Las Madonnas Morenas: Feminist Narratives of Cultural & Sexual Spirituality

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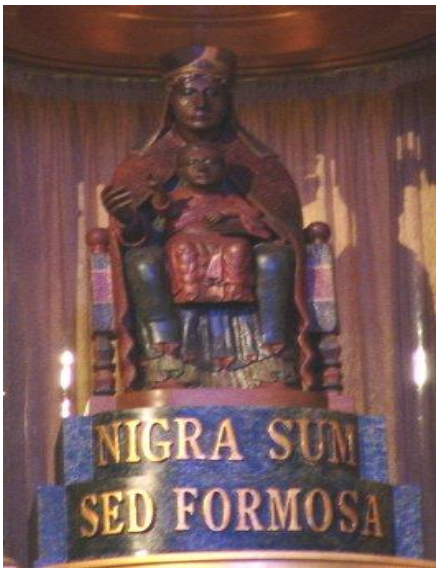
> *"What if the memory of an age of peace and equality among all living creatures, a memory embodied in black madonnas and other dark women divinities of submerged cultures, becomes a future celebrating equality with the beauty of differences, and justices."*
>
> *(Chiavola Birnbaum 2000)*

The label "Madonna," meaning "Our Lady" in Italian, is used as an expression of respect in reference to the Virgin Mary, or a mother figurehead of Christianity. The Madonna is traditionally acknowledged as the mediator, or mediatrix, for the following two reasons: she is responsible for birthing "the redeemer" and she is a spiritual link for prayer between "God" and humankind. Historically, narratives and visual representations of *las madonnas morenas* are varied in terms of worshipped identities, and in all aspects of identity, including ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and nationality[1]. In this article I apply concepts of mobility to the representation of brown and black madonnas. Additionally I explore within this piece how artistic representations or cultural presentations of the Virgin become a focal point for social justice as a means to contribute to counter-hegemonic discourse by pushing through prescribed gender roles. *Las madonnas morenas* occupy multiple and culturally spiritual spaces as guided by the religious theory of symbiosis. This theory conveys the premise that two religions, or, in this case, spiritualities, may "exist and function side by side as part of a total mosaic, without any truly substantial fusion occurring" (Rey 1999, 207).

Early images depicting the Virgin Mary typically holding Christ as an infant are commonly known as "Madonna and Child." These images display the Madonna as either having light-skin and light-eyes, or as having brown skin and dark eyes. For example, in Byzantine paintings and statues from the 6th and 7th Centuries the Virgin Mary can be found in a range of colors from beige to black.



Madonna di Tindari (Sanctuary of the Black Madonna, Siciliy)

Our Lady of Czestochowa (Jasna Góra Monastery, Poland)

Particularly of interest is the Latin quote found at the base and paintings of these historic artifacts, "*Nigra sum sed Formosa*" from the Old Testament book Song of Songs, 1:5 which translates as "I am black but beautiful" (Scheer 2002, 1431). Skin tones have also been differentiated, such as in Italy where three types of black madonnas are distinguished: nera as black, scura as dark, and bruna as tawny (Sciorra, 2004).

Many black madonnas, as well as brown madonnas, are related to various earth or indigenous goddesses. *Las madonnas morenas* coupled with indigenous goddesses are found throughout the world, however, over 400 images recognized as the black Mary or Black Madonna are primarily located in the European countries of Italy, Spain, Germany and France (http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/blackm/blackm.html). Historically the honoring of the black madonnas of Europe obviously predates the worshiping of new world representations such as the *Virgen de Guadalupe* (Virgin of Guadalupe), but it is during the 1500s and 1600s the color of the madonnas was contextualized. The awareness of the madonnas' darkness resulted as part of the development of discourses on race. As Monique Sheer (2002) indicates, "it is no longer a black image of Mary that is spoken of but an image of a black Mary" (1436). One of the oldest black madonnas is the wooden statue of the Madonna of Loreto holding the baby Jesus, and she resides in what is referred to as

the Holy House where it is believed that the Virgin Mary was born and Jesus was raised. The statue, as well as the Holy House, is enshrined in what became the town of Loreto, Italy.

