The Mirrored Angles of Curanderismo and Brujería

Xiomara Ortega Trinidad

2021

Main Supervisor: Professor Gianmaria Colpani

Supporting Supervisor: Professor Magdalena Cieslak

Home University: University of Utrecht

Mobility University: University of Lodz

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

The Mirrored Angles of Curanderismo and Brujería

Xiomara Ortega Trinidad

2021

Main Supervisor: Professor Gianmaria

Supporting Supervisor: Professor Magdalena

Home University: University of Utrecht

Mobility University: University of Lodz

Main Supervisor Approval: Dr. Gianmaria Colpani _____

Signature

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Abstract

This thesis works to define and explore the relationship between two terms, *curanderismo* and *brujería.* They are practices that include aspects of the supernatural, with the former being a type of healing based off of Latin American indigenous rite and religion and the latter literally translating to witchcraft. The project focuses on the use of these two concepts in the country of Mexico and the southwest of the United States by analyzing them through a historical context and exploring the socially constructed binary that has been established over time regarding the morality of *curanderismo* and *brujería*. This includes examining the uses of these words in practice and on a conceptual level during different time periods, such as the colonial era, post-colonial nationalist Mexico, decolonial movements, and contemporary times. The thesis also discusses the effect that European influence and religion had on traditional indigenous practices and how they shaped *curanderismo* and *brujería* and how modern influences, such as Chicana feminism, have reshaped the terms. The text also studies the representation of these two in Chicano and Chicana literature, including novels written in the magical realism genre that incorporate the similarities between the two terms, as opposed to emphasizing their differences. Interwoven with scholarship, this project incorporates the opinions of practicing *curanderas* and analyzes their positionality in terms of religion, identity, and spirituality.

Acknowledgements

To my mother and the galaxy of women who have always supported me.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The basis for this thesis began to take hold in my mind over several years of cultural exposure and teachings throughout my youth, but fully cemented into an idea I wished to explore when *curanderismo* and *brujería* made an entrance into mainstream culture and began affecting more of my day-to-day life. The concepts themselves appeared to have caught fire and swarms of intrigued people took note of a cultural concept and tradition that was usually keep private in the sidelines of communities. A *curanderismo* festival that took place yearly in my hometown, Albuquerque, went from having a few dozen participants, to over eight hundred after the event was broadcast on television, making the next year's festival – which I helped to plan – much more limited to the public. Businesses based off of these cultural healing methods began to gain more traction and there was even a large hexing movement led by self-proclaimed *brujas* that will be discussed in further detail in the text. The notion of this movement made me very curious because they used the word *bruja* rather than witch, therefore very clearly associated the movement with women of Latin American descent.

The fascination that both these concepts inspired in people caught my attention, but more so, was when I realized my own fascination and I asked myself, why did I want to understand these concepts? Why did I want to know more about them? Why did I want to know about *both* of them, indulge in the idea of practicing both of them, especially when one, *brujería,* reportedly had such a negative reputation, even in my own family?

These practitioners, *curanderas* and *curanderos* especially, appeared to be calm and completely sure of what they were doing, how they could help, when I had the opportunity to

interact with them, and I could not help but wonder how and why. Where did they learn these things? Was it passed on, if so, how? Were these practices the result of oral history and tradition steadily flowing generation through generation or was there an answer that was far more complicated? If they were indeed passed on, how was *brujería* passed on when a good portion of Latin American populations regarded it so negatively? The first chapter of this thesis primarily focuses on exploring these questions by digging into the historical background of both *curanderismo* and *brujería* through the lens of Mexico and the southwest region of the United States. This is done in order to attempt understand how both these terms are defined, and to try to grasp how colonization and post-colonization would have affected them. The second chapter continues with the effects that contemporary decolonial efforts have on both concepts and the manner in which they began to be explored both in mainstream culture and in literature, particularly by studying the use of *curanderismo* and *brujería* in the magical realism genre. While the third and final chapter explores the connections that both *curanderismo* and *brujería* have on women in particular through the analysis of Chicana feminism and the *brujas* hexing movement, before finishing with information provided by current practitioners. In short, this thesis attempts to understand the practical, mystical, psychological, and political effects the terms *curanderismo* and *brujería* have on Latin American people.

Chapter One: The History of *Curanderismo* and *Brujería*

Considering the massive amounts of change needed in order to properly begin to colonize a new area, it is expected that a great deal of chaos would follow any major movements. A moment of conquest in the Americas can be pinpointed by the toppling of a major empire, which in the case of this text is the fall of Mexica[1] Empire at the hands of the Spanish. The crumbing of this Empire, in particular, created opportunities for the Spanish to insert their own religion and traditions. At the time of their fall, the Mexica Empire was at the height of its power, and it exerted a great deal of control around the surrounding areas and its people.[2] Its sudden destruction was bound to leave a vacuum of power and fresh disorder. The consequences of the collapse of the Empire included a massive loss of wealth. Much of the riches, such as gold, was pillaged by the conquistadors. Also, the fall of their capital city – Tenochtitlan – which was thought to be home to a population of upwards to 500,000 to 700,000 people by the time the Spanish lay eyes on it, would have left survivors to be captured by the Spanish or displaced from their homes and livelihood (Soustelle 9).

Adaptations and changes to spirituality and religion, healing practices, and traditions would have therefore been inevitable as the influence of the Spanish colonization settled into the area. Therefore, in order to understand the effect that the concepts of *curanderismo* and *brujería* have in Latin America, the history of the two words should be followed from their inception in colonial

[1] Though most commonly known as the Aztecs, it is the name "Mexica" that was used by the natives of what is now Mexico and part of Central America to refer to themselves. Due to this, throughout this text, this particular population of indigenous people will be referred to as the Mexica in place of the Aztecs.

[2] Author Jacques Soustelle illustrates the treatment defeated people experienced that the hands of the Mexica, this included describing the tributes they were expected to hand over to the Mexica when negotiating their surrender, which was often land, treasures, and able men for the Mexica armies (211-212).

times and through their rebirth and rebranding in postcolonial history. In the countries that make up Latin America there are various cultural and historical differences that would affect the shaping of *curanderismo* and *brujería* over time, so this work will focus on the country Mexico and the southwest section of the United States. The inclusion of the latter is due to two facts. Firstly, the aforementioned section of the United Sates shares a border with Mexico, migration still occurs at this border, and therefore experiences significant cultural crossover. Second, the area was a part of Mexico up until the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War, and still retains a large amount of the cultural history, language, and traditions as Mexico, details that remain relevant to the topics of *curanderismo* and *brujería*. Equally important to this is the exploration of what cultural, historic, and modern differences there are between the concepts and practices of *curanderismo* and *brujería* in the Mexican and Southwestern US context. It is equally essential to discuss what these differences could mean for their conceptual future and how these concepts affect current cultural movements of Latinx, Chicana/o decolonial movements, and feminist movements.

1.1 Defining *Curanderismo* as a Practice and Concept

Curanderismo and *brujería* are terms composed of several facets, both in terms of language, culture, and use. When defined for its services, *curanderismo* is essentially an umbrella term that refers to a "traditional healing practice that meets such needs among… communities" (Chávez 129). It is nontraditional and nonwestern healing that is practiced by *curanderas* and *curanderos*[3] throughout the bulk of Latin America and parts of the southwestern region of the

[3] *Curanderas* and *curanderos* can be characterized as medicine people who share traits with shamans. The healing they provide encompasses the use of a wide variety of skillsets, as they can be called upon to heal physical ailments, which can include working with herbs, massage therapy, etc., as well as spiritual and emotional ailments, which can include the need to cast rituals, ceremonies, or cleansings and one on one talks similar to therapy sessions. David

United States, though in the thesis the focus will be mainly on Mexico and the southwest of the U.S. Depending on the region and the subsequent culture from which *curanderismo* can be derived, *curanderismo* can be practiced in different ways and according to different rules. According to Thomas Chávez this is because *curanderismo* "has evolved throughout history and exchanges between cultural belief systems; therefore, there is not one true form that us practiced" (130). For example, certain beliefs and rites or rituals practiced in one location can either be entirely different in another, or not exist at all. In essence, there are no specific regulations in place that exactly define what *curanderismo* is or is not, hence its position as an umbrella term, although there are certain shared aspects that help to define it as a whole, such its links to practices that have a basis in precolonial culture and ties to spirituality and mysticism. *Curanderismo* has had a long history, dating back at least to early colonial times,[4] and has had a large practical and cultural use throughout the years (Hoskins and Padrón 80). As in many rural regions, *curanderas* and *curanderos* were the only healthcare option available to the local population.

When analyzed purely as words, it should be noted that *curanderismo* and *brujería* are introduced terms used by colonizers to describe something indigenous. *Curanderismo* is a variation of the Spanish verb *curar*, which means "to heal" (Trotter 1). It is presumably derived from that particular word because the basis of *curanderismo* practices are physically and spiritually medicinal. The practices of *curanderismo* themselves are now named and known as a word in a

Hoskins and Elena Padrón describe them as "practitioners who heal individuals through specialized knowledge of herbs, massage, bone setting, counseling, spirituality, and midwifery" (79). Since the Spanish language is gendered, women are referred to as *curanderas* and men as *curanderos*.

[4] The presumption that *curanderismo* dates back to early colonial times is mainly deduced from historical cues and context, as before colonial times the practices that make up *curanderismo* as it is today were likely referred to as something else in their own respective cultures and languages. Several authors also make reference to different medicinal uses and traditions that were introduced to indigenous practices to form *curanderismo* in Mexico. Hoskins and Padrón talk about the "Aztec's strongly developed use of herbs and plants" as well as their ability to "set broken bones, treat dental cavities, and perform brain operations" (80). While Brett Hendrickson notes that "some principle components that came together into *curanderismo* were Iberian Catholicism, Greek and Arabic humoral theories, European folk traditions, and Native American medicinal and herbal expertise" (621).

language that was not used prior to colonization, so it can be deduced that the original name and practices themselves are not free of the influences of colonization. If there was a pure and original form that was practiced by the people native to the Americas prior to contact with Europe, it no longer exists; instead, there is most likely a mix of old and new knowledge, traditions, and beliefs. As a result, it can also be determined that a large part of the practice of *curanderismo* was formed throughout the centuries of colonization, followed by post-colonization. This conclusion would suggest that the practice as it exists today is an amalgamation of surviving native beliefs and practices, as well as Catholic beliefs, and that it predates an independent Mexico.

Curanderismo is considered a respected term, and a *curandera* or *curandero* is a valued members of the community in which they work due to the fact that they are "often a person chosen from the community, who shares the same experiences, the same language, and the same socioeconomic status as his or her patients" and because they "use culturally appropriate methods of dealing with the patients, methods that activate the natural support system already existing in the community" (Trotter 1-2). Their skills, while known for their supernatural side, often envelope a large variety of different specialties and can include working with herbs and other medicinal ingredients, physical healing, such as massage therapy or acupuncture, alongside mental and spiritual healing. Therefore, a *curandera/o* can often be closely associated with the term shamanism, as opposed to simply a medicinal doctor, especially given that the individual who practices *curanderismo* is almost considered to be mystical themselves. The manner in which they and their ability to practice *curanderismo* is well summed up by Salazar and Levin:

> the ability to practice *curanderismo* is seen to be a gift from God. People may determine whether they have the gift or feel a calling to the practice in a variety of ways. Individuals may be called by being told by a practicing *curandero/a* that they too have the gift, advised

by spirits through dreams, or may feel called after engaging in the practice of *curanderismo.* (151)

With this definition of what *curanderismo* and curanderas/curanderos are in mind, it can be concluded that they are considered to be special and valued individuals in their own local communities, specifically by those who believe in their services and are in need of them.

The manner in which a *curandera/o* may have existed and practiced in colonial times is difficult to posit with accuracy as, from an official governmental standpoint, such practices were at the very least looked down upon and at worst persecuted by the Catholic Church. Their position and use in postcolonial times, however, can be better understood due, at least in part, to the geography of Mexico as a country. Eliseo "Cheo" Torres describes it well in his book, wherein he explains: "nosotros confiamos en las tradiciones antiguas que son más viejas que la ciencia médica convencional que es practicada en hospitales y clínicas/ we trusted in the ancient traditions that are older than the conventional medical sciences practiced in hospitals and clinics"[5] (2). Torres also goes on to explain that the *curanderas* and *curanderos* could and did fill a need in communities through sheer lack of options (3). As a country, Mexico has several large cities, but also a massive amount of rural regions, many of which are only accessible through dirt roads. Travel, as a result, is difficult and time consuming to those of low income. As a result, local medicinal people, whether they received official training or not, are necessary and respected members of their communities. Therefore, through the years, *curanderas* and *curanderos* remained prominent and needed, if not staple, figures in rural or poverty-stricken areas that did not have access to recognized medical facilities, either through lack of funds or from sheer distance from the facilities.

[5] Translations done from Spanish to English are my own.

1.2 From Witchcraft to *Brujería,* Defining the Practice and Concept in a European versus Amerindian Context

In a similar fashion to *curanderismo, brujería* is a word in the Spanish language that is used to label an Amerindian concept. It was introduced through colonization and redefined in the Americas through the years of colonization. While the world literally translates to witchcraft, which in Europe was used to describe a specific type of magic and magical practice, in the Latin American context, the word *brujería* is also used to give a label to the spiritualities and healings originally practiced by the native people of Latin America. However, unlike *curanderismo*, *brujería* is not derived and formed from another word in Spanish; instead, it is a word in Spanish that came with its own definition and cultural weight prior to its introduction to the Americans. *Brujería* was used to give a negative label to both the original healing practices of indigenous populations, and later to the term *curanderismo* itself. This was likely done by Catholic priests and friars from Spain, presumably because the Amerindian practices themselves were not Catholic in nature, and thereby used magical and mystic means that were also not Catholic or sanctioned by Catholic scripture and clergy. If the practices were not Catholic, they were instead considered to be the practices of heretics. Given this, the healing practices were then linked to the closest European definition of heretical magic that was understood by Catholic religious folk, which was witchcraft/*brujería*.

Considering this context, it can be safe to assume that, prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the very concept of *brujería* likely did not exist in Latin America and is consequently a purely introduced term. As a result, *brujería* is conceptually more complicated than *curanderismo* as it contains a dual meaning that has formed over the years: one from its origin in Europe, and one from how it eventually came to be defined in Latin America. The two aforementioned meanings

do, however, share a common foundational definition. In essence, *brujería* is a word used to identify the actions of a *bruja*, which translated from Spanish to English means "witch." Those actions are often presumed to be strictly magical in nature and often referred to as "black magic." In Spanish, *bruja* is specifically the feminine form of the word, and while there is a masculine form of the word, *brujo*, the word *brujería* is often associated first with women, *bruja,* female witches, before being associated with men, *brujos.*

When the concept of witches and witchcraft is seen through the European context and the Catholic Church, at their core they are defined as forbidden magical practices. Specifically, they were known to be connected directly with the devil[6] and, therefore, to be a person who practices witchcraft meant that a covenant between that individual and the devil was formed (Darst 304). In this agreement, the individual in question would presumably sign away their immortal soul in exchange for favors from the devil, often in the form of supernatural powers, strengths, wealth, or abilities. The consequences of this for the local populations in Europe vary. Many areas considered witches to be a public hazard as it was believed that witches would endanger the community in which they live by targeting the population for no particular reason other than malice.

A translation by David H. Darst provides an opening into the minds and beliefs of the past through a testimony about witchcraft in Spain in 1529. Throughout this text, two churches on earth are described, the Catholic Church and the "diabolical" church, the latter specifically belonging to the devil. The testimony takes time to explain how any church that is not Catholic is "diabolical," including that of "Jews" and "Moslems" (302). It also explains how disciples of the devil can fly, shapeshift, and deceive others, and gives explanations describing how the said disciples worship the devil. There are also sections detailing what does not count as witchcraft and why, such as

[6] The devil in this case is a name used to refer to the fallen angel Lucifer from the Catholic cannon. He is also called Satan.

practices of medicine men and medical preparations. The exact definition of what actually makes a witch is described as follows:

> An express pact with the devil is of two kinds. One is so clear and express that with formal words, denying the Faith, they profess anew to the devil in his presence, who appears to them in any form and figure he desires to take. They give him complete obedience and offer him their body and soul … Others have an express and explicit pact with the devil, not because they have once spoken to him or seen him… but because they make the pact with his disciples, who are other enchanters, witches, or sorcerers… Both of these types of people are consecrated to the devil by express pact and are commonly called witches (*brujos*) or *jorguinos* or *megos*, which are corrupt words. (304)

Overall, this description gives a fairly simple answer to the complex system of identifying witches, namely that what separates a witch from other fellow human beings is their connection to and worship of the devil in place of the Catholic God. The manner in which a person ends up consecrated to the devil is not described as being particularly meaningful, or even having to be done on purpose, presumably because the end result is the same. What is described within the testimony in detail, however, is the people who are susceptible to becoming witches and the reasons why. This list ranges from women, for being naturally curious and vengeful, through simple people, who do not know better, or old people, with nothing to lose, to those who crave riches and earthly pleasures (Darst 304-305).

Witches are considered to be under orders from the devil and creatures of pure obedience to him. Due to this, it can be concluded that to be labeled a "witch" in the era that this testimony was written in (the 1500s) was a very negative thing and that the person called a witch would likely be considered to be a wholly evil person whose sacrilegious connection to the devil would do harm

to the rest of the population through proximity alone, especially when, as described above, they are capable of converting others. In Europe itself, to be associated with witchcraft or accused of being a witch was a damning thing; when this term was applied to the Amerindian people and healers, it had a similarly damaging effect, if for different reasons.

As stated in the previous section, the clergy of the Catholic Church had a very specific definition of what was considered holy and acceptable and what was considered sacrilegious. This definition essentially put everything into two columns, Catholic and not Catholic, with the former being the only acceptable faith. Considering the fact that the Amerindians were not Catholic, they were already placed into the category of "not acceptable" by the Spanish before much was even known about them. The customs and religion of the native people of the Americas would then, presumably, be also not acceptable to the Catholic clergy once discovered, especially when compared to the negative actions of the devil in the Catholic cannon, as translated in the aforementioned testimonies by Darst:

> Many of the ancient and most solemn diabolical sacrifices were celebrated with human blood, offering, beheading, and sacrificing daughters and sons to the devil. For this reason the devil in the past caused his disciples to make sacrifices in which they offered up children and covered the temples in human blood as if they really took pleasure in it. Today his disciples do the same thing, as is recounted of the idolaters of the New World; and where sacrifices can't be done publicly the devil makes disciples kill children in the most subtle and secret ways possible. Many witches who serve as mid-wives do this, or they suck human blood in secret and hidden ways that the devil shows them. (307)

If one follows the logic of this detailed explanation, it can be presumed that any faith – or action taken based on that faith – that was not strictly Catholic was automatically categorized as the work

of the devil. The religious practices of the Amerindians, which had aspects of the supernatural in them, be they of healing, spiritual, or any other nature, would therefore be labeled as witchcraft/ *brujería* because they were completely unknown, despite the fact that the practices were unlike traditional forms of witchcraft seen in Europe.

