

Spring 6-6-2020

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Recommended Citation

Lackey, Holly, "La Llorona's Invitation: Chicana Feminist Literature and the Community of the Monstrous" (2020). *Honors Projects*. 144.

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LA LLORONA'S INVITATION: CHICANX FEMINIST LITERATURE AND THE
COMMUNITY OF THE MONSTROUS

by

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A project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the University Scholars Honors Program

Seattle Pacific University

2020

Approved _____

Date _____

Abstract

La Llorona's ghostly figure has haunted the pages of Chicana literature for years as the monstrous woman. While her story shifts forms depending on the cultural context, the essentials remain: she was a woman, wronged by the father of her children, who now wanders the rivers at night wailing for the two children she drowned in anger, grief, or desperation. She has often been considered a monstrous figure whose function has been to regulate female identity. However, authors like Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Helena María Viramontes have sought to reclaim this ghostly visage from the grasp of patriarchal structures that condemn La Llorona's actions. Anzaldúa's poem "My Black *Angelos*", Cisneros' short story "Woman Hollering Creek," and Viramontes' short story "The Cariboo Cafe" revise La Llorona to acknowledge the female agency she represents. While critics have focused on feminine agency in these works, the function of the monstrous has often been overlooked. The monstrous usually refers to something feared or uncanny where oftentimes it is marginalized groups whose bodies represent cultural fears, but in these cases the monstrous is reimagined as a tool for agency. Through the lens of monster theory, and drawing on the theories of Jeffrey Cohen, Cristina Santos, and Luce Irigaray, this paper argues that Anzaldúa's, Cisneros', and Viramontes' representations of La Llorona develop female agency and community just as other critics have mentioned, but they also complicate monster theory by resituating the subjectivity to account for the positive monster. Through this, monster theory's dependence on a self/other dichotomy falls away and, with it, La Llorona's position as only a monster to be feared. Instead, these representations of La Llorona invite Chicana women into the community of the monstrous, where Cisneros, Anzaldúa, and Viramontes transform it from an androcentric space of "othering" and oppression to one of belonging and power.

La Llorona's Contexts

The figure of La Llorona, or the weeping woman, has long been a ghost associated with Mexico or the Borderlands of the US and Mexico. The basic premise of her story is that in life she had two children with a man who in some way rejected/betrayed her or their kids. Following this, the woman killed—usually drowned—her two children and herself and now wanders by rivers, wailing and searching for her lost children. Her story, like most stories of the monstrous, continues to live on; it shifts and bends depending on the cultural context in which it is being told. The monstrous always escapes to haunt a new page of history and it is this escape into other times that continues to keep the legend alive. Being a popular ghost tale, in this aspect at least, La Llorona is no different.

There are multiple iterations of her story, each with specific changes depending on the audience. One of her more popular and basic forms is a new version of the boogeyman where, in life, she had children with a man who eventually rejected her, she killed her children and herself for various reasons depending on the tale, and now she haunts the river searching for children. Parents often use this version to scare their children into obedience, claiming that if they are not well behaved La Llorona will come take them away. In *Loving in the War Years* Cherríe Moraga recounts the classic tale saying,

One traditional Mexican version of La Llorona tells the tale of a woman who is sexually betrayed by her man, and, in what was either a fit of jealous rage or pure retaliation, she kills their children by drowning them in a river. Upon her own death, she is unable to enter heaven because of her crime. Instead, she is destined to spend all eternity searching for her dead children. Her lament, 'Mis Hijos!' becomes the blood-chilling cry heard along irrigation ditches and country creeks, warning children that any misbehavior

(straying too far from camp, for example) might lead to abduction by this female phantom. (142)

Moraga explains the most traditional view of La Llorona as a boogeyman figure to keep children in line. The audience dictates the type of regulation that occurs. With children as the audience, La Llorona seems to be a fearsome figure in her hauntings as she searches for children to replace those she lost. The fear associated with this ghost is one that keeps these children behaving well, not talking back to their mothers or wandering too far from home. It keeps them in line just as her tale does for young women as well.

Even Moraga comes to different conclusions about La Llorona saying that “She is the story that has never been told truly, the story of that hungry Mexican woman who is called puta/bruja/jota/loca because she refuses to forget that her half-life is not a natural born fact” (147). Moraga does what many other feminist revisions of the myth have done: connect La Llorona to preconquest Aztec mythology. While Anzaldúa connects La Llorona to the goddess of destruction and creation, Coatlicue, Moraga connects La Llorona with the goddess whose dismembered body created the earth, Tlaltecuhli. The dismemberment that La Llorona is attached to through this mythology makes her body monstrous but it is also a reminder that Tlaltecuhli was not always torn apart, her body was split by the gods and the refusal to accept this makes her a threat. Moraga articulates the definition of La Llorona as a monstrous woman as a result of her protest against an androcentric system that would require her to consent in her own oppression.

The monstrous woman in Chicana and Latina traditions has emerged in interesting ways, one of which is Cristina Santos’ deconstruction of female monstrosity in her book, *Unbecoming Female Monsters: Witches, Vampires, and Virgins*. In this, Santos works to deconstruct the

claims of female monstrosity and link them to the various stages in women's lives. In doing so, she reveals that the monstrosity of women throughout their lives can be tied to expectations and regulations of female sexuality. In her chapter on motherhood, Santos delves into the monstrous La Llorona, specifically her Aztec predecessor Coatlicue. According to mythology, the goddess is both creator and destroyer and is often depicted with her head/limbs cut off with snakes in their place (65). Significantly, the snakes that are viewed as negative symbols in western culture are instead "a never-ending cycle of life, death, and rebirth" with the snake's shedding of the skin viewed as "a rising self-consciousness through personal transformation, and for women, the releasing of the power of the feminine" under Chicana feminist theory (65-66). Coatlicue's split from androcentric interpretations, according to Santos, has marked her as monstrous as she refuses gender norms.

The continued legacy of La Llorona has solidified her position as an important social figure as well as a ghost story. As one of the prominent critics on La Llorona, Jose Limón argues that she acts almost as a social mirror for greater Mexico. When properly situated culturally, La Llorona is a real woman portrayed as a witch because of her actions. She is the syncretic product of European and Indigenous cultures with Cihuacoatl grafted onto it (408). The stories of La Llorona have been spread primarily by women and so have expressed their own perceptions of the world, articulating both the woman's experience but also challenging the dominant class by refusing silence. She has become a symbol for the "socially produced and betrayed historical subjects in search of their community through their own symbolic idiom of women" (427). Limón's articulation of La Llorona reveals both her position within society as "other" and the way in which her narrative has been a method of resistance, all of which is viewed within the body of this ghost that mirrors society.

Limón's critical analysis sees La Llorona as a mirror reflecting the cultural contexts of the time, a view that corresponds with Jeffrey Cohen's in "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." One of the foundational aspects of monster theory is Cohen's simple, elegant thesis "The monster's body is a cultural body" (1). The monster's body is a pure embodiment of the culture's fears, anxieties, and desires and reflects its cultural time and place. Its body is meant to be read, "Like a letter on a page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again" (1). The monster's body is a text in and of itself. Reading it reveals its unique moment and constantly has more to say. This is no different for La Llorona's body which is marked by its ghostliness as much as it is by its position as a Latinx/Chicanx woman. And yet, these distinctions of identity change the way that the monster is being articulated. Limón talks about La Llorona within the context of Mexico where she is othered as a woman within patriarchal structures, but within the US Chicanx authors expand on their own experiences as othered on the basis of gender and race. La Llorona's body in this context navigates borders of identity as her ghost exists between borders of living and dead. Their feminist revisions of La Llorona center on specifically Chicanx feminism that acknowledges this intersectionality. Just as the monstrous body is a cultural body, so is the body of monster theory.

These stories of La Llorona have been reproduced in art, literature and song over the years; they are cultural touchstones that reflect their cultural moments. The works by three famous Chicanx authors offer their own unique contributions to the "monstrous" woman. Gloria Anzaldúa's book of essays and poems, *The Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Sandra Cisneros' short story "Woman Hollering Creek," and Helena María Viramontes' short story

“The Cariboo Cafe” all revisit the myth of La Llorona to offer her story respite from her monstrous label. They offer a version of La Llorona that refuses to be the bogeyman. While other critics have commented on these authors’ engagement of the cultural figure of La Llorona and her feminist revisioning in these myths, they often do so by deconstructing her monstrosity as a negative effect of a patriarchal structure, like Cristina Santos does in *Unbecoming Female Monsters: Witches, Vampires, and Virgins*. If women with agency are made into monsters to control them, then the deconstruction of the monstrous means eliminating the patriarchal label of “monster” from the bodies of women. But what gets lost in this feminist critique is the way that these authors not only reclaim La Llorona, they also reclaim the monstrous thereby allowing women to at once be “monsters” and positive figures of agency. Their revision embraces the Chicana feminist call for accepting plurality. Instead of the monstrous being a way to “other” Chicana women and regulate their bodies, the monstrous becomes a tool for self-acceptance and an invitation into a community of the “othered.”

