husband is and that she risks being branded a bad woman for leaving him: "What a disgrace. […] Coming home like that with one baby on her hip and one in the oven."[43] It takes enormous strength for Cleófilas to agree to meet Felice at the parking lot to get a lift to the bus station for her ride back to Mexico. Yet Cleófilas comes to understand that "when a man and a woman love each other, sometimes that love sours. But a parent's love for a child, a child's for its parents, is another thing entirely."[44] It is through her motherhood that Cleófilas realises the strength of the familial bond between parent and child as opposed to the bond of marriage that she had put such faith into. Cisneros thus asserts simultaneously that the mother-child bond is stronger than the bond of marriage between Cleófilas and Juan Pedro, and that there is power in woman-to-woman bonds, like those between Felice, Graciela, and Cleófilas.

Felice and Graciela come to the aid of Cleófilas at a critical moment, acting as her *comadres* (literally co-mothers), providing her with the support and help she needs to escape an abusive relationship. As *comadres*, Felice and Graciela are examples of women who negotiate a new paradigm of the family in the form of collaborative female relationships in order to create safe and supportive networks when patriarchal familial relationships have failed. In doing so, they deconstruct and redefine familial relationships as networks with fluidity rather than rigid hierarchical structures. This extended network of friendship and assistance is typical in Latina/o communities. A columnist for the online *Multicultural Family* network, Tracy López, wrote that "if Anglos have a "family tree" – Latinos have a "family forest"."[45] The "family forest" description of Latina/o *familia* life speaks to the extensive and far-reaching network of kinship found in many Latina/o communities. This network, called *compadrazgo*, is a prominent feature in Chicana/o families and is part of a larger framework of familism commonly associated with Latina/o families more broadly.[46] Familism has been

[43] Ibid., 50.
[44] Ibid., 43.
[45] Tracy López, "Family Versus Familia," *Multicultural Familia*, http://www.multiculturalfamilia.com/2011/06/22/family-vs-familia/.
[46] The original Spanish word *compadrazgo* originates from the Latin *compăter* (co-father) and is defined by the *Real Académica Española* as: "*[conexión] o afinidad que contrae con los padres de una criatura el padrino que la saca de pila o asiste a la confirmación.* [Connection or affinity linking the parents of a child with the person who stands as godfather at baptism or assists in the confirmation.]" (Real Academia Española, s.v. "compadrazgo," *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 22nd edition, http://dle.rae.es/?w=compadrazgo&o=h.) Indeed, José Genis claims that *compadrazgo* is so widespread in Latin America that it is a strong candidate for being included in the list of *universales culturales* (universal cultural truths) for the Latin American population

described as the most significant characteristic of the Chicana/o family and it is considered "the central institution for the individual."[47]

Within the Mexican American community specifically there has been much work done to describe and analyse the role of *compadrazgo* for those living within the particular context of the United States. *Compadrazgo* in the United States is an example of a negotiation of the nuclear family model; a model that does not fit the realities in Latina/o communities. In the 1970s, David Alvirez and Frank Bean found that the Chicana/o extended family has roots in the particular economic and racial circumstances of American society, noting that familism is, at least in part, a response to historical conditions of economic deprivation.[48] So, for example, in 'Woman Hollering Creek', Cisneros emphasises that Cleófilas does not have access to state resources to officially report her husband's

(José Genis, *Sistemas de parentesco ritual en México* (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, mecanoescrito, 1990).

[47] Alfredo Mirandé, "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39 (4) (1977): 747-56. The study of *compadrazgo* in social sciences began with the 1950 work of Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf with their study 'An Anthropological Analysis of Ritual Co-parenthood (compadrazgo)'. Interestingly this paper was published in the *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* published by the University of New Mexico, thus situating *compadrazgo* in not just a Central and South American context but one fundamentally connected to the United States and therefore particularly pertinent to Mexican American communities.

Prominent Chicano social scientist Richard Griswold del Castillo emphasises the important ceremonial role of *compadrazgo*, stating that "god- parents [are] required for the celebration of major religious occasions in a person's life: baptism, first communion and marriage." (*La Familia*, 42.) On such occasion, *padrinas/os* (godparents) enter "into special religious, social and economic relationships with the godchild as well as the parents of the child." They act as co-parents, providing discipline and emotional and financial support when needed. (*La Familia*, 40-4.) Griswold del Castillo's description of *compadrazgo* relies heavily on the organisation and structure of the kinship network and emphasises the role of godparents at specific moments in a child's development. However, one of the most interesting and still relevant observations from the 1950 Mintz and Wolf paper is that "*los mecanismos del compadrazgo pueden multiplicarse para alcanzar el ritmo acelerado del cambio* [the mechanisms of *compadrazgo*/co-parenthood can multiply themselves in order to keep up with an accelerated rate of change]" (Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf, "An Anthropological Analysis of Ritual Co-parenthood (Compadrazgo)," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 6 (4) (1950): 364). This recognition of the flexibility of the *compadrazgo* network is crucial in understanding its adoption by Mexican Americans living in the often hostile environment of Anglo America. See also: Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974); Helen Rose Ebaugh and Mary Curry, "Fictive Kin as Social Capital in New Immigrant Communities," *Sociological Perspectives* 43 (2000): 189-209; Connie M. Kane, "African American Family Dynamics as Perceived by family members," *Journal of Black Studies* 30 (2000): 691-702; and Susan E. Keefe, "Real and Ideal Extended Familism among Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans: On the Meaning of Close Family Ties," *Human Organization* 43 (1984): 65-70.

[48] Alvirez and Bean, "The Mexican-American Family," 289. N.B. Familism is sometimes used as another way of describing the connections associated with both fictive kin relationships and the *compadrazgo* network. The cultural value of familism represents the strong identification, loyalty, attachment, and solidarity of individuals with their nuclear and extended kin, and the understanding that the behaviour of an individual is a reflection of the whole family. See Ana Mari Cauce and Melanie Domenech-Rodríguez, "Latinos Families: Myths and Realities," *Latino Children and Families in the United States: Current Research and Future Directions*, ed., Josefina M. Contreras, Kathryn A. Kerns, and Angela M. Neal-Barnett (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); and Celia Jaes Falic, *Latino Families in Therapy: A Guide to Multicultural Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

abuse. During the one-sided phone conversation Graciela insists that asking for official help from the authorities would be useless: "Shit. You think they're going to help her? Give me a break. This lady doesn't even speak English."[49] Graciela understands the biases of the system against Mexican American women – and non-native English speakers in particular – like Cleófilas, which is particularly exacerbated if she is undocumented.

Graciela is alerted to Cleófilas' abuse when she sees that she has "black-and-blue marks all over" her body.[50] Yet Cleófilas, instructed as she is by the *telenovela* view of a good wife, has remained silent about her husband's abuse. It is important to point out that Cisneros does not place blame on Cleófilas for her inability to get away from the abusive relationship. Nor is Cleófilas to be blamed for causing the family's disintegration; rather she exposes the tight bind of such traditions on women of Mexican heritage. Central to this is a nuanced understanding of Cleófilas as a victim of domestic abuse. Law professor and social justice advocate, Jenny Rivera, emphasises the multiple and varied impediments that obstruct Latinas' attempts to negotiate the legal justice system in the United States. Rivera underlines the powerful influence of state law enforcement officials and judicial personnel whose views continue to reflect those of Anglo male society in which the concerns of women of colour are consistently disregarded. The lack of resources available for Latinas in the United States such as bilingual personnel in police stations or battered women refuge centres are major obstacles in such cases.[51] Furthermore, as Elizabeth MacDowell states, "domestic violence is a serious social problem that is frequently unrecognized, minimized, or ignored because of stereotypes about who is at risk and from whom."[52]

Cleófilas' case also highlights the threat of social ostracism for women because she knows that upon on her return the "town of gossips" will ask "[where] is your husband?"[53] The threat of social ostracism from one's own community can be as significant as the practical and legal obstructions discussed above; in particular for the Mexican American and Chicana woman, the pervasive and damning effect of being labelled a *malinchista* – a cultural traitor – can be a major deterrent to reporting such crimes. In a society in which Latino men are discriminated against and portrayed as

[49] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 54.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Jenny Rivera, "Domestic Violence Against Latinas," *The Latino/a Condition*, 519.
[52] Elizabeth L. MacDowell, "Theorizing from Particularity: Perpetrators and Intersectional Theory on Domestic Violence," *Scholarly Works*, Paper 769 (2013), http://scholars.law.unlv.edu/facpub/769: 352.
[53] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 50.

criminals, reporting men from within the Mexican American community may be viewed as selling out one of their own. By involving law enforcement, women who report domestic violence crimes are seen as betraying the community in an act of disloyalty explicitly connected to *La Malinche*'s mythologised 'betrayal' of the people. Rivera states that for the Latina/o community more broadly, "if a Latina decides to go beyond her community and seek assistance from persons already considered representatives of institutional oppression, the community may view her act as betrayal."[54] Thus Cleófilas faces a number of legal and cultural barriers she is compelled to negotiate in order to escape from her abusive husband. In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo address this issue head on, stating that "some women discovered after marriage that they were no longer in love. But they stayed because of economic necessity, fear of reproach from their family, prohibitions against divorce by the Catholic Church, or any number of reasons long ago established to keep our mothers "in their place."[55] The threat of social ostracism is another of the institutional strategies of patriarchy that keep women "in their place."

So in the face of so many legal and institutional obstacles that the Mexican American woman has to negotiate, many women rely on family and kinship networks for assistance. As although the family can be a site of disenfranchisement for women, it has also historically been an important support, especially for marginalised communities. Sánchez notes that familism among Mexican American communities "contributed to slow, but steady, economic advancement" in the early twentieth century.[56] In a society in which the help of institutions is not always easily obtained reliance upon family and those in the familial *compadrazgo* network is an important survival tactic. As Joan Moore maintains, clannishness is an important defence for a poor and unskilled population in a demanding, indifferent, or hostile environment and the network of obligations has been extremely important in the past among Mexican-Americans.[57] In addition, Sue Kier Hoppe and Peter Heller argue that, among lower-class Mexican Americans, familism is a positive form of social organization that

[54] Rivera, "Domestic Violence Against Latinas," 519-20.
[55] Castillo, *Massacre*, 188.
[56] Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 150. Studies show that non-Hispanic Whites tend to seek support from friends, associates, and professionals, whereas in the Mexican American community, social support is provided predominantly by family. See: Krzysztof Kaniasty and Fran H. Norris, "Help-seeking Comfort and Receiving Social Support: The Role of Ethnicity and Context of Need," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28 (2000): 545-81; Lucy Martinez-Schallmoser, Nancy J. MacMullen and Sharon Telleen, "Social Support in Mexican American Childbearing Women," *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing* 34 (2005): 755-60; and Yolanda C. Padilla and Griselda Villalobos, "Cultural Responses to Health Among Mexican American Women and their Families," *Family & Community Health* 30 (2007): 24-33.
[57] Joan Moore, "Mexican Americans and Cities: A Study in Migration and the Use of Formal Resources," *International Migration Review* 5 (1971): 292-308.

facilitates their adaptation to the condition of a marginal existence and its subjectively alienating consequences.[58] As Melba Vasquez states, "empowering group interactions increase zest, knowledge, self-worth, salience, and desire for more connection."[59] The *compadrazgo* support system can be a vital tool for many Mexican American communities not only in opposition to a potentially threatening Anglo society, but also to foster positive community identities.

For Chicana feminists, the female-centric network of *comadres* is vitally important. An adaptation of the *compadrazgo* system, the relationships of *comadres* emphasise the needs of Mexican American women. In 'Woman Hollering Creek', Felice and Graciela provide Cleófilas with this *comadre* connection to help her get away from her abusive husband. Indeed Graciela calls Felice "*comadre*" at the end of their phone call.[60] Given that *compadrazgo* has been described as a specifically "masculine rendition of co-parenting and extended family," the need for a feminist/female reworking of this network is imperative for women's concerns within the wider kinship networks of Mexican American communities.[61] *Comadre* networks are negotiated versions of the *compadrazgo* extended family, versions in which the prime mediators are women who ensure the rights and needs of their fellow Chicanas are central. Furthermore, research defines the important central role of women in extended kinship networks, sustaining that across race and class, women, more than men, are the keepers of the modern extended family.[62] According to several recent studies Mexican American women specifically cite female family friends and family as their most important and consistent source of support.[63] Like *compadrazgo*, *comadres* are identified as family or fictive kin

[58] Sue Kier Hoppe and Peter L. Heller, "Alienation, Familism, and the Utilization of Health Services by Mexican-Americans," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 16 (1975): 306. See also: Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
[59] Melba J. T. Vasquez, "Latinas," in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Inequalities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverley Greene (New York: The Guildford Press, 1994), 131.
[60] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 55.
[61] Angie Chabrám-Dernersesian, "En-Countering the Other Discourse of Chicano-Mexicano Discourse," *Cultural Studies* 13 (2) (1999): 275.
[62] See: Bert N. Adams, "Isolation, Function and Beyond: American Kinship in the 1960's," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 32 (1970): 575-97; Kathleen Gerson, "Changing Lives, Resistant Institutions: A New Generation Negotiates Gender, Work, and Family Change," *Sociological Forum*, 24, no. 4 (2009): 735–53; Naomi Gerstel, "Divorce and kin ties: The importance of gender," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 50 (1988): 209-19; Gerstel and Sarkisian, "Sociological Perspective," 237–66; Gunhild O. Hagestad, "Family Networks in an Aging society: Some Reflections and Exploration," *Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. Wim J. A. van den Heuvel, Raymond Illsley, Ann Jamieson, and C. P. M. Knipscheer (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1992): 44-52; Glenna Spitz and John R. Logan, "Helping as a Component in Parent-Adult Child Relations," *Research on Aging*, 14 (1992): 291-313; and Teresa Swarz, "Intergenerational Family Relations in Adulthood: Patterns, Variations, and Implications in the Contemporary United States," *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 191–212.
[63] See Sandra K. Eggenberger, Jane S. Grassley, and Elizabeth Restrep, "Culturally Competent Nursing Care for Families: Listening to the Voices of Mexican American Women," *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* 11 (3) (2006); Lucy Martinez-Schallmoser, Sharon Telleen, and Nancy J. MacMullen, "The Effect of Social Support and

that provide support in a variety of ways including assistance with child-care, help in the home, and general friendship and support.[64]

Within the feminist context the assistance of *comadres* is specifically expanded to provide support in the face of an oppressive racist and sexist society. So it is that Graciela recognises that without their help, Cleófilas is considerably less likely to get away from her abusive husband: "If we don't help her, who will?"[65] Felice and Graciela thus enact a Chicana feminist role, "making bold and political the love of the women of our race."[66] This support is often also deeply connected to the spirituality of many Chicanas and their connections to one another as women. Castillo underlines the importance of this connection, proclaiming that:

> We must address our spirit guides on the needs to learn
> to defend ourselves physically, to protect each other,
> to provide for each other's material needs.[67]

The connections within *comadres* networks are physical and spiritual and often draw upon ideologies and theologies that focus on images of powerful women figures. This resonates with the original conception of Ada María Isasi-Díaz's theory of *mujeristas* (womanists), that firmly anchors *mujerismo* (womanism) in the Latin American theology of liberation.[68] Lillian Comas-Díaz associates *comadre* networks with this spiritually attuned idea of *mujerismo,* describing *mujerismo* as "Latina feminism. […] *Mujerismo* responds to the need of Latinas in the United States."[69] Furthermore, Comas-Díaz emphasises that *mujeristas* not only support each other, but also address the role of racism and neo-colonialism in gender relations. [70] Comas-Díaz explicitly connects *mujerismo* with Alice Walker's theory of 'womanism', not only as it translates from Spanish to English/English to Spanish, but also in the connection between multiculturalism and feminism.[71] Like *mujerismo*, womanism "elevates all sites and forms of oppression, whether they are based on social-address

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Acculturation on Postpartum Depression in Mexican American Women," *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 14 (2003): 329-38; and Padilla and Villalobos, "Cultural Responses to Health."

[64] See Kana'iaupuni, Donato, Thompson-Colón, Stainback, "Counting on Kin", and López, "Las Comadres".

[65] Cisneros, 'Woman Hollering Creek,' 54.

[66] Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 139.

[67] Castillo, *Massacre*, 148.

[68] See Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha/In the Struggle*.

[69] Lillian Comas-Díaz, "Comadres: The Healing Power of a Female Bond," *Women and Therapy* 36 (2013): 65.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Lillian Comas-Díaz, "*Spirita*: Reclaiming Womanist Sacredness in Feminism," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 32 (2008): 13-21.

categories like gender, race, or class, to a level of equal concern and action."[72] Chicana feminists utilise *mujerismo* and the *comadre* network to challenge and resist the multiple attacks on female identity and agency from both Anglo American and Mexican American society.

Within the Chicana community, the support and activism of *comadres* underlines a tendency to create horizontal structures of dependence. That is to say, *comadre* networks are not governed by vertical hierarchies of power such as those found in the patriarchal familial framework in which the concerns of fathers and sons always come above those of women, rather the relationships are connected laterally and equally. As Castillo states in *Massacre of the Dreamers*, not only:

> can we hope that our comadre may occasionally baby-sit for us or lend us a little money or food or other expenses when we need it – as comadres have traditionally done – we can learn *to be each other's mothers*, even for one day of the month. Comadre means just that: co-madre [co-mother].[73]

It is this desire and need to "be each other's mothers" that underpins the foundations of *comadre* relationships. Furthermore, these relationships are about mentoring as well as support; there is an exchange of knowledge along with the emotional sustenance provided in *comadre* groups. Thus there is a shift from the vertical hierarchy of patriarchy lived by their foremothers to a broader, lateral framework based on horizontal ties more akin to sibling relationships like those exhibited by Graciela and Felice in 'Woman Hollering Creek.' Through using the powerful bonds of the familial network but adapting them to better support the needs of women, *comadres* negotiate a version of *familia* that best suits their activism. No longer are women restricted by their place in the vertical hierarchy of family, rather women use lateral space to extend and reimagine their roles. As Rebecca López states, the Latina/o extended family is characterised by *both* intergenerational and lateral interdependence.[74] It is the openness and flexibility of relying on vertical *and* lateral relationships that allows for greater elasticity than the traditionally rigid patriarchal hierarchical structure of the family. Through this shift in familial and community frameworks, *comadres* break down traditional

[72] Layli Phillips, "Womanism: On Its Own," *The Womanist Reader* ed. Layli Phillips (London: Routledge, 2006), xx. For more on womanism, see: Alice Walker, "Coming Apart," *The Womanist Reader*: 3-12; and Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*.
[73] Castillo, *Massacre*, 192: emphasis added.
[74] López, "Las Comadres," 26.

power relations within the patriarchal family, both between men and women, and between generations of women.

Through the feminist activist negotiation of her *comadres* Felice and Graciela, Cleófilas is able to escape an abusive marriage and save herself and her children from further violent cruelty. Furthermore, the community more widely benefits because of the actions of the *comadre* network. Although not explicitly stated in the text, it is assumed that Felice and Graciela have come to the aid of other women in the past, and are willing to assist in an act of feminist resistance and solidarity with their community. Their access to resources, through their paid employment and their proficiency with the English language, allows Graciela and Felice to help those without the same means. Cleófilas too demonstrates feminist activism in her decision to accept the help of her *comadres* and return home to a village where she may well be excluded because of traditional notions of how a wife ought to behave. Having been brought up in a family of men, and learned how to become a woman by *telenovelas*, Cleófilas has many obstacles to cross over to avoid the patriarchal prescription of womanhood that she has been indoctrinated in. Cleófilas' story emphasises the bind in which such women are caught; forced to choose between being a submissive daughter or an abused wife. The sad reality of such a bind is the difficulty involved in escaping patriarchal definitions of femininity and the restriction this places on the autonomy of women. Yet her interaction with Felice and Graciela does mean that, as Anna Marie Sandoval argues, "by virtue of her new personal liberation and development, she will probably resist the patriarchy and boundaries placed on her by her community."[75] Indeed at the end of the story, she shares her story with her father and her brothers, implying a permeation of the ideas she has been exposed to.[76] Despite the ambiguity in her return to Mexico and the potential return to a role as a submissive daughter, Cleófilas is safer and has been positively affected thanks to her encounter with Felice and Graciela. Despite the perpetuating influence of patriarchal conventions in the family, the intervention of the *comadre* kinship network means that Cleófilas can secure a safer future for herself and her children.

[75] Sandoval, *Toward a Latina Feminism*, 42.
[76] Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek," 56.

Negotiating Work in the Family: The Motherwork of Sofi in *So Far From God*

In *So Far From God* (1993), Castillo's central character, Sofi, negotiates her feminist activism with her role as a mother in the family and in the community. Sofi's activist mothering calls for a reconsideration of how women operate in the family as well as an understanding of how women negotiate their roles in the family with their place in the community. As O'Reilly argues, 'mothering' refers to women's lived experiences of childrearing, and activist mothering encompasses the variety of strategies and negotiations undertaken by women to ensure the health and security of the family group.[77] Castillo's novel explores the lateral movement of the family structure through the community activism of a female-centred family. This lateral movement consists of a series of negotiations in Sofi's role as a mother not only to her daughters, but also to her community. Sofi exhibits a mestiza consciousness that informs and directs her style of activist mothering, one that encourages a plural, dynamic approach to mothering within the family and within the wider community. *So Far From God* chronicles the life of Sofi, a wife, a mother, and a social and community activist living in Tome, New Mexico. Despite the deterioration of her marriage and the tragic deaths of her daughters, Castillo presents in Sofi a woman who is capable of immense strength and compassion and who negotiates her role as a mother with her emerging feminist activism to find her place in the community. Through Sofi, Castillo explores the ways in which women incorporate the qualities of mothering not only in the family but also "into [their] value system [in ways that] would radically change [the] world."[78] The feminist activism of mothers, like Sofi, does not just celebrate and value the mother's role, it also highlights efforts to confront racism and sexism in order to advance the concerns of the Chicana/o community. As her name suggests, Sofi demonstrates the wisdom that can be found when negotiating feminist activism and maternal roles for Chicanas.[79]

In *So Far From God*, Sofi acts as a mediator in the family and in the community, performing what Patricia Hill Collins describes as 'motherwork.' Motherwork, according to Collins,

> [softens] the existing dichotomies in feminist theorizing about motherhood that posit rigid distinctions between private and public, family and work, the individual

[77] O'Reilly, "Introduction," *21st Century Motherhood*, 1-36.
[78] Castillo, "Toward the Mother-Bond Principle," *Massacre*, 186.
[79] The name 'Sofía' is derived from the Greek for wisdom.