Certain ceremonies, such as human sacrifices practiced by the Mexica Empire (Soustelle 22), further pushed this narrative as they were seen as bloody and monstrous actions that were similar in nature to the blood demands that, according to the testimony, the devil in the Catholic cannon requires. Nonetheless, overtime the definition of a witch, or *bruja*, began to shift in the Americas. Castillo and Serrano, describing a case of a *bruja* executed in Querétaro, Mexico, note an important factor:

> *Para los frailes, nahualli y bruja eran semejantes y en sus escritos aparecen como uno solo, por ejemplo … Sin embargo, los propios religiosos notaron que la "bruja nahualli" era diferente de la bruja que habían conceptuado en Europa; Ruiz de Alarcón (1988) declaró que el "género de brujos" de esta tierra era diferente del de las brujas de España* / For the friars, the Nahua and the *bruja* were of a like and in their writings they appeared as one and the same … Nonetheless, the proper religious folks noted that the "Nahua-*bruja*" was different from the *bruja* that had been conceptualized in Europe; Ruiz de Alarcón (1988) declared that the "genre of witches" of this land were different than the *brujas* of Spain.[7] (2)

This passage and the paragraphs that follow on the same page point out an important turning point in the narrative of the *brujas* that came to exist in the Americas, namely the fact that the *brujas* in the Americas did not follow the same foundational rules of what made a European *bruja*. As

[7] Personal translation

described by Canuto and Serrano, many of the priests and priestesses of the Nahua religion were mistaken for *brujos* and *brujas* by the Spanish, and their practices, known afterwards as *brujería,* were therefore outlawed and forbidden. However, given that these practices originally had nothing to do with the devil from Catholicism, over time emphasis was placed on the malicious nature of *brujería* as opposed to only its sacrilegious origins in the Americas. With this in mind, it can be proposed that a separate branch and definition of *brujería* was formed, one that was composed mainly of the malevolent intentions of *brujas* and *brujos* and the rituals and crafts they could perform to do harm. This definition of *brujería* was therefore not connected to Catholicism, the devil, or the Amerindian religions and practices, but was, instead, something else.

1.3 An Amalgamation of Religions

In order to properly dive into the origins of *curanderismo* and *brujería* and the manner in which the two concepts eventually came to hold the cultural significance they do, this section will seek to walk first through the manner in which the indigenous people of the Americas[8] were seen by the Spanish conquistadors, religious clerks, missionaries, and priests who became the leading experts on the subject of the Amerindians, and how their views ended up shaping the manner in which the Catholic religion was introduced to and enforced upon the Amerindians. This section will also include an analysis detailing how the Catholic religion simultaneously dominated and was ingrained within the Nahua[9] religion, which was practiced by a large part of the indigenous

[8] Historically it was common to refer to the indigenous population of the Americas by the moniker of "Indians," which was seemingly derived first from Christopher Columbus' belief that he had reached the country of India in Asia when he first arrived at the Americas. Overtime, this way of referring to the indigenous population tapered off in popularity and gave way to different forms of identification, such as "indigenous," "native," and "Amerindian", all of which will be used throughout this work.

[9] The word Nahua in this context refers to an indigenous people native to current day Mexico and Central America who migrated there over many years prior to colonization. Several other indigenous groups either shared ethnicity with or were derived from the Nahua, including those of the Mexica Empire, who spoke the Nahua language, Nahuatl.

population of the area, including the Mexica Empire, and thereby contributed to the foundations of both *curanderismo* and *brujería.*

The multiple and conflicting moral viewpoints that Spain held towards the native populations of the Americas led to several discussions on the proper manner of treating those people. A prominent example of this type of argument is the so-called 1550 Valladolid Debate concerning the humanity of the Amerindians. During this debate various possible approaches towards the morality, humanity, and treatment of the indigenous people were explored. In their analysis of the debate, Daniel Brunstetter and Dana Zartner explore how whole countries and religions can come to the conclusive belief that certain treatment and behavior towards people is not only acceptable, but righteous, especially if the population of the people in question is considered to be barbaric or otherwise uncultured. This point is explained by the following quote: "The lessons from Valladolid point to the problems of a black and white presentation of the world, the negative consequences of linking humanitarian ends to just war and the renewed salience of *injuria* when building the case for just war," essentially pointing out that this debate is a prime example for the consequences justifying violence and extreme ideas of right and wrong (Brunstetter and Zartner 735). However, in the case of the Valladolid debate and the religious reformations that followed, the consequences that were experienced by the Amerindians included attempts to exterminate their culture and the people themselves.

In addition to the analysis of the Valladolid Debate on its own, Brunstetter and Zartner also makes parallels between the debate and contemporary wars on terror, including the idea of barbarism to define a population of people and the manner in which it can take root. In the 1550 Debate itself, one side, namely Sepúlveda's, drove this point home more often than not, while

---

Nahuatl itself was also spoken by several other native peoples surrounding the Mexica Empire at the time of its rule and conquests.

Bartolomé De Las Casas tried to argue towards the benefits of the Amerindians. If examined from an outside perspective, however, it should be noted that while De Las Casas arguably holds a less negative viewpoint of the indigenous people, it appears that neither side of the Debate was actually accurately and positively representing them. De Las Casas' opinions, in particular, can be summarized by the following quote:

> Las Casas' experiences in the New World during nearly 50 years meant that he came face to face with the customs of the Indians that Sepúlveda judged to be barbaric, as well as the Spanish wars aimed at paving the way for Christianity (Pagden, 1991). In thinking about war, his first turn was one of introspection in which he scrutinized the actions of his own people, and recognized their barbarity. His first contribution to clarifying *jus ad bellum* is thus the rejection of the civilized–barbarian dichotomy, a stance that serves as a warning against letting moral standards lead to black and white categorizations that dehumanize the Other. (Brunstetter and Zartner 739)

In essence, De Las Casas used his firsthand experience in both Spain and the Americas to draw comparisons between the two cultures, acknowledging, first and foremost, the barbarism on both sides and the fact that labeling any culture barbaric was not grounds for dismissing and dehumanizing a people.

To further illustrate the outcomes that the arguers of Valladolid debate were working towards achieving and implementing, it is important to also analyze the following quote on the overall views of Sepúlveda and De Las Casas in regards to warring with the Amerindians:

> Sepúlveda and Las Casas are essentially two sides of the same coin. Sepúlveda argued that in the case of barbarians, imposing the moral good, which was essential to the Christian view of charity and brotherly love, requires the use of force to clear the way. Las Casas

> rejects the use of force, claiming that the best manner to convert the Indians is not via an offensive war, but 'to see the Christian life shine in our conduct'. (Brunstetter and Zartner 745)

When analyzing these two different platforms in the debate, some contradictions in their arguments shine through. In the case of Sepúlveda, the flaw in logic comes from his insistence that violence is the most straightforward and moral way to show affection, or "charity and brotherly love," as stated above, to the Amerindian people. The argument attempts to justify immoral actions to create moral outcomes.

De Las Casas differs on the argument of the presumed barbarism and uncivilized nature of the Amerindians, but not necessarily by defending them outright. Instead, he rejects the platform that barbarism equals inferiority and "cites the modern Spanish who 'in the absolutely inhuman things they have done to those nations [of the New World] have surpassed all other barbarians' as a prime example," essentially putting into question the civility of the Spanish themselves (Brunstetter and Zartner 739-740). In a way, De Las Casas does not argue that the Amerindians are as human as the Spanish, but that the Spanish are as human as the Amerindians with the argument that both can be barbaric and wise. Due to this, De Las Casas' argument can be problematic, because the reason he defends the Amerindians does not appear to be entirely for their benefit. Throughout Brunstetter and Zartner's text, there are several citations showing that De Las Casas is against waging war on the Amerindians for moral reasons. He cites that the natives' use of violence for self-defense is not a justifiable reason to attack them and that their barbarism is no worse than that shown by other countries. However, he appears to be arguing so because he believes it will ultimately foil plans to convert them to Catholicism. This means that, despite his arguments of their humanity, his main arguments come from "his rejection of war to

spread the truth," or that he is playing a long game, believing that if kindness is shown to the Amerindians instead of violence he will attain their conversion to Catholicism and, thus, spread true morality more easily (Brunstetter and Zartner 745).

Therefore, regardless of the positive attributes of the Amerindian people listed by De Las Casas, which mainly focused on their rights to self-defense and their righteous anger at the way the Catholic clergy members were judging them in their attempts to convert them, the humanity of the Amerindians was not argued for. Instead, Sepúlveda argued against Amerindian humanity and De Las Casas spoke of it neutrally. Furthermore, the Valladolid Debate focused not on the native people themselves, but on the idea of "just wars" as a way to deal with them. The reason behind this was that it was still widely assumed the Amerindians were wicked largely through ignorance and could be taught proper faith and morality. Thus, looking at these intentions and thoughts on barbarism through the lens of culture and traditional practices, it can be argued that the rights and practices that eventually became *curanderismo* would have been targeted for eradication. The culture and practices of the indigenous people would have been seen as wrong and barbaric through their sheer difference from Catholicism alone, and adding magic, mysticism, and any bloody rites would have only worsened the opinion of the Spanish clergy. Thus, correcting the people and the practices through conversion would have been justifiable then. One of the first steps towards accomplishing said conversion would have been to label all practices as *brujería*, specifically because the concept held no positive connotations and was directly linked to evil. If both the clergy members and the native population came to accept this as truth, then it would only be natural for the practices to be rejected as the conversion to Catholicism spread. Therefore, if the traditional Nahua practices were to survive in any capacity, they would have to become known by

another name – hence the term *curanderismo* – and find a way to be permanently unaffiliated with the devil.

To place things in a linear perspective, it should be noted that the debate itself occurred almost thirty years after the fall of the Mexica Empire in 1521, that the campaign to conquer the Incan Empire had already started in 1532, and the Incan resistance against the Spanish would not officially end until 1572. It is important to note, then, the length of time between the colonization of what is now Mexico itself after the fall of the Mexica Empire and the Valladolid Debate. In the eyes of the Spanish crown, the attack on the Mexica by Hernan Cortés was illegal and, in the aftermath, he wrote several letters to the Spanish king and queen at the time to justify the takeover. That suggests that there is a high chance that the accounts are biased in favor of those who planned and participated in the takeover. Yet, the fact remains that it took decades for the Spanish government to begin to officially consider the native population in their new colonies; therefore, there were no clear laws in place to limit what Spanish citizens and Catholic clergymen could do to the Amerindian people in the meantime.

It is also important to recall that the words of the Catholic Church, the dogmatic laws they followed, and the biblical figures present in their cannon were considered to be as real and binding as anything else in the world. Manuel M. Marzal puts it well in his arguments concerning the devil, specifically because the devil's existence and malicious influence were considered fact. He states that "The devil had an important place in transplanted beliefs. For Spanish Christians, the devil was a 'theological fact' because he was a part of Catholic doctrine that was frequently mentioned in sermons and religious tracts" (151). This aspect of the belief of the Spanish is particularly important because it establishes the basis for the logic of their dealings with the Amerindians. The fact that the devil existed and that the only path to salvation was through a firm belief in Christ

and rejection of the devil was an unmovable truth applied to all situations, and narratives were specifically formed, or in some cases reformed, in order to keep this truth absolute. Evidence of this can be found in the first book published in South America, the *Totality of the Catholic Faith,* a book that explains the rules of catechism, which include rules of faith about God, the Trinity, Jesus Christ, holy church, and an affirmation that "in order to be saved, a man has to become Christian, to believe in Jesus Christ" (Marzal 147). Therefore, if anything that originated in native traditions or beliefs was expected to survive the Catholic purging, it had to transform into something more palatable to the Catholic Church. In essence, in order to keep practices alive, they could not be associated with the devil; hence, the healing practices that would become *curanderismo* had to be connected with the God of the Catholic scripture. Once that link was created, the protection of the Catholic Church could be extended to the native practices as opposed to being labeled as *brujería* and connected to the devil, though even with these measures, some avoid the practice due to conflicting perspectives about *curanderismo's* relationship with the Catholic Church and its connection to black magic (Salazar and Levin 150).

The need for this change came from the severity in which idolatry was dealt with in Spain, who at this time had already established the Spanish Inquisition. As explained before, if the Amerindians did not worship God, then in the minds of the Catholic clergy they could be only worshipping the devil. The fact that their religion did not fit the version of the devil seen in Europe meant that the devil must have tricked them and created the religion they currently follow as a way to maintain their worship. As Frost explains,

> one of the characteristics shared by most of those who dealt with the indigenous cultures was horror at the rites in which they could see nothing but sacrilegious parodies invented by the devil, this 'mockery of God,' whose envy not only made him fall, but also inspired

> in him a never-ending ambition to see others fall. For centuries, however, the devil's ambition could be satiated to a large extent by exercising his influence over the Indians who, by God's design, had no knowledge of God's word. There are even religious chroniclers who saw the conquest as God's just punishment for the Indian's wickedness. (129)

Following this reasoning, a conclusion could be drawn that if the Amerindians were not completely at fault for following the devil – in the eyes of the Spanish and the Catholic Church – then their ignorance was at fault, and ignorance could be corrected. Therefore, the priests and friars who traveled to the Americas, among others, could have aimed towards reforming the Amerindians as opposed to exterminating them. Further confirmation of this particular point of view can be seen in the change of the manner in which the Amerindians were chronicled, which shifted from "the first image of the Native American as a gentle being knowing nothing of quarrels or of murder, 'people of love and without greed' who love their neighbors as themselves and use no weapons" to that of sacrilegious individuals described above (Frost 121).

With this new definition of the Amerindians in mind, it can be deduced that the Spanish colonizers considered the local population to be simultaneously capable of being saved and unable to be saved without proper guidance from those who knew better. In this case, those with the guidance and power needed to save the Amerindians would be the clergy members of the Catholic Church, who were also the ones to apply this logic in the first place. The actions that followed, namely the work to dismantle the Nahua religion by taking action to burn the Mexica Codices, and other such drastic measures, can be seen as harsh attempts to bring the Amerindians into the fold of the Catholic Church, which would, by extension, save their souls from their previous ignorant idolatry and the worship of the devil. The official native medicinal and spiritual practices are

included in this purging. The practices were unknown and unsanctioned by the Catholic Church and, as such, would fall under the jurisdiction of the devil. Branded "forbidden", the practices could no longer function in an official capacity or out in the open; instead, in order to survive, they had to be passed on and performed underground or mixed in with Catholicism to appear more legitimate and appealing to the Catholic Church and later to Latin American followers of Catholicism. This mixing of traditions and practices could then arguably be where the concept of *curanderismo* could have sprouted, especially when one takes into consideration that contemporary clients who seek out healing by *curanderismo* "feel reassured by a perception that the beliefs and rituals that they experienced are at least connected to the Roman Catholic religion and may be comforted by the use of traditional religious objects during sessions" (Salazar and Levin 156).

The Nahua religion was a prominent part of the culture of the Mexica Empire and the surrounding regions, its influence extending to include a religious calendar that was followed by the population complete with holidays and days of ritualistic importance (Soustelle 109-111, 246-247). Given this, it can be comparatively equivalent to the Catholic Church in Spain as both included religious influence in state affairs, and both were organized and institutionalized religions in their respective countries/empires. However, unlike the Catholic Church, Nahua religion appeared to be less rigid in its beliefs and even with the importance of certain gods. Klor de Alva puts this into perspective in the following passage in which the workings of the Nahua religion are described as a:

> flexible pantheon [that] could include new deities, transform the significance of old ones, and reject those that had lost their efficacy… with important conceptual exceptions, their specific practices and beliefs were not assumed to be universal in scope. Indeed, localized

> forms of worship, creation myths, and religious premises were the rule and were imposed on others only as a natural result of military conquest, political hegemony, or charismatic persuasion… Although the missionaries struggled to characterize Christianity as totally opposed to the beliefs and rites of the natives, many of them saw links where significant gaps could (should?) have been expected. Thus while pre-Hispanic Nahua religion was violently rejected, its origin was interpreted by these friars as the horrific result of Satan's evil ways. This idea complemented the native notion of religious continuity and ended up by erecting bridges between the two religions that permitted each side to see the others' faith as intelligible. (175)

When analyzed, the natural religious continuity described in this quote can be interpreted as an opening for the Catholic religion to take up a space in the religion of the Nahua. As explained above, the dogma and myths in Nahua religion were flexible and used to change, which means that the Nahua people would have seen the inclusion of Catholic icons as new figures in their established religion rather than an entirely new religion. Klor de Alva specifically states that some religious premises at this time were imposed on the Nahua, presumably by the Mexica, given their status as a warmongering empire, and so, imposing new religious premises through Catholicism would not have been an entirely foreign concept (178). Thus, Catholicism would have followed in same footsteps as previous conquerors who inserted their own religious beliefs into local communities and, as Klor de Alva explains, bridges between the two religions would have been formed. Interestingly, most of the work was likely done by the Nahua as they identified and accepted key Catholic icons that they could connect to their own old deities, such as the Virgin Mary and the goddess Coatlicue, who also experienced an immaculate pregnancy. Therefore,

instead of Catholicism eradicating the Nahua religion, it was instead incorporated into the standing beliefs of the Nahua people.

With this premise in mind, it can be assumed that, alongside the Nahua religion and icons, various native traditions and practices would then also be merged with aspects of Catholicism during colonial and postcolonial times, as opposed to vanishing completely. This can be partly due to the manner in which the Spanish conquest rooted European lifestyle into the community. When a new area was discovered and subsequently conquered, it was common for the Catholic church to be built in the place of the most holy site available in the local area. In Mexica and Mayan cases, for example, it was common for the churches to be built from the stones of dismantled temples and pyramids. On account of these efforts, it would naturally follow that the care and worship the natives gave to the original sites would be transplanted onto the churches built in their place. After all, the holy site itself was not gone and still available for the local population to see and visit, even if there was a foreign building in its place and one needed to be baptized in order to visit (Klor de Alva 178).

