

A FEMINIST REREADING OF SELECTED WORKS BY CARLOS MORTON

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Carlos Morton is a prominent Chicano playwright that has contributed greatly to Chicano theatre, creatively and academically, since in 1970s. This thesis offers a feminist analysis of the gender representation in three of his works: *Lilith* (1977), *La Malinche* (1984), and *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992). The female characters in these three plays possess a unique agency that allows them to challenge oppressive patriarchal standards imposed on their gender identity. The second chapter explores Morton's *Lilith*, a play based on a Jewish creation myth. In the play, Lilith possesses agency of her gender identity and forms a bond with Eve to fight the patriarchal gender norms used to restrict women in Chicano culture. *La Malinche* is an adaptation of Eurpides's *Medea* set in post-Conquest New Spain. Chapter 3 focuses on the agency displayed by La Malinche through her indigenous roots to fight for her own form of motherhood and freedom from patriarchy. The final play analyzed in this thesis is *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda*, a dream-like play that is based on Diego Rivera's mural by the same name. Several female characters in the play demonstrate agency through their androgynous sexual identities as they unite to resist male character's sexualized perceptions and expectations of females within Mexican and Chicano culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background on Carlos Morton

Carlos Morton, a Chicano playwright, began his career in the early 1970s and is presently a prominent figure of Chicana/o and US Latina/o theatre. During his career, Morton has published four anthologies, has had individual plays featured in collections, and actively contributes creatively and academically to the Chicana/o and Latina/o Theatre communities. His works have been produced both in the United States and internationally. Among his most performed plays are *El Jardín* (1974), *The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales* (1976), *Johnny Tenorio* (1983), and *Rancho Hollywood* (1979). Beyond the stage, Morton has written for television and also created a series of Spanish-language drama that was featured on Mexican radio (Huerta, *Chicano drama* 103). Among his numerous theatre honors and awards, Morton was named Distinguished Full Bright Lecturer at Marie Curie Sklodowska University in Poland in 2006-07, Full Bright Lecturer at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico in 1989-90, and a Mina Shaughnessy Scholar in 1981. Morton continues playwriting and is currently a Professor of Theatre at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

1.2 The Uniqueness of Morton's Work

Morton's plays uniquely encompass the Chicana/o identity by reflecting the *mestizaje*, or mixed-nature, by which the community is marked. He accomplishes this by incorporating both Mexican and Anglo-American cultures in his plays in a way that reflects the hybrid identity of Chicana/o culture. His personal and professional experiences as a Chicano are a contributing factor to the uniqueness of his works. Jorge Huerta, one of the most distinguished authority on Chicana/o theatre and mentor to Morton, explains that Morton's works stand out by, "[...]

expressing a vision of the Chicano that is informed by his own experiences and his observations of the world around him” (*Themes and Forms* 169). Born in Chicago to parents of Mexican and Cuban decent, Morton was raised in the United States and also lived in Panama and Ecuador for some time as a child, due to his father’s military status (Gibb 151-52). During the early years of the Chicano movement (1960s), Morton spent time in Chicago, New York City, and El Paso. He explains that, although he was distanced from the grape field strikes taking place in California at the time, he still personally experienced the impact of the movement (Gibb 152). Morton was part of the camera crew for ABC’s Peter Jennings when tear-gas was dropped at Lincoln Park during the 1968 Democratic Convention; he recalls this experience as a turning part for him, which changed him and his perspective on the present struggle of the Chicano community (Gibb 152). In 1975, Morton completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Texas, El Paso then transitioned to California to continue his work under the guidance of his mentor, Jorge Huerta, at the University of California, San Diego, where he received an MFA in Drama. He recalls this time as “a time to read, write, and create in an exciting laboratory setting” (Gibb 154). Morton worked in a collective group for the first time with the San Francisco Mime Troupe from 1979-81 and also spent a short time with Luis Valdez’s El Teatro Campesino of which he says, “[...] I never really fit in. I guess I feel more working by myself” (Gibb 153). He later completed his doctoral studies at the University of Texas, Austin in 1987. Morton has also lived in Mexico City, San José de Costa Rica, and Poland while holding academic positions. Morton’s life-long travels and personal experiences as a Chicano have uniquely impacted the representation of the hybrid nature of the Chicana/o identity in his plays.

The presence of historical, mythological, and legendary figures and traditions of both Mexican and Chicana/o cultures, contribute to the uniqueness of Morton’s plays. In *Dreaming on*

a Sunday in the Alameda (1992), Morton incorporates important Mexican historical figures such as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Malitzin Tenipal, and Hernán Cortés. *La Malinche* (1984) features Malitzin Tenipal and Hernán Cortés, as well as mythological figures such as La Llorona and Ciuacóatl of Mexican culture. *Johnny Tenorio* (1983), based on the legend of Don Juan and the Mexican tradition of Day of the Dead, incorporates legends and traditions that are considered Mexican but that are also recognized or celebrated by the Chicano community. Other plays such *El Jardín* (1975), *Pancho Diablo* (1984), and *Lilith* (1977), feature Christian and Jewish myths and figures with a unique Chicano perspective. Morton has also written plays based on contemporary figures and historical events such as *The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales* (1976), which won the Latino playwriting prize at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1986, *Brown Buffalo* (2006), *Frontera Sin Fin* (2007), and *Zona Rosa* (2009). Through the presence of historical, mythological, and legendary figures in his plays, Morton explores universal topics such as religion, historical events, gender identity, and criminal injustices, as well as topics important to the Chicano community, such as cultural *mestizaje*, patriarchal machismo, and racial identity. Gloria Anzaldúa describes the *mestizaje* as being “cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems,” (100). The “dual or multiple personality” that Anzaldúa describes is precisely what makes up the racial identity of the Chicano, which appears prominently in Morton’s plays.

1.3 The Issue of Gender

In a survey of several Chicano plays in the late 1970s, Margarita Melville observed a trend of male-dominant advisory relationships between male and female characters, which mirrored the gender dynamics that occurred off-stage in the Chicano community at the time of her study (71). Melville noted that in spite of this trend, the standards that were previously held

in terms of gender representation in Chicano theatre were evolving and commended one Chicano playwright for his attempts to make this shift present in his works—Carlos Morton (78-9). This thesis expands on this observation by further analyzing gender representation and identifying feminist characteristics present in three plays by Morton; *Lilith* (1977), *La Malinche* (1984), and *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992). These plays highlight the gender identities prescribed in Chicana/o culture on and off the stage. This thesis argues that these selected works by Morton should be considered feminist based on gender theories by Judith Butler and Jill Dolan, and feminist theory by Chicanas such as Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Adelaida R. Del Castillo, whether or not they were considered feminist at the time of their emergence, and whether or not the playwright himself intended them as thus.

Judith Butler's gender performativity theory claims that gender is not a stable identity but rather constituted over time through a "stylized repetition of acts" which subsequently give way to the "possibilities of gender transformations" (519-20). She argues that this performative or theatrical notion of gender creates a mode of belief in which the gendered self and its audience accept or acknowledge the projected gender (520). Therefore, because gender is a performance that a person acts out for themselves and for others, the gendered-self is in control of what is projected, much like an actor on stage. Butler acknowledges that culturally assigned gender restraints are perceived socially as a given, however this theory allows agency over one's gender representation and subversion of these restraints. In regards to theatrical gender representation Jill Dolan explains that, "the stage, then, is a place to explore gender ambiguity, not to expunge it cathartically from society but to play with, confound, and deconstruct gender categories" (8). As the playwright, Morton is the appropriator of gender identity for his characters, to a certain degree; he provides the framework for how the character's gender should be represented through

their physical actions detailed in the stage directions, and interaction with other characters through their lines. Beyond the written text of the play, in a production the director and actors also have some appropriation over the gender representation of the characters. The plays analyzed in this thesis are all set within a patriarchal culture, with prescribed gender identities for both male and female characters. According to these gender theories proposed by Butler and Dolan, the stage uniquely allows for these identities to be deconstructed and redefined through agency over one's gender, which is precisely what I argue that Morton does with the female characters. I propose that these works are feminist due to the agency that the female characters in the plays analyzed express over their gender representation and social situations.

The theories of Butler and Dolan lay a foundation for the analysis of gender representation in Morton's plays. Yet, equally as important is the scholarship of Chicana feminist that challenged the gender status quo of Chicano theatre and culture in the late 1970s and marked the shift in gender representation of Chicanas on the stage and academically.

1.4 The Early Chicano Movement and the Role of Women in Teatro

Chicano theatre emerged from the Chicano movement in California in the 1960s. The stage was a forum through which sociopolitical issues were exposed, cultural pride reinforced and the community educated. The oppositional nature of Chicano theatre created a sense of unity through cultural nationalism, a social theory that raised Chicano culture above Anglo-American culture to create a sense of cultural pride in the Chicano community (Yarbro-Bejarano, 390). Similar to the Black Civil Rights movement, the Chicano movement utilized cultural nationalism as a way to bolster pride and unite the community under a common cultural identity. Cultural nationalism created was known today as *La Raza*. The theatre group that led the way during the movement was El Teatro Campesino, founded by Luis Valdez. El Teatro Campesino had humble

beginnings as street-style theatre that served to educate and entertain the farmworker community during the Chicano movement but quickly grew to become one of the most influential theatrical groups for its didactic nature which led it have international recognition (Huerta, *Themes and Forms* 1). El Teatro Campesino became a source of inspiration for other groups to join *la lucha*, the struggle, against the dominant Anglo-American culture and change the oppressed status of the Chicano community, not only in the grape fields of California but across the nation. The plays incorporated myths and themes that were deeply rooted in notions of the pre-Columbian origins of the Chicano people and that long pre-dated the discrimination that they were currently facing in the United States. Through this strategy of unity, many civil rights movements of the 1950s through the 1970s were able to accomplish great strides towards racial equality with some setbacks. Cultural nationalism combined the desires of diverse individuals behind a united front but also led to misrepresentation and internal inequalities. Chicanas, much like black feminists during the Civil Rights movement, observed that gender inequality issues within the group were second to achieving racial equality, which Diana Taylor argues means “male” equality (5).

Gender inequality was present both within the movement and on the Chicano stage. In 1980 Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano and Yolanda Broyles-González explored the issue of gender representation on the Chicano stage through an analysis of El Teatro Campesino’s scripts and oral testimonies of the female group members. Broyles-Gonzales concluded that female members of the troupe were subject to gender subordination by portraying characters that were often limited to stereotypical gender roles such as wife, mother, lover and more specifically under the dichotomy of whore or virgin. Alicia Arrizón comments on the gender representation dynamic of the Chicano stage when she writes, “El Teatro Campesino gave rise to a system of representation which simulated the unequal powers of the genders and exalted a compulsory

heterosexuality” (*Latina Performances* 80). Broyles- González and Arrizón both suggest that the inequality in gender representation was due to the cultural nationalist dynamic of the movement and the male-dominant nature, or *machismo*, of the Chicano culture. Broyles- González’s exposed some of the inequalities in gender representation present both on and off the Chicano stage but their study caused controversy within the Chicano theatre cult built around El Teatro Campesino for the overly-critical approach in which it was written. Broyles-González’s used the testimonies of the female group members of El Teatro Campesino to give them a voice and document their presence but, according to Meredith Heller, “also irrefutably justified her own critical stance that an oppressive matrix of race, ethnicity, class and gender was imposed on the bodies and identities of Chicana women” (767). In spite of Broyles-González’s argument, many comments made by female members expressed feelings of admiration for the group. An example of this is Diane Rodriguez’s interview comments about her appreciation for her time in the group and how it helped shape her career not only as an actress but as an activist as well (Rodríguez 144). Rodriguez was appointed by President Barak Obama in 2016 as the first Latina appointed to the National Council on the Arts. Rodriguez has continuously served the Chicano/a community theatrically, socially, and academically since the 1970s. Rodriguez does acknowledge that some constraints based on the binary notion of sexual identity (male-female) were in place with regards to the characters she was allowed to portray-but nonetheless expresses admiration and loyalty to the company. Rodriguez and other female group members, explain that some characters they portrayed brought them much freedom, such as androgynous characters like *Satanáz* or *La Muerte*. Even though Broyles-González’s observations were not met positively, her study exposed gender inequalities that were present on and off the stage, but that were slowly being transformed.

As part of the Chicano movement, it is no surprise that early Chicano theatre reflected the gender dynamics of the general Chicano community but Chicanas desired a change in female representation by the end of the 1970s. They were increasingly more aware of themselves as female subjects and began exploring what that meant for them on and off the stage. In 1978 a women's caucus within TENAZ (National Teatros of Aztlán) called W.I.T. (Women in Teatro) was formed to give a voice to female theatre workers and provide a venue in which communication and support for one another could occur, and continues to do so today. María Teresa Marrero writes that, "Rather than see themselves as victims, Chicanas sought ways to expand notions of their own and their communities' identities through individual performances" (135). All-women theatre groups formed, a surge of women playwrights, directors, and actors took possession of their agency and brought the Chicana identity to the front and center of the stage. Another important notion in this transition was the incorporation of poetry as a form of expression or what has been called *Teatropoesía*, which is a hybrid of theatre and poetry performance (Melville 78). Chicanas were no longer constricted to the roles that had been previously designated for them within the theatre. Gender representation outside of the patriarchal and heterosexually imposed roles were brought to the stage by Chicana playwrights such as Estela Portillo Trambley and Cherríe Moraga. The work of these feminist playwrights brought lesbianism and homosexuality to the Chicano stage. Alicia Arrizón explains that, "since the 1980s, as a result of Moraga's work, more emphasis has been given to the female body in this alternative space, and more direct questioning of sexuality has emerged" (76).