> and the collective, identity as individual autonomy and identity growing from the collective self-determination of one's group.[80]

This speaks to one of the definitions of 'mediation' which is understood as a type of negotiation that involves "intercession on behalf of another."[81] It is through motherwork that the mothering of many women of colour is more accurately described than in some Anglo feminist theories for, as Joanne Goodwin affirms, "race problematizes maternalisms's universal assumptions and feminism's focus on sex equity."[82] Although most commonly explored in the African American context, Collins' term encapsulates much of the Chicana experience as racially ethnic women whose mothering and work experiences "occur at the boundaries demarking these dualities." [83] The theory of motherwork also resonates with the mestiza consciousness that Anzaldúa proposes as it embraces the "pluralistic mode" that allows for a move beyond the limited prescriptive roles for women in the family.[84] Sofi is thus able to move away from her status as "la pobre Sofi" (poor Sofi), a name given to her because of her status as a divorcee, and to embrace her activist endeavours.

> "[I] can tell you this. I have been living in Tome all my life and I have only seen it get worse and worse off and it's about time somebody goes out and tries to do something about it! And maybe I don't know nothing about those kinds of things, but I'm sure willing to work for community improvement!"[85]

Despite her modest claim to know "nothing about those kinds of things," Sofi applies her knowledge of caring for her family, her friends, and her *comadres* to successfully negotiate better lives for the residents of Tome. Through an exploration of the motherwork of Sofi in *So Far From God*, Castillo critically reinscribes the role of the mother in the family and the community.

As Yolanda Martínez states, the relevance of motherwork for Chicanas lies in being a "deconstructing act of […] mothering models."[86] Thus motherwork defies the perception of Chicana

[80] Collins, "Shifting the Center," 175.
[81] *OED*, s.v. "mediation," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115665.
[82] Joanne Goodwin, *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform: Mothers' Pensions in Chicago, 1911-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 10.
[83] Collins, "Shifting the Center," 175.
[84] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 101-2.
[85] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 137-38.
[86] Yolanda Martínez, "Contesting the Meaning of Latina/Chicana Motherhood in *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cuban American Cristina García," *Latina/Chicana Mothering*, 202.

women as being what Mirandé and Enríquez described as "the hearth of the home; chaste, modest, honorable, clean, and, most importantly, to minister to the needs for her husband and children."[87] The community-driven focus of motherwork also corresponds with the collectivism of Latina/o familism and *compadrazgo* that puts motherwork in contrast to Anglo, and Euro-centric, feminism(s)'s more individualist outlook.[88] The individualist feminist tradition adopted by white middle-class feminists in America, tends to emphasise:

> more abstract concepts of individual human rights and celebrated the quest for personal independence (or autonomy) in all aspects of life, while downplaying, deprecating, or dismissing as insignificant all socially defined roles and minimizing discussion of sex-linked qualities or contributions, including childbearing and its attendant responsibilities.[89]

This significantly contrasts the feminisms of women of colour for whom such an individualistic approach is inappropriate and not conducive to community advancement. As Mirandé and Enríquez note, "it is not uncommon for Chicanos to pool their resources to help members of the immediate family or other relatives."[90] For example, in Mexican American communities, this often takes the form of financial support in the form of a *cundina* (also known as a *tanda*) which works like a no-interest loan amongst friends. So, for example, ten friends, family, or co-workers get together, and each agrees to give $100 every two weeks to the group's organiser. One person ends up with the whole pot at the end of the month: $2,000. This goes on for ten months until everyone gets the pots. So everyone has paid in $2,000 and everyone get $2,000.[91] The pulling together of resources is a characteristic of the community that is often explored in Chicana literary works. For example, as discussed above, in Cisneros' story 'Woman Hollering Creek,' Felice and Graciela come to the aid of Cleófilas, by using their English-language skills as well as local knowledge of the bus schedule, to pool their resources to help a Chicana in need. In this way, Collins' assertion that motherwork problematises the relationship between the individual and the collective resonates with the Chicana

[87] Mirandé and Enríquez, *La Chicana*, 98.
[88] As Karen Offen described in the late 1980s, individualist feminism has deep historical roots in European culture, and became increasingly characteristic of American discourse since the political philosopher John Stuart Mill published *The Subjugation of Women* in 1869. See Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs* 14 (1) (1988): 119-57.
[89] Offen, "Defining Feminism," 136.
[90] Mirandé and Enríquez, *La Chicana*, 108.
[91] Shereen Marisol Meraji, "Lending Circles Help Latinas Pay Bills and Invest," 1 April 2014, *NPR Code Switch*, http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/04/01/292580644/lending-circles-help-latinas-pay-bills-and-invest.

experience.[92] Further corroborating this conflict between individual and collectivism is Mary Pardo's assertions from her 1991 study of an Eastside Los Angeles community. Her findings indicate that "similar to other women of color, the Mexican American women described [in this study] suggest that everyday life and organized politics overlap."[93] Sociologist Nancy Naples finds that Latinas living and working in poor, urban neighbourhoods understand the politics of their community work as different from traditional conceptualisations of 'politics'.[94] According to Naples' findings, Latinas combine the practices of mothering with their political perspective and the fight for social justice, and vice versa: the "community workers defined good mothering to comprise all actions, including social activism, that addressed the needs of their children and community."[95] Sofi's activist mothering embraces this overlapping of politics, social justice, and familial care.

In *So Far From God*, the move towards community mothering, away from the traditional vertical hierarchy of family to a broader lateral network is, in part, provoked by the breakdown of the protagonist, Sofi's, marriage to Don Domingo. Castillo emphasises the central position of women in the family and in the novel by pushing the only significant male character to the periphery. Yi-Lin Lu states that this is a part of the trope of matrilineal narratives as when the mother-daughter relationship is prioritised, "the role of the father seems to be automatically attenuated."[96] Having abandoned his family years previously, Don Domingo makes a surprising return to his hometown. Despite this unexpected appearance after so long, his return is secondary to the main action of the plot. Domingo's deflated arrival illustrates his passivity with regards to family affairs and his return is remarkable in its insignificance. Don Domingo takes an entirely inactive role within the family and Castillo makes this apparent as the story of his absence is largely ignored in the village. His mysterious departure years ago and subsequent homecoming is dismissed as being only worthy of *chismes* (rumours), and even these have been fabricated by Don Domingo himself in an (unsuccessful) effort to prove his own importance.

[92] Collins, "Shifting the Center," 173-6.
[93] Pardo, "Creating Community," 297.
[94] See Nancy Naples, "Activist Mothering: Cross-Generational Continuity in the Community Work of Women From Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods," *Gender and Society* 6 (3) (1992): 441-63; Nancy Naples, "Contradictions in the Gender Subtext of the War on Poverty: The Community Work and Resistance of Women from Low Income Communities," *Social Problems* 38 (3) (1991): 316-32; and Nancy Naples, "'Just What Needed to Be Done': The Political Practice of Women Community Workers in Low-Income Neighborhoods," *Gender and Society* 5 (4) (1991): 478-94.
[95] Naples, "Activist Mothering," 448.
[96] Lu, *Mother, She Wrote*, 45. N.B. There is further discussion of matrilineal narratives in the following chapter.

Castillo parodies the idea of the father as the powerful *deus absconditus* [a hidden God]: "silent and noncommitted, dictat[ing] his wishes from afar."[97] Don Domingo does not dictate anything in this family, he is "noncommitted" but not in any grandiose, superior manner, rather because he seems incapable. Indeed, the only direct action associated with him is destructive. He single-handedly ruins Sofi's family inheritance, having gambled away her home, pawned her family jewellery, and sold the ten acres of land that had been given to them by her grandfather upon their marriage. The peripheral role of this husband and father emphasises that Sofi is what Amaia Ibarran Bigalondo describes as an "independent-from-men" woman.[98] Unlike the women described in chapter one, Sofi does not rely on the support of men to survive. Don Domingo's presence in the family and in the novel is marginal, highlighting not only the woman-centred structure of this household but also the wider feminist network that Castillo explores in her writing.

Sofi is not beholden to traditional notions of her role as wife or mother and takes matters into her own hands when she finally decides to serve her husband with divorce papers; something a traditional *mujer mexicana* would not dare do for fear of ostracism from church and community – and in Sofi's personal case the even greater fear of castigation from her mother. This is a legislative negotiation that Sofi is compelled to undertake because of the destructive influence her husband has had on her life. Studies in the 1980s found that Mexican American populations tended to have more stable marriages, i.e. lower divorce rates, than the non-Hispanic white population.[99] Recent research has allowed for a nuanced understanding of these patterns among the Mexican American population by clarifying that the lower divorce rates are most evident among those who were born in Mexico, especially those with lower levels of education.[100] One of the main reasons for lower

[97] Ilan Stavans, *The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America* (Harper Collins: New York, 1995), 108.
[98] Amaia Ibarran Bigalondo, "Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*: A Story of Survival," *Revistas de Estudios Norteamernicanos* 8 (2001), 28.
[99] See W. Parker Frisbie, Frank D. Bean, and Isaac W. Eberstein, "Recent Changes in Marital Instability Among Mexican Americans," *Social Forces* 58 (1980); and W. Parker Frisbie, W. Opitz, and W. R. Kelly, "Marital Instability Trends Among Mexican Americans as Compared to Blacks and Anglos," *Social Science Quarterly* 66 (1985).
[100] See Frank D. Bean, Ruth R. Berg, Jennifer Van Hook, "Socioeconomic and Cultural Incorporation and Marital Disruption Among Mexican Americans," *Social Forces* 75 (1996): 593-617; Julie A. Phillips and Megan M. Sweeney, "Premarital Cohabitation and the Risk of Marital Disruption Among White, Black, and Mexican American Women," *Journal Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 296-314; and Julie A. Phillips and Megan M. Sweeney, "Can Differential Exposure to Risk Factors Explain Recent Racial and Ethnic Variation in Marital Disruption," *Social Science Research* 35 (2006): 409-34.

levels of divorce is attributed to traditional family dynamics in Mexico.[101] Norma Ojeda states that the lower divorce rates in Mexico are connected to "*los niveles de "empoderamiento" de la mujeres en la sociedad mexicana* [the level of the "empowerment" of women in Mexican society]."[102] Interestingly the research on divorce rates is couched in the language of the 'stability' or 'instability' of family life based on marriage or divorce, respectively. However, in Sofi's case, it is the very instability of married life that leads her to divorce her husband, which gives her stability ultimately. Sofi's life becomes considerably more stable when she is free to live without her husband.

Sofi feels the deep frustration of having wasted her time trying to be what was expected of her and she condemns the social forces that have imposed these responsibilities upon her:

> Sofi had devoted her life to being a good daughter, a good wife, a good mother, or at least had given it a hell of a good try, and now she asked herself – '¿Y pa' qué? ¡Chingao! [And for what? For fuck's sake!][103]

The laws of marriage have denied Sofi the right to individual ownership of her home and when her husband gambles away the house, her very foundations are destabilised. The vexation of Sofi's outburst is caused by her apparently failed attempts at trying to be the idealised, and impossible, *mujer perfecta* (perfect woman). Yet the tone of her condemnation here is ambiguous as she simultaneously feels the frustration of socially imposed strictures while also having enjoyed being mother to her four daughters and she sorely feels the loss of her family – of her daughters through death and her marriage through divorce. The expletive "for fuck's sake!" not only implies frustration but also defiance. Indeed, one translation of "¡Chingao!" can be "fuck it!" which would imply that Sofi has had enough of the cultural expectations imposed on her, and is ready to quit. And yet, without her family to look after Sofi does suffer from a sense of loss as she feels she has "[nothing]

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[101] Norma Ojeda de la Peña, "Separación y divorcio en México: una perspectiva demográfica," *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos* 1 (2) (1986): 115.

[102] Ojeda goes on to expand on this, stating that: "*El logro de niveles más altos de escolaridad y la experiencia laboral de las mujeres permitirán que éstas sean menos dependientes económicamente de sus parejas masculinas, lo cual, a su vez, les permitirá tomar decisiones con menos dificultad para disolver sus matrimonios o uniones libres cuando por alguna razón éstas han dejado de ser satisfactorias, o bien es necesario disolverlas debido a situaciones problemáticas de alguna índole, como podrían ser casos de violencia doméstica.* (The attainment of higher levels of education and work experience for women allows them to be less economically dependent on their male partners, therefore, at the same time, allowing them to make decisions with less difficultly to dissolve their marriage or domestic partnership when they are no longer satisfactory, or also it is necessary to dissolve them because of situations of a problematic nature, for example in cases of domestic violence.) Ojeda de la Peña, "Separación y divorcio," 115.

[103] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 218.

to look out for no more."[104] Although she is an independent woman who has demonstrated great resilience, at this moment she feels empty without her family. Her role as mother (and to some extent as wife, despite Domingo's failure as a husband), although socially prescribed, is still one she has enjoyed, distinguished herself in, and will miss.

Yet through negotiation of her situation, Sofi is able to overcome the loss of one aspect of her mothering, due to the deaths of her daughters, and apply herself to a new social activist mothering that re-channels her efforts into the community of Tome. For Sofi does not sit and mourn the loss of her status as mother or wife; rather she sets about keeping herself busy and offering her nurturing talents to the wider community, performing her own version of motherwork. Melissa Schoeffel argues that for Sofi, "it is only when she begins to lose that which defines her as 'mother' – her children – that [she] is able to resist this particular version of the 'good mother.'"[105] Unlike the prescriptive, and proscriptive, depiction of women in early Chicano texts, Castillo allows Sofi to expand meaningful roles in the family and the community. Chapter Nine is defiantly entitled: "Sofia, Who Would Never Again Let Her Husband Have the Last Word, Announces to the Amazement of Her Familia and Vecinos Her Decision to Run for la Mayor of Tome."[106] As she is regarded by the community as '*la abandonada*' (the abandoned woman) who "did her best, turning out her girls however she could under the conditions and test that God put on her," this is seen as outrageous.[107] Deciding to run for a Mayor of Tome – a position that doesn't even exist until she runs for it – Sofi refuses to give up, embracing a collectivist approach that benefits herself and her community. Running for office, in the traditionally male-dominated role of mayor, demonstrates Sofi's mestiza consciousness and hybridity and her ability to see past the confines of prescribed roles. Sofi reasserts her "independent-from-men" status and negotiates a space for herself as a woman and as a leader of the community.[108] Critic Roland Walter praises the novel for its representation of community, reading the collective activism as "a utopian solution to the loss of identity, assimilation, and the spread of Anglo culture."[109] Although the death of her children makes Sofi's life less than

[104] Ibid.
[105] Melissa Schoeffel, *Maternal Conditions: Reading Kingsolver, Castillo, Erdrich, and Ozeki* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 45.
[106] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 130.
[107] Ibid., 134.
[108] Bigalondo, "A Story of Survival," 28.
[109] Roland Walter, "The Cultural Politics of Dislocation and Relocation in the Novels of Ana Castillo," *MELUS* 23, no. 1 (1998), www.jstor.org/stable/467765: 91.

utopian, she is able to learn from them, survive, and flourish. It is Sofi's *mestizidad*, her ability to negotiate "from a multiplicity of positions", that allows her to do this.[110]

An important part of Sofi's mestiza consciousness is her collectivist approach to her role as Mayor and in the cooperative she establishes. Setting up the cooperative in Tome, New Mexico is a difficult job for Sofi and it takes not only time and effort, but also a change in the town's "whole way of thinking" so that they can run the operation effectively.[111] The required transformation in their way of thinking emphasises the enormity of the task that Sofi has taken on: a task that resists not only patriarchal expectations of women's roles, but also capitalist tenets of markets and profit-making. The Los Ganados y Lana Cooperative that she sets up in Tome is described as being "modeled after the one started by the group up north that had also saved its community from destitution."[112] Castillo's fictional co-op is in fact based on the actual Ganados del Valle cooperative located in northern New Mexico which seeks to create environmentally sustainable alternatives to corporate economic practices.[113] In a study of the actual Ganados del Valle, Laura Pulido emphasises that the significance of the group, besides its economic success, "is that it has allowed people to develop to their fullest potential."[114] In order to succeed, cooperatives themselves rely on the kinds of negotiations that Sofi juggles in *So Far From God* and through pooling resources and collaborative practices women can leverage better negotiating power when dealing with governmental and business institutions. This collaboration works as a powerful mode of resistance against the exploitative practices employed by large companies that profit from the use, and abuse, of land. By establishing a cooperative business, the community responds to the harmful practices deployed by those who have usurped their lands. Social Scientist, Laura Halperin states that "the establishment of these sheep centered cooperatives largely centers on allowing native resident communities to harvest the land in ways that best serve their needs, which includes treating the land with the utmost care."[115] In addition, there are common factors found in cooperatives like the Ganados del

[110] Yarbro-Bejarano, "The Multiple Subject," 65-66.
[111] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 146.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Laura Pulido, "Sustainable Development at Ganados del Valle," *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 123. In making this connection explicit, Castillo demonstrates her own ongoing commitment to social activist concerns, and indeed, in the acknowledgements to *So Far From God*, she expresses her indebtedness to the members of the Southwest Organizing Project, a social and environmental justice movement. "What We Do," SouthWest Organizing Project, http://www.swop.net/about-swop/what-we-do/.
[114] Pulido, "Sustainable Development at Ganados del Valle," 131.
[115] Laura Halperin, *Intersections of Harm: Narratives of Latina Deviance and Defiance* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 118.

Valle cooperative of New Mexico that are particularly beneficial for women, including ensuring a fair return on work, support for members, safe working conditions, availability of pooled or purchased raw materials, and access to viable markets.[116] Furthermore, women's participation in cooperatives is a powerful empowering tool that can "[enhance] their dignity, and greatly improve quality of life."[117]

It is Sofi's status as a mother, as well as Mayor and cooperative leader, that allows her to complete this community aspect of her motherwork to great success. These negotiations forefront what Schoeffel calls "maternal practices (nurture, attentive care of the other) and the mutuality inherent in such practices as models for ethical and social relations."[118] Furthermore, Collins explicitly defines motherwork as "a cluster of activities that encompass women's unpaid and paid reproductive labor within families, community, kin networks, and informal and formal local economies."[119] Indeed, in a 2013 study of a Nicaraguan sewing cooperative, Josh Fisher finds that the connection between motherwork and economic endeavours runs deep. The women that work in this sewing cooperative state that their roles as care givers, emotional supports, and financial providers was all connected through the motherwork they did as part of the enterprise. In fact, their work in the co-op, "far from constituting a separate sphere, was deeply rooted in these roles."[120] These women affirmed that the purpose of the cooperative "is to build a future for our children."[121] Through this enterprise the economic and social welfare of the entire community is more stable and it is a result of the negotiations of Sofi and her fellow cooperative members that this is made possible.

Castillo endows Sofi with the ability to understand the importance of, and get pleasure from, the traditional familial role of wife and mother but at the same time she has the ability to negotiate these roles. Indeed, by the end of the novel, Sofi suddenly remembers that twenty years previously

[116] Rachel MacHenry, "Building on Local Strategies: Nepalese Fair Trade Textiles," *Artisans and Cooperatives*, 25-44.
[117] Brenda Rosenbaum, "Of Women, Hope, and Angels: Fair Trade and Artisan Production in a Squatter Settlement in Guatemala City," *Artisans and Cooperatives: Developing Alternative Trade for the Global Economy*, ed. K. M. Grimes and B. L. Milgram (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2000), 102. See also: Anne Brit Nippierd, "Gender Issues in Cooperatives," *Journal of Co-operative Studies* 32 (3) (1999): 175-81.
[118] Schoeffel, *Maternal Conditions*, 46.
[119] Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), 131.
[120] Josh Fisher, "Fair or Balanced? The Other Side of Fair Trade in a Nicaraguan Sewing Cooperative," *Anthropological Quarterly* 86 (2) (2013): 546.
[121] Ibid.

it was not that Don Domingo had walked out of the family, but in fact that she had kicked him out. That Sofi and the community of Tome had forgotten this "one little detail" highlights that there were no other roles open to women other than the binary traditional wife/mother or *la abandonada* (the abandoned woman).[122] Her sudden memory of this is part of her feminist development for, as Theresa Delgadillo astutely notes, "Sofi could not, in a sense, truly speak her life until she had created new roles for women."[123] Castillo refuses to portray passive women, and she actively defies "the popular image of Mexican-American women as victims of social and political forces and instead builds on their long-standing tradition of community involvement."[124] The emphasis is placed on Sofi's capacity to be more than just a wife and mother, as she fulfils these roles but also those of friend, neighbour, cooperative member, and mayor. Castillo thus creates a positive community-led mothering that is an alternative to the archetype of individualism representing the "strength of male power, while community becomes equated with female weakness."[125] Through Sofi's activism, particularly in contrast to Domingo's actions and marital/familial *in*action, Castillo inverts the paradigm of passive Mexican American women and dominant men, and shows the reader how an individualist approach can be detrimental to women, and to the community more widely.

As Sofi herself laments, she has "devoted her life to being a good daughter, a good wife, a good mother […] – '¿Y pa'qué? ¡Chingao! [And for what? For fuck's sake!]"[126] Yet this moment of exasperation does not make Sofi surrender. She *has* been a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother. Far from succumbing to the misfortune that infiltrates into her life, Sofi is strengthened in her resolve, deciding not to move away from the traditional woman's role but to broaden the scope of this role. As Gail Pérez notes, Sofi finds the "wisdom of the mother that must discover its own wisdom."[127] Her negotiations of her roles in the family and in the town of Tome brings her to this wisdom, a wisdom that benefits herself and the community. By adding politician, social reformer and business-person to her role, she is redefining mothering and leadership on her own terms. It is Sofi's multiplicity and her plural mestiza consciousness that is used as a strategy of empowerment and liberation. She embodies and lives the mestiza identity that Anzaldúa describes as "stubborn,

[122] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 215.
[123] Delgadillo, "Forms of Chicana Resistance," 910.
[124] Mermann-Jozwiak, "Gritos desde la Frontera," 105.
[125] Bonnie TuSmith, *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 22.
[126] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 218.
[127] Gail Pérez, "Ana Castillo as Santera: Reconstructing Popular Religious Praxis," *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 63.

persevering, impenetrable as stone, yet possessing a malleability that renders us unbreakable."[128] Sofi, as an emblem of female activism, is shown by the tragic experiences of her daughters that choices need to be actively made in life, and that life should be defined as "a state of courage and wisdom and not an uncontrollable participation in society."[129] Castillo focuses on communities of women reflecting a Chicana feminism fuelled by a female-centred spirituality that challenges the subjugation of women.