The preservation of more detailed aspects of culture, however, such as traditions and religious iconography, could mostly likely be traced to efforts from the indigenous populations. In the case of the Mexica Empire and other surrounding indigenous peoples, this process was described by Klor de Alva as the "Nahuatization" of Catholicism (174). This process illustrates the efforts of the Nahua people, in particular, to use aspects of the Catholic religion to their own ends. The changes wrought by the Nahua and can be encapsulated well as follows:

> Christianity had been thoroughly 'Nahuatized' by the Indians, who considered themselves genuine Christians even as they worshiped many spiritual beings, disregarded the significance of the teachings of salvation, and continued to make this-worldly ends the

> legitimate object of their religious devotion. It is this spiritual condition which anthropologists could still find in the twentieth century and characterize as 'Christo-paganism'. (Klor de Alva 174-175)

An example of this Nahuatization is the figure of the Virgin Mary who is fully accepted as cannon Catholic iconography and has had many miraculous sightings over the centuries. Her most popular incarnation, however, in current day Mexico specifically, is *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, who is a prime example of the Christo-paganism of Catholicism described above. She is a figure that was discovered and presented by a native Nahua man who had converted to Catholicism. Unlike her previous European incarnations, this version of the Virgin Mary is dark skinned, was seen for the first time by a native man in 1531, and the first church dedicated to her was built in the location where a temple for a Nahua goddess used to be (Cisneros 50). The popular holiday of *el Día de los Muertos*[10] in Mexico, which is celebrated on the first and second of November, also follows the concept of Nahuatization, as the holiday includes the use of *altares* – Spanish for altars – used in Catholicism and Catholic prayers for the deceased. Cities are known to host parades or parties in the streets and cemeteries to celebrate the holiday, which speaks to the widespread acceptance of an indigenous holiday in primarily Catholic communities. Outside of its wide popularity in Latin America, the holiday was also placed in the religious calendar of the Catholic Church, though on

[10] *El Día de los Muertos* (also referred to as *Día de Muertos*) is a holiday celebrated throughout a large portion of Latin America. In English it translates to The Day of the Dead and is celebrated on November 1st and 2nd of each year, with the first day often reserved towards remembering the souls of dead children and the second towards all dead souls. While the manner in which this holiday is celebrated varies from country to country, or even region to region, as a whole it focuses on the central theme of honoring the dead, specifically one's own dead loved ones and ancestors. The celebration of the holiday also has a foundation in joy as opposed to mourning. Rather than spend the day to feel the loss of the loved ones, families and individuals alike turn instead to rejoicing in the life lived by the dead and in the memories left behind. A form of spirituality is also included as it is believed that the living are not the only ones to benefit from this festival and that the souls of the dead are permitted to visit the world of the living during this holiday to see their families. Family *altares* are usually adorned with marigold flowers to guide the souls of the dead, can also be decorated with sugar skulls, candles, a special Day of the Dead bread, photographs of the dead, and even sometimes foods that the deceased once enjoyed.

that calendar it is more commonly referred to as All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. The fact that it was included into Catholic cannon at all demonstrates the success of the incorporation of an indigenous religion's beliefs a European one.

Manuel Marzal also pointed out another similar instance of a culture influencing Spanish Catholicism, specifically that of the Arabs while they inhabited Spain. The two cultures and religions had lived alongside each other with a certain tolerance for approximately eight centuries before the Arabs were pushed out, after which the country of Spain was formally created and united. Its new reigning monarchs were Catholics and Catholicism was considered to be the country's one and official religion. Regardless of the eventual rejection of the Arabs and their religion, however, as Marzal points out, a belief in the supernatural was left in Spain and "this magico-religious arsenal became a part of the popular Catholicism that was transplanted to America" (144).

One of the greater evidences of the influence the Nahua religion had on Catholicism can be seen in the popularity of saints[11] within Latin American communities, an esteem so strong that these figures are often prayed to as much as the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary are. The importance of saints is two-fold. On the one hand, they are evidence of the Nahuatization of Catholicism as they are figures present in and believed in by local populations who were then subsequently added into the Catholic cannon, often when European Popes officially declare them to be saints. With the validation of the Catholic Church in hand, the works of these saints could then be seen as acceptable and good, as opposed to native and evil, which in turn means that the magic they perform – specifically the miracles – are not evil either. In this, we can see the

[11] Definition of saints, especially in Latin American context. Like other religious figures, they are also presumed to be able to answer prayers and wishes by their followers after death, having earned a certain level of divinity due to their virtuous natures during their lifetime.

beginnings of how *curanderismo* came to be formed, or reformed, through the influence of the Catholic Church. Saints were seen in a particularly reverent light due to their miraculous abilities despite the fact the majority that are worshipped in Latin America have no European origins. As argued by Marzal,

> With regard to the significance of the cult of the saints, it seems that, of the two dimensions a saint has in Catholic theology – that of intercessor before God and that of a model for Christian life – that of intercessor had much more importance in transplanted Catholicism. The saint, by being a follower and messenger of God, participates in some way in divine power, and the worshipers experience the saint's power when he or she comes to their aid and listens to their prayers. (151)

Given the manner in which magic and mysticism were commonplace in the Nahua religion, the possibility exists that the reason behind the popularity of saints and their miracles is that they presented an opportunity for the Nahua people to keep the magical-supernatural and polytheism aspects of their indigenous beliefs and religion, while still remaining within the realm of acceptability set by the Catholic Church (Marzal 152). As stated, saints are thought to have a form of magical abilities granted to them divinely, so they are able to perform miracles – often with healing aspects attached to them – and are also capable of blessing people. Considering the Nahua's cultural history with the supernatural, it is possible to assume that the acceptance of saints stems from their similarity to the Nahua's original religious practices. Spiritual priests, priestesses, and midwives performed the sort of rites and necessities that saints, especially those that have emerged from Latin America over the years, became to be known to perform.

The mixture of Catholic and Nahua traditions and beliefs appear to have seeped into what would become the practices of *curanderismo.* Klor de Alva describes how this theological process took place:

> unacculturated Nahua religiosity, in contrast to the Christian focus on salvation, was fundamentally apotropaic, that is, centered on averting evil through appropriate observances. Except to those few with a penchant for abstract thought, the misfortunes the Nahua sought to avoid were very mundane: sickness, drought, hail, hunger, pests, poverty, sterility, and the many other calamities that attend bad luck. These disasters – abstractly considered the result of the disequilibriums that existed among the complementary but opposing forces that made up the universe – were countered by prayers and sacrificial ritual aimed at "paying back" the gods for their favors. (183)

When the points made in this quote about the Nahua religion's focus on solving every day human problems and illnesses are taken into the context of what *curanderismo* provides for the communities in which it exists, it can be surmised that one of the roots of what *curanderismo* is can come from the intentions behind the Nahua religion. Efforts were focused on healing human ailments, or natural disasters, or happenings that contribute to human ailment. In contrast, the efforts of the Catholic religion focused most often on the ailments of a spiritual nature, and placed importance on salvation after death, as opposed to earthly concerns. However, as mentioned in the previous section defining *curanderismo,* it is a diverse practice, and its practitioners may have several abilities and knowledge that is meant to heal physically, spiritually, and mentally. Given this, it can be concluded that *curanderismo* is a mix and successor to both the focuses of the Nahua and Catholic religions as it does not look to heal only one kind of ailment. Additionally, *curanderismo* practices, specifically those that lean on the supernatural aspect, often need, or at

least use, some form of rite or prayer to work. The prayers can technically be considered Catholic, but their necessity during healing work harkens back to the ritualistic nature of the Nahua religion as opposed to the practices of Catholicism at the time. The appeal of this aspect of *curanderismo* is thus summed up by Salazar and Levin: "Prayer to a saint for the healing of a particular ailment is a commonly performed practice within *curanderismo.* In a previous study of older Mexican Americans, authors found a positive association between praying to the saints and stronger God-mediated control beliefs, which in turn were related to better optimism and self-related health" (151). This explanation stresses two points. The first in the word "commonly", which demonstrates that a prayer to Catholic saints is both expected and interwoven with the healings involved in *curanderismo*, as opposed to being included superficially. The second is the importance of appealing to "God-mediated control beliefs." The mention of God being essentially needed in the healing process, mainly to make the patient feel more comfortable, pinpoints what exactly allowed *curanderismo* to continue as an acceptable practice in Latin America through colonial years and beyond: despite its roots in indigenous practices, it is interconnected with the Catholic faith. It, therefore, falls under the religion's guarantees of salvation of the soul, as well as assurances that it is a blessed form of healing, not one associated with evil and the devil.

A link to *brujería* can also follow alongside this logic as during early colonial times, regardless of the connections these healings rites and healers had to Catholicism, they would still very likely have been considered a type of black magic due to the mystic and supernatural aspects of it. *Curanderismo's* healing practices, especially, would most likely rely on the knowledge and ingredients used prior to the arrival of the Spanish. At the same time, any practices and/or practitioners who refused to add Catholic aspects to the rites or healings would not have fallen under the social and political protection provided by Catholicism during colonization. Thus, they

would not have been considered to be acceptable and would likely not have been categorized as *curanderismo*.

Adding to the confusion that surrounds the two terms of *curanderismo* and *brujería,* specifically when it comes to what it is exactly that makes them different, is the manner in which *curanderismo* began to evolve. Over time, the links of these healing practices to Catholicism became more pronounced, with things such as Catholic prayers, as mentioned before, working their way into the rituals and ceremonial aspects of *curanderismo*. The inclusion of Catholicism is described well by Salazar and Levin, who explain that "Religious paraphernalia, herbs, and other symbolic items are used in conjunction with prayer to bring about healing within *curanderismo* rituals" (154). Essentially, the use of these items means that, at a foundational level, many generations of practitioners of *curanderismo* are both Catholic themselves and could believe that Catholic icons and powers are at work with them during their healing sessions. This is despite the fact that the practices were originally Nahua and that the Nahua religion is, as described before, fundamentally different from Catholicism. In addition, the recipients of *curanderismo* healings themselves are Catholic as well and also believe that God or saints are present in the rituals and assisting in their healing. This testifies to the amalgamation of religions and traditions that began during colonial times as there appears to be no conflicts in using two separate beliefs alongside each other in the practice of *curanderismo.*

Salazar and Levin further support the theory that *curanderismo* is based on the blending of beliefs and spirituality:

> The *desarrollo* (training) of a *curandero/a* is an arduous process through which candidates become attuned with *el don*, the gift to heal, believed to come from God. The *desarrollo*

> prepares a per-son to properly use prayer and religious paraphernalia in pre- scribed rituals to bring about healing among respective clients. (150)

The "God" they mention pertains to the "God" worshiped in Catholicism (Salazar and Levin 150). The fact that this Catholic God is not only involved in the prayers and rituals of *curanderismo* but also in bestowing upon people the gift and blessing needed to become a *curandera* or *curandero* speaks greatly to the level of fusion between these two cultures and religions, because it metaphorically asserts that the God of Catholicism is not only aware of *curanderismo* as a practice but takes specific measures to ensure a person can become a practitioner of *curanderismo*. This inserts Catholicism into a practice with Amerindian origins. It speaks equally strongly of the point in which *curanderismo* and *brujería* became separate entities as it seemingly ignores that fact that *curanderismo* has native origins and gives permission, if unofficially, for it to be practiced further, with blessings. *Brujería*, on the other hand, is still an outlier, full of sacrilegious and evil practices that theoretically have nothing to do with God and Catholicism and are therefore meant to be scorned.

1.4 Postcolonial Nationalism in Mexico

To understand the practical and conceptual growth of *curanderismo* and *brujería* throughout the years, it is important to delve once again into a more linear context, this time with a focus this time on postcolonial times and the manner in which nationalism was shaped in the country of Mexico. To adequately describe this, this section will focus on the cultural and literary transformation of Malinali, who is better known by her moniker "La Malinche," [12] a very well-

[12] Her birth name is unknown. Various theories and possible names have been put forth over the years, but none officially confirmed. One of these posited names is Malinali, a name which has grown in popularity due, in part, to its phonetic similarities to her title La Malinche, her Spanish given name Marina, and another possible name and title, Malintzin. This version Malinali will be the name used to refer to her throughout the text.

known historical figure in Mexico. Malinali was a young woman who ended up featuring heavily in history due to her role as an interpreter for Hernan Cortés. This man, later referred to as a conquistador, would eventually lead his own soldiers and various indigenous people from the surrounding area to conquer and collapse the Mexica Empire. The viewpoint of her that emerges in different eras, specifically in colonial times and in postcolonial ones, directly speaks to the changes in culture and society that were being formed at the time.

During Spanish colonial times, Malinali's role with the Spanish against the Mexica is seen as both very important and near romanticized, particularly when pertaining to her relationship with Cortés, with whom she eventually had a child. Positive credit was given to her for her role in surviving autobiographical accounts, with some texts going as far as to claim that the conquest would not have been possible without her. Within one particular article that takes both colonial and postcolonial versions of Malinali into perspective, she is thus described, "La Malinche in Bernal Díaz del Castillo's 16th Century eyewitness account *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*…she is a native princess, a prisoner enamored of her master, a noble victim of a patriarchal system, and a polyglot. Díaz del Castillo affirms La Malinche's noble lineage when he presents her to the Spanish reading public in his text" [13] (Harris, 239). Taking into account the author of this particular written account of La Malinche, it is important to note that he was not only a Spanish man, but one directly involved in the fall of the Mexica Empire. The manner in which Harris summarizes Díaz del Castillo's written account makes it clear that he was an admirer of Hernán Cortés (240) and that there is a probability he was romanticizing the events. The autobiography should then be read under the presumption that the series of events depicted are written to appeal to readers in Spain. This presumption is strengthened when we consider, as

[13] Translates to: The True History of the Conquest of New Spain.

mentioned previously, that the attack on and the subsequent conquest of the Mexica Empire was illegal in the eyes of the Spanish crown. Therefore, the presence of an exotic foreign princess who fell in love with and helped another Spanish man would be a welcome character in his account.

Due to the chaos that ensued following the fall of the Mexica Empire and to the possible bias from the chronicles written in the aftermath, it is difficult to tell historical fact from myth. Malinali's story is often saturated with this kind of combination of fact and myth. A good example of this is the story of when she allegedly forgave her mother for selling her into slavery after coincidentally encountering her after the fall of the Mexica, an account provided by Bernal Díaz del Castillo (Franco 77-78). In this scenario, her mother is described as poor and fallen, alongside the various indigenous people after the fall of the Mexica Empire. In contrast, Malinali is portrayed as one of a high position, someone who now holds the ability to grant her mother forgiveness and a chance for survival. This high status would have been bestowed upon Malinali either directly by the Spanish, or at least as a consequence of her association with the Spanish. The dubiousness of this event lies, first, in the statistical unlikeliness of such an event occurring, and second, in the fact that it is unknown if Malinali was even sold into slavery by her mother in the first place. Díaz del Castillo affirms this account, alongside with information of her birth and youth, that she is of noble lineage and that she was made a victim by being handed to the Spanish by her own people (240). However, as stated previously, accounts of the time are likely biased; there are none from Malinali herself, and no accounts regarding her origins have been completely verified. There are several detailing how she ended up in slavery, varying from being given away by her community, along with other girls, to the Spanish, to being captured by the neighboring people who then sold her to the Mexica. Nonetheless, the story of her forgiveness, and other accounts like it, were spread and popularized during colonial times to cement her image as a woman of grace with a certain

amount of power, both of which were granted to her either directly, or through association, by the Spanish.

The perception of medicinal and mystic practices in colonial times shared a similar fate, as colonization placed those practices underneath a specific lens, though it was an inverse mechanism to the treatment given to Malinali. The mystic and healing practices were instead framed under the term of *brujería,* a term that specifically vilified and targeted the practices for extermination, just as their European equivalents were. The priests and midwives that existed in the Mexica religion, and their specific roles in that religion, for example, were no longer officially recognized as priests and midwives. The medicinal aspect to their roles was removed in favor of the supernatural and bloody aspect of it. Essentially, the view of them leaned into specific characteristics, such as the sacrificial part of their responsibilities and their perceived idolatry, and away from the ritualistic and curative aspects. The exceptions to this out-casting of culture and practices are found – as explained in the prior section – in the traditions sneaked and blended into the Spanish culture and Catholic religion.

In postcolonial times, however, which arguably officially started with the formation of Mexico as a country after winning their independence from Spain, both Malinali and the indigenous practices received a completely different treatment. A possible cause for this occurrence were the efforts to establish Mexican nationalism, which was important in regards to replacing the vacuum left by the Spanish rule and Spanish narratives after Mexico won its war for independence. In colonial times, for example, Malinali was most often referred to by the name the Spanish gave her, Doña Marina. In postcolonial times, she began to be popularly referred to as La Malinche, or *La Chingada,* the latter essentially translating to “the fucked one.” Both terms are not positive, which can be seen also in the word *malinchismo,* which is derived from the name

Malinche and is a derogatory term used to describe a person who rejects their own culture in favor of a foreign one, presumably a European one.

Postcolonial narratives took specific steps away from both Spanish and Amerindian ancestry and identity, focusing instead solely on the idea of being Mexican. One of the prime examples of these attempts can be found in the writings of Octavio Paz, who was an affluent person and writer during his life and has still regained a popular reputation over the years. In one of his best known texts, titled "The Sons of La Malinche", he details a good amount of the attitudes surrounding the construction of Mexican nationalism and the role that Malinali played in it. In one instance, he claims that,

> The Mexican does not want to be either an Indian or a Spaniard. Nor does he want to be descended from them. And he does not affirm himself as a mixture, but rather as an abstraction: he is a man. He becomes the son of Nothingness. His beginnings are in his own self' (Paz 87).

This quote encompasses a particularly strong point in the Mexican nationalism following colonization –the idea that a Mexican person's identity is first and foremost that of a citizen of Mexico, while their ancestry in Europe and in the natives of the Americas either hurt their identities or have no effect on them.

In the same text, Paz also discusses his viewpoint on why a person who identifies as Mexican would have trouble accepting either European or Amerindian heritage, saying that "To the Mexican there are only two possibilities in life: either he inflicts the actions implied by *chingar* on others, or else he suffers them himself at the hands of others. This conception of social life as combat fatally divides society into the strong and the weak" (78). Essentially, Paz describes how postcolonial narratives did not want to focus on identifying their people and new country as direct

products of the complicated history between the Spanish and the Amerindians. This was mainly because to claim either or both of those heritages was to admit to being either a child of the colonized or the colonized, and live as a mirror image of this heritage, complete with class and racial pressures, a conclusion Paz also reaches where he affirms that a Mexican man would rather become an "abstraction" and "son of Nothingness", rather than be a "mixture" (87). Such legacy would be difficult to embrace when, for example, someone who would identify closer to their native roots would automatically be considered being weaker, "the Other" of the two options, simply because the indigenous people were colonized.