In the U.S. connections to the black madonnas are made by immigrants with statues, or paintings, taken from the "old" country, such as the Statue of the Madonna del Tindari on East 13th Street in New York (Sciorra 2004). The image was brought over by Sicilian immigrants and placed in a storefront chapel in Manhattan's East Village in 1936. Another popular portrayal of a transplanted black Madonna is the Polish Black Madonna, Our Lady of Czestochowa, whose image is recognized by two scars along her cheek. Both representations of the Black Madonna are celebrated in the States not only by families of past immigrants of Italian or Polish descent from the 1800s, but by contemporary Haitian immigrants, as well. For example, in the area of East Harlem a feast for Our Lady of Mount Carmel is celebrated by Italian Americans, Puerto Ricans and Haitian pilgrims (McAlister, 2003, p. 945). The familiarity is linked to a pilgrimage site in Haiti, Notre Dame du Mont Carmel at Sodo, where it is believed that the Madonna actually appeared. For Haitians honoring black madonnas, there is an overlapping of prayer or spiritual recognition for the Afro-Haitian goddess, Ezili Dantò. She carries a baby daughter in her arms, and "is known as a single mother, a hard-working black woman, and a powerful warrior and fighter," as well as being described at times as a lesbian (McAlister 2003, 955). Elizabeth McAlister (2003) points out how Haitian religious culture is a performative function of code-switching between Catholicism and Vodou, whereby the latter "spiritually enfranchises Haitian women" with the feminine divine (944). Another example of this code-switching is the similar symbiotic spiritual relationship existing between las madonnas morenas and the Yoruba orisha, Yemaya as honored in Cuba and Puerto Rico (Doyle 1997, 171).

Similar to the recognition of the *Virgen* as a power symbol is the use of the Black Madonna as a means of resistance and mobility, as well as her connection to pre-Christian deities. In fact, in some instance there is no distinction between the *Virgen* and the Black Madonna. Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum (2000), a cultural historian and specialist on women's spirituality, connects the two iconic figures as representing feminist sites for resistance and discusses how images of black madonnas are used as counter-narratives to sexism and racism, as well as the historical violence against the Othered. She states, "Diverse as the different cultures in which they are venerated, the black madonnas of Italy, Latin America, and other parts of the third world may be regarded as a metaphor for popular hope, for liberation of the poor, the marginal, and the suppressed of the earth" (Chiavola Birnbaum 2000, 12).

One of the above mentioned popularly acknowledged brown madonnas by both religious and popular cultures is the *Virgen de Guadalupe* whose image is known as being identifiably indigenous. Traditionally, the *Virgen* is recognized as miraculously appearing in 1531 and it is widely believed that she represents a

brown Virgin Mary or the "Dark Virgin" (Burkhart 1993:198). However, there is some argument as to whether or not this is the case, as the *Virgen* has also been connected to the Guadalupe saint-figure in Extremadura, Spain as well as to various Aztec or Earth goddesses. In spite of these inconsistencies it is presumable that syncretized representations do not necessarily lend themselves to syncretized spiritual beings (Rey 1999, 199). Along with the apparition of the *Virgen* came debate as to the authenticity or artistry of her first acknowledged image found on a maguey-fiber cloth typically used for cloaks by the impoverished and indigenous. Louise Burkhart (1993) has argued that, "the grayish pigment used for the face and hands may reflect the artist's awareness of the original Guadalupe [in Spain] or other 'black Madonnas'" (206). Hence, the *Virgen* is artistically represented as a brown Madonna and is viewed as a viable symbol for the mestizaje of spiritual identity in the Americas. The renowned Guadalupe shrine of Mexico City is often recognized as originally being a temple site dedicated to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, and "Tonanztin" is translated as meaning *our revered mother* in Nahuatl (Burkhart 1993). If the above relationship and place of worship is viewed, as argued by this text, as examples of religious or spiritual symbiosis, then to this argumentation Chicana cultural critic Irene Lara (2008) creates an additional theoretical stance by suggesting that the "Tonanztin-Guadalupe" representation "becomes a decolonial figure capable of healing the virtuous *virgen*/pagan *puta* split perpetuated by Western patriarchal thought" (103). Lara also points out that indigenous worshippers of Tonanztin did not distinguish her from "God" in respect to the fact that both feminine and masculine dualities were seen as being embodied in one spiritual being (Lara 2008, 104). Thus, "Tonanztin-Guadalupe" represents an iconic image with gender bending capacities, as "both in words and in arts, the concept of God needs to be enlarged to all for women's subjectivity to be expressed" (Polinksa 2004, 57).

