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Magical Realism in Chicano Literature

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Chicanos use the literary mode of magical realism to express their cultural identity. Mislabeling works from authors of Latin or Hispanic descent continues as literature from the bordertowns along the US – Mexican border reached general audiences. This work clarifies this misclassification by defining magical realism and Curanderismo, often confused with witchcraft. Chicano magical realism shows the reclamation of identity and cultures thriving in the borderlands. Magic lives in the third spaces created throughout their communities, and Chicano magical realism explores what it means to be Chicano through supernatural elements in their fiction. After distinguishing between the two, this thesis shows how Chicanos adapted magical realism and created a structure that focuses on issues for their culture: third spaces, mythmaking, machismo, and the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe. I also discuss the evolution of Chicano magical realism as it follows the political climate of the borderlands.

INDEX WORDS: Magical realism, Chicano literature, Curanderismo

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my friends and family who had the patience to supported me through all my mental breakdowns. Thank you!

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Thank you to my committee members who have supported me throughout this journey. Thank you for the safe space, either through email or in person, to be able to talk through the process of writing this thesis. Special thanks to Audrey Goodman, who believed in my work and agreed to be my director before our working relationship started; I appreciate every moment of this process with you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

My parents migrated from Mexico to the United States, and I was born and raised in Georgia. By the standard definition of Chicano, Americans descended from the indigenous Mexicans living on the land that initially belonged to Mexico—I am not Chicana; I am merely Mexican American. During my research, I realized that the only difference between us is how close we grew up to the border, and I think that that is a testament to the success of the Chicano movement in terms of amplifying their Mexican culture and being proud of their identity. Our blended religion, devotion to La Virgen de Guadalupe, and so on are prevalent in states that weren't part of the original Mexican lands stolen by the U.S., so their cry for Mexican Pride was loud and clear. Viva Mejco Cabrones

INTRODUCTION

The border between Mexico and the United States overflows with cultures and traditions different from the rest. There are many indigenous groups, including the Yaqui (traditionally known as Yoeme) of southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico; the Cocopah of Arizona related to the Cucapa of northern Mexico; the Lipan Apache community of southern Texas, and many more; generations of Mexicans who stayed in that land after the border shifted are thriving, given the history between the native Americans and colonizers. After the Mexican American War, the many Mexican families living in the territories north of the Rio Grande are now in U.S. territory. Since 1520, when the Spanish entered and conquered Tenochtitlan, the people needed to assimilate and adapt. As the tension between the border grew, so did the need to assimilate as they were not only rejected by the Anglos living among them but also by Mexico; assimilating made them more Anglo than Mexican, but not Mexican enough for Mexico. Thus, the Chicano[1] movement emerged from the restlessness of the hybrid society thriving in the borderlands and their desire to define their identity by returning to their roots. The term "Chicano" was originally a racist slur reclaimed by Pachucos, another subculture associated with zoot fashion, as an expression of defiance to American society (Paz 14). The Chicano movement of the 60s and 70s led Mexican Americans to reclaim their indigenous roots, almost entirely erased by the assimilation caused by America seizing Mexican lands. Often called El Movimento, the Chicano movement was a social and political movement to combat structural racism, achieve community empowerment, and reject cultural assimilation. Art and religion became an outlet for la cultura to express their solidar-

[1] I will keep the traditional pronouns of Chicano/Chicana to stay consistent with the quotes and texts that use the term.

ity and define their identity. The movement's decline began when political demonstrations became a site for police brutality; others would argue that excluding Chicana issues added to the fall. While the movement covers an extensive list of topics, the first few Chicano organizations focused on restoring land grants and farm workers' rights.

While Chicanos reclaim their indigenous roots and live their hybrid lives, Chicano literature uses magical realism to showcase this reclamation and culture thriving in borderlands. Magic lives in the third spaces created throughout their communities, and Chicano magical realism explores what it means to be Chicano through supernatural elements in fiction. In his article, "Magical Realism and Its Discontents," Juan De Castro states that "Hispanic writers are expected to provide the world market with specific literary products: politically correct stories of exploited migrants or magical narratives that repeat what had once been Garcia Marquez's novelistic innovations" (De Castro 20). Due to a continuous lack of understanding that has spread to borderland literature, Anglo audiences categorize most of the literature accurately portraying the spiritual beliefs and traditions within the border as magical realism; this misunderstanding also continues to spread as the definition of Chicano begins evolving. My goal is to give a new perspective of what unknowing audiences see as magical elements and argue that those elements are sacred,[2]cultural practices not belonging under the umbrella of the supernatural or magical. Once that line is drawn, I discuss how Chicanos adapted magical realism from Latin American and created a structure that focuses on issues for their culture: third spaces, mythmaking, machismo, and the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe. I also discuss the evolution of Chicano magical realism as it follows the political climate of the borderlands.

[2] Referring to Curanderismo, talked about later in this thesis. Pagan Catholicism is a big cultural aspect as well as a religious one.

The layout of this thesis is simple: First, I will briefly discuss the Mexican Revolution and the division of the Mexican American border. Discussing the Revolution is necessary because it is the inspiration behind the structure of the Chicano movement, and most of the literature written by Chicanos involved the war. Then, I will analyze *The Death of Artemio Cruz* by Carlos Fuentes as one of the more famous novels having the Mexican Revolution as a central point in the narrative. This novel is part of the Latin American Boom[3] that happened around the same time as the Chicano movement; its success is due to the time setting and its unique narration style. Next, I will discuss *Pedro Paramo* by Juan Rulfo, a prominent novel within the Latin community. I am talking about the books in this order because *Artemio Cruz* begins with the Mexican Revolution, and *Pedro Paramo* ends with the Revolution. Also, *Pedro Paramo* is considered the foundation of what will eventually become the genre of magical realism. The last section discusses the meaning of magical realism and how it became popular in Latin America.

In the next section, I discuss magical realism and analyze the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. I will also discuss key concepts such as third spaces and their importance in the genre and later for Chicano/a literature. Chapter Two will focus on early Chicano/a works such as the poem "Madre Sofia" by Alberto Rios, *So Far From God* by Ana Castillo, and *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya; these novels focus on mythmaking, the two novels reimagining La Llorona, and La Virgen de Guadalupe. By introducing the practice of Curanderismo within these works, I plan to outline the differences between magic and cultural traditions. Explaining

[3] The Latin American Boom began in the 1960s. The political climate within the countries of which these authors lived in heavily influenced their writing. This was also one of the first times that many of Latin American novels made it to European countries. Magical Realism became a popular genre within the writers, though not all Boom writers wrote within the genre. Many of the important writers of the Boom include Garcia Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Julio Cortázar. The movement fizzled out in the 70s-80s. (Hispaniola)

these differences is essential because many novels that mention rituals and practices from other cultures, like curanderismo, are automatically disrespected by being labeled magical realism.

The first section of chapter three discusses the novel *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* by Rudy Ruiz, a Mexican American author who grew up in a bordertown in Texas. Rudy Ruiz led many Chicano organizations in college, and his works are in many lists when searching for recommendations on Chicano/a literature. After reading the novel *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez*, it is simple to conclude that it is a work of magical realism, and this thesis discusses that while the protagonist may not be a Chicano himself, this can be considered a Chicano novel showing early examples of Chicano culture, and magical realism. Within this chapter, I will also review third spaces and show how Ruiz created many third spaces through the syncretism of cultures and also the supernatural with the real world. Lastly, within this section, I plan to discuss machismo culture within the Chicano/a community and the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe in Chicano culture. The second section within this chapter briefly discusses new work within the Chicano canon and how the new works introduce a new aspect of how magical realism is being used.

While Latin American authors use magical realism to discuss historical events in their countries, Chicano/as and the people living along the U.S.-Mexican border initially use magical realism to define and establish their identities. As the political climate changes within the borderlands, so does magical realism evolve, changing Chicano literature to what we now see in the 21st century. It is essential to distinguish what is an example of magical realism and what is an example of the many rituals and practices seen in the borderlands so that there is no more miscategorizing of novels with culture practices and novels involving magic. Especially as the political climate starts to shift to immigrants physically crossing the borders while bringing in more

traditions from their countries, not just Mexico, as they make it to the north. Anglos living in the popular areas where immigrants tend to settle after crossing are constantly exposed to different, unknown cultural practices; literature commenting on this exposure and border politics is part of the political evolution that magical realism is going through.

1 THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION AND THE DIVISION OF BORDERS

This chapter begins with a summary of the Mexican Revolution. It is important to set foundations to understand the future structures established in contemporary novels, and the war is foundational in Mexico's literature. The Mexican Revolution is arguably the point at which Mexico established their own identity as they delt with political issues, and thus it is the foundation of many novels in which identity is a major theme. This chapter explores how the novels *Pedro Paramo* and *The Death of Artemio Cruz* mention the revolution in their respective narratives since they both feature characters impacted by the political unease from which the revolution sparked by The Mexican Revolution.

The upper class in Mexico grouped the people "into three categories: European in origin, mestizo, and Indian" (Richmond 14). As the country grew after gaining independence, unrest between the rich and poor increased because of political and social inequalities. Land distribution and the government were imbalanced precisely: "The oligarchical policies of Porfirio Diaz… favored the wealthy landowners and industrialists" (Davila). These inequalities also trickled into the churches with their role in creating "the municipio libre and its asamblea popular and by the rise of secular intellectual pluralism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Richmond 1). In 1910, while Diaz ran for his 7th term, Francisco Madero, leader of the Anti-re-*electionistas*, announced his candidacy. Diaz sent Madero to jail and claimed he won the reelection, and after his release, Madero called for a revolt in a newspaper from San Antonio, Texas. Though the official uprising failed, it ignited revolutionary ideas throughout Mexico; important figures like Pancho Villa, Pascual Orozco, and Emiliano Zapata ran a campaign and forced Diaz out of office, instating Madero as president in the spring of 1911.

Unfortunately, Madero's regime disappointed its supporters by not recognizing the need for economic changes. Zapata stopped supporting Madero since he failed to restore land to the indigenous people immediately. Orozco led a revolutionary movement in the north because of how slow Madero's reform was moving. Many Mexican refugees fled to Texas during this switch of power; before the Mexican American war in 1914, these refugees were already seen as dangerous. Working-class Mexicans were often grouped alongside African Americans in the racial hierarchy, and they worked as peones, working jobs that Anglos considered beneath them. "With the need to carry out this work, more and more Mexican immigrants entered Texas" (Richmond 13). The United States' scarce involvement in the war did not affect the outcome. The U.S government supported whoever was in power at the time; President Taft sent troops to the border but did not let them to directly intervene.

Many people were in power during the war, each overthrowing the other. After Madero, General Victoriano Huerta took over and even executed Madero a week into his leadership. Also, during Taft's presidency, Taft's Mexican ambassador conspired with the anti-Madero coup, but President Wilson did not recognize Huerta's power. Venustianio Carranza later overthrew General Huerta. Though he was also power-hungry, Carranza also wanted peace. Carranza "formed the Constitutional Army and a new constitution into which he accepted many of the rebel demands" (PBS). The official end of the war was in 1917, with the signing of the constitution. Unfortunately, the fighting did not end until the 1920s. The goal of the revolution was to equalize the land distributions among the wealthy and the poor and to ensure a better way of life for the farm workers. However, many believe that all the war achieved was a constant switch in power.

1.1 The Death of Artemio Cruz

As a defining moment in Mexican History, the Revolution is often the backdrop of works of literature. Carlos Fuentes's *The Death of Artemio Cruz* is a critical novel emerging from the Latin American Boom of the '60s and '70s. Fuentes's family traveled a lot, living in Washington D.C to South America, and because of this Fuentes's awareness of his Mexican identity in a foreign country grew. Inspired by many stories his grandparents shared at the dinner table, the novel is an epic perspective of Mexican history, as the Mexican Revolution acts as an essential influence for most of the book's plot. A professor in Wellesley College, Alexander Coleman stated that *Artemio Cruz* is "a historical tour de force depicting 20th-century Mexico; …following the ruminations of the moribund, robber baron Artemio Cruz through the horror [of] the Revolution to the present day…Cruz embodied the tragic contradictions of a revolution which stopped being essentially revolutionary far too soon" (Coleman). As Artemio Cruz is on his deathbed, and as his family and assistant are waiting for him to die, Cruz is focusing on significant moments of his life that have led him to where he is now beginning from the Mexican Revolution, exploring the corrupting effects caused by power, criticizing the distortion of the revolution's original purpose. Cruz is the product of his indigenous mother's sexual assault by his wealthy Criollo father, symbolizing Mexico's class conflict and colonial history. I believe understanding the complexities of the narration style Fuentes used in this novel helps to understand the complexities of the evolution of magical realism throughout Latin America. This novel is not magical realism but "heir to the exacerbated social conscience which burst forth in the flood of so-called 'novels of the Mexican Revolution'" (Coleman). Discussed later in the thesis, magical realism comments on the country's political climate, so a lot of magical realism novels are part of the group of "Mexican Revolution" novels, but not all Mexican Revolution novels are magical realism.

The novel consists of the three main narration types: first, second, and third person. All voices are Artemio Cruz. When the book is in the first and second person, we are in Artemio's mind, and when the novel is in the third-person perspective, we switch to a moment in Artemio's life. Artemio Cruz wakes up on his deathbed, and looking around, suddenly aggravated, he sees his estranged family and his assistant, and he is aware of his failing body. This section is in first person, but erratic and angry as it is the dying man's thoughts and not actual dialogue. In the room, Artemio has difficulty speaking. However, his inner monologue is a non-stop rampage about how useless Catalina's attempts to say the words she never said are, how his daughter hates him but is grateful that Teresa brought his granddaughter, and how his assistant is the best man he knows. Throughout the novel, Artemio often stares in mirrors, constantly disgusted by "the reflection of [his] sick twin" (10). Denying that he is in his last moments, Artemio distracts his mind by remembering what he did the day before. A new section begins switching to a second-person narrative, and the voice reminds Artemio to think in the future tense. These "You" sections are Artemio's "twin" talking to him. The twin narrates the memory, giving the reader a very bullet-point account of what happened the day before, and the next section opens with the date of the day before. As he lies there, he feels his body, running his hand on his stomach aware of the smells and sensations as his body continues to lose function and cause him pain. This pain either reminds him of something from his past, or Artemio uses his memory to distract him from his pain. The dying older man, or his twin, is the voice that carries the narrative from his pain to his memories in the future tense and the inner struggle between reality and Artemio's rendition of the memory. Artemio "only wants to remember what is going to happen: [he does not] want to foresee what had already happened" (7). Artemio only wants to remember details that never truly happened, which is why his memories are in the future tense.

The first future-tense section recalls the day before, as he is unconscious; the twin "fore-tells" Artemio remembers the good times of his life and "other things, other days… days that, far back he pushed into oblivion…[he] will remember the half [he] left behind" (11). Even as he is dying, Artemio has always justified his actions, and as he remembers specific critical points in his life, the twin argues back. According to the twin, Artemio has been able to "think in black and white, good guys versus bad guys, God or the Devil," claiming that even Artemio's cruel-ness has a tinge of tenderness. The twin argues with Artemio and believes that Artemio was never able to use the world "evil" because "[he] did not want to live that intermediate, ambigu-ous zone between light and shadow where [he] can find forgiveness" (27). The twin reveals to the reader that Artemio's blame on destiny is unjustifiable because he cannot "become one thing and not the other," as in good or evil "…despite it all, [Artemio] would have to choose" (28). The choices of Artemio Cruz make him who he is in the present moment; his destiny and deci-sions intertwine, and the second life he wishes to live becomes obsolete.

After the future-tense section clarifies the memory and Artemio's true feelings and inten-tions, the next section, the third person, past-tense, "He," sections replay the memory invoked by Artemio's present pain detailed by the twin. The narration once again changes, this time to third-person omniscient. This narrator is fully omniscient because the reader is still in Artemio's mind, witnessing a memory. The novel continues in this pattern: First the "I" sections in the present tense, first person, during Artemio's dying moments are his attempt to distract himself. Second, the "You" sections are in the second-person, future tense, so Artemio's twin can bring forth the memory connected to his awareness of his body, and lastly the "He" sections show the memory to the reader; however, always staying inside of Artemio's mind.

As he is dying, Catalina and Teresa, his estranged wife and daughter, attempt to determine the whereabouts of Artemio's will; a priest comes in to grant him his last rites, and his assistant, Padilla, brings in and plays recordings of illegal and sketchy business deals Artemio made at his office. Artemio is shocked when he wakes up and realizes what has happened to him. As he sees his reflection in a mirrored handbag, he is enraged as he learns that he is "that old man whose features are fragmented by the uneven [purse]. [He is] that eye furrowed with accumulated rage, an old forgotten, but always renewed rage" (1). His rage is constantly interrupted by internal shouts of pain as he is very aware of his dying body, and he repeatedly mentally calls out to his old love, Regina. In his pain, he convinces himself to think about the events of the day before since "[Artemio Cruz] did not get sick yesterday," someone else got sick, the old man got sick, and his twin got ill (7). All these "I" sections are the same, as Artemio is constantly fighting between denial and rage to ignore the fear that he is genuinely feeling; he is "afraid of thinking about his own body" (4). Many phrases repeat throughout these sections. As she tries to comfort him, Artemio thinks, "What useless affection, Catalina," and wishes to be able to pull away his hand. When he willingly talks to the people in the room, he shares a memory with no other detail than a simple sentence: "We crossed the river on horseback. That morning, I waited for him happily." Artemio can "feel [the priest] coming, with that smell of incense," and he begs the habitants in the room to "open the window," but Catalina denies his request, claiming he "might catch a cold and make things worse." Teresa strongly believes that "he is just faking. He closes his eyes and fakes." While he, the wife, and daughter, bicker, Artemio reflects on his assistant and believes that he is "a man you can count on, this Padilla." When he calls out to Regina in multiple parts of the novel, another person comes forward: "I survived. Regina. What was your name? No. You, Regina. What was your name, nameless soldier?" as if this nameless person is trying to

be remembered, and Artemio is trying to forget. As his condition worsens, his inner monologue becomes less coherent, and details that he has been trying to forget coming to the surface; Artemio reveals that he has a son, Lorenzo. He details his complex relationship with Religion and, aloud, finally says there is no will and leaves all his empire to his assistant, Padilla.