Following the logic described above, it could be of importance to note that *curanderismo* may have been pushed to not acknowledge its indigenous roots in the Nahua religion, nor any other type of Amerindian religion, because if it had, it too would be connected to the narrative of the indigenous weakness and passivity. This reason would have been included on top of the narrative of the native traditions being sacrilegious to the Catholic religion, which by postcolonial times was well ingrained into the Mexican culture. Additionally, if any practices of *curanderismo* were not seen to be connected to Catholicism and only connected to the native roots, it ran the risk of one being accused of practicing *brujería* as opposed to *curanderismo.*

To return to the manner in which Malinali came to be a representative figure in Mexican culture, it is also important to dive into the manner in which Paz, in particular, analyzes her character and what conclusions he draws on her effect on Mexican nationalism. Within his text, he describes a passivity to violation several times, specifically in relation to Malinali, describing that

> she disappears into nothingness; she *is* Nothingness. And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition. / If the *Chingada* is a representation of the violated Mother, it is

> appropriate to associate her with the Conquest, which was also a violation… The symbol of the violation is doña Maliche, the mistress of Cortés. It is true that she gave herself voluntarily to the conquistador, but he forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over…. The Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal. She embodies the open, the *chingado,* to our closed stoic, impassive Indians. (86)

An important detail in this quote is in the manner of address given to Malinali. She is not only referred to by her moniker of La Malinche, but is also called Nothingness, *Chingada,* and doña Malinche. Considering that the passage and article itself emphasize her influence over who Mexicans, especially Mexican men, are as people, these modes of address speak directly to the character of Mexico itself. Describing her as Nothingness, when she is the metaphorical mother of Mexico, implies that the citizens of Mexico are also nothing and that she is responsible for this. *Chingada* suggests a similar concept, but with the concept of violation. While referring to her as *doña* highlights her connection to the Spanish conquistadores and snubs her at the same time, both by not capitalizing the "d" in "*doña*" and by including her moniker after it, as opposed to the name she was given at baptism by the Spanish, Marina.

Overall, within this passage and the rest of the text, Paz describes both Malinali and the people of Mexico as persons that agreed to their own violation. They are people who specifically cannot help but to be open and complicit to violation because they are the metaphorical descendants of Malinali and therefore share in her sin and nature (Paz 86-87). Both Paz and this particular text grew in popularity after its publication in 1950 and the traitorous nature of Malinali/La Malinche essentially became historical fact as opposed to opinion or conjecture. With this type of text being used as a new cannon for the newly independent Mexico, it became important to make a choice as to how the Mexican person, especially a man, would behave and

become: whether conforming to the idea that they are a passive result of violation through Amerindian ancestry, or a conqueror through European ancestry, or a person of this new country who does not overly identify with either.

By Paz's particular analysis – as well as novels that recount fictional versions of Malinali and Cortés – Malinali became the embodiment of one who was both simultaneously a traitor to the indigenous people of Mexico and someone who purposefully allowed herself to be used and victimized by the Spanish during the conquest of the Mexica Empire. This image was then cast on to her metaphorical descendants, the people of the country of Mexico. Harris well marks the contrast between colonial views and postcolonial views:

> Díaz del Castillo does not blame her [Malinali] or accuse her of sin or treason; he was after all, a loyal soldier and admirer of Hernán Cortés. The narrator of La Malinche's submission to a Spaniard in Varela's American novel, however, characterizes her as sinful as does the narrator of her submission to a Mexican representative of la patria in Valle-Inclán's Spanish novel. In both depictions La Maliche is a victim and simultaneously a traitor who, by submitting sexually to her master – when that master is the enemy of the narrator of her story – has sinned. (240)

Similarly, the very concepts of *curanderismo* and *brujería* were remade before they were immersed in Latin American culture in postcolonial times, though an argument could be made that, unlike *brujería*, the term of *curanderismo,* as it came to exist, may have had a larger formation in this time in comparison to colonial times. Various practices began to return when Mexico as a country looked to embrace parts of their history that were not Spanish, though rejection of everything Spanish was not the goal. Catholicism, for example, was fully immersed in Mexican culture and ways of life. However, as outlined through this chapter, it was not uncommon for

native traditions to spill into Catholicism. Other Mexica cultural aspects along this line were also embraced, such as the mystic legend about the founding of the Mexica Empire. This legend tells how a prophetic vision prompted the Mexica to leave their previous home and settle at a new location, which they could identify when they saw an eagle perched on a cactus killing a snake. This location was a lake, where the Mexica then built their capital city Tenochtitlan and where Mexico's capital city is also located. The image of the snake, eagle, and cactus is now a symbol used on the Mexican flag.

The embrace and formation of *curanderismo* and *brujería*, however, differ from the cultural embracing outlined above. As mentioned before, during colonial years medicinal and spiritual practices were officially labeled under the pejorative term of *brujería*, an umbrella term used in order to establish European morals and viewpoints. Therefore, in postcolonial times, when Mexico was working to establish itself as a separate entity from Spain but did not want to return to identifying with its native roots, it would stand to reason that a separate term would be created and then used for these practices. Therefore, rather than using a term or title that predates colonization, the term of *curanderismo* would be adapted from Spanish as a term specific to Latin America. From there, it could gain popularity as a way to describe practices that were generally accepted and used by the population, but that were still sanctioned by the religion that most Mexican now followed and would not hold the same negative connotations as *brujería*.

Despite this conjecture, it is important to note that the full reason behind the creation of the word *curanderismo* during colonial times is unclear, though perhaps some credit could be given to the Catholic values that became deeply rooted in the people and country. The strictness of the Catholic Church in regards to worship outside of Catholicism during the period of colonization may have created discomfort at the thought of using a title utilized in another religion, especially

if it was a Nahua term. Nonetheless, despite the rise of *curanderismo* during colonization, the word *brujería* and its concept did not fade away during the postcolonial rebuilding of Mexico as a country. Instead, it was kept and branched off from the concept of *curanderismo.*

Culturally, there are two lenses through which *brujería* can be seen. One is the way that it was perceived by Catholicism and originated in Europe. Even in various forms of media, *brujería* is seen as heavily tied in with the devil and the enacting of malevolent forms of magic, curses, and general idolatry. Another aspect, however, is the association of *brujería* with plants and spiritual work native to Latin America, but with negative intentions and results. Essentially, *brujería* encompasses abilities that *curanderas* and *curanderos* could do but do not specifically because they are harmful. This type of *brujería* is often something that *curanderas* and *curanderos* are asked to help combat. Overall, the term of *curanderismo* changed in the postcolonial period into a separate definition, one which was fundamentally different from what *brujería* was described to be in colonial times. Although, the concept of *brujería* itself was never fully rejected and was instead adapted as a dark form of magical practices, disconnected from the main branch of *curanderismo.* Despite this defined difference between the two, however, the exact line between the two practices is blurred, and crossovers are undeniable.

Chapter Two: *Curanderismo* and *Brujería* in Relation to Decolonization and the Decolonial Context

Within this chapter, the complexities of *curanderismo* and *brujería* will be analyzed through a contemporary decolonial lens and the literary representations that include the two concepts. The reason for the inclusion of the contemporary decolonial perspective is due to its conceptual differences to postcolonialism. The concept of decolonization focuses on efforts to reverse and negate the consequences of colonization, though in practice it is more complex. As Franz Fanon describes it, "Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content" (36). Essentially, due to its complexity, several steps may be required to create a process of decolonization, which may differ in theory and in practice vastly throughout countries and cultures. Removing the source of colonization is one step of this process, but others include the reclaiming of cultural history, traditions, or language that may have been lost or forcibly removed during colonial times. The actual reclaiming of these can vary depending on the individual or community. Alongside the reclaiming are the equally important decisions to keep or preserve what was introduced during colonization, such as language or religion. In the second half of the 20th century anticolonial revolutions sprang up around various areas of the world and political and academic movements sprung up that included, or even relied on, the concept of decolonization. Chicana[14]/Chicano

[14] Chicana/Chicano is a self-stylized identity of people of Mexican descent who are born in or reside in the United States, especially if they've been in the US for most of their lives. Originally a racial slur, the word was reclaimed in the 1960s and 70s as a way to garner a sense of pride and identity for people of Mexican descent and ended up also being included in political matters. Throughout the decades, the term began to fade in and out of use due to difficulties with the rigidity of its definition. For example, in its exclusivity, focus was given to masculinity and Mexican descent nationalism, while lacking in inclusion towards other Latin American countries, issues of feminism, and Afro-Latin

movement in the United States, in particular, took root in the 1960s and 1970s as a way to challenge the hegemony of the ruling class (López 79). Academics and Latin American writers also took to the subject and explored the concepts of identity and generational trauma, including seasoned academics such as Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa describes ways in which decolonization has also been put to use outside of academia, such as embracing old indigenous dances and incorporating art into everyday life (88). Famous Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo, is another example. She was well known for bright color and symbolism in her paintings, which harken back to the indigenous roots and architecture, as well as local flora and fauna. She also became well known for her equally colorful wardrobe, which was heavily influenced by the Tehuana style that originated in Oaxaca, Mexico. These attributes have been celebrated as a form of culture specifically thought to be born of decolonization because of Kahlo's continuous efforts to connect with the indigenous, as opposed to European, roots.

2.1 Curanderismo in Chicano/a Context and Integrations into Mainstream Culture

A large part of the efforts put into the reclaiming of the culture and ancestry of Latin Americans can be accredited to the nationalist endeavors made in postcolonial times that worked to give Latin American countries an identity separate from European colonizers. The Chicano and Latinx[15] decolonial movements, however, continued where the nationalistic postcolonial efforts of Mexico left off, acknowledging and analyzing points that were not recognized by postcolonial

Americans. Due to this, the definition of Chicana/Chicano is a bit fractured, with individuals and communities having differentiating opinions on the meaning of the word and on who can and cannot be identified with it.

[15] Latinx is a term that has recently come into popularity following arguments over the term Latino. Latin American is the idiom used to refer to the people who are descended from and reside in South America, Central America, and Mexico, and are therefore often of mixed ethnicities and ancestries. However, due to the gendered nature of the languages Spanish and Portuguese, which are the most commonly used in Latin America, there is no official gender-neutral form of the word. Latino was then often used as a default, despite the fact that in a technical sense the word only refers to males. Latinx was introduced as a solution to this, with the intention being that the X at the end of the word would be neutral and therefore inclusive to all sexes and genders.

efforts, such as definitions of racism that were introduced during the colonization of the Americas and through the transatlantic slave trade. Gloria Anzaldúa, an author and academic, was one of the Chicano/a writers that contributed to the defining of decolonial identity in the southwest of the United States. In one of her more well-known texts, *Borderlands,* she introduces the term of *mestiza* consciousness. As previously stated, there were several words that were invented during colonial times to define a person's lineage and heritage. Chief among these new terms was *mestiza/mestizo,* which when first coined was used to describe a person who was half Spanish and half Mexica/Nahua until circumstances in the 1980s and 1990s provided room for the word's definition to broaden to a more collective mixed heritage (Cordova 201).

The cultural significance of this broadening definition is analyzed by Anzaldúa several times. Its basic definition is as follows:

> José Vasconcelos, Mexican philosopher, envisaged *una raza mestiza, una mezcla de razas afines, una raza de color – la primera raza síntesis del globo.*[16] He called it a cosmic race… a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world. Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity… his theory is one of inclusivity. And the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly "crossing over," this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being provides a hybrid progeny, a mutable more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollinization, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making – a new *mestiza* consciousness… It is a consciousness of the Borderlands. (99)

An important point to focus on is the word "consciousness," as it implies that a person's identification with the *mestiza/mestizo* does not need to be solely based on biology, though it is

[16] "a mestiza race, a mix of finetuned races, a race of color – the first racial synthesis of the globe" (my translation).

still a part of it. Instead, Anzaldúa posits that this consciousness can be used as a mindset and a way of identifying oneself when one lives or is born in a place wherein one faces cultural rejection or experiences a lack of belonging. This is a significant factor to consider because Anzaldúa was raised in Texas and was therefore from the part of the United States that was once a part of Mexico. As a result, her theory on this new consciousness is rooted in the conceptual reality she and other Latin American people have experienced, a reality in which people have an ancestral culture but not a home or country of their own. In the case Anzaldúa describes, this is because the people were displaced both physically and psychologically as they were no longer Mexican by border standards, or seen as such by cultural standards, but neither were they considered to be of the United States.

The southwestern area of the United States, which houses the states of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas,[17] were essentially colonized twice. The first was the colonization by the Spanish and the second by the U.S., when the latter went to war to claim those states from Mexico shortly after they had won their independence from Spain. The added trauma that the population experienced by being subjected to another war so closely after the one with Spain, followed by the forced acclimation into another foreign culture, makes the southwest of the U.S. an interesting case study in cultural mixing, particularly in the context of decolonization, because there is more than one layer of colonization to unravel. An example of this is in the reclaiming of indigenous languages in countries such as Mexico, which is fairly straightforward as Spanish was the enforced language and indigenous languages were the ones that meant to be

[17] Parts of Colorado and Utah were also once part of Mexico, but not the entirety of them. All the aforementioned territories were officially ceded by Mexico to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848. In terms of land loss, it is estimated that Mexico's territory was halved. However, the regions in question were not officially considered states when brought into the United States, but territories, and therefore the position of the people living there was complicated and difficult. They were not considered full citizens of the U.S. and therefore did not have the same rights. In addition to this, the locals did not read, write, or speak English, which made the former Mexican citizens' awareness of new laws and other local changes hard.

recovered. In comparison, the southwest of the U.S. experiences a more complicated form of linguistic reclaiming due to the social demands for the general population to speak English and not Spanish. Individuals then have to fight to retain the Spanish language because it is part of their culture, despite the fact that it is a colonially introduced language, others fight to preserve their original indigenous language, while others still have to work to keep both.

Prior to colonization by the Spanish, there were two major organized religions that were practiced in what is now Mexico. These were the Nahua religion – which was followed by a variety of people, including the Mexica – and the Mayan religion, which was followed primarily by the Mayans. Though the Mayan religion and influence are still alive in Mexico, particularly in the southern regions of the country, this discussion will focus primarily on the Nahua religion due to the fact that it has had the most influence in Chicana/o decolonial movements and was quite successful in terms of cultural reemergence, in addition to its success in blending Nahua beliefs and iconography into Catholicism.

For instance, while the previously discussed *Virgen de Guadalupe* is well known as a Catholic icon, her roots as a Mexica goddess are not denied, especially in more recent years. In many cases, her origins as a figure in Nahua religion are openly explored and even celebrated. A Chicana writer, Sandra Cisneros, even wrote a personal essay on the effect *la Virgen de Guadalupe* had on her sense of identity where she harkened back to the indigenous roots of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and how her previous incarnation as a Nahua goddess also affected her mindset and identity. Festivities hosted in Mexico on December 12 are another example. This date is the official birthday granted to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* by the Catholic Church, and is therefore a day in which she, and her miraculous appearances, are celebrated. Despite clear connections to Catholicism

present in these revelries, her other origins are not excluded, and Nahua cultural aspects, such as Mexica ritualistic dances and dress, are used (Barajas 3).

In parallel to this, the cultural and historic aspects of *curanderismo* are also utilized in decolonial efforts as symbols of practical and practicing cultural survival. Aside from the fact that *curanderismo* has served communities in a practical sense throughout the years, in the form of health services for local populations, its practices have also become a link to indigenous roots that can be embraced openly in contemporary times. This is due to the fact that *curanderismo's* basis is in medicine and healing, both physical and spiritual, and it can therefore lend itself to a more cultural, symbolic, and psychological form of healing when it is applied to decolonization. George Hartley breaks down this concept well when he discusses Gloria Anzaldúa's analysis on decolonization, and her

> project of "spiritual activism" as a decolonizing countermovement to Euro-American glorifications of both conquests, the Spanish and the Anglo" (2000, 177–94). She anchors her rejection of colonialism in what she calls the "New Tribalism," grounded in her attention to the indigenous roots of *mestizaje*. Noting that the Conquest was enacted through writing (letters between Columbus and Isabella, chronicles written by the clergy, and, we could add, treaties between the U.S. government and hand-chosen tribal "representatives"), she argues for "reclaiming the agency of reinscribing, taking off their inscriptions and reinscribing our- selves" (189) as a step toward healing of the Earth (193). In this example we see Anzaldúa's self-definition as a *curandera* of conquest, a healer of *la herida abierta*, the open wound created by the borders that neocolonialism has imposed—borders policing class, national, gender, sexual, racial, and religious divisions. (135)

In essence, when interpreting concepts such as *curanderismo* through decolonization, focus is placed on undoing the demonization of indigenous practices, which during colonial times were seen as barbaric and uncultured at best, and monstrous at worst. The manner in which this undoing is described by Hartley and Anzaldúa places emphasis on the psychological harm that this vilification had on the Latin American population. In the case of the *mestiza/mestizo* population that lived in the southwest of the U.S. after the war with Mexico, this psychological harm was pushed even further due to racially driven laws, which often aimed to take land from their original Mexican owners to give it to new Anglo owners. As a result, many local families felt compelled to claim to their white Spanish ancestry and refuse any indigenous ancestry in order to bypass these laws.

Despite the fact that decolonial movements can often place emphasis on individuals working on their own personal healing, efforts have been made to introduce cultural practices and ideologies on a conceptual level to a broader audience, especially through inclusion in academic work. When it comes to presenting *curanderismo* in such spaces, it aims towards endearing these practices as a legitimate form of action as opposed to simple customs used in rural areas or as a practice that is exclusive. Salazar and Levin put that into perspective stating that

> New avenues of training are presently offered for those individuals who would like to pursue a "career" in *curanderismo*. For example, Eliseo "Cheo" Torres has taught a two-week informational course on *curanderismo* entitled "Traditional Medicine Without Borders: *Curanderismo* in the Southwest and Mexico," serving more than 200 students at the University of New Mexico. The course invites local healers and health practitioners as well as healers from Mexican cities and communities to share their knowledge and experiences with students. The course has encouraged discussions surrounding the concept

of integrating traditional and conventional medicine to better serve the needs of the patient. (152)

Essentially, through academic lens, the concept of *curanderismo* strays from the idea that one must have a "gift" or "calling" to the practice in order to be able to do any form of traditional healing. It instead opens it up to people who simply wish to learn, or, as stated above, even turn it into a career path. As a result, the educational aspect of *curanderismo* is streamlined and focused more on the medicinal side as opposed to the mystical. Additionally, emphasis is placed, as indicated above, on fusing the traditional forms of *curanderismo* with western and conventional medicinal practices. This form of decolonization puts focus not only on removing the negative effects of colonization, but on choosing what to keep and what to change about one's own cultural heritage prior to colonization to "strategically reinvent ourselves to accommodate our exchanges," so that one may then include their cultural heritage it into other cultural areas of life (Anzaldúa 75). In this case, it is in keeping with traditional healing practices, but also allowing them to coexist with current knowledge and be enhanced by it.