Resituating the Gaze of Monster Theory

The issue of the gaze in monster theory has always been essential: who has the power to write and speak determines how the monstrous is interpreted and represented. Because “the recorders of the history of the West have been mainly European and male, women (She) and nonwhites (Them!) have found themselves repeatedly transformed into monsters, whether to validate specific alignments of masculinity and whiteness, or simply to be pushed from its realm of thought” (Cohen 15). By defining women and people of color as “other” through their representation as monstrous, the white men are able to construct their own definition of “self.” This tension of self versus other has been a base on which monster theory stands because, according to this theory, it is through difference that meaning is made. If there is a dichotomy of

self/other in which the self gets to define meaning against the monstrous, then whose perspective the monstrous is viewed through matters. The white male gaze defined the monstrous as “she” and “them,” but is that the only way?

The gaze that defines the monstrous, and the reciprocal relationship between the subject and monstrous object, is also an important part of Andrew Hock-Soon Ng’s monster theory, which focuses on more contemporary monsters. In theorizing about 21st century monsters, Ng argues that at the same time as the subject gazes upon the monstrous, the monstrous gazes back. And, as many cultural critics mention, the gaze holds power. It dictates the terms of relationship and, in some sense, overpowers the voice of the “other.” While Ng fails to take the extra step to situate subjectivity in the hands of the “other,” it becomes clear that if this gaze is resituated to the hands of the minority, new representational models must appear. And in the case of *La Llorona*, that model alters the connection of the monstrous with fear. Instead of a male or white gaze, the monstrous gaze acknowledges its own otherness but asserts a subjectivity of the monstrous in which the “otherness” is accepted as self. The revisions to the story of *La Llorona* resituate subjectivity to be strictly from the Chicana woman’s perspective, offering both a feminist revision and a revision to the Eurocentric monster theory that relies on a dichotomy of self versus other.

Although not typically part of the monster theorists’ discussions, Luce Irigaray’s feminist theoretical work, “Any Theory of the ‘Subject’ has Always Been Appropriated by the Masculine,” pushes for a reconceptualization of subjectivity outside the realm of masculine influence—a move that monster theory needs to make to overcome its self/other dichotomy. Immediately, Irigaray poses the question, “What if the ‘object’ started to speak? Which also means beginning to ‘see,’ etc. What disaggregation of the subject would that entail?” (135).

What happens when the object which has been used as the metaphorical ground, and the defining factor of the subject, decides to become a speaking subject? What happens when Chicana women decide to reorient the gaze to recognize their own worth in history and narrative? When this shift happens, there has to be a reconceptualization of the framework in which you operate because the framework is currently androcentric and Eurocentric. This goes for monster theory as well. It assumes that women are the objects of the male gaze, they are the “other” that is society’s monstrous mirror. But this assumption rests on the self/other dichotomy where men are using women to define themselves. It takes away women’s agency and selfhood and in doing so makes it easy for theory to cater to the androcentricity that relies on a language which denies agency to women and ignores the complications to theory that these women bring.

While Irigaray helps to shift monster theory away from a solely androcentric perspective, a feminist perspective is not universal or monolithic either. Anzaldúa’s, Cisneros’, and Viramontes’ revisions of *La Llorona* engage the intersectional identity of Chicana feminists who contend both with dismantling androcentrism and eurocentrism within theory and lived experience. Chicana women have been presented as “other” by virtue of being women within a male dominated society, but also contend with being “object” within the Eurocentric society because of their position as both woman and racial “other.” The complication of monster theory by Chicana feminists is inherently intersectional. The gaze of Chicana feminism accounts for these borderlands of identity by advocating for what Anzaldúa terms the “*mestiza* consciousness” whose work it is to “break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (102). Her resistance to the subject-object duality is an embodied resistance from within her position as a Chicana woman who “learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of

view” (101). It is from this perspective of holding the borderlands of identity in tension that the self-other dichotomy is dismantled. The Chicana feminist revisions and their gaze comes from this particular expression of breaking free from a duality that isn’t just conceptual, but also a lived and bodily experience.

In Viramontes’ short story, “The Cariboo Cafe,” the discrepancy in how La Llorona is interpreted depends heavily on this idea of the gaze—a negative monstrous woman when viewed from the male gaze, and a positive motherly figure from the gaze of the washerwoman.¹ The initial view of La Llorona (the washerwoman) maintains the “othering” aspect of the monstrous as the owner of the Cariboo Cafe describes her saying, “Already I know that she’s bad news because she looks street to me. Round face, burnt toast color, black hair that hangs like straight ropes. Weirdo, I’ve had enough to last me a lifetime. [...] I hear the lady saying something in Spanish. Right off I know she’s illegal, which explains why she looks like a weirdo” (172). In “The Boo of Viramontes’s Cafe,” Karina Oliva Alvarado argues this scene’s importance in terms of the immigrant woman’s social death. She writes that, the term “weirdo” signals the uncanny and “The washerwoman’s humanity ends up being nullified with the denial of her diversity through the naturalizing of her presumed illegality as a type of social abnormality” (80). The washerwoman is immediately “othered” by the cook’s gaze which places her on the margins of belonging as an assumed undocumented immigrant. Alvarado even engages monster theory by pointing out that La Llorona’s uncanny position as assumed undocumented immigrant is what places her in the category of “other.” This acknowledges that her physical appearance as a racial

¹ Some of the most prominent critics that have articulated the connection between La Llorona and the unnamed washerwoman in “The Cariboo Café” include: “The Boo of Viramontes’s Cafe: Retelling Ghost Stories, Central American Representing Social Death” by Karina Oliva Alvarado, “Hungry Women: Borderlands Mythos in Two Stories by Helena Maria Viramontes” by Wendy Swyt, and “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros” by Ana Maria Carbonell.

“other” and as a woman are important in the cook deeming her “weird.” But the gaze is what matters here. Alvarado is correct in her assertion that the uncanny plays a role in “othering” the washerwoman, but she neglects to see this as a product of the white male gaze that defines the Latinx woman as a feared “other” and instead sees it as a defining feature of the monstrous. In the cook’s version of the story, La Llorona is to be feared and warned against for both her position as woman and racial “other,” but in the version told through the gaze of the washerwoman La Llorona is a mother seeking respite from injustice.

When “The Cariboo Cafe” is narrated from the washerwoman’s perspective, La Llorona no longer resides in the space of “other,” which is a shift in gaze that necessitates a revision of monster theory. The washerwoman has had her son taken away and presumably killed by what appears to be the Nicaraguan government. Much of the scholarship has solidly established that the washerwoman is an embodiment of La Llorona both through her attempts to find her lost child and through her connection to water imagery. She also is viewed as an outcasted figure because of the death of her son, and her prayers are narrated to reveal her own suicidal ideations as she mourns the loss of her son. But what’s important is the way that this unnamed washerwoman sees herself primarily as a mother, but not as the mother that seeks revenge or is crazy. Instead, she sees herself as a mother protecting her child. She sees the little boy Macky in the street and mistakes him for her son, Geraldo. She sees herself, and subsequently represents La Llorona, as saving the child, saying, “I grab him because the earth is crumbling beneath us and I must save him” (177). La Llorona isn’t the bogeyman who steals bad children; she isn’t the crazy, undocumented immigrant that the cook fears. Instead, when narrated from the subjectivity of the Latinx woman, she is a mother attempting to save her child from the violence of the government, of the streets. By having both subjectivities present in “The Cariboo Cafe,”

Viramontes challenges the idea that La Llorona is solely “other” by redeeming her motivations from the monstrous assumptions of the cook. In doing so, Viramontes offers space for revising the monstrous woman as many critics have explored, but the washerwoman’s embodiment of both the “other” and the demonstrated subjectivity of the “self” also pushes monster theory to be more complex. By accounting for the Chicana woman’s perspective of La Llorona, monster theory has to contend with its own androcentricity and Eurocentricity as the washerwoman’s view of herself as a saving mother challenges the idea of the monstrous as solely “other.” The dichotomy of self and other breaks apart and with the blending of these categories comes the need for a more robust theory to account for these changes.

In Gloria Anzaldúa’s work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, which blends memoir, poetry, and theory, Anzaldúa very early on historicizes La Llorona and ties her to the Snake Woman, the goddess Cihuacoatl, also known as Coatlicue. Cihuacoatl is the goddess of both birth and destruction, she takes all the women who have died in childbirth as they are venerated as if they had died in battle (Swyt 192). Not only does Cihuacoatl lament the loss of her children like La Llorona does, but she laments the loss of the whole people to the Spanish conquerors and “the lost parts of herself” (60). Cihuacoatl is a sign of warning as much as she is a sign of loss. Though, even with this history, Anzaldúa rewrites the narrative to be gynocentric. She resituates the male gaze that Monster theory seems to rely on to account for the Chicana woman through what she has termed the “Coatlicue state,” a state that influences her poetry and her representations of La Llorona. Named after the goddess, Anzaldúa describes this state as:

Subject and object, I and she. The eye pins down the object of its gaze, scrutinizes it, judges it. A glance can freeze us in place; it can ‘possess’ us. It can erect a barrier against the world. But in a glance also lies awareness, knowledge. These seemingly contradictory

aspects—the act of being seen, held immobilized by a glance, and ‘seeing through’ an experience—are symbolized by the underground aspects of *Coatlicue*, *Cihuacoatl*, and *Tlazolteotl* which cluster in what I call the *Coatlicue* state. (64)

Anzaldúa’s gaze has power. The eye of the gazer has the power to “posses” and “pins down.” But unlike other representations of a one-sided gaze, there is also knowledge and a “seeing-through.” An important aspect of Anzaldúa’s gaze is the gendered gaze. This is “Subject and object, I and *she*” (emphasis added). Both the object and the subject gaze as women upon the other; it is a seeing through the Chicana female experience. The Coatlicue State, which could be defined as monstrous for its contradictory nature, holds the self and other within the same body, revealing the hole in monster theory that only accounts for a system based in dichotomous relationships. And just as Coatlicue holds the tension of creation and destruction within her being, so does the subject-object pair of women hold the tension of a gaze which operates symbiotically instead of dichotomously.