Artemio Cruz does not follow a linear timeline; the first memory Artemio goes through is the day before, July of 1941, and some of the events leading to his collapse. The next event Artemio transports himself to is May 1919, when he meets Catalina and her father. Artemio set out to look for the family of the man who was his cellmate while Artemio was a prisoner. Amused, Artemio sees the "irony that he should be the one returning…and not the executed Bernal…a joke that [somebody could play] with the greatest seriousness; but proof of being alive, of a capacity to survive and strengthen one's own destiny at the expense of others" (37). Back to his dying body, the twin reminds Artemio of his unbalanced desires that led him to where he is now, how he longed for his wishes and the object of his desire to be the same thing. Artemio "will not stop desiring; [he] will remember because that way [he] will make the desired thing [his]…Memory is satisfied desire" (57). The back-and-forth conversation about desire then transports Artemio to 1913, when he was a Mexican Revolution soldier fighting with a US-backed general who opposed the rebellion. Young Artemio is in the arms of his one love, Regina, and after a passionate morning, he meditates on their relationship. The love he has for Regina always has Artemio thinking "past the lovemaking…[imagining] the renewed union; the union itself the weary joy of memory and then total desire again, augmented by love, by a new act of love: Bliss" (61). Regina is dead by the end of the memory, impacting the trajectory of Artemio's life. Her death begins his rebellion; he no longer cares for the revolution because his bliss is gone. Instead, he fights in the war for his own personal gain. Artemio switches to fighting with the rebellion, and after

meeting Catalina's brother in jail, Artemio sets out to meet her, marry her, and have control of her family's land. The rest of the novel details corrupt deals he made while working in his business and other romantic relationships Artemio experienced before his death.

Since we are in Artemio's mind, the timelines of his memories are organized around what he is willing to remember while he still has agency over his thoughts. These memories are connected to the way Artemio feels his body as he is slowly dying and the memory he is most desperately to forget finally creeps out; Lorenzo, Artemio's son, died in Spain during WW2. This memory comforts Artemio who lived a life of isolation but with his son, Artemio didn't feel lonely. The phrase "…I waited for him with happiness" is associated with his son and is the only phrase that follows with the pronoun 'We': "We rode our horses across the river." This phrase disrupts the memories of solitude and is the one-time Artemio did not feel alone after Regina. After the death of Regina, Artemio acts selfish by choosing ambition over desire; this shift in energy mirrors the attitude in the Mexican Revolution. The war began as a cry for reformation and equality, and in the end, it became another form of power struggle. The way the timelines are represented in this novel mirrors the unity between the rebels in the beginning of the war to the solitary aspirations toward the end; Artemio leaving the Federales to join the rebels for his own gain, the leaders of the rebels ended up overthrowing each other instead of staying a united front.

The audience reading *The Death of Artemio Cruz* already knows the results of the revolution, so they understand Artemio's want to stay in a solitary memory because unity is a nostalgic memory tainted by the corruption of solitary ambitions. The original idea of the revolution was to eliminate the giant gap between the rich and the poor populations in Mexico. Unfortunately, it became a power struggle within a group that was supposed to defend the poor. The tragic shift of ambition that Artemio works through only reminds the readers how easily ambition can corrupt

people with any form of power, especially after the success of *Pedro Paramo,* a novel filled with corruption among people of power, showing the poor get poorer and the rich getting richer, as the Mexican Revolution loomed over Comala.[4]

1.2 Pedro Paramo

Born In 1917, Juan Rulfo is famous for two works: A collection of short stories, *El Llano en Lamas* (1953) and *Pedro Paramo* (1955). Because of the success of the Latin American Boom[5] of the 60s, new audiences began to read the work of previous generations and they picked up *Pedro Paramo*. According to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Paramo* inspired him to write his most famous work, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The older novel is now considered a magical realist novel because of the political commentary, the odd narrative style, and the fantastical elements throughout the novel. This section shows how this novel is not magical realism, just a really weird book; *Pedro Paramo* may have inspired a magical realist book, but it is not one itself. Written in 1955, *Pedro Paramo* tells the story of Juan Preciado traveling to the ghost town of Comala to look for his father, Pedro Paramo. Pedro is a corrupt landowner, and his selfishness ends up being the downfall of Comala. What makes this book stand out is its uniquely chaotic narrative style; both the living and the dead have a voice throughout the novel, and often, the reader is unaware if the narrative is in the past with Pedro Paramo or the present with Juan Preciado. Not only do the voices intermingle within the story, but the narrative is not linear, which Fuentes took inspiration from. The narrative splits into sections as opposed to chapters. It is in first person as we follow Juan Preciado through his journey, and it switches to the third person when the narrative is in Pedro Paramo's perspective.

[4] Fictional town in *Pedro Paramo.*
[5] Literature movement that highlighted Latin and Hispanic authors. See end note i.

Juan Preciado's mother, Dolores, sends him to Comala to confront his father and "make him pay…" (Rulfo 3). On his way, he meets a burro driver named Abundio Martinez, and the driver tells Juan that he is also Pedro Paramo's son and that their father has been dead for years. When he is finally in the abandoned, dried-up town, he can hear voices whispering to themselves, though not a single person can be found. The first ghost Juan encounters sends him to Doña Eduviges Dyada for lodging, and we later find out that she is an old friend of Juan's mother—the narrative shifts to the past, to a luscious and thriving Comala. A young Pedro Paramo daydreams about his crush, Susanna, and his mother scolds him and tells him to help his grandmother sell corn. In this section, we learn that his family is poor and in debt.

Back to the present, Juan is recounting his travels and the reason he's intown until Doña Eduviges interrupts him and asks Juan if he can hear the horse galloping around town. The following fragment is in the past, where we discover that Miguel Paramo, Pedro Paramo's son, owns the horse running around. Miguel visits a woman in another town and one night, he jumps over a fence Pedro had just built but falls and immediately dies. During the funeral, Padre Renteria is torn between his duty of blessing the young man into heaven because there are rumors that Miguel killed Renteria's brother and raped his niece, Ana. Pedro bribes the padre with gold coins, and Renteria goes along with the blessing. Ana confesses to Padre Renteria about her rape, and el Padre feels guilty for praying for Miguel's soul; to make himself feel better, he tries to find a loophole in Ana's airtight story. This memory exemplifies the corruption between the churches and the wealthy people of Mexico at the time; the church focused more on its gain than serving the people. There are more examples of corruption when he refuses to pray for Eduviges, who, before her death, lived nobly but committed suicide in despair. Eduviges' sister, Maria,

begs Padre Renteria to pray for her, but he refuses unless Maria can find the money for the prayers and some masses. Again, refusing to pray for a poor woman unless her family collects the "needed" funds reiterates the corruptness of the church and its refusal to serve the people without monetary gain.

Doña Eduviges disappears from the house, and Juan leaves the haunted room because of the screams of a man hanged there. Juan wanders through town, and though the town is empty, it is full of the echoes of the ghostly inhabitants still living there. Juan runs into a couple that seem alive and stays with them for several days. The woman reveals to him that she and her husband are brother and sister, and she remains locked in her house for fear of being seen living in sin. With the brother out searching for a calf, Juan and the sister sleep in the same bed, and the woman's body melts and turns into soil, mixing with her sweat and eventually mixing into mud. Juan feels suffocated and leaves the room to the suffocating heat outside the house. It is hard for him to breathe, and finally, he stops breathing. Dorotea calls out to Juan and tells him they are buried together, with Dorotea in his arms. The two then hear the voice of a woman reminiscing about her deceased mother, and Dorotea confirms that the voice belongs to Susana, Pedro's last wife, buried close to them. Pedro loved Susana and treated her very well; devastated by her passing, Pedro shuts down La Media Luna, leaving the people of the town with no work, eventually shutting down the whole town.

The last half of the novel is in the past; Susana is hallucinating about her dead husband, and Pedro is desperate to get her some help. She refuses when Padre Renteria tries to give her communion and her last rites, and eventually, she dies. All the churches ring their bells in honor of Susana's death, but some of the town's folk mistake the mourning bells for bells of celebration and start a party that lasts for days. That is when Pedro Paramor decides to shut down the town;

he is furious that they are celebrating instead of mourning his beloved Susana's death. Years pass, and Pedro slowly wastes his days sitting in a chair in a dark room. Abundio, from earlier in the novel, rides into town to ask for money to pay for his wife's funeral. He drunkenly runs into Dorotea, one of the few people still living in the deserted town and asks for money. Pedro is watching this encounter from his chair but only thinking about Susana. Men run over to the scene of Dorotea and Abundio, and they find Dorotea on the floor, Pedro bleeding, and Abundio holding a knife. The men carry Abundio back into town, and Dorotea asks Pedro if he wants lunch; he says yes, but he cannot get out of his chair and falls over "like a pile of rocks" (124). *Pedro Paramo*'s wealthy ranchero shows how the real rancheros' corruption led to their own downfall.

Many strange things happen through the novel; however, *Pedro Paramore* is not magical realism because of the circumstances surrounding the town. "If a rational explanation prevails in the end, then the story is neither fantastic nor marvelous[6], but simply strange or uncanny" (Camayd-Freixas 9). The circumstances surrounding the town of Comala have rational explanations when reading *Paramo* with an unbiased, analytical lens— meaning not thinking about magical realism. The thriving, lush Comala of the past represents the false sense of progress with the actual Mexican government. Financial corruption occurs hidden in the lushness of the town, but in the present not only do we see its long-term effects, but corrupt dealings cannot hide anymore. The sins of the people are out on display for the bystander to see. In the present, Juan walks into a literal ghost town; the ghost of the citizens who have died there haunt the town of Comala because of their past sins tethering them to the land. As the sister/wife melts into the ground, the reader is witnessing a tethering since she is in an incestuous relationship with her brother instead

[6] Alejo Carpentier created this concept for Latin America, referring to cultural syncretism coming from the clash between Western and nonwestern belief systems.

of abandoning the town along with the other towns folk. While in the past, there aren't many supernatural moments, but when they do happen, the characters are scared and haunted instead of accepting the supernatural elements as part of their reality. The corruption and sins of the people had a physical effect on the town, and it is as if the town is retaliating by keeping the sinners there literally dead or alive. The sister/wife accepts her faith only because she has witnessed many other tethering, and it was only a matter of time for her to become another ghost stuck in the ghost town of Comala.

In the introduction to his critical text *Magical Realism,* Ignacio López-Calvo defines magical realism as "a mode…of literary narration… where elements that seem magical or unreal are blended within an otherwise mundane and realistic narrative or setting" (xx). The uncanny narration of both *The Death of Artemio Cruz* and *Pedro Paramo*, the former inspired by the latter, is simply a stylistic choice by their respective authors. There are no actual magical moments to carry out the narratives; In *Artemio Cruz*, the narrative unravels as Cruz losses control over his dying body and the memories he suppresses surface for him to confront. In *Paramo*, the story is told in the first-person present tense as the reader follows Jaime through the town of Comala; the supernatural elements are happening to him and around him, but they don't drive the plot either. Jaime literally melts to his death because he is in a town with no food or water and deathly high temperatures, but again, this isn't an everyday occurrence for him, especially since he is not an original inhabitant of the town. There are no magical elements that blend with the literary narration of either *The Death of Artemio Cruz* or *Pedro Paramo.*

1.3 What is Magical Realism

Understanding the definition of magical realism is essential to differentiating works of magical realism from those that are not. Dr. Erik Camayd-Freixas specializes in cultural and literary studies of colonial and contemporary Latin America. In his contribution to *Magical Realism*, Camayd-Freixas recounts that 'the term 'magical realism' was coined by art critic Franz Roy in 1925 to describe German post-expressionist painting. "[Magical realism] was applied to literature by novelist Massimo Bontempelli using an alternative meaning in 1927…" (3). Alejo Carpentier took Bontempelli's literature meaning, creating lo real maravilloso for the phenomenon of magical texts coming from Latin America, which later became magical realism. Camayd-Freixas theorizes that "magical realism as a literary 'mode'…has…five primary characteristics: an irreducible element of magic; a strong presence of the phenomenal world; some unsetting doubts on the part of the reader in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; the narrative's merging of different realms; and the predilection for disturbing received ideas about time, space, and identity" (13). I argue that out of those five characteristics, the magical elements and predilection of those elements are non-negotiables for magical realist novels. The other three elements overlap with the characteristics of an uncanny or supernatural narrative. As early as the 'mode' of magical realism was popularized in Latin American literature, so did the discussion of what magical realism begins.

Many scholars have attempted to clarify what magical realism is and how it is usually portrayed in Latin American novels. In 1995, the critical volume *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* became a critical source for this topic. López-Calvo revisits the topic of magical realism with his 2014 edition of Critical Insights *Magical Realism*. In his introduction, López-Calvo claims that *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* "is a comprehensive attempt at

exploring [magical realism]" and believes that the editors of the 1995 volume, Lois P. Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, "deny the notion that it is an exclusively Latin American phenomenon…[and] present it as an influential, international [genre]…" (xx). López-Calvo states that "the tenuous border between magical realism and the fantastic have created numerous disagreements among critics [when defining magical realism], mainly because there is a tendency to label any [Hispanic or Latino] text dealing with fantastic, inexplicable, or supernatural as magical realism" and this is mainly due to the success of the novels emerging from the literary boom mentioned earlier, especially the popularity of *One Thousand Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (xix). López-Calvo points out that Zamora's essay in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community,* associates Jorge Luis Borges with magical realism even though his work is not part of the genre, essentially showing an example of this tendency the 2014 critical text is criticizing (xix). López-Calvo understands that Zamora acknowledges "the importance of criticism by contemporary Latin Americanists," but she fails to add Latin American voices in the 1995 volume (xxii). López-Calvo builds on Zamora's work, providing "an updated look at magical realism's relevance in the twenty-first century," López-Calvo specifically focuses on dissociating the genre from Latin America and representing criticism from Latin American authors (ix).

The novels of the literature boom, including their predecessor, *Pedro Paramo,* continue political conversations emerging from their respective countries. These novels have many characters that represent corruption traveling through the primitive world they are essentially ruining with their corruption. Critics argue that magical realist novels adopt a "primitive" narrative, showing an alternative Latin American history, as opposed to the "official version of history perpetuated by the structures of power," meaning these novels are always set in the past when com-

menting on current history (Camayd-Freixas 12). In Mexico, the Mexican revolution is the primitive setting in magical realist novels; however, in both *Artemio Cruz* and *Pedro Paramo*, there is no alternate history; what is portrayed is a realistic account of the corruption occurring in Mexico at the time. *Pedro Paramo* is often associated with the evolution of magical realism in Latin America because of the political commentary within the novel and how the voices of both the living and the dead intermingle throughout the narrative, giving a magical quality. Juan mentions several times that his mind entered a dream state, where the voices are dream-like, explaining the novel's supernatural elements. An essential quality of magical realism is the lack of clarification of where the magical or supernatural elements come from but avoiding complete disbelief; Juan's comment about the dream state he enters, plus the visual tethering of Dorothea, clarifies these uncanny moments. Valeria Luiselli, author of *Lost Children Archive* and teacher at Harvard University, states in her review for the new 2023 translation that *Pedro Paramo* should not be labeled as magical realism and that Rulfo should be akin to writers such as "T.S. Elliot, Samuel Beckett, and Franz Kafka, writers who took literature to the frontiers of their languages, who wrote in a kind of 'foreign' tongue, in that they allowed strangeness to seep into the familiar and turn the everyday into the uncanny" (Luiselli). I hope that with Luiselli's article, Juan Rulfo and his novel, *Pedro Paramo* escape the magical realism label for one better suited to the strangeness it portrays.

I will add that Carlos Fuentes' work also mirrors the strangeness that Anglo audiences accept. In his article "Magical Realism and Its Discontents," Juan E. De Castro mentions that "Carlos Fuentes… only occasionally flirted with magical realism" and that his novels lean more toward the uncanny (20). Fuentes' novelette, *Aura,* is the closest he has gotten to magical realism;

the novel is told in the second person, and our protagonist morphs into his employer's dead husband, while the woman living with his employer, Aura, morphs into the older woman by the end of the novel. In Coleman's 1965 review of *Aura*, Coleman describes Aura's transition as "macabre" and "Houdini-like" (Coleman). Coleman later argues "that audiences have seen it all before, if not in Poe or in Wilde, then surely in Faulkner['s] "A Rose for Emily" (Coleman). Which leads me to ask: Why is it that Rulfo's ghoulish atmosphere is magical realism, but Fuentes, who creates similar atmospheres, is compared to Poe and Faulkner? Is it because *Artemio Cruz* and *Aura* [7]were published three years before the popularization of magical realism during the Latin American boom? Or is it because of the knowledge that *Pedro Paramo* inspired Garcia Marquez for his most famous work? This thesis is not meant to place the blame on the success of Gabriel Garcia Marques but making the English-speaking world accountable for making the term magical realism "the paradigmatic literary expression of the region" (De Castro 21). Dissociating uncanny novels like those of Rulfo and Fuentes will appeal to larger audiences that may not be keen on reading magical realism.