This transition occurred not only in the theatre but also in academia. In an effort to transform gender identity, Chicana feminist re-interpreted cultural and historical figures that had been previous used to form the gender roles of females, such as La Virgen de Guadalupe (saint,

virgin, mother) and La Malinche (traitor, whore, subordinate). In the 1980s, Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, Adelaida R. del Castillo, Cordelia Candelaria, Cherríe Morraga, Alma Villanueva, and other Chicana feminist vindicated the image of Malitzin Tenipal, or La Malinche, with the purpose of claiming a voice of their own in a society that had labelled them as traitors for not adhering to their prescribed gender identities. For centuries, the canonic reading of La Malinche made her a symbol for cultural traitors, whores, transgressors, and most importantly of female subversion because of her role as Hernán Cortés's translator, which was seen as a treacherous victimization of her people (Alarcón 61). Alarcón argues that for Chicanas to rise above the designation of *malinchistas*, or traitors, required a revision and appropriation of what Malinche represented. Male scholars such as Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes attempted to reinterpret Malinche's importance but merely focused on the sexual nature of her signification, which Alarcón explains brought recovery to the female body as a sexual entity but also revealed men's attitude towards the feminine by labeling her *La Chingada*, the raped one (68). The Chicana's appropriation of Malinche did not focus primarily on sexuality like that of male scholars, but instead they re-read her qualities as a form of self-affirmation. The appropriation efforts by Chicana feminists began with Malintzin but grew to a much broader scope by seeking agency of their history, language, and sexuality. In *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa depicts "The Mestiza Way" when she writes, "She reinterprets history and, using new symbols, she shapes new myths. She adopts new perspectives toward dark-skinned women and queers. She strengthens her tolerance (and intolerance) for ambiguity. She is willing to share, to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking" (104). Like all women of color, Chicanas go against the grain of their patriarchal societies, and the scholarship purported by

them paves the way for future generations to continue exploring the dimensions of their identity both in terms of race, class, and gender.

1.5 Gender Representation and Feminist Agency in Morton's Plays

Through the application of the Chicana feminist theory mentioned above and the gender performativity theories of Judith Butler and Jill Dolan this thesis argues that *Lilith* (1977), *La Malinche* (1984), *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992) should be considered feminist plays because of the way that Morton's female characters display agency over their gender representation within their cultures. The gender representation in these plays is reflective of the transition in representation that Chicanas started working towards in the 1980s; a gender identity that can be deconstructed and reformed as Butler and Dolan explain.

The thesis is organized into three chapters, followed by a conclusion. Each chapter will analyze an individual play's lead female characters in terms of their historical, mythological, or legendary relevance and how they exercise agency over their own gender representation within their culture. The first chapter analyzes *Lilith* (1977). This play is a Creation story based on a Jewish mythological character, Lilith, that was said to be Adam's first wife, prior to the creation of Eve. The canonic and patriarchal reading of Lilith portrays her as a demonic, child-killing, seductress but Jewish feminist have re-read her to be a prototype of feminism and sisterhood. This chapter examines the manner in which Morton's *Lilith* mirrors the gender representation of Jewish feminist through the agency the main character displays in regards to her prescribed gender roles within the play's setting and the sisterhood that is formed between the two female characters.

The second chapter analyzes *La Malinche* (1984), which is an adaptation of Euripides's *Medea* set within a Medea-Malinche-La Llorona paradigm. *La Malinche* is set in the New World

just shortly after the Spanish Conquest and focuses on the gender and racial differences between Malinche and Hernán Cortés. In true Medea form, the play ends with the death of Malinche and Cortés's son but it is through this death that Malinche's character's expresses agency over her gendered, and racial identity. Female characters of importance to the play are La Malinche, La Llorona, Ciuacoatl, and Medea (whom is not in Morton's play but is relevant to the argument). The gender implications of all these characters off the stage are considered in the analysis of agency and gender representation.

The final chapter analyzes *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992); a dream-like comedy with the Diego Rivera painting, *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central* (1946-47), as its focal point. Although they are not the main characters of the play, Frida Kahlo, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, La Malinche, La Muerte, and other females, display agency over their gender representation. The female characters boldly discuss and carry themselves in a manner that are subversive within the patriarchal society to which they belong.

CHAPTER 2

AGENCY THROUGH GENDER IDENTITY AND SISTERHOOD IN *LILITH* (1977)

2.1 The First Woman and Why God Created Eve

In this chapter, I analyze the gender representations in Morton's play, *Lilith* (1977), an adaptation of a Jewish creation myth. According to Jewish mythology, Lilith is alleged to be the first woman created; she was Adam's first mate, before the creation of Eve. I present a brief history of canonical readings of Lilith that vilify and punish the character for her unwillingness to submit to patriarchal authority, and a contemporary re-reading, by Jewish feminists, that present her as a prototypical feminist who empowers women to have agency over their gender identity, fight for gender equality, and form a sisterhood.

There is much debate regarding the distinction between sex and gender identities that informs this analysis. The distinction consists of sex being a biological marker in which human beings are either born as man or woman, and gender as a psychological identity that is socially and culturally constructed. Judith Butler argues that making a distinction between the two is intangible when she writes, "Indeed, if gender is the cultural significance that the sexed body assumes, and if that significance is codetermined through various acts and their cultural perceptions, then it would appear that from within the terms of culture it is not possible to know sex as distinct from gender" (522). In other words, in spite of biological differences, sex and gender identities share cultural implications and therefore, in terms of culture they are one in the same. Further, Butler argues that gender identity is an illusion of a gendered self that is constituted over time "through a stylized repetition of acts" that are "capable of being constituted differently" (519-20). It is through this performativity of stylized acts that gender identity is not

something that people are, rather gender is something that people do and can be transformed over time.

Morton's *Lilith* presents the creation myth within a contemporary, Christian setting with a Latino-flare but more importantly, the gender representation in his play mirrors the re-readings of the myth by Jewish feminists. I argue that through the stage directions, character dialogues, and the plot details of the play, *Lilith* offers a feminist interpretation of contemporary gender identity politics by giving the character of Lilith agency in the following ways: it challenges the gender identity being imposed upon her by male characters; it proposes equality between men and women; and, it empowers the character of Eve with a desire to free herself from patriarchal subjugation. The character Lilith in Morton's adaptation realizes early on that she is not being treated equally because of her gender, that she does not desire to adhere to the stringent gender identity that Adam tries to create for her, and ultimately displays the agency to explore her gender identity and the implications it has on her reality and womanhood.

2.2 From Vilifying to Empowering Feminist Readings of Lilith

Lilith has been the subject of numerous texts spanning centuries. She has appeared in Jewish poetry, novels, plays, and short fiction. More recently Lilith has had a tremendous influence on Jewish feminism. Lilith's origins form part of a creation myth in which she, as Morton's play also depicts, is considered to be the first woman created, and Adam's first wife, preceding Eve. Her myth is rooted in a contradiction in the creation story found in Genesis, the first book of the Torah. In Genesis 1, God creates male and female at the same time (*English Standard Version*, 1:26-7). Later in Genesis 2, it is said that God creates man and later, female (*English Standard Version*, 2:22). The verses in Genesis 1 led many Jewish and rabbinic commentators to interpret a secondary version of creation that included the existence of a woman

before Eve. Lilith's myth was elaborated through midrash, a method of interpreting scripture that goes beyond what the text provides as a way to clarify or fill-in the gaps. References of Lilith appear in Jewish texts such as the Talmud, a body of two texts that date back to 200 CE and 500 CE, and the Zohar, a Kabbalistic scripture that first appeared in the twelfth century. In the Talmud, Lilith appears as a seductress and later in the Zohar, Lilith is depicted as an evil being, harlot and demon. A more detailed retelling of Lilith's myth appears in the midrash *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, an anonymous Jewish text that was written sometime between the eighth and eleventh centuries. According to *The Alphabet*, Lilith was made from the earth as Adam's equal and it is for this reason that she refuses to submit to Adam's authority and sexual demands; she calls upon God and is spirited away but is later punished for her disobedience by being transformed into a demon (*The Alphabet of Ben Sira 78: Lilith*, Jewish Women's Archive). In retaliation to this punishment *The Alphabet* says she becomes an infant-slayer of human children; she is granted dominion over all children for a short number of days after their birth, at which time she can kill them, if they are not under the protection of angels. Other canonic texts depict her as a succubus, a horrendous spirit that kills infants and brings infertility, the mother of demons, a wild-haired, half-woman, half-demon, or the embodiment of pure evil.

The midrashes in the Talmud, the Zohar, and *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, all vilify Lilith. Her desire to have equal dominion to that of her male counterpart, Adam, her unwillingness to submit to male authority, and her refusal of patriarchal sexual subscriptions led to, not only her rejection by Jewish orthodoxy but, a demonic archetype used to keep Jewish women subservient. Jay Jacoby explains that, "the vilification of Lilith, and by extension, of any woman who refused to submit to male domination, represented an effort to discredit attempts to undermine the patriarchal Jewish tradition," (80). In Jewish tradition, a woman is expected to submit to the

authority of her husband, both emotionally and sexually. Over the centuries, Lilith's myth has been used as a moral warning to Jewish woman to remain obedient and submissive to the male figures in their lives. Her demonic characterization is a product of the patriarchal desire for control, and although these evil incarnations of Lilith are penetrated deep into Jewish culture, contemporary interpretations of the Lilith myth depict her differently. Jewish feminist re-interpreted the Lilith midrash in a way that empowers and frees women from the prison of subservience and negative stereotyping for those that choose paths others than motherhood or heterosexuality. This re-interpretation is similar to Chicana feminist, Norma Alarcon's re-reading of Malitzin Tenepal, from the canonical image of a whore and traitor to that of a strong model of "historical, sexual, and linguistic agency". Most notably in the effort to re-read the midrash of Lilith is the collaborative work of a group of Jewish feminists, recorded in an essay by Judith Plaskow, in which the midrash is retold without the demonization of Lilith and ends by uniting Lilith and Eve in a bond of sisterhood (30-2). Plaskow's midrash of Lilith does present the male projections of evil, punishment, and disdain for women but offers Lilith and Eve, and by extension, all women, an alternate fate. Plaskow explains that "Lilith is not a demon; rather she is a woman named a demon by a tradition that does not know what to do with strong women" (82). Her re-telling does not focus on Lilith's marital disobedience or even her punishment, but rather the way that Adam, with God's help, vilifies Lilith in order to make Eve fearful of challenging or disobeying him. Adam's tactic sparks a curiosity in Eve that causes her to seek out Lilith's true identity and ultimately forms a bond between the two women.

Aviva Cantor, another Jewish feminist, challenges the patriarchal bias of previous readings of the Lilith midrash by commending Lilith's "struggle for independence, her courage in taking risks, her commitment to the equality of woman and man based on their creation as

equals by God,” (49-50). Her desire for gender equality makes Lilith a figure of strength and independence for all women. Thus, Lilith becomes a feminist prototype through the agency she displays by choosing a path of her own, in spite of the obstacles thrown at her by the patriarchal powers represented by the characters Adam and God, and for the sisterhood that is created between her and Eve, to empower one another. In all versions of the Lilith midrash, she and Adam are created as equals yet she is not treated as such; she challenges this inequality and is either punished or completely demonized.

2.3 Gender Identity Politics in *Lilith*

In Morton’s *Lilith*, the title character challenges the mistreatment and the inequalities that accompany the gender identity being assigned to her by various male characters, who are representative of the patriarchy. Furthermore, Lilith feels inclined to warn Eve of her situation to create a shared awareness of the gender inequalities that eventually all women would face. By sharing the burden of the gendered inequalities, a bond or sisterhood is formed between the two female characters. The desire to challenge and transform the injustices faced by the female gender through the pattern of patriarchal subjugation is what drives Lilith. The efforts towards agency over gender identity by Morton’s *Lilith* mirrors that of Chicanas and Latinas at the time that *Lilith* was written (1977).

The parallelism between the gender identity politics of the play and that of Chicano/a culture can be found by analyzing the stage directions provided by Morton. To begin, the stage directions state that *Lilith* is set in the garden of Eden “in a mythical time” but with a “contemporary feel about it” (*Lilith* 1). The setting is described to have the necessary garden details, such as a tree, a brook, and some logs for sitting but also includes a higher plane with “the entrance to the pearly gates advertised in glowing neon with concertina wire around it”

(*Lilith* 2). The balance between the “mythical time” and “contemporary feel” of the play is further emphasized in the stage directions regarding the character’s costumes and prop accessories. Lilith is “naked except for a few leaves that cover strategic portions of her body” but is also described as “wearing sneakers and ankle weights” and carries a journal or diary, in which she writes throughout the play (*Lilith* 2). The costumes and prop accessories of Pedro and Joe, the archangels, also maintain a parallelism between myth and contemporary. Pedro is first portrayed as a more traditional archangel with his “long flowing robe and trusty staff” (*Lilith* 3). The Joe is Pedro’s opposite; he wears “body armour with a sword in his belt” (*Lilith* 3). After a turn of events, the archangel characters appear in “black leather, shield, helmet, full riot gear” or as the stage directions describe, “an interstellar galactic insect bristling with electricity” (*Lilith* 46). As far as prop accessories the archangel characters carry modern items such as cellphones, walkie-talkies, a riding crop, a diary, and ice packs. They also make references to contemporary topics such as fashion trends, marital counseling, paramedics, and paying bills. These setting details are important because it can be argued that they lay the foundation for *Lilith* to be seen as a postmodern pastiche that offers a critical commentary on the cultural preoccupations and worries of a contemporary audience.