This symbiotic relationship between self and other extends to Anzaldúa’s “shadow beast,” which offers a model for breaking the dichotomy of self/other that monster theory relies on. This “shadow beast” is essentially an uncanny “other” who mirrors the “self” and is necessary to accept on the way to the Coatlicue State. It is both feared and reveals the self. In Norma Alarcon’s work “Anzaldúa’s Frontera: Inscribing Gynetics,” the community that Anzaldúa builds and the revision of psychoanalysis takes the forefront. Within the discussion of the shadow beast as both the Lacanian other and part of the Althusserian imaginary, Alarcon explains this shadow beast as the “native” woman. Even though the woman is conceived as “other,” she still operates in a form of duality by being self and other simultaneously (121). The feminine figures—including the figure of La Llorona—challenge the symbolic order which

places women firmly in the category of “other.” Alarcon sees Anzaldúa’s work as a feminist restitution of the gaze theory takes,

Thus the system that displaces Maternal Law, substitutes it with the concept of the ‘unconscious’ where the so called ‘primal repression’ is stored so that consciousness and rationality may be privileged especially as the constituted point of departure for the discovery of the ‘unconscious,’ further it constitutes itself as the science-making project displacing what will thereafter be known as mythological systems, that is the ‘unconscious-as-the-discourse-of-the-other’’s multiple systems of signification, to which the maternal/feminine is imperfectly vanished. (122-123)

She argues that Anzaldúa has begun the long work, not only to revise these theories, but to create entirely new language in which androcentrism and colonial values do not take center stage. It is this creation of a new gynocentric language that extends well beyond the shadow beast in Anzaldúa’s work. Her poem on La Llorona, “My Black *Angelos*,” indicates that her own figure is being re-written within these new theoretical frameworks—one that has Chicana women at its center. While Alarcon’s argument articulates the importance of the gaze for feminist theory, this also needs to be extended to monster theory. Monster theory must undergo the same shift in gaze to account for the monstrous as both other and self, as existing within the Coatlicue state instead of monstrous-defined-by-man. In so doing, she argues for a dismantling of the dichotomy of self/other that assumes a male gaze.

As women and immigrants (or in Anzaldúa’s case, those living in the borderlands) these authors’ revisions to La Llorona uniquely combat monstrousness by resituating the subjectivity to be from the Chicana feminist point of view. But more than that, they demonstrate the ever-changing nature of La Llorona herself as a figure of the borders between life and death—a state

familiar to both border crossings and the battle between identities that Chicana authors often describe. Chicana literature is often concerned with the implications of living with the convergence of Indigenous, Anglo, and Latina identities that are often a result of histories of immigration and border disputes like the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The external borders begin to appear as internal and psychological borders or barriers in much of Anzaldúa's literature and Cisneros and Viramontes' as well. The position of the border as a space-between is one that is played out in the contested nature of each revisioning of La Llorona. Even for Cisneros, Viramontes, and Anzaldúa, the fact that La Llorona is a ghost (a figure that operates between the borders of life and death) means that she is embodying the specific cultural experience of these women as they straddle the borders of identity. In honoring this specific experience and subjectivity, the monstrous woman is rewritten, and the monster theory requires complicating to account for an otherwise overlooked aspect of its framework: its own androcentricity and Eurocentricity.

While monster theory has been able to offer interesting critiques on race and gender by examining how each has been "othered" by being placed in the position of the monstrous, it has largely continued to operate from the subjectivity of the presumed universal self of the white man or white woman. Women are only other when viewed from a male perspective that is situated as self, and Chicana people are only other when viewed from a white perspective that is situated as self. By reframing the subjectivity to be from a Chicana woman's perspective in each of their works, Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Viramontes have not only pointed out the need for a feminist reclamation of La Llorona, they have pointed out the need for monster theory to address its Eurocentric foundation. The self/other dichotomy that monster theory has at its foundation is based upon an unquestioned assumption of the white male subjectivity as universal and neutral.

These stories of La Llorona prove otherwise and, in doing so, demonstrate the need for complicating monster theory further to account for subjectivities that have been ignored or forced to fit Eurocentric rules of what qualifies as monster, monstrous, or monster theory.

Does Fear Make the Monster?

While my analysis attempts to complicate monster theory and add the monstrous to feminist discussions, there might be some apprehension around the use of the terms “subject/self” and “object/other” as inherently reinforcing the structures I am trying to dismantle. Without language that operates in a space between binaries we are almost doomed to act within the patriarchal structures that position woman as other. Even when talking about Chicana literature there have to be choices in language to dismantle a dichotomy of self and other where Chicana women would be subsumed into the masculine Chicano because of the presence of one man. Language within patriarchal cultures privileges men as the norm and in doing so, positions women as “other.” Even as I try to articulate a space between these binaries, I am forced to describe it using the dichotomous terms themselves in an effort to speak to the sometimes-invisible water we find ourselves swimming in. Until language ceases to be androcentric and Eurocentric, I find myself trapped in a cycle which continually asserts its androcentricity and Eurocentricity and, while I attempt to resist it, because of the nature of communication I will continue to use the language of self/other while acknowledging the paradox that by doing so it seems that I also place Chicana women in the position of “other.”

Monster theory undoubtedly rests on a dichotomy of self/other that privileges male subjectivity, something that Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Viramontes revise in the gaze toward La Llorona, but this dichotomy of self/other also impacts one of the most common aspects of the monstrous: fear. The self/other dichotomy in terms of its applicability to horror or fear emerges

in monster theory largely from Freud's "The Uncanny" and is built on by other theorists along the way. Freud's ideas about psychoanalytics have haunted academia in the form of a repressed other. According to Freud, there is the homely, the familiar, and when that familiar is made unfamiliar, there exists the uncanny (604). But it is not only the familiar-made-unfamiliar that results in a fearsome specter, but the fact that this unfamiliar is usually represented in the body of the other. That which is repressed becomes alienated from the self and is recognized to the horror of the self in the body of the other. Again, in this dichotomous structure, the other becomes something against which the self is defined and relegates the "other" to a position of object. It is through this aspect of theory that feminist critics like Cristina Santos argue that La Llorona is feared because she represents the repressed female sexuality as her tale warns against women wandering (60). While the uncanny has long been used by monster theorists and feminist theorist alike, it rests upon an unchallenged assumption of dichotomous relationships of self/other that necessitates fear as an accompaniment to monsters.

Other theorists like Cohen have incorporated Freud's theories on the uncanny into their own monster theory and articulated the idea that another part of the monster's association with fear comes from its position of difference. By operating as the "other," different from the assumed natural way reality functions, the monster draws attention to reality as a construction since what is defined as "normal" is in flux. While there is some desire associated with the monstrous because it allows people to live out a fantasy of what they cannot acceptably be in society, it also functions as a threat to the constructed reality much like the uncanny does. Horror emerges only "when the monster threatens to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture. When contained by geographic, generic, or epistemic marginalization, the monster can function as an alter ego, as an alluring projection of

(an Other) self” (Cohen 9). Fear of the monstrous seems almost necessary in Cohen’s description. And if not necessary, then a defining factor. An important thing to note is that while Cohen largely recognizes the monstrous as a tool for othering in which marginalized populations are often made into monsters, he refuses to recognize the way that his own thesis operates on the assumption that this structure is essential. Even in this section that categorizes fear with the monstrous as a fear of the “othered” alter ego of the “self,” Cohen articulates this in terms of a dichotomy that places those experiencing epistemic marginalization solely within the category of “(an Other) self.” Instead of being allowed their own self, the epistemically marginalized—this includes women and people of color—must function “as an alter ego.” The dichotomy of self and other is essential to Cohen’s theory, and will be essential in my own deconstruction of monster theory, but this dichotomy upholds a structure that would confine the Chicana woman and La Llorona to the position of an “(Other) self” feared by the assumed white masculine “self.”

As monster theory develops, contemporary theorists like Ng have expanded on this idea of the monster being feared because they expose reality as a construction. Instead of the monster as an external warning of a physical other, as Cohen seems to argue, the monstrous has transitioned to a representation of the human psyche’s fears and desires, harkening back to Freud’s uncanny (4). The monster acts as that which makes the self question the apparent stability of reality. It’s a reminder of the Void for which reality is just a comforting fantasy. By existing outside the symbolic order, the monstrous reminds the subject that reality is constructed, it reminds the subject of the Void. This questioning of reality places the subject in a state of liminality themselves just as the monstrous is. In other words, the monstrous necessitates an acknowledgment of the monstrous liminality within the self. The self must recognize itself as other. But according to Ng, this acknowledgment provokes fear alongside the monster’s body

which continues to place the “other” in a position of difference instead of assumed universality. While this theory still requires that the monster operates as a figure of fear, it gets closer to articulating the Chicana feminist monster theory of Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Viramontes in its attempted subversion of the self/other dichotomy by allowing both to exist within the same body. Through their feminist revisions of La Llorona a new kind of monster emerges that allows women to be monstrous without necessitating an androcentric and Eurocentric fear.