Many decolonial movements encourage reconnecting not only with *curanderismo*, but with precolonial religions. If one's lineage can be traced back to a specific people and culture, then an individual is encouraged to reconnect with that religion. However, in this case of individuals from Mexico and areas of the southwest of the U.S., many often turn to the Nahua religion as a general ancestral religion. This is likely because the *mestizaje/* mixed race aspect of the Mexican people can make it near impossible to trace exact lineage. The Mexica and, by extension, the Nahua religion, are therefore a blanket inheritance for those who do not know what their exact ancestry is. Some of this can be seen even on a national level, with care given to preserving what is left of the Mexica capital of Tenochtitlan, which include the archeological preservation of ruins of

Teotihuacán, a popular tourist destination that houses two pyramids known as the Temple of the Moon and the Temple of the Sun. There is also the use of the Mexica founding myth of the eagle killing a serpent upon a cactus illustrated on Mexico's flag. This symbol has been used on three different iterations of the Mexican flag, with the current one legally approved by presidential decree in the 1980s. The consistent use of this symbol on different versions of the flag, combined with the legal decree indicate a cultural attachment to Mexica heritage throughout the country of Mexico. In addition to this, Chicano/a movements were heavily associated with the Nahua religion for a time, to the point that the inclusion of Nahua religion in decolonial movements was almost a canon in Chicana/o movements. This is most notably seen in the connection those movements had to the mythical homeland of Aztlan,[18] which Anzaldúa discusses in an entire chapter of *Borderlands*. This layer of decolonization can at times directly impact *curanderismo* in particular because it changes the mystical and spiritual side of healing. Rather than focusing on prayers to the Catholic God or to Catholic saints, attention may instead be given to gods or spiritual figures from other religions, to nature itself, or to removing the prayer completely.

Another facet of decolonial movements that gained traction in the 2010s includes in-depth discussions on racism and colorism, [19] issues that have been very present through colonial and postcolonial times and still have effects on individuals and communities in contemporary times.

[18] In Mexica lore, Aztlan is the original homeland of the Mexica, from where they all came from before migrating south and establishing their capital city of Tenochtitlan (Soustelle 218). According to this account, the reason behind the migration was a prophetic vision that led the Mexica people to create their new city and empire atop the location where they find an eagle killing a snake on a cactus. The lake where they eventually built Tenochtitlan was that place. Several theories in Chicana/o writings attempt to discover where exactly this homeland actually is, and the significance of it is rooted in the idea that it can stand as a metaphorical and spiritual homeland for Chicano/a people who don't know their exact indigenous lineage or heritage.

[19] Colorism is a form of discrimination that focuses heavily on the color/shade of one's skin tone. Alice Walker defined colorism as the "prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color" (290). It differs from terms like racism as unlike racism – which is usually defined by one race of color discriminating against another through systemic means of oppression – colorism is usually performed by people of the same race. It focuses more on how people should look, for example, in order to be considered attractive or a proper member of their race. It also does not have as great a basis in systemic oppression but is a contributing factor towards violence against people who are more outwardly of color, be they native or of African descent.

Social and cultural inclusion towards Afro-Latin Americans, who have historically been marginalized, has become a prominent goal, due to the damages done to them throughout slavery in Latin America, as well as through other forms of exclusivity, such prejudice in the workplace as the discriminatory idea that individuals who are not of only European and Amerindian descent should not be considered Latin American at all (Charles 9, 23). Other such instances of colorism concentrate on the idea that the more European an individual appears, the more acceptable they look. Decolonialism works to undo the psychological harm that colorism incites by encouraging the acceptance of various skin colors and ancestries of Latin America.

A curandera gave a personal account of these sorts of efforts when she discussed her own ancestry, the difficulties she faced concerning her lineage and identity, and the various healing practices she was introduced to throughout her life, which have intermingled more in recent years. She explained that she has African-Cuban ancestry, native ancestry, and what she referred to as her imposed Spanish, to consider in terms of identity. As a child, she identified primarily with her indigenous ancestry. In particular, she talked about the healing practices introduced to her first through her Apache grandmother when she was young. Due to her Apache ancestry and her birth and childhood in New Mexico, she disliked being called or labeled Mexican, although she did have a Spanish last name, learned Spanish, and was also required to go through Catholic communion.

Her African-Cuban ancestry, on the other hand, was largely unexplored until her adulthood, when she was introduced to an African-Cuban *curanderismo* community. Once accepted into this community, she began to sing as an apprentice in *Santería* ceremonies and eventually received status as a High Priestess. She then commented that she speaks Yoruba better than she speaks Spanish, sings and prays in Yoruba and described her participation in a "river sermoning." She defined this event to be a day of service done every year, wherein a group would get together to

clean the river from boats and sing various water songs and prayers from different ceremonies, walks of life, and communities. This last description explains the umbrella term of *curanderismo* and the contemporary uses of *curanderismo* well, as there is no particular ceremony an individual has to follow to participate, instead, all ceremonies and prayers are considered valid and the diversity itself is welcomed. Inclusive events such as this river ceremony highlight decolonialism in *curanderismo,* as they not only accept various cultural practices, but specifically practices from cultures that have historically been accepted as Latin American, such as African-Cuban practices like *Santería*. This *curandera's* acceptance into another culture and that culture's healing practices provides two interesting points. The first is the broadening definition of *curanderismo* in contemporary times, as *Santería* was often misunderstood as *brujería* as opposed to *curanderismo*. The second, is the psychological healing that this can provide for individuals, as the *curandera* commented that she felt very at home and accepted in this community and its practices. She also spoke about the positive effect this link to her ancestry had on her. If her experience is looked at through a decolonial and colorism lens, then it is possible to see how embracing one's own ancestry as opposed to Eurocentric expectations can yield positive results (C., R.).

By analyzing Anzaldúa's work, Hartley further explores the phenomenon of colorism by discussing the damages done by Eurocentric expectations, saying that, "Such healing work involves a diagnosis and a remedy. Anzaldúa situates her diagnosis within her chronicling of Anglo terrorism in the Southwest. The social forces of oppression that she identifies produce the illness: internalized colonialism" (136). Essentially, this type of psychological decolonial work focuses firstly on the internal workings of an individual's mind and on how societal interpretations of race and color can influence them. The words "internalized colonialism" are especially important because they speak to the lingering effects that colonialism can have on an individual. This

includes the importance of skin color and how one can buy into the idea that they are either less valuable or less a member of their own nationality, depending on their skin color. Secondly, it focuses on the workings of the communal mind, which can place emphasis on a specific skin tone or ancestry as being truer than another. This includes looking down on people who identify as native, as opposed to of mixed race, and are therefore considered lesser for having absolutely no European ancestry.

Cataloguing people with words such as *creole*, which was used to describe a Spanish person who was born in the Americas as opposed to Spain, *mestiza/o* to describe a person of mixed ethnicities (specifically Spanish and indigenous), and *mulatto/a* to describe someone who had a Spanish, indigenous, and African lineage, helped to create a system of social worth. This type of labeling was very specific and sometimes used as slurs. However, despite the fact that this type cataloguing fell out of use, unofficial levels of society hierarchies based on skin color remained, such as concepts of beauty. Officially, all skin colors are accepted in Mexico; however, if this blanket assumption is probed a little further complications can be seen immediately. For example, in the bulk of all major roles in television, movies, and other forms of media, light skinned people are cast. Simultaneously, darker skinned people, who are, often not much darker than their lighter skinned counterparts, are either portrayed in small or helpless roles, or those of a villainous nature.

This type of social hierarchy can also be seen in the practices of *curanderismo* and the practices that are rejected from being recognized as *curanderismo.* As previously mentioned, *curanderismo* is considered to be an umbrella term with several subcategories, however, there is a healing practice known as *Santería* that does not fall under the umbrella term of *curanderismo. Santería* is a practice that was fashioned much like *curanderismo* was. It was derived from another culture, in this case arriving to the Americas through the beliefs of slaves from West Africa, was

renamed using a word in Spanish as its root, and even blends Catholicism into its rites and beliefs through the use of saints and prayer (Salazar and Levin 155). Even with these similarities and its specific role as a healing practice, *Santería* is often misunderstood and aligned with *brujería* as opposed to *curanderismo* (Lara 31). Essentially, these practices have been othered and excluded from *curanderismo,* very likely due to its origins being from Africa as opposed to the Americas, despite the fact that *Santería* was conceptually developed in the Americas.

2.2 Representations in Literature

The literary genre of *realismo mágico*, or magical realism, explores matters concerning supernatural abilities through complex themes and storylines. Through a decolonial lens, this genre is of particular interest because of its inception in Latin America and because of the manner in which it came to be accepted as a legitimate, or even classical, type of literature, one that, despite being written in Spanish, is purely Latin American. When this genre – which already contains magical aspects – includes notions decolonization and concepts such as *brujería* and *curanderismo* the storytelling that magical realism provides becomes more multifaceted.

Magical realism as a genre essentially takes elements of the fantastic, supernatural, and magical, and depicts them in a normalized fashion; however, a concrete definition for the genre is still undecided, with some like Angel Flores giving the short description of an "amalgamation of fantasy and reality," while others such as A. Valbuena Briones preferring the more in-depth definition of "a universal phenomenon which presupposes a world where fantasy and reality coexist in an immediately perceivable world" (Bartlett 27). Regardless of the specifics, however, it is often seen that when magical or supernatural events happen to characters in stories that include magical realism, they seldom seriously question the abnormal happenings or see them as

something frightening, nor do they actively seek to rid themselves of their magical circumstances. Instead, unnatural events are presented as occurring naturally and affecting day to day life. Characters may take note of oddities occurring but still behave normally. Another aspect of magical realism novels is that their plots and supernatural facets are not restricted to kindly uses, like how miracles performed by saints are perceived by the Catholic Church. In many instances, the strange happenings that occur in magical realism are deeply tied to nature or to the emotions of the characters and can therefore have both positive and negative effects. Those effects are also not unlike *curanderismo* and *brujería* and in some instances are even directly explored within the texts.

Given that the magical realism genre includes aspects of magic and the supernatural, the concepts of *curanderismo* and *brujería* can and are explored. Two particular examples are the novels *Como agua para chocolate* by Laura Esquivel and *Bless Me, Ultima,* by Rudolfo Anaya. Esquivel's novel follows the main character Tita through the difficulties she faces after her boyfriend marries her sister, while Tita herself is forbidden from marrying at all due to a family tradition. In the novel, Tita is not the only character who can perform supernatural feats; both her sisters and her mother have instances in which they do or cause something out of the ordinary. However, given that Tita is the main character and is the cause of most of the magical events in the novel, the section will focus on her. In one instance, for example, Tita is forced to bake a cake for her sister and boyfriend's wedding. She weeps into the batter and the following day the entire party bursts into tears as they mourn lost loves, before vomiting severely. On another occasion, Tita is able to breastfeed her nephew, though she herself has never given birth to a child or been pregnant. Throughout the novel, Tita does not recognize her own deeds at all on more than one

occasion. What is not acknowledged at all is exactly how she is able to perform these magical actions.

Throughout the novel, Tita does not appear to be consciously trying to cause these strange events and mishaps and has no clear goal to do harm. Instead, her abilities affect the world around her to better fit or reflect her mental and emotional state; however, even though the effects are unintentional, they come across very much like spellcasting. In fact, her abilities could even be classified as *brujería* because Tita does not go through any training connected to *curanderismo* that would account for her skills nor does she necessarily use them to the benefit of others. Instead, she does cause harm to others, even if unconsciously. A prime example of this is in the illness she causes to her elder sister whenever she eats what Tita prepares when in a bad temper. The effects the sister experiences include weight gain, bad breath, and severe indigestive problems that are implied to eventually cause her death. However, regardless of this harm, the novel itself does not present a negative spin on Tita's actions or abilities, instead simply expressing them as an extension of Tita herself and her natural reaction to circumstances.

This naturalness is what hints the most that what Tita is doing could be a form of *brujería,* specifically as it came to be defined in Latin America, as even when she causes harm it is clear that her abilities are not connected in any way to the devil or spellcasting or described as inherently blasphemous or evil. The naturalness can also serve to free Tita of the guilt of purposefully practicing *brujería* or any form of black magic specifically because it is a reactionary ability as opposed to intentional. Through the lens provided by Esquivel's novel, it can be interpreted that magic or abilities are natural to the people in Latin America, especially women, and are not evil or innately wrong as was posited by colonists.

Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* explores similar concepts about the relationship between *curanderismo* and *brujería* through the exploration of a relationship between a *curandera*, Ultima, and a young boy, Antonio. The novel also analyses tense relationships between Ultima and her abilities and local beliefs, and studies different forms of abilities as well as the various spiritual beliefs that could coexist in one community. In the novel, Catholicism is described as the backbone belief system of the community – Antonio even attends catechism – while also recognizing other forms of spirituality, such as a god that takes the form of a fish in the local river, and of course, the belief in *curanderismo* and *brujería.* The theme of faith and what religion to follow is a heavy subject throughout the novel, culminating in Antonio deciding he does not need to choose any one belief or the other, but can have both and perhaps even create a new mixed and inclusive religion, a metaphor that follows the logic of Chicana/o decolonization very well.

One of the greater turning points of the novel, however, is when a relative of Antonio's comes to solicit Ultima's services as a *curandera* despite previously scorning her. Her help is needed to break a curse cast on another relative by three *bruja* sisters,[20] which was slowly but surely killing him. Again, as is wont to see in the genre of magical realism, no one within the community overtly questions Ultima's skills, or the presence of certain supernatural elements, or magic. In fact, more doubt is expressed on the matter of Ultima's character and intentions than on her abilities.

The manner in which the healing that Ultima performs unfolds speaks vastly to the nature of both *curanderismo* and *brujería*, especially regarding what is supposed to be the defining

[20] In the novel, these three *bruja* sisters are consistently described as evil, as are their practices, although it is never made entirely clear what exactly they are doing in their magical ceremonies. The curse was cast on the relative because he accidentally saw them performing a ritual and interrupted them – even after being cautioned about them and the area where they cast their spells. What the ritual he interrupted was meant to do, what else the sisters had done, and what else they were planning to do and why, is not explained or explored in the novel.

differences between the two. To start, Ultima is firm in her identity as a *curandera* and she defines her abilities as medicine and a force of good. In one pivotal scene, she is called a *bruja* by the novel's antagonist, the father of the three *bruja* sisters. When Ultima confronts him with the fact that his daughters are *brujas* and that they cast a lethal curse, he not only denies it, but threatens her not to harm them and warns her against slandering them. The fact that he is so resistant to the idea of his daughters having any connection to *brujería* speaks both to the bad reputation and the danger of being associated with the practice. Ultima herself is often the subject of gossip and social isolation due to simply being a *curandera,* if one were found to be a *bruja* the consequences would be far more dire. The fact that the antagonist uses the word *bruja* against Ultima while denying the title for his daughters means that he knows the term *bruja* is not an acceptable thing in their community and, therefore ,it is something he must protect his daughters from being identified as.

After the conversation, Ultima does break the curse, but the manner in which she does it appears strange and even dangerous. She uses Antonio during her ritual and he subsequently falls ill for a time, until whatever measures Ultima is taking to break the curse are completed. A detail of note is that Ultima not only breaks the curse to save and heal the afflicted family member but turns the curse back onto the *brujas* who cast it. When she does so, one of the *brujas* is killed by it almost instantly and it is clear throughout the novel that the two remaining sisters will suffer the same fate. This speaks to two very revealing factors: one, that as a *curandera,* Ultima is willing and able to kill using her practices, and two, that she has had the knowledge to do so with her all along. This point is interesting to ponder, considering that throughout the novel she plainly explains her views on using her abilities for good and to keep harmony with nature, and she is seen by Antonio and his family as someone deserving of high respect and a protective figure of extreme wisdom. Therefore, her ability and willingness to cause harm to another, even when they have

caused harm themselves, makes her role as a *curandera* appear to be less principled and more dangerous than it has been portrayed as in the novel thus far.

Ultima's ability to do harm, even while healing, can be revealing about the overall understanding of what *curanderismo* and *brujería* is and how they are interpreted. Firstly, even though Ultima's abilities and position are not acknowledged or sanctioned by the Catholic Church, she is nonetheless able to heal and save lives, even do a form of exorcism, on her own accord. It is specifically stated prior to Ultima's healing that a priest and a doctor were called and unable to help Antonio's relative. Ultima is successful where they are not, and her curative powers are acknowledged to such a degree that even characters who scorn her or claim not to believe in her abilities still go to her for healing. This speaks to the deep-seated belief in spiritual healing in Latin America. The second point is the notably thin line between *brujería* and *curanderismo*, a difference that is blurred in the novel more than once, such as in Ultima's animal owl companion, which is described as being a part of her, but could also be interpreted as a witch's familiar. However, this blurred difference is seen most powerfully in the scene in which a mob comes to kill Ultima for being a *bruja.* The matter ultimately ends when the mob agrees to test Ultima through the use of a cross made with two blessed needles. The mob disperses after the test but, due a distraction, both Antonio and the readers are left unsure if she actually passed the test.

By the European definitions discussed in the previous chapter, a *bruja* is defined as one who receives her abilities from the devil – hence the need for Ultima to pass the test with the cross – and who thus cannot abide by or be in contact with anything that is regarded as sacred by the Catholic Church. This is seen more than once with the *bruja* sisters, who are seen as undeniably evil throughout the novel. However, if Ultima did not pass the test with the cross, which remains unclear in the novel, it is heavily implied that her own abilities as a *curandera* are also not aligned

with what is deemed acceptable by the Catholic Church. Therefore, despite the curative nature of Ultima's abilities, they could be technically classified as *brujería*. This, tied in with the fact the novel never actually describes how the sisters received their abilities, hints that *brujas* in Latin America could derive at least some if not all their abilities through local practices as opposed to the traditional devil from the Catholic cannon. It can also be seen that, despite the stigma against them, *brujas* have prevailed in one sense or another in Latin American communities, even if they are still associated with being or causing evil. With the ambiguity of Ultima's abilities' as a prime example, it can be seen that practices are passed on regardless of their negative reputation. It is clear that Ultima knows and was likely taught *bruja* practices as well as *curanderismo* rites and healing, which is why she knows how to undo curses. With this conclusion, it can be deduced that the two practices are learned from and rooted in the same source and that, therefore, the biggest differences between *brujería* and *curanderismo* lies not in the differing nature of the two, but in the interpretation of each individual and the intentions of the practitioner.