Defining magic[8] can help us understand magical realism, separating the truly magical and uncanny from the spiritual, as this becomes a problem later discussed in this thesis. It is essential to respect the beliefs of many cultures and traditions that believe in the miracles of a higher power and not chalk up every inexplainable moment to magic. The magic in magical realism novels is part of the characters' everyday lives in the book or comes from "a secret body of

[7] *The Death of Artemio Cruz* and *Aura* were translated into English in 1965.
[8] The Oxford English Dictionary defines magic as "the use of ritual activities or observances which intended to influence the natural world, usually involving the use of an occult or secret body of knowledge" (OED n. "magic"). Also, the OED defines occult as "not apprehended…by the mind; beyond ordinary understanding or knowledge" (OED adj, "occult").

knowledge," according to the definition stated in the footnote. Magical realism "normalize[s] supernatural atmosphere by describing it or narrating it in precise, realistic detail" (6), and everyday rituals in certain cultures do not fall under the definition from above because they connect to the religion they practice. The rituals in novels that express ambiguous or made-up elements are magical realist rituals. By 1989, Alberto Fuguet [9]and anti-magical realism groups [10]had helped with the genre's decline. However, it did not erase it altogether. More characteristics surround magical realism created by the end of the 80s, among them being a common trope later labeled as the 'fukú' curse[11] in 2007, a curse that haunts the protagonist and the later generations after. Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* became not only a "Mexican Revolution" novel but also a poster child for the genre of magical realism emerging from countries other than Colombia.

1.4 Like Water for Chocolate

After working through the origins and definition of magical realism, this next section explores *Like Water for Chocolate*, a prominent Mexican, magical realism novel written in 1989, translated to English in 1992. The goal of this section is to give the reader an example of a true magical realist novel from Mexico, detailing a significant difference between the previous novels. Laura Esquivel's *Like Water For Chocolate* is a Mexican magical realism novel that follows the life of Tita de La Garza in the form of a cookbook involving recipes that are important to the narrative as the novel's magic transmutes from the food. Tita is the youngest daughter of a family living in a small rancho in Mexico at the turn of the century. According to family tradition, as the

[9] "Writers today who mold themselves after the Latin American "Boom" writers…have transformed fiction writing into fairytale business, cranking out shamelessly folkloric novels that cater to the imaginations of politically correct readers—readers who, at present, aren't even aware of Latino cultural realism" (De Castro 22).
[10] "Crack" groups and McOndo groups—anti-magical realist groups that began at the same time as the decline of magical realism.
[11] Term originates from Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wonderous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007).

youngest daughter, Tita must never marry as she is designated to be Mama Elena's caretaker when she gets old. Mama Elena marries off her second eldest daughter to Tita's love, Pedro Muzquiz, and she uses her cooking to deal with her emotions. We witness a truly magical event within the first couple of pages with the birth story of Tita De La Garza. The first tip in the cookbook is how to avoid crying while chopping onions—Tita is born while her mother tears up due to the onions she chopped. Tita would not stop crying, eventually flooding the kitchen with her tears. The house cook, Nacha, waits for the tears to dry up and collects the many pounds of salt that resulted from Tita's tears. Tita grows up in the kitchen and enjoys the isolation surrounded by food. Mama Elena raises her three daughters with an iron fist and strict routines, and when Tita timidly announces that Pedro Muzquiz would like to visit the house, Mama Elena reveals the family tradition that the youngest daughter must stay single to care for the matriarch in her old age. When Pedro arrives at the rancho to ask for Tita's hand in marriage, Mama Elena offers her second eldest daughter, Rosaura, instead. He accepts her but later reveals that he only agrees with this alternative as it is the only way to be close to his actual love, Tita.

The following recipe in the cookbook is for wedding cake; Tita and Nacha are responsible for making the entire menu for the wedding. Overwhelmed with sadness, Tita cannot stop crying over the cake batter. Nacha sends Tita to bed, understanding her despair, and tastes the batter and icing to ensure that Tita's tears do not leave the cake salty. The taste is fine, but Nacha later goes to bed with an overwhelming feeling of longing, remembering her lost love. At the wedding reception and after eating the cake, all the guests are not only overcome by a sense of sadness and longing, but they also become violently ill. The only person who is not affected by the cake is Tita. Nacha died that night because of the sadness that the cake induced, and Tita is now the house cook as she is the only one who studied closely under Nacha.

Pedro congratulates Tita and her cooking by giving her roses, and Mama Elena forces Tita to get rid of them. Instead, she makes a pre-Hispanic meal of rose and quail, a meal that Tita would not know how to make without Nacha whispering the recipe in her ear as she cooks. Happy because of the roses, a passionate Tita creates a delicious meal that works as an aphrodisiac to Gertrudis, Tita's older sister. Gertrudis is dripping in pink sweat, emitting a rose-scented aroma; she attempts to cool herself down by taking a shower in the outside showers of the ranch, but the heat radiating from her evaporates the water and later sets the showers on fire. At that exact moment, a battle between the Federales and the Rebels of the Revolutionary War is occurring not too far from the ranch. Allured by the rose-scented aroma, a rebel soldier leaves the battle and goes to the ranch. He arrives by horseback at the exact moment that Gertrudis is running away from the burning shower. He scoops up Gertrudis, and they make love while they gallop away from the ranch.

Tita also has some magic inside of her; when Rosaura gives birth to her son, she cannot nurse him. Through a flashback, we discover that Federal troops occupied the village while Rosaura is in labor, and no doctor could help. Tita took charge, and with the help of Nacha's spirit voice, Tita delivers the baby. Due to the stress of the birthing surroundings, Rosaura is not able to nurse. Tita attempts many ways to get him nutrition and, out of desperation, offers her breast to the baby; it turns out Tita can now produce milk and nourish her nephew. Tita secretly nurses Roberto with the help of Pedro, who had earlier discovered Tita nursing the baby, until Mama Elena suspects them and sends Rosaura and Pedro to seek medical advice across the border. After a fight with her mother due to the death of her nephew, Tita leaves and hides in a dovecote in a catatonic state. Dr. John Brown, a family friend, is called to take Tita to an insane asylum, but he takes her to his home instead. There, Tita encounters the nurturing and loving ghost of John's

grandmother, a Native American woman called Morning Light. Leaving the ranch introduces other supernatural elements into the novel, as Tita had only heard Nacha's voice. Living with John also brings in more historical contexts and showcases the diversity of the border through John's Native American grandmother.

Bandits attack the ranch, leaving Mama Elena a paraplegic; Tita returns home to care for her traumatized housemaid, Chencha, and becomes the ranch cook again. However, Mama Elena refuses to eat Tita's food for fear of being poisoned; she later dies by overdosing on an emetic she was secretly taking because of the fear of being poisoned. Tita is now free to marry and accepts a proposal from John Brown. Around the same time, Rosaura gives birth to a daughter, Esperanza, inevitably her youngest daughter. Rosaura later reveals that she will continue the tradition that has haunted Tita her whole life. Pedro agrees with Tita to stop the tradition, but Rosaura will not change her mind, leading to Tita's following supernatural phenomena. The rage that Tita feels for her sister emits powerful waves of heat; the manifestation of the heat of her anger also manifests lust from Pedro, and by the end of the night, Tita gives into the passion she feels for Pedro, and they consummate their love. While they make love, "phosphorescent plumes" fly around the kitchen, and a glow emits from Mama Elena's bathing room, where the couple is (158).

Tita fears that she is pregnant after her night with Pedro as she has missed a period and realizes that she needs to cancel her engagement with John Brown. Rosaura seeks Tita's advice as she is experiencing digestive issues, which has affected her marriage, especially since the night they saw the glowing light emitting from Mama Elena's room, Rosaura believes it was her mother's ghost. Tita confesses everything that has happened between her and Pedro to Rosaura, and when she leaves the room, the real ghost of Mama Elena appears and starts to shame Tita for

what she has done. Gertrudis finally returns to the ranch, accompanied by the man who had swept her away; she is now a general in the revolutionary army. Tita confides in her that she is pregnant, and Gertrudis insists that Tita tell Pedro the truth. Pedro is conflicted with the news, and when he is drunkenly serenading Tita, the ghost of Mama Elena appears again, threatening Tita and cursing the baby inside of her—at this point, Tita already has a small bump even though it has only been a week since their encounter. Tita finally stands up for herself, proclaiming to Mama Elena: "I know who I am! A person who has a perfect right to live her life as she pleases…leave me alone, I will not put up with you anymore" (199)! This speech banishes Mama Elena's ghost, and she turns into a small ball of light. Tita's pregnancy symptoms disappear as she starts a supernaturally heavy menstrual flow. The small ball of light turns into a fireball, knocks over an oil lamp, and the explosion of the incident burns Pedro all over his body.

Rosaura tends to Pedro, but he cries out for Tita the entire time; this embarrasses Rosaura, and she locks herself in her room for a week. When she finally comes out, Rosaura loses over sixty pounds, though she still has digestive issues. Tita still breaks off her engagement to John Brown, and after a time skip, Tita and Chencha are preparing for the wedding of Esperanza and Alex, John's son. Rosaura died due to her digestive issues, freeing Esperanza from the tradition. Pedro and Tia delicately coexisted while Rosaura was still alive, and now they can live together. After the wedding, Pedro and Tita are finally alone in the rancho; they make love for the first time in years, and Pedro's heart gives out because of the bliss he experienced. Tita begins to eat the candles around the room to open a tunnel that leads to death. Tita opens the tunnel and sees Pedro at the end of it, and when their spiritual bodies unite, the encounter sparks fire, setting the ranch on fire. After the honeymoon, Esperanza and Alex return to the rancho, where everything turned into ash except a cookbook with all of Tita's recipes.

Referring to the definition of magic, Tita's emotions and their transmutation into food comprise the novel's 'secret body of knowledge'. The third space in this novel in which the magic flows from Tita to the people is the kitchen, and her tool is food. Whether the other characters realize that her food influences their emotions, no one questions the manipulation happening once they bite anything Tita cooks. When Tita is not in the kitchen, her emotional magic stays within her person; when she is staying with Dr. John Brown, Chencha visits Tita and brings with her a soup from her childhood. After her first bite, Tita is overwhelmed with nostalgia and begins to cry, eventually flooding the room she is staying in. While she literally cries a river, her tears do not affect anyone else. When Tita feels guilty for sleeping with Pedro, her magical pregnancy manifests through her anxiety, but Pedro seems unaffected. She is also the only one to see and hear the ghosts within the novel. *Like Water for Chocolate* is a perfect example of the evolution of magical realism in Latin America and the steppingstone of what later becomes Chicano literature. The magic in the novel comes from out of nowhere; none of the other characters experience powers like Tita, they are only affected by her cooking. The novel *Like Water for Chocolate* is also one of the few books that use the Mexican Revolution as a backdrop of the story, as the revolution represents a sense of change. Throughout the novel, Tita is fighting for freedom just like the revolutionaries; she wants to make her own decisions and be her person away from Mama Elena.

Like Water for Chocolate is a magical realist novel that does not talk about religion and focuses more on politics; physically moving up the border, religion becomes just as important as politics. Gabriel Garcia Marquez expresses that "In the Caribbean, [people] are capable of believing anything, because [they] have the influence of all those different cultures, mixed in with

Catholicism and [their] own local beliefs" (De Castro 23). Though he was talking about Columbia, the same can be said for other areas where native communities want to "… resist Western normalization" (De Castro 24). Mexico is prominent for hybridizing its culture with Catholicism because of its venerated mother, La Virgen de Guadalupe. Since they were part of Mexico at one point, The bordertowns add more to this hybridized religion carried on from the descendants of the original people living on that land. "Magical realism is not only a literary style," as Rudyard Alcocer puts it, "but also what could be described as a cultural or symbolic movement that purports to challenge and disrupt established boundaries of many varieties" (Alcocer 71-2). A challenge that Chicanos decided to take head-on with the rise of el movimento.

2 CHICANO LITERATURE

This chapter introduces Chicano literature. The first section details the origins of La Virgen de Guadalupe, the Virgin Mary of Mexico. Her history is important because it connects our two timelines together as her image was used for both the revolution and the Chicano movement. Section two of this chapter begins our discussion giving us context on Chicano literature with Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera* and using the poem "Madre Sofia" by Alberto Rios for examples. Section three introduces Curanderismo with the novel *Bless Me, Ultima* and this section explores the importance of cultural practices so as not to confuse them with fictional literary tropes such as magical realism. Section four discusses the importance of Chicana feminism within literature; Chicano literature reinvents myths, and Chicana authors take it a step further by removing the patriarchy within the myths they are recreating. This thesis highlights explicitly the focus on La Llorona and the different interpretations that remove her from the boogeyman status initially given to her. The last section in this chapter dives further into the subject of third spaces that was introduced in the last chapter.

2.1 Chicano Movement, Mexican Revolution, and Magical realism

Within bordertowns, a hybrid form of Catholicism began when Chicanos introduced indigenous elements into their beliefs and practices. Anzaldua remembers her grandmother's altar to La Virgen de Guadalupe as her family, "like most Chicanos, did not practice Roman Catholicism but a folk Catholicism with many pagan elements" (49). Coatlalopeh is La Virgen's indigenous name, and she is the main deity connecting Chicanos to their indigenous roots. La Virgen de Guadalupe is an essential figure in Mexican and Chicano culture. According to La Virgen's story, after being rejected three times, Juan Diego approached the Archbishop of Mexico City to tell him that not only was La Virgen's mother of the True God but also that she asked for a

church in her name. Beforehand, la Virgen arranged roses in Juan Diego's tilmatli (cloak). When he spoke to the Archbishop, Juan Diego dropped the roses and imprinted the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe on his tilmatli. The Archbishop was surprised by this miracle and ordered to build her church on Tepeyac Hill. 1810, during the Mexican Revolution, her image appeared in the rebels' banners as they chanted, "Long Live Our Lady of Guadalupe!" Priest declared her appearance as the Foundation of Mexico as she freed the people's pre-European religion and united the Spanish and indigenous people under one religion.

La Virgen de Guadalupe continued to be an inspiration of unity as Chicanos began seeing her as a symbol of their own mestizaje. An important aspect of the movement is their indigenous identity and La Virgen connected to her Brown followers of an overall White institution. Just like the Mexican revolution, the Farmer's Rights movement emerged because of the imbalance of wealth. Chicanos noticed the mirrored circumstances that started the revolution and took the opportunity to use the same tactics for their own revolution. Cesar Chavez invoked La Virgen de Guadalupe image during the 1960s Farmer's Rights movement, and many churches elaborated ceremonies on the anniversary of her appearance, December 12th. The growing Chicano movement of the 1960s used the image of la Virgen as a symbol of independence. Her image is essential to Chicanos because she is the only dark-skinned Virgin Mary, showing her indigenous roots and representing the indigenous blood of the Chicanos who worship her. Chicanos identify with La Virgen De Guadalupe because she is a hybrid, a blend of two cultures, just like them. Her image is everywhere within a larger Chicano population; she is on murals, cars, tattoos, and literature.

With a political lens, magical realism critiques the elite, and most novels from the Latin American Boom exemplify the use of the genre for critique. Most countries from Latin America,

as in all the countries south of the United states, were going through their own political issues at the same time of the literary boom. There was the Cuban Revolution in 1959, including the U.S involvement with the Bay of Pigs invasion, Chile's coup d'état in 1973, the fall of Juan Perón in Argentina inflating guerrilla brutality in Argentina and Uruguay, and the never-ending violence in Colombia. Because most magical realism novels are set in an alternative world where magical elements are natural, the authors easily critique their political environment without facing deadly consequences.

The Chicano movement also influenced novels critiquing political discourse within the border. Similar to the Latin American political landscape, the Chicano movement is also "…that same search for national archetypes [leading] to reclaiming indigenous traditions…" in the border, the alternate world within the novels are heavily based on mythology and legends from the mix of cultures in the bordertowns (Camayd-Freixas 6).Western readers and the Anglo audience in bordertowns see "these 'primitive' conventions for what constitutes habitual everyday reality (perceived as "magical thinking" by the modern reader) replacing that rational causality of traditional realism and becoming a given, an unquestionable norm in the magic-realist text" (Camayd-Freixas 12). In his article "Magical realism: A Typology," William Spindler argues that there are three types of magical realism[12]; Chicano novels use the third type—anthropological magical realism, or an indigenous world set side by side with an Anglo world. While that is true

[12] The other two types are European metaphysical magical realism—a sense of alienation and likeness with the uncanny and ontological with a more matter-of-fact regarding inexplicable magical moments. There is some objection to these three categories: "Spindler indulges in an act of categorization which seeks to define Magic Realism as a culturally specific project, by identifying for his readers those (non-modern) societies where myth and magic persist and where Magic Realism might be expected to occur. There are several objections to this type of analysis. It needs to be recognized that models of Western rationalism may not actually describe Western modes of thinking and it is certainly possible to conceive of instances where both these orders of knowledge are simultaneously possible" (Connell 6).

in most novels, Anglo audiences regard myths as made of tales instead of traditional stories concerning indigenous history, which still limits the Anglo readers' experience and misinterpret magical elements with cultural rituals and traditions. I will go further in depth of this issues throughout the rest of the sections of this chapter.

2.2 Chicano Literature

Literature created through the Chicano movement involved mythology, folklore, and traditions born of the land, now referred to as borderlands, as the land makes up the U.S. portion of the Mexican-American border. Moreover, Chicano literature took a genre now historically associated with Latinx authors and made it their own. The genre is a mestizaje, blending the conventional with the unconventional, cultural with culture, and religion with spirituality. During the 1980s, Chicana Feminism was rising within the academic field. Gloria Anzaldua was one of the first Chicanas to come out as gay, and she uses her birthplace as the geographical location for the theory she builds in the text *Borderlands / La Frontera.* Her educational experience in South Texas strongly influenced her writing; her career as an essayist and poet helped develop what would have been considered her most definitive work. South Texas is a bordertown with a unique hybrid culture of U.S. and Mexican culture, history, language, and ethos. Anzaldua was always a proud Mexican and a Chicana; overcoming the racism within El Valle—the southmost tip of the U.S to the Rio Grande to Roma, Texas—taught Anzaldua to "stand within and outside cultures, languages, and social structures" (5). Her experiences became the basis of her Borderlands Theory, which borrows from W.E.B Dubois' ideas on "double consciousness" and applies them to the Chicana experience.