Although the stage directions do not explicitly allude to this, I argue that *Lilith* is set within a Christian context, not Jewish. Evidence of this argument would begin with the presence of a pearly gate entrance to Heaven, a distinctively Christian perception of the entrance to Heaven. This perception of the entrance to Heaven is based on a verse from the New Testament of the Bible where it is said that the twelve entrances to Heaven are made of a pearl (*English Standard Version*, Rev. 21:21). The explicit use of the name of God the Father is a Christian tradition as well because although Judaism refers to him as Father and King, he is not called by

that, which is something that is done by multiple characters in the play. Finally, the archangel Pedro, is also evidence of the Christian context of the play. Pedro, or Peter in English, was a Jew himself and one of Jesus Christ's twelve apostles and later a leader of the Christian church. The Christian context in which *Lilith* is set is essential to the critical commentary that can be drawn from the play about the gender identity politics of Chicano/a culture at the time that the play was written.

Lilith was written in 1977. Around that same time, Chicana and Latina female theatre workers (be they actresses, playwrights, performance actresses, designers, etc.) united to advocate and create for themselves. They formed all-women troupes, began portraying characters that were previously restricted to them, and deconstructed and reconstructed new gender identities on the stage. An example of this redefinition of gender identities in Chicano/a theatre is Cherríe Moraga's 1984 play, *Giving up the Ghost*. The play portrays Chicana's repression by the ideologies of the Chicano movement, and the implications they had on gender identity. Elizabeth Jacobs suggests that through this play occurred "the emergence of significantly new representational strategies and modes of performativity that move beyond the confines of movement ideology" (29). Thus, homosexuality, lesbianism, and androgyny were explored and celebrated both on stage and in academia. Chicana feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcon, and Cherríe Moraga paved the way for Chicanas to self-examine their gender identity and explore the possibilities of a transformation or liberation from gender constraints previously imposed by the patriarchal culture, male authority, and Christian traditions alike. *Lilith* then, is reflective of the Chicana and Latina efforts to challenge the stereotypical female gender identities of devoted mother or *mujer mala*, the bad women, traitor of patriarchal tradition. The play offers a feminist critique of the gender subjugation that the Christian

patriarchal tradition imposes on Chicanas and Latinas alike, as well as the unjust condemnation of those that are unwilling to submit to male authority. Lilith can be interpreted as representative of the Chicanas that desired to change the narrative of Chicano/a gender politics in the late 1970s and early 80s; they wanted the concerns of women to be voiced and the agency to explore new gender identities that didn't necessarily fit the previous gender limitations.

Regarding Chicano/a gender identities, Gloria Anzaldúa writes that “the culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels she is *mujer mala*. If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish,” (39). Lilith's character is perceived by the male characters, in varying degrees, to be precisely that: selfish, rebellious, *mujer mala*. In their own ways, the male characters in *Lilith* (Adam, the archangels Pedro and Joe, and God the Father) expect obedience and submission from the two female characters. When the male characters do not receive this obedience and submission from Lilith they become angry and abusive; they retaliate and punish her. The male character's expectations and perceptions of the female characters can be found in the dialogues exchanged between the male and female characters, as well as the male to male character conversations about the females. First there are exchanges between the characters Adam and Lilith. She is portrayed as a strong and driven character that is self-aware and that questions any authority that Adam has over her, not from stubbornness but for the purpose of being treated as an equal. Adam struggles with Lilith's unwillingness to submit to him, which builds frustration and he eventually resorts to anger and abuse.

The play begins with the couple having an argument about their job assignments; Lilith wants to gather manna and have Adam prepare it but Adam uses their genders to argue that he is the one who should gather and she prepare it (*Lilith* 6-7). This argument is representative of the

fight for full power over women on Adam's part and the fight for equality by Lilith that drives the rest of play. Lilith's character points out that he can learn to prepare it, like she did, to which Adam refutes, "Of course you invented the arts and crafts! That's your job!" (*Lilith* 6). Lilith argues that she is as capable as Adam of catching manna but he attempts to end the argument by pointing out, as directed in the stage directions, their sexual body parts and explaining that because of those physical differences he was going "to invent what will be known as division of labor" (8). This further complicates the situation because they were created from the same dust, they are "the same size, shape, dimensions, intellect, soul and heart," yet Adam's character insists on expressing dominion over her because of their difference in sex. Lilith's character refuses to submit to Adam's authority when she says, "[...] no one should rule over anyone else," on the basis of gender equality because they were made as equals (*Lilith* 8). Adam then says, "You are so hard-headed! I fear it will grow to be a trait," which characterizes her desire for gender equality as rebellion (*Lilith* 9).

Adam continues to express his self-assigned dominion over Lilith's gender identity, and by extension that of all mankind, in the scene in which he talks about the colors he invented. He begins by categorizing yet another job designated for the female gender identity; he explains that with her color she can "use it to decorate things. After you invent fashion, we could wear it or paint things on a canvas" (*Lilith* 22). He reveals to her that pink will be her color and blue for him and continues to explain that "in years to come all little boys will be wrapped in blue swaddling clothes," and girls in pink (*Lilith* 22). Lilith feels that it is unfair that she be limited to the color pink because of her gender and Adam responds by calling her selfish and ungrateful considering he gave her a color of her own and then says "Nothing ever satisfies you!" (*Lilith*

24). The frustration builds for both characters and erupts into a physical altercation that occurs off stage, according to the stage directions, in which Adam hits Lilith and she slaps him back.

Post-fight Lilith's character has a short soliloquy that summarizes the frustration she feels regarding the gender inequalities that Adam is imposing on her and her disillusionment with her fate of subservience to man.

LILITH
How can it be?
Both him and me,
Made from the same Holy dust,
Were we.
Made by His hand
I don't understand

Is this my fate?
Is it too late?
Must I swallow my pride,
And die inside?
Submit to a man,
Is that the plan?
I don't know,
Where can I go,
To be truly free? (*Lilith* 28).

She desires nothing more than to be free from the gender subjugation that Adam, through patriarchal tradition and his own desire to control her, is forcing on her. Here Lilith struggles to understand; if they were created as equals, why Adam has dominion over her. She feels forced to submit to male authority and be enslaved to Adam's control.

The other male to female conversations that expose the male character's opposition towards a strong female occur between Lilith and the archangel Joe. Joe's character has zero tolerance for disobedience from a female, and therefore, becomes angry and verbally abusive as a way of expressing his male control. When Lilith refuses to come down from a tree, Joe says, "Look here, bitch, you're getting on my nerves" (*Lilith* 30). Later Joe states, "Lilith, thou stands

accused of false pride, stubbornness, inciting rebellion in Paradise,”; all of which are crimes of a rebellious woman that is unwilling to submit to the authority of man (*Lilith* 47).

Of all the male characters, the archangel Joe expresses the highest disdain for women and fuels Adam’s frustration when Lilith’s character is proving to be more difficult to control than anticipated. Their conversations with each other about women are degrading, disrespectful, and filled with hate. Early in the play Joe’s character gives Adam’s character advice about how to express control over Lilith. He uses the metaphor of breaking in a horse to explain how to handle woman and exercise male privilege over her. The metaphor alludes to man exercising emotional, physical, and sexual authority over the woman, to the point of possible abuse and infidelity, if desired. Joe’s lines describe the process of man breaking a woman until she knows nothing else but obedience. He begins with emphasizing the foundation of having emotional authority over then woman when he says “When you mount her to go riding/ you don’t say “pretty please”,” (*Lilith* 16). This comment implies that Lilith is given no other option but to obey Adam. If necessary to continue the process of subjugation, Joe suggests that physical force be taken when he says, “Dig the spurs into her flank/ Dig them hard until she bleeds” (*Lilith* 16). The reference of blood expresses an extreme that is justified in order for man to have full authority over woman. “You may ride her in the clover, / Over and over, again and again” detail the level of sexual submission expected from the woman by the man once he has gained control over her. The final lines, “Then you’ll go on to another, after all you are the man!” imply that infidelity by the man is justified simply because of his phallic authority over women; a sexual act that would not be permissible for the woman. Joe’s metaphor proves to be an ineffective strategy for Adam to gain control over Lilith but it does cause the fight that ended in a physical fight, mentioned earlier. Even though Joe’s character does not encourage Adam to hit Lilith, he also doesn’t

disapprove. This is made when after the fight Joe tells Pedro that he told Adam's character "how to handle a woman," and then with a smug face says, "He hit her" (*Lilith* 26). The physical abuse that occurs in the play mirrors behavior of Latino and Chicano men that, according to Anzaldúa, are encouraged to beat their wives if they disobey or are unable to fulfill their duties as mothers and wives (*Lilith* 38).

She realizes that she and Adam cannot be together because of their gender identity and inequalities to which she being subjected. She leaves and Adam pleads with God to create another, more submissive, helper for him; and so, God creates Eve. Meanwhile, Joe and Adam determine Lilith's punishment for disobedience, rebellion, selfishness, and ultimately her unwillingness to submit to their male authority. They make an attempt to capture her to deliver punishment but fail. Adam calls her a "Nazi fem dyke!" and says that "she'll be damned for all time! Like anyone else who disobeys!" (*Lilith* 48). Joe gives Adam a proclamation to read that parallels many of the vilifying characteristics given to her in the canonical readings mentioned before. He calls her "Demon of the night," "seductress," "Queen Demon, Satan's harlot," a "whore and cannibal," that "flies in the night to devour babies" (*Lilith* 49). This proclamation acts as condemnation for Lilith and any woman that is unwilling to submit to male authority, which is apparent immediately afterwards when Eve questions what Lilith did to deserve such a fate and Adam responds harshly with, "Silence! Who are you to question the will of God!!" (*Lilith* 50).

The other male characters, the archangel Pedro and God the Father do not express the level of disdain or frustration with Lilith for her desire for independence but they still maintain and honor the patriarchal traditions as superior to any other form of gender identity. Pedro is Lilith's archangel and often tries to provide her with counsel but ultimately must remain faithful

to the authority of man over woman. This is evident first by the unrealistic advice Pedro provides Lilith; he suggests that after a fight between the characters Lilith and Adam, “everything will work out in the end, you’ll live happily ever after,” (*Lilith* 13). This mindset was the subtler way of asking woman to submit to male authority; it erased any negativity or questioning and replaced with blind acceptance. At the end of the play, Pedro proves his loyalty to the patriarchal traditions when he is unwilling to help Lilith escape the punishment for fighting for a personal sense or formation of gender identity and freedom from the sexual prison of patriarchy.

Although Adam is the character that attempts to exercise the most authority over Lilith’s character, God provides Adam with that dominion. In the play, God’s voice advises Adam to learn how to compromise, for women and men would likely argue with each other for all of existence. Adam argues that he and Lilith have “irreconcilable difference,” and then God essentially goes back on his previous statement and says that there are other measures that could be taken if Lilith continued to disobey; God creates the character Eve to replace Lilith as Adam’s helper. The characters of God and of Lilith never actually speak in the play. She does have introspective moments when she speaks to him while writing in her diary but she is never given the privilege of speaking directly to him and altogether loses that privilege as part of her punishment. Therefore, it can be argued that God, just like the archangel Pedro, honored the patriarchy above helping a female character.

2.4 Freedom Through Agency and the Bond of Sisterhood

Ultimately, Lilith’s character seeks freedom from the confinements of the patriarchy but in order to gain it, she must renounce all she has. Morton’s *Lilith*, much like the Lilith in Plaskow’s retelling, is forced to give up the option of trying to make the relationship between her and Adam work and is damned in doing so, which is where Eve finally enters the plot lines.

Morton depicts a traditional Eve—obedient, kind, loving, submissive—as a contrast to Lilith’s character who is strong-willed and inquisitive. Lilith’s strong character and confidence, combined with Adam’s fear tactic, have a profound impact on Eve’s character. At the beginning, Eve eagerly submits to everything Adam commands, including his request to “multipyeth” and do “the missionaryeth position,” or in other words have sexual relations. These references possibly have comedic intent but they are also representative of the gendered status of their relationship; Eve is on her back and Adam is on top of her. Eve’s character description at the beginning of the play is telling of the purpose and gender identity her character. The description for Eve states, “Second woman, “mother of mankind”,” (*Lilith* 1). If the character Lilith can allude to socio-political subjectivity of Chicanas in the 1970-80s that called for a reinterpretation of traditional, Judeo-Christian patriarchal constraints, then Eve evokes women who were imprisoned by gender subjectivity without a means of escape. Adhering to Adam’s *machismo*, a design that maintains male authority over female subjugation, forced Eve into a gender identity formed by Adam which defined her work roles, sexual servitude, and unchallenged obedience. This is until Eve’s character finally encounters Lilith’s character and realizes Lilith is not the demon described by Adam but rather, that they have things in common. Lilith and Eve’s character contrast one another but nonetheless, they form a bond, a sisterhood, solely based on their agency over their gender identity. Lilith desires more freedom than Eve but their final conversation together opens Eve’s eyes to the oppressive nature of her relationship with Adam. Lilith foretells the fate of women when she says, “Women will become goods, lawful chattel, forced to change our names for his, bought and sold to the highest bidder,” (*Lilith* 53). Eve defends her stance and explains that she is okay with being taken care of by a man because in reality, “behind every man is a little woman pressing his buttons” (*Lilith* 53-4).

Morton's Eve eventually eats the fruit from the forbidden tree. In doing so, she intentionally disobeys Adam to liberate herself from his patriarchal authority, even if only partially. Eve confesses, "You left me no choice, Adam. I could find no other way... out" (*Lilith* 56).

2.5 Without Shame or Constraints- The Implications of Exploring Gender

Having Lilith as the main female character of this play reinforces the strong feminist symbol and challenges the male controlled traditions of the Latino and Chicano cultures.

