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TANTALIZING THE BORDER: RE-MAPPING MOTHERS' IDENTITY IN CHERRÍE MORAGA'S *THE HUNGRY WOMAN: THE MEXICAN MEDEA*

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ABSTRACT. This paper discusses the correlation between the body and the land in Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: The Mexican Medea*. Moraga constructs a dystopian world exposing a presumed queer essence within the global market. This reframing sees "queer" as a symptomatic identity shaped by cultural interplays, particularly in ethnicity and economics. Medea's existence straddles geographical, sexual, and sensory borders, prompting a critical examination of loyalty/betrayal as an epistemological concern. Through the transformation of Mothers via Latin American legends, Moraga advocates for an environmental ethics, challenging the moral nihilism often associated with the Christian interpretation of a child murderer.

Keywords: Cherrie Moraga, The Hungry Woman: The Mexican Medea, globalization, queer, borders.

TENTANDO LA FRONTERA: RECONFIGURACIÓN DE LA IDENTIDAD MATERNA EN *THE HUNGRY WOMAN: THE MEXICAN MEDEA* DE CHERRÍE MORAGA

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza la correlación entre el cuerpo y la tierra en *The Hungry Woman: The Mexican Medea* de Cherríe Moraga. Moraga construye un mundo distópico que expone una supuesta esencia queer dentro del mercado global. Esta reformulación considera lo "queer" como una identidad sintomática moldeada por interacciones culturales, particularmente en relación con la etnicidad y la economía. La existencia de Medea transita entre fronteras geográficas, sexuales y sensoriales, lo que impulsa un examen crítico sobre la lealtad y la traición como una cuestión epistemológica. A través de la transformación de las madres mediante leyendas latinoamericanas, Moraga aboga por una ética ambiental, desafiando el nihilismo moral a menudo asociado con la interpretación cristiana de la figura de una madre infanticida.

Palabras clave: Cherríe Moraga, The Hungry Woman: The Mexican Medea, globalización, queer, fronteras.

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The difference between poetry and rhetoric
is being ready to kill
yourself
instead of your children

By Audre Lorde

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new wave of LGBTQ+ activism emerged, advocating for the unapologetic inclusion of queer individuals in society. Rejecting mere tolerance, this movement sought to assert the human right to peaceful coexistence, drawing strength from adversity and asserting their rights boldly (Rand 3). It highlighted the public visibility of queer bodies, emphasizing the freedom to be themselves openly. This paradigm shift spurred both a social and academic exploration of sexual identities. Lisa Duggan underscores the potential for these efforts to usher in new political thinking and action (Duggan 11). Queer Nation, born in 1990 as a response to escalating anti-LGBTQ+ violence, exemplifies radical rhetoric, extending beyond mere acceptance of the term "queer" to encompass various marginalized groups (Slagle 94). While short-lived, it catalyzed the demand for queer representation in mass culture (Stryker). Duggan posits that queerness challenges conventional notions of sexuality and gender (Duggan 23). Queer Nation is not synonymous with homosexuality but rather represents a dynamic political entity, transcending boundaries and fostering fluid identities (Duggan 20-21). Despite the legalization of same-sex marriage in the U.S. in June 2015, the integration

of the LGBTQ+ movement with broader justice domains, including racial, political, and environmental, remains a contentious issue.

This context of LGBTQ+ activism and the fight for visibility and rights echoes in the work of Cherríe Moraga, particularly in her play *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (hereafter abbreviated as *Hungry*; 1995), which is positioned within a distinctive cultural backdrop. Moraga's work addresses pressing concerns within the LGBTQ community, while simultaneously engaging with the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality within the Chicana/o experience. Infused with elements of Aztec and Native American cultures, *Hungry* offers a queer reinterpretation of Euripides' *Medea*. Both titular characters are portrayed as anguished and indignant women/mothers. Moraga's reimagining of Medea amplifies the vitality of these women and the marginalized female body, positioned at the crossroads of diverse aspects of identity pertinent to contemporary queer Chicanas/os.

In light of the current political climate, particularly the rollback of LGBTQ+ rights under the Trump administration and ongoing attacks on reproductive freedom, Moraga's exploration of betrayal, gender autonomy, and queer resistance takes on renewed significance. Under Trump's leadership, the LGBTQ+ community has faced increased marginalization, from efforts to rescind protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and healthcare, to the banning of transgender individuals from serving openly in the military. His administration's proposed policies would strip away crucial protections for transgender people, including access to gender-affirming healthcare and the right to live free from discrimination.[1] These political developments echo the themes in *Hungry*, where Moraga critiques the ways in which systems of oppression—such as patriarchy and colonialism—shape the lives of marginalized individuals. Just as Moraga's characters struggle with betrayal and survival in a world hostile to their desires, today's LGBTQ+ communities face similar battles, fighting to exist outside the confines of harmful, oppressive structures. In this way, *Hungry* becomes not just a work of artistic exploration, but also a political critique that resonates deeply with contemporary struggles for gender, sexuality, and resistance.

Moraga's body of work consistently delves into the complexities of layered repression, reflecting her ongoing quest for a culturally empowering force. Current scholarship acknowledges the intricate social dynamics surrounding queer Chicanas in Moraga's writings, with body politics emerging as a central theme. Tiffany Ana López's "Performing Aztlán: The Female Body as Cultural Critique in the Teatro of Cherríe Moraga," Lakey's "More than Theatre: Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman* and the Feminist Phenomenology of Excess", and Evrim Ersöz Koç's "Liberating Serpentine Goddesses on the Borderlands: Cherríe Moraga's Feminist Architecture

[1] For further details on the Trump administration's stance on LGBTQ+ rights, including its actions to rescind protections and criminalize gender nonconformity, see the article titled "Trump on LGBTQ Rights: Rolling Back Protections and Criminalizing Gender Nonconformity" from the ACLU: https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/trump-on-lgbtq-rights-rolling-back-protections-and-criminalizing-gender-nonconformity.

in *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*" share a focus on Cherríe Moraga's *Hungry* as a site of feminist and cultural critique. López emphasizes the role of the female body as a vehicle for reclaiming *Aztlán* and challenging societal norms, while Lakey examines how Moraga's play occupies the space between "[l]osing a culture and finding oneself in the process of cultural creation" (200), engaging with the feminist phenomenology of excess. Koç, on the other hand, discusses how Moraga re-appropriates and discerns the "archetypal goddesses in the context of Chicana indigenous feminism" (149) to construct her own feminist architecture. Across these works, there is a shared emphasis on feminist reimagining, cultural reclamation, and the intersection of gender, race, and identity, with *Hungry* positioned as a transformative space where women's bodies become central to cultural critique and liberation.