When we look at how Anzaldúa addresses fear in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, the typical narrative of monster theory is already being revised. While she foregrounds an acknowledgment of the Void, she does so within the culturally specific term of the “Coatlicue State.” The difference between the Void and “The Coatlicue State” being Anzaldúa’s acceptance of liminality instead of fear toward it. As Anzaldúa says, “Coatlicue depicts the contradictory” (69). She embodies being between. She is both life and death, creation and destruction, the dualities combined into the ultimate liminal body. This alone is enough to make her figure monstrous according to Ng and many other monster theorists. However, she is also one of the goddesses thought to be the early originator for La Llorona as Cihuacoatl or “the snake woman” laments the loss of her children (60). And while there’s fear involved in the process of gaining the Coatlicue State so heavily associated with La Llorona, essentially it ends in the acceptance of a position of constant liminality, of living on the borderlands. The Coatlicue State becomes one of acceptance of a subject which has often been the monstrous, in which “I am never alone. That which abides: my vigilance, my thousand sleepless serpent eyes blinking in the night, forever open. And I am not afraid” (73). Anzaldúa moves one step beyond a monster theory based on a dichotomy of self and monstrous other. Anzaldúa herself embodies the subjectivity of the monstrous, of the liminality that comes with being serpent or a woman of

color or queer. And instead of the fear that attempts to keep a divide between self and other, she integrates the two in the Coatlicue State for an acceptance of the Void. While Ng, Cohen and Freud all bring the monstrous back to fear, Anzaldúa revises the theory to account for the monstrous as self and in doing so, asserts a monstrous self that, once accepted, no longer necessitates fear.

Anzaldúa readily engages the fear attached to monsters. She asserts that “Humans fear the supernatural, both the undivine (the animal impulses such as sexuality, the unconscious, the unknown, the alien) and the divine (the superhuman, the god in us)” and because women bleed every month and do not die, we are feared. By this logic, “Woman is the stranger, the other. She is man’s recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast. The sight of her sends him into a frenzy of anger and fear” (39). The uncanny would usually be the term to describe this idea of woman as the feared “other” to the male psyche. The woman’s body becomes representative of the repressed and the sight of her in her divine or monstrous forms elicits the response of fear and anger from men who see her power as a threat. But in Anzaldúa’s “*My Black Angelos*,” women are not the Shadow-Beast for men; they no longer occupy the space of fearful object but act as a gynocentric Shadow-Beast of the self—feared as the uncanny but the only repression is of self-acceptance after which the androcentric fear of the other is unnecessary. Even as she accepts the fear surrounding this image, Anzaldúa rewrites the idea that La Llorona *needs* to be feared for her monstrousness.

The role of the uncanny emerges in Anzaldúa’s work here, but the repressed other that exists with La Llorona is essentially that of the dead body or the ghost. In his theoretical work, Freud talks about ghosts as one of the typical representations of the uncanny and explains that “Most likely our fear still implies the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his

survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him” (605). Aside from Freud’s glaring androcentricity as he uses masculine pronouns to talk about the universal person, this theory partially holds up. People fear ghosts and dead bodies because they represent their repressed emotions around their own death. They bring back the repressed idea that these haunting figures will attempt to bring the living self into the world of the dead. Freud’s uncanny addresses unconscious repressions, but the question is: who gets the burden of the unconscious? Irigaray deems the unconscious as the subjectivity of women in which they are often means of imprinting or the representation of negative death, dreams and fantasy (141). Women’s bodies have been used to display the “othered” aspect of the self which causes the uncanny, they usually are the repressed to be feared. The unconscious becomes something appropriated by the masculine, for the masculine definition of self. It’s this version of La Llorona that has made her into the child-snatching bogeyman. In this instance, La Llorona would be the shadow-beast for the living and “*My Black Angelos*” certainly seems to start with this view of the uncanny. La Llorona is feared—she is uncanny—but Anzaldúa rewrites the narrative of La Llorona as merely a bogeyman figure sent to snatch away the speaker. While there may be fear surrounding La Llorona, Anzaldúa reclaims this androcentric and Eurocentric view of the monstrous and dictates a new way of defining the monstrous that no longer relies on fear to define the male self. Instead she allows La Llorona to be a shadow-beast for Chicana women, blending the categories of self/other and revising the narrative of fear around the monstrous.

The presence of fear in “*My Black Angelos*” has been explained by Domino Perez as a result of the speaker’s repression of indigenous history and identity. The speaker describes their fear of this haunting woman, a version of La Llorona who most eerily reflects the Aztec goddess Coatlicue (or Cihuacoatl, an aspect of Coatlicue) where she haunts the speaker with her talon-

like hands and serpent tongue. In Perez's analysis of La Llorona, she argues that the fear surrounding La Llorona is the internalized fear of the speaker's indigenous self which La Llorona/Coatlicue/Cihuacoatl teaches her to embrace and provides "a means for reclaiming feminine agency" (55-56). As Perez walks through the way that La Llorona transforms from a fearful image to a helpful one, she demonstrates that the fear associated with La Llorona is a holdover from an androcentric and Eurocentric view that would suppress the importance of indigenous female deities and mythological figures like La Llorona. Her analysis of the poem expertly articulates the shift away from fear and toward acceptance as a revision of La Llorona to account for female agency. Expanding on what Perez already established, the presence of an uncanny La Llorona—who represents a repressed mytho-historical past to reclaim feminine agency—also has implications for how monster theory is conceptualized. This view seems to situate La Llorona firmly within the Eurocentric theory of Cohen and Freud, with La Llorona operating as the repressed other. Anzaldúa unmistakably draws on this, but it's important to note that part of this is because of the sticky nature of Eurocentric and androcentric narratives to trap those who try and break the cycles. Resistance is often coopted by the very force it is resisting. That being said, Anzaldúa undeniably has elements of the very androcentric and Eurocentric leanings that she tries to revise with La Llorona, but that does not discount the work she also does to push on monster theory's necessity for the monster to be feared. She points out the initial fear of the monstrous as a product of an androcentric and Eurocentric culture leaving the possibility open to revise the definition of monsters as feared and account for the Chicana woman's perspective.

There is no doubt that La Llorona is feared within the first half of "My Black *Angelos*," but the fear functions as the "control" showing what the androcentric and Eurocentric view of La

Llorona is before Anzaldúa rewrites the narrative. The speaker hears La Llorona wailing: “Her *grito* splinters the night / fear drenches me. / I stink of carrion” (9-11). She is clearly afraid of the figure of La Llorona/Coatlicue that hunts her down in the poem. The uncanny figure reminds the speaker of the repressed self, the Indigenous woman wailing and appearing to seek the speaker to bring her into the land of the dead like Freud theorizes about ghosts. The speaker enacts an internalized fear that sees this Indigenous divine woman as “other” as she views La Llorona as an uncanny figure. If La Llorona is “other” then according to traditional theories of the monstrous and the role of fear, she should be used to define the self against. The identification of the speaker should be against La Llorona as a way to form the self if this is operating on a dichotomy of self/other. But Anzaldúa does not uphold this dichotomy and so the conceptualizations of fear must shift as well.

“Woman Hollering Creek” also starts with this androcentric view of La Llorona as a feared monster before Cisneros dismantles it later. The short story focuses on Cleófilas, a woman who has immigrated to the US with her husband, Juan Pedro. Cleófilas’ neighbors, Dolores and Soledad, warn her away from the river which is where she hears La Llorona. They warn her that it’s bad luck, that she and the baby won’t be safe if they don’t stay near the house (51). La Llorona, when described from these women who are often representative of the androcentric versions of the story, becomes a figure to be feared—she should be a monster beaconing Cleófilas to violence. And yet, the fear in this story does not reside with the monster, but with her abusive husband, Juan Pedro. The monstrous Llorona, when viewed through Cleófilas’ perspective, continues to be a figure of support, but the men around her become the objects of fear. In every scene with the men present there is discussion of violence against women, whether it be through jokes or how Cleófilas thinks about the news articles of women being murdered by

the men they know (52). The scenes with Juan Pedro are marked by his physical and emotional violence against her as well. The figure of La Llorona is not the threat, the men are. The threat of an androcentric system in which violence against women is common fills the space of fear that the monstrous usually holds and it is La Llorona's lack of fear surrounding her that often leads to the interpretation that she is redeemed from the category of the monstrous. But she does not need to be redeemed; she has the potential to be feared, and yet Cisneros' shift of fear toward the men, and away from La Llorona, reveals an important shift in perspective. From the point of view of women who have been made "other," La Llorona occupies the space of self which is not feared, while men who once occupied the assumed position of "self" are finally allowed to be in a position that is "othered." While there remains some issue with this upholding the appearance of a binary, La Llorona's combination of other and self seeks to disrupt that, at least for Chicana women in these narratives.

The androcentric fear that starts Cisneros' and Anzaldúa's revisions of La Llorona highlights the regulatory function that fear generally plays. Chicana feminist revisions of La Llorona like Cisneros', Anzaldúa's, and Viramontes' tend to give La Llorona agency by taking her out of the category of "bad woman," hoping to subvert the monster's power to regulate female sexuality and belonging. One critic, Shannon Wilson, points out the regulatory function that labels like "bad woman" have, but she doesn't connect it to monster theory. She writes that La Llorona's tale "cautions that if women abandon their roles as wives and mothers, they too will be punished like *la Llorona*" (Wilson 47). This regulatory La Llorona is what would inhibit Cleófilas from leaving her husband, what would make her like Dolores or Soledad, as their existences are dependent on their relationships to their husbands and sons. It would be what keeps the speaker in Anzaldúa's poem from finding belonging. By presenting La Llorona as a

“bad” woman to be feared, other women are supposed to fear becoming her and fear repeating her actions. And this regulatory figures rests solidly within the European male tradition of the monstrous that Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Viramontes are not operating within.