Negotiating Non-Biological Mothering: Tía Regina as 'Othermother' in *The Guardians*

In *So Far From God*, Sofi finds herself working outside of, and against, traditional role expectations and in the later novel *The Guardians* (2007), Castillo further explores the concept of maternal negotiation and community activism through the character of Tía Regina (Aunt Regina). Tía Regina challenges conventional motherhood imagery and offers a new description of Chicana experiences of mothering. As in *So Far From God*, this maternal adaptation is, at least in part, imposed upon the characters in *The Guardians* by a variety of antagonistic and aggressive social and political influences. Published fourteen years after *So Far From God*, *The Guardians* portrays the hostilities of border life in the twenty-first century. In this novel, Castillo engages with a social and political climate fixated on 'securing' the border between the U.S. and Mexico. It was published just after President George W. Bush implemented of the Secure Fence Act of 2006 which aimed to build seven hundred miles of physical barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border.[130] The novel opens with the destruction of a family at the hands of the brutal forces, both natural and human, governing the borderlands between the United States and Mexico. Tía Regina's biological family is torn apart when her brother and sister-in-law are killed trying to cross the border to join their son, Gabo, Regina's beloved nephew and *de facto* adopted son. Regina becomes Gabo's guardian, taking on the role(s) of the novel's title as "one who guards, protects, or preserves; a keeper, defender."[131] Throughout the novel, Regina builds a tight-knit family for herself, starting with her nephew Gabo and their trustworthy dog, la Winnie. Over the course of the novel, it comes to include her friend and colleague, Miguel, and his grandfather, El Abuelo Milton, as well as Gabo's friend, Tiny Tears, and her baby, Gabriela. But

[128] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 63-4.
[129] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 250.
[130] The U.S. Government Printing Office, "Secure Fence Act of 2006," Public Law 109-367, 109th Congress, https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-109publ367/html/PLAW-109publ367.htm.
[131] *OED*, s.v. "guardian" http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/82151.

tragedy befalls her chosen family when Miguel's ex-wife, Crucita, is kidnapped, and Gabo is caught up in dangerous gang activities.[132] Tiny Tears delivers the final blow to Regina's family, when in a drugged induced frenzy, terrorised by sexual assault and captivity, she stabs Gabo. As Gabo and Tiny Tears exit the gang house where she has been held captive, the police order Gabo to raise his arms but he is unable to do so because of his stab wounds and is shot multiple times by the police. Yet Gabo's death does not mark the end of Regina's mothering and she demonstrates enormous strength and resilience to help Tiny Tears and her daughter, Gabriela. In Tía Regina, Castillo portrays a woman negotiating motherhood without being a biological mother herself, revealing that mothering "connotes the human work that gives us a future, not the body that gives birth."[133] In *The Guardians*, despite the heartbreak caused by the destruction of her family, Tía Regina negotiates a non-biological mothering relationship with Tiny Tears and her child, Gabriela. She extends her guardianship to help these vulnerable members of the community and give them a better chance at securing a safer future for themselves. Her activist mothering is a representation of praxis and resistance in contemporary U.S. society.[134]

It is in this capacity that Tía Regina becomes what Collins calls an 'othermother'. The term originates from an article by Rosalie Riegle Troester who discussed female familial relationships in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* in 1984.[135] It describes people who take on care duties for young people in the community, from providing meals and financial support, to emotional and moral guidance. Collins applies this term to the wider African American community stating that "despite strong cultural norms encouraging women to become biological mothers, women who choose not to do so often receive recognition and status from othermother relationships that they establish with Black children."[136] Hills Collins concludes that othermothers' participation in activist mothering demonstrates a rejection of individualist practices and adapts a system in which the ethics of caring move communities forward.[137] The role of the othermother in familial and community care-giving focuses on cultural and collective concerns. In this way, the othermother plays a central part in the cultural survival of communities, particularly for marginalised groups like Mexican Americans.

[132] See mention above of the idea of the 'chosen family'; Weston, "The Politics of Gay Families."
[133] Orr, *Subject to Negotiation*, 116.
[134] Téllez, "Mi Madre, Mi Hija y Yo," 64.
[135] Rosalie Riegle Troester, "Turbulence and Tenderness: Mothers, Daughters, and 'Othermothers' in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*," *SAGE* 1 (1984): 13-16.
[136] Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Women and Motherhood," *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions* ed. Barrie Thorne (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 220.
[137] Collins, "Black Women and Motherhood," 215-45.

Othermotherhood empowers women to negotiate a space for themselves in the family and the community where they are relied upon to help others in their roles as mediators. This is consistent with the type of negotiating women undertake which has generally been framed as mediation on behalf of others. This is particularly important for women in the Mexican American community as Aída Hurtado notes, women are expected to demonstrate a high degree of concern for others.[138] They serve the community by bringing their wisdom and expertise to help those around them to cross, get over, round or through obstacles placed in their way.[139] In *The Guardians*, Castillo recognises the significance of othermotherhood through the character of Tía Regina who attempts to foster her own family as tragedy has befallen her biological family. This emphasises the lateral movement occurring in this generation of women, who, either through choice or fate, negotiate traditional definitions of family.[140] Yolanda Martínez observes othermother practices in the Latina context and comments that, "motherhood and the act of mothering are not exclusive to biological mothers nor simply determined by gender. Not all women are mothers, while those who are mothers do not all mother." [141] Martínez views mothering as an active practice that can be taken on by anyone, regardless of their gender or the biological processes involved in reproduction. The role of the othermother then expands definitions of mothering, allowing those who have not biologically reproduced to take part in care-giving in the community. Furthermore, in the Chicana context, Herrera notes, Tía Regina's role as an othermother rewrites the myth of virgin motherhood, "that impossible standard that Chicana mothers have been expected to live by."[142] This emphasises the agency in her negotiation of mothering as, for Regina, virgin motherhood is not passive, "it is active, radical, and capable of invoking justice."[143]

It is through Tía Regina's relationship with her nephew's friend Tiny Tears that the influence of the othermother is most apparent. Tiny Tears is a member of the gang suspected of killing Regina's brother and sister-in-law, Gabo's parents. As part of a spiritual mission, Gabo befriends Tiny Tears trying, in vain, to save her from the violence and abuse inflicted on her in the gang. Tiny Tears has acquired her nickname because of the tears tattooed on her face representing each of the people

[138] Hurtado, "Relating to Privilege:" 833-55.
[139] See *OED* s.v. "negotiation," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125879
[140] In such cases, the lateral inclusion of the othermother in the Chicana/o family, as described in Castillo's work, is an extension of the *compadrazgo* and *comadres* network discussed above with reference to 'Woman Hollering Creek'.
[141] Martínez, "Contesting the Meaning," 196.
[142] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 205.
[143] Ibid.

she has killed for the gang to which she belongs. The ironic connection between her gang name and the name of a popular brand of doll emphasises Tiny Tears' inferior position in the group. The name infantilises her and underlines her role in the gang as a person, or even an object, to which things are done, taking away her agency and rendering her passive. However, Tiny Tears' real name is María Dolores and Regina wittily declares that she "was a pain, all right, mucho dolores."[144] Yet, while *dolores* does mean 'pain' in Spanish, it also means 'sorrow' or 'grief'. Tiny Tears, María Dolores, has been through great pain, grief, and sorrow because of her involvement with the gang. Like many girls and women caught in gang culture, Tiny Tears is abused and sexually assaulted by other members of the gang.

> Tiny Tears's rage, like everything else about the monster girl that no one loved, was out of control in that house in Tornillo. Being raped every day. No food, just poison in her veins. The public defender says the girl herself is a victim.[145]

The *dolores* that she has had to suffer at the hands of her so-called *familia* in the gang have turned Tiny Tears into a monster. Studies show that gender inequality and sexual exploitation shape the risks found in street gang culture and that adolescent females are particularly vulnerable to these risks.[146] In Tiny Tears, Castillo presents a nuanced understanding of the negotiations young female gang members are forced to undertake in order to survive. So although Tiny Tears is a murderer, there are social and cultural forces at play that are hard to avoid, especially for low-income Mexican American girls whose situations are confounded by class, race, and gender issues.[147] The reasons behind gang involvement are complex and some reasons why girls turn to gang culture include peer pressure; protection from neighbourhood crime, abusive families, and other gangs; financial incentives that are not available through other legitimate societal institutions; as well as a way of obtaining respect.[148] Furthermore, these problems are reported to be exacerbated for those Mexican American girls in communities dominated by traditional gender roles.[149]

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[144] Castillo, *The Guardians* (New York: Random House, 2008), 181.
[145] Castillo, *Guardians*, 210.
[146] Janet L Lauritsen *et al.*, "The Link Between Offending and Victimization Among Adolescents," *Criminology* 29 (2) (1991): 265-292; Jody Miller, "Gender and Victimization Risk Among Young Women in Gangs," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 35 (1998): 429-53; Donna Eder, *School Talk: Gender and Adolescent Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); and Sue Lees, *Sugar and Spice: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls* (New York: Penguin, 1993).
[147] Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).
[148] Chanequa J. Walker-Barnes and Craig A. Mason, "Factors for Female Gang Involvement Among African American and Hispanic Women," *Youth and Society* 32 (3) (2001): 303-36.
[149] Ruth Horowitz, *Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicano Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983); Avelardo Valdez and Jeffrey A. Halley, "Gender in the Culture of

The relationship between Tiny Tears and Tía Regina demonstrates what Collins describes as the power of the othermother to create a connection that is not based on biological affiliation. Collins states that the influence of othermothers,

> is transformative in that Black women's relationships with children and other vulnerable community members is not intended to dominate or control. Rather, its purpose is to bring people along, to – in the words of late nineteenth century Black feminists – "uplift the race" so that vulnerable members of the community will be able to attain the self-reliance and independence essential for resistance.[150]

By extending her mothering to Tiny Tears, Tía Regina revises traditional notions of mothers, showing the ways in which non-biological mothers can exert their mothering skills to help the most vulnerable members of the community. Tía Regina's ability to expand her maternal influence to the community, specifically to Tiny Tears – the girl who is responsible for her nephew, Gabo's, death – is demonstrative of both her compassion and her strength, as well as her commitment to the survival of at risk community members.

Regina recognises the vulnerability of Tiny Tears but refuses to see her as a victim stating emphatically that: "[*victim*] is not a word in my vocabulary."[151] Rather than either condemn or excuse Tiny Tears, leaving that up to the courts, Regina instead takes on the arduous task of looking after Tiny Tears' baby, who she names Gabriela. Although not explicitly stated in the text, Gabriela has been named after her father, Gabriel (aka Gabo), and remains the only kin left to Regina.

> My decision is to care for the child. Tiny Tears don't want it. Her own mother didn't want it, neither. The toddler was about to go to foster care. I wasn't raised like that. My mother may have been harsh but she wasn't like that.[152]

Mexican American Conjunto Music," *Gender and Society* 10 (2) (1996): 148-167; and Williams, *The Mexican American Family*.

[150] Collins, "Black Women and Motherhood," 233.

[151] Castillo, *Guardians*, 211.

[152] Castillo, *Guardians*, 209.

Her understanding of the complexity of the situation, for herself and for Tiny Tears, demonstrates Regina's strength as an othermother. Despite Tiny Tears' complicity in Gabo's death, Regina takes on the care of her child and expands her role as a great-aunt to encompass the day-to-day care and rearing of Gabriela while Tiny Tears lives out her prison sentence. Instead of distancing herself from her nephew's killer, Regina opens herself up, as an othermother, to help both Tiny Tears and her child. Regina's act of resistance comes in the form of looking out for, and caring for, the most vulnerable members of the community thus refusing to perpetuate the cycle of helplessness and beginning once more to build her own family.

Tía Regina's decision to care for vulnerable members of her community, like Tiny Tears, is common in Latina/o neighbourhoods. A recent study by Ceballo *et al.* demonstrates the tendency among low-income Latina mothers to adapt parenting practices when faced with neighbourhood poverty and the threat of community violence.[153] The practices employed in such cases include strict monitoring, engagement in positive activities for children, and establishing strong parent-child communication. What is more, Ceballo *et al.* explicitly make the connection between African American theoretical frameworks, like othermothering, and their study, stating that work done in this field concerning African American families can help establish a framework from which to study parenting among Latina/o families specifically.[154] Although this particular study is specifically interested in the experiences of biological parents, and particularly biological mothers, it is these similar community-lead and female-driven practices that Castillo illustrates through the othermother Regina. As Herrera notes, the act of adopting Gabriela is an act of feminist mothering because it will protect the child from being motherless and also protect her from growing up in a violent household.[155] This is more

[153] Rosario Ceballo *et al.*, "Always Aware (*Siempre Pendiente*): Latina Mothers' Parenting in High-Risk Neighborhoods," *Journal of Family Psychology* 26 (5) (2012): 805-15.
[154] Ceballo *et al.*, "Always Aware," 806. See also: Linda M. Burton, and Robin L. Jarrett, "In the Mix, Yet on The Margins: The Place of Families in Urban Neighborhood and Child Development Research," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 1114-35; Rosario Ceballo and Vonnie C. McLoyd, "Social Support and Parenting in Poor, Dangerous Neighborhoods," *Child Development* 73 (4) (2002): 1310-21; Frank F. Furstenberg, "How Families Manage Risk and Opportunity in Dangerous Neighborhoods," *Sociology and the Public Agenda*, ed. William J. Wilson (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993): 231-58; Robin L. Jarrett, "Growing Up Poor: The Family Experiences of Socially Mobile Youth in Low-Income African American Neighborhoods," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 10 (1995): 111-35; Robin L. Jarrett, "African American Family and Parenting Strategies in Impoverished Neighborhoods," *Qualitative Sociology* 20 (1997): 275-88; Kenneth I. Maton, Freeman A. Hrabowski, and Geoffrey Greif, "Preparing the Way: A Qualitative Study in High-Achieving African American Males and the Role of Family," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 26 (1998): 639-68; Mary E. Pattillo, "Sweet Mothers and Gangbangers: Managing Crime in a Black Middle-Class Neighborhood," *Social Forces* 76 (3) (1998): 747-74; and Håkan Stattin and Margaret Kerr, "Parental Monitoring: A Reinterpretation," *Child Development* 71 (2000): 1070-85.
[155] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 171.

than simply an act of kindness, it is part of a process of negotiation that deconstructs the hierarchical structures of the traditional family and resists patriarchal limitations on the roles of women in the family and the wider community. These women expand familial care and support to the community as part of a negotiation that has a positive impact.

Like *compadrazgo* and *comadres* networks, othermothering practices like those adopted by Regina are an important part of family and community life in Latina/o communities. A 2011 study by Richard Mora explores the lives of a group of othermothers living in the Southwest of the United States. His work, 'Life, Death, and Second Mothering,' investigates the lives of ten Mexican American women who altered their roles as mothers by taking their mothering practices beyond the confines of their homes after their own children were murdered.[156] Mora's concept of 'second mothering' compellingly reflects the behaviour of Tía Regina that Castillo depicts in *The Guardians*. It is in this specific borderlands context that the theories of 'othermother' and 'second mothering' have particular significance in the Mexican American experience. These practices are feminist negotiations of the familial framework that extend familial care and support to the community. Like Regina, the women in Mora's study "transform their children's deaths into affirmations of life."[157] As with Sofi in *So Far From God*, these women use their influence as mother figures to benefit the whole community and bring about positive social and cultural change. Mora states that the women "possessed a great deal of moral authority, which they used effectively when interacting with young men and adolescents in their barrios."[158] Using this moral authority as a positive influence, the women redefine their view of motherhood and extend their mothering practices out into the barrio.

Moreover, the spirituality of second-mothers is intrinsic to their efforts to help those at risk in their communities. As discussed above, this resonates with womanist and othermother efforts among other communities of women of colour in the United States. Mora states that the women in this study were inspired by *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, thus grounding their spirituality within the specific Chicana/Mexican American context.[159] As discussed in the introduction, many Mexican American women find inspiration from within Catholic theologies that focus on the powerful image of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. This echoes the original conception of Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz's theory of

[156] Richard Mora, "Life, Death and Second Mothering," *Latina/Chicana Mothering*: 71-87.
[157] Ibid., 71.
[158] Ibid., 83.
[159] Ibid., 71.

mujeristas that connects *mujerismo* with the Latin American theology of liberation and Comas-Díaz's assertion that "mujeristas ground their spirituality in a gender specific and cultural context."[160] It is important to note that Castillo distances spirituality from the institution of the Church in *The Guardians*. Tía Regina's nephew, Gabo, is a devout Catholic who yearns for a closer connection with God and takes on a particularly punitive form of religious practice. His aunt does not understand, or even respect, his punishing religiosity, wittily remarking that her "biggest fear" is that he become a priest.[161] Although critical of Gabo's severe version of Catholicism, Regina relies on her spirituality for support throughout *The Guardians*. In this way, Regina negotiates her own version of Catholic spirituality to connect to the strength that her faith gives her. Spirituality, and specifically female spirituality, is an intrinsic part of her character as illustrated by her middle name, Ana. Regina comments, somewhat derisively, that she is named after Saint Anne, "patroness of late-in-life mothers."[162] In this way the connection between this "late-in-life" mother, Saint Anne, is strengthened by the alternative mothering practices that Tía Regina adopts. Almost despite herself Regina is spiritually connected to a line of women mothers and othermothers. She strives to negotiate better outcomes for others out of commitment to her faith, her nephew, and her community. In this way her role as Gabo's guardian is further extended to that of guardian angel: "an angel conceived as watching over or protecting a particular person or place."[163] Ruth Trinidad Galván connects the Chicana spirituality with womanist praxis stating that "the presence of women's spirituality [is] the driving force to ignite their personal growth and ability to act on their commitment to community."[164] Through their spirituality and the example of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, the women in Mora's study "opted to turn grief into action" and, like Regina, become community othermothers, extending their mothering into the neighbourhood to "protect and provide for [their] young, [their] families, [their] tribes."[165]

However, although spirituality can have a positive influence on the practices of activist women, the dependence on *La Virgen of Guadalupe* as a role model can prove problematic. As discussed in chapter one, the unattainable nature of *La Virgen* as an example of motherhood can result in women feeling like failed mothers, and therefore bad women. Such a framing of women's work can

[160] See Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha/In the Struggle*; and Comas-Díaz, "Comadres," 65.
[161] Castillo, *Guardians*, 7.
[162] Castillo, *Guardians*, 152.
[163] *OED*, s.v. "guardian" http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/82151.
[164] Ruth Trinidad Galván, "Portraits of *Mujeres Desjuiciadas*: Womanist Pedagogies of the Everyday, the Mundane, and the Ordinary," *Womanist Reader*, 258.
[165] Mora, "Second Mothering," 78.

emphasise the negative aspects of a maternalist approach, undermining the crucial social work undertaken by women in the community. The danger is, therefore, that such an explicit connection to *La Virgen of Guadalupe* harks back to gender stereotypes of *marianismo*, returning to the image of the "ideal mother […] [and a] valuing [of] the self-sacrificing, all-giving, "virgin" mother."[166] For example, in their 2012 study, Ceballo *et al.* find that Latina mothers depict the ideal mother as a woman who is aware of her child's every move, thought, and feeling. The authors note that constant vigilance of children can place enormous pressure on mothers and "such parenting ideals may create unobtainable goals and thereby lead to mothers' emotional distress."[167] However, despite the potential problems with such a role model, these women can also be seen as another example of Mexican American/Chicana women who are reworking the traditional position of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. By reclaiming her in an activist and culturally positive light, the women of Mora's study, along with other spiritually inclined activist women, take part in the process of negotiation that revises *La Virgen*'s role in Mexican American culture. Through a manipulation of the image of *La Virgen*, women are able to draw out the positive aspects of her story so that she works for them, better reflecting their lived realities. In doing so, they leave those repressive features of her image behind, dismantling the patriarchal construct of her so that they can adopt the empowering characteristics in their daily lives.

Although Collins lamented the disintegration of the othermother network in African American communities in 1990, the second-mothering practices of these Chicanas is an example of the recent and ongoing influence of the othermother in Mexican American communities on the border. Collins described the "assault" on the community structure of bloodmothers and othermothers as being directly connected to the increase in the use and abuse of drugs in inner-city neighbourhoods.[168] Like Regina's family in *The Guardians*, the second-mothers of Mora's study were all tragically affected by the dangers of the drugs trade in the southwest of the United States. For example, in Los Angeles, where Mora's study took place, from 1979-1994, the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sherriff's Department reported a total of 7,288 gang-related homicides.[169] Issues connected to gang-related violence deeply affect parenting in these communities and, as Michelle Cruz-Santiago and Jorge Ramírez García find, significantly add to the challenges faced by parents

[166] Vincent Guilamo-Ramos *et al.*, "Parenting Practices Among Dominican and Puerto Rican Mothers," *Social Work* 52 (2007): 17–30.
[167] Ceballo *et al.*, "Always Aware," 813-4.
[168] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 122.
[169] Range H. Hutson, *et al.*, "The Epidemic of Gang-Related Homicides in Los Angeles County from 1979 through 1994," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 274 (13) (1995): 1031.

where gang-related violence is prevalent.[170] Many Mexican American families settle in dangerous and economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and studies have shown that creating a stable family life in such an environment can be a challenging task.[171] These neighbourhoods often lack the resources to help with the positive socialisation of young people and, as research has shown, adolescents and children are at higher risk of psychosocial problems, including conduct disorders, substance abuse, and academic failure.[172] In addition, in such environments, parenting is made more difficult because there are fewer resources to help support families.[173] However, although Collins predicted the collapse of such women-led community networks as a result of the drugs trade, the Mexican American women in Mora's study, and Regina in Castillo's *The Guardians*, demonstrate that even with the devastating effects of drugs on the neighbourhood, community othermothering can still be an effective and important defence against the demise of the barrio.