A discussion on Moraga's aesthetic strategies to achieve such an insight is often found in Master's and Doctoral theses. Tanya Gonzalez's *Murders, Madness, Monsters: Latino/a Gothic in the USA* (2004) explores the use of gothic discourse in Latino/a literature and film, focusing on how it addresses societal monsters—those marginalized or upholding oppressive ideologies. Gonzalez analyzes how Cherríe Moraga's work challenges conventional notions of motherhood and family, using gothic elements to subvert traditional narratives, particularly around the maternal roles in the Medea and La Llorona myths. Melinda Marks' *Three Faces of Destiny* (2013) analyzes three modern adaptations of the Medea myth, including Moraga's *The Hungry Woman*. Marks examines how narrative structure, characters, and settings enhance the emotional traits of Medea, emphasizing Moraga's reimagining of Medea's role in a contemporary Chicana context, highlighting the protagonist's complexity and resistance to traditional maternal expectations.

The above works highlight the multiple layers of oppression faced by Chicanas and how Moraga explores new female subjectivity through history, mythology, and theatrical representation. However, the significance of Moraga's texts within contemporary cultural discourse is rarely addressed. Therefore, this paper explores whether the sexual, national, and racial oppressions critiqued by Moraga remain relevant in today's globalized world, where diversity is increasingly emphasized. More specifically, it examines whether Moraga's effort to overhaul the epistemological framework extends beyond the sexual movements of the past century and continues to hold significance in an era when racial, sexual, and national boundaries are becoming increasingly fluid. Has this issue faded, or has it transformed into something new?

Moraga's greatest contribution lies in highlighting that human identity is shaped within gaps, as Lakey notes, existing "in-between" myth and history (203), home and border, Mexico and the U.S., Chicano and American, and white and colored feminism. This gives rise to what Lakey identifies as the female energy of excess, which is evident in Moraga's theatre, where the patterns of the world are reconfigured. This energy attests to a distinctly female phenomenon—encompassing histories, experiences, and languages—that "cannot be properly absorbed back within the dominant hegemonic narrative system" (202). It also resonates with

Melinda Marks' description of Moraga's Medea, whose "control of her situation is tied to her ability to love and be loved, and to accept and be accepted" (Marks 52). The excess is akin to the seed of a banyan tree (Ficus benghalensis), falling between layers of cement walls, struggling to sprout. Should it "loyally" become cemented amber, or "rebel" and grow its own life? The absurdity of this question underscores the difficulty individuals face when navigating historical rhetoric, meta-narratives, and the challenges of personal growth.

The lens of loyalty and betrayal not only highlights the tension between dominant cultural narratives and bodily autonomy but also offers a fresh perspective on Moraga's yearning for fluidity in a globalized world, where transgressing borders brings possibility and hope. As contemporary diversity movements dissolve traditional monolithic subjectivity, the body continues to struggle, resist, and adapt within new social networks. This paper explores the psychological underpinnings of Medea's mindset, focusing on "betrayal" in a hyper-globalized world facing an epistemological crisis. It examines the dynamics of betrayal and loyalty in the queer Chicano/a context, where globalization challenges ethical norms and reshapes conventional ideas of right and wrong. Despite these changes, societal responses remain constrained by entrenched cultural constructs. Ethics and epistemology are increasingly seen in relation to one's perspective and societal position. *Hungry* can be interpreted as Moraga's acknowledgment of both the constraining and liberating aspects of this modern phenomenon, evident in the juxtaposition of "betrayed mothers"—Coatlicue, Medea, and La Llorona—with the reality of queer mothers in a patriarchal, heteronormative context.

This paper is composed of two parts. The first part examines how Moraga utilizes "body/sexuality" to challenge compulsory heterosexuality and its impact on the formation of nationalist subjectivity within a global context. Betrayal, in this paper, is framed both as a personal and cultural act of defiance against restrictive societal roles imposed on women. Drawing on feminist and postcolonial thought, betrayal signifies resistance to patriarchal expectations and the rejection of traditional roles, often marking the intersection of female agency and resistance. The paper begins by establishing the parameters of nationalist subjectivity, drawing on the Chicano nationalist movement of the 1960s to demonstrate how Moraga's text problematizes this construct. Chicano nationalism often sought to define boundaries—geographical, physiological, cultural, and ideological—to distinguish itself from whiteness, relying on fixed cultural imaginaries. However, the reproductive capacity of women disrupts these rigid imaginaries, as it introduces the possibility of hybridity (e.g., the issue of mestizaje). Moraga critiques this system, highlighting how the Chicano cultural construction sacrifices women, differentiating Chicano from Chicana, or enforces patriarchal values through misogynistic ideologies. Within this cultural context, women are framed as beings devoid of desire and, consequently, cultural agency. For those without agency, betrayal becomes an impossibility. Women betrayed by men—if they choose self-loyalty and resist conforming to patriarchal expectations—are deemed traitors for rejecting the roles assigned to them, such as dutiful mother or obedient wife. From birth, women are betrayed by a patriarchal society that denies

them agency. Moraga's project of connecting women with land requires a reimagining of female desire and an anti-essentialist approach to identity.

Through this framework, the paper delves into the complexities of Medea's desires, exploring how her psychological intricacies complicate her sexual identity in a patriarchal, heteronormative society. Moraga's text reimagines female agency by examining the intersection of loyalty and betrayal with women's unrecognized or illegitimate sexuality, embodied by mythological "bad mother" figures—namely La Llorona, Coatlicue, and Medea. These figures are depicted as communal traitors due to their reproductive power, tracing the connection between the body and the land. Moraga's discourse underscores that female bodies, labelled as excessive and uncontainable by patriarchal systems, occupy a critical space "in-between"—whether between myth and history, home and border, or Chicano and American identities. This liminality challenges hegemonic narrative systems and calls for a cultural reconfiguration rooted in the vitality of women's desires.

The second part of this paper investigates how the theme of betrayal in Moraga's *The Hungry Woman* underscores the role of body and sexuality in a political context, highlighting ongoing tensions between personal freedom and societal expectations in a globalized world. In the globalized context, betrayal extends beyond individual acts, embodying shifts in loyalty within feminist and queer movements, particularly for third-world women, where traditional expectations and new socio-political realities collide. While globalization could potentially dissolve rigid nationalist imaginaries, it often results in betrayal within these movements, where women's bodies and identities continue to be marginalized. Additionally, the theme of betrayal extends to "motherhood," as sons are taught to objectify their mothers, reducing them to mere commodities. In response, Medea—representing the archetype of the betrayed mother—rejects traditional roles by refusing to deliver new life and instead enacts filicide. Moraga situates Medea's maternal rebellion within the larger context of ecological ethics and the connection between "mother nature" and environmental concerns, symbolized by Coatlicue. This "queering of mother earth" reflects not a movement, but a recalibration of desire. Medea's ultimate rejection of both Jason and Luna, as well as heteronormativity and queerness, signifies a shift in focus from personal relationships to cultural systems incapable of accommodating diverse bodies and their connection to land. Her betrayal transcends individual grievances, critiquing a socio-political structure that prioritizes material definitions of identity over holistic connections.