Regardless of whether the *Virgen* is viewed as also being Tonanztin, or any other pre-Christian deity, she has been celebrated as the "celestial mestiza" and has served as a model for women and as a supporter for their public work endeavors (Matovina 2005, 161). The popularity of the *Virgen*, as well as her development as a cultural icon or ethnic identity marker, has led to her incorporation by contemporary Chicana and Latina artists in their work of visual counter-narratives. These artistic narratives, or visually-based stories, are used to resist hegemonic, social power structures by deconstructing and re-envisioning the *Virgen* as a power source for social justice and change. Examples may be found beginning primarily with the Chicana and Chicano Movement and extending to present day works by Chicana artists such as Ester Hernandez, Yolanda López, and Alma Lopez.

The commonalities of their representations are situated at the root base of cultural and institutional transformation, thus making sense of our world based

on experienced realities. As Chicana artists, their creations to disrupt societal norms and narratives of oppression. Moreover, their images connect the *Virgen* with indigenous deities, including Tonantzin, Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui, and by doing so they assist in providing visually agency to conceptualizing spiritual symbiosis. These works may then be considered as counter-narratives to what Terry Rey refers to as "Mary's absorption of the feminine religious symbols of the cultures in which she has taken root" (1999, 229). And, as Debra J. Blake indicates, Chicana artists have refigured the Virgen and "Mexica goddesses" as symbols conveying "a woman of color consciousness" (2008, 23). This may be defined as a consciousness that effectively engages an awareness between social relations of power and oppression, and the intersectionalities of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and so on, as well as explores the potential for political transformations via agency and social justice movements. This consciousness allows for an integration of mixed racial and cultural identities developed by lived realities and voiced experiences previously silenced or unacknowledged by mainstream society. In essence, a woman of color consciousness provides the discursive space(s) necessary for active agency in the telling and sharing of stories as subjects rather than objects. Contextually, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/1999), one of the founding *madres* of Chicana feminism, refers to such a consciousness as "*la conciencia de la mestiza,*" or a mestiza consciousness where the disruption and reinterpretation of history may occur using "new symbols" to develop "new myths" (99-104).

Starting in the 1970s, Chicana artists began the creation of these new myths, or stories, by combining the principles central to mestiza consciousness with the re-imagining of La Guadalupe. The work by Ester Hernandez reveals how the *Virgen* is able to cross static boundaries of gender, as well as indoctrinated versions of prescribed, post-conquest representational forms of spirituality. In one painting titled *The Virgin of Guadalupe Defending the Rights of Chicanos* (1976) the *Virgen* is represented as a Chicana in motion doing a karate kick breaking free of metaphorically and tangible restraints (Hernandez, 2009d).

Here, again using a mestiza consciousness, Ester Hernandez has re-robed *La Guadalupe* and imagined her form as surpassing beyond the confines of a cloak.