In *Borderlands*, Anzaldua argues that "the over-layering of a country over a preexisting nation" divided the U.S. from Mexico, which did not correspond to the experiential existence on

the border (6). The border is geographically more inclined to la mezcla—hybridity, neither entirely Mexican nor American. Anzaldua defines the border as una herida abierta—an open wound; she introduces the idea of the border becoming a third space as defined by Homi Bhabha: "the third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which inadequately understood through received wisdom" (Ruthford 131). Anzaldua argues that the Chicanos/ Mexicanos- living in the border towns- are made up of outsiders who are neither from the North nor South of the border; they are the people living in the in-between. This third world "grates against the first [world] and bleeds…the blood of the two worlds merging to form a third country" (25). Magical realism grew from Latin America into the United States through these brodertowns with the people of Mexican decent; a prominent writer living along the border is the poet, Alberto Rios. Rios was born in Arizona to a British mother and a Mexican father, and he focused most of his work on the magical realism movement. His poems talk about his experience living in a bordertown as a child of mixed cultures. Born as biracial and living in the border, he is familiar with the struggle of living with hybrid cultures. Alberto Rios uses magic realism, using the supernatural and the natural world as a metaphor for his mixed background and the difficulties of experiencing a culture he does not understand.

"Madre Sofia" is a perfect example of a Chicano magical realism poem, as there is a fantasy element to the poem because of the perspective of a little boy. In the beginning, Rios makes the narrator's mother the Mexican parent, and she is already breaking a rule from her own culture. In the second chapter of *Borderlands,* labeled *Movimentos de rebeldia y las culturas que traicionan,*[13] Anzaldua explains that men create the culture as the patriarchy holds power over

[13] Rebellious Movements and Betraying Cultures

women: “males make the rules and laws [and] women [transmit] them” (39). The narrator's mother breaks the rules by taking him to a fortune teller impatient for “the second ten years" (Rios 2). This "second ten years" implies that the narrator and the mother know the cultural experience of waiting to be a man, not a child, to visit the fortune teller. Visiting the fortune teller is an act of rebellion, going against a tradition set by a culture that “expects women to show greater acceptance of and commitment to the value system than men” (Anzaldua 39). So, it is shocking to see the poet’s mother going against tradition to hear her son’s fortune.

Anzaldua divides the supernatural into two forces: the divine, “the animal impulses such as sexuality; the unknown,” and the undivine, “the superhuman” (39). In Rios’s poem, we see our narrator divide the supernatural forces around him into the divine and undivine as the narrator morphs the fortune teller into three different forms throughout the poem. The first is as a child, for when he enters the room, Madre Sofia tilts her head, “mimicking its original intention like the smile of a child hitting himself” (Rios 9-10). He wants to identify with the fortune-teller to make this experience less overwhelming but turning her into a child does not work. So, the narrator now transforms the fortune teller into well-known male figures. Culture and religion- both masculine, according to Anzaldua, strive to protect women and children from the two supernatural forces. Since the poet has not yet gone through the transformative years of his life, he is using both religious and magical imagery:

> Central in that head grew unfamiliar poppies
> from a face mahogany, eyes half yellow
> half gray at the same time, goat and fog,
> slit eyes of the devil, his tweed suit, red
> lips, and she smelled smoke, cigarettes,

but a diamond smoke somehow; I inhaled

sparkles, I could feel them, throat, stomach (10-17).

The first attempt of transforming the fortune teller into a male figure is by transforming Madre Sofia into is a demon figure with "slit eyes of the devil" (10, 14). Transforming Madre Sofia into a demon with a “tweed suit [and] red lips” (14-15) is an example of a Half and Half; “she was neither [woman] nor [man] but a strange doubling, a deviation of nature that horrified” (Anzaldua 41). Being a half-woman and half-man gives Madre Sofia access to the feminine supernatural world and the masculine society into which we are born. The third state in which the narrator perceives the fortune teller is as different smoke forms: cigarette and diamond smoke, which comes from the half-and-half fortune teller (15-16). The two types of smoke also represent the Madre Sofia accessing these dueling energies as cigarette smoke is usually associated with men, and diamond smoke connects to women's jewelry. Ironically, a soft, flowing smoke as cigarette smoke equates to the masculine side of Madre Sofia. In contrast, the hard, diamond smoke equals her feminine side, two unbendable things living in one.

As the session continues, the narrator is hyper-aware of the fortune-tellers' body parts. He had just compared her to a male figure and is now aware of her breast "coming out of her dress” (26). The narrator's supernatural force emerges, but he quickly disregards the magical power once he realizes that her breasts vulgarly come out of her dress, “not like [his] mothers” (27). This primal scene makes the narrator confront and recognize the sexual difference between him, the fortune teller, and the world around him. This mythic and demonic person may look human, but the narrator realizes that the fortune teller is not of his world. When he says she is not like his mother, he implies a sharp distinction between the culture he grew up in and the rebellion his

mother threw him into. As a child, he believes his mother is still part of the culture and is struggling to separate his mother from Madre Sofia. As the fortune teller swings her arms in a mystic trance, the poet instinctively places his hands on his lap to protect "whatever needs protecting" in a symbolic fear of castration (48-49). During the same lines, the fortune teller puts her hands on the narrator's head, and he instantly recalls a television faith healer, a young Oral Roberts. Recollecting another male figure finally brings Rios' other culture into the poem. As stated in the poem, Roberts was a faith healer, the Anglican kind that would yell and lay their hands on people, ultimately using prayer so their problems would "disappear." The narrator tries to make sense of this traumatic experience by bringing forward memories of a male figure he is familiar with from a culture he feels safe in.

Finally, being able to come to terms with something he is familiar with, the session winds down, and the narrator sees only "hair around her left nipple, like a man" (57). Reverting Madre Sofia into a masculine presentation, Half and Half shows that the narrator is too afraid to explore the unknown. At this moment:

> [the narrator] sat there, no breath, and could see only
> hair around her left nipple, like a man.
> Her clothes were old.
> Accented, in a language whose spine had been
> snapped, she whispered the words of a city
> witch, and made me happy, alive like a man:
> *The future will make you tall* (56-60).

There is more to the session than what the fortune teller could have told the boy; however, because they could not speak to each other, all she could say was a generic prediction. Earlier, the

narrator states that Madre Sofia only spoke to his mother, and when addressing him, she “did not speak, and as a child, [the narrator] could only answer” (18-19). Assuming his parents raise the narrator as bilingual, the language barrier would not have been there if he had been older. His mother's haste does not allow the narrator to know what is about to happen; terrified, he stands behind her during most of the session.

Hybridity removes pre-existing cultural categories to form a new blended identity. The "multiple belongingness" for the narrator in "Madre Sofia" fails to blend and be part of their hybrid identity. The poet's mother refusing to follow the rules and take the poet to the fortune teller foreshadows the fall of social customs. Meeting Madre Sofia was traumatic for the poet, so he rejects a culture that was a part of him. As Camayd-Freixas puts it, “Magical realism makes the extraordinary seem commonplace and vice versa” (Camayd-Freixas 14). The supernatural, the most prominent magical realism aspect, helps the narrator understand what is happening. The narrator tries to compare the fortune teller to a child because he is a child. However, his tactics had to get more extreme because of the unfamiliarity of the situation. The nonconventional point of view of the “naive” or “unreliable” narrator and “the extremely detailed and matter-of-fact description and narration of [the] rationally implausible event” helps this child cope with the experience he is going through (Camayd-Freixas 14). Relating to cultural syncretism, the mentions of Oral Roberts represent the traditional movement. This male figure is in juxtaposition with Madre Sofia. Roberts represents the traditional culture, the safe and regular place for the narrator because he has seen Roberts on television multiple times. Once the narrator brings in the old religion, Madre Sofia's magic disappears, and he sees her as an ordinary woman. Madre Sofia is the supernatural, the narrator’s mother taking him to her, *es un movimento de rebeldia, traicionado*

la cultura.[14] The mother and her cultural betrayal is essentially the main reason why Rios' poem is a magical realist work. Meeting with the fortuneteller is a commonplace event in the mother's culture. Still, because the naïve narrator does not understand what is happening, there is no explanation for the magical moments that happen to the narrator or to him as he copes with these events. Returning one more time to *Pedro Paramo*, Jaime does not break cultural rules when entering Comala and experiences uncanny and supernatural events. Also, he is not an inhabitant of the town, so these supernatural events he goes through are not a part of his everyday life. In terms of defining magical realism, *Pedro Paramo* is not magical realism, though it seems similar to "Madre Sofia." The narrator in the poem isn't aware of the cultural taboo the mother committed and is new to the supernatural elements around him; thus, the poem "Madre Sofia" is magical realism.

2.3 Curanderismo

In Alejo Charpentier's Prologue to *The Kingdom of This World*, "the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith" (10). Since colonization, anything that was not already familiar to the colonizers was seen as magic. Alberto Rios wrote "Madre Sofia" from a child's perspective, and the fantastic elements are magic; however, his mother most likely went to a curandera, which is customary in the Latinx and Chicano communities. Curanderismo and fortune-telling are predominant practices in Mexican culture predating the more acceptable practice, New Age Spirituality.[15] Curanderismo is a hybrid mode of healing techniques building on the cultures that thrive in the bordertowns. Bordertown curanderos understand that their prayers and practices look like magical rituals and may thus be conflated with witchcraft. While they work on curing

[14] A movement of rebellion, betraying the culture.
[15] Movement that spread through the occult and metaphysical religious communities in the 1970s and ’80s.

witchcraft, I would argue that using *magic* or *magical* to describe their healing is incorrect. Curanderos have rituals in their practices; however, because they are working with Catholic traditions, it is safe to assume that their power is not a form of the occult but of the Judeo-Christian God and the indigenous energies and practices of the region. The issue of categorizing curanderismo as magic stems from the skeptics and non-believers conflating anything they do not understand under the umbrella of witchcraft. Curanderos very clearly handle cases with social, psychological, and spiritual problems and physical issues; they believe that illness can be natural or come from supernatural forces like a brujo. *Bless Me, Ultima* showcases the Hispanic culture of New Mexico in the 1940s, commenting on the folklore history of the landscape, and details the work of curanderas. Luis Alberto Urrea, author of *The Hummingbird's Daughter,* argues that all the magical elements within a novel like *Bless Me* are considered fact by the author. Anaya rejects this traditional Latino writing as he believes the genre to be "a trope to capture what the peasant knows deep in [their] own bones" as real (Urrea xii). This novel is always considered part of magical realism; the issue is that it does not account for cultural and spiritual practices and the history of the region which the novel is about. The difference between the narrator in "Madre Sofia" and Antonio in *Bless Me, Ultima* is his familiarity and later developed relationship with Ultima. The narrator did not know where and to who his mom took him to visit, while Antonio is well aware of Ultima and her works as the Curandera of el Llano.

Bless Me, Ultima takes place in Guadalupe, New Mexico, and follows Antonio (Tony) Marez y Luna and his mentor, the curandera, Ultima. Tony's parents have different dreams for his future; his mom wants him to become a Roman Catholic priest, and his dad wants Tony to become a vaquero of the llano- open plains. As he struggles with this situation, he becomes attracted to the land's spirituality and starts learning curanderismo from Ultima, the town's

curandera. In what he considers a “truly magical moment,” Anaya, recounts the moment Ultima appeared to him during a rough writers-block moment and instructed him to write her in the story. *Bless Me, Ultima* went from an adventure story to one of “an intense exploration of the unconscious” (ix). Ultima’s role in the novel is to open Tony’s eyes to the beauty of the llano and understand the spirituality of his roots and culture. La curandera’s techniques come from Mexican and Native American traditions. By the novel's end, Tony reflects on his call to Catholicism and continues his lessons with Ultima’s legacy. He realizes there is no need to choose between being a vaquero or a priest but combine the two to form a new identity and practice.

Antonio and his family live on the outskirts of town, right at the edge of the Llano. His mother is happy to have moved, but Antonio’s father is depressed that he cannot be there. The differences between the parents are part of the conflict that would hang on to Antonio as he finds his own identity. Antonio’s parents discuss the idea of Ultima, the town's curandera, living with them. Antonio’s Catholic mother respecting Ultima is an early example of a hybridized culture in the city. Antonio and Ultima immediately have a strong connection, one that Ultima had already suspected they would have. The night when Ultima arrives, an Owl appears outside, and Antonio dreams of la Virgen de Guadalupe and the owl. This dream begins with Antonio mixing his old world with the new world he will learn about; the old world is his mother's Catholicism, represented by La Virgen, and the new world, represented by Ultima’s owl.

As Ultima gets accustomed to the family’s routine, Antonio’s father cries about how WW2 has ruined his plans to move back to the llano with his sons. Antonio joins Ultima in her walks through the llano, collecting herbs and learning the names of all the plants and animals. One night, a WW2 veteran is experiencing PTSD and kills someone at a bar; Antonio witnesses the townspeople, including his father, searching, and eventually killing the veteran. The Veteran is

the first death that Antonio witnesses, and this event begins his questioning of punishment and hell. Antonio also begins to worry about his brothers, who are currently fighting in the war. After the incident, he dreams about his brothers wanting to join their dad in the llano. La Llorona wants to take Antonio's blood but later transforms into the dead veteran, asking for Antonio's blessing. Depending on the perspective of the legend of La Llorona you take, you can gain some sympathy for her; she is an indigenous woman who was cheated by her Spanish lover, and out of a fit of madness, she kills their children. Introducing La Llorona alongside the veteran adds to Antonio's internal conflict on punishment and hell because both characters are victims of the post-traumatic events in their lives, presenting moral issues that Antonio is already dealing with. These two characters show anecdotes from two different cultures used to solve problems.

Antonio continues to learn from Ultima while also dealing with his parents arguing over his future; his father wants him to be a vaquero of the llano, and his mother wants him to become a priest. When Antonio starts school, we realize how sheltered his parents kept him because of the bullying he endures for not knowing English despite his doing well in class. Ultima reveals to his mother that Antonio will be a learned man, and though he wants to cry and leave school, Antonio sucks it up because he does not want to disappoint his mother. Walking home from school, Antonio bumps into his friend, Samuel, and Samuel invites Antonio to fish with him. Samuel tells Antonio the story of the golden carp, which he heard from the Indians living next to their neighbor. According to the story, the gods gave people land full of abundance with only one rule—never eating the carp. During a famine, the people grew desperate and fished the carp for food. The angry gods were going to eat the people as punishment, but one god stood up for them, and they turned the townspeople into carp and forced them to live in the river. Later, when Antonio is fishing alone, Cico approaches him and tells him he will show him the golden carp. When

Antonio meets the golden carp, Cico takes him to a secluded river. Antonio feels as if he is facing la Virgen and soon feels like that is how he should have felt during his first communion. Cico reveals the prophecy of the golden carp: if people continued to sin, their sins would flood their land, and everyone would die. Cico believes that their town is already starting to sink.

There seems to be a debate on what the golden carp represents for Anaya and the novel. The golden carp in the story is Anaya's myth, "for as a storyteller, [he] is also a mythmaker" (xi). It is a representation of native indigenous traditions and an alternative to Catholicism. In his article, "In Search for Anaya's Carp," Alex Hunt argues that "the golden carp becomes a new myth based in ancient myth…that seeks to heal a rift between East and West in terms of racial significance, and an eco-myth that seeks to counterbalance the destructive force of the atomic bomb" (181). While I agree with him that the golden carp is a myth to heal, I believe the golden carp heals the rift between the indigenous traditions of the land and Catholicism brought by men. Stuck in this rift between his mother's and father's wishes, Antonio finds solace in Ultima and the golden carp, representing a duality of different cultures living in one. I also must disagree with Hunt's claim that the golden carp is "a contribution to Chicano culture ecology long before its time" (182). Anaya does continue the tradition of commenting on ecocritical issues within the borderlands. However, it is not as hidden and convoluted as the golden carp. The contribution was the introduction of the testing of the atomic bomb.

Hunt goes on to say that critics generally understand that the golden carp "represents the indigenous past, native cosmology as opposed to Catholic theology" and that no one bothers to go deeper into the meaning of the carp (180). They do not have to when Anaya himself gives you what the golden carp represents; in the introduction for the Grand Central Publishing edition of *Bless Me, Ultima,* Anaya clearly states that the golden carp is his myth and that the myth of the

golden carp "resonates with to the fish symbol of Christianity, Aztec mythology, and Pueblo Indian emergence tales" (xi). Later in my thesis, I argue that Chicano/a literature rewrites myths to help represent their hybrid identities, and the golden carp is an early example of Chicano/a myth recreation. Anaya created his tale to describe the religious and spiritual conflict in the borderlands. Ultima represents when people disregard the conflict and accept both beliefs. Hunt takes the carp out of the myth, claiming it means "the power and sentience of the earth," however, we can see that power with the healing herbs Ultima uses for her cures and rituals and Anaya showing the importance of the juniper trees. Another example of that power is Ultima's owl, her soul, and her relationship with nature.

Bless Me, Ultima is about a Chicano child working through his identity and the future his family wants, disregarding what he wants for himself. He strongly connects to Ultima because he sees the balance of beliefs he craves in her; the excitement and fascination he feels when meeting the golden carp is another moment where Antonio senses the balance of spiritual and religious energies. As Antonio buries the owl, he creates a more intimate version of the Catholic mass they will later hold for Ultima. This private funeral is the beginning of Antonio creating his system by taking "the llano and the river, the moon and sea, God, and the golden carp—and making something new," a combination of Catholicism and Native American teachings (Anaya xii).