Through these inquiries, this paper contends that Moraga's emphasis on betrayal stems from her perspective on the interplay between bodies, land, and epistemology. In Moraga's work, betrayal is not merely an act of personal defiance but a critique of larger cultural and societal structures that continue to shape and limit the roles available to women. Her portrayal of female desire and agency serves as a lens through which to explore the larger cultural reconfigurations needed to dismantle these oppressive systems. It applies an epistemological framework through feminist architecture to argue that globalization has not resolved issues of loyalty and betrayal. Instead, Moraga's portrayal of female desire remains central to the struggle for

revolutionary change, positioning betrayal as a lens through which to examine both the constraints and possibilities of identity in a hyper-globalized world.

1. BODY/LAND: REIMAGINING NATIONALISM AND SEXUALITY

Hungry explores the exile of queers from Aztlán, a fictional country that arises after the balkanization of the U.S. following a race war. The play is set in the remnants of Phoenix, now a ruined city on the border between Gringolandia (white America) and Aztlán (Chicano country). At the heart of Moraga's play is Medea, whose sense of betrayal and thirst for revenge mirror those of the ancient Medea in Euripides' *Medea*. In the Greek tragedy, Medea is betrayed by her husband Jason, and ultimately receives divine intervention to assert her power. In contrast, Moraga's Medea is a complex figure, both a mother and a revolutionary, caught between her love for her son Chac-Mool and the pain of his potential abandonment by her ex-husband Jason. Moraga reinterprets Medea's struggle within the context of Chicana and queer identity. Medea, a former revolutionary, and her lover Luna, along with Medea's thirteen-year-old son Chac-Mool and dyke grandmother Mama Sal, face drastic change when Medea's ex-husband Jason, who lives in Aztlán, sends a letter requesting that Chac-Mool come live with him. This echoes Jason's paternal authority in Euripides' play, forcing Medea to choose between her seven-year lesbian relationship with Luna and her heterosexual past with Jason.

Like Euripides' Medea, Moraga's Medea is motivated by betrayal and revenge, but her actions are framed by the intersection of her queer identity and her relationship with Jason. As Medea enters Aztlán and meets Jason at the border, the play explores not only her doubts about Jason's motives but also her struggle with the complexities of her identity. Medea's act of filicide in Moraga's adaptation differs from Euripides' version, where it is driven solely by revenge against Jason. In *Hungry*, Moraga's Medea poisons her son not as an act of retaliation, but as a way to assert control over her identity, motherhood, and sense of self. The play critiques patriarchal norms and addresses issues of gender, sexuality, and national identity. The narrative unfolds through flashbacks while Medea is confined to a psychiatric ward, and it ends with Chac-Mool's spirit returning to visit her, taking Medea to the moon. Just as Euripides' *Medea* challenges the moral justice system of Athens, Moraga's play uses the rebirth of Chac-Mool to express a vision of alternative female autonomy and a reimagined cultural and political identity.

Influenced primarily by the revolutionary and highly politicized theatres, notably El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworkers' Theatre, founded by Luis Valdez in 1965), Moraga has become increasingly cognizant of the significant underrepresentation of women in the Chicano nationalist movement of the sixties. This movement effectively established the biological family and race as essential components of a new heteronormative community. While appreciative of Valdez's pivotal role in shaping the vibrancy of Chicano theatre in its modern form, Moraga also acknowledges that Aztlán nationalism's relentless propaganda has embraced a sexist

stance as a convenient strategy to further its aims. Culturally, the patriarchal family is envisioned as the movement's quintessential model of domesticity.

Valdez's plays depict the dynamics between Chicanos and Chicanas, reflecting this socio-cultural model, which consequently frames the Chicano and white male struggle over geographical, physical, cultural, and ideological boundaries. This contest is consistently and symbolically mapped onto female bodies, which hold value only in relation to the power struggles between white and brown men. Therefore, "gender differences are seen as instrumental, even indispensable, to the process of Chicano nation building" (López 162). As female bodies are the carriers of racial continuity, they are also demarcated as boundaries perpetually under threat from incursions into cultural territory. Therefore,

> while Woman is upheld as a revered figure, she is also made to represent that which is most despised in the culture, as indicated in the nomenclature used to describe those who have questioned the structure of Chicano nationalism: vendida, pocha, malinchista, marimacha (sellout, whitened one, fucked one, dyke). (López 163)

In contrast to Luis Valdez's troupe, Moragas' theatrical strategies are centred around a manifesto and performativity that highlight the crucial link between the body and the land. In her work "Queer Aztlán: The Reformation of Chicano Tribe" (1993), Moraga draws on Ricardo Bracho's assertion, "How will our lands be free if our bodies aren't?" to position queer Chicanos within the nationalist and cultural revolution of the sixties (Moraga, *Last* 145). Through this, she challenges the conventional definition of "man" and his relationship with the land. Moraga contends that if Chicanos seek to reclaim the territory of Aztlán from U.S. control, the queer community must forge new definitions for 'man,' 'future,' and 'sexual identity' that transcend the confines of patriarchy.

Furthermore, Moraga highlights the fact that even though gay men are biologically male, they face mistreatment within a misogynistic system where anything considered "female or feminine" is met with punishment (Moraga, *Last* 162). This underscores that gay men, despite their maleness, are not exempt from oppression in a patriarchal framework. Moraga goes on to emphasize that the freedom of gay men is intricately linked to the freedom of women, asserting that "as long as they insist on remaining 'men' in the socially and culturally constructed sense of the word, they will never achieve the full liberation they desire" (Moraga, *Last* 162).

Indeed, Moraga acknowledges that in order to understand female desire and sexuality, she had to first examine Anglo culture. As she explains in *Loving in the War Years*, she found that Anglo culture provided more space for the development of female desire, which allowed her to explore the concept of desire as a subject in its own right before returning to her Mexican roots to further develop her revolutionary ideas. Moraga writes, "[w]hat may look like betrayal among Chicanas on the basis of race is deeply linked, I believe, to internalized sexism and misogyny" (107). She explains how Chicanas, in their pursuit of male approval or avoidance of

sexual marking by men, often turn against each other. This idea of betrayal is closely connected to the sexual legacy passed down to Chicana women, exemplified by the historical figure of Malintzin Tenepal (La Malinche), who is often vilified as a symbol of betrayal. As Moraga points out, Malinche's role in the colonization of Mexico—her sexual and advisory relationship with Hernán Cortés—has been distorted in history as the cause of the loss of Indigenous Mexico. Rather than being revered, Malinche is slandered as *la Chingada*, the violated one, or *la vendida*, the sellout. Her story, one of both historical and sexual transgression, is used to perpetuate the idea of women and Indigenous people as inherently treacherous. Moraga's exploration of these themes reveals the intersection of female sexuality, betrayal, and revolutionary potential, illustrating how Chicana women's sexuality has been historically policed and how their bodies have been marked as sites of both colonization and resistance.

From this perspective, Moraga challenges the notion of national subjectivity rooted in heteronormative values. She presents an alternative possibility—one in which bodily desire can serve as a means to transcend geographical boundaries and subvert hegemonic collective memories. This approach represents a bottom-up response to the predominant top-down forces that typically drive globalization.