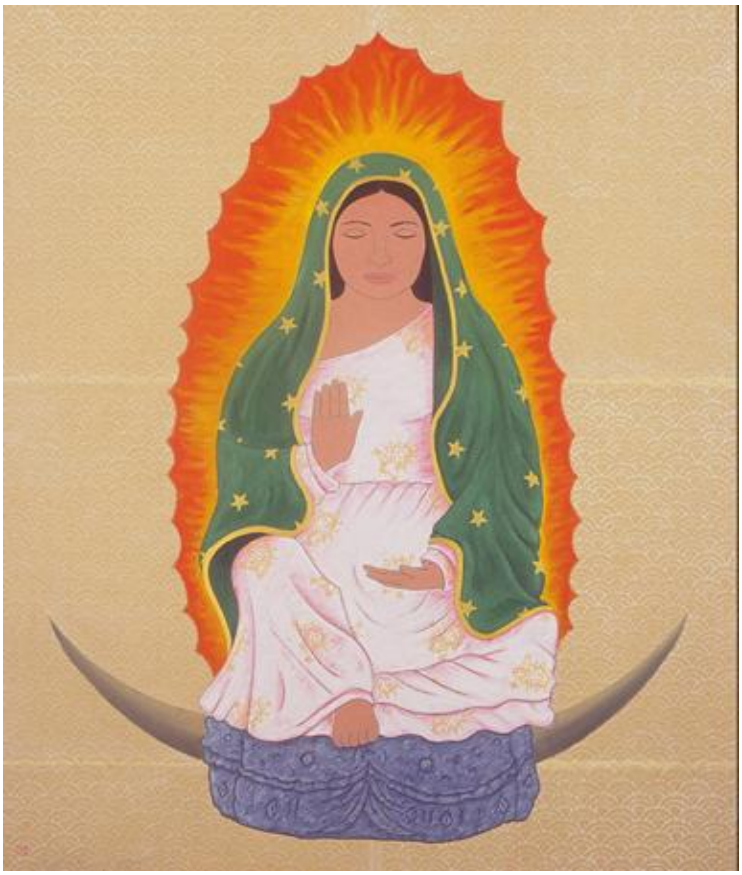
The image demonstrates a politicized mobility by representing an image of the virgin for liberated Chicanas and Latinas. The image reveals a shared link to the Women's Liberation Movement by taking up male-identified space and by learning and practicing (Westernized) martial arts as a means of breaking gender boundaries. It is plausible that although the Women's Liberation Movement is perceived as primarily a white woman's platform, the representation of a Chicana iconic figure enacting a karate movement is a symbol for symbiotic social justice efforts by the artist. Additionally, linking Chicanas and karate within spiritually charged imagery lends itself toward a symbiotic interpretation of practicing martial arts as a method of controlling and connecting with one's mind, body and spirit.

Another more recent painting, *Virgen de las Calles* (2001) depicts the *Virgen* as a migratory border woman selling flowers (Hernandez, 2009c).

Virgen de las Calles also evokes a transnational mobility by cloaking the woman in a rebozo-like shroud and a sweat-shirt reading "USA," as well as entering the image in a capitalist dialogue by displaying the woman as wearing a set of Nike tennis shoes. Ester Hernandez is known for visually stimulating her audiences by combining a thematic commitment to social justice with a feeling of humor (Hernandez, 2009a). In this context, humor may be understood as a way of subverting societal norms and challenging the "most mundane, taken-for-granted aspects of culture" (Crawford, 2000, p. 214).

In addition, Ester Hernandez (2009b) has combined religious narratives by merging the *Virgen* with the Buddha in a piece she calls *Budalupe* (2005) and in the process creates of sense of spiritual mobility. The idea for this religious-spiritual combination stems from a request for a tattoo design by Chicana author Sandra Cisneros (2002) who refers to herself as being a Buddhalupist. Cisneros

displays her "Buddhalupe" tattoo on her upper arm as a devotee to both Guadalupe and Buddhism.



It is within the context of this mobility that a spiritual code-switching occurs in "third space," as explained by Rakesh M. Bhatt, where "systems of identity representation converge" (2008, 178). Spiritual code-switching may also be used to discuss the mobility of how the *Virgen* and her indigenous variations are mutually worshipped. As such, spiritual mobility enacts a politicized symbiosis representing the mutual uniting of belief without focusing on the institutional hybridization of representational figures. For example, Tonantzin may be worshiped simultaneously with the *Virgen de Guadalupe* and be acknowledged as a separate, but connected deity or spiritual being. This differs from a syncretic explanation in terms of recognizing both Tonantzin and *La Guadalupe* as a sole, static identity that has been blended, subsumed or overlaid.