Cohen’s fifth thesis on monster theory outlines this function of the monstrous saying “To step outside this official geography is to risk attack by some monstrous border patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself” (12). By calling La Llorona monstrous, she defines the boundaries of what’s considered “acceptable” while also warning other women away from acting in a way that could be defined as such. But again, this is based on a self/other dichotomy that places Chicana woman firmly in the “other” category which was demonstrated in the original portrayals of La Llorona as a condemned and feared monster. With Chicana feminist revisions of La Llorona’s tale, she does not quite match up to her predecessors since she is no longer a condemned and feared monster, but a woman with agency. The threat of becoming a monster hardly matters when the monstrous is already the self and it is exactly this that Cisneros, Anzaldúa, and Viramontes demonstrate through their physical embodiments of La Llorona.

In “Woman Hollering Creek,” each woman embodies a different interpretation of the myth of La Llorona by showing both the regulatory function that fearing La Llorona could have and Cisneros’ revision that asserts agency and challenges a theory based in fear. Cleófilas’ neighbors, Dolores and Soledad (or pain and solitude), are often represented as two versions of femininity that are there as regulators of Cleófilas’ own performance of gender (Sandoval 36-37). Other critics, including Shannon Wilson, have said that Dolores and Soledad are representative of La Llorona herself.² Wilson goes deeper into the topic by claiming that Dolores

² Dolores and Soledad are considered the embodiments of La Llorona with the river operating as a third neighbor in “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros” by Ana María Carbonell and as strictly representations of La Llorona in “The Chicana Trinity: Maternal Mestiza Consciousness in *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*” by Shannon Wilson.

and Soledad's names "represent the emotions that are thought to inspire *La Llorona*'s cries [...] Neither woman seems able to move past the loss of identity as wife and/or mother" (49). Their circumstances and grief mirror that of a story of *La Llorona* that places women's value in their relationships to the men around them, whether that be their husbands or sons. Dolores lights candles "in memory of two sons who had died in the last war and one husband who had died shortly after from grief" (47). Then there was Soledad, who lived on the other side of Cleófilas and whose "husband had either died, or run away with an ice-house floozie, or simply gone out for cigarettes one afternoon and never came back" (46). Both these women could easily be incarnations of *La Llorona* with their betrayals and missing children, just like Wilson argued. Dolores lives in constant grief. She is stuck in a constant state of motherhood as she grieves for her two lost sons while Soledad lives forever in solitude, ignoring the husband who abandoned her. Were these women representations of *La Llorona*, they would be regulatory figures warning Cleófilas away from becoming like them, encouraging her dependence on her husband to avoid solitude and her full identification as a mother to avoid the sorrow of losing her children. While these women are reminiscent of *La Llorona*, they are not an embodiment of her. Instead, Cleófilas becomes the embodied *La Llorona* and in doing so offers a space for revising the narrative to account for female agency and offer a new space of resistance against a system that would dictate she stay in an abusive relationship.

In "Woman Hollering Creek," Cleófilas very obviously avoids becoming an embodiment of the regulatory version of *La Llorona* by escaping her husband and the situations that had her on a trajectory to become just like Soledad and Dolores. Just like Soledad did with her husband, Cleófilas suspects Juan Pedro is cheating on her and just like Dolores she fears losing her children but to Juan Pedro instead of to war. Cleófilas must confront the man on whom she is

economically and socially dependent and part of this is through the agency she demonstrates by leaving Juan Pedro. By avoiding these stories of La Llorona, Cleófilas' embodiment revises the narrative of La Llorona as a regulatory figure. She is no longer operating as an "other" to be feared, to keep women in line. Instead, she is embodied by a woman acting with agency and in resistance to an androcentric system that would condemn her to a lifetime as a victim of abuse instead of a survivor. This feminist revision of La Llorona then necessitates a look at monster theory and its own reliance on an androcentric theory that confines women to feared monsters. Monster theory itself requires complication to account for a monster without regulatory fear, to account for the subjectivity of the "other."

Accepting the Monster as Self

So then, if La Llorona, when written by these Chicana feminists, rewrites narratives of fear, what work is the monstrous body doing when it is fully accepted outside of a self/other dichotomy? Some critics, like Persephone Braham, argue that the lack of fear attached to the ghostly figure of La Llorona forces it into the category of magical realism instead of the monstrous. Magical realism works to subvert the western reliance on rationalism by having magical or supernatural elements as an accepted part of reality and, "Because magical realism does not seek to create unease in the reader, what might otherwise be monstrous, abject, or uncanny is not experienced as such by the characters" (172). The elements of magical realism that subvert Eurocentric ideologies are not associated with fear or the "uncanny" which, according to Braham, would mean La Llorona cannot be part of the monstrous. While magical realism demonstrates this subversion, it doesn't fully explain what happens in Cisneros', Anzaldúa's, and Viramontes' work, where La Llorona operates as a monster within her ghostly body but subverts the need for fear. Their work goes against Eurocentric ideals of what creates

the uncanny or fear to reposition the monstrous from the subjectivity of the other while still affirming the existence of the monstrous as part of the self. The lack of fear surrounding La Llorona doesn't mean she isn't monstrous, it means that—drawing on the history of magical realism—she challenges the western epistemology that necessitates her “othering” through fear. La Llorona offers a space of resistance and female community within the body of the monstrous.

Though La Llorona has been deconstructed to show how the monstrous woman is socially created with each of her myths, feminist critics often redeem La Llorona by denying her monstrous aspects because of their assumed negative portrayal of women. One critic, Santos, argues that Chicana feminists have recognized the intersectional nature of their work and reoriented monstrousness onto those who deserve the blame: “territorial dispossession and cultural assimilation of colonialism” (80). The revisions of La Llorona deconstruct the monstrous woman and reconstruct the monstrous onto the racist and sexist society. While Santos impeccably deconstructs how women are made monstrous, her argument rests on taking the label of “monster” off the bodies of women entirely. This approach makes sense in the context of an androcentric and Eurocentric monster theory, in which women and especially women of color are routinely demonized, but shifts when the theory becomes gynocentric. With a gynocentric theory the monstrous woman can be not only a symbol of power and agency that resists androcentrism, but the label of “monster” itself can be retained and understood as a positive tool for social change. The idea that it is “(worse) to become monstrous oneself” no longer holds when becoming monstrous is an act of agency and belonging (Cohen 12). The feminist critic's act of deconstructing the monstrous gets at the way La Llorona becomes a figure of agency, but only by revising monster theory do we see that the monster does not need redemption, it merely

needs to be allowed to exist outside the confines of a strict androcentric and Eurocentric self/other dichotomy.

Each revision of La Llorona includes the speakers becoming monstrous, and none of these revisions is more occupied with the bodily than Anzaldúa's "My Black *Angelos*." Anzaldúa focuses the whole poem on subsuming La Llorona into the speaker's body or the speaker being subsumed into the monstrous body of La Llorona. La Llorona crawls into the speaker's, "spine / her eyes opening and closing, / shining under my skin in the dark / whirling my bones" (27-30). La Llorona takes over every aspect of the speaker and becomes part of the speaker's physical body, breaking yet another boundary as she moves from the world of ghosts to an embodied experience. But it is unclear whether the speaker is being taken into La Llorona or if La Llorona is becoming part of the speaker. There's no doubt that they are becoming one body, but the ambiguity around a separation of self and other speaks to an ideological shift surrounding the story of La Llorona. She is no longer a monstrous "other" within Anzaldúa's poem. Instead, the monster is indistinguishable from the self. By accepting La Llorona into her body, the speaker accepts the self, and by accepting the speaker into her body, La Llorona also accepts the self. There is a symbiotic relationship that completely subverts the idea that the monstrous must be physically the "other" and also subverts the idea that if the monster isn't a physical other, she must be a rejected and therefore "othered" part of the self.

Even when La Llorona is physically outside of the speaker, their relationship suggests a symbiotic relationship of intimacy and care where the androcentric fear of the "other" no longer has a place in the narrative. La Llorona is not a figure of revenge; she leads the speaker towards the acceptance of the monstrous, or acceptance of the self. Although plagued by fear at first, the

speaker's actual encounter with this Serpent woman is marked by an animalistic grooming. La Llorona catches up to the speaker:

Taloned hand on my shoulder,
 behind me putting words, worlds in my head
 turning, her hot breath
 she picks the meat stuck between my teeth
 with her snake tongue
 sucks the smoked lint from my lungs
 with her long black nails
 plucks lice from my hair. (18-25)

The animal imagery associated with La Llorona asserts La Llorona's monstrousness as she resembles Coatlicue, or the Snake Woman. La Llorona's animal body defines her as monstrous and she does not try to shirk that. She has taloned hands like a bird of prey and a snake's tongue and "she is a symbol of the fusion of opposites" with the masculine bird and the feminine snake represented (69). La Llorona/Coatlicue holds both inside her and "like the ocean, neither animal respects borders" (85). The very body of La Llorona resists dichotomies and, in doing so, she appears at once a monster and a caring figure guiding the speaker toward acceptance. There is no denying that La Llorona here can be a figure of fear, but to stop there would be to completely ignore the Chicana subjectivity that allows for an ideology of both/and. La Llorona is a monster, but she also grooms the speaker. She speaks into the speaker's mind, is engaged in acts of intimacy with the speaker that show care as she cleans her. It is only after this practice of grooming and care that La Llorona enters into the speaker's body and becomes one with her. The

monster that resides within the Coatlicue state does not respect the borders of monster theory any more than La Llorona does.