The dystopian backdrop in *Hungry* underscores the prevalence of anti-essentialism (or queerness) within the context of globalization. In doing so, the play taps into a real-world awareness of these issues that has gained momentum since the 1990s. For example, in *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin F. Manalansan highlight the reciprocal relationship between queer culture and globalization (1). They note that the former has become both a commodity, subject to the passions and purchasing power of nonqueer individuals, and a means through which queers shape their identities in our contemporary consumer-driven globalized world.

The inherent power of sexual identity as a source of emancipation challenges numerous deeply ingrained patriarchal values. These conflicts, marked by themes of loyalty and betrayal, hold significant weight in Moraga's play. Within the framework of patriarchy, loyalty and betrayal imply a contractual bond between two individuals, as well as between a person and the broader community, which delineates the norms surrounding female sexuality. Specifically, *Hungry* reveals profound tensions between the betrayer and the betrayed when female/queer sexual desires defy the repressive norms, both implicit and explicit, of patriarchal law.

The play alludes to three mothers—Coatlicue, La Llorona, and Medea—each of whom deviates from the archetype of a "good" woman in a patriarchal society where moral boundaries are in place to safeguard the purity of the father's lineage. While Coatlicue embodies a multidimensional goddess, she is nonetheless stigmatized as a "bad" woman by the community due to her enigmatic pregnancy and warrior-like

spirit.[2] The legendary La Llorona is portrayed as both a passionate wife and a nurturing mother (depending on the version of the story being told), who tragically drowns her children in response to betrayal or shame (respectively, depending on the version of the story). Thus, La Llorona stands as a variation of Euripides' Medea.

The narrative of betrayal reveals a cultural mechanism that systematically denies women the agency to construct their own subjectivity. In a patriarchal society where women are relegated to the role of fulfilling men's needs and desires, and where female sexuality is tightly regulated, women are stripped of any sexual autonomy or independent identity, especially outside of heteronormative norms. As López aptly points out, within Chicano nationalist discourse, women are essentially rendered incapable of "betrayal" since their sexuality and sexual identity are not culturally acknowledged—they are often perceived as asexual. Consequently, the moral imperative of loyalty within a monogamous system is a standard that exclusively applies to women.

Heteronormative men, on the contrary, consistently occupy a privileged position where they possess either a loyal or disloyal wife. This assumption implies that their own behaviour bears no causal relation to the type of wives they have. In other words, according to heteronormative logic, if women are considered disloyal for engaging in adultery, there is no corresponding constraint on men who commit equally immoral acts. How, then, does the rage of the three archetypal wives mentioned earlier fit into this framework? Based on legends and literature, only those possessing extreme beauty (as in the case of La Llorona) or extraordinary abilities (such as Medea's mastery of magic) have their deeply felt emotions made visible. Tragically, in these narratives, their exceptional qualities serve only to increase the likelihood that their intense emotions will betray their expected social roles—such as that of a loving mother. This emotional display is "sanctioned" in a cultural environment where they are conditioned to be loyal solely to the imposition of societal expectations on women, without any agency to be loyal to themselves.

Given these circumstances, loyalty to their role as a community member or even as a human being becomes an impossible option. Despite everything else, when deceived, women find themselves torn between betraying either themselves (by accepting the injustice) or their assigned social roles (by remaining true to their

[2] Coatlicue (Serpent Skirt) was a major deity in the Aztec pantheon and regarded as the earth-mother goddess. Represented as an old woman, she symbolized the antiquity of earth worship and she presents one of the most fearsome figures in Aztec art. Coatlicue was also the patron of childbirth, associated with warfare, governance and agriculture. In Aztec mythology Coatlicue was actually a priestess whose job was to maintain the shrine on the top of the legendary sacred mountain Coatepec. One day, as she was sweeping, a ball of feathers descended from the heavens and when she tucked it into her belt it miraculously impregnated her. Their other children are ashamed by their mom's dishonesty and rally together to kill her. Her son, then still unborn Huitzilopochtli, rose to his mother's defence by springing from the womb fully-grown and fully-armed killing his siblings (Cartwright 2013). See Mark Cartwright, "Coatlicue." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, 2013. Accessed Aug. 5, 2020. https://www.ancient.eu/Coatlicue/.

innate anger as a human being). Because their desires and very existence are shaped within such a social context, it could be argued that women are fundamentally born into a state of betrayal by society.

2. DESIRES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT: BETRAYAL, FREEDOM, AND REVOLUTION

Could the empowering potential of globalization foster a cultural agency that enables alternative female/queer subjectivity? Globalization seems to foster the mobilization of gender categories. As the economy takes on an increasingly influential role in shaping subjectivity and sexuality, a highly integrated and interdependent global marketplace possesses the potential to disrupt traditional epistemological categories that define human existence and identity. While hyper-globalization is often marked by top-down economic expansion, including trade alliances and labor exploitation, which dictate policies and standards to facilitate the smooth functioning of the global marketplace and wield influence over political authority—often at the expense of social and cultural interests—it also blurs the lines between economic, political, socio-cultural, and national boundaries. This creates opportunities from the grassroots level to establish and normalize new forms of culture and identity.

Interestingly, while Moraga recognizes the potency of sexual identity as a counterforce to economic imposition, her play deliberately departs from this optimistic viewpoint by categorizing itself as a dystopia. In *Hungry*, the notion of a 'queer nation' is reduced to a marginalized enclave operating on the outskirts of yet another prevailing culture. In this regard, Chicano Aztlán merely replaces the United States of America. So, why do the empowering facets of capitalism, evident in a global context, not manifest themselves in *Hungry*? Why aren't the formidable female/queer warriors acknowledged with a reward akin to their real-world counterparts? The dystopian experience endured by queer Chicanos/as in *Hungry* appears to serve as a poignant indictment, suggesting a profound sense of betrayal by an anti-essentialist (i.e., queer) movement that is ironically dominated by the very forces it seeks to reject.

To address these inquiries, we must delve into the inherent epistemological framework within the dynamics of globalization. In his work "Rupture or Continuity? The Internationalization of Gay Identities," Dennis Altman examines "the extent to which the forces of globalization (both economic and cultural) can be said to produce a common consciousness and identity based on homosexuality", associating gay identity with modernity and globalization to illustrate the emergence of a "global gay" (79). Altman acknowledges that this terminology is heavily influenced by recent American trends and intellectual styles (Altman 77). Nevertheless, there is a potential risk in relying on material prosperity, as it may further marginalize LGBTQ individuals from different social classes, genders, and racial backgrounds.

In *The Globalization of Sexuality*, Jon Binnie delves deeper into this matter by exploring how queer individuals can find themselves implicated in the economic

structure of globalization, leading to various consequences (63). For example, white working-class queers in Britain may experience heightened levels of marginalization due to economic globalization. These theoretical and social science perspectives offer insights into elucidating Moraga's pessimistic portrayal of the intersection between economy and sexuality. If norms are constructed within the confines of bodies and states, as negotiated in the play through terms like "sane/crazy," "loyal/betrayal," "right/wrong," "normal/abnormal," it prompts a critical examination of identities defined by material conditions.