Likewise using the *Virgen* as a template for feminist creativity, Yolanda López, a third-generation Chicana, created the *Virgen de Guadalupe Series* composed of the following three pieces*: Portrait of the Artists as the Virgin of Guadalupe, Margaret Stewart: Our Lady of Guadalupe and Victoria F. Franco: Our Lady of Guadalupe* (1978). This series was considered to be a radical departure from how the *Virgen* is traditionally portrayed and it legitimized her interpretation as a new figure for symbolically and culturally representing women of Mexican and indigenous descent. Commentary by feminist theorists on the varying pieces and their portrayals of the *Virgen* make reference to how she is reconstructed as a gendered body, as well a sexual being. For example, the first piece in the series is a recreation of the artist positioning herself as the *Virgen* in running motion, thereby demonstrating a sense of mobility and corporal status to the iconic image (Y. López, 2009a). Betty LaDuke's (1994) art essay on Yolanda López further adds that this self-portrait is an interpretation of taking ownership and control of one's body, as well as connecting endurance and survival. The painting visually plays on cross-cultural symbols, including the use of a hand-held, captured snake representing the conquest of evil in Christianity and a locus of power for the Earth goddess, Coatlicue. Gender and sexuality are demonstrated not only in the powerful act of revealing of the *Virgen's* legs, but by their active positioning and display of musculature. In reinterpreting the image of *La Guadalupe* as an active figure, as opposed to maintaining the traditional, submissive stance, Yolanda López has opened up what queer Chicana cultural critic Luz Calvo (2004) refers to as "Chicano/a visual space" (201). It is within this visual space that Chicana artists have not only altered the *Virgen's* stance, but have imagined her with a, as Chicana fiction writer Sandra Cisneros (1996) states, "*panocha*", or vulva (51).

The next piece in the series is described as honoring the working woman's labor and is interpreted as equating physical work with holy work, thus bridging the gap between lived reality and celestial perfection (Y. López, 2009b). Lastly, the final work in the series is a representation of the artist's grandmother sitting in what is deemed as a position of influence demonstrating the power and value of an aged woman, often disregarded by society (Y. López, 2009c). All of these paintings display the life stages of Chicana or Latina-identified women as witnessed by the artist, and as visual narratives, incorporate the telling of their stories and mixed heritages. Yolanda López (2009d) explains, "It is important for us to be visually literate: it is a survival skill." Her words may be understood in the context of this article as supporting the thesis that artistic renderings of religious icons use a process of visual storytelling and narrative counter-discourse, thereby employing a sense of spiritual mobility and agency. As such, the work by Yolanda Lopez is an example of how imagery depicting the *Virgen* as a gendered and sexualized being creates shared realities and links to personalized experiences of survival.

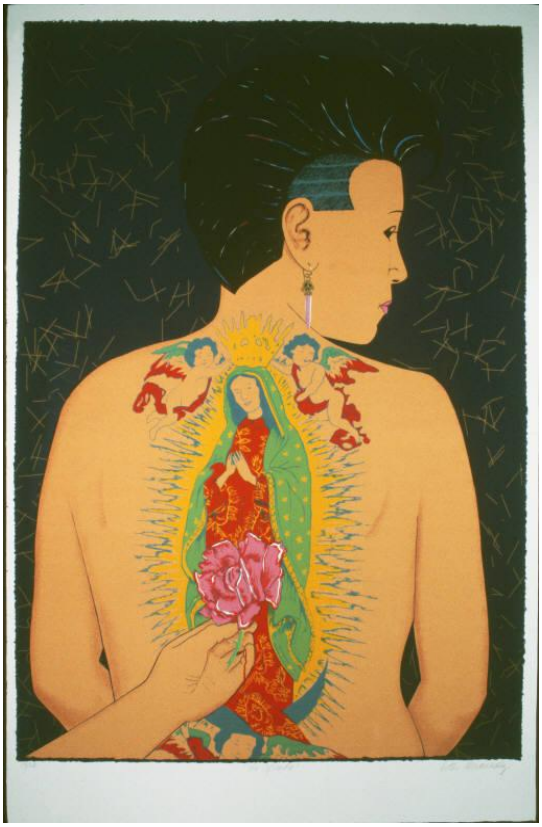
Similar to Ester Hernandez and Yolanda Lopéz in promoting social