The actions of the women in Mora's study and in Cisneros and Castillo's writings correspond with what Chicana sociologist Gilda Ochoa calls 'transformational caring'. Ochoa's term persuasively draws together the threads of feminist social activism and mothering in the Chicana context. Ochoa understands the importance of transformational caring because "it is removed from essentialist conceptions of mothering that assume that mothering is natural, apolitical, undertaken by all women, confined to the private arena, not the purview of men, and based on biological relationships."[174] Castillo and Cisneros' narratives actively take part in such a reconceptualisation of mothering as they reject essentialist readings of their female characters taking mothering out of the confined private arena into the public, while also allowing mothering to take place when the mother

[170] Michelle Cruz-Santiago and Jorge Ramírez García, "'Hay Que Ponerse en los Zapatos del Jóven': Adaptive Parenting of Adolescent Children Among Mexican-American Parents Residing in a Dangerous Neighborhood," *Family Process* 50 (1) (2011): 100.
[171] See Nancy A. Gonzales *et al.*, "Acculturation and the Mental Health of Latino Youths: An Integration and Critique of the Literature," *Latino Children and Families in the United States: Current Research and Future Directions*, ed. Josefina M. Contreras, Kathryn A. Kerns, and Angela M. Neal-Barnett (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002): 45-75; and Mark W. Roosa *et al.*, "Ethnic Culture, Poverty, and Context: Sources of Influence on Latino Families and Children," *Latino Children and Families*: 27-44.
[172] See Manuel Barrera Jr., *et al.*, "Pathways from Family Economic Conditions to Adolescents' Distress: Supportive Parenting, Stressors Outside the Family, and Deviant Peers," *Journal of Community Psychology* 30 (2002): 135-52; Jean Brooks-Gunn, Greg Duncan, J. Lawrence Aber, *Neighborhood Poverty: Context and Consequences for Children* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997); Frank Furstenberg *et al.*, *Managing to Make It: Urban Families and Adolescent Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Jorge I. Ramírez García, Jennifer A. Manongdo, and Michelle Cruz-Santiago, "The Family as Mediator of the Impact of Parent–Youth Acculturation/Enculturation and Inner-City Stressors on Mexican American Youth Substance Use," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 16 (2010): 404-12.
[173] See Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Aber, *Neighborhood poverty*; and Furstenberg *et al.*, *Managing to Make It*.
[174] Gilda L. Ochoa, "Transformational Caring: Mexican American Women Redefining Mothering and Education," *Latina/Chicana Mothering*, 109.

involved has not gone through the biological processes of pregnancy. Ochoa's 'transformational caring' forefronts the feminist negotiations of motherwork as well as othermothering stating that "the concept of transformational caring works to name the labor and power behind such activities and to link them to broad forms of education that occur within and across multiple spheres, including home, schools, and communities."[175] For, as Regina states, "the job of a mother (even a substitute one like me) never ends."[176] Ceballo *et al.*'s study shows that, rather than passively responding to environmental and cultural pressures, Latina mothers actively negotiate parental control that encourages positive outcomes for the community: "ultimately, mothers drew strength from their reliance on cultural resources when broader structural support systems were unavailable."[177] The role of women like Felice and Graciela, Sofi, and Tía Regina in the community is vitally important for future generations. Through collaborative negotiations and female support networks like those of the *comadres*, women can positively influence their communities. The conditions of one's neighbourhood has large ramifications for community and personal developments affecting a diverse number of outcomes connected to educational attainment, criminal involvement, teen sexual activity, and employment.[178] Through writing their stories, authors like Castillo and Cisneros forefront the endeavours of activist community women and promote the development of collaborative practices for Chicanas. In this way, these women characters become what Rebolledo calls "mujeres de fuerza" (strong women): self-sufficient and self-nurturing.[179] As the characters discussed in this chapter demonstrate, this self-sufficiency and -nurturing is not an individual pursuit, but rather one with the needs and concerns of the community at its centre. By supporting their communities, they live out a Chicana feminism that resonates with their political and cultural principles. They enact activist mothering, defying and rewriting the script of passive womanhood so often imposed on women in the traditional family.

In 'Woman Hollering Creek', *So Far From God* and *The Guardians*, Cisneros and Castillo illustrate the power and strength of negotiating horizontal female-directed relationships in the overall family network. Through the characters of Felice, Graciela, Sofi, and Tía Regina the possibilities of *compadrazgo*, motherwork, and othermotherhood are highlighted and the benefits for women in the community are clear. The mestiza consciousness of such lateral praxes allows women to expand

[175] Ochoa, "Transformational Caring," 109.
[176] Castillo, *Guardians*, 121.
[177] Ceballo *et al.*, "Always Aware," 814.
[178] See for example Ingrid Gould Ellen and Margery Austin Turner, "Does Neighborhood Matter? Assessing Recent Evidence," *Housing Policy Debate* 8 (4) (1997): 833-66.
[179] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, 189.

the definitions of motherhood and embrace the potential of female-centred and cooperative practices. Furthermore, the positive application of aspects of Chicana/o culture such as *compadrazgo* and *comadres* allows for the redefinition and reworking of roles within the family and the community. As Michelle Téllez asserts, "by using *cultura* as a tool to persevere, Chicana motherwork becomes a representation of praxis and resistance in contemporary U.S. society."[180] Castillo and Cisneros are themselves a part of this reworking. The celebration of feminist negotiation and activism in their writings not only boosts awareness of the potential of female-centred networking, but also promotes and encourages it. In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo states that:

> as Xicanistas, female and male alike, whether we are biological mothers or not, we can learn to incorporate qualities customarily seen as inherent in mothering and apply them to how we treat ourselves, our relationships, and of course, our children.[181]

The characters in Cisneros and Castillo's writing provide fictional models for social activism, helping ensure not only survival but thriving families, kinship networks, collaborations, and communities. Despite the obstacles placed upon many Chicanas as women of colour living in a racist and sexist society, through feminist alliances, new pathways are opened that allow for a revision(ing) of the role of women in the Mexican American family; pathways that can be taken by the next generation of women.

[180] Téllez, "Mi Madre, Mi Hija y Yo," 64.
[181] Castillo, *Massacre*, 204.

Chapter Three

Daughters Negotiating the Motherline: Rejection Versus Redefinition

> [Most] of the mothers [and grandmothers], however, will not own up [to their stories]. The task falls upon the daughter to invent and interpret the mother's life, and how it spills onto her own life, hoping to sketch out their faces in the process.[1]
> Norma Alarcón

The daughters, the third familial generation of women discussed in this thesis, work to synthesise the strategies of their foremothers to find their identities both as part of the Mexican American family and as individuals. This is an intergenerational process for, as Chicana feminist Norma Alarcón highlights, "listening to our mothers' stories, and our grandmothers' stories, is the beginning of understanding our own."[2] The tension between the search for an individual identity and the connection to their communal maternal heritage compels women of this familial generation to selectively adopt lessons learned from their foremothers while also maintaining a distinct sense of individuality. This involves a complex and difficult process of negotiation that simultaneously acknowledges the stories of their foremothers and seeks to rewrite them in order to establish a meaningful place for themselves. A theme that runs throughout Cisneros and Castillo's writing is that of the "mother-quest" in which daughters "search for [their] Self through a recuperation of [their] maternal heritage."[3] As part of this search for the self, daughters seek knowledge about their foremothers in the hope that they can find out who they themselves are as women, often through negotiating and resolving old conflicts between intergenerational women in the family.[4] This involves a process of reconnection with their foremothers' stories. As quoted in the epigraph, Norma Alarcón argues that daughters are tasked with telling these stories. They must "invent and interpret" the mother's life in order to better understand their place in the family and during this process, daughters can hope to "sketch out their faces."[5] Alarcón's image evokes the daughter's attempts to draw a self-portrait not only using the skills that their foremothers have passed on, but also seeking

[1] Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover," 93.
[2] Lowinsky, "Mothers of Mothers," xii.
[3] Adalgisa Giorgio, ed., *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (New York: Berthahn Books, 2002), 5.
[4] See also: Kim Chernin, *The Woman Who Gave Birth to her Mother: Tales of Transformation in Women's Lives* (New York: Penguin, 1998); Joanna Goldsworthy, ed., *Mothers by Daughters* (London: Virago Press, 1995); Wendy Ho, *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian American Mother-Writing* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1999); and Constance Warloe, *From Daughters to Mothers: I've Always Meant to Tell You: An Anthology of Letters* (New York: Pocket Books, 1997).
[5] Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover," 93.

inspiration from them in the creative endeavour. Alarcón understands that the negotiations of women of this familial generation requires imaginative invention and interpretation of their foremothers' stories so that the daughters can "sketch out their [own] faces," to find their own identities as part of an intergenerational family. Crucially, this negotiation acknowledges the intersecting of identifications between generations. Across generations, women identify themselves on their own terms as well as part of a family or community of women. Alarcón speaks evocatively of the need for women's stories to be told, to be shared with the next generation of Chicana women, the daughters. This task is nothing less than "a necessity for the daughter-writer."[6] Cisneros and Castillo recover their foremothers' stories in their works by writing daughter characters who engage with the stories of the women who came before them. In the process of writing, Chicana daughter-writers recover their foremothers who have previously been marginalised, degraded, or simply ignored in the past.

This chapter analyses the motherline stories of Cisneros and Castillo by exploring the ways in which Chicana daughters 'sketch their own faces' with and through their motherline. That is to say, the ways in which Chicana daughters and granddaughters engage with and interpret their (grand)mothers' stories in order to find their own place, their own thread(s), within the complex weave of Mexican American family life. The process of inventing and interpreting the mother's life in order for the daughter to find her sense of self is also explored in Naomi Lowinsky's theory of the 'motherline.' According to Lowinsky, one's motherline can be imagined as a line, a cord, or a thread that connects every woman – each born of a woman – back to her foremothers through her roots of family and culture.[7] Lowinksy explains that her motherline theory is inspired by Alice Walker's essay on womanism and writing, 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens' (1972). In this essay, Walker traces the thread connecting her to generations of foremothers before her, affirming that,

> so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realize this: that through years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the

[6] Ibid.
[7] Naomi Lowinsky, "Mothers of Mothers and Daughters: Reflections on the Motherline," in *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation,* ed. Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abby (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 231.

> manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories – like her life – must be recorded.[8]

Walker's realisation of the importance of her mother's stories is central to the theory of the motherline and interconnects with womanist practices like those discussed in chapter two. Like Walker, Cisneros and Castillo also recognise the significance of telling women's stories and have become recorders of these neglected stories through their writings. In the introduction to *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona clearly state that writers like Cisneros and Castillo are part of the first generation of writers able to write these narratives, stating that "[their] mother[s] couldn't have written this story – or even helped [them] write it."[9] As discussed in the previous chapters, the restrictions placed on women in the patriarchal family denied them both this self-expression and communal storytelling. The matrilineal narratives of Cisneros and Castillo connect generations of women through the narration, conservation, and passing on the stories of previous generations to future generations.

Chicana and Mexican American daughters as writers and narrators of matrilineal narratives, and as the next familial generation in the motherline, play a pivotal role in intergenerational negotiations of womanhood. The cyclical nature of intergenerational developments is emphasised throughout as these (grand)daughters do not necessarily follow on from the previous generation in a linear process of development, but rather take diverse paths in their search for their female identities. The non-linear nature of intergenerational development tallies with cultural models of parenting that are viewed as tacit schema or behavioural scripts reproduced across generations, or contested and adapted to novel norms and practices as parents and children acculturate.[10] The role of acculturation is particularly important in the case of Fe in Castillo's *So Far From God* as she reproduces a patriarchal behavioural script in her attempts to negotiate through assimilation with Anglo American society. Meanwhile Cisneros' Zeze the X and Celaya, from 'My Name' and *Caramelo* respectively, contest patriarchal models of womanhood and adopt new practices.

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[8] Walker, *Our Mother's Gardens*, 240.

[9] Gómez, Moraga, and Romo-Carmona, *Cuentos*, ix.

[10] Bruce Fuller, "Learning from Latinos: Contexts, Families, and Child Development in Motion," *Developmental Psychology* 46 (3) (2010): 561. See John W. Berry, "Acculturation as varieties of adaptation," *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some New Findings*, ed. Amado M. Padilla (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980): 9-25; and Bruce Fuller *et al.*, *Through My Own Eyes: Single Mothers and the Cultures of Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

The framework of intergenerational negotiation allows for a clearer understanding of the cyclical nature of these negotiation techniques as it does not impose a linear pattern on its analysis. This corresponds with Castillo's understanding of Xicanisma and its intergenerational basis. In 'A Countryless Woman' (1994), Castillo states that the basic premise of Xicanisma (her theory of radical Chicana feminism) is,

> to reconsider behavior long seen as inherent in the Mexic Amerindian woman's character, such as patience, perseverance, industriousness, loyalty to one's clan, and commitment to our children. […] [We] do not reject these virtues. […] [Rather, we] redefine (not categorically reject) our roles within our families, communities at large, and white dominant society, our Xicanisma helps us to be self-confident and assertive regarding the pursuing of our needs and desires.[11]

Xicanisma looks forward and backward for its inspiration and redefines itself within new contexts. Through the framework of negotiation, it is possible to analyse the ways in which daughters choose to either reject or redefine those behaviours seen as inherent in the Mexic Amerindian woman's character. In Castillo's *So Far From God*, Fe cuts herself off from the motherline, rejecting her Chicana heritage and opting to attempt to embody a patriarchal and capitalist version of womanhood as opposed to the womanist and collective womanhood her mother, Sofi, chooses. Her rejection of the motherline is ultimately fatal and through the character of Fe, Castillo warns of the denial of Chicana feminist womanhood in favour of an (Anglo) American capitalist and patriarchal ideology. Cisneros' short story 'My Name' in *The House on Mango Street* (1984), explores the complexity of finding autonomous identity while still connected to the motherline. The narrator, Esperanza, must reconcile her own identity with that of her namesake, her great-grandmother, to resolve her own interpretation of her place in this motherline. Likewise, Celaya in *Caramelo* demonstrates the ambiguities in finding her own individual identity in spite of and yet through her complicated relationship with her grandmother. It is only through narration of her grandmother's story, through expression of that which has previously been silenced, that both Celaya and her grandmother can fulfil the promise of their individual and collective/connected identities. Like Esperanza, Celaya has to negotiate her own place through the intrinsic connection she has to her motherline and in doing so redefine their roles in the families and communities. These daughters

[11] Castillo, *Massacre*, 40. The use of the 'x' in the spelling of 'Xicanisma' pays homage to Castillo's indigenous roots by incorporating the Nahuatl language of the Mexican who use the 'x' to signify 'ch': she employs this deliberately "to reclaim our indigenismo" (*Massacre*, 12).

reveal the ways Chicana daughters negotiate with their motherline either through rejection, as in the case Fe, or redefinition, like Esperanza and Celaya. Through their stories, Cisneros and Castillo emphasise the importance of the matrilineal connection in the subjectivity of Chicana daughters and Fe, Esperanza, and Celaya enact various strategies to navigate this complicated relationship when seeking to carve out their own individual identities alongside their familial identities.

Cutting the Motherline: Negotiating Assimilation in *So Far From God*

Developments in the role of women in the family between generations do not happen in a strictly linear pattern but rather repeat, adapt, and reconcile in a variety of different ways. As discussed in chapter two, in Castillo's *So Far From God*, the mother, Sofi, negotiates womanist strategies to develop a sense of her own womanhood. However, the daughters of this *feminista* character do not necessarily take on and integrate the lessons of their mother in their own lives. Fe, one of Sofi's four daughters, who strikes out against the Chicana *mujerista* family that Sofi creates, chooses instead to try to negotiate a place in Anglo middle-class society. Fe is a painfully prim and proper bank employee who leaves home in an attempt to assimilate into white middle-class society. However, upon leaving the family and home, Fe finds only "violence and ultimate destruction."[12] Her name, Faith, is thus a cruel parody of the virtue that she represents. Fe tragically puts her faith into the empty promises of American capitalist patriarchal society, believing in the myth that if she works hard enough and fulfils that culture's conditions of 'success' – namely marriage, money, and paid employment – then she will live happily ever after. With her fate in mind, Fe thus problematises both the assumption that feminist mothers like Sofi will "pass along" their political activism to their daughters, that a feminist identity is "inherited from one generation to the next"; and that assimilationist models are the way to success in U.S. society.[13] Fe's rejection of her mother's feminist

[12] Carmela Delia Lanza, "Hearing the Voices: Women and Home in Ana Castillo's So Far from God," *MELUS* 3 (1) (1998): 72.

[13] Lisa Adkins, "Passing on Feminism: From Consciousness to Reflexivity?," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 11 (4) (2004): 427-44. See also: Angela Y. Davis, "Afterword," *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, ed. Rebecca Walker (New York: Anchor Books, 1995): 279-84; Rory Dicker and Alison Pipemeier, ed. *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003); Lisa Maria Hogeland, "Against Generational Thinking, or Some Things That 'Third Wave' Feminism Isn't," *Women's Studies in Communication* 24 (2001): 107-21; Jennifer Purvis, "Grrrls and Women Together in the Third Wave: Embracing the Challenges of Intergenerational Feminism(s)," *NWSA Journal: A Publication of the National Women's Studies Association* 16 (3) (2004): 93-123; and Judith Roof, "Generational Difficulties, or, The Fear of a Barren History," in *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue*, ed. Devoney Looser and Ann E. Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997): 69-87.

and collectivist approach as well as her misplaced faith in Anglo American capitalism, and her attempted assimilation, ultimately result in a disconnection from her motherline and her death.

Fe's detachment from the motherline is exemplified through the rejection of her Mexican American heritage and desired assimilation into white, middle-class society. Fe, the third of Sofi's daughters, "was fine."[14] That is, twenty-four, with a steady job at the bank, and a long-term, hard-working, Anglo boyfriend; at the beginning of the novel they have just announced their engagement.[15] Fe wants to leave Tome and her mode of escape is through incorporation into white, middle-class, capitalist America. She hopes to gain access to this world through assimilation; through imitation with her "weekly manicured fingernails and a neat coiffure", intermarriage with an Anglo, and economic success at her job with the bank.[16] Fe judges her family as "self-defeating" and "unambitious" because they do not share her interest in waged work and she feels "disappointment and disgust" for them.[17] Fe then spends all of her life trying to "escape her mother's depressing home – with its smells of animal urine and hot animal breath and its couch and cobijas [blankets] that itched with ticks and fleas."[18] Fe's family do not conform to her model of American success and she tries to minimise her interactions with them as much as possible.

Fe's choice to reject the Xicanista motherline manifests in the decision to attempt to assimilate to Anglo American capitalist society. Assimilation into mainstream American society requires a negotiation of the Chicana self, but it is a negotiation on the terms dictated by Anglo American capitalist structures. As a result of this, the negotiations of a brown woman like Fe in *So Far From God* are ultimately destructive as she is only valued for her exploitability within these structures. Instead of relying on the collectivist support network of her family and community, Fe opts to pursue an individualist approach that detaches her from the motherline. Although the individualist approach is often seen as a classic 'American' (white, Anglo, middle-class) way of life, it does not serve the Chicana woman well.[19] In a nation that strongly motivates people toward competition,

[14] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 27.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 28. Linda Chávez in *Out of the Barrio* states that intermarriage between Latinas/os and Anglas/os facilitates assimilation, see: Linda Chávez, *Out of the Barrio*: *Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), note 12 at 139-40.
[17] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 28-9.
[18] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 171.
[19] See Uichol Kim, "Individualism and Collectivism: Conceptual Clarification and Elaboration," *Individualism and Collectivism: Theory, Methods, and Applications*, ed. Uichol Kim, Harry C. Triandis, Cigdem Kagitcibasi, Sang-

individual achievement, and, above all, material acquisitions, collectivity and spiritual aspirations are anachronistic.[20] As discussed in the previous chapter such an individualistic approach is inappropriate and not conducive to community advancement for women of colour. For Fe to choose to reject her Mexican American heritage in pursuit of the elusive profit of a more Anglo American way of life, she disconnects from her motherline. Yet, as communication theorist Stella Ting-Toomey acknowledges, the attempt to function as a "free agent" and "join" another culture is not always as profitable as it sounds and is often stressful, shocking and isolating.[21] In Fe, Castillo reveals that such a tactic of negotiation is deeply flawed as it separates her from the feminist cultural heritage and denies her agency, taking away her own subjectivity. Furthermore, because of the focus on individualism, the motherline is broken and Fe is isolated from the intergenerational connections in the family.

Fe's quest for assimilation is directly connected to her relationship with her family, and with her mother specifically. Xiaomei Chen explores this idea in relation to Asian American families and recognises that by "choosing the assimilationist route, the Americanized daughters initially reject their Asian mothers' experiences as irrelevant to their own lives."[22] Fe does not understand, nor want to understand, her mother's cultural values as she sees them as completely contrary to her own life aspirations. Chen goes on to state that for Americanized daughters, like Fe, "rejecting the mother is a mode of rejecting [traditional] cultural values."[23] Although found in a different cultural context, Fe's disconnection from her mother is an example of the rejection of the Chicana cultural heritage that her mother embodies. Thus Fe's desire to distance herself from her family results in a disconnection with her motherline through a detachment from her Chicana self. This can be understood in the context of her having put her faith in Anglo America's promotion of capitalist patriarchal culture, for, as Richard Alba and Victor Nee posit, "attachment to the ethnic group [hinders] minority individuals from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by American

Chin Choi, and Gene Yoon (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994). See also: Robert Neelly Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* (Beverley Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1980); and Harry C. Triandis, *Culture and Social Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).

[20] Castillo, *Massacre*, 47.

[21] Stella Ting Toomey, *Communicating Across Cultures* (New York: Guildford Press, 1999)

[22] Xiaomei Chen, "Reading Mother's Tale: Reconstructing Women's Space in Amy Tan and Zhang Jie," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 16 (1994), 115.

[23] Ibid. As Cristina Herrera notes, Asian American writers follow the tradition of feminist writings by women of colour by subverting long-standing stereotypes of women. Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 25.

society, which require individualistic mobility, not ethnic loyalty."[24] For Fe, the lure of individualistic mobility is far greater than any ethnic loyalty she feels to her family and to the wider Mexican American community. Theresa Delgado argues that it is Fe's uncritical acceptance of "the hegemonic discourse of middle-class America" that imposes distance between her and her family, "a family not considered typically American in such discourses because of its gender composition, race, ethnicity, and culture."[25] Fe's tragic story serves as an allegory of the way in which the dangerous allure of assimilation can destroy Chicana/o families and communities like the one portrayed in *So Far From God*. Furthermore, in her critique of assimilation, Castillo reveals the wide gap between "the perception of realistic opportunities for social mobility" and the "actual attainment of middle-class status."[26] This emphasises the ways that Chicanas are rejected by the dominant mainstream American society, even those who attempt assimilation.