This introduces a dimension of localization, representing a bottom-up approach to global gay issues. As observed, while some queer activists respond to the influences of global forces in shaping a shared homosexual consciousness and identity, there are apprehensions regarding transnational queer subjectivity. In their book *Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement,* Barry Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Andre Krouwel analyze contemporary queer movements across more than a dozen countries spanning five continents. They seek to discern the dynamics encapsulated in the postmodern transformation of morality and values, as well as the reconfiguration of economic relations, the public sphere, and the private realm that enable "the ascendancy of romantic love ideologies" (Adam 5). They acknowledge the intertwined phenomenon of heightened connectivity between the state and the personal, culminating in the formation of a "historical subjectivity" (Adam 5). However, they also emphasize that any sense of commonality that might be invoked by the widespread adoption of terms like "gay," "lesbian," or "bisexual" must be tempered by the diversity within and among national cultures (Adam 9).

Jyoti Puri further challenges a certain level of essentialism within the anti-essentialist (queer) movement itself, cautioning that the production of global gay subjectivity presents a potential pitfall by inadvertently exporting hegemonic "institutional sites of knowledge and power" (60), influenced by Western consumerism, intellectualism, and consensus. In conclusion, the dynamics of localization, or a bottom-up socio-economic perspective, acknowledge individual differences in contrast to the potential homogenizing force of globalization on groups.

Concerns about the construction of minority identities also arise in other social movements. Discussions surrounding sexual identity often occur within the context of relatively stable financial circumstances. One shared aspect between the feminist and LGBTQ movements is that both were initially catalysed by individuals who possessed financial and social privileges. This is not to say that feminists or homosexuals of colour did not exist prior to the involvement of their white counterparts in the movements. Rather, it tends to be the case that the former remains less visible until the latter enter the discourse. Throughout the last century, history has demonstrated that social movements led by racial and sexual minority groups often rely on initiatives from more racially and sexually prominent groups.

For example, following (white) liberal feminism, we witnessed the emergence of third-world feminism, and lesbian movements followed gay movements.

Consequently, movements instigated by (more) dominant classes or groups (such as white, male, etc.) are frequently later accused of overlooking pre-existing racial, class, and/or gender issues before they brought their own movement(s) to the forefront. In her work "Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory," bell hooks (1984) highlights that "had middle-class black women initiated a movement in which they labelled themselves 'oppressed,' no one would have taken them seriously" (6-7).

Indeed, this critique of minority movements, rooted in a sense of betrayal, is a crucial aspect of Moraga's exploration of her own revolution. Beyond her early observations of Chicano culture, as discussed in *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga deepens her interrogation of betrayal in her second memoir, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings 2000-2010*, published decades later. In this work, she reflects on how the intersection of her mixed heritage and her struggles with identity continue to shape her understanding of betrayal—not just in relation to her Chicano roots, but also within broader feminist, queer, and decolonial movements.

This theme of betrayal informs Moraga's critique of mainstream feminist and queer movements. She writes, "[m]aybe one of the greatest damages white feminism did to women was to convince us of our own victimization without at the same time requiring us to acknowledge our complicity in oppression" (Moraga, *Xicana* 59). Here, Moraga criticizes how white feminism perpetuates victimhood while failing to hold women accountable for their role in perpetuating systems of power. Similarly, in *This Bridge Called My Back*, Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1942-2004) confront white feminists, asserting, "[we] are challenging white feminists to be accountable for their racism because at the base we still want to believe that they really want freedom for all of us" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 58). Through these critiques, Moraga highlights the tension between the desire for liberation and the exclusionary practices within feminist spaces.

Furthermore, in *Waiting in the Wings*, Moraga expands on her resistance to the conventional gay movement, stating, "I've always experienced my lesbianism as culturally distinct from most white gays and lesbians" (Moraga, *Waiting* xx). She rejects the imposition of mainstream gay culture, which she views as privatized and disconnected from the extended, multigenerational relationships that define her vision of queer Chicana life. This rejection of assimilation, along with her critique of traditional feminist and queer movements, reinforces Moraga's long-standing theme of betrayal—both personal and political—and her search for a cultural identity rooted in familial and woman-centered values free from patriarchal constraints. Through these works, Moraga consistently grapples with the betrayal experienced within feminist and queer movements, emphasizing how systemic oppressions force individuals to confront personal and cultural dissonances, shaping a feminist and queer consciousness that refuses to conform to dominant ideologies. For Moraga, betrayal becomes a lens through which to critique how systems of oppression, including patriarchy and colonialism, persistently shape the lives of marginalized individuals, often turning them against their own communities in search of personal survival or autonomy. As she reclaims her place within these movements, Moraga also reimagines what true solidarity and revolutionary change might look like,

pushing for a vision that embraces rather than punishes the complexity and fluidity of identity, desire, and resistance.

The complex issue of "queer subjectivity" within the privileged yet dominant "minority" underscores the themes of borderlands and home, projecting Medea onto the landscape of the disappeared Aztlán, the Balkanized America, Chicano Aztlán, and the contemporary queer ghetto through her ambiguous sexual identity as a diasporic loner. In the fissures between history and myth, normalcy and abnormality, sanity and madness, Medea's identity is shaped and challenged. When the Chicano nationalist revolution erupts in response to economic exploitation, exacerbated and solidified by agreements like NAFTA, Medea is presented as a formidable warrior, proudly adorned with scars. She evolves from a heterosexual virgin who "bleeds" for Jason into a martyr who bleeds for the nation, under the encouragement of Chicano leaders of the revolution. Disgusted by Jason's cowardice, Medea undergoes a transformation from being Jason's submissive partner to becoming Aztlán's queer and resolute soldier.

The Aztlán warrioress, nurtured by American queer culture in the nineties, wholeheartedly embraces her new identity, one that allows her to simultaneously preserve her racial and sexual identification. Her blood symbolizes the birth of the nation (Aztlán) as well as the future of the land—represented by the bodies of her offspring. During wartime, a lesbian fighter becomes even more valuable because her racial identity takes precedence over her gender identity. This is why the betrayal of the country she helped build strikes her so deeply after the revolution's success. Once Aztlán is established, the new Chicano patriarchy instructs women to "Put down your guns and pick up your babies." In doing so, the revolutionary fathers not only disavow their own contributions to the founding of their new nation but also reinstate and stipulate heteronormativity as its cornerstone. Consequently, Medea is exiled or "sexiled" from the fatherland for being queer. Years later, she abandons her female lover in her quest to secure Aztlán citizenship for her son, only to experience another profound betrayal as she is reduced to being seen simply as "[a] woman, a thing" (Moraga, *Hungry* 70).