Bless Me, Ultima is the first novel to introduce the tradition of curanderismo, the most misunderstood tradition in the realm of Chicano literature. Curanderismo thrives in the town where Anaya grew up; all his town had was a curandera that healed the fragmented soul. Many Anglos, and possibly uninformed POC readers, confuse the traditional practices of the curandera of the novel as magic. Because the curandero's concept of the natural source of illness overlaps with the medical model, curanderos ridicule the scientific medical system for its lack of attention to

the supernatural. In trying to understand curanderismo, "post-1965 anthropological studies classified curanderismo in terms dictated by reason and science" (Leon, x). Because of this lack of understanding, people outside the culture view curanderismo as magic or witchcraft. Because the curandero is a community member, their practice heavily depends on their and the patient's faith and the herbs, fruits, and oils available in the region they are from (2). It would be a disservice to sort this novel into the magical realism genre; to do so would discredit the customs and cultures that very much rule the Rio Abajo of New Mexico. The magic is realistic and authentic—a product of the land and the characters' multigenerational connection to it. Rudolfo Anaya transmutes the hybridity of his cultures within himself into a myth that reaches many Chicano readers.

2.4 Chicana Feminism

Because of the success of *Bless Me, Ultima*, more Chicano authors draw from their own experiences, filling in the void the Chicano movement brought into focus. Chicana feminism explores the historical, cultural, and spiritual intersections impacting Chicana identities. Chicana literature takes elements from the past in the form of myth and legend; it ensures their sustainability by retelling them to a new generation of Chicano readers who usually would not have access to them. In an interview, Anzaldua states that "myth and fiction create reality," historically used against women. By rewriting mythology, Chicanas respond to the "oppressing paradigms and [correct] the historical malaise of women perpetuated through negative mythology" (5). Anzaldua argues that la cultura "expects women to show greater acceptance of and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males" (39). The mother in Rios' poem has taken the first step to destroy the patriarchal expectations put upon a woman by both cultures within the bordertowns and religion. She prematurely takes her son to a curandera as a move of defiance. Many Chicanas can identify with Anzaldua's

claim that her identity is “grounded in the Indian woman’s history of resistance” in literature; this attempt is seen as rewriting mythology and turning it into fact (Anzaldua 43).

Ana Castillo's novel, *So Far from God*, is a well-received Chicana novel; Sandra Cisneros, a Chicana feminist writer, reviews her novel and states: “Ana Castillo has gone and done what I always wanted to do—write a Chicana telenovela—a novel roaring down Interstate 25 at one hundred and fifteen miles an hour with an almanac of Chicanoismo—saints, martyrs, T.V. mystics, home remedies, little miracles, dichos, myths, gossip, recipes-fluttering from the fender like a flag. Wacky, wild, y bien funny” (Cisneros). When the novel first came out, the LA Times called *So Far from God* “the offspring of a union between *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and “General Hospital”: a sassy, magical, melodramatic love child” (Kingsolver). *So Far from God* is a Chicana novel that blurs the line between showing cultural practices and magical moments. This section will show the importance of drawing a distinct line between the two so as to label the novel correctly.

Readers view this novel as perfect to scratch “all of [the] magical realism itches, particularly the strain that is unique to [Ch]icana writer…” (goodreads). Sofia and her daughters Esperanza, Caridad, and Fe are based on the Holy Martyr's Saint Sophia, whose daughters are Faith, Hope, and Love. The rest of the novel is a modern interpretation of Mexican traditions, Acoma Folklore, and other customs and traditions native to the original inhabitants of New Mexico. The book shows genuine magical moments through La Loca, Sofia's fourth and youngest daughter, the only daughter not part of the Christian story of Saint Sophia. Doña Felicia is also a central character as she is the curandera of Tome, New Mexico. She trains Caridad to become the next curandera, and they are the characters showcasing the natural talents and practices of curanderismo. We get examples from the Acoma Pueblo community by introducing the character

of Esmeralda and her relationship with Ruben with Caridad and her trip to Chimayo[16]. La Loca is the vehicle used to carry out essential magical elements, which is why Castillo did not bring La Loca into the subject of curanderismo until the very end of the novel.

While *So Far From God* does have some magical realism involved in the narrative, it is a small amount compared to the cultural practices and traditions from the New Mexican community. In her article "Teaching Chicana/o Literature in Community College with Ana Castillo's *So Far from God,"* Danizete Martínez believes that magical realism "creates space for interactions of diversity" (7). We see this diversity by interweaving the magical moments throughout La Loca's life with the mythology and tradition of the state of New Mexico. The main characters of the novel are Sofia and her four daughters, modeled after the Martyr Sophia and her three daughters: Faith, Hope, Love (Orthodox Church in America). The novel begins with the death and resurrection of the youngest of Sofia's four daughters. La Loca Santa flies onto the roof of the church and claims that in her death, she traveled from hell through purgatory to heaven and back to teach the people the knowledge she gained from her experience and to pray for them.

Most of the *magical* moments of the novel center around her as she seems to have gained specific knowledge through her supernatural travels. After her resurrection, "she [is] repulsed by the smell of humans," claiming that they smelled like the places she had traveled to (23). After breaking up with her boyfriend, Caridad had three abortions, all safely performed by La Loca. While Caridad is in the hospital after her mutilation from La Malogra, La Loca disappears; Esperanza is about to call the police when she hears "a distinct clunk sound from inside the wood-burning stove in the living room," and her sister and mother pull La Loca out (34). La Loca had a

[16] The Sanctuary of Chimayo is a famous destination in New Mexico for pilgrimages to travel to. There are yearly pilgrimages and Holy Week is the most celebrated pilgrimage if the year. There are many testimonials of people being healed after their pilgrimage to the Sanctuary and petitioning for health. (Santuario de Chimayo)

sweet affinity towards her sister Caridad. Unlike her father, who smells like death, La Loca describes her sister's smell as laurel and sage. La Loca loved being around Caridad because though "her eyes and voice smelled very sad," it was "always soothing, like a lullaby with no words" (152). La Santa Loca is not part of the original myth of the roman martyr and so Castillo uses La Loca as the only outlet for what is traditionally defined as magical realism.

Everything outside of La Loca's story line is Castillo's attempt at rewriting myths and putting on display the many traditions in the bordertown of Tome New Mexico. Caridad only trusted La Loca and Doña Felicia with the knowledge of what attacked her because she understood that they were the only ones to believe and appreciate her traumatic encounter. La Malogra attacked Caridad. Its original name is La Mala Hora, and it originated in Chiapas, Mexico. La Malogra usually walks on the side of the road at night, seducing any man she encounters; "the poor victims who do not look down at [her] feet will follow her to their doom" (Zumel). On the other side of the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, la Malogra is an evil spirit that "haunts the crossroads at night, hunting those who travel the roads alone" (Zumel). Castillo uses this version of the story of La Malogra when describing Caridad's attack:

> It was not a stray and desperate coyote but a tangible and amorphous thing. A thing that might be made of sharp metal and splintered wood. Of limestone, gold, and brittle parchment. It held the weight of a continent and was indelible as ink, centuries old and yet as strong as a young wolf. It had no shape and was darker than the night, and mostly, as Caridad would never, ever forget, it was pure force (77).

Arguably, Castillo morphs both versions of the legends; Caridad, as the victim, is a promiscuous woman traveling late at night. We see Caridad as La Malogra when she returns from the hospital; Esperanza sees her floating to Fe's room, "once again beautiful," wearing Fe's wedding gown. As Martínez states, Chicana literature "takes elements from the past in the form of myth and legend

and ensures their sustainability by retelling them" to a new generation of Chicana/o readers who would otherwise not have access to these tales (3-4). Martínez summarizes one of Anzaldua's interviews and states that Anzaldua believes that "myth and fiction create reality" and are historically used against women. By rewriting mythology, Chicanas respond to the "oppressing paradigms and [correct] the historical malaise of women perpetuated through negative mythology" (5). Morphing the two versions of the legend of La Malogra continues the feminist narrative that Castillo is writing by making Caridad both La Malogra and the victim and making the “attacker” a creature, leaving men out of the narrative altogether.

While Esperanza studies Chicano Studies in college, she dates Rueben, who is growing his "Chicano cosmic consciousness" (Castillo 25). During their romance, Esperanza partakes in peyote ceremonies in the Native American Church, and they go to sweat lodges together. When Ruben returns to her life, Esperanza feels like she is losing herself and believes that she needs to consolidate the spiritual with the practical sides of her life. When La Loca has one of her "infrequent seizures," two miracles occur (37). The first miracle she witnesses is Caridad as La Malogra; the second is Fe's recovery since she stops screaming once Caridad heals. Her father also returns from his long absence that night, arguably the third miracle, as it was not a spiritual event that brought him back. Esperanza cannot understand what has happened, so she decides to take a job in D.C. that would eventually send her to where she will die. News of her death comes from La Llorona, "Chicana international astral-traveler," and as the narrator points out, "who better…could the spirit of Esperanza have found…if not a woman whom every generation of her people had given a bad rap," a spirit that Esperanza could have seen as a "mother goddess" (162). In *Borderlands,* Anzaldua desires a connection with her white, Mexican, and Indian identity because la cultura constantly demonizes la India within Chicanas. La chingada-the-Indian,

Tlazolteolt, and Coaltlicue are the women, or the indigenous side, wailing as they mourn for their lost children, stolen by colonialization and religion, lost within the culture. Esperanza connects with La Llorona because she is a Chicana relating to her indigenous roots, and La Llorona is originally an indigenous spirit that Chicana feminism authors claimed and redefined her narrative by removing the patriarchy from her story.

One of Loca's favorite hiding spots is the acequia near her home. During one of her visits, she comes back home shaking and completely afraid and tells her mother that "*She* came to tell [her] that la Esperanza is [dead]" (158). Loca explains that she has a friend wearing a flowing white dress who used to visit her often when she saw the acequia; however, she never knew her name. Loca's family knows she cannot lie, so they believe every word she says as she describes her friend and that her friend told her that Esperanza had been tortured and killed in the Middle East. The narrator helps the reader answer the question of who her friend is:

> A woman whom everyone knows, who has existed under many names, who has cried over the loss of thousands but who was finally relegated to a kind of "boogy-woman" to scare children into behaving themselves, into not straying too far from their mother's watchful eyes (160).

La Loca's special friend is the legendary Llorona, or Weeping Woman, herself an *astral traveler* who journeys wherever her people live. Sofia never believed in the legend of the wailing woman, so she never told her daughters about her either; that is why she considers Loca her friend La Llorona. Because of this connection to La Llorona, Esperanza also appears near the acequia to visit Loca.

La Llorona is one of Mexico's oldest stories; "Just like the country changed its name, so did the name of their legends change" (Castillo 161). As the narrator explains, La Llorona used to be Matlaciuatl, the goddess of the Mexica, who prayed on men. She was also Ciuapipiltin, a

goddess who wore a flowing gown and stole babies from their cribs. The last name the narrator mentions is "Cihuacoatl, the patron of women who died in childbirth, whom all wailed and wept and moaned on the night air" (161). The story is written in two ways in *SFFG*: Fe when her fiancé jilts her and is then known as La Gritona and Loca's friend. Martínez Argues that "La Llorona represents in the novel as a hybridized figure dealing with four distinct spheres: reality and fantasy, and a European and indigenous status" (7). Castillo creates her cautionary tale of La Llorona by aligning her with Fe with her continuous screaming for being left by her fiancé. Martínez also argues that by making Fe sterile, Castillo is rewriting the misogynistic myth to one where the patriarchal institution of the military arms industry is to blame for her death.

After her near-death experience, Caridad moves to her trailer and lives near the town's curandera, Dona Felicia. During her training, Caridad accompanied Dona Felicia on her yearly pilgrimage to Chimayo. According to legend, centuries before the novel takes place in that valley, a Penitent brother ran toward a bright light near the river; he dug in the ground near the morning and found a statue of Our Lord of Esquipulas. After his appearance, the Catholic church endorsed the land; people traveled to the same spot during Holy Week. Thousands of people worldwide have made this pilgrimage since the church of Chimayo has miraculously healed people with their ailments. Caridad meets a woman there, and it is love at first sight for her, but later, we find out that the love is unrequited. Esmeralda is from Acoma Pueblo and has a strong connection with Caridad even though she is already in a relationship. Caridad knows Francisco El Penitente has been stalking her, but he kidnapped Esmeralda. Once free from Francisco, Caridad and Esmeralda decided to visit Esmeralda's grandmom in SkyCity to ask for advice. Esmeralda realizes that Francisco has snuck into the city with a tour group, so she grabs Caridad's hand, and they run away. As they ran, a noise rang throughout the city that only the natives were

able to understand: "The Acoma people heard it and knew it was the voice of the Invisible One who had nourished the first two humans…no one had heard it in a long time…but all still knew what It was" (211). The two women continued to run, and when they neared the city's edge, they jumped. To everyone's surprise, they did not die and left their remains at the bottom of SkyCity but disappeared out of thin air. Only the Acoma people understand that Tsichtinako called them home, under the earth, where they would be safe. Martínez disregards this as a suicide and instead calls it a "mythical re-enactment and return home to [Caridad's] indigenous roots (9). Castillo's feminist retelling of the Acoma creation story gives grotesque elements to the new feminine perspective, sowing how Chicanas view the grotesque as transformative and healing.

One of the most *magical* things about La Loca is her ability to be an expert on things that no one could have taught her. She knew how to play the fiddle that no one knew how to play. She is an excellent horseback rider and a fantastic cook. However, she does not understand basic measurements and makes up her own, and, as mentioned above, she can perform abortions safely without medical training. La Loca's character is the vehicle of all the magic in *SFFG;* she can talk to ghosts, has developed a sixth sense of knowing, and her nose can smell scents out of this world. While the only ritual she performs is prayer, it is no secret that even the novel's other characters do not understand where her different abilities come from. After her resurrection, Loca is referred to as La Loca Santa. However, as she becomes more eccentric and secluded, the people of the town of Tome drop the "saint' in her name and only refer to her as la loquita, to the point of forgetting her real name entirely. The town loves La Loca, so when she gets sick, many Curanderas from all over New Mexico gather to help her. When she dies, the entire village goes to the funeral, hoping for one more magical moment from La Loca.

Before we continue with La Loca, let us return to Curanderismo. In the forward to *Curanderismo: Mexican American Folk Healing,* Leon states that Castillo's feminist model of curanderismo allows "Chicana's [to] become active agents of religious production, spiritual healing, and physical curing" (Trotter el al. xiii). Through Caridad's don and practice of curanderismo, Castillo shows how Chicanas can find a sense of identity through this holistic practice. Doña Felicia constantly repeats that it is through God that she can do her work, and many other practitioners also work with angels, saints, and animal spirits. Castillo dedicates an entire section detailing some of Doña Felicia's remedies. The reader is given simple and easy examples of how to cure curanderas' most common ailments: Empacho, Aigre, and Mal de Ojo. Doña Felica reminds Caridad (or the audience) that they must "commend [themselves] to God, praying the Apostle's Creed and always at least one Our Father" before they can begin a Limpia (Castillo 70). This section perfectly details the integration of the holistic healing and prayer curanderos used to remove themselves from the witchcraft label. Since the argument is the idea that curanderismo is not magic because it is faith-based, Paganism can also be seen as something other than witchcraft; however, most pagans working with other deities like to be labeled as witches, cast spells, or perform rituals to put out specific energies. Curanderos only believed in the Judeo-Christian God and focused their energy on healing, not casting. These differences separate curanderismo from magic, curanderos from brujos, and people who study Brujeria and other similar practices.

During Loca’s final moments, Sofia convinces Loca to try going to a 'real' doctor, and that is when we meet the psychic doctor, Dr. Tolentino. He had migrated from the Philippines and is very fluent in Spanish. Once he sees that his scientific approach to healing La Loca does not work, Dr. Tolentino attempts to heal Loca with the traditional practices he learned from his

family on the islands. After praying to God, Dr. Tolentino proceeds to perform psychic surgery. He "opens" La Loca's stomach and removes blood clots from her abdomen with his hands. The left hand holds the core open while his right-hand scoops the clots. All the while, Loca feels no pain. His psychic approach is like Doña Felicia's, tied to the religion he practices, but it also reflects his knowledge of the land he comes from. One day, while crossing paths, "one coming in to give Loca her brand of healing and the other leaving after giving him and maintaining the practice of praying before they did anything," Dr. Tolentino gives Doña Felicia his professional approval (235). Growing up in the Philippines, the doctor had heard of many of Doña Felicia's treatments, only with herbs native to his land. Likewise, Doña Felicia had heard of Doctors like Tolentino, only called by a different name.

This last attempt at healing La Loca is the novel's final blending of the magical and traditional. While he does pray to the same God as Doña Felicia, how Dr. Tolentino performs his psychic surgery is still a mystery. We are still waiting for an explanation from either the narrator or Dr. Tolentino himself. Castillo gives us extensive details of Doña Felicias and the other curanderas' ingredients and practices as they compete to treat la Loca but barely details Dr. Tolentino's treatments. The lingering mystery of the doctor's treatment exemplifies how Castillo shows the tangible truth of curanderismo and separates it from what is considered magical. With Fe's unmagical death and lack of resurrection because of her skepticism and having La Loca Santa permanently die at the end of the novel by an unknown and untreatable illness, Castillo shows the hybridity within mythology and tradition that lends to the grotesque history of Chicano/a culture and how myth can overcome the psychic and physical consequences from internalizing oppressive patriarchal ideologies.

Many moments in the novel are more fantasy than traditional practices, as there are ghosts and resurrections involved, but the cultural practices of New Mexico are dominantly present. Because of the fantastical moments associated with La Loca, many Anglo readers classify *So Far from Gad* as magical realism. This issue is important to note because many Chicano novels with examples of these conventional practices of the culture created from bordertowns get confused for fantastical elements, magic, or witchcraft. After all, the curanderas all over the bordertowns are in a natural life setting, and no one questions their cures. While there are moments in this novel that seem magical (i.e., La Loca's resurrection, Caridad's healing miracle, La Llorona visiting la Loca, and the disappearance of Esmeralda's and Caridad's bodies after jumping off the SkyCity), they are based on many mythological and folklore stories told in Mexico and Acoma, respectfully classifying these customs and traditions as magical would discredit and disrespect the people growing up inside the culture.