Morton's re-telling of the Lilith myth is notable within the works of other Chicano playwrights at the time. His rendition of Lilith with feminist female protagonist was not the standard used by other Chicano playwrights. In expressing her desire to be free, to be herself without shame and constraints, Anzaldúa writes, "I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied of me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar, and my own feminist architecture" (44). Morton's Lilith is forced to do this exact thing. The agency she has over her gender identity, and her desire for freedom and self-expression liberates Lilith from the patriarchy but she is forced to create new life alone in the wilderness. Lilith's character longs to have more and be more than what Adam's character has designated for her and she is willing to give up everything, including Paradise, in order to achieve that. She stands up against the oppressive powers of the patriarchy and that of Christian traditions, to gain her freedom and form a gender identity of her own as a true feminist.

CHAPTER 3

AGENCY THROUGH INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND MOTHERHOOD IN *LA MALINCHE* (1984)

3.1 Treacherous Mother or *madre protectora*?

In her iconic book *Borderlands/La Frontera* Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “Not me sold out my people but they me” (44). With these words Anzaldúa emphasizes the plight of the Chicana and of the Mexicana; a struggle fought both externally and internally because of their gender and racial identity. The disdain of *la mujer*, the woman, and *la india*, the Indian woman-within, is a tradition that spans centuries in both Chicano and Mexican cultures. The figurative mother of this disdain and distrust of women in Chicano and Mexican cultures is Malintzin Tenepal. In this chapter, I look at the implications that gender and racial identity have on agency and motherhood in Morton’s *La Malinche*. In *La Malinche* Morton pays homage to Malintzin, the indigenous translator and mistress of Hernán Cortés. The play is an adaptation of Euripides’s *Medea* set in a post-conquest New Spain. *La Malinche* keeps true to *Medea* with La Malinche, the main female character, plotting to kill Hernán Cortés’s betrothed and in doing so, sacrifices her own son. Other female characters of significance are La Llorona, who acts as the chorus, and Ciuacoatl, the servant to Malinche’s character. Both of these characters guide Malinche in making her decision to take action against the patriarchy, represented by the character of Hernán Cortés and to fulfill her role as Indian mother, by protecting her son, Martín.

Within their own narratives in history and culture, Medea, Malintzin, and La Llorona have often been characterized as treacherous mothers that betray their children because of the men in their lives or simply out of insanity. I argue against the negative implications often associated with the Medea-Malinche-Llorona paradigm that characterizes La Malinche as a treacherous mother. I propose that Morton’s *La Malinche* challenges this stereotype by

portraying Malinche's character not as treacherous but rather as a *madre protectora*, a protective mother. This feminist portrayal of Malinche in her role as mother is accomplished by the agency over gender and racial identity discovered by the character throughout the play; Malinche demonstrates her self-driven desire to make change occur for her and her son. Malinche discovers the strength and freedom rooted within her with the help of La Llorona, one performer functioning as the chorus, acting as a guide for the character development of Malinche; La Llorona uses flashbacks and indigenous truths to aid Malinche in rediscovering her racial identity which ultimately allows her to have agency over her gender and motherhood. Malinche takes ownership of her identity and does not let shame, guilt, or man's will surpass her desire to protect her son, even if it was only by his death that she can do so.

In my analysis, I look at the history of the La Llorona myth and the implications often associated with works that offer representations of Malinche, La Llorona, and Medea. I also consider the historical documentation about Malintzin Tenepal as well as contemporary re-readings about her that have informed her prominent role in current Mexican and Chicano/a identity. I specifically consider the re-readings of Malintzin by Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcón, Adeleida R. del Castillo, among other scholars such as Luis Leal, Deena J. González, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba. The Chicana feminist scholarship about Malintzin Tenepal that is considered began emerging in the 1980s. Morton wrote *La Malinche* in 1984 for his doctoral dissertation; he was not influenced by nor did he consult the feminist scholarships of Chicana theorists. Morton's Malinche, as woman and mother demonstrate, a feminist mother that desires to protect her child above what the patriarchy demands on her gender role.

3.2 The History of Malintzin Tenepal (a.k.a. Doña Marina, Malinche, *La chingada*)

Pilar Godayol explains that Malintzin is a “product of historical reconstructions,” because all documentation about her person are second or third person accounts (62). The Malintzin that is known today is a construction of the interpretations that centuries of commentators and scholars have formed. Evidence of this reconstruction is divided into two categories: historical and cultural. In her historical context, Malintzin is the young indigenous maiden that was given to Hernán Cortés in form of tribute and because of her linguistic abilities, became his translator and eventually led him into victory over the Aztecs. Hernán Cortés documented her service in *Cartas de relación*, his letters to king Charles V that relayed details of the conquest. In these letters Cortés refers to Malintzin only as *la lengua*, or his translator. Cortés gives her due credit but only to acknowledge the strategical resources she provided as a translator for his men. *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a soldier of Cortés that took part in the conquest, gives a more detailed account of Malintzin’s involvement in the conquest. Díaz del Castillo refers to her as Doña Marina, the name given to her by the Spaniards after she became a Christian. It is because of Díaz del Castillo that there is biographical information on Malintzin. According to Díaz del Castillo, Malintzin was the daughter of a great cacique but after her father’s death, she was sold into slavery by her mother after remarrying (147). Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera* is one of the few documented accounts that hold biographical information about Malintzin. His documentation details her personal history and also credits Malintzin with an essential role in bringing down the Tlaxcalans and Cholulans, serving not only as a translator but as a cultural strategist; her linguistic and cultural knowledge of the people was key to the Spaniard’s advancements. He states that without her linguistic abilities and cultural knowledge, Cortés and his men would not have been as

successful (148). Her role as translator and cultural navigator in the conquest was significant as far as strategy and Sandra Messinger Cypess argues that it also through this role that she “transcended all gender constraints of both Aztec and European societies” (17). Malintzin was invaluable to the conquest, as Díaz del Castillo noted, but her linguistic skills were rare. Her knowledge of languages and her ability to navigate through cultures was astounding, particularly considering this was not common for females. Miriam López Hernández asserts that Mexica women of all social classes were designated primarily to domestic tasks from birth; they did not hold important public positions and they were not religious leaders (177). Malintzin’s linguistic skills were beyond what Mexica women were traditionally allotted according to their gender roles, which made her role as translator for Hernán Cortés’s army a significant feminist prototype. Her role as translator and cultural strategist put her in an arena that was reserved for males, making her unique and providing her a route for survival during the conquest.

The importance that Díaz del Castillo gave to Malintzin historically was not the only interpretation defining her identity. Norma Alarcón explains that culturally Malintzin, as a translator, was a representation of “feminine subversion and treacherous victimization of her people” to many Mexican generations since the conquest, many even today (61). Malintzin provided the upper hand that allowed the Spaniards to be triumphant by translating for and advising Cortés but for her people, and what would later become the Mexican people, considered as an act of deviance and treachery. Anzaldúa observes similar disdain expressed by Chicanos when she writes, “she has become the bad word that passes a dozen times a day from the lips of Chicanos. Whore, prostitute, the woman who sold out her people to the Spaniards are epithets Chicanos spit out with contempt” (44). Up until the end of the twentieth century, to be called *malinche* or a *malinchista* was to be one that has turned their back on their people, their culture;

to be a *traidora* or *vendida*, a traitor or sell-out to the white man or nay foreigner. Aside from being labelled a traitor, her role as mother of a mestizo child made her a whore, allowing for the patriarchy to use her image as an attack on women's sexuality. In the mid 1970s, Chicana feminists began to critically analyze these interpretations of Malintzin that existed and concluded that a revision was necessary so that she would no longer be used to perpetuate disdain of women and the image of a treacherous mother. Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcón, Adelaida R. Del Castillo, Cherrie Moraga, and many other Chicanas broke the cycle of misogynistic contempt towards Malintzin; their re-readings of Malintzin transformed her from traitor and whore to a strong leader, a woman with agency, a history-maker, and a caring mother. Alicia Gaspar de Alba writes that to Chicana feminists, Malintzin "represents affirmation: of a woman's freedom to use her mind, her tongue, her body in the way that she chooses and to cultivate her intellectual skills for her own survival and empowerment" (55). Chicana feminists reinterpreted Malintzin's image and adopted her as a figure of resistance against the patriarchy and as their figurative feminist mother.

Regarding Malintzin's significance in Mexican and Chicano cultures Adelaida R. del Castillo writes that "she embodies effective, decisive action in the feminine form, and most important, because her own actions syncretized two conflicting worlds causing the emergence of a new one" (125). Del Castillo emphasizes the importance of Malintzin's role in the creation of a new world, a new race. Malintzin served as Cortés's translator, cultural strategist, mistress, and mother of his first son, Martín. Therefore, Malintzin played a dynamic and essential part in not only the conquest of the Aztec Empire but also in the creation of a new people. Together, Cortés and Malintzin, are considered the procreators of *la raza mestiza*, the mixed-blood race. Although Cortés is not considered a hero, Malintzin is the only one that is vilified and scrutinized for her

role in this creation. Alarcón explains that because of Malintzin's role as translator and aiding in the destruction of her people she "betrayed her primary cultural function—maternity" (63).

Although there were other children born to Spanish soldiers and indigenous women, Malintzin's son with Cortés made her into the figurative mother of the Mexican people. To say that she betrayed her primary cultural function of maternity is not directly related to her physical maternal relationship with Martín but rather her role as mother of the *mestizo* people. The destruction brought on by her role in the conquest, as translator and mistress, transform her motherhood into an act of treachery. Her cultural role as mother would be to protect and uphold the patriarchy to which she belongs, through submitting physically, emotionally, and intellectually to man, but by doing this with Cortés, she became the mother of betrayal.

Historical and cultural interpretations of Malintzin vilified the young indigenous woman by not fully analyzing her personal history that lead her to partake in the conquest as well as the political atmosphere of the Aztec Empire that laid the foundation for their demise. Malintzin's language abilities allowed her agency over her life; they freed her from a life of slavery and allowed her to chart a path of survival. Although unfortunate, Malintzin's mother's betrayal led her to partake in the formation of a new race and the dismantling of the Aztec Empire. In her re-reading, Adelaida R. del Castillo suggests that Malintzin "should not be portrayed as negative, insignificant or foolish, but instead perceived as a woman who was able to act beyond her prescribed societal function, namely, that of being a mere concubine and servant, and perform as one that was willing to make great sacrifices," (126). The importance of Malintzin's role in the conquest and the creation of *la raza mestiza* deserves more merit than negative stereotypes and making her the sole entity responsible for the destruction of her people. At the time of the arrival of Hernán Cortés, the many Indian nations that made up the Aztec Empire had already begun to

rebel against the Aztec nobles and high priests. Del Castillo asserts that the Indian nations under Aztec rule “decided it would be to their advantage to help free themselves from the yoke of the Aztec dominance,” and “eventually joined together to make its downfall a reality” (131-2). In essence, the Aztec Empire’s self-destruction had been in motion long before Malintzin’s role as translator.

Another male-biased interpretation of Malintzin is that of her as a victim. In his historical essay, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Octavio Paz famously characterizes Malintzin as *la chingada*, the sexual victim; the raped mother of the Mexican people. Paz’s sexualized interpretation of Malintzin as raped mother shifts her role as translator from traitor to victim, as it implies that she was strategically used by Cortés in the conquest politically and sexually. Paz argues that it is the female condition, the weak one, that gives way to this idea of *la chingada*. Therefore, according to Paz’s interpretation, Malintzin was inevitably the victim of a sexual and cultural violation by Cortés and the Spaniards. This re-reading of Malintzin does not take into account the agency and strategy that she boldly displayed by becoming a translator for Cortés, a role that was not traditionally allotted to woman. It also eliminates any ownership she had over her sexuality; Paz’s interpretation suggests that any sexual act between Malintzin and Cortés was a violation, void of consent or passion on Malintzin’s side.

Chicana feminist’s re-readings of the identity of Malintzin reject the connotations of whore, traitor, and victim that have long been given to Malintzin and instead view her from a feminist perspective, giving her agency and re-claiming her indigenous heritage, sexuality and motherhood without shame. It is their interpretations that I use to argue that Morton’s *La Malinche* challenges the negative characterizations associated with Malintzin by giving the

character La Malinche agency to fight against being enslaved by the patriarchy and fulfills her role as mother by protecting her son through the ultimate sacrifice of death.

3.3 The Medea-Malinche-Llorona Paradigm

Malinche scholars such as Luis Leal and Sandra Messinger Cypess have argued that writing Malinche into the Medea-La Llorona paradigm feeds into negative imagery of Malinche as a treacherous mother. Messinger Cypess suggests that grouping Malinche with Medea and La Llorona, leads to “masculinist attitudes,” that promote, “fear of women, distrust of woman in a powerful position, envy of the woman as the procreator,” and is robbed of her positive role as mother of *la raza* (20). Yet, Morton does not follow the tendencies that Messinger Cypess applies to the Malinche-Medea-Llorona paradigm in *La Malinche*. Morton’s Malinche displays agency and discernment. Her character challenges and angers that of Cortés and the other Spanish figures, such as, Bishop Lizárraga and Sánchez, the Spanish soldier.

Due to the infanticide that occurs in the Medea-Malinche-Llorona paradigm it is difficult to see their actions as a form of liberation but Domino Renee Perez argues that the oppressive forces that lead them to commit the act of killing should also be considered (76). In *La Malinche*, although Malinche and La Llorona kill Martín, Malinche explains that Cortés’s character left her no recourse other than to kill in order to save her son. Perez writes that, “agency, most often, is what La Llorona seemingly lacks, for she wails, wanders, and weeps while futilely searching for the unrecoverable,” (76). Morton does not follow that mold; his Malinche displays agency in her decision to kill Martín as a *madre protectora*. She originally plans to kill Cortés’s wife-to-be and escape with her son Martín but in the end decides that it is only through death that she could liberate him and herself from the Spaniards.