Overall, the use of magic by the characters of Ultima and Tita can allude to how *curanderismo* and *brujería* are perceived through contemporary lenses and decolonialism. The complexity of their stories, magical abilities, and characterization speak to the contemporary desire to examine *brujería* and *curanderismo* on a deeper level by exploring their relationship with Latin American communities, challenging the manner in which they have been perceived historically, and analyzing their relationship to Catholicism, as opposed to simply perceiving them through stereotypes like in other forms of media, such as popular telenovelas. The fact that both Tita and Ultima are women, whose abilities are not fully understood or sanctioned by the Catholic Church, also speaks to the enduring link between femininity and magic. Their positive characterization,

however, even with the looming doubt that they may be practicing *brujería*, insinuates that the vilification of both women and *brujería* in Latin American culture may be changing.

Chapter Three: *Curanderismo* and *Brujería* Under the Lens of Chicana Feminism and Female Generational Context

3.1 An Introduction to Chicana Feminism

While Chicano and other decolonial movements contributed vastly to constructing a sense of individual and cultural identity in Latin America, as well as to creating headway to heal generational trauma, many aspects of cultural sexism have been either looked over or ignored entirely. The rise of what is referred to as Chicana feminism[21] originated in the 1940s and took firm hold in the 1970s to fill the need for discussions on sexism. The movement included involvement in politics as well as voices from several Chicana writers on subjects such as spirituality, ancestry, sexuality, and culture. The spirituality discussed among Chicana writers included exploring female spirituality and abilities, female deities, and *curanderas*. Gloria Anzaldua, whose widely read works are considered by many Chicana feminists to be a cannon, provides many ponderings on the connections between Chicana feminism, ancestry, and female spirituality. In her previously discussed book *Borderlands,* she goes into an in-depth analysis of the subject of sexism in Latin America, specifically in the Mexican and Mexican American cultures, several times. To do so, she digs into the contemporary significance of Mexica mythology and deities – mirroring the cultural connections made by Chicano movements – and explores several precursor goddesses to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, even dedicating an entire chapter to the effect one particular goddess, Coatlicue, has had on her. Several other Chicana writers also wrote about this subject matter, making feminist and decolonial connections with Mexica female deities and historical figures, such as Malinali.

[21] Also referred to as Xicanism.

The role that *la Virgen de Guadalupe* has played throughout colonial and postcolonial history to advance sexism in Mexican and Chicano culture is twofold. As a divine virgin figure, she is the defining role model of what a good woman is meant to be: pure, removed from sexuality to give way to her role as a mother, and Catholic. As stated in previous sections, the focus to make Catholics out of the indigenous population of the Americas was a very important action for clergy members who traveled to the Americas because they saw the conversion as the only way to transform what they saw as wrong-minded worshippers of idols or the devil into good people who followed God.

From a cultural standpoint, this process simply includes removing the aspects that make a person indigenous – and therefore savage – in the eyes of the European clergy. When a feminist lens is added, the efforts of colonization and post-colonization go further and encourage the removal of not only indigenous cultural identity, but also gender and sexual identity in order to make one a proper citizen. Chicana writer Norma Alarcón explains this effect on women by analyzing the treatment of Malinali throughout postcolonial years, stating that "When our subjection is manifested through devotion we are saints and escape direct insult. When we are disobedient, hence undevout, we are equated with Malintzin; that is, the *myth* of male consciousness, not the *historical* figure in all her dimensions doomed to live in chains" (187). Essentially, Alarcón points out the use of Malinali's reputation as a traitor as an incentive for Mexican and Mexican American women to behave in a certain way – be obedient, quiet, etc. – while also pointing out the hypocrisy of using Malinali as a way to shame women when it was male narratives who created her reputation in the first place.

In addition to the use of Malinali, efforts to transform female Nahua deities, who served as an inspiration to *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, into a fully integrated Catholic icon also contribute to

the formation of a Mexican female ideal. Thus, her dark skin was more of a minor detail to endear her to the indigenous population, as opposed to evidence of her previous identity as a Nahua deity. Transforming what the given female deity used to represent and what her character was into what the figure of the "Mother of God" is meant to represent in Catholicism was also an important step. It involves a complete transformation of a foreign deity into a woman who is chaste, whose identity revolves around that chastity, and who is the mother of divinity as opposed to being divinity herself. Anzaldúa's works helps place this into context, explaining that

> After the Conquest, the Spaniards and their Church continued to split *Tonantsi/ Guadalupe.*[22] They desexed *Guadalupe* taking *Coatlalopeuh,*[23] the serpent/sexuality, out of her. They completed the split begun by the Nahuas by making *La Virgen de Guadalupe/Virgen María* into chaste virgins and *Tlazolteot/ Coatlicue/ la Chingada* into *putas*; into the Beauties and the Beasts. They went even further; they made all Indian deities and religious practices the work of the devil. (49)

In this context, it is made clear that female deities were reforged in Catholicism not only to remove the idolatry and sacrilegious beliefs that the Catholic Church believed was inherent in the religion, but to encourage and reform the existing sexism in both Europe and the Americas. This was meant to create another layer of oppression, as it introduced an ideal icon that women would be unable to be equal to, and fortified shame in them for having indigenous ancestry. The notion of "desexing" Nahua goddesses to convert them into *Guadalupe* is of particular importance.

[22] Tonantsi is a Nahua/ Mexica goddess, known to be one of the primary precursors of la Virgen de Guadalupe. It was the location where her temple used to reside where the converted native man, Juan Diego, claimed to have seen la Virgen de Guadalupe for the first time, and where he said he was instructed to build a church for the Virgin. Also known by the name Tonantzin and under titles such as "Our Mother", she is mainly known to be an earth goddess, or earth mother, and is sometimes thought to be an aspect or title of another goddess, Coatlicue.

[23] Coatlalopueh is an earth and fertility goddess of the Nahua religion. Considered to be another precursor to la Virgen de Guadalupe, she is also largely thought to be the origin for her name, as they are not only phonetically similar but Coatlalopueh is often translated to mean "She Who has Dominion Over Serpents." She is also thought to be a later variation on the goddess Coatlicue.

Rendering her an unsexed icon implies that it was not only *Guadalupe's* capability of giving birth immaculately that identified her, but the idea that she had nothing to do with sex or sexuality at all and that, therefore, one of the main aspects of her that defines her as a good and pure figure is that her divine status places her above normal women.

Similar to Anzaldúa, Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros describes the image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and how the impossible expectation of *Guadalupe* affected her throughout her childhood and early adulthood. In her essay "Guadalupe the Sex Goddess," she details how the cultural expectation to take after this virgin icon caused her despair and frustration regarding her naivety about the functions of her own body and sexuality. As she describes her development from a child following her mother's example, to a naïve and shamed young woman, to an angry woman, and finally to a woman at peace with herself and her sexuality, Cisneros connects to the many versions of *La Lupe*[24] that she interpreted throughout the years. She explains that the impossible standard of a Catholic *Guadalupe* loomed over her youth, and that it was only through the exploration of her origins as the Nahua goddesses Tonantzin, Tlazolteotl, Totzin, Tzinteotl, and Coatlicue, that she was able to truly accept *La Lupe* and, through her, Cisnero's own sexuality (48-50). Overall, Cisneros is able to come to terms with the figure of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* by seeing her as a woman rather than a pure and chaste impossible standard.

With the acceptance of the sexuality and womanhood of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* comes the acceptance of her empowerment as a goddess, a conclusion that Cisneros achieves by sundering *La Lupe* completely from her Catholic characterization. Instead, she accepts the version of her that, Cisneros explains, was formed in the 1990s from Chicana movements (50). In her concluding thoughts, Cisneros explains that "My *Virgen de Guadalupe* is not the mother of God. She is God.

[24] An affectionate nickname that Cisneros uses throughout her text to refer to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* .

She is a face for a god without a face, an *indíjena* for a god without ethnicity, a female deity for a god who is genderless" (50). It is therefore through the discovery of *La Lupe's* identity in Mexica lore and Chicana interpretation that Cisneros came into her own empowerment, as she was able to connect more with the precursor goddess that contributed to *La Lupe's* existence, as opposed to the patriarchal version of her.

Like the narratives in colonial and postcolonial times, Chicana feminism also makes use of the historical figure of Malinali. As discussed earlier, in one manner or another, Malinali has been used as a form of identification, both on a personal and communal level, and identification with her can be expressed through blaming or praising her for her role in history. Writers in Chicana feminism, in particular, have taken to defending and/or humanizing Malinali in a manner that was absent in previous narrative incarnations of her[25], which they did by writing novels presenting her perspective and essays discussing the conditions she experienced. In other circumstances, she is identified as a strategy used to encourage racism and sexism, as Alarcón, for example, explains:

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

Unlike the colonial and postcolonial narratives that preceded it, the Chicana feminist view of Malinali focuses in large part on how she was affected by her circumstances as opposed to how she affected history, and on analyzing her as a human and acknowledging her difficult

[25] This includes calling her by other names such as Malinali instead of her moniker of La Malinche.

circumstances without the need to victimize her. Chicana feminism also often challenges the postcolonial narrative that claims that, by being spiritual descendants of Malinali, Mexican and Mexican American women are, by association, guilty of everything she was considered to be guilty of. As Alarcón points out, women experienced social pressure to prove they are not like Malinali, which can include anything from trying not to behave too sexually, not being victimized, and not looking or acting indigenous, to prove they were not traitors to the nationalistic Mexico (183, 187). This social pressure also supported patriarchal narratives, as both the religious aspect, which promoted *la Virgen de Guadalupe* as a feminine ideal, and the untrustworthy indigenous woman narrative, targeted Mexican and Chicana women. The double pressure of these social standards and behavioral expectations led to a "policing" behavior performed by women on themselves and on other women (Anzaldúa 44). This policing encouraged women to constantly check their conduct and modify their actions to reflect acceptable figures, such as *Guadalupe,* and deny others, such as Malinali, essentially becoming complicit to the creation of racially driven internalized sexism. Alongside the condemnation of their indigenous ancestry, Mexican women are equally culturally pressured to be more like *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, a figure who stands in contrast to Malinali as her complete opposite in a version of the virgin-whore dichotomy. Chicana feminism calls out the hypocrisy of this cultural expectation, both by exploring the native roots of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and challenging the negative narratives given to Malinali over the years.

The Malinali described and perceived in Chicana feminism differs vastly from the Malinali depicted in postcolonial and Chicano movements. As Franco notes,

> The Chicano movement of the nineteen sixties was an assertion of nationalism in the face of discrimination, an assertion of self-worth like the black power movement. It was a moment of male self-definition. La Malinche who had betrayed the Indian cause with

which the Chicano movement identified itself was thus once again the symbol of shame (83).

The manner in which Anzaldúa and Franco's words explain the psychological damage done through the image of Malinali speaks very much to how indigenous traditions and practices have been handled over the years. This includes the downgrading of indigenous women and female power as a whole by condemning a historical figure that has consistently been described as a mother figure. In the case of *curanderismo* and *brujería,* the sexism that heavily exists in Mexican and Chicano culture can make it easy, and even expected, to associate the practices of *curanderas* with *brujas*. This is an especially probable assumption to make because the bloody and violent nature associated with *brujería* is similar to the nature of sacrifices in Mexica religion and lore, both of which are seen as evil and barbaric by the standards of the Catholic Church. This would automatically link any practices done by *curanderas* as negative or even evil. By contrast, such assumption might not be made if it were a practicing *curandero* due to men's lack of connections to *brujería*, and with social standards in place that allow and expect men to be properly learned in the ways of medicine.[26]

3.2 Female Power and Capability in Mexica Mythology and Religion

Due to the Chicano and later Chicana focus that Mexicans and Mexican Americans placed on their ancestral connection with the Mexica Empire – which is credited as the root of spiritual ancestry for at least one, if not both movements – it is important to direct attention to some of the societal expectations of the sexes that may have influenced both movements, and then allowed concepts such as *curanderismo*, and possibly *brujería*, to become lasting cultural practices. As

[26] In the testimony provided by Darst, there is even a section explaining the curative powers and abilities of medicine men and arguments as to why they are not witches (307-308).

mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea of the mythical homeland of Aztlán played a large part in how Chicano/movements perceived their spiritual origins. However, it is possible that what is known of how the society of the Mexica Empire operated may have also played a role in establishing gender roles that were then enhanced during colonial years, specifically in regards to the status of women. One such description can be seen in the following quotes:

> Matrilineal descent characterized the Toltecs[27] and perhaps early Aztec society. Women possessed property, and were curers as well as priestesses. According to the codices, women in former times had the supreme power in Tula, and in the beginning of the Aztec dynasty, the royal blood ran through the female line. A council of elders of the Calpul headed by a supreme leader, or *tlactlo,* called the father and mother of the people, governed the tribe. The supreme leader's vice-emperor occupied the position of "Snake Woman" or *Cihuacoatl,* a goddess. Although the high posts were occupied by men, the terms referred to females, evidence of the exalted role of women before the Aztec nation became centralized. The final break with the democratic Capul came when the four Aztec lords of royal lineage picked the king's successor from his siblings or male descendants. (Anzaldúa 55)

The material and presumed importance of women in those cultures, including social, spiritual, and political positions, differs vastly from what is believed to have been the norm further into the timeline of the Mexica Empire. During the latter years of the Mexica, preceding the fall to the Spanish, male roles grew in importance to such a point that their increasing power and exalted position was expressed in the mythos of the Mexica religion. As put again by Anzaldúa, "The

[27] The Toltecs are another Amerindian tribe that prior to colonization lived in what is now Mexico. While it is unlikely that the Mexica people were direct descendants of the Toltecs, it is thought that the Mexica considered themselves to be their spiritual or cultural descendants.

male-dominated Azteca-Mexica culture drove powerful female deities underground by giving them monstrous attributes and by substituting male deities in their place, thus splitting the female Self and the female deities. They divided her who had been complete, who possessed both upper (light) and underworld (dark) aspects" (49).

This separation of the sexes that occurred before colonization is seen also in the analysis of the Mexica lore. Though not many surviving myths from the Nahua religion are known, one of the most prominent is that of the miraculous birth of the god Huitzilopochtli. This mythological figure is the god of the sun and war, who features heavily in Nahua religion and in the religious practices of the Mexica. His high placement in the pantheon of gods is understandable given that the Mexica themselves were a warrior people, who conquered other surrounding tribes and would therefore rely heavily on the patronage of the god of war. In the myth, the goddess Coatlicue was sweeping the temple at Coatepec,[28] when she became immaculately pregnant. In some versions she comes across a ball of hummingbird feathers on the floor, which she then tucks into her skirt and becomes pregnant by the ball of feathers; in others, that ball, or even a single feather, falls from the sky into her skirt. This strange and abnormal pregnancy offended her daughter, Coyolxauhqui, the goddess of the moon. As a result, she marshalled together her four hundred brothers, also the children of Coatlicue, who were collectively known as the *Centzon Huitznahuas*, to attack their mother. Depending on the version, this attack was launched specifically to kill Coatlicue or at least to end her pregnancy. Upon arriving, Coyolxauhqui cuts off her mother's head, and from the blood spurt from the wound two snakes appear. Coyolxauhqui is then attacked by Huitzilopochtli, who emerges from his mother's womb fully grown to defend her. He beheads Coyolxauhqui and throws her head into the sky, while dismembering the rest of her body and

[28] Coatepec is a holy mountain in the Nahua lore. In some versions of this myth, Coatepec is Coatlicue's shrine, in others she was ordered there as a form of penance, though the reason for this is unknown.

tossing it down the side of Coatepec, before attacking the *Centzon Huitznahuas*. The versions about the fate of the four hundred brothers differ, some ending with Huitzilopochtli killing all of them, while in others the brothers scatter after their sister's death in an attempt to escape Huitzilopochtli, thus becoming the southern stars. The myth often ends with Huitzilopochtli continuously chasing his siblings across the sky, seeking to defeat them every day so that the sun may continue to rise, and that the sacrifices the Mexica made in honor of Huitzilopochtli are to strengthen him in this endeavor.

There are several points in this myth that speak about the shifting of perspective for female deities. The first major point to note is the overall helplessness of Coatlicue throughout the tale, which is strange when it is taken into account that she is a not only a maternal goddess of the earth, but also a goddess of creation and destruction. Coatlicue is also one of the founding creators of all life and a mother of the gods, who is described as a being who continuously and daily gives birth to and devour the world. She is the goddess who is described by Anzaldúa as follows: "*Coatlicue da luz a todo y a todo Devora. Ella es el monstruo que se tragó todos los seres vivientes y los astros, es el monstruo que se traga el sol cada tarde y le da luz cada mañana/* Coatlicue gives birth to all and all she Devours. She is the monster that swallowed all living beings and the stars, she is the monster that swallows the sun every evening and gives birth to it every dawn"[29] and "*Coatlicue* gives and takes away life; she is the incarnation of cosmic processes" (68). However, according to this myth, despite her power, Coatlicue is helpless in her penance at Coatepec, in the face of her pregnancy, and against her children, who seek to murder her even though she is the goddess of destruction, which makes it very likely she cannot be killed. Her thoughts on her

[29] In the Spanish translation the phrase "da luz" directly translates to "give light" and is a common euphemism for giving birth.

unexpected pregnancy are also unknown; it is not discussed whether she was pleased, angry, or if she even wanted the pregnancy to continue.

Coatlicue also has no ability to protect herself but needs the newborn Huitzilopochtli to protect her from death. He is a new god in this instance and goes on to become the patron god of the Mexica. Further evidence of such purposeful diminishing of her power in the Mexica lore is the way she disappears from further mythology after the birth myth. Her consort Mixcoalt,[30] who is the presumed father of all of her children apart from Huitzilopochtli, also ceases to appear in any important myths. Neither of the parents are said to have taken any sort of vengeance on Huitzilopochtli upon the deaths of their children. Coatlicue is even described as being pleased with the sight of Coyolxauhqui's head in the sky. This detail was even portrayed as a kind gesture on the part of Huitzilopochtli, who placed it there so that his mother may still see her daughter every night.

As Anzaldúa stated in her quote above, powerful female deities were given monstrous attributes, and Coatlicue is a perfect example of this. The only surviving depiction of her is in the form of a statue[31] that illustrates what she would have looked like *after* this myth took place. According to Cisneros, the statue was "so terrible it was unearthed and then reburied because it was too frightening to look at" by the Spanish colonizers, who eventually found it (49). In this statue, Coatlicue is a goddess without a human head, hosting instead twin serpents rising from her neck, a necklace made up of human hearts and hands, with a human skull at the center that has living eyes. Her breasts are purposefully sagging to depict her status as a mother. At her waist, there is another skull and numerous writhing snakes make up her skirt. Her hands and feet have no

[30] Mixcoalt was a hunter god who, like Coatlicue, was a creator god and, like his children with her, was one of the four hundred brothers. He is also known to have participated in the introduction of fire to humanity and to have died shortly after the birth of Huitzilopochtli.