Researchers discuss that "… the narrative point of view is key [in understanding magical realism]. In this regard, a further distinction may be drawn as to whether the point of view should be collective and culturally bound (that is, tied to a set of traditional beliefs shared by a particular cultural group) or individual and psychological bound (that is, relative to an individual universal representative of the species, or of the human condition)" (Camayd-Freixas 14). The difference between works like "Madre Sofia" and *So Far From God* is the approach and perspective in which the stories are told. "Madre Sofia" is told from the perspective of a child who has not yet been integrated into his 'other' culture, the culture from which the mother had to move away from to assimilate into her new space. Taking her son prematurely to see Madre Sofia is a step of defiance; however, this left the boy alone to his own devices, needing to wrap the situation so that he could understand what was going on. Madre Sofia may be a curandera, but in the lens of

a young boy, anything seemed magical if it completely differed from the stuff he has seen from Oral Roberts, a prominent T.V figure. So, categorizing the poem and similar works as magical realism is unproblematic. “The binary opposition between a constructed marvelous…and a real marvelous…is intrinsic to the mode in which the novel is narrated.” (De Castro 25). I agree on the aspect of narration in magical realism; in *SFFG,* not only is the narrator very familiar with every culture, custom, and tradition practiced within the novel, but the main characters are Chicanas, daughters of the bordertown of Tome, New Mexico. While fictional, Sofia and her daughters represent an actual group of people, and the novel showcases their culture. Where I disagree because of *SFFG* and similar novels, is their statement that “the real marvelous finds its justification outside literature itself: in the historical-anthropological correlation between the marvels depicted and the actual beliefs of the social groups represented” (De Castro 25). Here is where the ambiguity of the magic is important; everything outside of Curanderismo and even the character Francisco el Penitente, is the magical “correlation” needed to be labeled as magical realism. However, because they gave a name to the healing powers of Caridad and Doña Felicia, I argue that those culturally significant moments cannot justify the magical moments outside of them. Therefore, labeling the entire novel as magical realism would be wrong.

When I read this novel, I thought this was not magical realism as I was already aware of curanderismo and have curanderas in my family. So people referring to this novel as magical hit a nerve. However, the further I went into my analysis of the novel, the more I needed to clarify my own understanding of magical realism. This confusion was at the back of my mind because of La Loca. It should not be surprising that Loca dies of one of the most mysterious illnesses at

the time the book is based on[17], HIV. I argue that La Loca contracting this virus is a magical moment in the real world; La Loca never leaves her sanctuary nor interacts with people, so it does not make sense why she would get this virus.[18] HIV is very real, and there is no effective cure for it (CDC). Had Ana Castillo cured La Loca with Curanderismo, it would have made the practice seem magical, and Loca's death is as realistic as Fe's death[19]. The most magical character got 'magically' infected by a very real, deathly virus. This plot line in the novel is a hybridized moment for La Loca, a magical and real moment, so I can cautiously agree that this novel is a magical realist novel. I say this with caution because without knowing the context of all the cultural references in the novel, readers misunderstand curanderismo and believe that the entire novel is magical instead of only focusing on moments that include La Loca, which, as I argue, disrespects the cultural traditions of the novel.

2.5 Third Spaces

Third spaces are wildly important in Chicano magical realism novels because the third space is where we see the magical elements separately from the cultural traditions and practices. When the Anglos "migrated illegally into Texas," still part of Mexico at the time, the original tejanos (native Texans of Mexican descent) "lost their land and, overnight, became the foreigners" (Anzaldúa 28). La raza continues moving south, but unwelcomed or unwilling to move back to Mexico, they are left to converge near the river: "The convergence has created a shock culture, a border culture, a third country, a closed country" (33). This third space created in the borderlands differs from the third space from a diasporic perspective because la raza was not wholly displaced. They are in their own home and can physically return home or never completely leave

[17] *So Far From God* published in 1993.
[18] HIV can only be transmitted through sexual contact, using used needles from someone already infected, or coming in contact with infected blood.
[19] Fe gets cancer after working with radioactive material with no protection.

the land they grew up in. Because *Bless Me, Ultima* has no magical element within the novel as Ultima is a Curandera, and the golden carp is Anaya's attempt of creating his own myth, the entire llano is a physical third space as opposed to a magical one. Antonio's family deal with a lot of the cultural dilemmas as they travel through the llano, and it is also where Antonio and Ultima collect the ingredients for their cures and protections. In a secret corner of el llano, that is where Antonio meets the golden carp. According to De Castro, "Alberto Fuguet's attacks on magical realism stems from the disconnect between the representation of the region implicit in magical realism," and the regions reality (De Castro 28). I agree with Fuguet as I apply it to the border-towns along the Mexico/ US border. The towns are physical third spaces where the cultural practices/ traditions thrive, and in literature these practices turn into ambiguous mystical rituals from the perspective of the narrator, creating a magical third space. This magical third space is where Chicanos ambiguously practice magic connected to their origins. Again, I emphasize ambiguity because giving magic a name like curanderismo diminishes the minority culture that is already being erased due to assimilation. In Rios' poem, "Madre Sofia," the third space is Madre Sophia's space the narrator and his mother enter. The literature created in this space is filled with example of how the different cultures harmoniously live within the people. In *So Far from God*, Sofia's family were one of the original land grant families, and she complains that "all [they] have ever known is [the] life [of] living off of [their] land, that just gets más smaller y smaller" (139). Because her house is part of the original land belonging to the people, Sofia's house and the acequia connected to it is the main third space of the novel. Her home is connected to the original people, the last remnants of el Mejico Viejo. However, they are no longer welcome; they

are foreigners in their lands due to the illegal confiscation of it by Anglos. As opposed to assimilating to the culture in which the diasporic people enter, la raza must assimilate to a culture forced on them.

Thus, the border becomes a third space where Native American and Mexican traditions syncretize to fight against the Anglo traditions. In magical realism, the third space is where the magic intermingles with the real world. Chicanos designate a space where the magic or supernatural elements flow naturally in their real world of the book. It is usually a peaceful space where magic is a regular part of the environment; so, in *SFFG,* it makes sense for La Loca to make the house her sanctuary, her magical third space. She never leaves the house, yet she can play an instrument no one else can teach her, she can perform abortions, and outside in the acequia, La Loca talks with La Llorona. When she is sick, Dr. Tolentino does his psychic operation in Sofia's house as opposed to them going to him. Caridad and Esmeralda's disappearance did not happen in Sofia's home, so, it cannot be magical realism. Their disappearance happened in Sky City in Acoma territory, and it's another attempt of Castillo recreating a myth, the Acoma creation story. Another myth recreation that Castillo attempts is her interpretation of the appearance of La Llorona and the myth of La Malogra.

López-Calvo reminds the reader that the "[magical realism] approach to reality, which is often associated with a…third [space]…opposed to Western modernity," is seen in the works mentioned above that are proven magical realism (ix). Chicano literature continues to use the magical realist approach as they oppose the Western identity. Chicanos continue to find ways to embrace their indigenous identity, and many of their works are set in the past. Contemporary Chicano authors continue to follow the structure laid out in this chapter and are writing narratives with clear lines that separate cultural traditions and uncanny, supernatural moments.

3 CONTEMPORARY CHICANO LITERATURE

After exploring Chicano literature and the many aspects of it, the first section of this chapter discusses the novel, *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* from 2020, and how it uses the many topics and tropes discussed in chapter three such as curanderismo and myth remaking. Section two explores more examples of Chicano literature written from 2018 forward. The novels not only vary in genres other than magical realism, such as horror, but also still have the foundational structures discussed in chapters one through three.

3.1 The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez

Chicano stories have continued to appear years after the movement by the same authors and new authors. Most of the novels written by the new generation are set in the same periods that the older generations wrote. The more recent authors can take mythmaking to a different level; just as Chicana literature rewrites myth to correct the historical malaises of women, contemporary authors can update any malaises done to la raza that has not been able to be shown through the work written during the movement. The older generations have already established the tropes, inspiring many new renditions of the same stories. A contemporary writer setting their story in the 1950s allows the writer to tell the story of their parents and grandparents with the perspective of what has already been taught and worked through. In terms of magical realism, contemporary writers now fully understand what is considered magical realism and what is not, especially with the examples of Laura Esquivel and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Based in the 1950s, *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* shows the beginnings of Chicano culture through the love story of Fulgencio and Carolina. Ruiz uses pharmacies and ranchos to deliver how syncretism of cultures can create many different third spaces for the people living in border towns throughout Texas. Like the Chicano writers that came before him, Ruiz creates his own Llorona

narrative with the character Minerva and explores the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe in Chicano culture. Though not perfectly, Ruiz also touches on machismo that toxically runs prevalent through Mexican and Chicano households.

In *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez*, Fulgencio and his family live on the south side of the border called La Frontera and travel to the north side, Nueva Frontera, every day to work and pick up their everyday necessities not offered on their side of the border. While picking up his mother's medicine at the local pharmacy, Fulgencio sees Carolina Mendelssohn, the pharmacist's daughter, and it is love at first sight for him. Fulgencio decides that to be worthy of Carolina's love, he must become a pharmacist like her father. Fulgencio realizes that he must change schools from the impoverished public school in La Frontera to the private school north of the border. When Fulgencio starts working at the pharmacy, it becomes a traditional third space for the Spanish-speaking community in La Frontera. Fulgencio starts making breakfast for the staff in the café connected to the pharmacy. Fulgencio's Mexican breakfast, serving foods like chilaquiles and drinks like tea de yerba buena, brings in "a steady stream of…hardworking immigrants [that find] comfort" in what he offers on the menu (30). Fast forward twenty-five years, and Fulgencio's own pharmacy also becomes a third space as he practices both medical and herbal techniques, "filling prescriptions [, and] helping the needy. Dispensing herbs when the Medicaid gave out" (6). La Farmacia Ramirez is "…a little world where la raza could come in and share their woes, get some medical advice in Spanish, and fill their prescription, sometimes with more than a promise to pay" (193). Fulgencio is…

> the first and only pharmacist in town who spoke to [the Spanish-speaking customers] in their language. The only one who did not look down on them with disdain from high up behind the counter…[Fulgencio] was just like them…Furthermore, when the prescriptions did not work, the herbs and incantations he learned from his mother did" (281).

Fulgencio practically gives his medicines for free to la raza when they are in need or if their Medicaid runs out, and because of this, he gains a following of viejitos from both worlds throughout his career who believe in his healing practices.

Pharmacies in this novel are not only a third space in which the two cultures in La Nueva Frontera can intermingle but also for the supernatural, specifically for Fulgencio to practice his magical remedies outside of traditional medicine. Fulgencio has healing powers he gains from La Virgen de Guadalupe and collects special herbs to make remedies for patients who believe in otherworldly healing using his pharmacy space to create many concoctions and potions to help his customers from both sides of the border. Because of his mental state, Fulgencio's cousin Gustavo, is a regular at the pharmacy. "Fulgencio had repeatedly attempted to put his unconventional healing powers to work in his cousin's favor…[he] worked furiously mixing a multitude of vials and powders, measuring and shaking, boiling and cooking, grinding ancient herbal remedies into a mystical compound of modern medicine and ancient cures" (127). Gustavo chugs a smoking blue potion created by Fulgencio, and smoke comes from his ears, and his face morphs into a more attractive look; his hair becomes shiny and healthy, and he no longer needs glasses. This new attractive version of El Primo Loco Gustavo only lasts a few minutes before he "began twitching, convulsing, and foaming at the mouth…as if he had inserted his finger into a light socket" (128). This moment with Gustavo brings in the novel's magical realism; unlike real-world curanderos, Fulgencio makes your typical potions and brews seen in movies and television. While effective, Curanderos' teas and remedies are much more subtle and realistic in how the patient reacts to them.

Fulgencio inherits his grandfather's rancho and feels most at home there because "this was the land from whence his family came from," and he was alone, "no one but the ghosts to

talk to, no one but the spirits to listen, and nothing but the past to render judgment." (22). The original El Dos Copas is divided by the Rio Grande and is a third space for the spiritual and earthly realms to syncretize. According to Fulgencio's grandfather, a relief of the Virgen de Guadalupe randomly appeared one summer on an adobe wall of the only house en el rancho. After his death, Fulgencio's grandfather now calmly lives with his grandson at El Dos Copas, playing solitaire and gossiping with La Virgen de Guadalupe to pass the time.

Brother William, Fulgencio's mentor from the Academy of San Juan del Atole, Also appears on El Dos Copas after he dies. Brother William falls in love with the simple life of El Dos Copas and asks Fulgencio to be buried in el rancho; because of this request, Brother William keeps Fernando and la Virgencita company en el rancho. While touring the ranch, Brother Williams notices "the figure of a lone woman [standing] at the crest" of the beach side of el rancho; according to Fulgencio, not everyone visiting the ranch can see her (66). This lone woman is a spirit that lives in El Dos Copas, though no one really knows who she is. Fulgencio saw ghosts his whole life, and he makes it clear in the novel that when someone dies, there is no guarantee that they will appear again, but when they do, they usually stay where they feel safe and happy. Carolina questions him on these miracles, and Fulgencio explains that he "… would not call them miracles. Sometimes [he] feels things, or [he] sees them in [his] mind, and suddenly they are there…It is just the way [his] life has always been. That is how it was with the flowers." (296). These a truly magical realism moments as the ghost and the ability to manipulate roses has always been a part of Fulgencio, no one questioning it before Carolina, an Anglo woman.

3.1.1 La Virgen de Guadalupe

Figure 1 Mural of La Virgen de Guadalupe on the side of my grandma's house painted by my uncle in the late 90s.

Ruiz continues the tradition of showing how important La Virgen de Guadalupe is to the Chicanos living on the border. Fulgencio has a strong connection with La Virgen de Guadalupe, and most of Fulgencio's powers come from their relationship. Fulgencio travels to Austin to talk his way into college; he pleads his case for acceptance into the university mentioning that the people need someone like him, who can empathize with both cultures of the people of La Frontera (141). The Dean of the university accepts Fulgencio into the college and later recounts the meeting to a priest and reveals that he saw *Her* during the meeting with Fulgencio:

> [Fulgencio] was standing before me. His eyes ablaze like the cloak of that Virgen of Guadalupe the Mexicans adore. And then behind him and to his right, a glowing halo just like Hers appeared. As he spoke, I heard a choir of angels speaking in unison. And then I saw…I saw Her. (143)

The Dean saw La Virgen de Guadalupe hovering over Fulgencio, and that divine intervention led to Fulgencio's acceptance into the University of Texas.

If La Virgencita is not at El Dos Copas, she is with Fulgencio as he journeys to win Carolina's love. Fulgencio manipulates any rose bush around him, more importantly, the rose bush in front of Carolina's parents' house. After returning from the homecoming dance, the couple kissed for the first time, and "the rose bush beneath Mendelssohn's window burst to life, dozens of red roses weighing the branches down to the ground" (94). During his university years, Fulgencio visits Carolina during a winter break, and "Despite the frigid temperatures, the Virgencita de Guadalupe willed a single red rose to spring forth on the rosebush beneath Carolina's window, and Fulgencio plucked it for his love" (120). While the couple were separated, Fulgencio arrives at Carolina's house with a young rosebush and plants it "among the ruins of the old rosal beneath the window to [Carolina's] room" (263). Fulgencio uses this young rosebush to coerce Carolina into going on an actual date with him. "If this rosebush is in full bloom by this evening when I arrive to pick you up, will you be my date" (264). Carolina agrees, and Fulgencio, now in his pharmacy, prepares "a special potion with a recipe his mother had given him" and yerbas[20] collected by one of his friends (264). Fulgencio instructs his little brother to take the potion to the young rosebush and say: "In the name of the Virgen de Guadalupe, in the spirit of her miracle in the mountains of the Valley of Mexico, I command you to bloom" (265). When Fulgencio arrives to pick up Carolina, the bush is overflowing with life and full-grown roses. There are many smaller moments where Fulgencio magically produces roses from his pockets.

La Virgencita is also an aspect of magical realism within this novel because she becomes an actual character with whom the others interact beyond appearing around Fulgencio. While she is only seen in El Dos Copas, she often plays cards with Fulgencio's grandfather, and eventually Brother William. When Fulgencio suggests to his grandfather to bring Brother William to help

[20] Herbs

them with la maldicion, La Virgencita "begins to do an Irish jig" on her wall (203). During a standoff with bandits, one of Fulgencio's godchildren died, and La Virgencita "cried a river of mud from her place on the [adobe] wall" (238). When the couple's daughter, Paloma Angelica, comes back from college, she brings La Virgen a new CD for her to "[dance] on the wall to the latest music…headphones over her radiant halo, her fingers snapping beneath her bright green cloak" (324). Fulgencio and Carolina pass away in El Dos Copas, and "La Virgen de Guadalupe tore herself from the adobe wall in the hut and dragged Fernando Cisneros from his card table…" to attend the funeral, speaking out loud for the first time in the novel, She mentions that "it is time they moved" (327). Before this, La Virgencita only whispered to Fernando throughout the book; she is the one who suggests speaking with the spirit that lives in El Dos Copas for information on la maldicion de Caja Pinta.

3.1.2 Curanderismo vs. Magic Realism

Ruiz's use of magic is complicated because Fulgencio does not call himself a curandero nor does he practice witchcraft; however, what the novel describes sounds like Fulgencio is practicing curanderismo exaggerated with fictional magical elements. Fulgencio's magical power and connection to La Virgen de Guadalupe are not to be confused with a curandero's healing powers and rituals. Ruiz stresses the difference between his characters and actual curanderos. Fulgencio and his mother discuss their practices, and Ninfa believes that Fulgencio saw ghosts but never believed in a curse attached to El Dos Copas; they later discuss la maldicion and the topic of the supernatural:

> "Ay Dios, esta gente de rancho. Fulgencio, we did not move to America so that we could still believe in such things. The past is the past… La Senora Villarreal is a gitana…she is stuck in the old ways and superstitions. Let her believe what she needs to believe. You are a man of science, aren't you? (199)

Fulgencio agrees he is a man of science that also has faith and believes in yerbas and maldiciones. Exasperated, his mother leaves Fulgencio alone, believing that if he needs to blame his issues on something "you can pay some curandera or bruja" to fix, he is free to do so (199). Fulgencio is frustrated with his mother because she also dabbles with spells and herbs, but for some reason, cannot believe in curses, and Ninfa rebuts by reminding him that "Curing a cold or helping someone with their rheumatism is one thing…dabbling in black magic is another" (201). As mentioned in an earlier section, Curanderos can dispel a curse but not cause one, but Ninfa seems to not care about this difference.