justice with her work, as well as a mestiza consciousness and representation, Alma Lopez, a self declared Mexican-born Chicana artist, activist and visual storyteller has dedicated her life's work to taking as her subject the daily lives, mythologies and dreams of people of color. Lopez has stated, "through my visual scholarship I deconstruct and refigure cultural icons, including La Virgen de Guadalupe, allowing them to exist in radically new ways. My art activism lies at the critical intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, love (as an oppositional methodology) and resistance" (2009c). Alma Lopez also interprets her revisions of the *Virgen* as relating to issues of human equity with underlining themes of progressive social and political mobility. Lopez is known for her bold digital recreations of the *Virgen*, as well as for her paintings, positioning the images in contextually provocative works. Through her work, Alma Lopez creates an artistic dialogue relating to gender and queer realities. Her most recognized piece is *Our Lady* (1999) and is referred to by the artist as "Our Lady of Controversy" due to the notoriety from the protests of the Catholic community in New Mexico where it was exhibited in a cyber art collection at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe (A. Lopez, 2009c). *Our Lady* makes the power of sexuality visible by placing the iconic image of the *Virgen* in a powerful stance with a direct gaze toward the audience, as well as a replacing of the male archangel under her feet with a full-breasted, ring-nippled female. This plays on the impact of how "the body is an instrument of *performance* and a site of *performativity*," specifically in gendered and sexualized bodies (Nagel, 2003, p. 51).

Another art work by Alma Lopez (2009a) titled *Tattoo* (1999) is a digital reflection of an earlier, and also controversial piece by Ester Hernandez (2009e), *La Ofrenda II* (1990). Both artists place the *Virgen* on the backs of their Chicana subjects in a metaphorical claiming of the body by being tattooed with the *Virgen*.

These works disrupt traditional gender norms of having only male bodies display large tattoo *homenajes*, or homages, to the *Virgen*. Moreover, how each artist represents the female body is also demonstrative of a sexual mobility by the blurring of boundaries, such as the short hair-style of the subject in *La Ofrenda II* and the subject's hand placement on her hips in *Tattoo.*

This positioning of the hands on the images of the *Virgen* is also important. Alma Lopez avoids representing the hands clasped together in a submissive stance as traditionally witnessed with depictions of the *Virgen*, instead she places the subject's hands on her hips. This placement of the hands is also demonstrated in Alma Lopez's (2009b) piece, *Chuparosa* (2002). In *Chuparosa* a symbolic blending of indigenous deities and their representations are combined with an ownership of self by the subject. The audience is provided with a visual acknowledging of the multiple heritages a Chicana body incorporates by tributes to the Earth Goddess and Huitzilopochli, the god of war, who is associated with hummingbird images. Additionally, Alma Lopez (2009a)



is famous for pushing against sexual norms with her *Lupe & Sirena* (1999) series. Two of the main pieces in the series, *Encuentro* and *Lupe & Sirena in Love*, place the *Virgen* in a sexualized and queer relationship with *La Sirena*, a popular-culture Chicana, or Mexicana, iconic figure. In essence, the works portray the *Virgen* in a loving embrace with a mermaid, and in *Retablo*, the artist inserts herself into the work paying homage to the holy lesbian-identified couple.

In discussing the digital workspace of previously mentioned Chicana artist, Alma Lopez, Guisela Latorre indicates that cyber space becomes a "platform for broader discussions around religion/spirituality, cultural identity, sexuality, freedom of expression, intolerance and so forth" (2008, 133). Springing from this stance are two cyber-art exhibits focusing on imagery of the black madonnas: The Postmillennial Black Madonna (http://www.postbme.com/) and The Black Madonna Exhibition (http://www.theblackmadonnaexhibition.com/), where artists engage the image of the Black Madonna with representations of the self, namely female subjectivities and racial/ethnic identities. Referred to at times

as "Lady Underground," the Black Madonna forms a new narrative site for the exploration of resistance and visual counter-discourse.