[31] This statue of Coatlicue is currently housed in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

fingers, ending in talons instead, with another snake on each hand and foot. While Nahua gods certainly have attributes that denote them as something other than human, few, if any, have a physical body that is mixed with so many animal attributes. They are not depicted in such a monstrous manner either. These animal characteristics, combined with the fact that there are no depictions of what Coatlicue may have looked like before the birth myth of Huitzilopochtli – who essentially took her, and possibly Coyolxauhqui's, place as the most powerful god in the Nahua pantheon – lends credence to Anzaldúa's argument about the systematic removal of the power of female deities.

Further evidence can be found in analyzing another Nahua goddess who received similar treatment, Cihuacoatl. This goddess was also eventually transformed into a Mexican cultural figure, La Llorona, and underwent a change to her physical features similar to Coatlicue, while also experiencing a change in her abilities and mythology. Ana María Carbonell describes this change well:

> La Llorona's precursor, Cihuacoatl, has also been mobilized as a destructive figure… Aztecan high priests would manipulate the image of this popular goddess as a "cunning device" to obtain more sacrificial victims for their war gods. These priests would solicit an ordinary woman to impersonate Cihuacoatl to carry a cradle that contained not a child, but a sacrificial knife. She would then disappear into a body of water, strategically leaving the cradle with the knife behind… Cihuacoatl, originally the patron of midwives is an ancient earth goddess of both war and birth. However, the militaristic Azteca-Mexica culture… focused on her destructive aspects by replacing Cihuacoatl's child – a sign of fertility – with a sacrificial knife. This exchange of symbols transmuted her exclusively into an agent of destruction and erased her life-giving powers (55)

The changes made to this religious imagery explain several changes made in regards to Mexica social expectations, specifically in the detail of a sacrificial knife in place of Cihuacoatl's child and her submission to the symbolism of its presence, which is to provide a sacrifice, presumably a child, to appease the militaristic gods and society of the Mexica Empire. The removal of some of her abilities, as explained in the quote, is an equally significant measure, as it would have linked her destructive power to masculinity and the Mexica military, while simultaneously removing her power – the capability to create life. This treatment of female deities could have set a precedent for female folklore figures in Mexican culture, which can be seen most clearly in La Llorona and her position and characterization in Mexican lore. She continues the traits of destructive energy present in Cihuacoatl but without the justification of sacrifice; instead, her own story makes her an outright murder, who is often portrayed as a selfish person who killed her children out of spite or irresponsibility, and a dangerous phantom in death who attacks out of grief and jealousy.

The matter of Coatlicue's daughter, Coyolxauhqui, is also worth considering. It is important to note three details about her in this particular myth, the first being that of all of Coatlicue's other children, she is the only one that is named and the only girl, while the others are boys who are known only under a collective name/title. The second is that, despite this, or because of this, Coyolxauhqui is fully capable of rallying her brothers quickly and leading them without any sort of trouble or resistance. While in most versions of the myth she is the eldest child, in some she is the youngest sibling, which makes her leadership role over her brothers especially prominent as it speaks to either great influence and persuasion, or possibly even a previously established hierarchy among the siblings. If the latter is true, then it implies a great amount of power and social status that among literally hundreds of male children it is the lone female child who leads and gives orders. The third is that even before Coyolxauhqui's head was put into the sky, she was the goddess

of the moon while her brothers were the stars. When this fact is seen in the context of the time in which this myth was told, this detail is key as it hints at Coyolxauhqui's natural superiority in power in contrast with her brothers, as in this time the brightest and biggest thing in the night sky would have undoubtedly been the moon and would easily have outshone the stars.

Coyolxauhqui's role in the attack on her mother, which in the myth is planned solely by her, also encourages a patriarchal narrative as it presents Coyolxauhqui as a traitorous and untrustworthy child who betrayed her mother. This representation of her then justifies the violence committed onto her and her death, while simultaneously pushes the narrative of pitting women against other women and away from female inclusivity and collaboration. The inclusion of the *Centzon Huitznahuas* in the easy and brutal conquest by Huitzilopochtli also makes an example of what will happen to males who follow females leaders as opposed to leading themselves or at least following another male. In contrast, Huitzilopochtli's behavior is not only allowed but rewarded, a fact that shows that his actions are justified and that he is permitted to punish and reward others as he sees fit.

It is also very telling how easily Coyolxauhqui was defeated in the myth by her newborn brother, who as the sun would automatically be considered to be more powerful than the moon. The ease of the murders committed by Huitzilopochtli, combined with the Mexica sacrifices for the god – which were provided by the Mexica religion in an official capacity to strengthen him and allow him to continue defeating his siblings every day – contribute to the patriarchal narrative of male dominance over female dominance. This is encouraged by the brutality in which Coyolxauhqui was murdered, which is immortalized in a stone carving that depicts her as a dismembered body. As is the case with Coatlicue, there are no depictions of what Coyolxauhqui looks like before the myth, and the most well-known surviving illustration of her is in the form of

a stone disc, in which she is carved as a completely dismembered body. Chicana feminist authors and writing can be kinder to Coyolxauhqui, if only by attempting to see or justify her actions from her perspective. Cherríe Moraga, for example, thus describes the events:

> *Cuando su hija, Coyolxauhqui, descrubre que su madre está a punto de dar a luz a Huitzilopochtli, Dios de la Guerra, monta en cólera. Y, junto con sus hermanos, las Cuatrocientas Estrellas, arma un plan para asesinar a Coatlicue en lugar de tener que someterse a ese mundo donde la Guerra se convertirá en el nuevo dios.* / When her daughter, Coyolxauhqui, discovers that her mother is about to give birth to Huitzilopochtli, God of War, she flies into a rage. And, together with her brothers, the Four Hundred Stars, draws up a plan to assassinate Coatlicue rather than have to submit to a world where War would become the new god.[32] (199)

Within this telling, there are a couple of crucial details that explain Coyolxauhqui's positionality. The first is the phrase "together with her brothers," which hints at the level of involvement of the *Centzon Huitznahuas* in both the plan to attack their mother and in the reason why. In previous versions of the myth, they appear to either blindly follow their sister's wishes or are turned into an angry mob under her command, whereas in this version, they have autonomy and still go along with the plan. This detail allows the brothers to be held accountable for their own actions as opposed to placing the responsibility solely on Coyolxauhqui. The other detail has to do with the short, but vital reason given to Coyolxauhqui for deciding to kill her mother, which is to avoid the birth of a war god and the subjugation that she and likely others would have to contend with.

In addition to this analysis, there is also the age of the myth to consider. In comparison to other myths and lore, the birth of Huitzilopochtli is relatively young, as this particular god rose to

[32] Personal translation.

prominence shortly before the founding of the Mexica Empire. Yet, it is one of the most enduring and well-known Mexica myths. The importance of Huitzilopochtli, and the manner in which society would shape itself in Mexica society under his symbolic guidance, is contextualized by Anzaldúa:

> Huitzilopochtli, the God of War, guided them [the Mexica] to the place (that later became Mexico City[33]) where an eagle with a writhing serpent in its beak perched on a cactus. The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (as the earth, the mother). Together, they symbolize the struggle between the spiritual/ celestial/ male and the underworld/ earth/ feminine. The symbolic sacrifice of the serpent to the "higher" masculine powers indicates that the patriarchal order had already vanquished the feminine and matriarchal order in pre-Columbian America. (27)

By analyzing the effects this myth had on the Mexica and the founding of their Empire, it can be understood that the importance of Huitzilopochtli is far reaching. Not only did an entire people displace themselves from their home to move to a brand-new location – where they were to make a new home at the promise and command of this god – but they established their societal standards and warmongering on the standards and character of this particular god. At the time in which the Mexica left their first homeland they had no idea where they were going to eventually settle, only that a vision would indicate when they were to stop traveling. Additionally, as explained in the quote above, this vision symbolized the submission of the feminine in this new homeland that would likely end in death, as in most descriptions of this vision the eagle (male energy) is said to be killing the serpent (female energy).

[33] While it would later become Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, the Mexica originally founded it as the capital of their own empire, named Tenochtitlan.

The decline of power of female deities such as Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl, who as previously explained, were then relegated to the roles of *Guadalupe* and La Llorona, respectively, could very well have mingled with the sexism and sacrilegious cultural beliefs brought by the Spanish during the colonization. This in turn could have produced what is now a direct association of women with *brujería* and why the association was so easy to apply to Amerindians and enduring even past colonial times. According to the manner in which witches were perceived in Europe – which amounts to being servant with borrowed power, as opposed to women with their own power – it could then be assumed that any indigenous woman with any sort of power, magical power especially, would be associated with wrongness, monstrosity, and unnaturalness, which could then provide a link to the nature of *brujería*.

As a concept introduced via colonialism and then through its years in postcolonial times, *brujería* was a term and practice seen as inherently evil and most commonly performed by women. The root of this assumption could very well have come from the European belief in the devil, especially when, as described previously, women could not be expected to have any sort of power if they did not attain it from another source. Moreover, since the "good" male source – the Catholic God – would not allow them to have it, then it could only be assumed they got it from the evil male source – the devil. Evidence to this can be found in a translated testimony from Spain in 1529 describing the characteristics that make a woman more naturally inclined towards evil:

> There are more women than men consecrated and dedicated to the devil. The first reason is because Christ forbade them to administer the sacraments, and therefore the devil gives them the authority to do it with his execrations. The second reason is because women are more easily deceived by the devil, as is shown by the deception of the first woman… The third reason is because women are more curious to know and investigate occult lore, since

> their nature denies them access to such matters. The fourth reason is because women are more talkative than men and can't keep a secret… The fifth reason is because women are more subject to anger and are more vindictive. Since they have less strength and means to avenge themselves on people with whom they are angry, they procure and seek vengeance and favor of the devil. The sixth reason is because the spells that men cast are attributed to some science or art… But women… they don't have any art or science as an excuse. (Darst 304-305)

This view on the perceived weaknesses in the character of women, combined with the belief that women could never hold supernatural or divine power of their own, and the stripping of power in Mexica women and deities, could be a large contributor into the longstanding association of *brujería* with women and femininity in Latin America.

When the explanation why *brujería* is often so closely associated with women is linked with the propensity for Chicana feminism to take previously negative and sexist cultural icons and expectations and then inverse them to empower women, it can be understood how the concept of *brujería* would be intellectually alluring. In some Chicana feminist and decolonial narratives, embracing *brujería* could be an opportunity to embrace a kind of female power that exists outside of normally acceptable spaces for power. As Irene Lara puts it,

> As an empowered female cultural figure, la Bruja symbolizes power outside of patriarchy's control that potentially challenges a sexist status quo. In las Américas, where she is associated with "superstitious" and "primitive" Indian and African beliefs and practices, la Bruja is also a racialized cultural figure. Many people in indigenous and Chicano/ Latino communities today are not comfortable with the term "bruja" because it signifies someone who uses her powers for bad, for others, she positively symbolizes the persistence of

> indigenous conocimientos in spite of Christian colonial and western scientific attempts to destroy, invalidate, and appropriate them. (12)

When looked at from this perspective, *brujería* can be embraced despite the negative connotations that have always been attached to the concept, and allow one to escape, or even invalidate several forms of oppression. Lara's viewpoint can work on a decolonial level because *brujería* practices in Latin America are connected to indigenous ideology, while simultaneously rejecting both indigenous and European forms of sexism by moving *brujería* from a negative to positive light. By doing so, it is also possible for women to use *brujería* as a way to safely express aspects of themselves that women are culturally pressured not to show or even have, such as anger or selfishness.

A connection to *brujería* as opposed to *curanderismo* could be used as a way to provide a symbolic path for a young girl or woman to self-serve, and to place this self-serving above public service. Mexican and Mexican American culture often cultivates selflessness as a desirable trait in women. *Curanderismo* comes with the connotations of helping and healing others as opposed to specifically performing rites or services for the self, as *brujería* is often implied to do. It is therefore entirely possible that while acting *curanderas,* who most likely know the rites and practices that are classified as *brujería*, may not encourage *brujería* on account of its association with bad intentions, from an intellectual or feminist perspective aligning oneself with *brujería* could fill a needed form of self-representation or self-determination that would otherwise not be culturally available. Lara describes thus this possibility using sexuality as an example:

> Given such a negative portrayal of the racialized bruja, it is no wonder that in similar fashion to the virgin/whore dichotomy that attempts to regulate Latina sexuality along the axis of a Christian worldview… a good curandera/bad bruja dichotomy has developed in

> an attempt to order non-institutional spirituality. In this binary framework that valorizes the former over the latter category, curanderas are de-sexualized healers and brujas work in "black magic" and "sexual witchcraft." (15)

In essence, Lara points out that by creating a binary opposition between the practices of *curanderismo* and *brujería* societal expectations and patriarchal narratives can insert behavioral and cultural standards by aligning unwanted characteristics with the vilified end of the binary. Therefore, as Latina women are meant to be chaste mothers, not women with sexuality, *curanderas* are meant to be healers and doctors, not women with personal power and sexuality. In order to be properly considered to be a good healer, one is meant to be untied from the earthly desires and concerns, which in the case of women often includes the removal of female sexuality and desire, as well as ambitions outside home, very much like a nun of the Catholic Church would have been expected to behave.

3.3 The Power *Brujas* Add to Contemporary Feminism and Politics

In the same manner in which *curanderismo* has gained a wider following in contemporary times through the use of university classes, formal businesses, and festivals, *brujería* has also been introduced to broader audience in recent years and used for nontraditional purposes. One particularly large use of *brujería* was in an online hexing movement aimed specifically towards Donald Trump that Norell Martínez describes as a "focus on what some have coined as 'witch feminism,' 'witch activism,' or what I call 'bruja feminism,' the act of reclaiming la bruja, or witch, for political purposes" (33). This form of *brujería* not only has a significantly different role in the lives and efforts of its practitioners, but also appears to have a completely different nature than it has had in its European and colonial history.

As previously established, the role that *brujería* played in Spain was that of a malicious type of magic, practiced by people – mainly women – who opposed the Catholic Church by seemingly aligning themselves with the devil. When introduced to Latin America, the term was used mainly to vilify indigenous beliefs and practices, with the eventual result being a term of malicious opposition to *curanderismo.* In contemporary times, however, *brujería* has begun to gain attraction as a conceptual term. As with *curanderismo*, its roots in practices prior to colonialism are emphasized to new practitioners, particularly young ones. However, unlike *curanderismo, brujería* has also been linked to less amiable purposes. As Martínez explains it,

> Today, young people and particularly young women are turning toward non-western spiritual practices from Africa and Indigenous Latin America partly because they are not tied to a history of colonization and genocide of people in the Americas and because they symbolize resistance to colonization. Young Latina and Black feminists are repurposing the witch to honor this resistance and to remember the women who survived injustice. Thus, the word 'bruja' has become associated with resistance of Eurocentric religious and patriarchal ideologies. (35)

The lure that *brujería* is described to have for young women is interesting due to two points. The first is the preference to *brujería* when there is *curanderismo*, a practice that could theoretically be more appealing to potential practitioners, also having roots in indigenous and non-western practices but containing none of the current or historical negative affiliations that *brujería* normally does. The second is the repurposing of the word, linking it to resistance instead of opposition. The repurposing of the word *bruja* from someone who casts curses or is self-serving to someone who stands against injustice parallels the redefining of the word Chicano/a, a word that used to be a racial slur, but then became the title of a massive movement, very much like that of *bruja* feminism.

The aspect of resistance that Martínez details is important as well, as it explains the core reason that makes *brujería* in particular so seductive to young women, despite the negative connotations and the existence of *curanderismo* as another option. Due to its negative history, particularly when it comes to the violence inflicted on individuals who are called *brujas,* young women who are reclaiming the term are already automatically differing themselves from Eurocentric and patriarchal ideals. Additionally, they are rejecting notions of morality set by European religion and patriarchy by taking a term that has never been approved of and using it as a tool to create positive movements and intentions, which historically was not the use of *brujería* at all.

The manner in which the *brujas* created the movement to curse Trump demonstrates the redefining of *brujería* particularly well. As Martínez explains, "when young brujas are performing hexes on a white supremacist and bigot like Trump, the aim is to challenge this power with good, in this case 'good magic,' which is grounded in left-leaning political ideologies. Brujería is a timely response to this evilness as it puts into the question, who the true evil ones are?" (39). Essentially, *brujería's* negative connotations make using the term doubly affective due to the moral high ground they as *brujas* are asserting to have over bigoted people. The most compelling phrases in this argument are "good magic" and "who the true evil ones are." *Brujería* has both a definition and reputation for being an evil and forbidden practice used to do harm, and yet, in this passage that definition is rejected completely, instead it is blatantly stated that *brujería* is a force of good against an evil force. In a racial and feminist context, the quote as a whole can speak to the mindset of young women who choose to take up the mantel of a *bruja* as opposed to another – such as *curandera.* The women casting these hexes are women of color speaking out against white supremacy and by calling themselves *brujas* they are not only calling out and rejecting the colonial history that labeled indigenous practices as evil but are also purposefully labeling themselves as

dangerous. By doing so, they show decolonial resistance to Eurocentric labeling and claiming a form of power for themselves, as they essentially state that despite the consequences they would have experienced in the past for being *brujas,* they can openly claim the title now and practice malicious magic without fearing any of those penalties.