Unlike the other daughters in *So Far From God*, Fe is explicitly described as being light-skinned and it is her phenotypic 'whiteness' that gives her the hope to gain access to a society that benefits those of lighter skin complexions.[27] As Angela Harris states, in a society where the constitution of racism is through "economies of color", skin colour plays a crucial role in the way people are categorised and treated.[28] Fe's light skin gives her the potential to negotiate with the white Anglo world she deems so desirable, as it gives her what Mary Waters terms the "ethnic option" of claiming whiteness.[29] In

[24] Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.
[25] Theresa Delgado, "Forms of Chicana Feminist Resistance: Hybrid Spirituality in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 44 (4) (1998): 909; and Rosaura Sánchez, "Discourses of Gender, Ethnicity and Class in Chicano Literature," *Americas Review* 20 (2) (1992): 77.
[26] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, 162.
[27] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 157.
[28] Angela Harris, "Introduction: Economies of Color," in *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1. The variety of phenotypes within the broad Latina/o community in the United States results in divergent outcomes when assimilation is attempted. Kevin R. Johnson outlines the differences stating that, for example, Cuban-Americans, a group with many fair-skinned persons, assimilate economically, politically and socially. In contrast, Puerto Ricans, some of whom are black, are the Latina/o national origin group least likely to be assimilated in this way (Kevin R. Johnson, "'Melting Pot' or 'Ring of Fire'?: Assimilation and the Mexican-American experience," *California Law Review* 85 (5) (1997), 1259-1313). See also: María Cristina García, *Havana USA Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 83-120; and Silvia Pedraza-Bailey, "Cuban Political Immigrants and Mexican Economic Immigrants: The Role of Government Policy in Their Assimilation," in *Hispanic Migration and the Unites States: A Study in Politics*, ed. Gastón Fernandez, Beverley Nagal, and León Narváez (Indiana: Wyndham Hall Press, 1987): 68-101. See also: Nazli Kibria, "Race, Ethnic Options, and Ethnic Binds: Identity Negotiations of Second Generation Chinese and Korean Americans," *Sociological Perspectives,* 2000, 43 (1): 77–95.
[29] Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

Massacre of the Dreamers, Castillo writes of the difficult choices permitted to mestiza women, stating that the mestiza is "advised to assimilate into white dominant society or opt for invisibility - an invisibility that we are blamed for because of our own lack of ability to take advantage of the supposedly endless opportunities available through acculturation."[30] Fe believes in the myth of the "endless opportunities" available to her if she can access them through acculturation. Castillo also notes the prevalence of attempts to 'pass' as white in the Mexican American community, stating that "[we] hope for light-skinned children and brag no end of those infants who happen to be born güeros, white looking, we are downright ecstatic if they have light colored eyes and hair."[31] Cherríe Moraga remembers that in her family "[it] was through [her] mother's desire to protect her children from poverty and illiteracy that we became "anglocized"; the more effectively we could pass in the white world, the better guaranteed our future."[32] In Moraga's case, her mother negotiated the 'anglocisation' of her children to give them a better chance of survival in a white world. As a result of the anti-Mexican attitudes and policies of the early twentieth century discussed in chapter one, Fe's choice to attempt to pass as white is understandable within the context of historical oppression for darker skinned people. Acknowledging the "economies of color" that exist in the United States, Castillo points out the perceived benefits of families having light-skinned children who may be able to access the same resources as white children. As Moraga states, for some Chicanas, this is about protection from poverty and illiteracy, and passing as white means a better guaranteed future.[33]

With the binary choices permitted to her, Fe chooses to deny her indigenous heritage and opt for assimilation into the dominant white society: "[she] couldn't wait to until she got out – of her mother's home as well as Tome – […] she would get out properly, with a little more style and class

[30] Castillo, *Massacre*, 22. Some Latina/o scholars have advocated the benefits of this type of negotiation with Anglo American society, most notably Linda Chávez and Richard Rodriguez (See: Chávez, *Out of the Barrio*; and Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez, An Autobiography* (Boston, MA: D.R. Godine, 1981)). From the Anglo community, one of the most vocal advocates for assimilation is Harvard scholar Samuel P. Huntington. His 2004 book entitled *Who Are We? The Challenges to American's National Identity* vociferously calls for assimilation from the Latina/o community, most explicitly as regards learning the English language. For Huntington, assimilation has "enabled America to expand its population, occupy a continent, and develop its economy with millions of dedicated, energetic, ambitious, and talented people, who became overwhelmingly committed to America's Anglo-Protestant culture and the values of the American Creed, and who helped to make America a major force in global affairs." His stance on assimilation is racist as it portrays the Latina/o community in unerringly negative terms and implicitly promotes white supremacy through the denunciation of any language other than English. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 183.
[31] Castillo, *Massacre*, 38.
[32] Moraga, "La Güera," *This Bridge Called My Back*, 28.
[33] Moraga, "La Güera," *This Bridge Called My Back*, 28.

than the women in her family had."[34] In her 2011 study, Jessica Vasquez notes that the attempted whitening of one's self is not uncommon among Mexican Americans, stating that interviewees informed her that they learned at a young age that "lighter is better," and often tried to "wash off" their darkness or use facial medications to lighten their skin colour.[35] Fe too buys into the "lighter is better" myth, complaining about her "Indian flat butt" and choosing three "gabachas" (*gringas*, white girls) from the bank to be her bridesmaids instead of her three sisters.[36] Fe's allegiance to her white-skinned colleagues as opposed to her sisters marks her as one of those who Elizabeth Martinez describes as "the wannabe whites/don't wannabe Indians."[37] Fe uses her lighter skin tone to try to negotiate with white society, to use it as a way to gain access to Anglo society, attempting to reject her brown skin and her Mexican American heritage. Some scholars consider this kind of "passing" as "taking the racial bribe," stating that people sell out their political allegiance in favour of accepting racial benefits of whiteness.[38] Fe certainly distances herself from Chicana politics, affirming that she has "no desire to copy [her sister] Esperanza's La Raza politics."[39] Through her desire to assimilate with Anglo white American society, Fe tries to use the 'advantage' of being light-skinned to benefit from white privilege, or, as Vasquez stresses, "at the very least obviating negative stereotypes to which darker-skinned individuals are more quickly and more often subjected."[40]

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[34] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 29. The Constitution of Mexico states that Mexico is a "pluricultural" nation, recognising the diverse ethnic groups that constitute it and in acknowledgment of the indigenous peoples that are the foundation of the nation. Mexico, Artículo 2o, "La Nación Mexicana en única e indivisible," *Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos que Reforma la de 5 de Febrero de 1857*, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/htm/1.htm.

[35] Jessica M. Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations: Immigrant Families, Racial Realities* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 129. Vasquez also notes, importantly, that these concepts of "passing" in the Mexican American context occupy an ambiguous place. According to modern-day racial categories, Mexican American are designated as an ethnic group of any race. Thus, for example, a Mexican American can classify themselves as 'Hispanic' and 'white' on their census forms. Vasquez states that this "contemporary understanding of the way Mexican Americans are mapped racially and ethnically can be used to substantiate claims of belonging to the white race, making the notion of "passing" as white both nonsensical and potentially inflammatory." Endnote 1, 266.

[36] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 29.

[37] Martinez, "Beyond Black/White," 28. The use of the term 'Indian' here is a derogatory description of people of indigenous heritage. Unfortunately, the potential advantages for lighter-skinned Latinas/os have been confirmed in various studies in which Latinas/os judged to have European physical appearance have enhanced "life chances" than those with indigenous features. See: Carlos H. Arce, Edward Murguia and W. P. Frisbie, "Phenotype and Life Chances Among Chicanos," *Hispanic Journals of Behavioral Science* 9 (1987): 19-32; Martha Menchaca, "Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States," *American Ethnologist* 20 (3) (1993): 583-603; and Edward E. Telles and Edward Murguia, "Phenotypic Discrimination and Income Differences Among Mexican Americans," *Social Sciences Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (1990): 682-96.

[38] Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 224-9.

[39] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 28-9.

[40] Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations*, 129.

With tragic irony for Fe, the narrator in *So Far From God* is aware of the harsh realities for women of colour, even those with lighter skin tones, and tellingly interjects in the narrative indicating that Fe "was not nearly as white as she thought she was".[41] As José Esteban Muñoz states, "Brownness is not white, and it is not black either, yet it does not simply sit midway between them. Brownness […] is cognizant of the way in which it is not and can never be whiteness."[42] For Mexican American women like Fe, no matter how light-skinned, her brownness "can never be whiteness" in the eyes of Anglo white society.[43] Castillo forefronts this conflict in the character of Fe, although she has lighter skin than her sisters, she is not considered white. For, as George A. Martinez acknowledges, although some light-skinned Mexican Americans have theoretical access to the privileges assimilation permits, "actual social behavior fail[s] to reflect [this]."[44] Through Fe, Castillo reveals the ways which racialised traits are imposed on women of colour, and although she sees herself as lighter than her sisters and wants to buy into the promises of Anglo American consumerist culture, she is denied access time and time again, with devastating results. Fe demonstrates what Madsen understands as the "perceived contradiction between what one is in oneself and the cultural image imposed by the racism of others."[45] Fe is caught between how she experiences herself – as a light-skinned, hard-working, ambitious young woman – and how others view her, as a brown-skinned woman who is exploitable and expendable.

Despite her constant attempts to negotiate (on unequal terms) with white middle-class America, Fe is denied admission. A series of events unfold that leave her unable to communicate, all of which begin when she is cruelly jilted by her fiancé, Tom. The effect on Fe is devastating; as her life breaks down around her, so too does her ability to communicate. Fe stops speaking and instead lets out "one loud continuous scream that could have woken the dead."[46] This scream lasts days and when she begins to speak again it is in broken, disjointed fragments. As her mother, Sofi, describes,

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[41] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 157.
[42] José Esteban Muñoz, 'Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race and the Depressive Position,' *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter (New York: Routledge, 2013), 415. See also: Jorge Duany, "Neither White Nor Black: The Representation of Racial Identity among Puerto Ricans on the Island and in the U.S. Mainland," *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First Century Perspective*, ed. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Tomás Almaguer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 157-84.
[43] Ibid.
[44] George Martinez, "Mexican Americans and Whiteness," *The Latino/a Condition*, 177.
[45] Madsen, *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*, 213.
[46] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 30.

> Fe had severely damaged her vocal cords during the days when she had so violently and ceaselessly screamed; as a result, when she spoke her voice was scratchy-sounding, similar to a faulty World War II radio transmitter, over which half of what she was saying did not get through, something like talking to Amelia Earhart just before contact was broken off altogether and she went down.[47]

Through this loss of communication, her contact with Anglo middle-class society is broken and Castillo sets Fe up for the now seemingly inevitable fall. The inevitability of her failure is thanks in no small part to the explicit connection with pioneering pilot Amelia Earhart who never reached her goal of circumnavigating the globe and disappeared mysteriously in the South Pacific in 1937.[48] Her idealisation of the American consumerist way of life destroys her ability to communicate, for, as Barbara Katz Rothman states, the "ideologies of patriarchy, technology and capitalism give us our vision of [womanhood] while they block our view, give us a language for some things while they silence it for others."[49] Fe's silence and severed communication, both as a result of her long *grito* (scream) but also her self-imposed isolation from her family, leads to suffering and loss. What is more, her long period of screaming evokes the story of *La Llorona* – the weeping woman. According to Mexican American folklore, *La Llorona* is the ghost of a woman who drowned her children and now wails while trying to look for them in the river.[50] However, in the case of Fe, her screaming is not provoked by the death of children, but rather the failure in her negotiation with Anglo American society. In Fe's version of the *Llorona* myth, the scream is caused by the loss of the family she wanted, the Anglo white family that she could have had access to through marrying her fiancé Tom. Yet, in the end, both Fe and *La Llorona* suffer as women upon whom the rules and expectations of patriarchal life are imposed, with destructive consequences.

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[47] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 85.
[48] Amelia Earhart, *Last Flight*, ed. George Palmer Putman (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1937).
[49] Barbara Katz Rothman, "Beyond Mothers and Fathers: Ideology in a Patriarchal Society," *Mothering: Experience, Ideology, and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139.
[50] For a fuller account of the myth of *La Llorona*, see Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* (New York: Ballantine, 1992), 302. See also: Rodolfo Anaya, *The Legend of La Llorona* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Rodolfo Anaya, *La Llorona: The Crying Woman* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2011); and Bess Lomax Hawes, "La Llorona in Juvenile Hall," *Western Folklore* 27 (1968): 153-70.

Fe's violent and ceaseless screaming cuts off access to her longed for lifestyle not only because she is no longer engaged to Tom, but also because it damages her speech which results in losing her job at the bank:

> What she was finally told was that although the company did not want to discriminate against her "handicap," her irregular speech really did not lend itself to working with the public. "What do __ mean, handi___?" she asked the manager but was only advised to go to speech therapy and that was that.[51]

Fe mourns the loss of her Anglo fiancé and her job at the bank, the two things that were essential negotiating tools for her entry and acceptance to the world of middle-class white America that she yearns for. Yet regardless of this, it is her family, or more specifically her mother, who still understands Fe through her "scratchy-sounding" vocals: "Sofi understood her daughter, while exercising to the fullest the patience granted to her to endure the particular life she had been given."[52] Thus although broken, socially, emotionally, and vocally, Castillo underlines that at this moment Fe still has the support of her mother(line) and her family, emphasising the nurturing and restorative quality of the Chicana family.

However, Fe is still desperate to salvage some of the middle-class lifestyle she so craves, and once again moves away from her home, taking on a job at the Acme Chemical factory. Fe still strives to assimilate, becoming one of the people who Martinez describes as "[spending] too much energy understanding [their] lives in relation to Whiteness, obsessing about what the White will think."[53] In this attempt, Fe works hard to please her bosses at the factory and prove she is a valuable employee. As a result of her diligent work, Fe soon becomes something of "speciality worker" and gets given the toughest job as she is, after all, "the queen of utilisation and efficiency."[54] It turns out, however, that the jobs she has been designated under the pretence of 'speciality' are, in fact, those that nobody else is able, or willing, to do.

> After the first day of what she called Ether Hell, she got used to the constant lethargy and just went with it. She was getting better bonuses, too. It was a lot of

[51] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 177.
[52] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 85.
[53] Martinez, "Beyond Black/White," 23.
[54] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 181.

> work, though, even for someone like Fe, so she was really earning them. When another girl was put on the same job for a few days, she went right back to the assembly line because she couldn't handle the smell or having to lug those burdensome parts down all day, neither.[55]

Despite the nausea, headaches, and constant lethargy, Fe takes pride in the bonuses she receives as a result of her dangerous work and in knowing that the other women in the factory cannot handle the working conditions. Acknowledging that "she was really earning" the bonuses for the work demonstrates that Fe is wholly caught up in the capitalist mechanism of factory work in which she believes that hard work has direct benefits reflected in monetary rewards. Yet the brand new super-efficient chemical they bring in to clean the parts is an incredibly hazardous product and has a massive impact on Fe's health and it is slowly killing her. With Fe's slow and painful death, Castillo emphasises that in a patriarchal system, paid labour, violence, and gender discrimination are all implicated and Fe is a disposable part of the system.[56] Fe's desire to buy into Anglo American capitalist society endangers her, physically and spiritually and as a result of her desire to fit into the consumerist capitalist machine, she is ultimately "consumed by it as she tries to consume it."[57]

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[55] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 183.

[56] Floya Anthias, and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 108. See: Lourdes Arguelles, "Undocumented Female Labor in the United States Southwest: An Essay on Migration, Consciousness, Oppression, and Struggle," *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History*, ed. Adelaida Del Castillo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Floricanto Press, 1990): 299-312; Elvia R. Arriola, "Voices from the Barbed Wires of Despair: Women in the Maquiladoras, Latina Critical Legal Theory, and Gender at the U.S.-Mexico Border," *DePaul Law Review* 49 (3) (2000): 754-765; María Patricia Fernández-Kelly, *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1983); Elizabeth Kadetsky, "High-Tech's Dirty Little Secret," *The Nation* (1994): 517-20; Louise Lamphere, Patricia Zavella, and Felipe Gonzalez, with Peter Evans, *Sunbelt Working Mothers: Reconciling Family and Factory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Rafael Moure-Eraso *et al.*, "Back to the Future: Sweatshop Conditions on the US-Mexico Border. Community Health Impacts of Maquiladora Industrial Activity," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 25 (1994): 311-24; Devon G. Peña, *The Terror of the Machine: Technology, Work, Gender, and Ecology on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); Juan F. Perea, ed., *Immigrants Out! The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Norma Iglesias Prieto, *Beautiful Flowers of the Maquiladora: Life Histories of Women Workers in Tijuana*, trans. Michael Stone and Gabrielle Winkler (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010); Cirila Ramírez Quintero, Romo Aguilar, and María de Lourdes "Riesgos laborales en la maquiladora. La experiencia Tamaulipeca," *Revista Frontera Norte* 13 (2) (2001): 11-46; Denise A. Segura, "Inside the Work Worlds of Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Women," in *Women of Color*: 95-111; and Daryl M. Williams and Nuria Homedes, "The Impact of Maquiladoras on Health and Health Policy Along the US-Mexico Border," *Journal of Public Health Policy* 22 (3) (2001): 320-37.

[57] Laura Gillman and Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, "*Con un pie a cada lado*/With a Foot in Each Place: Mestizaje as Transnational Feminisms in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*," *Meridians* 2 (1) (2001): 163.

Through Fe's story, Castillo unmistakably warns of the dangers of assimilation as a negotiation tactic for women of colour, and this is a principle explored in her other creative and critical works. In 'A Countryless Woman', she condemns the "outrageously low wages for working in dangerous and unregulated conditions."[58] It is the culmination of Fe's severance of her connections with her family, her desire to fit into white, middle-class society and her willingness to work in exploitative conditions that, for Castillo, destroy her Chicana self. Madsen argues that Fe's demise is as a result of her "denial of her family, her ancestry, and her Chicana self [which is itself] always a form of death."[59] In her desperate attempts to make money and please her employers, Fe sacrifices everything. After only one appointment at the hospital during which the abuse that her body has suffered is made horribly clear, Fe dies: "[and] when someone dies that plain dead, it is hard to talk about."[60] With the finality of her death, Castillo singles out Fe as her sisters all experience some form of resurrection or spiritual transcendence in the novel.[61] For the final time, Fe is silenced. Her utter destruction emphasises her disposability within the capitalist patriarchal system that she tried to access. Her agonising death from cancer demonstrates not only the devastating physical effects of dangerous chemicals and the lack of health and safety measures applied to expendable female workers of colour, but also the hazards of buying into a consumerist culture, in addition to underlining how damaging isolation from her family, community, and heritage can be. Castillo thus creates a counternarrative that challenges the mainstream assimilation narrative, and this becomes a resource, a strategy of resistance, and a "lens through which […] the symbolic patterns of a particular marginalized group" can be uncovered.[62]

In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo describes assimilationist strategies as leaving the Chicana "floundering between invisibility and a tacit hope […] [a floundering that is marked by a] schizophrenic-like existence."[63] It is this schizophrenic-like existence that Castillo describes that distinguishes Fe from her mother, Sofi. Unlike the hybrid *mestizaje* adopted by her mother, Fe's

[58] Castillo, *Massacre*, 37.
[59] Madsen, *Understanding Contemporary Chicana Literature*, 100.
[60] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 186.
[61] They "had all gone out into the world and had all eventually returned to their mother's home." (*So Far From God*, 25) The eldest daughter Esperanza, having gone to report on the war in the Persian Gulf, is captured, tortured and killed, and returns home in spirit form (162-64). Caridad jumps off a cliff in Sky City but no body is found and the "spirit deity Tsichtinako" guides her "deep within the soft, moist dark earth" where she is "safe and [will] live forever" (211). The youngest, La Loca, stays at her mother's side after her miraculous resurrection when she was three years old and after her second funeral is revered as a saint, making occasional spiritual appearances until her "transcendental departure" (230-32 and 238).
[62] Lisa A. Flores, "Challenging the Myth of Assimilation: A Chicana Feminist Response," *Constituting Cultural Difference Through Discourse*, ed. Mary Jane Collier (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2000), 41.
[63] Castillo, *Massacre*, 38-9.

attempt to "pass" in Anglo American society creates a conflict within herself that tears her apart. As discussed in chapter two, Sofi and Tía Regina's mestiza consciousness allows them to embody multiple types of womanhood in a move away from the reductive and stifling singular traditional definitions of motherhood. Conversely, Fe fails in her attempt to combine the Anglo American within her Chicana self, because admission to the former requires a complete denial of, and split from, the latter. This "cultural schizophrenia," as Alicia Gaspar de Alba describes it, is a psychological legacy of a history of colonisation. Gaspar de Alba defines the cultural schizophrenia experienced by Mexican American women as "the presence of mutually contradictory or antagonistic beliefs, social forms, and material traits in any group whose racial, religious, or social components are a hybrid (or *mestizaje*) of two or more fundamentally opposite cultures."[64] She argues that in the "moment of differentiation" of the split identity, Chicana/o identity becomes aware of itself as not only separate from, but more importantly resistant to, the hegemonic constructs of race and class.[65] Yet in the case of Fe, no such moment of realisation occurs because of the complete denial of her non-white self. So it is that she is presented as an incomplete character, one unable to reconcile her desired white identity with her mestiza familial heritage. It is a direct result of Fe's (attempted) assimilation into white middle-class society that causes a rupture in the Chicana motherline.

Furthermore, Fe illustrates the non-linear pattern of intergenerational developments. Rather than learning from and integrating the lessons of her mother's non-traditional mothering practices, Fe opts for a different type of womanhood, Anglo and middle-class, one that denigrates and abuses her. Fe wants an identity separate from her motherline, seeing her Mexican heritage as she does as jarring with the Anglo American version of family and success. Fe tackles this through utter denial of her Mexican heritage in favour of assimilation, rejecting her Chicana womanist motherline and seeking an identity in an Anglo American society that subjugates and stifles women of colour. Fe's story is demonstrative of the ways in which the individualism at the core of assimilation is dangerous and threatening to women.[66] As Melissa Schoeffel notes, it exposes the "ugly underbelly of dominant culture" and Castillo critiques the narratives that capitalist patriarchy uses to justify "corporate greed and irresponsibility, and violence towards women."[67] Lisa A. Flores underlines this

[64] Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "The Alter-Native Grain: Theorizing Chicano/a Popular Culture," *Culture and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Bicultural Experience in the United States*, ed. Antonia Darder (Westport, CN: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 106.
[65] Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Born in East L.A.: An Exercise in Cultural Schizophrenia," *The Latino/a Condition*, 227.
[66] As discussed in Yarbro-Bejarano, "Chicana Literature"; and Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*.
[67] Melissa Schoeffel, *Maternal Conditions: Reading Kingsolver, Castillo, Erdrich, and Ozeki* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 53.

danger by stating that when one person's accomplishments are highlighted as exemplary of the success of the assimilation model, "we also ignore systematic and institutional discrimination, because we turn our attention to the examples that seem to illustrate equality."[68] Fe's desperate failure reveals the ways that Chicanas are silenced by dominant mainstream American society. This affirms Kevin R. Johnson's contention that "assimilation is a process entailing human pain and suffering. There are casualties."[69]

Yet, as Castillo comments in 'A Countryless Woman,' "one cannot cruelly judge such women who have resorted to negation of their heritage; constant rejection has accosted us since childhood."[70] In the face of aggression and abuse from Anglo American mainstream society, Castillo acknowledges the motivations of those who may resort to assimilation in order to survive. In today's United States of America, this option is understandable because of the intolerance and racism being openly expressed by none other than the President, Donald Trump, and his supporters. Like the women of the (grand)mother generation who experienced the lack of tolerance in the 1930s and 1940s, people of colour in 2017 are experiencing racist violence and hostility on a regular basis. So in this environment perhaps the attempt to assimilate by some people in marginalised communities should be understood as a means of survival. This parallels the survival tactics employed by women in previous generations. Like some of the negotiations employed by the foremothers discussed in chapter one, they are compelled to implicate themselves in systems that undervalue them as they feel that they do not have another option. As Ronald L. Jackson argues, "there is always a need for marginalized persons to seek centrality and to associate with members of the dominant and mainstream culture."[71] With this in mind, Fe's choice to assimilate is perhaps not surprising as the environment in which she lives privileges assimilation as the key to survival.[72] Negotiation through assimilation is often seen as the only viable option for women of colour if they are to succeed on Anglo America's terms. Yet, as Flores further expands, their survival on these terms, "consistent with U.S. American ideology, is an individual one."[73] Fe's individualistic assessment of success is therefore fundamentally flawed and counter to the collectivist outlook of Castillo's Chicana feminism as seen in *So Far From God*.