Although it remains largely unarticulated in monster theory, it's important to understand that this hybridity or boundary crossing that is part of a definition of the monster is an essential tool for accepting the monster as self. The animal body is often the monster's body, but "Always when they cross my path, fear and elation flood my body. I know things older than Freud, older than gender. [...] Forty years it's taken me to enter into the Serpent, to acknowledge that I have a body, that I am a body and to assimilate the animal body, the animal soul" (Anzaldúa 48). Anzaldúa's own position as a queer Chicana woman is what she is usually referring to when she talks about accepting the "animal." She speaks toward accepting a part of herself that has long been deemed monstrous, and for her that operates at the intersection of being a queer Chicana woman. The speaker's act of taking the Serpent woman into her own body, mimics Anzaldúa's theoretical work which sees this moment of fear and elation as an act of agency or self-acceptance. La Llorona becomes the tool for the radical act of a woman accepting the "animal" body, the physical being and sexual pleasure that it connotes. This is an owning of the self through the bodily community of two women, physically breaking the boundaries of self and other that traditional monster theory relies on. The breakdown of a self/other dichotomy points to a new way of theorizing the monstrous in which becoming the embodied monster is not the worst possibility, rather it is essential for moving into a space of community and belonging.

This image of La Llorona as a positive figure carries over from Anzaldúa's work to Viramontes', where becoming a monster is no longer the feared fate that traditional monster theory says it is. In "The Cariboo Cafe," the washerwoman who embodies La Llorona finally feels that she has found the child she lost, even though he is not her actual son and she has

essentially kidnapped him. According to the un-revised stories of La Llorona, she should be the boogeyman figure, there to take the children who have wandered too far away from their homes. And she fulfills the role of monster. She is La Llorona embodied, but the same kind of Coatlicue state emerges. While the washerwoman has fulfilled that aspect of La Llorona, the water she is associated with is one of care and cleansing. But when she narrates her own story, we see that the washerwoman gently washes the boy, a stark contrast to the other water imagery usually associated with La Llorona: drowning her children (177-78). Instead, La Llorona/the washerwoman accepts the boy into the self with the associated positive imagery around water. In this case it seems to be just an acceptance of the boy into the monstrous space, but this also becomes an acceptance of the self. In her essay, Moraga explains the possibility for the infanticide in La Llorona's story to be "a suicide. A mother never completely separates from her child" (146). As the washerwoman accepts the lost boy as herself through the act of bathing him, she has accepted a part of herself that had been lost. This acceptance played out on the body demonstrates Viramontes' own revision of La Llorona in which the self accepts the monstrous self. The boundaries of self and other are yet again blurred in this revision of La Llorona's story in a way that speaks to the positive influence of the monstrous for accepting the monster as self and the self as monster.

In yet another revision of La Llorona's story, in Cisneros' "Woman Hollering Creek" Cleófilas does not escape becoming the monster either. Instead, La Llorona's association with the river acts as a mirror for Cleófilas' perspective and desires. Even though everyone else seems afraid of the river (or of La Llorona), Cleófilas' attitude toward it is always one of curiosity and acceptance as the river's different states reflect her own. At the beginning of the short story, when Cleófilas crosses the river for the first time, she thinks about the river's name, "la gritona,"

wondering why it would be named after pain or rage when it seems so “pretty and full of happily ever after” (47). She literally laughs at the idea of the river being anything negative—and by extension, La Llorona being negative—but she also connects her own experience to the river’s by believing she’s moving into a period of happy-ever-after with her new husband. Even while still with her abusive husband, Cleófilas gains comfort from the river—a representation of La Llorona—which is “a good-size alive thing, a thing with a voice all its own, all day and all night with its high silver voice” (51). The river is alive; La Llorona has her own voice that’s “silver,” all imagery that speaks to a positive and life-giving view of the ghost that is often feared. So, instead of a theory of monstrosity based in a self/other dichotomy that only views the monstrous as negative or views the monstrous as the thing to fear and regulate, the monstrous itself becomes a tool of comfort and acceptance. This necessitates understanding monster theory from the subjectivity of the “other” where Cleófilas can be the monstrous embodied and still be a figure that provides comfort and community.

Cleófilas is tied to La Llorona and the river through laughter, not through screams of rage or anger that would inflict fear. It is at the end of the short story as she crosses once more over the river that Cleófilas finally embodies La Llorona instead of acting as her mirror. The noises of the river, associated with La Llorona, are a part of Cleófilas’ own body. Cleófilas leaves Juan Pedro with the help of Felice. As she engages in this brave and subversive act, crossing once more over the river that marked her journey to the US, “Felice began laughing again, but it wasn’t Felice laughing. It was gurgling out of her own throat, a long ribbon of laughter, like water” (56). The lack of recognition surrounding her own laughter reveals what has been repressed to create the uncanny figure of La Llorona: joy and freedom. By reorienting the narrative to account for Chicana women’s subjectivity, monster theory no longer relies on fear.

Instead, it becomes a method of empowerment in which Chicana women accept that which has been othered by an androcentric and Eurocentric society and creates a space for that laughter. This bodily self-acceptance reveals a new way of understanding monster theory that doesn't rely on the self/other dichotomy. Instead, it recognizes the monstrous as the self. By reframing the monstrous, it becomes a way to empower women and create change instead of merely a way to mark difference, laying the groundwork for communal acceptance.

The Monster Offers Acceptance into Female Community

We can see that when we analyze La Llorona as a monstrous figure rewritten within Chicana feminism, monster theory begins to have holes in how it deals with a monster who accepts the "other" as "self" and breaks the dichotomy. While La Llorona might remind the self of the constructed nature of reality (cause fear), she does so from the woman's gaze as demonstrated previously. Where white men articulate the revelation of a constructed reality with fear because it means their power is also constructed, the Chicana feminist subjectivity through La Llorona articulates a constructed reality as positive. La Llorona circumvents the fear associated with this knowledge of reality because the constructed reality is a patriarchal and Eurocentric reality. By reminding these women of that, La Llorona or the monster offers the hope of freedom and the opportunity for community where previously there was only the myth that the oppression faced as Chicana women was "natural."

Just as the body politics of the US-Mexico border is central to Anzaldúa and Cisneros' works, Viramontes' "The Cariboo Cafe" explicitly engages the border politics between the US and Central American countries—showing the monstrousness of La Llorona from the usual Eurocentric subjectivity while also accounting for the "other." When narrated from the point of

view of the unnamed washerwoman (always in connection with La Llorona) she holds a community of Chicax and Latinx women who have endured suffering and heartache:

The darkness becomes a serpent's tongue, swallowing us whole. It is the night of La Llorona. The women come up from the depths of sorrow to search for their children. I join them, frantic, desperate, and our eyes become scrutinizers, our bodies opiated with the scent of their smiles. Descending from door to door, the wind whips our faces. I hear the wailing of the women and know it to be my own. (174)

The women all embody La Llorona who haunts and hunts at the doors of houses (reminiscent of Anzaldúa's revision). They are waiting and longing for their children to be returned to them. And in their wailing and searching, they are one with each other. They are connected through the body of the monstrous, a community of women mad with grief and wailing against injustice. Instead of La Llorona as the "othered" monster, she is the self who searches and within that self is the entrance into a monstrous community. It is this community that offers belonging as the washerwoman joins alongside the other women whose children have been taken and it is this positive belonging that demonstrates monster theory's need to embody its own propensity to shift. Monster theory needs to shift to account for Chicax perspectives in which La Llorona is not either a symbol of individual feminine agency or a feared monster, but a positively connoted monster inviting women into a community screaming for justice.

Even at the end of "The Cariboo Cafe," right after the washerwoman/La Llorona is shot, she asserts her agency and creates a new space of community. Switching into first person, narrating from beyond the grave, the washerwoman says, "I am blinded by liquid darkness. But I hold onto his hand. That I can feel, you see, I'll never let go. Because we are going home. My son and I" (180). With this scene in particular, the critic Ana María Carbonell brilliantly points

out the liquid death of La Llorona as a way to transform “into a unified maternal figure” and creates a sense of rebirth or renewal (64). And there is no denying that this is a moment of renewal, but it also needs to be seen as resistance. She resists in this final act to allow herself to finally be at peace, finally be with her children. But what’s important for understanding the intersection of this feminist revision and monster theory, is that it’s also a moment of community. She invites the boy into the community with La Llorona in the afterlife. It is in this third space that the monstrous image of La Llorona is transformed into a figure that is still a feared monster from the subjectivity of the men, and yet when viewed from the subjectivity of Chicana women builds community and embodies resistance.