Contrary to the legend of La Llorona, Morton's Malinche does not weep for her son; instead, she treats his death as her "supreme sacrifice" (54). La Malinche boldly stands by her decision to kill Martín as she says, "I accept my fate [...]" and expresses to Cortés, "My grief is mine. At least you cannot mock it," in defense to his ridicule and disdain (Morton 54). She finishes by telling Cortés that Martín, "died because you would not allow him to be raised a Mechica," to extend the culpability to Cortés (*La Malinche* 55).

La Malinche's sacrifice in Morton's play is much like the sacrifice made by Medea in Euripides's *Medea*. Medea also attempts to liberate herself from a patriarchy in which she has been replaced by a non-barbarian woman. In Euripides's play, Medea plots to kill Jason's betrothed but ends up also killing her children so that she and them would be free of Jason's control. It is only by the sacrifice of the children, that Medea and Malinche are able to save their children and themselves from the colonizing man. Like La Llorona, Medea's character is often criticized for the infanticide that she commits to free herself from Jason's dominion but Medea and Malinche both kill their child willingly in order to be free.

3.4 La Malinche's Path to Agency in *La Malinche*

The play begins with La Malinche reminiscing on how she and Cortés first met and why she fell in love with him, through a flashback induced by La Malinche; this occurs before Cortés's impending wedding to Catalina, the Spanish woman and niece to the Bishop, after which he plans on taking Martín from La Malinche. La Malinche is in tears and anguish as she recounts the events that led her to this point yet she worries for her son when she says, "Oh, my son, we must leave here...now," (*La Malinche* 6). From the beginning of the play La Malinche expresses deep concern for her son's fate, above all other worries, and is determined to keep him from becoming like his father. Her concern for Martín and his eventual fate are foreshadowed in

the first scene when Malinche talks about a dream she had, “I had a nightmare. I dreamed that my son was in chain mail mounted on a beast with a sword in one hand and a cross in the other. He looked like a Spaniard (*Beat.*) Hide him from his father” and out of reaction says, “My son! You are better off dead!” (*La Malinche* 11). La Malinche is aware of the oppressive relationship she has with Cortés and knows that if he has his way, Martín will be raised as a Spaniard like his father; this is something she is unwilling to allow.

La Malinche knows that in order to avoid Martín being taken from her that she has to convince Cortés to call off the wedding to the Spanish woman or Martín must die. She attempts to reason with Cortés in convincing him to call off the wedding, out of love for him and their son, and based on his previous promises to her. She pleads, “We are the family of the new nation! How can you throw that away? Hernán, it’s not too late for you to change your mind!” (Morton 20). Cortés does not agree and explains to her that strategically, him marrying a Spanish woman, taking their son, and marrying Malinche off to another noble Spanish man is the best plan for them (*La Malinche* 19-20). Malinche realizes that they cannot be together because of her racial identity; she exclaims, “I am Aztec, what you call an Indian! Not worthy to marry a noble white man like you” (*La Malinche* 21). At this point, Malinche reaches a crossroads, either she submits to Cortés’s plan for her life or she acts on her own to protect her son and herself from the ongoing wrath of the Spaniards. As their argument ends Malinche is yelling, “Tezcatlipoca! Tezcatlipoca!” and suddenly both Malinche and Hernán fall into a deep slumber by La Llorona.

There are two significant topics at this point in Malinche’s path to having agency over her life. First is the mention of Tezcatlipoca, who is the Aztec god of Smoking Mirrors, and second is her interactions with La Llorona. There are several mentions of Tezcatlipoca, as well as obsidian and smoking mirrors, which are considered symbols of the Aztec god. Their presence

in the play is significant because they are representative of the indigenous strength that La Llorona invokes within La Malinche. The character struggles with the idea that she loves Cortés and what his betrayal means for her and her son. Anytime that she confronts Cortés or later when planning his demise, the smoking mirror references empower her to move forward with her plan for saving her son from the Spaniards. This is very specifically addressed when Malintzin says, “Tezcatlipoca! I lost sight of you when I served the white man. Now I return to you, Smoking Mirror” (*La Malinche* 33). Malinche determines that she needs to return to her indigenous identity in order to release herself from the oppression of the white man and liberate her son from them as well. This determination is reached through her interactions with La Llorona. La Llorona, as the chorus, induces several flashbacks that help root Malinche back in her indigenous identity and frees her from the white man’s oppression. La Llorona reminds Malinche that she is an “Aztec priestess,” and encourages her to look into her obsidian mirror, “Gaze into it and draw your strength,” so that she can gain the agency to decide what is best for her and her son (*La Malinche* 33). Together with La Llorona, Malinche takes a turning point out from under Cortés’s oppressive plan by plotting the death of his betrothed by poison.

Through the assistance of La Llorona’s flashbacks and the strength drawn from Tezcatlipoca, Malinche plots the death of Catalina and Bishop Lizárraga. Malinche shares her plan with her servant, Ciuacoatl, who is wary of the danger of poisoning but understands Malinche’s point of view. Ciuacoatl attempts to convince her that this is their role, “We are slaves; first to our fathers, then to our husbands” (*La Malinche* 38). To which Malinche responds, “And marriage is the worst form of slavery” and continues on to express the reason why their deaths must occur, “We have to. Don’t you see—he’ll take Martín away and raise him

as a Spaniard. He'll turn him against our people and use him just as he used me," (*La Malinche* 39).

The final steps in Malinche's path to agency is her deception of Cortés and the death of Martín. Malinche first convinces Cortés that she has agreed to his wedding, and his plan to take Martín and raise him as a Spaniard but has already plotted the death of his bride by poison. As an adaptation of Medea, Malinche poisons a wedding gift that consists of her inherited indigenous headdress, which she plans on having her son deliver. At the wedding, Martín delivers the poisoned gift to Catalina and is able to escape successfully before the graphic death occurs, killing the bride and the bishop. Cortés knows that Malinche is to blame for the deaths and attempts to locate his son in order to save him from death as well but he is unsuccessful. Moments before the death of Martín, Malinche exclaims, "In vain did I rear you and suffer the pain of childbirth. Never will I see you grow into a strong warrior. [...] Oh heavens, pity me, and give me strength to do what must be done" (*La Malinche* 52). These final words to her son are what sets Morton's Medea-Malinche- Llorona paradigm apart from others; in Morton's play, Malinche displays agency by making the difficult decision to kill her son in order to protect him from being turned into a Spaniard, by his father, and bringing more destruction to their people. For her, Martín's death freed him and her from the wrath of the patriarchy.

3.5 La Llorona in Mexican and Chicano Cultures and in *La Malinche*

Accounts of the legend of La Llorona have been part of Mexican culture since before the Conquest and continue to prevail in contemporary Mexican and Chicano/a culture. Scholars suggest that La Llorona's presence in Mexican culture is strongly based on the Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl for their common association of kidnapping and killing children, and later weeping over their death, as well as seducing men to later kill them. The Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl was

known as *la mujer serpiente*, or the serpent woman. It was said that she could take the form of a serpent, of a weeping woman with an empty cradle, or of beautiful young woman that would seduce men and then kill them (López Hernández 76). During the Conquest, Cihuacoatl is said to have appeared as a weeping woman in the streets that mourned the impending death of her children that she would soon abandon (López Hernández 78). The legend of La Llorona is rooted in Cihuacoatl's incarnations, specifically that of the weeping woman with an empty cradle, symbolizing that she has killed or abandoned her children. La Llorona and Cihuacoatl, spelled Ciuacoatl by Morton, both appear as characters in *La Malinche*. Ciuacoatl role in the play is minor but he contributes to the work that La Llorona's character fulfills in her role as the chorus. Together, these two characters influence and aid Malintzin in gaining agency over her identity and motherhood.

The character of La Llorona functions as the chorus of the play; she appears to aid La Malinche in gaining agency through flashbacks, and sharing truths about Malinche's indigenous identity. La Llorona's character description in *La Malinche* perpetuates her historical relationship to Cihuacoatl; "The Weeping Woman," an Aztec goddess who carries an empty cradle, looking and lamenting for her lost children" (*La Malinche* 4). La Llorona's character appears in flowing robes with an empty cradle, often frightening Spanish-soldier characters; she also appears as the role of a woman in which she disguises herself in order to deceive one of the Spanish characters. La Llorona's role in the play is crucial to the development of La Malinche's character; according to Morton, "LA LLORONA is the chorus that weaves the narrative" (*La Malinche* 6). As the chorus of the play, La Llorona reminds La Malinche of her indigenous roots, of the pain and suffering her people endured, and to guide her towards the path of freedom from the patriarchy and from constraints on her motherhood.

A footnote on the character description of the play reveals that “Parts of LA LLORONA’s speeches are inspired by traditional Aztec sources, such as the *Florentine Codex* and poetry by Nazahualcoyotal” (*La Malinche* 4). Direct quotes from original Aztec sources contribute greatly to the indigenous truths that La Llorona uses to convince La Malinche’s character to return to her roots and resist the oppressive rule of the patriarchy. Every time La Llorona enters a scene, she does so with poetic or lyrical references. It is in this way that the play begins and ends; excerpts from the Mexican folklore song, “La Llorona” begin the play in Spanish and finish it in English. The portion of the lyrics that relate to Malinche’s sacrifice are, “Oh, my Llorona, Llorona, / Llorona of now and then, / yesterday I was a wonder, Llorona, / today I am steeped in sin. / They say I feel no pity, Llorona, / because no one sees me crying, / well, dead men never make a sound, Llorona, / and painful is their dying” (*La Malinche* 55). Much like the lyrics that end the play, La Malinche is in pain over the death of her son but owns this pain as she knows it was a necessary sacrifice that only she could make to save him from the Spaniards.

La Llorona induces flashbacks on La Malinche, specifically to moments of suffering and desperation during the conquest that led her to her current timeline within the play. These flashbacks give La Malinche’s character the opportunity to reconsider her desire to reconcile with that of Cortés’s, and ultimately lead her to the decision of killing her son in order to save him from becoming a Spanish man and losing his Mexica identity. There are two flashbacks that La Llorona uses to remind Malinche of her past with Cortés and of her strength within. The first flashback occurs at the very beginning of the play; Malinche recalls the day that she first met Cortés. La Llorona opens this flashback by saying, “Once Cortés discovered she spoke Nahuatl, the language of Aztecs, her fate was sealed!” (*La Malinche* 8). Cortés says about Malintzin, “But

her tongue is her most valuable asset, fool!” (*La Malinche* 8). This scene is representative of the value Cortés placed upon Malintzin. He primarily cared about her use value to further his purpose. In the second flashback, La Llorona takes Malintzin back to the night the Cholutecas attacked the white men. La Llorona offers Malintzin an opportunity to free herself from man by letting them be attacked without warning. La Llorona warns, “He is using you,” and then again, “He will betray you! Your own people will grow to despise you,” (*La Malinche* 23). Yet Malintzin does not let Cortés and his men die that night because she is with child. She defends herself by saying, “In my womb a child is growing who has his blood and mine. And this child I cannot betray!” (*La Malinche* 23). La Llorona foreshadows Cortés’s betrayal, the disdain of Malintzin by her people, but also Malintzin’s love for her son. Although Cortés perceives Martín’s death as a betrayal by Malintzin, she does not. Martín’s death is an act of sacrifice to Malinche; she does this as a way of protecting

Malinche knows that she will be unable to escape with Martín after Catalina is poisoned. Malinche yells, “I see now what I must do. I won’t let them take my son like they did my husband. No, he can’t fall victim to my enemies,” (*La Malinche* 49). At this point, La Llorona’s flashbacks and the power drawn from the Smoking Mirror, have made Malinche’s character realize that Martín must die to be safe from the influence of the Spaniards and so that he does not cause further destruction the indigenous and mestizo people. It is Malintzin that decided that Martín must die but it is La Llorona that actually kills him. La Llorona’s character stabs Martín with the sword of Cortés, which she steals from him earlier in the play. The death of Martín’s character with a Spanish sword is symbolic of the punishment that was bestowed on Cortés for his sins against the indigenous people. La Malinche paid the ultimate sacrifice of having her son killed to save him from also committing the sins of the father. The sins of the father are a more

general psychological reference here but nonetheless, she wanted to protect him from becoming like the Spaniards.

3.6 A Feminist Reading of Malintzin and La Llorona in *La Malinche*

Alicia Gaspar de Alba explains that Malintzin reflects Chicana's resistance of the patriarchy and the female slavery that it demands (55). She writes that as a primary mandate of the patriarchy, women are expected, "both to produce sons and heirs for the Father and to perpetuate the laws and interests of the Father," (53). In *La Malinche*, contrary to the desires of the character of Cortés, La Malinche wants Martín "to be raised a Mechica," not a Spaniard, which is what ultimately leads to the death of Martín's character (*La Malinche* 55).