Fulgencio's healing powers are often described as mystical, with brewing potions and very instant results. Curanderos' practices are not magical, and instead of potions, their cures are simply teas or paste made by the yerbas they picked. To clarify, the wording Ruiz uses to describe the healing practices distinguishes his characters from a real-life Curandero. Calling the healing "concoctions, potions, and spells" invokes an image of a witch over a boiling cauldron. Ninfa's monologue to Fulgencio about the people del rancho is meant to separate the old magic of Mexico from the new healing techniques of La Frontera. Fulgencio defends the ancient magic by not only explaining that what they do is not so different than a curandero's work but also by bringing in the fact that, in the Catholic church, the transmutation of the eucharist and wine to the body and blood of Christ is a form of magic (201). Ninfa rebuts by explaining that she talked to a priest, and the priest says that "none of that old Santeria belongs in the Christian world" (201). Ninfa believes that because she is Christian, she is not doing Brujeria, but magical healing used for good. Anzaldua discusses that "institutionalized religion fears trafficking with the spirit worlds and stigmatizes it as witchcraft. There are strict taboos against this kind of inner knowledge. It fears what Jung calls the Shadow, the unsavory aspects of ourselves. Nevertheless,

it fears the supra-human, the god in ourselves" (Anzaldua 59). Ninfa fears the unknown and it is not clear if she also heals in the name of the Lord as curanderos do, but Fulgencio sometimes calls upon La Virgen before he proceeds to use his potions and healing powers.

3.1.3 Machismo

In Mexico during the 20th century, San Judas Tadeo, or Jude the apostle, became venerated in Mexico City and is often seen with La Virgen de Guadalupe as a pair (Macías Rodríguez 55). He is sometimes associated with the Santa Muerte as the saint of good and evil. However, the church's veneration of Judas separated that association, making him another folk religious Catholic icon in Latin America. Chicanas worked to remove the patriarchy from their religious practices, and they also disassociated La Virgen from this masculine energy, which in turn separated them from machismo and fought for their male allies. Machismo, or male behavior that is strong and forceful is a negative aspect, the equivalent of toxic masculinity within Mexican and Chicano culture: "it mostly refers to an attitude or conception that men are, by nature, superior to women" (Ortiz). Macho men believe in extreme traditional ideas of how men and women should act, reinforcing the concept of "women as second-class citizens whose rights and opportunities…are undermined in their households…" (Ortiz). Nicolas Ramirez, Fulgencio's father, is your typical Mexican exuding machismo. Physical discipline is common in Mexican Culture; however, machismo elevates this practice to domestic violence. "Men are expected to display their manliness outwardly and proudly, and while this may not be a bad thing on its own, it often leads to unnecessary displays of power" (Ortiz). As the head of the household, Nicolas oversees disciplining his kids, making sure to spill blood in the process. "*Machismo* protects the aggressors by normalizing these conducts and not considering the implementation of consequences" (Mirandé 474). Machismo makes men take things too personally; Nicolas is ashamed and filled

with rage, seeing his son make a name for himself despite Nicolas's so-called efforts for his family. Nicolas feels threatened by Fulgencio, seeing that he is moving on from the family and having an Anglo father figure; his anger explodes, resulting in Fulgencio leaving the house after the physical altercation with his father.

La Maldicion de Caja Pinta is a curse put on Caja Pinta, which spans both sides of El Rio Bravo. In the 1840s, ownership transferred to Mauro Cisneros, Fulgencio's great-great-grandfather, who was the head of the family during the Mexican-American War. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo split the land in half, giving the northern half of Caja Pinta to "gringos;" the southern half later becoming El Dos Copas. Enraged, Mauro tries and fails to get his land back, and his pregnant wife, Soledad, tries to stop him (220). Mauro dies attempting to evict the gringo squatters from his land and is later buried in the family plot located on the north side of the Rio Bravo. Soledad drowns, trying to get to his grave. Minerva, Soledad's mother, blames Mauro's "pride and machismo" for what happened, and "the powerful bruja" creates the curse (221). For Fulgencio to live a normal life, he must break la maldicion de Caja Pinta.

A rage builds inside Fulgencio, affecting many of his relationships. Fulgencio would get in many fights, often caused by a "wrong word, [or] a miscalculated or misinterpreted glance" (106). This rage inside him grew when he met Carolina and feels this force increases from anger or jealousy. Fulgencio begins to hear an ancient voice speaking a foreign language, flowing like a "Mystical incantation…brimming with the kind of power that lurked beneath the deceptively calm waters" of El Dos Copas (47). These voices that he hears are another form of the curse manifesting. Fulgencio physically hears his rage, sounding "like a freight train rolling in from Mexico," often drowning out the world around him; in his mind, he can see the freight train with letters stenciled on the boxcars. Fulgencio senses the boxcars carrying "secrets imported from

beyond, foreign to [La Frontera,] yet native to his soul" (106). The letters on the side of the box-cars spelled out foreign words for Fulgencio, those words being *chahualiztli* (a generic name for some parasites/ jealousy, suspicion), *nexicolhuiliztli* (envy, jealousy), *ellelaci* (to suffer great pain), and *tlatzitzicayotl* (loneliness). Fulgencio grows aggressive, and as his rage grows, more incantations are added to the roaring train inside his mind: *Atle spam motta* (something vile, without value, unworthy of esteem) and *anel nitrite* (to loathe, detest, or hate someone) now constantly tormenting him along with the others (Wood). These incantations connected to his rage are in Nahuatl, implying supernatural forces from his motherland. This implication is confirmed during the earlier confrontation between Fulgencio and his mother. Ninfa proclaims that Fulgencio could run, but "he will never escape the dark side of who [he was] and where he came from." La Senora Villarreal, his eavesdropping neighbor, adds that if Fulgencio was not careful, "the blood that [he carries] inside will turn [his] dreams…into nightmares" (Ruiz 109). By this point, Fulgencio's nightmare was already coming true.

Fulgencio's jealousy and anger only worsened when he left for college, leaving Carolina behind to finish her senior year of high school. Carolina would share stories of her life back in La Frontera, and Fulgencio "would sense his jealousy bubbling up from that cauldron of fire deep inside him, the mysterious words rushing into his ears…" (149). In one of his visits back to his hometown, Carolina and Fulgencio argue as they discuss their future lives together. Ever since he decided to pursue her, "Fulgencio had never given her plans much thought" (151). Fulgencio believes that Carolina would not even need a degree because she would still be living a life of luxury and ease with him. His anger and determination to live a better life led him to insist that Carolina not attend the same college to be with Fulgencio, even though her dream is to attend her father's alma mater. Carolina decides to go to a different college, and she and Fulgencio

continue their long-distance relationship. Fulgencio finds out Carolina travels south of the border with her friends to attend dances and events and tells her to “act the way a girlfriend should act.” Her response reminds Fulgencio that she cannot be “owned” and that he is why they were not together at the time (160). Gloria Anzaldua comments on this expectation: “The culture expects women to show greater acceptance and commitment to the value system than men” (Anzaldua 40). Miguel, a friend of the couple, points out that as an “Anglo woman…she probably thinks [Fulgencio is] too macho, stuck in the ways of la raza south of the border” (161). His high expectations for Carolina are dangerous because her modern, Anglo ways challenge Fulgencio's machismo, ultimately leading to his downfall.

Fulgencio decides to attend the next dance, finding Carolina innocently dancing and having fun with multiple partners. Fulgencio explodes in toxic rage, fighting three men at once, those ancient Aztec words drowning out all the noise. Wearing “a macabre Aztec mask,” Fulgencio confronts Carolina, spitting out that she is “not worthy of his efforts” (162-3). The couple make up a couple of weeks later; the final straw, however, happened during Fulgencio’s last Christmas break in college. Fulgencio decides to surprise Carolina for Christmas break, but before he can knock on the door, Fulgencio peaks into the front window and witnesses Carolina dancing with an Anglo man. The darkness and rage “had been there long before, like a congenital disability or the scars and trauma of his tortured childhood. And it had taken this chain of events for the darkness to finally consume him” (171). Fulgencio walked away from Carolina that night, and it would be another twenty-five years before they saw each other again.

La maldicion de Caja Pinta seems to be Ruiz’s way of tackling machismo in the novel, especially since it is highlighted that the main reason for the downfall of the Cisnero men is their machismo. La maldicion comes from Fulgencio’s maternal side, beginning with Mauro Fernando,

father of a set of twins, and one of the twins being Fernando Cisnero, Fulgencio's grandfather. Fulgencio's father is not affected by the aspect of the curse that makes them lose all the women in their lives, but he does show general Mexican machismo. La Maldicion de Caja Pinta highlights the toxicity of machismo culture by disturbing the relationships of the Cisnero Men. The curse affected all male descendants, making them lose the women they love the most "by echoing and amplifying the same emotions that had led Mauro Fernando Cisneros to cause her daughter's untimely death: machismo, pride, vanity, insecurity, possessiveness, jealousy, envy, and ultimately, rage" (221). In Machismo culture, the men see their women as property and something they can possess. Fulgencio holds Carolina on a high pedestal from the moment he sets his eyes on her; "she was a dream, a goddess in his eyes…but could [Fulgencio] ever possess [Carolina] like a macho was supposed to possess a woman" (48)? Fulgencio uses possessive phrases throughout the novel when he thinks about his life with Carolina and even questions if an Anglo woman could follow Mexican traditions. Machismo often manifests as anger projected onto others because of the unhealed trauma men have because of traditional gender stereotypes on the inside; a common macho stereotype is the famous "boys don't cry." Minerva realizes that the curse will affect her bloodline, so at the last minute of making the curse, she creates a way to break it.

First, Fulgencio must unite the lands separated by the Treaty of Hidalgo; then, he must recover Soledad's remains and bury her with Mauro on the northern side of Caja Pinta. Lastly, since Soledad died trying to cross the border and get into the United States, Fulgencio must save a woman who is a descendant of Soledad and grant her a safe and free entrance into La Frontera. The first two tasks were easy to accomplish because Fulgencio obtained mass wealth from his many businesses, including the pharmacy. Fulgencio spends his time south of the border along-

side his compadre, El Chino, and his kids. One day, El Chino requested Fulgencio's help to eliminate some squatters taking over his rancho. After a daring rescue resulting in many deaths from the squatter's family, Fulgencio helps Chino and his family escape from Mexico by helping them illegally cross into La Nueva Frontera, officially breaking La Maldicion de Caja Pinta.

Ruiz falls short of even providing a small solution to Fulgencio's machismo in the novel. I argue that it was not intentional, but Ruiz focused on creating Fulgencio, a perfect character, handsome with a great singing voice, a hard worker, astute, and literally blessed by the holiest of mothers. Yes, the curse affected his anger and his relationship with Carolina, but every other aspect of the curse did not touch Fulgencio. Ruiz goes out of the way to detail certain aspects of machismo that Minerva specifically hated: pride, vanity, insecurity, possessiveness, jealousy, envy, and rage. There are many examples of Fulgencio portraying these traits: his pride and arrogance are shown through his beautiful singing voice and his relatively good looks. Fulgencio's insecurity, possessiveness, jealousy, envy, and rage are shown throughout his relationship with Carolina. Fighting the squatters shows the extremes of his rage, the worst trait Fulgencio adopted from la maldicion. As he runs around town, Fulgencio flaunts the wealth and power he has gained over the years, not dealing with his pride or vanity; he takes on many lovers but can make potions to safely stop him from bearing children. It would make sense that Ruiz would have Fulgencio overcome these negative traits to dispel the curse; however, the tasks set to end the curse fail to do so since they do not comment on machismo and are only related to the story. The only 'resolution' Ruiz gives Fulgencio for his rage is throwing in a couple of sentences, making it feel like it was added at the last minute. After a passive-aggressive comment during the dinner date with Carolina, Fulgencio is surprised that he gets mad, but "he found himself perfectly capable of flipping a switch to activate the training" he had with Brother William, who threw "pretend

insults" at him (283). He takes a deep breath and recites positive Nahuatl phrases he learned during the training (284). His jealousy, control, and insecurity have a better resolution through character growth when he finds out Carolina was dancing with her cousin that fateful Christmas day:

> How could he have been so blind to his flaw, the burden he had secretly, unknowingly, brought with him from Mexico like a smuggler unwittingly sneaking in deadly contraband? … Just because he was now more capable of controlling his emotions, it did not mean that he can control Carolina's. Nor did he wish to anymore. (185)

This moment of clarity gives us a better resolution of his macho jealousy, possessiveness, and insecurity, but again, this resolution did not come from completing the tasks. Ruiz unnecessarily specified that machismo was the reason for Soledad's death, consequently leading to the curse, and laid out specific characteristics that Minerva hated. However, there was no need for the machismo qualities to be connected to the curse if the tasks to break the curse do not challenge and erase those qualities. Two things can be true at the same time; the tasks are not an issue for the overall continuation and resolutions of the narrative but they do leave a sense of lacking on the commentary of machismo.

3.1.4 Recreating Myths

Ruiz follows the tradition of retelling the story of La Llorona with Minerva and her reaction to Soledad's death. The ghost of Minerva "wanders twenty miles downstream at the [Rio Bravo's] mouth. Every night, she roams the shore of the beach in mournful desolation… Her wails of sorrow can be heard in the howling of the midnight wind" (222). This version of La Llorona continues to connect the myth to the indigenous people of Mexico with Minerva being a mestiza, half-Indian, and able to speak Nahuatl. However, because Ruiz has defined la maldicion de Caja Pinta as the magic of the old world, he is, unfortunately, villainizing indigenous blood,

the half of the Chicano self that they are trying to reclaim. Anzaldua experienced this villainization when she was younger, and she "allowed white rationality to tell [her] that the existence of the 'other world' was mere pagan superstition" (Anzaldúa 59) Throughout the entire novel, Minerva is referred to as la bruja, and, as mentioned before, the words that Fulgencio hears when his rage is going out of control are Aztec words. "White anthropologists claim that Indians have "primitive" and therefore deficient minds, that we cannot think in the higher mode of consciousness-rationality. They are fascinated by what they call "magical" mind, the "savage" mind, the participation mystique of the mind that says the world of the imagination – the world of the soul and the spirit is just as real as physical reality" (59). Ninfa cations Fulgencio to not mess with this old Santeria that does not belong in the new Christian world as if she agrees with the white anthropologist; with the phrase "gente del rancho," Ninfa believes that the people of the old world are deficient minded because they do not have the education of La Nueva Frontera and continue to believe in the old ways.

The dinner date towards the end of the novel is a minimal redemption attempt not to view Aztec culture as evil. However, this moment feels awkward and out of place since the entire novel makes the reader believe this mysticism needs to be corrected. Ruiz uses the La Virgen de Guadalupe to justify Ninfa's and Fulgencio's alienation from their indigenous side; just how Anzaldua mentions that "[religion] [encourage] a split between the body and the spirit and ignore the soul; they encourage us to kill parts of ourselves," (Anzaldua 60) and in the case of this novel, they are killing the old-world connection that is still prevalent in La Frontera. It would have made more sense for Fulgencio to have prayed to La Virgencita for strength since there has never been a positive view on the Nahuatl words; it also would have been a nice callback to his connection with La Virgen and the breaking of the curse. La Virgen de Guadalupe is an integral

part of the heart and soul of the Mexican people; her appearance helped unite the indigenous and Spanish people as she represents the syncretism between them. By making a caricature of La Virgen, Ruiz leaves a bad taste as he simultaneously demonizes her indigenous side, which connects her to Minerva.

As a contemporary Chicano writer, Ruiz should know the work Chicana writers have done to destigmatize the fear associated with La Llorona. Chicana writers take the patriarchy out of the myths that demonize the women-centered in the story. In *So Far From God*, which Ruiz should be familiar with, Ana Castillo rewrites the legend of La Llorona through Fe with her yelling episode after her boyfriend left her and by becoming infertile by her work with the military arms industry. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio dreams of La Llorona wanting to take his blood and then later transformed into the veteran whom the men of the town killed due to a PTSD episode, which resulted in the veteran killing a man. This transformation between the two characters showcases the moral question of punishing a sympathetic character since they both have PTSD. Neither author necessarily demonizes La Llorona the way that Ruiz does; just like how he tackled machismo, I believe he was focused on the plot. He is aware of the legend of La Llorona, so connecting Minerva with her is not too over the top, but the curse needed a creator, and it could not be Soledad since she was the love of the person being punished.

There are many examples of Chicana writers in different genres continuing the tradition. V. Castro is a Mexican American writer who continues the work many Chicana Feminists started, even outside the regular genre in which Chicanos usually write. In the horror novel *The Haunting of Alejandra* by V. Cruz, Alejandra is haunted by a monster who disguises itself as La Llorona. To defeat the monster, Alejandra uncovers the truth of the myth and uses the help of La

Llorona and her foremothers to destroy the monster. *The Haunting of Alejandra* is a beautiful example of a retelling of La Llorona leaving the patriarchy out of it. Throughout *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez*, anything indigenous or "old world" is villainized, and there is no redemption for Minerva, the wailing lady of the novel. This thesis does not criticize Ruiz's career but only uses this as an example of writers not learning from the past. By attempting to excel at one aspect of the Chicano magical realism structure, mythmaking, Ruiz abandons the rest of the structure; he reintroduces patriarchal ideas and demonizes indigenous roots with his version of La Llorona, which is a step back from what earlier Chicano writers, especially Chicana feminism writers, established in their work.