[68] Flores, "Challenging the Myth," 40.
[69] Johnson, "'Melting Pot' or 'Ring of Fire'?," 1276.
[70] Castillo, *Massacre*, 38.
[71] Ronald L. Jackson II, "Cultural Contracts Theory: Towards an Understanding of Identity Negotiation," *Communication Quarterly* 50 (3-4) (2002): 363.
[72] Flores, "Challenging the Myth," 38.
[73] Ibid.

Thus Castillo emphasises the dangers of attempted assimilation in direct contrast to the security provided by the Mexican American family. It is because of the negation of her Chicana self, and of her Chicana family, that Fe's negotiation is ultimately unsuccessful. Yet although Fe herself disengages from her motherline in choosing Anglo American culture over her Chicana home, when all else is lost, she is drawn back to her family and to her home.

> Despite all this and more, Fe found herself wanting to go nowhere else but back to her mom and La Loca, and even to the animals to die just before her twenty-seventh birthday. Sofi's chaotic home became a sanctuary from the even more incomprehensible world that Fe encountered that last year of her pathetic life.[74]

Fe's homecoming reveals her misplaced faith in the empty promise of assimilation that in the end kills her. As Delia Lanza states, Fe is "finally able to see her home as a source of comfort, wisdom and spirituality but it is only after the outside world has done its best to destroy her."[75] Tragically for Fe, it is only in death that she is reconnected to her motherline. Yet, finally, the distance Fe creates from her home, family, and motherline, is bridged, "by the communal sharing of grief, caring, and healing that the women together provide for one another in need."[76] Although Fe has rejected her Mexican American heritage, she is welcomed back to the family in the end and finds "sanctuary" from the "incomprehensible world" she had tried so hard to access. Castillo exposes the fallacy in following an assimilationist path that fundamentally denies Chicana women agency and subjectivity while revealing the benefits of the Xicanista philosophy that emphasises the importance of familial and cultural connection.

[74] Castillo, *So Far From God*, 171-2.
[75] Lanza, "Hearing the Voices," 72.
[76] Delgado, "Forms of Chicana Feminist Resistance," 910.

"I have inherited her name but I don't want to inherit her place by the window:" 'My Name' and Negotiating Nominal Lineage[77]

In the story 'My Name' in Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984), the protagonist, Esperanza, struggles to negotiate her nominal connection to her motherline with her own desire for individuality. 'My Name' explores the relationship that Esperanza has with her great-grandmother, after whom she is named. She feels the connection to her foremother strongly and the pressures this imposes on her own growth and development. Esperanza's relationship with her female lineage is representative of the complexity of growing up as (grand)daughters of Mexicana and Chicana women. The young Esperanza does not want her life to be a repeat of the story of her great-grandmother's life, marked as it is by sadness and waiting.[78] Cisneros' story effectively demonstrates the complexity of accepting one's place in the motherline, while also wishing to change or twist the line to better reflect one's self, and particularly one's potentiality. So it is that Esperanza declares: "I have inherited her name but I don't want to inherit her place by the window."[79] Tey Diana Rebolledo emphasises the importance of this process of acknowledgement and adaptation particularly for women that share the same name. She states that "naming and the acceptance of names is seen by many writers as a continuing process of self-definition."[80] This is particularly pertinent given that for Mexican American girls it is said that one's name will "[serve] as the cornerstone of [one's] identity."[81] Their nominal connection allows Esperanza to listen to her great-grandmother's story with a particularly keen ear and it helps her to express her own hopes for the future: "I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be."[82] Unlike her great-grandmother, Esperanza has choices open to her as a young woman in twentieth-century America and does not want to repeat the life of her imprisoned and oppressed female relative.

Esperanza's negotiation of her nominal connection involves the acknowledgement that she is connected to her motherline and that she has agency to change that matrilineal connection.

[77] Sandra Cisneros, "My Name," *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 11.
[78] Ibid., 10.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, 105.
[81] Yvonne M. Cherena Pacheco, "What's In a Name? Retention and Loss of the Maternal Surname," *Latino/a Condition*, 516.
[82] Cisneros, "My Name," 11.

Through storytelling these characters are able to negotiate their identities and their place on the motherline on their own terms. Like the negotiations employed by Sofi and Tía Regina discussed in the previous chapter, Esperanza embraces a mestiza conscious identity to include the multiple aspects of her selfhood, to better understand her own self, and thereby find her place along the motherline. So though she wishes to baptise herself anew, she "is always Esperanza."[83] Through negotiating her nominal connection with her great-grandmother, Esperanza also rehabilitates her foremother and brings her into a feminist Xicanista identity that retrieves her from silence and gives her expression.

Esperanza's desire to break free from the negative legacy of her great-grandmother's name illuminates what Alvina Quintana describes as "a generational rift and the pain and estrangement between women of the same family who are subject to racial and ethnic subordination."[84] The rift between Esperanza and her great-grandmother is most apparent in the young Esperanza's desire to break away from the inherited legacy of sorrow endured by her namesake. However, through integrating her great-grandmother's story into her own life story, Esperanza acknowledges the pain of her great-grandmother's past while disconnecting it from their future. Esperanza is "determined not to adopt the generational suffering of the women in her family."[85] As opposed to continuing the pattern of generational rift, the young Esperanza seeks to break the history of pain and estrangement of women in the family by changing her narrative, and therefore the narrative of the long motherline of her female ancestors. So while Esperanza's inherited name is described as a name that means "sadness [and] waiting," they also share a powerful spirit, both strong "horse [women]" as they are.[86] Both women were born in the Chinese year of the horse, which Esperanza notes is supposed to be bad luck as such women are strong and forthright, which neither traditional Chinese nor Mexican cultures tolerate.[87] However, great-grandmother Esperanza's 'wildness' is tamed when a man kidnaps and forcibly marries her. Jennifer Hirsch documents the tendency for this sort of behaviour in interviews with women from Degollado, Jalisco. According to Hirsch, these women, born in the 1930s and 1940s, told her "that in the days when they courted, girls only eloped against their will, carried off at gunpoint on horseback."[88] Stuck in an imposed and unwanted

[83] Cisneros, "My Name," 11.
[84] Alvina E. Quintana, "Borders Be Damned: Creolizing Literary Relations," *Cultural Studies* 13 (2) (1999): 363.
[85] Sandoval, *Toward A Latina Feminism*, 24.
[86] Cisneros, "My Name," 10 and 11.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Jennifer Hirsch, *A Courtship After Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

marriage the elder Esperanza becomes one of many wild women controlled and oppressed by the institution and tradition of matrimony. Women who spend their lives looking out the window, "sit[ting] their sadness on an elbow."[89] Esperanza is trapped as a wife and mother, her outlook restricted to what she can see, but not take part in, from the window of the house. The younger Esperanza imagines the heaviness that weighs upon her great-grandmother propped up her elbow as she stares out to the world. Through their shared name, the Esperanzas are unwillingly "linked to the male-dominated tradition of [their] culture."[90] The young Esperanza acknowledges the weight of her great-grandmother's (hi)story, and does not want her name to burden her in the same ways, she does not "want to inherit her place by the window."[91] She chooses not to be one of the women who passively watch the world go by from their windows but are unable to take part as their place is restricted in the home as wife and mother.[92]

So it is that the younger Esperanza seeks her own space, and tries to actively transform the nominal motherline drawn between herself and her great-grandmother and re-write her own place in her (hi)story through a process of renaming.

[89] Cisneros, "My Name," 11.
[90] Sandoval, *Toward A Latina Feminism*, 25.
[91] Cisneros, "My Name," 11.
[92] The image of passive women who sit by the window is also explored in Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. In 'Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut & Papaya Juice on Tuesdays', Rafaela "gets locked indoors because her husband is afraid Rafaela will run away since she is too beautiful to look at" (*The House on Mango Street*, 79). Like the elder Esperanza, Rafaela is imprisoned in her marriage and only able to communicate with the rest of the world through the window, when every Tuesday she throws a crumpled dollar to one of the children on the street to go and buy her a coconut and papaya juice that she then hoists up with a washing line rope to her "bitter" and "empty room" (80). Cisneros' reiteration of the image of marriage as imprisonment reveals the realities for young women who are oftentimes stuck in a marriage that represses them. One of the recurring characters in the book, Sally, gets married in order to get away from her abusive father: "[she] says she's in love, but I think she did it to escape" (101). In 'Linoleum Roses', Sally too is trapped in her house and her husband is so controlling that "he doesn't let her look out the window" (102). Instead, all Sally can do it look at the linoleum roses on the floor, which Julian Olivares argues are "a trope for household confinement and drudgery, and an ironic treatment of the garden motif, which is associated with freedom and the outdoors" ("Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and the Poetics of Space," in *Chicana Creativity and Criticism*, 165). Sally can only experience what her husband allows within the four walls of her new home for "she is afraid to go outside without his permission" (102) Tragically, like Cleófilas in 'Woman Hollering Creek', Sally has moved from one abusive relationship to another, from her father's strict home to her husband's. The house for these women then is a place of confinement. It is for this reason that Esperanza wants to distance herself from her great-grandmother, her namesake, as well the other women on Mango Street and get a "house all my own", "a space for myself to go" (108).

> I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.[93]

Esperanza's desire to change her name to 'Zeze the X' demonstrates a need to break free from the potential damage of nominative determinism, to avoid the fate of her great-grandmother. For, under patriarchy, "naming constitutes a tool of domination through its power to symbolically confine the named within the parameters of an imposed gender identity."[94] Esperanza thus refuses to be dominated by the legacy of confinement instilled in her very name. Nevertheless, the connection to, and relationship with, the nominal motherline is intrinsic to her definition of herself. Indeed, psychologist Lilian Comas-Díaz states that naming and nominal lineages are crucial in understanding a Latina's sense of self, asserting that it is important to identify the patient's namesake as many Latinas/os are named after family members and identifying this connection and understanding their (his)stories may help reveal the patient's conflicts.[95] It is therefore significant that the younger Esperanza wants to disaffiliate in this way.

Furthermore, the choice of name also marks a break away from, and the disintegration of, traditional name formations in both Spanish and English and therefore a disruption of the norms of familial identification. This resonates with José Esteban Muñoz concept of 'disidentification' which describes how identity is not just about identifying with one's culture or standing against it but rather relies on a process of transformation.[96] This transformation for Zeze the X involves the creation of a new name without a comprehensive rejection of the name 'Esperanza'. Indeed, the connection between the two names can be traced as Zeze the X morphs the ending of her given name (the 'za' of Esperanza) to create this new iteration. Thus this disidentification of Zeze the X's is a negotiation that embodies resistance as well as conciliation. In becoming 'Zeze the X', Esperanza is free from the prescription – literally pre-scripted in the story of her great-grandmother Esperanza – of her own name, thus becoming individual and self-titled. Within the Chicana context, the 'X' links

[93] Cisneros, "My Name," 11.
[94] Silvio Sirias and Richard McGarry, "Rebellion and Tradition in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* and Sylvia López-Medina's *Cantora*," *MELUS* 25 (2) (2000): 84.
[95] Lillian Comas-Díaz, "Culturally Relevant Issues and Treatment Implications for Latinos," *Crossing Cultures in Mental Health*, ed. Diane R. Koslow and Elizabeth Pathy Salett (Washington DC: National MultiCultural Institute, 2001), 27.
[96] José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

to the development of a 'Xicanista' sensibility. As discussed above, in 'A Countryless Woman', Castillo states that the basic premise of Xicanisma is a:

> [redefinition] (not categorically [rejection]) [of] our roles within our families, communities at large, and white dominant society, our Xicanisma helps us to be self-confident and assertive regarding the pursuing of our needs and desires.[97]

Castillo defines Xicanisma as inherently connected to the Mexic Amerindian woman's character, emphasising that there is not a split between the two but rather a development that integrates the virtues of this part of the Chicana female identity with the feminist development of a Xicanista identity. This underlines that in naming herself Zeze the X(icanista), she is not rejecting outright the legacy of her maternal nominal lineage. Rather, Zeze the X is taking part in the process of redefining her role within the familial network, embracing the feminist practice of uncovering self-confidence and assertiveness and pursuing her own needs and desires. Thus Zeze the X's relationship with the past, through her nominal motherline, is not about separation, but about "reenvisioning the future through the past so as to assure survival."[98] Through redefinition of her name, Esperanza/Zeze the X is able to negotiate her matrilineal connection on her own terms.

Furthermore, 'Zeze the X' is an example of what Alvina Quintana terms a "culturally uncoded" name, emphasising the break away from traditional gender role expectations through the disruption of the inheritance of the name 'Esperanza'.[99] Interestingly, Quintana states that Cisneros suggested to her that the story 'My Name' was inspired by Maxine Hong Kingston's 'No Name Woman' from *The Woman Warrior* (1975). Hong Kingston's work was, and continues to be, hugely influential, particularly for women of colour writers but also for the American canon; indeed, David Leiwei Li states that during the 1990s, it was "the most widely taught book by a living writer in US colleges and universities."[100] Hong Kingston's work permeates Cisneros' writing and associations with *Caramelo* and *Woman Warrior* are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. In 'My Name' the connection is underlined by Cisneros' explicit association of both Esperanzas with the year of the horse and the connection made between Chinese and Mexican traditional cultures in the text. With

[97] Castillo, *Massacre*, 40.
[98] Flores, "Challenging the Myth," 39.
[99] Quintana, "Borders Be Damned," 363.
[100] David Leiwei Li, *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Studies* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), 8.

this cross-cultural dialogue in mind, Quintana understands this to be part of a process creating a feminist ethnicity that is "creolized", that is to say "removed from traditional gender constraints."[101] Thus suggesting that Esperanza's self-baptism as Zeze the X is part of a process of renaming that connects other "rebellious women who affirm their strength through emergent American identities that are as yet unnamed."[102] The deconstruction of her given name, a process of unnaming, allows Zeze the X to take part in reconstruction of a new emergent identity. The explicit connection between Hong Kingston's work and Cisneros', as well as Walker's 'In Our Mother's Garden' discussed above, traces a shared motherline between women of colour of many cultures and ethnicities in the United States. Although each such story is unique, there is a connection through the motherline, as Lowinsky states, and other women's stories "set up sympathetic vibrations so that we begin to hear our own."[103] In the works of writers like Cisneros, Castillo, Hong Kingston, and Walker, the sympathetic vibrations connecting them are as a result of their positions as women of colour writing stories from a place at the margin of mainstream U.S. literary and cultural society.

Through a process of renaming Zeze the X realigns her connection to her great-grandmother for even with her new name, she "is always Esperanza."[104] In doing so she changes the motherline narrative for both of them as they are still connected through the story of their names. Changing her name to 'Zeze the X' does not break their connection, rather it adds a new thread to the weave of their histories. Rather than a separation or detachment from the past, this is a process of integration that intertwines the stories in their motherline. In this way, Zeze the X avoids the fate of her great-grandmother, and the fates of similarly oppressed women, those who "[suffer] as quiet rebels, sitting by the window, their anger silenced."[105] Lowinsky notes that for a modern woman to connect to, or root herself in, her female lineage "she must be able to feel the archetype of continuity, as well as the generational and cultural differences between the women of her line."[106] In redefining the story that connects these women through the adaptation of her name, Cisneros demonstrates the ways in which naming can function as "a tool for empowering self-definition, a means by which to redefine women's identity and reject imposed descriptions of the self."[107] Through this deliberate redefinition of her great-grandmother's fate, Zeze the X demonstrates a feminist choice never

[101] Quintana, "Borders Be Damned," 363.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Naomi Lowinsky, *The Motherline: Every Woman's Journey to Find Her Female Roots* (Cheyenne, WY: Fisher King Press, 1992), xii.
[104] Cisneros, "My Name," 11.
[105] Sandoval, *Toward A Latina Feminism*, 25.
[106] Lowinsky, *Motherline*, 99.
[107] Sirias and McGarry, "Rebellion and Tradition," 84.

afforded to the elder Esperanza. Ironically, in choosing to castoff the name 'Esperanza', Zeze the X reveals the very 'hope' imbued in the meaning of her name. She unlocks the potentiality of the name for herself, and for her great-grandmother, and for all the other "quiet rebels".[108]

Negotiating the Motherline Connection: Celaya and the Awful Grandmother's Relationship in *Caramelo*

Like Zeze the X, Celaya in Cisneros' *Caramelo* is troubled by the tension between her connection to the motherline and her desire to create an individual identity for herself. Celaya's response is not to pull away from the motherline but rather to realign herself along it through telling her grandmother's story. By understanding her place along the maternal continuum she is able to negotiate the motherline by adapting and integrating the stories of her foremothers to create a self that is both individual and communal. Like Castillo in *The Guardians*, Cisneros thus engages with plural potentialities for Celaya's character that combine the individual with the collective. Celaya is the only daughter of Inocencio Reyes, the Awful Grandmother's most cherished son. As discussed in chapter one, the Awful Grandmother has a hostile relationship with Zoila, Celaya's mother, and yet treats her sons like royalty. As the narrator of the Awful Grandmother's story, Celaya bridges the intergenerational connections in the Reyes family and negotiates these connections to develop her own identity, as an individual and as a member of the longer line of women in the family. The relationship between the Awful Grandmother and Celaya is complex; it is simultaneously dysfunctional and intimate, difficult yet cherished. Furthermore, their identities are closely linked through their sharing of stories. As Tess Cosslett describes in her theory of matrilineal narratives, "the identity of the subject [(Celaya)] is assumed to be dependent on or in relation with the identities of her female ancestors [(the Awful Grandmother)]."[109] In the matrilineal narrative of *Caramelo*, Celaya connects her grandmother's identity with her own. As with Zeze the X in 'My Name,' Celaya is thus able to acknowledge her self as part of a larger female family group while also taking her own track along the motherline. For Celaya, storytelling is a means to construct an individual, a familial and a cultural identity, allowing her to negotiate her place in the Chicana motherline: "[because] a life contains a multitude of stories and not a single strand explains precisely

[108] Sandoval, *Toward A Latina Feminism*, 25.
[109] Tess Cosslett, "Matrilineal Narrative Revisited," *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, ed. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London: Routledge, 2000), 142.

the who of who one is."[110] In acknowledging this, Celaya takes part in the process of turning backward to the knowledge of the past to imagine, and so create, a future, which is seen as essential to the fulfilment of the Chicana self.[111]

In *Caramelo*, Cisneros explores the tension of the motherline connection through the granddaughter-grandmother relationship of Celaya and the Awful Grandmother. It is important to note that many Chicanas see their *abuelitas* (an endearing term for grandmothers) in a very different light to their mothers and some Chicanas have made particular note of the different influence that their grandmother had on their development and sense of self. This is particularly important as the relationship between the Awful Grandmother and Celaya is distinct from the Awful Grandmother's relationships with her daughter and daughter-in-law, discussed in chapter one. The complexity of these intergenerational relationships demonstrates the fluidity of familial roles. Closeness between Chicanas and their grandmothers has been described as significant by key figures in the Chicana community, including Diane Neumaier, Lorna Dee Cervantes, and Tey Diana Rebolledo.[112] Lisa Hernandez describes the critical grandmother-mother-daughter relationship as a "process of transformation" integral to Chicana self-affirmation and empowerment.[113] Many Chicanas see their relationships with their grandmothers as affirmation of themselves as "women with a unique racial and ethnic history, [and] language."[114] Rebolledo notes that writing about grandmothers is common in Chicana literature as *abuelitas* are central to the writers' attempts to decipher a cultural past in the absence of apparent literary foremothers.[115] As Norma Alarcón states, they are a "solid figure that illuminates the writer's present, and secures the past."[116] Alarcón goes on to underline the fact that the particular position of the grandmother, "by virtue of age, distance, durability, and ultimately death", gives her a "privileged status" in the Chicana/o family. This allows the Chicana writer to make the grandmother a "positive heroine" even though she cannot "completely do so for her mother."[117]

[110] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 115.
[111] Moraga, *Last Generation*, 60.
[112] See: Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Beneath the Shadow of the Freeway," *Emplumada* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980); Diane Neumaier, "Judy Baca: Our People Are the Internal Exiles," *Making Face*; and Rebolledo, "Abuelitas."
[113] Lisa Hernandez, "Canas," *Palabras Chicanas*, 47-9.
[114] Segura and Pierce, "Chicana/o Family Structure," 303.
[115] Rebolledo, "Abuelitas."
[116] Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover," 96.
[117] Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover," 96-7.