At the time *La Malinche* was published (1984), Chicana feminists had just begun their work of dismantling the gender constraints of the patriarchy that had used figures such as Malintzin Tenepal and La Llorona to vilify Chicanas and Mexicanas. Although Morton was not influenced by Chicana feminist scholarship, *La Malinche* calls for a critical view of the female struggle against the oppressive patriarchy prevalent in Chicano and Mexican cultures. Chicanas are expected to be two things in life: virgin and then mother. If she chooses not to comply with either, she is labelled as a *malinchista* or *vendida*. Not submitting to the patriarchal-heterosexual dichotomy by being a lesbian or choosing a career over a family, or both, causes many Chicanas to be rejected by their culture. Malinche allowing Martín to be killed in *La Malinche*, is an extreme example of a woman not adhering to her culture's expectations of her as a woman and mother and therefore, being labeled as evil and treacherous. While it might be simplistic, what adds to the complexity of Morton's feminist Malinche is the agency he confers upon her self-determination as a person and as a mother. Chicanas reread Malintzin as a woman, who through agency and her linguistic abilities, survived the Conquest; likewise, Morton's *La Malinche*

portrays a strong mother who frees herself and her son from the patriarchy through her agency and racial identity.

CHAPTER 4

AGENCY THROUGH SELF-EXPRESSION AND RESISTANCE IN *DREAMING ON A SUNDAY IN THE ALAMEDA* (1992)

4.1 *Dreaming* and the Patriarchy

As the title of the play implies, *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992) is based on Diego Rivera's famous Mexico City mural *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central*¹. Much like Rivera's mural, Morton's play has a dream-like effect yet it is filled with humor and socio-cultural critiques. Compared to the other two plays analyzed in this thesis, *Dreaming on a Sunday* does not center upon lead female characters; however, it does feature strong female characters, but the lead role is portrayed by a male. Unlike *Lilith* and *La Malinche* the feminist characteristics of *Dreaming on a Sunday* do not have as strong of a role in the plot line, and therefore, I will take a different approach with my analysis. I argue that Morton's satirical portrayal of the male character's cultural standards for the female characters is a critique of the patriarchy's historical perceptions and treatment of women in Mexican culture. In their interactions with the male characters and one another, the female characters display agency of self-expression and resist gender standards imposed by the patriarchy, making *Dreaming on a Sunday* a feminist play.

Dreaming of a Sunday is primarily from the point of view of the character, Diego Rivera. In the play, Diego reveals his perceptions of Mexican culture and a handful of Mexican historical figures. María Herrera-Sobek writes, "The play is a vitriolic critique of a cross section of Mexican society. It is a splendid satire on the foibles of human beings, whether they are nuns, dictators, painters, or conquistadors" (xiv). The play, a dream-like fantasy, is centered on the

¹ The setting of Rivera's painting is the Alameda Central, a park in Mexico City that was built in 1529 by Viceroy Luis de Velasco. It is analogous to New York City's Central park.

process of the character Diego painting the mural; as he paints certain characters, they come to life and interact with him. There are a few other characters in the play that are not necessarily in Rivera's painting but they have historical significance and Morton's use of them in the play rounds out the stories of the characters that are featured in the mural.

The play is dynamic thematically and in style; it opens itself up to a multitude of analyses but in this chapter I focus on the commentary that the play has on the patriarchy's perceptions and treatment, both historically and culturally, of women. There are a total of nineteen characters in the play, ten female and nine male, but I analyze primarily ten characters' perceptions of and interactions with characters of the opposite gender. The female characters on which I focus are: Frida Kahlo, La Malinche, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Chi-Chi and La Catrina. The male characters are: Diego Rivera, Hernán Cortés, Don Porfís, Monk, and Don Guillermo.

The order of this chapter is as follows: a brief history of Diego Rivera's mural, a comparison of the play and the mural, and historical details on the characters from the mural that appear in Morton's play. These historical references provide a foundation for the cultural gender norms portrayed by the characters in the play and Morton's humorous treatment of them to be interpreted as a feminist commentary of the Mexican patriarchy. More specifically this is seen through the interactions between the male and female characters listed above and the female characters' agency of self-expression of their gender and their subsequent resistance of patriarchal standards.

4.2 Rivera's *Sueño de una tarde en la Alameda Central*

A recurring theme in many of Diego Rivera's murals in Mexico City is that of dreams, according to Berta Taracena (79). *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central* (Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Central) was originally painted in the Hotel del Prado

which is across the way from the Alameda Park and is now at the Diego Rivera Mural Museum in Mexico City, is perhaps the prime example of this theme. In this famous mural, Diego Rivera paints a dream-like scene of the Alameda Central park on a Sunday afternoon that captures a still image of Mexican culture, and famous historical figures and eras from the Conquest and Colonial periods to the Revolution and Reform in Mexico.

The mural is made up of three sections; however, it is not a triptych². Moving from left to right, in the first section Rivera captures the Conquest and Colonial Period of Mexico through the depiction of notable historical people: Hernán Cortés, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. This section continues with the Independence and Reform periods as well as the periods of foreign invasions with historical figures such as: Antonio López de Santa Anna, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, Benito Juárez, Ignacio Ramírez, el Nigromante, and the emperor Maximiliano and his wife Carlota. Rivera depicts famous historical figures but also captures images of the common Mexican folk time frames. In the first section, there are indigenous people enduring the colonialist wrath of the Catholic Church, along with images of common men, women, and children contemporary of the painter's time (1890-1915).

The second section famously captures a young Diego front and center, at around the age of nine, who on one side is being hugged by his beloved, Frida Kahlo, who is holding a yin and yang symbol, and on the other he is holding the hand of *La Calavera Catrina*³, an image originally made famous by José Guadalupe Posada. This center section also includes others such as the famous Latin American writers like the Mexican Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and the Cuban

² The mural is one continuous piece not a triptych but as far as the time periods of Mexican history that are addressed throughout the painting, I have broken it down into three different sections from left to right.

³ *La Calavera Catrina* is a zinc etching made by the Mexican printmaker, José Guadalupe Posada (1910-1913). *La Calavera* is a female skeleton who wears clothing that was custom in 1900-1920s in Mexico. She is a satirical character that comments on Mexican culture desiring to be seen as European.

poet and patriot José Martí, and the wife and daughter of Porfirio Díaz. Mexican culture is captured in this section with street vendors that carry balloons, *pan dulce*, candies on a revolving stick, and again, common people in the park.

The final section depicts the development of the Mexican revolution, with images of *campesinos* enduring mistreatment, fires and firearms, as well as more street culture and common people in despair; it captures an image of a corrupted Mexican government abusing its people and the efforts that lead to a change. Concerning the nature and people in the painting, Berta Taracena asserts, “The presence of important personages in history is emphasized through characteristic features, yet they are linked to the people, creating a unique mass” (80). In the *Dream of a Sunday* mural Rivera captures Mexican history by including people who greatly impacted the country and his personal life, but also includes a collective image of the Mexican people throughout history, creating a unique dream-like atmosphere, in which the people portrayed are at once moving and captured in a brief moment, in the Alameda Central park, historically an important location in Mexico City.

4.3 Morton’s *Dreaming on a Sunday* and Rivera’s *Mural*

Morton’s *Dreaming on a Sunday* should be considered a hypertext of Rivera’s mural, which functions as a visual hypotext. Rivera’s mural provides a baseline for the characters and interactions that occur in Morton’s play. The play and mural share same title and although they share many characters in common, Morton’s hypertext of the painting offers a much different approach to the historical context present in the mural. One could argue that Rivera’s painting does not have a satirical agenda. Instead, Rivera offers a personal rendition of Mexican history and culture infused with his personal life. The mural captures the splendor and struggle of the Mexican people historically, the spirit of resilience and beauty that layers official historical

narratives. The mural's setting in the Alameda Central contributes to the centrality of the piece on Mexican history and culture; it is only fitting that the painting about the history of a country be set in one of its most famous parks because it is a symbol of Mexican life and culture.

In Morton's play, the mural itself is still a work in progress. According to the design notes, the play is set in an artist's studio but applies the dream effect more literally than what is seen in Rivera's mural which often occurs with a dramatic change in scenery either to a flashback in history or to his life, or to a television show studio. Morton also suggests that a projection or picture of the mural could be used as the background of the play (59). Throughout the play, Diego's character is painting a series of people onto the mural with the help of his assistant, Johnny. Morton explains in the notes that outlines of half-finished portions of characters such as Frida Kahlo, Hernán Cortés, Sor Juana, and La Catrina, act as points of reference for the introduction of the characters into the play (59). Between the painting and introduction of characters, Diego and Johnny discuss the historical significance of these people along with some personal interjections of Diego's life. Morton uses the dream effect as a way to bring certain characters from the mural to life and to provide a method for which Diego and other characters are able to voice their opinions; they criticize and mock one another, create bonds with one another, and break the fourth wall, inviting the audience to become participants in the play, in a critical sense. The dream effect is realized through a fluidity of character entrances and exits, illogical and unannounced changes in setting and wardrobe. Many of the scenes begin within the original framework of the mural in progress but jump to historically-based flashbacks, personal moments in the life of the painter, scenes in the park, to a satirical television show setting, and back to the painting. It is through this fractured narrative technique that a dream effect is created, in which Morton interjects his satirical critique of Mexican history

and culture. Much like a dream, the sequence of events and scenery of the play are unpredictable but the humor employed by Morton within this construct allow him to be critical of historical and cultural content.

Of the nineteen characters in the play, only about half actually appear in the mural. The more notable names in the list of characters, such as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Hernán Cortés, Don Porfís (nickname for former president Porfirio Díaz) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, all appear in the mural as well. Some descriptions of the mural suggest that La Malinche is depicted by a female in a yellow dress just to the right of the young Diego, Frida Kahlo, and La Catrina but this was not noted by the artist himself so this fact is uncertain. The description provided by the Museo Mural Diego Rivera, a museum sponsored by the Mexican Secretary of Culture, does not include La Malinche in the list of characters depicted in the mural. In the play, the character La Malinche holds a grudge against Diego for not including her in the mural.

The characters Gentleman, Blondie, Policía, and La Yerbera seem to be representative of characters pictured in the third section of the mural. In the mural, Blondie is depicted by a small girl in a white dress who holds a blonde-haired doll. Her father in the play, Gentleman, could possibly be pictured behind her. Finally, the characters Policía and La Yerbera, are representative of the policeman in the third section that is shooing an indigenous family away with a baton. In the mural these people are not historically significant but rather symbolic of the class hierarchy prevalent during the Mexican Revolution and as well as the poor treatment of indigenous people by the government. This has been commented upon by scholars and critics of the painting such as Desmond Rochfort, who writes about the common Mexican folk in the painting, “These are the dictatorship’s underclass, on whose behalf the revolution was made. Rivera contrasts them with figures in the middle ground of the composition representing the priveleged classes of the

time” (85). Rochfort states that the images of common Mexican folk in the mural are from Diego’s own childhood memories of visits to the Alameda Park (85). In the play, these four characters are representative of the subjugation of the colonizer over the indigenous and their interaction doesn’t end as depicted in the mural. The only scene in which they appear reveals the character Gentleman to be Hernán Cortés and the character Policía is Cuauhtemoc, the last of the Aztec kings, and the two fight because of Gentleman/Cortés’s mistreatment of Morena (*Dreaming* 78-84). Another character that is used as an indirect reference to the mural is the Monk. Monk is the first character introduced as a painting and he is representative of the Catholic Church’s Inquisition. He represents the first section of the mural in which the Conquest and Colonial period is depicted with blood and greed under the guise of spiritual navigation for the country.

Two characters that do not appear in Rivera’s mural but have important roles in the plot development of Morton’s play are Johnny, Diego’s Chicano assistant, and Chi-Chi, a reporter for Channel 69. As Diego’s assistant, Johnny helps transition the scene from one character to another. He asks Diego’s character meaningful questions and intercedes in Diego’s interactions with other characters when necessary. The character Chi-Chi is unique; she is the reporter that introduces the dream-setting of the play with her opening lines, provides updated news reports about the Diego’s dream throughout the play, and hosts a satirical television show in Act 2. Her character provides comedic relief and frames a narrative within the narrative of the dream with the television show scene.

Morton’s theatrical rendition of Rivera’s mural has similar historical intentions, they both provide an overview of grand narrative of Mexican history and culture but Morton takes a much more satirical approach with the dream effect and candidness of Diego with all of the characters

that are depicted in the mural. He does this with the interactive nature that the mural characters have with the painter; they offer a critique and playful challenge to Diego's intentions. There are also scenes, such as the talk-show, that break from the mural setting that allow for additional satirical conversations. Through this approach, the playwright provides a much more critical look at certain periods in Mexican history, Diego Rivera's personal and political convictions, and the role of women in both.

4.4 Morton's Female Characters Within Patriarchy

Within the play, there are three main time periods in Mexican history that are represented by the female characters that appear in the play. The character La Malinche is an allusion to the Spanish Conquest and the early Colonial period; Sor Juana is representative of the Colonial period as well as the Catholic Church's Inquisition; and Frida Kahlo is symbolic of the Revolution, both civil and cultural. The treatment of these three characters by the male characters are symbolic of the attitude towards woman in their respective historical timeframes.

La Malinche has been depicted as Hernán Cortés' mistress and translator by chroniclers such as Bernal Díaz del Castillo as well as cultural critics and novelists, such as Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes. Centuries of cultural critics and writers disdainfully referred to her as a traitor to her people, *a vendida* or sellout who helped the white man conquer and bring destruction to her people. Because of her role in the conquest, as translator and mistress to Hernán Cortés, Malinche has also been depicted as mother of the mestizos, the mixed race. Perhaps one of the most known references to Malinche's role as mother to the mestizos was Octavio Paz's "Hijos de La Malinche", a chapter in his *Labyrinth of Solitude*, outlining a historical and cultural commentary on Mexican psyche. Regarding this famous chapter in Paz's novel, Norma Alarcón writes that Octavio Paz connects La Malinche to *la Chingada*, making the Mexican people, *hijos*

de la chingada, children of the raped one (65). Alarcón writes, “In calling attention to the fact that Malintzin and Cortés are more than historical figures, Paz in effect is implying that they are part and parcel of Mexican ideology—our living attitude” (65). Symbolically Malinche and Cortés gave birth to the Mexican people but because she was the woman she has culturally been blamed for her role to the extent of complete disdain towards her actions and disregard of her historical situation. That is, until the late 1970s when Chicana feminists, such as Norma Alarcon, Cherríe Morraga, and Gloria Anzaldúa, took her as their patron mother figure; they reread her story in a way that empowered them to have agency, be strong-willed and driven, as well as make decisions with caving into the patriarchal imposed shame from being a female. Gloria Anzaldúa writes that if we reject Malinche as our mother, we reject ourselves; and in this, warns against allowing the patriarchy to instill a self-imposed rejection of oneself and Malinche as patron mother (44-5).