This movement, however, turns even more assumptions about the nature of *brujería* upside down. According to Martínez, "Whether the Trump-hexing bruja projects are examples of witch-as-metaphor, activist performance or real spiritual practice, their work points to a history of poisoning and hexing the ruling class," which does seem to resonate with what *brujas* were originally described to have done, or at least desired to have done (44). In one of the sections from the 1529 testimony provided by Darst, there is a description of reasons why one would choose to become a *bruja.* This section includes notions of classism, flat out describing that someone who is poor or destitute would want to be a witch because they envy the upper class. The same section absolves the upper class by explaining that individuals who are well off in life do not need to sell their souls to attain anything that the devil could provide them, essentially claiming that only those of high class have the ability to be virtuous (305). In contrast, the *brujas* of the Trump hexing movement appear to be reversing this reasoning. As Martínez states, their actions are aimed towards the ruling class, but by creating an entire movement that shifts the definition of *brujería* from a selfish practice to one that is working for the benefit the population, they are removing the superiority and moral high ground that was attributed to higher classes in the past. Therefore, by directly associating the classification of *brujería* with actions that are intended to be selfless, they also remove the previous negative connotations attached to *brujería* despite the fact that the curses they practice are literally the malicious actions that have historically defined *brujería.*

One of the final main points of interest in this movement, however, comes from the way in which this version of *brujería* differs from previous definitions. As previously explained, over the years *brujería* came to be defined as a negative mirror for *curanderismo* despite the fact that both practices were historically from the same indigenous origins, with at least one of the reasons behind this being that *curanderismo* blended with Catholicism to become acceptable while *brujería* did not. The *brujería* practiced in this movement, however, is all but completely removed from the evil and selfish practices that are normally associated with *brujería.* Instead,

> the intention of their spells is not for individual gain, but for the good of all, it is an act of solidarity so that all people may live free of oppression. It is also a defiance of the status quo. Like the community ceremonies and hexing ritual performed by enslaved people to feel free, these millennial brujas also want to imagine a better world for themselves and their people. (Martínez 46)

The well-meaning intentions contrast directly with what even some *curanderas* have explained about the nature of *brujería*. During an interview, one *curandera* asserted that they do not believe *brujas* and *brujería* really exist, but when describing what individuals who call themselves *brujas* practice, she explained it as someone who is using her gifts for personal gain or using them out of anger or other negative emotions (S., J.). This particular explanation marks a stark difference or even an outright change in the very definition of *brujería* outside of many *curanderismo* circles because it is practiced in movements such as the *brujas* hexing Trump and therefore is implied to work specifically for the betterment of others as opposed to working towards purely selfish goals as is normally suggested by *brujería*. In contrast to this, however, another *curandera* spoke on the subject of *brujería* during an interview and defined it as a stepping-stone, or even a manner in which women in particular try to express themselves or take care of themselves by connecting to

a personal power that is not meant to be purely medicinal or used for the purposes of helping another as opposed to themselves. This too, differs very much from the hexing movement, as it again describes *brujería* as a tool meant for gain, even if it is not precisely an evil practice, whereas the hexing movement has been described by Martínez several times as a movement meant to attempt to better the world. With this in mind, it can be concluded that contemporary *brujas* – especially those that take up the title for a movement as opposed to making it a lifestyle and identity – are a third incarnation of what a *bruja* and her practice are, one that differs from the *brujas* of Europe and the Latin American *brujas.*

3.4 Curanderas and Brujas in the Female Generational Context

While the practices and art of healing that make up *curanderismo* can be informally taught or picked up by anyone who feels they have the calling or talent to it, there is an established tradition of creating teacher-student relationships with a seasoned *curandera* or *curandero.* Such partnership tends to last until the student has learned enough to practice on their own. This more formalized type of healing and rituals can be defined as follows:

> A *curandera* is a female traditional Mexican or Chicana healer or medicine woman who makes use of ancient rituals and (primarily herbal) remedies known as *remedios*. In this way, she draws on a body of knowledge that has been suppressed by the colonizing forces. A Christianized synthesis of indigenous healing practices from Arab Africa, Europe, and the Americas, *curanderismo* made possible a mode of practical consciousness that offered indigenous peoples (including *mestizos*) a concrete yet discreet means of resisting the colonizing impact of the Spanish Conquest and with it the initial moment of modernity-coloniality. (Hartley 137)

In essence, the formalized practice of *curanderismo* can be interpreted as a form of preservation of knowledge and resistance to the colonial narrative that vilified it, in addition to being a form of medical practice. However, there are also informal uses of *curanderismo* that focus on households as opposed to communities or abstract concepts. These smaller practices are limited to families and usually passed on through familial lines as traditions; due to this, they are seldomly outright labeled as either *curanderismo* or *brujería*. These traditions, while usually taught to all the children of the family, are primarily practiced by the female children in their adulthoods.

In the cases of the *curanderas* interviewed, the origin of their trainings or where they first began to learn aspects of *curanderismo* were heavily saturated with the presence of other women. One of the *curanderas* described her childhood first, during which she had a lot of exposure to *curanderismo,* as her grandmother would often take her to the local *curandera* for healing, specifically of a spiritual kind. Later in life, she describes her official pursuit to work as a *curandera* herself after her daughter was born, explaining that "Her daughter ignited her gift;" afterwards, she would take several courses and train with many women under many different forms of healing until she found the practice that was right for her (S., J.).

Another *curandera* described a tradition of healing rites within her family that was passed down almost like an inheritance, first by speaking of her own connection with her grandmother, who had twelve children and specifically singled her out to participate in *curanderismo* work. A couple of things stand out in her recollections. One is the manner in which her grandmother learned her healing practices. The *curandera* described her great-grandmother, who learned healing from her mother-in-law. The second is the way that the *curandera's* family reacted to the *curanderismo* work she and her grandmother practiced, which was seemingly almost indulgent. She spoke of her mother's disinterest in learning and occasions in which her uncles would tease her and her

grandmother for praying through song (C., R.). These details make some interesting points as to how and why *curanderismo* practices may be passed down, especially through women. The fact that her great-grandmother learned from her mother-in-law is very telling, as it demonstrates a clear preference on behalf of the mother-in-law as to who should learn. Rather than teaching her own male child, she chose to teach her daughter-in-law how to keep an herb garden and how to treat burns. Later, this *curandera's* grandmother would do the same (C., R.).

My own grandmothers employed similar tactics, though unintentionally and on a smaller scale, when it came to providing natural solutions to small ailments. When male members of our families had a sore throat with phlegm, for example, my paternal grandmother would make something to help them. When I or another female member had the same problem, she made sure to give directions, tell us exactly what to do so that we would know for the next time. Boil salt water, make sure the water is simmering before adding the salt, remove and let it sit, but not for too long. Gargle it for thirty seconds. If that doesn't work, add chili. Maybe honey. When analyzing this behavior, it can be assumed that these practices are handed down to female members of the family for a reason, and if looked at through a cultural lens, this reason could be because these sorts of healing rites technically fall under matters of the home and family, and, therefore, under the jurisdiction of women, who in Latin American cultures are often in charge of domestic affairs.

This kind of teaching that is handed down through families may include both medicinal and mystical aspects, as described by the experiences of the *curanderas* above; however, these particular practices do not necessarily have to have been taught to the family by fully trained and accepted *curanderas* and *curanderos*. Instead, they can be simple and small intimate practices, almost rituals, that are mainly meant to promote the health and wellbeing of one's family. The fact that these smaller practices endure both in action and in knowledge provides evidence of their

generational context, as they are passed down from a grandparent to a parent to a grandchild. One thing of note, however, is that these smaller traditions are often not considered to be very powerful or even proper *curanderismo* practices, but that even when they are not considered to be proper *curanderismo,* the possibility that it may be classified as *brujería* is very present and feared.

Just as important, however, is the manner in which these practices can sometimes stick more firmly to maternal members of the family as opposed to paternal. To provide a personal example, my own grandmothers had small things they were insistent on performing or creating for their grandchildren, especially just after they were born. Even in these small things, the lurking possible taint of *brujería* remained. In the eyes of my paternal grandmother, for example, using a deer eye talisman on the wrists of all her newborn grandchildren to ward off spirits with ill intentions, called *mal ojo*,[34] were perfectly appropriate. *Limpias*, also known as cleansing or smudging with sage or *palo santo* (holy wood) were acceptable and using tiny dolls under pillows to ward off bad dreams was perfectly sensible. Using an herb and newspaper spread across the chest while one slept to vanquish a cold was also appropriate, but the moment my sister asked about a type of medicinal healing that included the use of a raw egg my grandmother immediately snapped at her: "*eso es brujería*/ that's witchcraft." She did so in such a manner that it was clear that none of us should ever mention such a thing again, much less consider it to be a legitimate course of action. None of us asked anything along that line of thought again, but the incident stayed in my head, as I could not help but be confused by the severity of her reaction, and also wonder

[34] Translates to: Evil eye. This concept is particularly interesting, as according to the Darst testimony mentioned previously from Spain in 1529 there is a section on the *mal ojo*/ evil eye in which the phenomenon is not only discussed in detail as a serious concern but is also clearly explained to not be a form of witchcraft. The fact that this existed in Europe before Latin America speaks to the enduring mingling of traditions, as the evil eye was European in origin, but the manner in which to ward it off is Amerindian.

constantly what the difference between the two was, especially that, in this instance, the rite described as *brujería* was meant to be used to healing, with no malicious intentions.

Further evidence that blurs the line between the two concepts comes from knowledge shared by contemporary *curanderas*. One spoke in length about the effect her grandmother had on her and her openness to *curanderismo.* She describes specific instances in her childhood wherein her grandmother took her to a *curandera* to perform a healing service with a raw egg that my own grandmother strongly claimed to be *brujería.* The startling difference in these two reactions from two different grandmothers – one who directly sought out this rite, more than once, out of belief that it would help her granddaughter, while the second grandmother forbade even mentions of it – lends credence to the idea that the lines between *curanderismo* and *brujería* are not universally agreed upon. Instead, the differences between the two, if there are at all, are more than likely chosen and perceived by an individual. This perception can and likely is influenced by family, community, and official teachings provided by institutions such as the Catholic Church, but the overall decision as to what practices qualify as either *curanderismo, brujería,* or neither, is liable to be decided on from person to person as opposed to communally.

Conclusion

As concepts and practices, *curanderismo* and *brujería* remain as complex and enduring in the present as they did when first introduced to the Americas. Reviewing their origins in both Europe and Latin America provides a solid foundation to beginning to understand them. Starting with their growth throughout the years of colonization in Latin America – during which it is very likely that *curanderismo* was founded after the introduction of the Spanish language to the Amerindians – we can see how indigenous practices and spirituality and European influence, mostly in the form of the Catholic Church, blend together to conceptually create *curanderismo*. However, alongside this process, *brujería* also begins to take form after it was introduced to the local Amerindian population as a way to vilify and forbid local medicinal and magical practices, while promoting European interests, as see, for example, by exalting the figures of Malinali and *la Virgen de Guadalupe*.

Throughout post-colonization, the definition of both concepts underwent change as the country of Mexico began to establish its identity outside of Spain. This process worked mainly to cut ties with both indigenous and European ancestral connections, and used the historical figure of Malinali again, this time as a person to hold in contempt. *Curanderismo* was mostly welcomed through this post-colonial years, and though *brujería* was not, it still conceptually changed from a practice associated purely with the devil to one that instead is associated with malicious intentions and stands in opposition to what *curanderismo* is meant to be. Later, in contemporary times and through decolonial movements, *curanderismo* began to be seen as a way to connect to indigenous ancestry and as a means to psychologically heal from colonization and included streamlining the practices into something that could be more palatable to academia and

western thought. Thus, *curanderismo* got accepted into medical circles it previously would not have been included in and received the possibility of being taught in university setting, with the prospects of making careers out of it, as opposed to being limited to local, often rural, communities. Latin American literature, especially the magical realism genre, has also made steps to truly delve into the complexities of *curanderismo* and *brujería* in order to explore what both concepts may mean and what they provide to the individuals and communities who either know of them or practice them. Such an approach is much more intricate and multifaceted than previous interpretations, which often place the concepts into a *curanderismo*-good, *brujería*-evil binary.

Overall, as the thesis suggests, *curanderismo* and *brujería* share origins, characteristics, and other aspects that largely overlap and make them blur , to the point where I, at least, and likely others, cannot tell where one begins and the other ends. Their interlocking natures also make it difficult to define the moral dimension of each of them, especially given the fact that the definition, or rather understanding, of *curanderismo* and *brujería* often varies from place to place, and from individual to individual. As previously mentioned, *brujería* is often labeled as an immoral practice, especially by European standards, due to the craft's connection with the devil from the Catholic cannon in the colonial period. In Latin America, it is often considered less an evil practice and more a malicious with the assumption that those who practice it have bad intentions. However, the feminist approach to *brujería*, in the context of Chicana feminism in particular, has completely flipped this definition in recent years and created movements that go as far as to embrace the concept instead of scorn it, or even use it as a resistance tool in politics. The reason behind this is not completely clear, but due to the historical association between women and witchcraft/*brujería* that still persists to this day, it is not altogether surprising that

women would want to reclaim the term and change it into a positive one. It could then be deduced that women, particularly Mexican and Mexican American women, who feel powerless in some form or another, could turn to *brujería* as a concept that could empower them. This is related to the specificity of the cultural context, where women are expected to be subservient and sexually pure, and can be relegated to the role of a "bad woman" if they do not follow those expectations. *Brujería* can therefore be an opportunity for Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana women to safely explore and embrace characteristics of themselves that they would otherwise be judged for very harshly.

However, despite all these discoveries about the practices, there are massive amounts of possible new data that could be explored to truly begin to understand the two terms. This is especially true when one considers the fact that this text was unfortunately unable to interview practicing *brujas* the way it was able to interview *curanderas.* Additionally, it explores *curanderismo* as an umbrella term, *brujería* as a concept, and focuses primarily on Mexico and the Southwest of the United States. How *curanderismo* and *brujería* were formed in other countries, how they were passed down as practices through the centuries, what their definitions could be in other cultures, and what they mean in contemporary times could deeply vary from country to country in the rest of Latin America. These differences could especially be seen in subjects or services that could be provided only to women, such as midwifery and sexual reproduction. For example, would the latter fall under the term *curanderismo* due to its relation to medicine and health services? Or would it be more closely associated to *brujería* due to associations with contraceptives and abortion? The possibilities for study in this area are vast and entrancing to discover and due to their pervasive and enduring natures in Latin American culture and feminist movements, new knowledge on them may be available for learning indefinitely.

References

Alarcón, Norma. “Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision Through Malintzin/ or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object,” *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Feminist Women of Color,* eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa.

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *Bless Me, Ultima : A Novel*. Quinto Sol Publications, 1972.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Meztiza Consciousness,* Third Edition, Aunt Lute Books, 2007.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/ Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality,* edited by Analouise Keating. Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 75.

Barajas, Dina K. *Danzantes Aztecas y Promotoras Tradicionales: The Ritual Performances and Identity Politics of a Mexican American Ceremonial Community.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2020, pp. 3.

Brunstetter, D. R., and D. Zartner. “Just War against Barbarians: Revisiting the Valladolid Debates between Seplveda and Las Casas.” *Political Studies Oxford*, no. 3, 2011, p. 733.

Carbonell, Ana Maria. “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros.” *Melus: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, vol. 24, no. 2, June 1999, p. 53-74.

Castillo, Felipe Canuto, and Angel Serrano Sanchez. “La Brujeria a Finales Del Siglo XVII: El Caso de ‘La Chuparratones’ En Queretaro, Mexico/The Witchcraft at the End of the 17th Century: The Case of ‘La Chuparratones’ in Queretaro, Mexico.” *Culturales*, vol. 6, Jan. 2018, p. 1T.

Charles, Jenneil. “Colorism and the Afro-Latinx Experience: A Review of the Literature.” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 43, no. 1-2, Feb. 2021, pp. 8-31.

Chavéz, Thomas A. “Humanistic Values in Traditional Healing Practices of Curanderismo.” *Journal of Humanistic Counseling,* vol. 55, no. 2, 2016, pp. 129-135.

Cisneros, Sandra. “Guadalupe the Sex Goddess.” *A House of My Own : Stories from My Life*. First edition., Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, pp. 46-54.

Cordova, Ruben C. “Book Review of: Mexico, from Mestizo to Multicultural: National Identity and Recent Representations of the Conquest.” *Aztlán*, vol. 35, no. 2, Sept. 2010, pp. 201–205.

David H. Darst. “Witchcraft in Spain: The Testimony of Martín de Castañega’s Treatise on Superstition and Witchcraft (1529).” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 123, no. 5, Oct. 1979, pp. 298–322.

Esquivel, Laura. *Como Agua Para Chocolate: Novela de Entregas Mensuales Con Recetas, Amores, y Remedios Caseros.* Vintage Español, 1993.

Fanon, Franz. The wretched of the earth. New York: Grove Press, 1963, pp. 36.

Franco, Jean. “La Malinche: from gift to sexual contract.” *Critical Passions: Selected Essays,* Mary Louise Pratt, editor, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 71-88.

Frost, Elsa Cecilia. “Indians and Theologians: Sixteenth-Century Spanish Theologians and Their Concepts of the Indigenous Soul.” *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality, from the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation*, edited by Gary H. Gossen and Miguel León-Portilla. The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997, pp. 119-139.

Harris Amanda Nolacea. “Imperial and Postcolonial Desires: ‘Sonata de Estío’ and the Malinche Paradigm.” *Discourse*, vol. 26, no. 1/2, Jan. 2004, pp. 235–257.

Hartley, George. “The Curandera of Conquest: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Decolonial Remedy.” *Aztlán*, vol. 35, no. 1, Mar. 2010, pp. 135–161.

Hoskins, David, and Elena Padrón. “The Practice of Curanderismo: A Qualitative Study from the Perspectives of Curandera/os.” *Journal of Latina-o Psychology*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 2018, pp. 79-93.

Klor de Alva, J. Jorge. “Aztec Spirituality and Nahuatized Christianity.” *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality, from the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation*, edited by Gary H. Gossen and Miguel León-Portilla. The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997, pp. 173-197.

Lara, Irene. “Bruja Positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism.” *Chicana/Latina Studies: the Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, vol. 4, no. 2, Spring 2005, pp. 10–45.

López, Fred A. “Reflections on the Chicano Movement.” *LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES*, vol. 19, no. 4, Sept. 1992, pp. 79–86.

Martínez, Norell. “Brujas in the Time of Trump, Hexing the Ruling Class.” *Latinas and the Politics of Urban Spaces,* Navarro, Sharon A. and Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, editors, Routledge, 2021, pp. 31-52.

Marzal, Manuel M. “Transplanted Spanish Catholicism.” *South and Meso-American Native*

Spirituality, from the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation, edited by Gary H. Gossen and Miguel León-Portilla. The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997, pp. 140-169.

Moraga, Cherríe. "El Mito Azteca." *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, Ana Castillo, editor. Riverhead Books, 1996.

Paz, Octavio. "The Sons of La Malinche." *The Labyrinth of Solitude.* Grove Press, 1994, pp. 65-88.

Salazar, Cindy Lynn, and Jeff Levin. "Religious Features of Curanderismo Training and Practice." *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing*, vol. 9, no. 3, May 2013, pp. 150–158.

Soustelle, Jacques. *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest.* Stanford University Press, 1970.

Torres, Eliseo, and Timothy L. Sawyer. *Curandero : A Life in Mexican Folk Healing*. University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

Trotter, Robert T. *Curanderismo: Mexican American Folk Healing.* 2nd ed., University of Georgia Press, 1997.

Walker, Alice. "If the present looks like the past, what does the future look like?" *Search of our mother's gardens*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983, pp. 290.

Interviews:

C., R. Interview. Conducted by Xiomara Ortega Trinidad, 19 May 2021.

S., J. Interview. Conducted by Xiomara Ortega Trinidad, 6 June 2021.