When we look at community in “Woman Hollering Creek” we also see that part of Cleófilas’ joining with La Llorona is the joining of Chicana women in community with each other. While the hybridization of beings can be viewed as monstrous, in this case the only thing to fear is women gaining autonomy and power, something that is represented positively, since the narrative of the monstrous is resituated into the hands of women. This subjectivity permeates the short story, with the shifts toward the female perspective being mirrored in Cisneros’ decisions on point of view. The beginning of the story is told through ever shifting points of view—everything from first person, to second, to third and back again. Ultimately it is narrated by an unknown woman from Cleófilas’ village who is “going to the wedding. Of course! The dress I want to wear just needs to be altered a teensy bit” (46). The community weighs in and tells Cleófilas’ story to the audience directly. But it’s not just the community’s point of view. The third person narration allows for the point of view of Cleófilas and her father to both have space. It is truly a community of perspectives that exist in the beginning of the narration.

As Cleófilas' story continues, and she travels away from her village the narration shifts. Now she has crossed the border with her new husband, Juan Pedro, into a town where "the whispering begins at sunset at the icehouse instead" and its "built so that you have to depend on husbands. Or you stay home. Or you drive" (50- 51). Instead of a fluid transitioning between points of view, as in the beginning sections, the story stays fixed in third person. Just as Cleófilas finds herself stuck in a community centered around men, so the narration is isolated and contained. It's not until Cleófilas practices agency and starts to embody an alternate view of La Llorona that the community-based narration returns. As Cleófilas holds a plurality of identities inside her, Cisneros broadens the narration again. Now, instead of silence there are conversations. Cleófilas talks to Juan Pedro, who doesn't get his own side of the narration. Even the narration of Cleófilas' conversation with him about going to the doctor for her pregnancy is a one-sided conversation. By refusing a voice to the men in this story, Cisneros reorients the narrative to be completely gynocentric and establishes this as a revision to the tales of La Llorona that are told from an androcentric and Eurocentric point of view. We listen to Cleófilas' perspective of a conversation between Graciela and Felice who help her escape her abusive relationship. These narrative shifts keep the subjectivity of Cleófilas but demonstrate a reemergence of Cleófilas into a community of women. Now, Cisneros revises Llorona, who is embodied within Cleófilas, from a figure of regulation to a tool for identification with other women and a healing community.

At the end of Anzaldúa's "My Black *Angelos*," La Llorona accepts the speaker into her community of women, showing a subversion of the monster theory that would claim becoming monstrous is the great fear and regulator. The monstrous La Llorona/Coatlicue crawls into the speaker's spine and her wails rattle her bones as the body is accepted, and then she wails:

aiiiii aiiaaaaaaaa

Una mujer vaga en la noche

anda errante con las almas de los muertos.

We sweep through the streets

con el viento corremos

we roam with the souls of the dead. (32-37)

Referencing this poem, Domino Perez argues that this Llorona represents a forgotten or repressed mytho-historical past and this ending signifies that “the *grito* is now liberating since the narrator no longer hides from the weeping woman. By embracing La Llorona, the narrator embraces the indigenous part of herself she had been taught to fear” (58). This ending to the poem no doubt speaks to an acceptance of the self and even this embrace of indigeneity, but the one connection Perez fails to make is the significance of community. The speaker does not just accept indigeneity, she is accepted into the body of La Llorona which is made of other women. The wailing woman remains singular, “*Una mujer*” a woman, but within that one woman there is the plural “we” who sweep through the streets. They are all subsumed into the community of La Llorona’s body. It is this community of the monstrous that the speaker finds belonging in and common resistance. This community of monsters necessitates a complication of monster theory that would stop at the fact that the monstrous has become a tool of resistance and negate the fact that, when oriented from the subjectivity of the self (the self being Chicax women), it is a tool for belonging.

The community is a community of the monstrous. These revisions of La Llorona do not deny her categorization as monstrous since all these women become an embodiment of La Llorona. Instead, they complicate what “monster” means. In the hands of Chicax feminists, the

monster is no longer just a warning or dreaded sign; it is a reclaimed place of belonging and resistance. Because of this redefinition, women can deconstruct the androcentric and Eurocentric cultures while still embodying the monstrous form which is no longer negative. The fear that has been typically part of monster theory is no longer a necessity when reexamined through a Chicana feminist lens that disrupts the reliance on a self/other dichotomy.

The Monstrous Wail is a Language of Resistance

As the feminist revisions of La Llorona offer belonging within a community, her iconic wailing is also a method for communal resistance against patriarchal structures, showing the monstrous to be a tool for change. According to Cohen, the monster is a physical representation of the refusal to be part of the symbolic order (3). It's refusal to be part of the symbolic order shows the construction of that very order and reveals the fear associated with this new way of understanding reality. In other words, the monstrous takes what is considered "natural" and shows that it's actually constructed by being part of the "unnatural." A big part of what is considered the symbolic order is language itself. Because of the connection of the symbolic order with language, La Llorona's haunting wail would traditionally (according to Eurocentric monster theory) be considered outside of the symbolic order because it operates as an emotional cry causing fear as it reveals a space without the symbolic ordered language. A lot of feminist critics see La Llorona's wail as an act of resistance and independence, but they do not pull together this feminist resistance with monster theory. By adding the language of monster theory to the monstrous wail of La Llorona, the monster's role as part of a community of resistance pushes monster theory to complicate its views on the role of the symbolic order. The monstrous does reveal the constructions of society by operating outside the symbolic order, but this refusal to be part of the order itself is an act of female resistance which should be acknowledged within

monster theory. When this resistance is seen from the Chicana woman's subjectivity, the monstrous itself becomes a positive tool instead of a feared creation. It revises monster theory to account for a subjectivity of the "other."

To move away from privileging the symbolic order as "normal," Irigaray argues that language within the symbolic order is masculine. In order to subvert the androcentric tendency of language it's necessary to talk in riddles and allusions, and

Even if people plead that they just don't understand. After all, they never have understood. So why not double the misprision to the limits of exasperation? Until the ear tunes into another music, the voice starts to sing again, the very gaze stops squinting over the signs of auto-representation, and (re)production no longer inevitably amounts to the same and returns to the same forms, with minor variations. (143)

She argues for feminine language that exists completely outside the limits of the reason and signification that has been appropriated as masculine territory. In being completely outside the linguistic bounds, the feminine is inherently monstrous, a defining feature of it in fact. Irigaray argues for the necessity of resting within this space outside of the symbolic order as resistance to the patriarchal structures. When brought into conversation with monster theory, it's clear that La Llorona's wail allows the monstrous to be a tool of resistance. Women may be inherently "other" when viewed from the masculine perspective that's trying to make sense, but Irigaray points out that linguistically this is not "other" it is merely the feminine self. By shifting this perspective, we see a bringing into the feminine community that accepts the monstrousness of allusion and unobtainability both in language and in the representations of La Llorona. Part of this can even be in the wail of La Llorona—not a cry of grief as the male gaze would argue, but one of

resistance, freedom, power and community. A cry that does not adhere to an analysis of emotion or a containment in male language.

As critics have pointed out, both Anzaldúa and Cisneros make an important revision in the myth of La Llorona: changing the name of her wailing from “Llorona” to “Gritona” or “Grito.” The word *grito* is connoted as a scream, a yell, or revolutionary cry while *Llorar* (the verb Llorona comes from) is connoted as a mournful cry or a cry of grief. Even though this is operating within the symbolic order, the decision to change the name of La Llorona’s wailing offers her more agency as her voice is connoted as a method of resistance instead of grief. Santos’ critical work argues that Cisneros’ revision in calling the river la Gritona, “changes La Llorona’s wail or cry into a holler and a shout of female empowerment and self-esteem” (81). The monstrous wail is more than a feared aspect of La Llorona. When we view the narrative of La Llorona through a Chicana feminist lens, the wail itself becomes a symbol of independence and empowerment. When we view that same wail through the Chicana feminist lens *and* the lens of monster theory, it reveals something that is restrictive within Monster theory: the privileging of the symbolic order, and subsequently an androcentric and Eurocentric leaning.

Anzaldúa’s own theory in *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* outlines the act of wailing so often associated with La Llorona, as an act of resistance instead of grief. Against a system based in Euro- and androcentrism “Wailing is the Indian, Mexican, and Chicana woman’s protest when she has no other recourse” (55). The wailing breaks the boundaries of a symbolic order that categorizes the emotional as feminine and therefore “other” and monstrous. Although the wailing is the last resort, it is an act of resistance and protest. The wailing of La Llorona is one that protests the dependence upon an androcentric and Eurocentric system by refusing it and instead operating with the feminine language that Irigaray talks about, the

language of riddles and illusions, of wordless emotion. Anzaldúa's own view on the act of wailing as a form of protest speaks to the power that the monstrous can hold when freed from the confines of a self/other dichotomy that would ignore the Chicana woman's subjectivity. Instead of wailing merely marking the "other," La Llorona is part of the self and part of the communal and her wailing signifies the monstrous as a tool for community-based resistance and change.