I argue that the Malinche in *Dreaming* is much more in line with Chicana feminists’ re-reading of the historical figure. The character La Malinche plays a very unique role in Morton’s play. She indeed portrays her historical role as Hernán Cortés’s mistress and translator, but also functions as an advocate, along with Sor Juana, for Frida’s independence from Diego’s womanizing ways. She spends much of the play holding a grudge against Diego for not painting her into his mural, which heavily influences her annoyed attitude towards him. Contrary to the attire Malinche would have worn during her historical time period, she appears in the play dressed as a punk. Her character description reads, “Enter LA MALINCHE PUNK dressed in huipil, huaraches, black leather jacket, with purple spiked hair and a ring in her nose,” (*Dreaming* 69). Her attitude and speech is also more in line with her wardrobe than her historical time period. She refers to Cortés as “dude” and refers to her thoughts on sexuality very openly

when she says, “for me, sex is like aerobics, just another way to get off” (*Dreaming* 69-70). She very much does not care for Cortés’s or the patriarchy’s opinion of her. She expresses this in a verse she sings as Cortés plays the guitar, “ Yo soy La Malinche / Say I am a pinche / Made love to the rinche / Yo soy La Malinche / Say I’m La Chingada / Me lleva la fregada! / They act like I got seda / I’m not a vendida” (*Dreaming* 72). She also, without any hesitancy, criticizes Cortés’s inability to be a good father to their son Martin when she says, “Let’s go you good for nothing! (*Grabbing CORTÉS by the ear*) Don’t you hear poor Martincito bawling while you drink with your cronies!” (*Dreaming* 77). She expresses a general distrust of men, including Cortés and Diego. She is emancipated. As a supporter of Frida’s character, she questions Diego’s intentions with Frida and challenges the sexual parameters Diego attempts to place on his and Frida’s relationship. She expresses her dislike of Diego and his womanizing ways when she complains to Frida and Sor Juana, “How lovely, here we are, three intelligent women, spending our time talking about a stupid man” (*Dreaming* 108). Her unique self-expression as a punk female, sure of her sexuality, and unwavering critique of the men in the play act as her resistance towards the patriarchy’s implications on her gender identity. She resists the males in her plot line, primarily through Cortés as her former lover but also Diego as it is his dream in which she exists in the play.

The second time period of importance addressed in the play is the Colonial Period in Mexico and the residual effects of the Inquisition in a Jesuit-controlled baroque New Spain (17th-18th centuries). Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who appears in the play as Sor Juana, is perhaps the most notable female of existence in the seventeenth century in New Spain, not because of her femininity but rather her resistance to conform to the gender role prescribed to her. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is famously known for her genius, her witty writing, and ultimately for her

androgynous identity. In Octavio Paz's essay, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe* (1982) he addresses the historical significance of Sor Juana Inés's works and life on Mexican culture and history. He writes about her life in the Order of Saint Jerome and her relationship with María Luisa Manrique de Lara, the vicereine of New Spain, and the impacts these had on her writing. Even without formal schooling, Sor Juana possessed superior intelligence, which was considered a very masculine trait. Due to her voracious reading and writing in a time when only some men were educated, Sor Juana Inés was condemned to life of nunnery for challenging gender standards imposed by men. Linda Egan writes of women's status during Sor Juana Inés's time, "their status as women subjected them to similar losses of respect, freedom, and happiness as captives of male-dominated power structures," (28). Egan suggests that the only way Sor Juana could shield herself from the rule of the patriarchy was by her androgynous identity and by resolving to the life of a nun, even though the church was also a patriarchal institution that intended to oppress her (29).

In *Dreaming* Sor Juana first enters the play in pursuit of knowledge in order to be free, just as she is alleged to have done historically. The first scene in which she appears is set in a bar with Cortés and Diego both attempting to get Sor Juana drunk in order to seduce her. First Cortés puts his hand on her legs and she "recoils at his touch", then Diego tries to lift up her skirt and "she threatens to kick DIEGO. He backs off" (*Dreaming* 75). This continues back and forth until she has enough of their misogynist focus on her sexuality as she says to Frida, "Men are such mules, how can you stand them! That's why I went into the convent," (*Dreaming* 77). From this point forward she acts primarily as a voice of reason for the character Frida. Much to Diego's disapproval, Sor Juana advocates on Frida's behalf for an open marriage with Diego, in which Frida, because of her androgynous nature, would be free to sleep with other men and women

(*Dreaming* 86-7). In the end though, Sor Juana does not believe that it is in Frida's best interest to remain with Diego. She criticizes Diego, and all men, with her song,

“Stubborn men—so very adept
at wrongly accusing women
not realizing you're to blame
for faults you plant in her mind.
After you've won by urgent plea
the right to tarnish her good name
you still expect her to behave
you, who coaxed her into shame.
You batter her resistance down
and then, with righteousness proclaim
that feminine frivolity
not your stubbornness, is to blame” (*Dreaming* 110-11).

Her final scene in the play perpetuates her repudiation and resistance of the patriarchy and of men; as Diego is in his final moments of life, she diagnoses his physical ailments as well as condemns his manhood in stating to him, “Señor Rivera, you have a rare form of cancer. I recommend immediate amputation of the penis and testicles to prevent the spread of malignancy” (*Dreaming* 121).

As Diego Rivera's wife and life-long love, Frida Kahlo is of much importance in this play. The two visual artists were considered a power couple and even though they had a rather tumultuous and non-traditional marriage, their relationship grew both of them as people and as professionals. Rivera was considerably older than Kahlo when the two first met; Kahlo approached him while he was working on a mural and asked him to professionally judge some of her self-portrait paintings, which sparked the beginning of a long and painful life with one another. In regards to the marriage between Rivera and Kahlo, Liza Bakewell writes, “her interest in marrying Rivera had much to do with his revolutionary politics. Rivera was the quintessential revolutionary artist. However, in her painting she rejected much of it, especially his masculine bravado,” (168). Rivera and Kahlo agreed on many aesthetic interests as well as

political ideologies but Rivera's phallic-centered existence that elevated him over her simply because of his male status was not something that Kahlo accepted. Bakewell argues that, "From early childhood, Frida was uncomfortable with Mexico's cultural conceptions of gender and with the roles and domains attached to them" (169). This resistance to patriarchal imposed gender standards manifested itself in a variety of ways. Inadvertently Kahlo broke from her assigned gender by on occasion dressing androgynously in male attire, or when she cut her long hair, a trait of womanhood and beauty within Mexican culture. She also depicted herself with more "masculine" qualities in some of her paintings in which she exaggerated her facial hair or depicted herself as a man, such as: *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940), *Self Portrait with Monkey and Parrot* (1942), and *Diego and I* (1949). Through more active methods, she would publically voice her communist ideals in the political arena, that was a realm of male-power. She also explored bi-sexuality, sleeping with both men and women during her marriage with Diego Rivera and after. In essence Frida Kahlo was an expert feminist resistor of the patriarchy. She broke past all barriers previously assigned to the feminine gender through a unique self-expression of both her persona and her art work.

The Frida depicted in Morton's play treads true to historical renditions of her. Morton's Frida challenges the patriarchal ideals from the first scene in which she appears. The play depicts a rendition of Diego and Frida's real life meeting within the dream structure, in which she appears to him from the mural and asks him to judge her paintings, but she expresses her distrust in him because of his reputation with woman. She says to Diego, "They say if a pretty girl asks you for something you are ready to gush all over her," expressing the mistrust in his opinion (*Dreaming* 65). After this scene Diego jumps dream transitions to him asking her father, Don Guillermo, for Frida's hand in marriage. This is important to the critique of the patriarchy within

the play because of how Don Guillermo and Diego expresses themselves about Frida. Don Guillermo warns Diego, “[...] she’s extremely strong-willed and very intelligent. Which means she will surely drive you insane. Some do not think her particularly beautiful,” and she finally says, “She’s a devil” (*Dreaming* 66). For the rest of Act 1 Frida struggles with the decision to leave Diego because of his womanizing tendencies; she attempts to make it work, suggests an open marriage, but at the end of the first Act she declares that she must leave him. After uniting forces with La Malinche and Sor Juana, in Act 2 when Diego attempts to come back to declare his love for Frida again and tries to convince her that maybe one day they may be together again, she states her conditions for their possible reconciliation. Her conditions: “I will provide for myself financially from the proceeds of my art. I will pay half of the household expenses. And I swear, like Lysistrata we’ll have no sexual intercourse,” (*Dreaming* 109). She stands firm in her feminist convictions and displays agency over her self-expression of her gender identity and independent desires. Leaving Diego with a difficult decision—Frida or sex—Frida and Sor Juana leave him Exerting exerting her freedom in sexual identity in repressing his sexual desires, Frida says, “You know Sor Juana, a man’s sex is just in one place, whereas a woman’s sexual organs are all over her body,” (*Dreaming* 109).

Finally, the character Chi-Chi is not a historical figure but rather is representative of a more modern day woman; her role as reporter within this dream-setting allows her to transcend the limitation of historical reference and act as symbol for the treatment of women in a modern day setting in either Mexican or Chicano culture. Chi-Chi is a secondary role double cast by the actor playing Sor Juana, as instructed in the character descriptions. She has two appearances in the play. She is the first character to appear on stage. Her opening lines frame the duo-narratives of the play; Chi-Chi is reporting live from Alameda Park where Diego Rivera’s mural is about to

receive a new home but also explains that it is occurring within a fantastic dream, which she invites the audience to join (*Dreaming* 59). Chi-Chi's second and final appearance in the play is her as the host of a satirical television show where Cortés pretends to be Porfirio Díaz. In this scene, Chi-Chi enters in a "low-cut sequined dress" in which she awkwardly flirts with and passionately kisses Don Porfis as she asks him about his role in the country. This scene, although full of humor, offers a critique of the gender role often designated to women both in entertainment and in politics in Mexican and Chicano cultures. Both cultures can be critiqued here because of the ambiguity and dream-effect of the scene and because of Chi-Chi's non-affiliation with a specific people. Chi-Chi, in her roles of sexualized-woman and as inadequate reporter, brings attention to the portrayal of gender expected by women in a patriarchal setting. Chi-Chi repeatedly praises Don Porfis and allows herself to be kissed and fondled even though everything Don Porfis is saying is ridiculous. Chi-Chi praises of him include, "big boss", "You are a genius", and "My God, they don't make men like this anymore" (*Dreaming* 102-4). She praises him solely on the base of his manliness because his suggestions for solutions to issues in Mexico that she questions him about are nonsensical: "One Day without Air" and "One Day without Cars" to solve air pollution, "One Day without Work" to solve unemployment, and finally, "One Day without Tacos" to solve hunger (*Dreaming* 104).

In the play the character La Catrina is not representative of a historical time period in Mexico as she is in the mural but rather she symbolizes death; she soothes Diego to his death and ends his dream. Through La Catrina death takes the form of a female, which is an ironic ending to Diego's life, as women were his biggest weakness and indulgence, according to the female characters. Her interaction with Diego is a highly sexualized scene in which she soothes him as she "offers him from her bony teat" and he exclaims to her, "Yes, Catrina my calaca flaca, let us

lie together. Let us bind our bones together. Imagine the noise when we fuck!” (*Dreaming* 122). After Diego reaches his climax, she reassures him of his male-centric existence, “Of you Diego, of you. All of are dreaming of you!” (*Dreaming* 123). This final scene reiterates the patriarchal hierarchy of males in culture. At the end of his dream, Diego makes his dream, ultimately all about himself.

4.5 The On-Going Resistance Against Patriarchal Gender Standards

Carlos Morton’s *Dreaming of a Sunday in the Alameda* is a multi-dimensional and humorous play. Within a dream-like narrative framework Morton captures the essence of Diego Rivera’s mural *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central* and brings to life a variety of historical figures from the painting and presents their conflict within Mexican history.

Although the play does not contain lead female characters, through the perceptions and treatment of the female characters by the male characters, it offers a critique of the patriarchal standards imposed on the female gender. The characters Malinche, Sor Juana, and Frida Kahlo, display agency through their self-expression of a gender identity that breaks from that which is applied to them by Mexican patriarchy. These three characters criticize man’s desire to sexualize a woman’s body at his leisure instead of her choosing for herself by exerting dominion over their own sexuality. The characters Chi-Chi and Catrina form part of the criticism of the patriarchy in a different way than the other female characters. Chi-Chi depicts a satirical image of the ideal female according to the patriarchy, who appears in a skimpy dress only to praise the man she interviews and allow him to kiss and touch her as he sees fit. Catrina, on the other hand, is representative of man’s fate is when he values his sexuality and convictions over the freedom of self-expression of a female. The character Catrina brings death to Diego after his inability to indulge in his sexual desires and to allow Frida her own self-expression. It is through these

characters and their display of self-expression and resistance to the patriarchy that *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* should be considered a feminist play.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Morton's Contribution to Chicano Theatre

From Luis Valdez's *El Teatro Campesino* to the works created and produced by Chicanas to the more contemporary plays written by Chicano/as, Chicano theatre has always reflected the beauty, diversity, and challenges faced by the Chicano and Latino people. As political and social changes have occurred in the US so has Chicano theatre transformed to demonstrate the impact of those changes. Chicano theatre was born out of the Chicano Farmer Workers Movement in the 1960s and grew later through the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in the 1970s. In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Chicanas entered the stage with a strong sense of independence and began creating works that represented the realities of being a Chicana or being a lesbian. The works of Chicanas like Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa boldly challenged Chicano gender identities and unapologetically represented women and queers in a way that opened doors for other topics to be addressed on the Chicano stage.

