

Anzaldua uses *la tres madres*, or “the three mothers” to speak out against the transgressions imposed upon women throughout time. Her feminist critiques center around both male-dominated America and Mexico. She says, “For 300 years she has been a slave, a force of cheap labor, colonized by the Spaniard, the Anglo, by her own people” (22). It is through this awareness of the exploitation of women that Anzaldua points out that she is not alone. For centuries, women were silenced and forced to serve man’s needs. It is not a single group of men guilty of these horrors; her “own people” share the guilt equally. Both the “Spaniard” and the “Anglo,” whose qualities, as the product of a bordertown, Anzaldua shares. Anzaldua continues, however, that she is no stranger to subjugation and abandonment. In fact, she states that Chicana women have three figures of abandonment in their culture, which are the three mothers. Guadalupe, the virgin mother, is the symbol of everlasting devotion whose love will never waiver. La Chingada, Hernán Cortés’ mistress whom Mexicans blame for betraying her people, has been outcast by the culture. Lastly, *la Llorona* is the mother forever in search of her deceased children; Anzaldua claims she inhabits both sides of abandonment. These three mothers remain with Anzaldua and provide her with the strength necessary to persevere. They are the proof of oppression, and through their own perseverance, a symbol of strong will. However, throughout time, the purpose of these figures and the responses they are to evoke has been corrupted. The Virgin Guadalupe, she claims, is to calm women, Chingada is to strike shame for their indio blood, and *La Llorona* is a mixture of the two, which only encourages the “virgen/puta dichotomy.” It is these very dichotomies that Anzaldua takes aim against, and in the face of the corruption these figures have experienced, Anzaldua supports and connects with these mothers even more so.