Research shows that the grandparent-grandchild relationship tends to differ from the parent-child relationship due to the generation gap between grandparent and grandchild, and that overall this helps to construct positive relationships. In the Mexican and Mexican American context, this is particularly true, as *abuelas* (grandmothers) often hold a central position in the family. Zepeda's 1979 study established that the role of the grandmother in the family "is something most Mexicanos/Chicanos treasure."[118] Further Zepeda states that Chicana grandmothers are often considered "the backbone of family endurance and the symbol of cultural survival."[119] In many other communities in the United States, research shows that the grandparent-grandchild relationship is important for both sides, enabling positive developments for both grandparent and grandchild.[120] Importantly, as asserted by foundational anthropologist Margaret Mead, grandchildren who have a good relationship with their grandparents also acquire a clear sense of themselves as cultural and historical beings.[121] In the case of Mexican American women it is this sense of self as cultural and historical beings that is crucial in defining relationships between granddaughters and their *abuelitas* (grandmothers). Furthermore, in the Mexican American family, respect for elder family members is a fundamental part of the family structure. In Latina/o culture more widely, a well-raised child is considered to be "*tranquilo, obediente, y respetuoso*" – calm, obedient, and respectful towards their elders.[122] In the Mexican American family, it is the accumulated wisdom and years of labour for the

[118] Marlene Zepeda, "Las abuelitas," *Agenda* 9 (1979): 5.
[119] Zepeda, "Las abuelitas," 12.
[120] See: V. C. Downs, "The Grandparent-Grandchild Relationship," *Life-Span Communication: Normative Processes*, ed. Jon F. Nussbaum (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989): 257-81; Margaret C. Hall, *The Special Mission of Grandparents* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999); Timothy S. Hartshorne and Guy J. Manaster, "The Relationship with Grandparents: Contact, Importance, and Role Conception," *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 15 (1982): 233-45; Sherry J. Holladay, *et al.*, "(Re)Constructing Relationships with Grandparents: A Turning Point Analysis of Granddaughters' Relational Development with Maternal Grandmothers," *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 46 (4) (1998): 287-303; Arthur Kornhaber, "Grandparenthood and the "New Social Contract"," *Grandparenting*, ed. Vern L. Bengston and Joan F. Robertson (Beverley Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1985): 159-72; and Loretta L. Pecchioni, Kevin B. Wright, and Jon F. Nussbaum, *Life-Span Communication* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005).
[121] See: Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (Garden City, NY: Natural History Press, Doubleday, 1970); and Margaret Mead, "Grandparents as Educators," *Teachers College Record* 76 (2) (1974): 240-9.
[122] Sara Villanueva Dixon, Julia A. Graber, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, "The roles of respect for parental authority and parenting practices in parent-child conflict among African American, Latino, and European American families," *Journal Of Family Psychology* 22 (1) (2008): 1-11. See also: Charles L. Briggs, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Andrew J. Fuligni, Vivian Tseng and May Lam, "Attitudes Toward Family Obligations Among American Adolescents with Asian, Latin American, and European Backgrounds," *Child Development* 70, (4) (1999): 1030-44; Cynthia García Coll, Elaine C. Meyer, and Lisa Brillon, "Ethnic and Minority Parenting," *Handbook of Parenting: Vol. 2 Biology and Ecology of Parenting*, ed. Marc H. Bornstein (NJ: Erlbaum, 1995): 189-209.

benefit of the family that earns grandparents this respect.[123] Part of the centrality of their place in this group is as a result of their roles as cultural transmitters. Grandparents in Mexican American families have been considered conduits through which common values, beliefs, language and customs of the culture are communicated to children and grandchildren.[124] As Elisa Facio contends in her book *Understanding Older Chicanas* (1996), Mexican American grandmothers, as well as other Latina grandmothers, occupy a central place in family-life and their function as transmitters of culture is significant.[125]

However, as discussed in chapter one, the Awful Grandmother, in her role as mother and mother-in-law, demonstrates many of the behaviours associated with the patriarchal familial framework in which women are subservient to men, particularly in her relationships with her daughter and daughter-in-law. Indeed, Herrera-Sobek also acknowledges that in Chicana literature, grandmothers have been depicted as withholding the truth and perpetuating a "conspiracy of silence" in the family.[126] Although they do hold important roles as cultural transmitters and provide much needed support in the family, they also often perpetuate the patriarchal value system and suppress female voices. In the Awful Grandmother, Cisneros has created what B. J. González calls a "perverse inversion of the myriad lovable and saintly grandmothers who so often seem to personify Tradition in literature."[127] Yet, it is through her complicated, at times embittered, at times celebratory, grandmother-granddaughter relationship that a more complex picture of the Awful Grandmother

[123] Rosina Becerra, "The Mexican American Family," *Ethnic Families*, 141-59.
[124] See: David Maldonado, "Aging in the Chicano context," *Ethnicity and Aging: Theory, Research and Policy*, ed. Donald E. Gelfand (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1979): 175-83; and Merril Silverstein and Xuan Chen, "The Impact of Acculturation in Mexican American Families on the Quality of Adult Grandchild-Grandparent Relationships," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1) (1999), http://www.jstor.org/stable/353893: 188-98.
[125] Facio, *Understanding Older Chicanas*. See also: Thomas D. Boswell and James R. Curtis, *The Cuban American Experience* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allenheld, 1984); Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971); Catherine C. Goodman and Merril Silverstein, "Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren: Ethnic and Racial Differences in Well-Being Among Custodial and Coparenting Families," *Journal of Family Issues* 27 (11) (2006): 1605-26; Kyriakos S. Markides, Joanne S. Boldt, and Laura A. Ray, "Sources of Helping and Intergenerational Solidity: A Three-Generation Study of Mexican Americans," *Journal of Gerontology* 41 (1986): 506-11; Lisandro Perez, "Immigrant Economic Adjustment and Family Organization: The Cuban Success Story Examined," *International Migration Review* 20 (1986): 4-20; Emily Israel Raphael, "Grandparents: A Study of Their Role in Hispanic Families," *Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics* 6 (1989): 31-62; Lloyd D. Rogler and Rosemary Santana Cooney, "Puerto Rican Families in New York City: Intergenerational Processes," *Marriage and Family Review* 16 (1991): 331-50; and Adeny Schmidt and Amado M. Padilla, "Grandparent-Grandchild Interaction in a Mexican American Group," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 5 (1983):181-98.
[126] Maria Herrera-Sobek, "The Politics of Rape: Sexual Transgression in Chicana Fiction," *Chicana Creativity and Criticism*, 178.
[127] Bill Johnson González, "The Politics of Translation in Sandra Cisneros's *Caramelo*," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17 (2006): 3.

emerges. Furthermore, through this intergenerational relationship, Celaya begins to understand her own sense of self as daughter and granddaughter, as well as independently as a young Chicana woman. As Rita Bode notes, Cisneros "refuses to sanctify or vilify, but she complicates the process of maternal transmission through a range of significant obstacles."[128] Cisneros is thus able to portray the full complexity of this grandmother-granddaughter relationship, by highlighting the very difficulties that define it rather than glossing over the obstacles that must be negotiated.

Storytelling is an integral part of the Awful Grandmother and Celaya's relationship and this is central to maintaining connections through the motherline, as Lowinksy states, asserting that "[every] woman who wishes to be her full, female self needs to know the stories of her Motherline."[129] The grandmother has a particular role in this through her close connection to what Lowinsky terms "another time" that, in the case of Celaya and the Awful Grandmother, can be interpreted as the connection to their Mexican heritage of this older generation of women.[130] As a Chicana daughter, it is Celaya's duty to shed light on why her grandmother has become the woman she is; the woman who viciously attacks her daughter-in-law and worships her sons. In narrating the Awful Grandmother's story through Celaya, Cisneros highlights the role of the feminist Chicana (grand)daughter who can give voice to "the maligned female who cannot speak for herself."[131] In doing so, Celaya can begin to understand the influence that patriarchal family dynamics have played in establishing her grandmother's character.

Throughout *Caramelo*, the Awful Grandmother is present in Celaya's narrative motherline and, even after death, refuses to depart, forcing Celaya to ask, "Grandmother, why do you keep haunting me?"[132] The Awful Grandmother's response to this question is poignant and meaningful: "Me? Haunting you? It's *you*, Celaya, who's haunting *me*. I can't bear it. Why do you insist on repeating my life? Is that what you want? To live as I did?"[133] The Awful Grandmother's declaration emphasises the shared stories of these two women, underlining the association across familial generations and asserting that their relationship is characterised by a mutual haunting between grandmother and granddaughter. In Part II of the novel, Cisneros writes their story as an interaction between the

[128] Bode, "Mother to Daughter," 294.
[129] Lowinsky, *Motherline*, 12.
[130] Lowinsky, "Mother of Mothers," 233.
[131] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 101-2.
[132] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 406.
[133] Ibid.

Awful Grandmother and Celaya and it is often presented as a dialogue between the two characters, emphasising their close connection. The use of haunting by Cisneros also creates a story that "[challenges] the scripts, literary and social, of [the] larger culture."[134] Hong Kingston, whose 'No Name Woman' influenced Cisneros' 'My Name', attests "that this is a theme in the women's writing: 'how can I break silence.' […] There is the struggle of how to find the voice when everyone conspires and orders you to put all these things away."[135] In the Mexican American context, the influence of the Biblical teachings adopted by the Catholic Church is pertinent to this generation of traditional (grand)mothers. As discussed in the introduction, the Catholic Church mandates a subservient role for women and silence is an integral part of this submissive position. In the Bible the rules for the conduct of women specifically state that "[a] woman must receive instruction silently and under complete control", women are not permitted "to teach or have authority over man", and they "must be quiet."[136] Furthermore, the role of the spiritual, or supernatural, in the relationship between the Awful Grandmother and Celaya resists traditional realist literature, producing a narrative that is "doubly at odds with the traditional Anglo-American canon."[137] The Awful Grandmother's story can only be told through the resistant style of narrative Cisneros adopts. Thus, through telling her grandmother's story, Celaya recuperates an historical legacy of silenced women, giving them expression.

Furthermore, the haunting of Celaya by the Awful Grandmother connects *Caramelo* with a number of books by women of colour who also use the supernatural in order to question ideas of ethnic identity and cultural transmission; such as Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Alma Luz Villanueva, Amy Tan, Susan Power, and Christina García.[138] In these writings, "ghosts exemplify the "in-between" situation" of women of colour and writing ghosts into the narrative "[translates] the past to construct their future."[139] Kathleen Brogan explores this

[134] Ruth Y. Jenkins, "Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Allende's *The House of the Spirits*," *MELUS* 19 (3) (1994): 62.
[135] Maxine Hong Kingston, quoted in Angels Carabí, "Interview with Maxine Hong Kingston," *Atlantis* X (1-2) (1988): 143.
[136] 1 Timothy, 2:11-13. See also 1 Corinthians, 15: 34-36.
[137] Jenkins, "Authorizing Female Voice," 63.
[138] Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1988); Christina García, *Dreaming in Cuban* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987); Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow* (New York: PLUME, 1983); Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1988); Susan Power, *The Grass Dancer* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Books, 1994); Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991); Amy Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* (New York: G. P. Putnum's Sons, 1995); and Alma Luz Villanueva, *Weeping Woman* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Review Press, 1994).
[139] Ken-fang Lee, "Cultural Translation and the Exorcist: A Reading of Kingston's and Tan's Ghost Stories," *MELUS* 29 (2) (2004): 106. See also: Gayle K. Fujita Sato, "Ghosts as Chinese-American Constructs in Maxine

theme in her book *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature*, and although not directly discussing the work of Cisneros, her observation that ghost stories, or ghosts in stories, by women of colour function "to re-create ethnic identity though an imaginative recuperation of the past and to press this new version of the past into the service of the present" is particularly fitting as regards *Caramelo*.[140] It is not therefore a case of exorcising the Awful Grandmother's ghost, but incorporating her story into the present as it is together that granddaughter and grandmother take part in this process of recuperation and integration. So the Awful Grandmother pleads with her granddaughter to tell her story so that she can be forgiven: "You'll tell my story, won't you Celaya? So that I'll be understood? So that I'll be forgiven?"[141] Together these intergenerational women can negotiate their stories as part of a recuperation of the past that serves in the present. Hong Kingston explained in an interview that "writing does not make ghosts go away. I wanted to record, […] I want to give them a substance that goes beyond me."[142] This connects directly to Lowinsky's theory in which she states that motherline stories "are haunted by ghosts. The unredeemed grief and suffering of generations of women [that] stalk us."[143] Through Celaya's narration of her grandmother's story, both women are reconnected to their motherline and are able to integrate one another's stories into their identities, providing the possibility for mutual "healing renewal."[144] As Brogan attests, "[frightening] ghosts […] can sometimes be put to rest, not in the sense of being forever banished, but in the sense of being transformed into memories that usefully guide, rather than overwhelm, the present."[145] Through negotiating their relationship, through (re)connection and redefinition, they no longer need to haunt each other, but rather recognise the important place in each other's identities through the continued bond to their motherline.

Celaya's candid narration of her grandmother's story creates space for grandmother and granddaughter to reveal the oppressive influences that have silenced the Awful Grandmother.

Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," in *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghosts Stories by American Women*, ed. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 191-214.

[140] Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 6. See also: Victoria Myers, "The Significant Fictivity of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," *Biography* 9 (2) (1986), 112-125.

[141] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 408.

[142] Maxine Hong Kingston, quoted in Paula Rabinowitz, "Eccentric Memories: A Conversation with Maxine Hong Kingston," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 26 (1) (1987): 178.

[143] Lowinsky, *Motherline*, 141.

[144] Wickelson, "Shaking Awake the Memory," 93.

[145] Brogan, *Cultural Haunting*, 19.

Instead of simply criticising the role the Awful Grandmother has played, Cisneros condemns the overall patriarchal oppression of women that force her to behave in this way. Cisneros focuses on the ways in which the Awful Grandmother has been silenced throughout her life, and the impact this forced silence has had on her own identity and on her relationships with her family. The criticism of the enforced silencing of women is clearly apparent when her father-in-law, Eleuterio, is left mute, and the Awful Grandmother has an acute understanding of his "tantrums and tears," silenced as she too has been all her life: "she was as mute as he was, perhaps more so".[146] Unlike Eleuterio's cataleptic attack, the Awful Grandmother's muteness has been caused by the oppressing silence that marks women in a traditional Mexican American family. As discussed above, a woman is expected to be silent and acquiescent under the rules of the traditional Catholic patriarchal family. In this way, the grandmother symbolises "the silent struggle of all women who must rise from a position of subservience and exploitation."[147] Paula Gunn Allen states that those caught between cultures, mestiza women, are most likely to be "inarticulate, almost paralyzed in their inability to direct their energies toward resolving what seems to them insoluble conflict."[148] Like Zeze the X's great-grandmother Esperanza in 'My Name,' the Awful Grandmother is another of the "quiet rebels" sitting by the window, unable to express their anger.[149] Cristina Herrera emphasises the importance of this shift towards a political and critical understanding, stating that, "[as] a writer and more importantly as a daughter and granddaughter living within a male-dominated culture, Celaya has the capacity to comprehend the significance of her grandmother's story and its need to be told."[150] Like the narrator in Hong Kingston's 'No Name Woman,' it is through Celaya's narration that the Awful Grandmother can move from a quiet rebellion to expression through her granddaughter's interpretation of her story.

Yet in interconnecting the Awful Grandmother and Celaya's stories so closely, Cisneros risks (re)creating patriarchal conditions in the next generation of women in the family. The (re)cyclical nature of intergenerational relationships may have the potential for the same negative influences to affect the succeeding generations of women. The style of mothering adopted by the Awful Grandmother, as discussed in chapter one, demonstrates the possible perpetuation of oppressive

[146] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 151.
[147] Helene Carol Weldt-Basson, *Subversive Silences: Nonverbal Expression and Implicit Narrative Strategies in the Works of Latin American Women Writers* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), 220.
[148] Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 135.
[149] Sandoval, *Toward A Latina Feminism*, 25.
[150] Herrera, "The Rejected and Reclaimed Mother," 193.

traditions that devastatingly affect her relationships with her daughter and daughter-in-law. As Marianne Hirsch points out in the mother-daughter plot, this repetition, "the daughter repeating a maternal story that is unspeakable" limits women writers and their fictional characters alike.[151] Thus Celaya's recycling of her grandmother's story comes with the latent chance of repetition of these behaviours. Like Fe in *So Far From God*, the next generation of women are not immune to the reinstitution, by themselves or by others, of traditionally oppressive customs and behaviours, particularly in a society that continues to oppress Chicanas, and women of colour more generally. Yet this (re)cyclical process is familiar in Chicana writings in which, as Barbara Brinson-Pineda claims:

> [collectively,] many of us have looked back to our mothers and grandmothers for artistic force, for affirmation of our cultural selves for reinforcement of our identities as women and as writers. Our stories, poems, and essays are frequently peopled by these women in an attempt to understand our connection to history, to our people.[152]

Celaya recognises that her grandmother's story is inextricably connected to her own:

> **Your story? I thought you were telling *my* story?**
> Your story is my story. Now please be quiet, Grandmother, or I'll have to ask you to leave.[153]

Despite the acknowledgement that her grandmother's story is her story and the potential negative connotations of the repetition of oppressive behaviours, the overall focus is on the solidarity of intergenerational women and their connected (hi)stories. Cisneros therefore focuses on intergenerational transmission, so that Celaya can connect to her foremothers' past through communication and understanding, through storytelling, rather than rejection. It is Celaya, as narrator of the Awful Grandmother's story, who is able to actively negotiate this transmission. For, as Hirsch states, when (grand)daughters know their maternal stories intimately, they have choices: they can "repeat and not repeat", in order to "[achieve] self-realization without sacrificing connection."[154] In an attempt to fully understand her connection to her history and her people,

[151] Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, 118.
[152] Brinson-Pineda, "Onde Estas Grandma," 1.
[153] Castillo, *Caramelo*, 172. The bold typeset is used in the original and visually separates Celaya's voice from her grandmother's on the page.
[154] Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, 116; and Bode, "Mother to Daughter," 296.

Celaya critically engages with the Awful Grandmother's story, not only narrating it but also reinterpreting it.

Furthermore, Celaya's style of narration and the defiant tone she adopts with her grandmother integrates a new voice into the story of their motherline and emphasises the retelling of the narrative from a new perspective. Throughout Celaya's telling of her grandmother's story, the Awful Grandmother still holds onto romantic ideas about her life with her husband and berates her granddaughter for telling it wrong when she misses out the amorous *telenovela* scenes, or the waltzing soundtrack.[155] The Awful Grandmother wants to brush past the negative parts of her story, so that when Celaya describes the view from her auntie's apartment in Mexico City as "[not] much to look at really", she hastily interjects with "**But not too bad either!**"[156] Yet it is Celaya's at times blunt narration of the Awful Grandmother's story that breaks down the idealised and imaginary memories that she holds on it in order to reveal a more sinister, but more realistic, story. By adopting a prosaic tone, Celaya is able to peel off the veneer and discuss the realities of her grandmother's troubled history. Throughout the narrative, the Awful Grandmother's story is exposed and the reality of her "childhood without a childhood" after the death of her mother and remarriage of her father to a heartless woman, as well as the "never-ending hill of laundry to wash and iron" at her Auntie's house in Mexico City, and her sexual abuse by her Uncle Píos is revealed.[157] Through this frank narration of her story, Celaya is able to "reveal the "dark sufferings" that have made [her grandmother a prisoner] of a deferred or suspended time."[158] Furthermore, the back and forth of Celaya's narration and the Awful Grandmother's interruptions uncovers the complexities of their narratives and the ways in which they intertwine. With each revelation in the Awful Grandmother's story, Celaya actively takes part in connecting to her motherline, while simultaneously (re)connecting her grandmother to their shared motherline. In this way, the text itself functions as "the thread that links grandmothers and granddaughters" and becomes part of the "richly textured cloth connecting the past to the future" through the motherline.[159] The narrative is a dialogue between Celaya and the Awful Grandmother and the to-and-fro employed by Cisneros throughout Part II of the novel emphasises the proverbial two sides to a story. And yet, what is

[155] Castillo, *Caramelo*, 95, 101, 104.
[156] Castillo, *Caramelo*, 101.
[157] Castillo, *Caramelo*, 94-101.
[158] Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover," 105.
[159] Rebolledo, "Abuelitas," 158; and Lowinsky "Mothers of Mothers," 12.

realised in the telling of both sides of this narrative in dialogue, is that Celaya and the Awful Grandmother share the same story, they are connected through their motherline stories.

Rebolledo affirms the importance of the grandmother in connecting granddaughters to their past to find "meaning in the present."[160] Describing the works of Chicana writers, Rebolledo argues that "[the] lyric speaker […] is a young girl, pre-adolescent perhaps, as the Chicana writer looks nostalgically towards the past, the childhood years, for meaning in the present."[161] In *Caramelo*, Celaya certainly connects with her grandmother to look back to her past, and their shared past through the histories of Mexican American women. However, Cisneros does not portray this reminiscence as nostalgic, to use Rebolledo's term. Rather, Celaya looks back towards the past critically, keen to learn about the time before the Awful Grandmother "became awful."[162] Actively refusing to see her grandmother's history only nostalgically, Celaya narrates and interprets the Awful Grandmother's story her way, much to the annoyance of her grandmother:

> **All I'm asking for is one little love scene. At least something to remind people Narciso and I loved each other. Oh, please! We really only have that vulgar love scene overheard by Eleuterio.[163]**

The Awful Grandmother feels possessive of her own narrative and worries that her granddaughter is filling it with *cochinadas* (filthy remarks), distorting her story in ways that are unseemly for a proper *mujer mexicana*. However, in order for Celaya to "find meaning in the present" from her grandmother's story, Celaya must delve deeper into her grandmother's story, deeper than the *telenovela* version with its waltzing soundtrack.[164] It is in this way that, as a storyteller, Celaya is able to push past the humiliation and mutilation towards a better understanding of her grandmother as an individual and not just as a product of patriarchal engineering. In a study of Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976), Suzanna Danuta Walters describes this phenomenon, stating that "the chronicler is

[160] Rebolledo, "Abuelitas," 153.
[161] Ibid. See Rina García Roch, "New Year's Eve," in *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, ed. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana Suárez Rivero (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 163; Carmelita Grant, "Grandmother's Ghetto," quoted in Rebolledo, "Abuelitas," 151; and Elena Guadalupe Rodríguez, "Tortillas pa' Nana," *Morena*, ed. Francisco A. Lomelí (Texas: University of Texas, 1980), 72.
[162] Castillo, *Caramelo*, 91.
[163] Castillo, *Caramelo*, 171.
[164] Rebolledo, "Abuelitas," 153.

able to move away from blame and towards a politicized understanding."[165] In the case of *Caramelo*, therefore, the chronicler, Celaya, is able to understand the restrictions imposed on her grandmother growing up as a woman in strict patriarchal culture and view her story not nostalgically, but critically. Furthermore, the criticism is not directed at the Awful Grandmother, and women of her generation, but at the patriarchal constraints under which they are forced to live. Thus the strategies employed by Amá and the Awful Grandmother discussed in chapter one are understood as negotiations undertaken to give these women a chance at surviving in a society that denigrates and oppresses them.

The recounting of the Awful Grandmother's story allows Celaya to take part in the active process of what Gina Wong-Wylie terms "matroreform." For, as Wong-Wylie asserts, matroreform is not only a process of "reforming and reaffirming" but also "a feminist act of voicing up and out of invisibility and silence."[166] Wong-Wylie's theory of matroreform develops out of, but diverges, from Adrienne Rich's theory of "matrophobia" as delineated in *Of Woman Born*. Rich states that matrophobia "can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr."[167] Furthermore, this "splitting of the self" is heightened in Chicana women as another example of the "schizophrenia-like" existence described earlier in this chapter.[168] However, Wong-Wylie prefers to move away from negative connotations of the word 'phobia' as employed by Rich as it suggests irrationality and illogicality. Rather, Wong-Wylie adopts the term 'matroreform' and defines it as:

> an act, desire, and process of claiming motherhood power; it is a progressive movement to mothering that attempts to institute new mothering rules and practices apart from one's motherline. Matroreform is a cognitive, affective, behavioural, and spiritual reformation of mothering from within including removal and elimination of obstacle to self-determination and self agency.[169]

[165] Suzanna Danuta Walters, *Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 178.
[166] Gina Wong-Wylie, "Images and Echoes in Matroreform: A Cultural Feminist Perspective," *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 8 (1) (2006): 135-46.
[167] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 236.
[168] Castillo, *Massacre*, 38-9.
[169] Wong-Wylie, "Matroreform," 142.