In *Hungry*, female sexuality takes on an unconventional portrayal. Moraga's narrative focuses on the transformation of an American feminist activist into an exiled Aztlán queer, highlighting the intricate layers of repression faced by LGBTQ individuals within racial minorities. Caught between the staunch patriarchy of Aztlán and the confined queer enclave of Phoenix, Medea seems to navigate a disconcerting dance of both sexual and political ambiguity. As Medea is stripped of her Aztlán citizenship, Jason's former apprehension towards this once-formidable warrior diminishes. He now belittles the once-powerful ex-revolutionary who played a pivotal role in the establishment of Aztlán. It is clear that Jason no longer places significant weight on Medea's consistently validated "non-conforming sexuality." With his son Chac-Mool by his side, Jason's patriarchal pride is restored in legal terms. He attains what he desires: "Land and a future in the body of that boy" (Moraga, *Hungry* 69). In this perspective, Medea's usefulness comes to an end. Her body contributed to the creation of his "future," and her strength played a role in

the secession of U.S. lands that now form Aztlán—the so-called 'father's land.' Subsequently branded as an exiled queer, Medea's only recognized legitimacy lies in her association as Jason's partner.

Drawing from Moraga and Ricardo Bracho's probing question, "How can our land be free if our bodies are not?," the play implicitly contends that women's bodies are not afforded true freedom, and that their desires are fundamentally burdened by notions of original sin. Just as in the dystopian portrayal where female sexuality is exploited for political gain, within a patriarchal society, women's bodies are restricted within the realms of family, community, and nation. In *Hungry*, the border guard, Medea's nurse, and Medea's mother are all portrayed by the same actress. This threefold role reflects the multifaceted nature of women navigating within the confines of the heteronormative and patriarchal system, operating on familial, societal, and national levels. Each character also has a distinct duty—keeping a vigilant watch over Medea's body, thereby suppressing (or confining) her and her perceived deviant (sexual) nature. In this manner, Medea encapsulates the essence of womanhood within the patriarchal system, embodying a lack of true freedom alongside the pervasive fear and repression of her inherent deviance. This sentiment traces back to the biblical tale of Eve, who is often associated with the original sin in the Garden of Eden. Within the family dynamic, Medea's mother instructs her to yield to her brother's desires, including her own body, given that he is the sole male figure in the family (Moraga, *Hungry* 58). In a pivotal scene where Medea reflects on a moment shared with Luna, admiring each other's bodies in a mirror, the border guard intervenes. She positions herself between them and interrogates Luna, seeking to ascertain if she has the legal right to cross into Aztlán. He presses, asking, "Answer the question. Do you desire…" (Moraga, *Hungry* 62). For queers in the father's land, their bodies and sexuality become crucial realms through which they can initiate the reclamation of their own "land" in the form of both agency and a rightful place in society. In this light, bodies are not only sites of sensuality, sexuality, and nourishment, but also arenas for political contestation.

The intricate connections between bodies and politics remain largely confined to the realm of clandestine discussions among queer individuals, while the "straight" community—comprising the patriarchy and proponents of the heteronorm—often dismisses or overlooks this vital understanding. This dynamic is exemplified when Jason attempts to persuade Medea to allow Chac-Mool to return to Aztlán in order to become what he deems "a real man." In response, Medea counters with explicit sexual language, once again signalling her stark disapproval of the values upheld by those in the father's land.

> JASON. If you really loved your son, you'd remove him from your tit.
>
> MEDEA. So his mouth can suck your dick?
>
> JASON. That's how your dyke friends talk, Medea?
>
> (Moraga, *Hungry* 69)

The unending cycle of betrayals inflicted upon mothers and other women by both Chicano fathers and the U.S. Air Force father in the context of nationalist and other political endeavours propels Medea towards a steadfast commitment to revolution. She is determined to impart to Jason's new mestiza child-wife the harsh lessons of a history steeped in struggle, one that defends "women and children against enemies from within" (69). Refusing to instil in Chac-Mool the fervour of Chicano nationalism, Medea firmly believes that "betrayal occurs when a boy grows into a man and sees his mother as a woman for the first time. A woman. A thing. A creature to be controlled" (Moraga, *Hungry* 70-71). Medea is resolute in her refusal to nurture in her son a brand of manhood that views his mother as "a thing," just as she rejects the idea of him perceiving her simply as "a woman". Expanding upon Medea's sentiments to encompass their entire community, exiled queers come to the realization that, for them, the liberation of bodies—encompassing their collective body—must take precedence before the reclamation of their land.

In this context, Moraga's portrayal of Medea marks a departure from its original iteration, particularly concerning the cultural resonance of the work. Medea's tragic act of filicide, rather than being seen solely as a horrifying deed, is presented as a catalyst for "queering society." This metaphorical shift, from a suffering soul in the father's land to embodying Mother Earth, invites an alternative epistemological perspective. It aims to challenge the entrenched moral judgments stemming from gender biases, offering a stark contrast to Euripides' portrayal of female rebellion. On the one hand, in *Hungry,* Medea assumes the role of a midwife who eventually grapples with the realization that, due to custody issues surrounding Chac-Mool, she has lost her capacity to assist women in giving birth. A year prior to Medea's tragic act, she confides in Mama Sal, admitting, "I don't trust myself. I feel my hands as liquid as the river" (Moraga, *Hungry* 18). This statement, while foreboding, alludes to the legend of La Llorona—an eerie and relentless child murderer who, in her despair, drowned her own offspring and continues to claim the lives of children even after her own demise. On the other hand, Medea's transformation from a giver of life to a bringer of death prompts contemplation of Moraga's stance on environmental ethics. It underscores a cautious perspective regarding Mother Earth's ability to sustain procreation within an environment tainted by the actions of her human offspring.

These intricately woven representations of motherhood serve as a reflection of diverse perspectives found in literature, social discourse, and folklore, offering glimpses into alternative epistemological frameworks and complex relationships between human children and the concept of "Mother." One of the most notable embodiments of this theme in Moraga's narrative is Coatlicue from Aztec mythology. Moraga employs Coatlicue's formidable presence as a supernatural force that enacts environmental justice. Stemming from profound grief and profound confusion resulting from extreme repression and a succession of betrayals, the mothers in the story are compelled to transform in a manner that disrupts the cycle of procreation. This gives rise to a distorted image of the maternal figure, where nurturing qualities give way to an inclination towards destruction. The rediscovery of the remarkable

Coatlicue sculpture housed in Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology, one of the most renowned Mexica (Aztec) sculptures in existence, traces a lineage of humanity's engagement with a latent, potentially destructive maternal power.[3] In this vein, Medea's ambiguous sexual identity, the betrayals she endures, and their ensuing impacts within the play serve as a metanarrative in a time of ecological crisis. Consequently, Mother Earth evolves from being perceived as a benevolent and seemingly asexual entity into a mysterious force exhibiting "desires" and "behaviours" that prove challenging to comprehend.