Within the vastness that makes up Chicano theatre, Morton's works stand out for his unique approach in addressing issues of identities through historical and cultural lenses. It is through his use of historical, mythological, and legendary figures from both Chicano and Mexican cultures that he is able to write about topics such as social injustices, historical events, cultural *mestizaje*, racial identity, and gender identities. Plays such as *El Jardín* (1974), *The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales* (1976), *Johnny Tenorio* (1983), and *Rancho Hollywood* (1979) are some of his most produced plays that capture Chicano culture and the challenges faced by Chicanos. Other plays such as *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992) and *La Malinche* (1984) display Morton's interest in Mexican culture and history. In more recent plays such as *Brown Buffalo* (2013) and

Zona Rosa (2013) Morton recounts the mysterious deaths of two separate individuals, Oscar “Zeta” Acosta in *Brown Buffalo* and Dr. Francisco Estrada Valle in *Zona Rosa*, both of which occurred in Mexico. Morton’s contribution to Chicano theatre has been and continues to be unique, honest, and impactful.

5.2 Gender Portrayals and Feminism in Morton’s Works

This thesis analyzed the gender identities presented in three of Morton’s plays: *Lilith* (1977), *La Malinche* (1984), and *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992). In these plays, Morton displays the gender roles perpetuated by Chicano culture in an authentic and honest way that at times challenges the gender status quo. I have argued that these the plays by Morton have feminist portrayals of their female characters and therefore, should be considered feminist positive plays. With the gender theories by Judith Butler and Jill Dolan as well as feminist theory by Chicanas such as Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Adelaida R. Del Castillo as a theoretical foundation this thesis offered an analysis of the gender identities represented in the plays, specifically of the female characters. When writing these plays, Morton has stated that he was not influenced by the gender and feminist theories yet they each contain strong and empowered female characters. These plays were not considered feminist at the time of their emergence and with the exception of *Lilith*, the playwright himself did not intend them as such. Yet, through my analysis, the plays are revealed to demonstrate a feminist approach in their portrayal of female characters through the agency they are given.

The female characters of these plays are either a historical, mythological, or legendary figure from the culture represented in the play. This aspect of the female characters allows for an analysis of the historical or cultural impact of that figure within the play. An analysis of the gender politics off stage is also done as a reference to how Morton represents it in his works. The

works of Chicanas that began to emerge in the 1980s are commonly referred to as feminist works because of their focus on the female's identity within the culture. Although these plays by Morton are not part of traditional Chicana feminist works, the gender portrayals in these plays demonstrate the transition in gender representation within Chicano culture. As Judith Butler and Jill Dolan both suggest, gender identities can be deconstructed and reformed, which is precisely what feminist works do to challenge the gendered status quo and the patriarchy. In analyzing Chicana sexuality and gender Debra J. Blake argues that Chicanas "refigured", or re-imagined, cultural and historical figures to address contemporary racial and gender identity politics. Blake states that the refiguring of such figures "implies agency, a conscious choice to think and act for oneself or in the interest of the community. Cultural refiguring identifies refiguring and destructive images, ideas, symbols, and practices, directed towards women and disenfranchised people" (5). The female characters in these three plays are Morton's re-reading of their historical, legendary, or mythological figure counterparts. Morton deconstructs and reforms these female characters to be strong-willed, intelligent, and confident through giving each of them agency to challenge the patriarchy within their cultures. The unique agency displayed by the female characters in each of the plays analyzed allows them each to challenge the gender politics within their cultures. In all three of the plays, the female characters challenge patriarchal restraints put on them because of their gender.

5.3 Agency and Feminism in *Lilith*, *La Malinche*, and *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda*

This thesis was organized by the three plays analyzed. In each chapter, first the historical or cultural impact on the play is considered followed by an analysis of the portrayal of the female characters and the agency displayed by each. This dual analysis reveals how each play can be considered feminist because of the way that gender and female characters are rendered.

The first play studied is *Lilith* (1977). This is the creation-based play that explores the Jewish myth of Lilith, the first female created and first wife of Adam. According to Jewish mythology, Lilith was the first female created as an equal to Adam, and it was her actions that lead to the later creation of Eve as Adam's mate. In Chapter 1 of the thesis, I explored the importance of the Lilith myth in Jewish culture and the impact it has had on Jewish women historically and culturally. Traditionally, Lilith is portrayed as a succubus, child-killing, whore, and often as a rebellious woman. This vilification of Lilith had a negative impact on the treatment of women within Jewish culture which Jay Jacoby references when he explains, "the vilification of Lilith, and by extension, of any women who refused to submit to male domination, represented an effort to discredit attempts to undermine the patriarchal Jewish tradition," (80). Jewish feminist, Judith Plaskow re-reads the Lilith myth by re-telling the midrash without demonizing Lilith and by uniting her and Eve in a bond of sisterhood (30-2). Plaskow argues that "Lilith is not a demon; rather she is a woman named a demon by a tradition that does not know what to do with strong women" (82). The strong and empowered Lilith in Plaskow's re-reading is analogous in Morton's play. Morton's Lilith challenges gender identity being assigned to her by various male characters, whom are representative of the patriarchy, and resists the mistreatment she endures that occurs solely based on gender. Another parallelism between Plaskow's feminist re-reading of Lilith and Morton's *Lilith* is the sisterhood that is formed between Lilith and Eve which leads to a shared awareness of the gender inequalities that eventually all women would face. In the play, Lilith is driven to challenge and transform the identity prescribed to her simply based on her gender. This desire for agency over her gender identity is what allows Morton's Lilith to break free from the oppression of patriarchy and form a sisterhood with Eve in efforts to support and gain strength. This agency reflects that of Chicanas

at the time that *Lilith* was written (1977). Morton's *Lilith* is portrayed as a pro-typical feminist, who possesses agency of her gender identity and forms a bond with Eve to struggle against oppressive practices.

The second play analyzed, *La Malinche* (1984), presents the historical characters Malintzin Tenepal and Hernán Cortés within an adaptation of Euripides's *Medea*. Chapter Two offered a detailed account of Malintzin's impact on Mexican culture and history. As the translator and mistress of Hernán Cortés, Malintzin Tenepal played an essential role in conquering of the New World by Spanish conquistadors as well as the creation of the *mestizo* race. Although there are few first accounts of Malintzin Tenepal recorded, culturally she has been regarded as playing a crucial part in the creation of a new people. It is because of this historical role that she has been portrayed negatively and with disdain, that is until Chicana feminists began to re-read her historical and cultural roles. Through the works of Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, Adelaida del Castillo, and many others, Malintzin Tenepal was transformed from traitorous mother to patron feminist mother. Chicana feminists re-interpreted Malintzin's historical role as empowering instead of demeaning by arguing that her part in the conquest of her people was an act of agency instead of involuntary servitude. In Morton's *La Malinche*, Malintzin is portrayed within the Malinche-Medea-La Llorona paradigm, which scholars such as Luis Leal and Sandra Messinger Cypess have argued has a negative connotation on Malintzin as treacherous mother and irrational woman.

My analysis of the play revealed that Morton's *Malinche* does not fall prey to the negative implications of the Malinche-Medea-La Llorona complex because of the agency displayed by Malinche as a woman and a mother. Morton's *La Malinche* challenges the stereotype of treacherous mother that is often applied to Medea, Malinche, and La Llorona by

giving her agency of her motherhood through her indigenous identity. Morton's Malinche is portrayed as a *madre protectora*, a protective mother, who defies patriarchy in order to free herself and her son from the oppressive ways of the Spaniards. Malinche's struggle in Morton's play is reflective of the challenges faced by Chicanas, whereby women are expected to remain a virgin until motherhood and to then be fully devoted to her husband and family. Those who were unwilling to comply with this gender identity are labelled as a *malinchista* or *vendida*, traitors and sell-outs. By resisting the patriarchal-heterosexual dichotomy of their cultures by being a lesbian or opting against motherhood altogether provokes a rejection by traditionalist readings of acceptable behavior. At the end of Morton's play, Malinche allows her son Martin to be killed in order to save him from his father; an extreme example of resisting her culture's demands on womanhood and motherhood. The character Hernán Cortés, representative of the patriarchy, criticizes and labels Malinche as evil and treacherous when he learns that she has had their son killed but she stands firmly by her decision and considers his death as her ultimate sacrifice which allowed her and Martin to be free from the constraints of patriarchy.

The final play analyzed is *Dreaming on a Sunday in the Alameda* (1992). This play differs from *Lilith* and *La Malinche* in that the lead characters are not female but nonetheless the female characters of *Dreaming* are perceived as feminist through the agency they display over their androgynous self-expression and their resistance to patriarchal values. As the title of the play reveals, *Dreaming on a Sunday* is based on the Diego Rivera mural by the same name, *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central*. Morton's theatrical rendition of Rivera's Mexico City mural, is set within a dream-like structure in which the character Diego dreams about his painting and the significance of key characters from the mural in his personal life and in Mexican history. Through a satirical portrayal of male characters cultural and gender

standards for females the play challenges the patriarchy's historical perceptions and treatment of women in Mexican culture. An analysis of the female character's interactions with male characters and with one another revealed that the female characters display agency of their androgynous self-expression and resist the gender identities prescribed by the patriarchy within their culture. With an almost equal distribution of gender in the character make-up, ten female and nine males, there are many interactions between the male and female characters that present the gender dynamics within the culture and perceptions each character have of the implications of gender. Notable historical female figures that are present in this play are Frida Kahlo, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, La Malinche, and La Catrina⁴. Other fictional female characters of importance in the play are Chi-Chi Batista, Blondie, and La Yerbera. Much like the historical figures Frida Kahlo and Sor Juana Inés de le Cruz, their characters in the play display agency over their gender identity through their androgynous characteristics as well as their challenge of patriarchal standards of the sexuality of women. The portrayals of other characters such as Malinche, Chi-Chi Batista, and La Catrina, and their interactions with male characters, display the lude and misogynistic nature of patriarchy. These characters' experience unfair treatment and are sexualized by the male characters with whom they interact. The combination of the two portrayals of female characters offers a critique of patriarchal gender standards and the sexuality of woman within Mexican culture.

5.4 A Feminist Re-Reading of Chicano Works

In this thesis, selected works by Carlos Morton were analyzed according to the feminist gender representation of the female characters. In each of the plays these characters display

⁴ La Catrina's character references José Guadalupe Posada's etching of *La Calavera Catrina* (1913) which is not a historical figure but rather represents cultural implications of a period in Mexican history.

agency over their gendered identity and are able to explore the cultural implications and challenges. They challenge the patriarchal standards imposed on them by their male counterparts through the agency displayed by each of them within the context of their play. The historical, legendary, and mythological figures therein are considered to be feminist themselves; this is significant because of the feminist implications that were transferred from the figures to the characters in the plays. Analysis of each historical, legendary, or mythological figure revealed a continuous effort by Chicana feminist theorist to reinvent the significance of such figures to empower Chicanas. Morton was not influenced by nor did he consult the feminist theories that are used to defend this thesis but it is clear that his female characters are often portrayed as strong-willed, empowered, driven, and confident.

The purpose of this feminist re-reading of selected Morton works is to draw attention to efforts by playwrights, who are not commonly considered to be feminist, to portray a Chicana identity on stage that reflects the gender politics and diversity of the culture. In her rereading of Americo Paredes' work *George Washing Gomez* Sandra Soto writes:

From the vantage point of the early 1980s, when Moraga wrote *Loving in the War Years*, the explicit feminist critique of Chican@ gender norms had become fairly common. But when the teenaged Paredes wrote *George Washing Gomez* in 1930s South Texas, he obviously did not have access to that collective critique. Therefore, it is quite remarkable that he goes to such lengths to illustrate how the girls and women in Gaulinto's life are marginalized. (120)

Like Paredes, Morton's work reveals, in the words of Soto, "a prescient sex-positive and feminist ethos" (14). Morton's works were not considered feminist when they were written, and even now would likely not be listed side-by-side with the works of Chicana feminists but nonetheless, this thesis applies the label of "sex-positive" to his plays because of the portrayal of female characters with feminist convictions and agendas. The female characters in the plays analyzed

demonstrate an agency that challenges and reconfigures the gender constraints of the Chicano culture, an effort undertaken primarily by Chicana feminist and more contemporary writers.

Gender identity continues to be a heavily debated topic both on and off stage. The importance of re-reading plays such as *Lilith*, *La Malinche*, and *Dreaming on a Sunday* as feminist is to continue to challenge the gender standards imposed on both men, women, and transgender persons within Chicano culture. Bringing these issues to the stage enables awareness and sets the conditions for social change to occur. Chicano theatre came to life through a social-political movement that advocated for the civil rights and cultural identities of Chicanos in the United States. Although evolution of Chicano/a theatre has occurred, these efforts continue through works by playwrights like Carlos Morton who through historical and cultural lenses reimagines Chicano and Chicana identities and the implications of gender on the culture.

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