If wailing operates outside of the symbolic order as a form of resistance, then Anzaldúa's revisioning of La Llorona in "My Black *Angelos*" reflects this protest and demonstrates the monstrous as a tool for change within community. The La Llorona that Anzaldúa's speaker joins with haunts the streets with a community of the dead crying "Aiiii aiiii aiiiiii / She is crying for the dead child / the lover gone, the lover not yet come: / Her *grito* splinters the night" (6-9). Anzaldúa's *grito* enacts the same transformation and needs to be read as a moment of resistance, even if it's feared at first by the speaker. And why is this *grito* feared? Because the cry that terrifies the speaker is the cry of resistance. The androcentric and Eurocentric view of the monstrous as feared creeps in and it will probably continue to as escape remains elusive in a system that continually coopts resistance. Even so, La Llorona's wail begins the stanza, starting the section with a refusal of linguistic structures that privilege the unemotional. The wailing doesn't just bridge the barriers between stanzas; Anzaldúa also terms it *grito* instead of using the verb *Llorar*. It is a wail of independence and resistance for La Llorona, the dead that roam the streets with her, and the speaker enveloped into her community. The communal resistance becomes part of the monstrous body and needs to be part of monster theory. When considering La Llorona as both self and other, monster theory no longer needs to exist in a dichotomy which binds it to the monster as feared other, instead a Chicana feminist monster theory allows the monster to be a positive tool for resistance and change.

In “The Cariboo Cafe,” La Llorona was part of a grieving community through her wandering and wails, but over the course of the short story she embodies a shift from grief to monstrous resistance in her wailing. She uses her language outside the symbolic order to rebel against the violent forces of the government—whether that be Nicaragua or the US, there is no distinction. She associates the ICE officers with the Nicaraguan officers, saying they’re both “farted out of the devil’s ass.”³ It is against these government forces attempting to separate families that she begins screaming, at first playing into the androcentric and Eurocentric view of the monster that requires fear as the cook hides from her monstrousness, still afraid of her he “huddles behind the counter, frightened, trembling.” But she breaks from a view of simplistic fear, and the washerwoman “begins screaming all over again, screaming so that the walls shake, screaming enough for all the women of murdered children, screaming, pleading for help from people outside” (179). Calling on a language outside of the symbolic order, La Llorona enters yet again the space of the female monster in the only way that the androcentric culture lets her: grief. And yet, even amidst this limited form of expression, the screaming and wailing of La Llorona/the washerwoman is revised from its original form of grieving her lost child, now it is a tool of resistance.

But this resistance is not singular in “The Cariboo Cafe.” Just as the washerwoman grieved in community, so does she resist in community. By embodying La Llorona, the washerwoman’s resistance becomes resistance for all women touched by violence. There is strength in her solidarity with other wronged women and her wails of grief are transformed into wails of resistance. Through the monstrous body the washerwoman enters into a community of resistance and transforms the monstrous into a positive image of potential change. Her monstrous

³ This is established in Ana María Carbonell’s “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros”

wail that would place her in a position of “other” outside symbolic language is transformed to a monstrosity that cultivates communal resistance and justice against oppressive systems of androcentricity and Eurocentricity when viewed through a monster theory that refuses sole reliance on a self/other dichotomy.

The wailing of La Llorona in “Woman Hollering Creek” also offers this new kind of gynocentric language, operating outside of the symbolic order, which offers Cleófilas escape from her abusive house and becomes a tool of resistance against structures of power. When Cleófilas leaves and escapes her husband and the U.S. she subverts the idea that women must be self-sacrificing mothers, she no longer buys into the idea that “to suffer for love is good” (45). This turn is significant because it mirrors the shift from the language of Llorona to Gritona, a linguistic shift Cisneros makes in naming the river by Cleófilas’ house la Gritona. Instead of the wailing of La Llorona as suffering like Cleófilas once believed about love, the community of women that help her leave and Felice’s own yell offer space for resistance, for a “Grito de Dolores” associated with independence (Sandoval 40). Cleófilas enters into community with Felice and with La Llorona and as she does that, she becomes part of a communal resistance to patriarchal structures. Instead of the usual suffering, La Llorona’s wailing speaks to her position as a positive figure of female agency and independence within community as the woman embodying her is empowered to protect herself and her children. If monster theory is going to expand beyond western literature then it needs to see that—when boundaries of self/other are broken down to include the subjectivity of Chicana women—the wailing of the monster is an act of communal resistance and because of this the monstrous is more than a way to deconstruct society, it is also a tool for change.

The monster operates outside the symbolic order and reveals that the symbolic order is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. The wailing of La Llorona becomes the gynocentric language whose very existence points to the fact that an androcentric and Eurocentric view is not “natural,” it is constructed. If it is constructed, then it can also be changed. By shifting toward a gynocentric view of La Llorona’s wails Anzaldúa, Cisneros and Viramontes all demonstrate the wailing as an act of resistance and agency. As they shift the meaning of La Llorona’s wail to account for a feminist perspective, they also change the way that monster theory is articulated. The monstrous, in their revised narratives, was already an invitation into community and belonging, but the way that La Llorona’s voice is treated opens the doors for communal resistance to patriarchal and Eurocentric structures. In order for monster theory to embrace this view of a positive monster enacting change, it needs to embrace the Chicana feminist monsters that are self and other at the same time.

Conclusion

Monster theory has undeniably been an interesting theory to apply to texts within gothic literature and even to more contemporary examples like the rise in zombie movies and other cultural touchstones like *Jurassic Park*. However, it has also relied for too long on a dichotomy of self versus other as a way to define the parameters of the monster. What the revisions of La Llorona’s story reveal, is that there can be an undeniable presence of a monster and yet she will be excluded from the category of monster because she does not strike fear, because she is not a regulatory figure. Even when the revisions of La Llorona are deconstructed using the feminist lens, her redemption or revision is based on her not being a monster. An analysis that necessitates saving La Llorona from being a monster ultimately does her and monster theory a disservice. This would acknowledge that the monster is purely the domain of white men where

being a monster can only be a result of the white male gaze. This leads to a belief that, under a system of androcentricity and Eurocentricity, the only way for women to reclaim agency is to deny the label of monster altogether. But what Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Vிராமontes reveal is that La Llorona can retain her monstrousness and still be a figure of agency and resistance. Even further, La Llorona's monstrousness becomes the very tool for acts of acceptance of the self, agency, community, and resistance. It is a Chicana feminist subjectivity that reclaims the power to define what being a monster means and complicates monster theory by introducing a type of monster that is no longer defined by a self/other dichotomy. This by no means necessitates that all monsters be analyzed through a lens of monster theory that rejects the self/other dichotomy, but when we read Chicana feminist literature that so strongly rejects this dichotomy, there has to be an openness for the theory to be revised and reclaimed.

While we can read La Llorona as a tool of feminine agency, she retains her monstrous traits. The revisions to her narrative demonstrate a necessary revision to monster theory in which the definition of "monster" is reclaimed from its usual position as "other." In this case, it is necessary to have a monster theory that accounts for the subjectivity of Chicana feminists which accounts for a monster that is "self." The theory needs to account for a monster that is not feared and yet does not exist within magical realism. It needs to account for La Llorona's invitation to join a community of the monstrous. When monster theory is revised to be a Chicana feminist monster theory, the definition of monster is powerfully reclaimed as an identity which allows for resistance, change, and self-acceptance.

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Appendix

The politics of the monstrous extend beyond its implication for Chicana literature. As counterintuitive as it may seem, the monstrous can be an important way to understand religious figures. Even Anzaldúa references the importance of the monstrous in how we conceptualize divinity when she wrote, “Humans fear the supernatural, both the undivine (the animal impulses such as sexuality, the unconscious, the unknown, and alien) and the divine (the superhuman, the god in us)” (39). The divine and the undivine have just as much potential to be considered monstrous since they both exceed the boundaries and borders humans have constructed. The divine according to Anzaldúa has to hold tensions within it and the need for paradoxes when talking about the divine is what draws me toward her work. Most of the harm I have encountered personally and second-hand within religious institutions is because of the deep fear people have of holding God in a position of paradox. Anzaldúa holds no such fear when it comes to divinity. For her, the divine is monstrous in its ability to hold multiplicities, in being both creation and destruction, feared and loved.

The work this paper does to interrogate the assumptions of a “universal self” within monster theory is also necessary when we talk about religion. Each of these authors works to dismantle a system based on androcentricity and Eurocentricity, a system that the Christianity I grew up with often finds itself guilty of. But the work done to complicate monster theory and enrich it by including more subjectivities can also be done for religion. By examining the constructed parts of religion, we can begin to see the areas that are androcentric and Eurocentric like Eurocentric artistic depictions of Jesus or the assumed masculine language used for God despite a general acceptance of God as transcending gender. When applied to the church, the

interrogation of the necessity of self/other just might force an admission of unfounded sexism and racism within institutions that should be practicing the acceptance of the Coatlicue State.

In understanding Christianity and my own place within it, there has to be a dismantling of some of the harm that its often sexist leaning does. As a woman growing up in a primarily evangelical church, I often heard versions of the Bible that articulated my inferiority because of my gender. I was told that women, while women are equal and can do anything, they are not allowed to lead, not allowed to be Pastors, should be submissive to their husbands, and to fulfill your role is to have children (an assumed part of being a woman included husbands and children). I have seen and felt the harm that this kind of religion places on people and remain committed to dismantling this in the church as well as in other aspects of our androcentric culture. The women-focused narratives that these authors put forth reminds me of the power and strength that women hold and the important fight for women to be seen as the self and not the “other.” Anzaldúa especially reclaims divinity for Chicana women and does so in a way that honors her indigenous, Anglo and Latina roots. Religion, just like monster theory, cannot be used as a tool to discount women’s voices across any intersection. By accepting the othered self without fear we can be both monstrous and divine and hopefully dismantle the notion that Christianity should be tied to sexist practices and ideologies.