At the core of Keith Alcorn's assertion that "queer is a symptom, not a movement, a symptom of a desire for radical change" (quoted in Smith 1996, 277) lies this profound reimagining of Mother Earth. This transformation challenges the established national subjectivity shaped by the patriarchy—a norm perpetuated across various epistemological representations, seemingly impervious to human compassion and suffering. Even though Chac-Mool harbours unwavering love for his mother, he finds himself unable to resist the call of the subject imposed by the "Ideological State Apparatuses." He yearns to return to the father's land as the rightful heir, showcasing a conflict born from his deep-seated conditioning. Meanwhile, Jason's masculinity, symbolized by the act of deflowering virgins, mirrors the distorted reality of this prevailing 'norm.' In a poignant exchange with her son, Medea imparts:

> MEDEA. You want normal? Then go with your father. He's perfectly normal. It's normal to send your five-year-old child and his mother into exile and then seven years later come back to collect the kid like a piece of property. It's normal for a nearly sixty-year-old Mexican man to marry a teenager. It's normal to lie about your race, your class, your origins, create a completely unoriginal fiction about yourself and then name yourself la patria's poet. But that's normal for a country that robs land from its daughters to give to its sons unless of course they turn out to be jotos. (Moraga, *Hungry* 75)

Recognizing the inherent absurdities within what is deemed "normative," Moraga subtly suggests that border-crossing serves as a bold and imaginative method to disrupt national uniformity and challenge the problematic epistemologies that underlie it. Medea's descent into madness and her ultimate act of violence are presented as a dramatic sacrifice for this very purpose. She resolutely declares that her son will never become a man like Jason, emphasizing that "The man I wish my son to be does not exist, must be invented. He will invent himself if he must, but he will not grow up to learn betrayal from your example" (Moraga, *Hungry* 69).

This "invention" constitutes an epistemological revolution aimed at challenging a politics wherein one's body (identity) is entangled with the notion of land (politics). This entanglement is further complicated by economic influences, as well

[3] In 1790 New Spain the sculpture of Coatlicue was discovered near the main temple of the Aztecs, it was reburied because it so disturbed European Christianity value. Another sculpture was replaced to be put into the exterior of the cathedral (Cartwright 2013).

as racial and nationalist agendas. Moraga examines this contemporary phenomenon, beyond the influence of patriarchy, by proposing hierarchical social constructs—economy/capitalism, race/nation, and heteronormativity—that hold sway over individual sexual identity and subjectivity. Within her narrative, the female and nature frequently function as intertwined metaphors and are also subjected to economic and patriarchal exploitation. In particular, it is women/mothers who personify nature, embodying the essence of Mother Earth, offering selfless nourishment and "unconditional emotional and physical support" (López 162). Reflecting her own identity as a self-proclaimed Chicana dyke, many of her texts deal with interrelated issues associated with the economic exploitation of imperialism (capitalism) and racial discrimination. In the context of neoliberalism, the economy plays a pivotal role in shaping nationalist subjectivity, ultimately exerting dominance over individual subjectivity. In both *Hungry* and "Queer Aztlán," for instance, she highlights the unyielding force of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) driving market expansion and how the aftermath of this push results in "border babies being born without brains" (Moraga, *Hungry* 23). It also leads to "Mohawk women's breast milk being contaminated by the poisoned waters of the Great Lakes Basin" (Moraga, *Last* 170). The presence of NAFTA in both texts ultimately underscores the link between economy and personal identity, as exemplified in Moraga's characterization.

While Moraga critiques the systemic forces impacting women's identities and bodies, her personal reflections in her memoirs offer a deeper exploration of her own evolving understanding of motherhood and sexual identity, blending her queer feminist vision with a broader ecological and political consciousness. In *Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood*, Moraga reflects on motherhood as a complex, transformative process of care and identity, far beyond biological function. Her lesbian identity is intricately tied to this nurturing ethos, as reflected in her experience caring for a friend's child:

> I had grown up to be woman enough, on my own terms, to mother a child. The child grew inside me, the loss of the child, the discovery of mother, the recognition that I had nursed dozens of hungry women throughout my life as I had my own mother ... I am a daughter and have always loved those daughters in all our beauty and brokenness. But what of the children? (*Waiting in the Wings* xxv)

This passage reflects a profound transformation, where the phrase "I had my own mother" takes on a deeper, metaphysical meaning. Moraga sees maternal power as extending both upward—to rewrite history, making the invisible visible, as she resists the dominant meta-patriarchal and orientalist narratives—and downward—to nurture the next generation, the future, and the environment. Her vision of motherhood transcends biological kinship, extending to emotional, intellectual, and spiritual solidarity. Challenging normative constructions of womanhood and reproduction, Moraga redefines mothering as a communal and intergenerational act, deeply intertwined with the protection of future generations. This perspective is echoed in collections like *Colonize This! Young Women of Color*

on Today's Feminism, where many young women testify to the mentorship of figures like Moraga and Anzaldúa, as seen in personal narratives like "HIV and Me" (65-77). These testimonies highlight the transformative impact of feminist mentors who challenge traditional power structures and offer alternative models of identity, love, and community. Here, mothering becomes a collective act of fostering care, resilience, and resistance across generations.

Moraga's vision of motherhood further evolved in her second memoir, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings 2000-2010*. In this work, Moraga expands her notion of motherhood by connecting it to global issues such as environmental loss, globalization, and the political struggles rooted in ethnic and cultural affiliations. She reflects on the question of cultural nationalisms in the face of the exploitation of the environment and the violence wrought in the name of tribal, ethnic, and religious identities. Through this lens, Moraga examines how the act of mothering extends beyond the individual to encompass the care for the earth itself and for future generations, aligning her work with broader struggles for cultural and ecological justice.

Central to Moraga's evolving understanding of motherhood is her connection to what she terms the "sisters of the corn"—a concept borrowed from Toni Cade Bambara to describe Indigenous women whose wisdom and cultural practices are deeply intertwined with the earth and its cycles. Moraga further expands on this connection, invoking her "sisters of the rice, the plantain, and the yam," to emphasize the shared, global experiences of women of color who, like her, live in communion with the land (Moraga, *Codex* 31). These references to food and agricultural sustenance are not only metaphors for nourishment but also reflect the cultural autonomy and communitarian values that Moraga champions. She sees herself and other women of color as inheritors of a feminist philosophy grounded in Indigenous traditions, which emphasize reciprocity with nature and a collective responsibility to care for the earth and all its beings.