3.2 More Examples of Contemporary Chicano Literature

In the borderlands between Mexico and the U.S., the job of magical realism was to show the hybridization and identity struggle Chicanos faced during their political movement of the 60s and 70s. Between then and now, the newer writers began to tell the stories of their families who lived in these lands, and since they are aware of the traditions from their past, audiences can recognize their works as magical realism. In 2005, Luis Alberto Urrea wrote *The Hummingbird's Daughter,* a historical fiction novel about his great-aunt Teresa Urrea, often known as the Saint of Cabora. Teresa's mother is a poor Indian woman working on the ranch of the Urrea family. She abandons Teresa, and as she grows, she learns healing from the ranch's healer, Huila, who also knows the secrets of her destiny. Amid the Mexican Revolution, Teresa became a popular curandera, spreading the miracles throughout Mexico. Luis Urrea grew up hearing the story of Teresa in Baja, California, and "hunted down" her story all over the U.S. and Mexico. In writing this story, Luis "had to learn Mexican history, revolutionary history, Yaqui and Mayo cultural history, Jesuitical missionary syncretistic history, family history. I had to study with medicine

people and shamans, midwives and curanderas" (Urrea). In the same vein as *So Far From God, The Hummingbird's Daughter* incorporates magical moments into the narrative as Luis Urrea exaggerates or expands on details of Teresa's training as a curandera. Still, historical fiction is the best way to classify the novel because *The Hummingbird's Daughter* is the story of an actual person, Urea's great-aunt, and not a made-up character that represents a general population. Similarly, *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* is a magical realism love story, with the magic coming from the main character, just like Laura Esquivel's novel, *Like Water for Chocolate.*

The New York Times reviewer Kawai Washburn states that in the twenty-first century, the political climate changed again, and "…when a story is set in the Texas borderlands, a certain narrative is expected, almost demanded. There will be violence, trauma, desperation. Coyotes and border agents, narcotics, and trains. There will be injustice and emptiness — of both the landscape and emotional variety" (Washburn). Chicano magical realism adapted to this change; however, the main concepts of third space, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and machismo stayed the same. As detailed in this thesis, *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* is one of the few contemporary novels that follow the same magical realism structure of its predecessors, meaning the story is set during the Mexican Revolution or influenced heavily by it, and it covers the key concepts of third space, La Virgencita, La Llorona, and machismo. Though it's not as important for the overall story, Rudy also alludes to issues surrounding the border. Fulgencio cross over the border to work and study, and through the help of a friendly border agent, he sneaks his goddaughter to safety. La Bestia[21], the beast, is a famous train that carries immigrants through all of Mexico, ending at the border; Fulgencio's anger is portrayed as sounding like an angry freight

[21] Cargo trains transporting products to the United States. Migrants literally run alongside the moving train to jump aboard and travel to the boarder. Apart from injures and death, dangers also include gang violence, sexual assault, extortion, and kidnapping.

train, almost like a monster yelling in his ears. Due to the racial incidents, Fulgencio's angry train feels like an homage to La Bestia.

In 2022's *The Family Izquierdo* by Ruben Degollado, "the Izquierdos and McAllen go, so goes life: polyphonic, mixing across borders, expanding with a musicality that only strengthens as it grows" (Washburn). The narrative switches from different perspectives and generations within the Izquierdo and McAllen family, beginning with the patriarch of the Izquierdos, Octavio, and his feud with his neighbor Emiliano Contreras. Jealous of Octavio's successful business, Emiliano places a curse on him that seems to affect family members later. Whether due to the curse or their doings, *The Family Izquierdo* tackles many issues that Chicanos face now, including the ever-going battle of machismo: "As the Izquierdos and McAllen go, so goes life: polyphonic, mixing across borders, expanding with a musicality that only strengthens as it grows" (Washburn). The ambiguity of the curse and the family living their everyday lives makes it hard for the reader to determine the source of the magic, which, as I argue, gives it the magical realism aspect of the novel.

Also published in 2022, Estella Gonzales's *Chola Salvation* is a magical realism collection of intertwining narratives featuring Frida Kahlo and La Virgen de Guadalupe. In the titular story set in the 80s, Isabela grows up in a Mexican American family in East L.A. "She suffers sexual, physical, and verbal abuse. The tipping point for Isabela is when she refuses her mother's demand for a quinceañera" (Steinberg). The two icons come to Isabela a la deus ex machina:

> La Frida is in a man's suit, a big baggy one like the guy from the Talking Heads, but this one's black, not white. All her hair is cut off, so she is not wearing no braids, no ribbons, no nothin'. The only woman thing she has on are those hand earrings… [La Virgen] has blonde hair, lots of white eyeshadow, and she's wearing chola clothes. You know, tank top with those skinny little straps, baggy pants, and black Hush Puppy shoes. And she has this lipstick like she just bit a chocolate cake. Her hair is so long, it

> touches the back of her feet. Her bangs are all sprayed up, like a regular chola, but she wears a little gold crown (Steinburg).

The characterization of La Virgen de Guadalupe makes this collection of stories magical realism, especially because she comes and goes as she pleases, appearing out of nowhere. This collection honors her and her representation because, dressed as a Chola La Virgen, she represents Chicanas, her new generation of followers, while her traditional image represents the old generation. Her Chola attire is another form of mythmaking; Gonzales creates the myth that La Virgen de Guadalupe appears to those in need in a form they would appreciate and understand, just as she appeared to Juan Diego so long ago.

According to Camayd-Freixas, "[Books] dealing with immigrants, a topic one can preliminarily identify as linked to US Latinos and those written in a magical realist style, which would include books written by both US Latino and Latin American Latino writers" are taking over the bookshelves (Camayd-Freixas 20). The evolution of magical realism comes from the political context surrounding the text. Immigration and border crossing are new themes emerging within Chicano literature, as seen in *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* and his family traveling back and forth between the fictional towns of La Frontera and La Nueva Fronter. To escape from her abusive home, Isabel from *Chola Salvation* crosses from California into Mexico, and the adults from *The Family Izquierdo,* who were born in the 80s-90s, reminisce crossing into Mexico to buy medicine and some of their favorite childhood toys. Like Latin American magical realism, Chicano realism "is personal as well as historiographic." (43). The bordertowns have easier access to go back and forth between countries, so it is part of the narratives written, showing how it was to flow back and forth, blending between cultures and customs. However, within the newer novels, we see the change in accessibility of leisurely border crossing.

Everyone Knows You Go Home by Natalia Sylvester is a 2018 magical realism novel focusing on immigrants from Mexico who are crossing to the U.S. through the Mexican-U. S border. Isabel first meets her father-in-law on her wedding day when his ghost appears to her and his son, Martin, right before the ceremony, which falls on the Day of the Dead. Since then, Omar, her father-in-law, appears on their anniversary, every Day of the Dead, asking Isabel to help him reconcile with his family. Kirkus Reviews comments that "the book transitions smoothly from past to present… [Sylvester] gradually documents the original sin that traces trauma throughout the family legacy, revealing the battles and scars that Elda, [Isabel's mother-in-law] [bears], having immigrated illegally in the 1980s with Omar. Ultimately, the appearance of Eduardo, Martin's cousin, brings the past into the present and provides another point of view on Omar" (Kirkus). Though the ghost of Omar appears on the Day of the Dead, a culturally significant holiday in Mexico and Chicano culture, this novel can be classified as magical realism because Isabel is the only one who has the power to see and hear him due to Omar's family holding resentment towards him. Omar's appearance is surprising at first, after years of this occurring, Isabel expects Omar to show up to continue the work they had done last year. Because of the political themes of immigration, this cute, magical, realistic novel turns into a severe conversation about escaping a dangerous landscape and illegally seeking refuge. While introducing the theme of immigration, Sylvester adds a new spin on the theme of identity; Isabel was born and raised in the Texas town the novel takes place in, as her family's ancestors were among the original occupants of the land. She is essentially your typical Chicana character. Martin's parents, Omar and Elda, immigrated to the United States and, by default, made Martin a Mexican American. While they had similar childhoods and upbringings, this difference between the newlyweds eventually becomes a point of contention when dealing with the appearance of Eduardo.

In contemporary Chicano magical realist novels, only two of the aspects detailed in this these change throughout the years: the political context surrounding the novel, and the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe. While Chicano literature is politically shifting to represent the struggles of migrants crossing, so the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe is growing. La Virgen de Guadalupe is very well known to the countless of migrants traveling north to the border; In 1754, Pope John Paul II "declared Our Lady of Guadalupe as the 'Patroness of the Americas…[and] Catholic communities across the United States, Mexico, and elsewhere maintain a strong devotion to [her]" (Service). For first, second, and third generations of immigrants La Virgen is a reminder of the struggles their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents went through as the crossed the border with only their faith. Regardless of which Latin American country they migrated from, the generations born in U.S. soil—specifically in the bordertown are surrounded by La Virgen's image, and inevitably become one of her devotees. When la raza fights for immigrant rights, they add the image of La Virgen on their flags, just like the Chicanos did during the Chicano movement who had gotten inspiration from the rebels fighting in the Mexican Revolution. Within contemporary Chicano literature, the other aspects of Chicano magical realism detailed in this thesis: myth-making, and machismo remains the same.

4 CONCLUSION

Rudyard Alcocer mentions that in a Latin American "historical and political context, instances of magical realism in fictional narrative[s] have been identified as carrying a broader sociopolitical or culturally symbolic weight," and the Chicano adaptation of this genre or "mode" continues to precisely carry the cultural weight (Alcocer 70). Chapter one's discussion on the Mexican Revolution showcases how important the revolution impacted the identity of the people and the country itself. I also clarified how *Pedro Paramo* and *The Death of Artemio Cruz* are not magical realism. If anything, *Pedro Paramo* leans more toward the uncanny and the weird because the narrator clarifies that the ghosts who inhabit the town are tethered there because of the sins they committed in life. As for *Artemio Cruz,* the narration style is weird, but there are no magical elements to consider in this text's magical realism. As mentioned, Fuentes's writing is uncanny and dips its toes in fantastic elements but arguably never crosses the lines to magical realism. Even his short novel, *Aura,* about an editor working for a dying widow to collect her husband's memories, also only seems to be weird, leaning toward a gothic atmosphere. Unfortunately for Rulfo and Fuentes, and with any work that came out during the literary boom of the 60s-70s, "works within the same national or linguistic tradition may be linked together by strict common denominators, forming a core nucleus of magical realism, while other works that share a family resemblance, [like novels such as the ones mentioned,] may be placed in closer…proximity to this relational nucleus" (Camayd-Freixas 14). Anglo publishers and audiences forcibly label these earlier novels as magical realism because of how popular *One Hundred Years of Solitude* became, primarily when published in English.

Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* is a magical realist novel as "the characters and narrator do not care to look [for a] rational explanation, but instead accept the events as normal…" (Camayd-Freixas 9). No one questions the emotional symptoms they feel when eating Tita's food; Mama Elena seems to be aware of the effect the food gives people, but she is more concerned with Tita's and Pedro's relationship than actually questioning what Tita puts in her food. The one moment we get of Mama Elena's awareness is when she consumes the emetic for fear of being poisoned, which eventually kills her. *Like Water for Chocolate* also has the Mexican Revolution as a backdrop to the narrative, eventually mirroring Tita's journey to gain her independence from her mother and establish who she is outside of her suffocating rancho.

Chicano literature is also considered to have a common denominator with its Latin American predecessors because of this nucleus of magical realism that Western audiences created to lump all Latin American and Hispanic literature across them. Inside this nucleus is essentially any fantastical and uncanny work written in Spanish. In her guest essay for *The New York Times*, Mexican American author Silvia Moreno-Garcia discusses the stereotype haunting Latin American literature. In "Saying Goodbye to Magical Realism," Moreno-Garcia complains that her entire catalog fell victim to this stereotype. When she released her novel in 2020, she blatantly named it *Mexican Gothic* so that it would be another casualty. I agree with Moreno-Garcia that the "magical realism label subtly erases the efforts of an emerging group of horror writers, such as V. Castro…whose work cannot be neatly encompassed by that term" (Moreno-Garcia). A host of criticism and articles talking about the Latin American magical realism pipeline and how if novels did not have "flying grandma's," the novel would have negative reviews from Western audiences (López-Calvo).

Chicano poems and other works of literature that portray their magical elements, like Alberto Rios's "Madre Sophia," fall under the many characteristics of magical realism, as defined when discussing *Like Water for Chocolate earlier.* As I argued, however, most Chicano literature involves examples of traditions and rituals from not only the indigenous population in the borderlands, but also Mexican practices carried over from the ancestors forced to assimilate into the Western culture. The autochthonous culture from the brodertowns along the Mexican and US border "artificially [constructs] a conventionalized pastiche or simulacrum based on classical anthropology's creation of a generic 'primitive society' —a composite of early ethnographic depictions of traditional non-Western cultures…" (Camayd-Freixas 12). *So Far From God* is a successful Chicana novel that blurs the lines between the cultural practices and the magical elements because of the character La Loca. So, it is fair to label this novel as magical realism. My attempt to separate the unknown fantastical from the known rituals of the indigenous ancestors from the land is to vindicate diminished novels that divide the magical from cultural traditions. Practices such as curanderismo are primitive and unfamiliar to readers outside the bordertowns. Because Chicanos regularly practice curanderismo, Anglo readers label works such as *Bless Me, Ultima* magical realism regardless of the explanation for what seems "fantastical" to them.

"Categories should not act as straitjackets, and yet the magic realism label has sometimes strangled rather than liberated Latin American literature" (Moreno-Garcia). Moreno-Garcia believes magic realism is often "overused and stereotypical, spoken without much thought" (Moreno-Garcia). Her article is one of many complaints that other Mexican American[22] and

[22] "The older generation remembered the word's earlier disparaging implications, and other Mexican Americans felt uncomfortable using Chicano in formal conversation. Most significantly, many Mexican Americans rejected the way self-styled Chicanos had taken the expression from its in-group folkloric context and appropriated it for common dialogue. It was this violation of folkloric norms that produced the word's repudiation from within by the early 1980s. Mexican Americans, Hispanics, or Latinos took its place. Chicano, however, remained a part of the overall in-group lexicon" (De León).

Latin-American authors expressed as they strongly believe that Anglo audiences find it easy to label them as magical realism. Cultural representations that Anglo audiences see as weird throw these works into this genre strait jackets because they cannot fathom that third-world literature or "primitive" works can be akin to the works of Poe or Faulkner (Camayd-Freixas 12). If that sentiment were not the case, *Pedro Paramo* would have a more extensive audience reach. I had not heard of Rulfo's work until my senior year of my undergrad studies, but I had reread the works of Poe, Hawthorne, Faulkner, and T.S Eliot multiple times since high school, where they also focus on world literature.

Magical realism is not a genre to throw away, as there are many works within the genre. As seen in *Like Water for Chocolate,* magical realism is a big part of Latin America, and Mexico is no exception. The genre almost always comments on the political landscape in the country where the novel is set; Tita's trek to independence mirrors the rebels in the Mexican revolution. Magical realism is a hybridized genre—mixing magic with reality and is common in Chicano literature as a way to express their hybridized identity living in a hybrid environment in the borderlands. An essential aspect of Chicano literature is the backdrop of the narrative, including the Mexican Revolution in one way or another. This is important because the economic difficulties surrounding Mexico during the revolution are similar to those surrounding Chicanos at the time of the Movement. Like Tita figuring out her identity outside of her suffocating matriarch, the Chicanos embrace who they are outside of an acculturated society where forced assimilation was the norm. Other aspects of Chicano literature include mythmaking, machismo, and the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe in Chicano homes. While authors write magical realism narratives, they commonly create magical third spaces that mirror the third space they live in. The hybridized cultural living in the bordertowns makes the border a third space; a magical third

space is like the fortunetelling room in Alberto Rios's “Madre Sofia” as that is where all the magical moments happen for the narrator. Pharmacies in *The Resurrection of Fulgencio Ramirez* are both a physical and magical third space; it is a magical space because that is where Fulgencio makes his potions, and it is a physical third space because his clientele is the many Mexicans, Americans, and Mexican Americans that daily travel the border from La Frontera to La Nueva Frontera. The political climate around the border between Mexico and the United States continues to change, which the evolution of Chicano literature emulates. Many of the novels that Chicanos and even those who label themselves as Mexican Americans center on the topic of immigration as the background of their novels. As immigrants—migrants from all different parts of Latin America—continue to settle in bordertowns, the culture surrounding the border continues to enculturate the many customs that migrants bring with them. In bordertowns, people of other Latin American countries grow up around Chicano culture and it becomes a part of their own identity. The hybridity within the immigrant population evolves the significance of La Virgen de Guadalupe and she is now the mother and protector of all immigrants.

Chicano literature continues to thrive from authors born in bordertowns, and they continue using the structure detailed within the thesis as they evolve magical realism to reflect the 21st century. Having the political climate as the background or subplot of the narrative evolves from the Mexican Revolution to border and immigration politics, and the subject of machismo within homes of 2nd and 3rd generation Chicanos remains a subject of conversation for those who refuse to let it ruin their families. Lastly, the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe within the religious culture of the bordertowns continues to be celebrated as her following grows with the population. While mythmaking is still a part of magical realism, it is now prevalent in other genres outside of magical realism. Many Chicanos and Mexican-Americans write horror novels

by recreating myths as the foundation of their novels, and they continue to remove the patriarchy from the legend of La Llorona. Her myth begins the conversation of generational trauma with matriarchal families. The stress of differentiating cultural practices like curanderismo from magic is just as significant now as in earlier works to avoid confusing the folk healing practice with brujeria outside of magical realism books. Having a defined line between magic, the supernatural, or the uncanny, and cultural practices gives future Chicano and Mexican American authors confidence to write in different genres without having the fear of misunderstood, stereotypical labels, allowing true magical realism novels to stand out.

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