Celaya's articulation of her story thus actively allows them both to be agents in this process of matroreform. Yet although Wong-Wylie sees this as being distinctly "apart from one's motherline," in the case of Celaya, matroreform requires the motherline connection as it allows her to reform matrilineal connections in her family through the act of storytelling. Indeed, by the end of novel, Celaya realises that she and her grandmother are enduringly connected and understands her in a new and positive light when she states: "I've turned into her. And I see inside her heart."[170] Celaya is able to understand the ways in which her grandmother's story is woven into her own story, the better to understand what Jennifer González recognises as an "overlapping of identification between generations."[171] This affirms Lisa Hernandez's description of the relationship as a "process of transformation" that is integral to Chicana self-affirmation and empowerment.[172] In the end, Celaya sees herself as a unique individual while also being part of a womanist collective, connected through the motherline: "[e]veryone, big and little, old and young, dead and living, imagined and real high-stepping past in the big *cumbia* circle of life."[173] Unlike Fe in *So Far From God*, Celaya is able to see her part in a larger network of Mexican American women, she embraces what David J. Vásquez terms the "matrixed subject" and incorporates a self that is "inextricably linked with the larger social structures like community and national identity."[174] As an intergenerational storyteller, Celaya can better understand her place in the "big *cumbia* circle of life" and connect with her grandmother.[175]

Celaya, Zeze the X, and Fe try to combine their individual identities with their place in a wider community of Chicana women by negotiating their place along the motherline through rejection or redefinition. The difficulties inherent in this attempt illuminate the complexities of growing up as a Chicana daughter. Yet, despite their different tactics, all three characters serve to demonstrate the importance of the motherline connection in self-development. By writing motherline stories, both Cisneros and Castillo reveal how daughters interact with the history and culture of their foremothers in order to negotiate their place in the Mexican American family. In *So Far From God*, Castillo

[170] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 424.
[171] Jennifer González, "Negotiated Frontiers: Contemporary Chicano Photography," *From The West: Chicano Narrative Photography*, ed. Chon A. Noriega (The Mexican Museum, San Francisco, distributed by University of Washington Press, 1995), 20. With reference to photographs from the series *Marías Great Expedition* (1995-1996) by artist Christina Fernandez.
[172] Hernandez, "Canas," 47-9.
[173] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 424-5.
[174] David J. Vásquez, *Triangulations: Narrative Strategies for Navigating Latino Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 6.
[175] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 424-5.

underlines the dangers of disconnecting from the Chicana motherline through the tragic story of Fe. In attempting to negotiate with Anglo American society, Fe negates her Chicana self, leading to her death. In Zeze the X and Celaya, on the other hand, Cisneros draws out the tensions between young Chicanas and their foremothers and the potential difficulties in intergenerational relationships where cultures and ideologies clash. Despite Fe's regressive example, in general, gender attitudes and norms are liberalising through time. Indeed, Jessica Vasquez argues that patriarchy is decreasing and women's empowerment is increasing, and this is directly connected to women's reflection on family experiences and intergenerational family communication.[176] By focusing their negotiations on processes of redefinition rather than rejection, Zeze the X and Celaya are able to move forward and remain connected to their motherline. In doing so, Zeze the X and Celaya assume the roles of "archaeologists and visionaries of [their] culture" as Castillo describes in *Massacre of the Dreamers*, connecting their past with their present and future in order to create new and different norms and practices for women in the family.[177] In writing these stories, both Cisneros and Castillo emphasise the integral place that these intergenerational relationships have in the Mexican American community and the complexity of negotiating simultaneously individual and interconnected lives.

[176] Vasquez, "Gender Across Family Generations," 533.
[177] Castillo, *Massacre*, 220.

Conclusion: Negotiating for *Sobrevivencia*

> *La gente Chicana tiene tres madres*. […] All three are *mediators*.[1]
> Gloria Anzaldúa

In their writing Cisneros and Castillo portray generations of women as mediators, who display strength and resistance within an often oppressive familial and cultural system in an attempt to forge meaningful identities. This thesis' critical analysis of these literary representations shows how women negotiate their roles in the family in a variety of different ways, from the maintenance of patriarchal structures to the dismantling of those structures through feminist co-operative practices. As women combatting the dual assault of misogyny and racism, the characters in these books are compelled to adopt and adapt innovative approaches in order to secure their place in the family and in the community. These negotiations resonate with what Cherríe Moraga describes as strategies that Chicanas employ to "cope – how [they] measure and weigh what is to be said and when, what is to be done and how, and to whom and to whom and to whom, daily deciding/risking."[2] These strategies, these daily decisions and risks that women make and take, are part of a complex feminist negotiation.

Through its interrogation of literature through a variety of social and cultural lenses, this thesis reveals the ways in which women characters in Cisneros and Castillo's writing creatively negotiate their roles in the family. In their negotiations, these women demonstrate what Ruth Galván calls *sobrevivencia*: "*la sobrevivencia* [survival] is what lies ahead and beneath plain victim, our ability to *saciar* (satiate) our hopes and dreams in creative and joyful ways."[3] It is the patriarchal setup of the Mexican American traditional family framework, based on asymmetrical social and gender relations that oppress women, that forces women to adopt a variety of survival tactics.[4] Castillo and Cisneros challenge this familial structure in order to evaluate its overwhelming influence on the lives of the women living within it. The women in their books consider the balance between recognising

[1] The Chicana/o people have three mothers. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* 52.
[2] Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xviii-xix.
[3] Ruth Trinidad Galván, "*Campesina* Epistemologies and Pedagogies of the Spirit: Examining Women's *Sobrevivencia*," *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*, ed. Dolores Delgado Bernal, *et al.* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 163.
[4] Del Castillo, "Gender and its Discontinuities," 212.

the importance of familial heritage and acknowledging their oppression within the family setup. This thesis analyses the negotiations of women caught within the roles of wives, grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, in order to understand how and why intergenerational women navigate, adapt, and/or resist the prescriptive roles imposed upon them. This analysis allows us to look ahead and beneath the role of victim in which so many women have been cast and to explore their *sobrevivencia*.

Through writing the stories of *sobrevivencia* in the family, Cisneros and Castillo unite with other feminist authors in the unravelling of "the patriarchal script" of womanhood, in order to reveal instead "their own stories of motherhood and daughterhood."[5] Indeed the writing of Cisneros and Castillo, as Alvina Quintana argues, "functions as a bold cultural invention": a cultural "invention" because Chicana literature has been denied a place in both the Chicano and the American canon for so long, and had to be created as something new.[6] This marginalisation of the female Chicana voice in literature was due in part to a cultural assumption that Anzaldúa identifies as based upon the belief that women who "[carry] tales" are "*mal criada* [badly brought up]."[7] Anzaldúa's observation speaks to the roles prescribed to women and the particular limitations imposed on them as writers: 'good' women should not tell stories. Women who were writing from the 1950s to the 1980s were mute(d) in the distinctly Chican*o* literary landscape, and in reviews, teaching aids, criticism, as well as in publication, Chicana writers were dismissed, and relegated to occasional and superficial mentions by the male literary elite. Yet women writers carried on writing, relying on small print presses and publishers and the support – financial, editorial, and emotional – of *comadres*. Working against the dominant culture in literary production, Cisneros and Castillo are both carriers of tales who contest the rules of patriarchy through feminist resistance. Their writing demonstrates a politics of negotiation that critiques the gendered ideologies and roles of the family set up. They actively contest the cultural assumptions that women should remain silent and submissive, and through this contestation reveal the significance of telling stories.

These stories are then passed on so that each subsequent generation of women can understand and learn from the experiences of their foremothers. Through the continuation, understanding, and

[5] Andrea O'Reilly, "'I come from a long line of Uppity Irate Black Women': African American Feminist Thoughts on Motherhood, the Motherline, and the Mother-Daughter Relationship," *Mothers and Daughters*, 145.
[6] Quintana, "The Novelist as Ethnographer," 74.
[7] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 76.

reappropriation of their foremothers' stories, Chicanas discard binary definitions of womanhood in favour of a mestiza approach that allows for the adoption of some lessons and the rejection of others; it is a process that changes for each individual in each familial generation. As intergenerational feminist development should not simply be understood as operating on a linear continuum, the negotiations of these women do not necessarily move towards a moment of completion but rather will continuously adapt based on individual motivation and circumstance. Women do not simply accept or reject their foremothers' stories; rather they can choose to "keep forms of maternal knowledge that are conducive to the achievement of agency and subjectivity."[8] In this way, they take part in a process of negotiation with the long line of women who came before them, and who "supported them" in relationships through which Chicanas "find their sustenance and their strength."[9] At the same time, the intergenerational framing of this analysis allows these negotiations to be understood both within their specific contexts and as part of a broader historical and social network of feminist resistance in the family. In this way, intergenerational women remain connected despite their different approaches to negotiation in the family. The negotiations employed are fluid and must evolve dependent on circumstance and situation. As such, the frameworks of negotiation and intergenerationality complement one another and allow for a nuanced understanding of the Chicana experience.

The intergenerational women in Cisneros and Castillo's fiction therefore reveal the complexities of growing up Chicana and the multitude of mediations that take place within the family. Analysis of these complex compromises is critical to a better understanding not only of Chicana literary production, but also of the lived experiences of Mexican American women. As this thesis demonstrates through its interdisciplinary method of analysis, there is a significant relationship between the fictional and lived experiences of women in the Mexican American community, and the writing of Castillo and Cisneros reflects the cultural and social concerns of Mexican American communities. The critique undertaken in their writing of the patriarchal constraints imposed on women in the traditional Mexican American family is part of a broader feminist endeavour, both in academic theory and in actual practice, to expose the variety of influences shaping Chicana identities. In its interrogation of the ways in which women characters position themselves in the family, this critique reveals the ways in which the negotiations of intergenerational women are critical to the survival of those living in a racist and misogynist society. Furthermore, the analysis of

[8] Herrera, *(Re)Writing the Maternal Script*, 201.
[9] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, x.

Chicana literature through a cultural-critical perspective has wider implications for literary and social inquiry in the academy. Investigation of these works opens up the relationships between texts and their contexts and suggests some ways in which the one influences and is influenced by the other. This in turn introduces a multitude of new directions in both the textual and contextual analysis of American culture. The integration of literary analysis with social, cultural, and political realities for the writers as well as the women that they portray is a rich avenue for further research and one which reflects the plurality of the mestiza experience in the United States. Yet it is an avenue that requires its own level of negotiation within an academy that is too often bound by rigidly defined disciplines that constrain pluralistic and intersectional scholarship. This thesis contributes to an expanding field that uses multidisciplinary analysis to explore Chicana/o literature and culture, and thereby advances scholarship in the field of American Studies, particularly in the United Kingdom where studies on *chicanisma/o* are still scarce. The complexities and nuances of family life in the Chicana/o community necessitate a pluralistic approach to scholarship on this subject and this project highlights the importance of such intersectionality. Exploration of these experiences is crucial as the demographic shift in the U.S. hastens towards an increasingly multicultural population in which Latinas/os will have a prominent position.

The adoption of the framework of negotiation allows for such a pluralistic approach and it advances a nuanced analysis of literary representations of women that I believe can usefully be expanded to analyse Chicana and Latina literature more widely. The resistance of patriarchal and racial oppression is a theme present in much Latina literature and using negotiation as an interpretative anchor could usefully be employed in critiquing other writers, opening interesting avenues for further research. For instance, Latina writer Melinda Palacios' 2011 novel *Ocotillo Dreams* negotiates her mother's legacy as an advocate for undocumented migrants when she inherits her home in Arizona.[10] Isola, the novel's protagonist, grapples with issues of identity and belonging that lead her to explore her life's meaning through an intergenerational negotiation with her mother. Cuban American Cristina García's *A Handbook to Luck* can also be read through this framework to analyse how the central characters from Cuba, El Salvador, and Iran negotiate their distinct cultural contexts in the United States.[11] For example, Enrique, the young Cuban living in California, struggles to balance his passion for mathematics with his filial duty when he sacrifices his dream of attending MIT to help his family. Denise Chávez's novels also provide valuable insight into the possibilities of

[10] Melinda Palacios, *Ocotillo Dreams* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 2011).
[11] Cristina García, *A Handbook to Luck* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2007).

reading through negotiation. Her 1994 novel *Face of an Angel* tells the story of Soveida Dosamantes who comes from a long line of long-suffering women, but who defies their legacy of sorrow through a negotiation of her motherline similar to that undertaken by the daughter characters discussed in this thesis. Soveida too integrates and re-interprets matrilineal stories when she writes a compendium of lessons inspired by her own experiences and those of her women co-workers while working at El Farol Mexican Restaurant. Irene Beltrán Hernández's young adult book *Across the Great River* (1989) takes the reader to the borderlands and explores the negotiations of Kata, the young protagonist, in her attempt to take on a leadership role in her family when several of them become separated crossing the border in the United States. These are just a handful of examples of novels, taken from a far larger range of contemporary Latina/o writers, that could interestingly be analysed through the framework of negotiation that has been outlined in this thesis. These works deal with a variety of themes but share a central interest in how people negotiate their distinct situations in the context of the United States, and this speaks to the multiple meanings of the term 'negotiation' including communication, compromise, and the "action of crossing or getting over, round or through some obstacle by skilful manoeuvring; manipulation."[12]

It is also clear that people of colour in the United States have to negotiate in their day-to-day lives. From threats of deportation and stricter (im)migration regulations, to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests; from discrimination in the classroom, to the election of a president who is openly supported by the Ku Klux Klan; daily life in the U.S. is toxic for many communities of colour.[13] In the current climate of fear-mongering and racism against people of colour, these negotiations are fraught with difficulty and carry great weight. Although studied in this thesis through the literature of Cisneros and Castillo, the connections between the written word and daily life are compelling and the framework of negotiation outlined here could be expanded to include cultural, political, and social analyses of the Mexican American experience. This echoes Anzaldúa's understanding that

[12] *OED*, s.v. "negotiation," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125879.
[13] Richard Prince, "Big US Networks Ignored Epic Native Protest Over Pipeline," *The Root*, 9 September 2016, http://journalisms.theroot.com/big-us-networks-ignored-epic-native-protest-over-pipeli-1790888968; Allison Keyes, "The Wall and Deportation: For Latinos, Life Under Trump Brings Uncertainty and Fear," *The Root*, 17 November 2016, http://www.theroot.com/the-wall-and-deportation-for-latinos-life-under-trump-1790857750; Melinda D. Anderson, "How the Stress of Racism Affects Learning," *The Atlantic*, 11 October 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/10/how-the-stress-of-racism-affects-learning/503567/; Peter Holley, "KKK's Official Newspaper Support Donald Trump for President," *The Washington Post*, 2 November 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/11/01/the-kkks-official-newspaper-has-endorsed-donald-trump-for-president/?utm_term=.0e247b5267c4.

"there is no separation between life and writing."[14] As evidenced from the multidisciplinary approach to this project, there are illuminating connections between diverse scholarly fields and the broad theoretical idea of analysing, for example, writing, policy, or education through the framework of negotiation could yield thought-provoking insight. Nonetheless, in employing the negotiation framework in this way, it is vital to emphasise the specificity of each context and to ground the study by highlighting the particular communities in which particular negotiations occur. Thus the adoption of the negotiation framework in other fields of scholarship must be embedded in context to anchor it strongly to the specific communities studied. Engagement and dialogue with other scholars will strengthen this theoretical framework and help to improve the ideas advanced in this thesis. In the field of Chicana/o Studies, and Latina/o Studies more broadly, this is a fruitful avenue for further research. Indeed, this thesis adds to a growing number of theses engaging with Chicana/o communities in the United States and, although the UK is perhaps some distance from creating dedicated Chicana/o Studies centres or departments in higher education institutions, research in this field is critical to the growth and development of American Studies, Latin American Studies, and numerous fields of study across the Humanities and Social Sciences that are interested in multidisciplinary approaches to academic research. So it is that the negotiation of academic fields of study echoes the negotiations of women in the Mexican American family – both are confined by institutional frameworks that too often stifle innovative approaches.

For those women trapped by the structures of traditional family hierarchies, their *sobrevivencia* involves a complex mediation working within the strict rules of patriarchy. The characters in Castillo and Cisneros' work have to be considered within this framework in order to understand the strategies they employ. The tactics that women adopt in such cases are part of a subtle bargaining process, as described by Kandiyoti and discussed in chapter one. The accommodation to and maintenance of patriarchal norms are the only tools available to women operating within this system. Although this practice clearly disadvantages women overall, Cisneros and Castillo reveal that within the limited choices available to women in traditional families, doing so is often the only viable option for their survival. Oftentimes the actions and behaviours of women of the (grand)mother generation seem explicitly anti-feminist, particularly in the obviously unequal relationships they have with their sons as opposed to their daughters. In the uterine family, it is the relationship with the son that gives the mother access to influence in the family, and therefore women are compelled to construct powerful connections to their sons at the expense of their relationships with their

[14] Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues," *This Bridge*, 170.

daughters. With this in mind, the behaviours of characters like Amá and the Awful Grandmother are simultaneously simplified and complicated by Castillo and Cisneros. This thesis has interpreted these actions and behaviours as an intricate feminist act, one that makes it possible to recognise the oppressive nature of the system under which women are compelled to operate, and to acknowledge that their motivation is as much about basic survival as it is about the continuance of traditional ideologies. This is emphasised by Castillo, when she underlines that the children of these (grand)mothers are being brought up and taught in an environment "that women did not create."[15] The context in which these women live moulds their strategies, while both the external and internalised social pressures dictate the only acceptable methods of mothering. Using a feminist theoretical framework, this thesis has analysed the ways in which in *Caramelo* and *Peel My Love Like An Onion*, Cisneros and Castillo reveal the underlying social and cultural structures that affect the Awful Grandmother and Amá, and suggests that they do so in order to critique the entire framework, not those individuals forced to operate within its rules.

Despite often having been taught the tricks of surviving in patriarchal families by their (grand)mothers, the women of the next generation choose to forge their own feminist and *mujerista* (womanist) pathways. In doing so, they take part in a *sobrevivencia* that is more than just survival. In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo states that "[survival] should not be our main objective."[16] In her writing, Sofi and Tía Regina "[show their] will to survive, to overcome every form of repression know to humankind."[17] By learning to "be each other's mothers", women of this generation adopt styles of mothering that do not pit women against each other, but rather pull women together in order to strengthen their chances, as seen in Felice and Graciela in 'Woman Hollering Creek.[18] *Comadre* networks break down traditional power relations within the traditional family setup between generations of women, allowing then not only to survive, but to thrive. Through these female connections, the mothers of this generation break away from their prescribed roles in the family and extend their mothering practices to the community. *Comadre* networks also promote mothering practices such as motherwork and othermothering as strategies to challenge traditional patriarchal hierarchies in the family. In the Chicana community these resistance tactics are part of a mestiza consciousness, a consciousness of women who dare to examine and question the restrictions placed

[15] Castillo, *Massacre*, 194.
[16] Ibid., 146.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Castillo, *Massacre*, 192.

on them.[19] The lateral praxes of mothering like those adopted by Tía Regina and Sofi in *The Guardians* and *So Far From God* express the plurality of the lived experience of Chicanas and draw attention to the mestiza consciousness of women whose "gender politics are lived simultaneously with race, class, and sexual awareness."[20] Through writing these stories, authors like Castillo's and Cisneros' forefront the efforts of community women, and support the benefits of collaborative practices for Chicanas, underlining that *sobrevivencia* is not just about survival but about "[achieving] joy."[21] In Cisneros and Castillo's narratives, this joy is achieved through *mujerista* practices that centre on women's needs and concerns.

The third category of these intergenerational women, the daughters, inherit a complicated mixture of their foremothers' negotiation tactics. Castillo and Cisneros reveal that women in this generation approach their own roles in the family from different, and often divergent, positions. The daughters most clearly illuminate the non-linear nature of intergenerational development by opting to accept certain of their foremothers' methods and disregarding others. Yet in their writings, Cisneros and Castillo emphasise the matrilineal connection and focus on the importance of intergenerational bonds. By writing motherline stories, both Cisneros and Castillo show the ways in which daughters interact with and interpret the history and culture of their foremothers in order to position themselves in the Mexican American family. Through this process, these daughters also situate their foremothers in the larger narrative of Mexican American society. The process is fundamentally intergenerational. As Alarcón states, the daughter-writer's "efforts to rescue her mother and other women in her life from the silent abyss enables her not only to rescue herself, but to acquire a richer and more varied voice."[22] Cisneros and Castillo's retrieval of the lost narratives of marginalised women is a feminist undertaking for, as Virginia Woolf asserts, the act of "thinking back through our mothers [is to] think back through the absence of mothers" and to discover and reclaim their place in literature.[23]

[19] Sonia Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 59.
[20] Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border*, 61.
[21] Castillo, *Massacre*, 146.
[22] Alarcón, "What Kind of Lover," 105.
[23] Virginia Woolf, quoted in Rachel Bowbly, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 28.

The women in Cisneros and Castillo's fiction demonstrate the need to negotiate with the constraints of the family, but also with the support and protection it can provide. The telling of intergenerational stories about these methods of compromise and confrontation allows for a more nuanced approach to each generation's attempts to situate themselves in the family. For instance, Michele Téllez underlines that

> [as] a Chicana single mother I embrace many aspects that my *cultura* has to offer, but I refuse to believe that motherhood implies a relinquishment of self. Instead, I choose to argue that motherhood implies the creation of a greater self that is in constant regeneration.[24]

Castillo's and Cisneros' writing also emphasises the ways in which womanhood can be regenerated by (re)writing female characters who defy the image of the Chicana as "the hearth of the home; chaste, modest, honorable, clean, and, most importantly, [enjoined] to minister to the needs for her husband and children."[25] Their stories show that what women stand for, in every generation, is not victimhood or blind obedience, but energy, creativity, and irrepressibility. Castillo and Cisneros write women whose negotiations in the family are feminist acts that reveal strength, flexibility, perseverance, and a will to survive.

[24] Téllez, "Mi Madre, Mi Hija y Yo," 64.
[25] Mirandé and Enríquez, *La Chicana*, 98.

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