In this context, Moraga's maternal philosophy merges with environmentalism, suggesting that to be a mother is not just to care for one's children, but to care for the entire planet. As she writes, "[it] is a philosophy, not of a rigid separatism but of cultural autonomy and communitarian reciprocity in the twenty-first century" (Moraga, *Codex* 31). In this way, motherhood, for Moraga, becomes an act of resistance—a force that not only nurtures but also seeks to protect the future from the ravages of cultural erasure and environmental destruction. The epigraph from Audre Lorde's poem *Power*—"The difference between poetry and rhetoric/ is being ready to kill/ yourself/ instead of your children"—captures a powerful shift in thinking that aligns closely with Moraga's evolving conception of motherhood. In Lorde's poem, the distinction between "poetry" and "rhetoric" lies in the ability to transcend personal suffering and not perpetuate violence onto others, especially the innocent. Rhetoric, which can serve as a tool of oppression and dehumanization, contrasts with poetry, a mode of expression that channels inner pain into transformative action. Similarly, Moraga's evolving understanding of motherhood, as explored in her two memoirs, represents a form of "poetry" that does not succumb

to the destructive forces of societal rhetoric. Instead, her vision of motherhood is one of active resistance and protection—not only of children, but of the earth and future generations. By nurturing and protecting, whether biologically or ideologically, she redirects the destructive energy of patriarchal and colonial forces toward the preservation of life.

The queering of Mother Earth unravels yet another layer of betrayal, shedding light on Medea's diasporic existence straddling sexual and geographical borders. Medea's reluctance to revert to her lesbian identity implies that the presumed "queer subjectivity" associated with globalization, as questioned by Altman and Binnie, is only a partial byproduct of the heteronormative framework itself engendered within the globalization mechanism. Put differently, the apparently liberated sexuality of the nineties in the U.S. under globalization doesn't liberate women/queers from a deficit of cultural agency. The boundary-crossing facilitated within this framework fails to emancipate from the economic and heteronormative structure. Thus, Medea opts not to return to Luna after her experience with Jason, the Chicano impostor, who consents only to provide her with an illicit "second bed" (Moraga, *Hungry* 69). The sense of betrayal doesn't solely stem from a deceptive man, but rather from a cultural mechanism that falls short of accommodating all (nonconforming) bodies in their holistic connection to their lands—physically, spiritually, and emotionally. This neglect is a question that the realm of sexuality alone cannot resolve. Whether straight or queer, Medea finds no solid ground in reality to anchor her. In other words, she feels betrayed not only by heteronormativity but also by a queer movement that predominantly defines itself through sexuality and hinges heavily on material prosperity. Medea's hunger for a meaningful agency looms large, threatening to consume her.

Hence, Medea's rejection of Jason/Luna, heteronormativity/queerness, or Aztland/Phoenix following the revolution that topples the white Gringolandia, can be interpreted as an acknowledgment that "sexuality" at best serves as a partial tool to express her subjectivity. Its liberation in a global age offers little more than a distorted reflection of political and economic dynamics. Medea conveyed to Jason: "I've changed. I married you ... with a girl's naiveté who still looked for a father's protection. But that was a long time ago. I am a woman. A Mexican woman and there is no protection and no place for me, not even in the arms of another woman because she too is an exile in her own land" (Moraga, *Hungry* 70). The loss of faith and connection on both sides of the epistemological spectrum, shaped by heteronormativity and a queer enclave (defined solely by "deviant" sexuality), is evident in her descent into "madness," reflecting a malfunctioning cultural agency. The mother is crushed. In "Why Queer Diaspora?," Meg Wesling argues that "the diasporic queer subject in particular ... is called upon to bear witness to the political, material, familial, and intellectual transformations of globalization." Because queers are "always already extra-national," they share a fundamental characteristic with "the migrant's movement through national and cultural borders," resisting constraints imposed by gender (Wesling 31). This statement aptly underscores the themes explored in *Hungry* and its empowering portrayal of dystopia. The queer

community, with its transgressive nature in the national context, embodies migratory experiences imprinted upon it, offering fresh vocabularies and examining new expressions of normativity in response to the global phenomenon of displacement, being displaced, and bearing witness to displacement.

3. CONCLUSION

In her debut play *Giving Up Ghost* (1986), Moraga vividly illustrates how women are reduced to mere vessels, as men "shoved the thing into what was supposed to be a mouth" and "made women a hole in her body" (Yarbro-Bejarano 7). This image of the mouth and hole, tied to women's sexuality and reproduction, is expanded in *The Hungry Woman*. Moraga critiques the Chicano civil rights movement's nationalist framework by positioning the female body as a site of liberation, separate from patriarchal control. What was once a hole—symbolizing passivity and subordination—is transformed into a mouth, representing hunger, desire, autonomy, and action. Through this shift, women are portrayed as warriors, with Medea's betrayal by Jason symbolizing the exploitation of women's bodies within both the Chicano and queer movements.

The paper draws from the perspectives of Tanya Gonzalez and Evrim Ersöz Koç to discuss the complex layers of "betrayal" in Moraga's narrative. Gonzalez emphasizes how Moraga's works focus on "decolonizing being" through love, positioning Medea's rejection of heteronormative relationships as an act of revolutionary resistance against patriarchal oppression (64). Koç, conversely, explores the darker aspects of motherhood in Moraga's writing, noting how the "serpentine goddesses" and maternal figures in Moraga's work illustrate the stripping away of women's autonomy. In contrast to the traditional, idealized mother, Moraga's characters exhibit an empowered, but often destructive, maternal power—a force that challenges both societal and cultural norms.

Building on these ideas, this paper examines how Moraga's focus on female reproductive power and motherhood envisions a love that transcends traditional boundaries. This love encompasses not only future generations but also a profound connection to the environment—an idea that resonates in today's globalized world. Moraga's vision of motherhood also evolves in her memoirs, where she reflects on the transformative process of care and identity, recognizing maternal power as both an act of nurturing and a communal responsibility.

At the same time, the analysis of *The Hungry Woman* reveals how betrayal functions as a key theme in Moraga's portrayal of identity and belonging. Medea's rejection of her prescribed roles within heteronormative relationships, her refusal to return to Jason, and her separation from Luna underscore her challenge to normative structures. These acts of betrayal reflect not only personal rebellion but also critique the socio-political and cultural mechanisms that fail to provide agency for marginalized bodies. Medea's ultimate rejection of these structures signifies her

desire to break free from the limitations imposed by both patriarchy and a queer community that fails to fully accommodate nonconforming identities.

Furthermore, betrayal extends beyond the individual to encompass environmental and global justice issues. As discussed through figures like Coatlicue, Moraga reimagines motherhood as an act of protection—not just for children, but for the earth itself. This vision links environmental justice to the fight against cultural and ecological erasure, suggesting that women's roles as mothers are inherently tied to the broader struggle for survival and resistance against destruction. Moraga's maternal philosophy, particularly as articulated in her memoirs, connects the care for future generations to the broader fight against exploitation—be it racial, economic, or ecological.

In conclusion, Moraga's portrayal of betrayal in *The Hungry Woman* transcends personal grievances, becoming a lens through which to explore larger cultural and political struggles. By focusing on the intersection of bodies, land, and identity, Moraga challenges the rigidity of nationalist and heteronormative frameworks, positioning betrayal as an epistemological tool for examining the limitations and possibilities of identity in a globalized world. Through Medea's rebellion and her rejection of both familial and cultural betrayals, Moraga calls for a radical reimagining of women's roles, not just in relation to motherhood, but in the broader fight for autonomy, justice, and environmental preservation.

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