As Jacqueline Doyle states, "the *Virgen de Guadalupe* functions as a threshold between human and divine, the living and the dead, and as a mediator between competing cultures" (1997, 181). Each of the above mentioned Chicana artists employs the sexual mobility of the *Virgen* by desensitizing her imagery as being holy, or ethereal, and creating spaces for the viewing and legitimizing of Othered brown bodies, particularly female and queer bodies. They push what Joane Nagel (2003) defines as ethnosexual frontiers. Judith Huacuja (2003) refers to their use of bodies as critical subjectivity where the differences of persona are literally worn (104). As such, they provide a visual, counter-discourse to hegemonic social and cultural structures, and share new ways of viewing the world with their audiences, as well as new ways of being. Their visual narratives and stories embrace a critical consciousness and allow for the defining of alternative realities. Hence, traditionally viewed as crossing the border in prayers alone, the *Virgen* is now recognized as crossing all borders both metaphorically and tangibly. Resultantly, *La Guadalupe* inhabits the racialized and politicized borderlands of Chicano/a visual space, or third space, in conjunction with mestiza consciousness.

It is within these borderlands that the *Virgen* is also seen in the shifting fluidity of ethnic identity performance as demonstrated by her use on personal items from baby bibs to scrub caps. Debra J. Blake notes that "Guadalupe's image appears painted on ranflas (low-rider cars), street murals, and outdoor walls of houses," as well as "mass-produced as statues, candle holders, prayer cards, dress pins, t-shirts and other memorabilia" (2008, p. 105). As the image of the *Virgen* is culturally recognized as a symbol displaying Latinidad or Chicanidad, the "wearing" of her by individuals constitutes an ethnic and racialized connection.

The image of *La Guadalupe*, and its use as a performance tool for both identity and spirituality, may be described as a source of social or cultural capital. By subverting mainstream notions of what is defined as capital, namely economic-based assets acquired with socio-economic privilege, and reclaiming value in social or cultural beliefs, behaviors and artifacts, scholars have reconceptualized what constitutes capital for marginalized groups. In a study regarding Chicana cultural capital the image of the *Virgen* was attributed to assisting in the retention of Chicanas in the university system by visually creating safe havens to ease the perceptions of a racist, hostile campus climate. The following quotes are from two undergraduate students, named Esperanza and Alicia, who have identified the presence of *La Guadalupe* as crucial to their survival in college. Esperanza, the youngest out of four sisters, all of whom had attended universities, was in her final year of college when she shared the following with me in an interview: (DeMirjyn 2005, 122-123):

> So, like in my room, I always, whether it's a Mexican flag or a picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe or the Aztec calendar… it's always something in my room or something in my house or a picture of my family. I always have something that reminds me of home that I can feel that I'm back, not here… college town.

Alicia, similar to Esperanza, was in her final year of college however she was the first daughter out of four siblings to attend a four-year university. Alicia conveyed that not only was the image of the *Virgen* important to giving her a sense of connection with her family, but also in surviving a racially hostile campus.

> You try to keep your culture and I still have my Virgin my mom gave me. I have the serape and the little saint statues all over. So I try to keep my culture involved in my everyday life. Of course it's harder because it's not the environment I live in. This town is white and you try to distinguish yourself from it, but it's hard. But I try.

The transitioning of not only wearing the *Virgen* as an important ethnic performativity, but placing her in a visual range or creating Chicana visual space also provides a source of empowerment and strength in the disruption of hegemonic power structures found within institutions, such as higher education. Franco Garelli interprets this as adhesion of beliefs and traditions, showing "the identification between cultural and historical roots of one's own ethnic group," as well as recognizing "the role played by religion in permeating social life and the construction of collective identity" (2007, 321).

Similarities, such as the use of domestic space as a site for feminist spirituality is congruent with the construction of home alters which are described as "alternative sacred space controlled primarily by women" for both Haitians and Chicanas/Latinas (McAlister 2003, 962). Also, Haitian racial identity or "blackness" is connected historically to Africa; hence Haitian Americans are regarded as creating a "new black ethnicity" in the United States differing from African Americans (McAlister 2003, 967). This is analogous to Chicanas/os who have struggled and continue struggling with the creation of an encompassing mestiza ethnic identity.

Las madonnas morenas are a bold awakening to the critical consciousness needed to visually disrupt hegemonic narratives. They provide a space to question religiosity as a prescribed script and create room for "tension" and cultural awareness as described by Jeanette Rodriguez in her work, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (1994). Rodriguez' study on the worship and spirituality associated with the *Virgen* by Mexican-American women showed that by attempting to merge two cultural sets of values as to what constitutes a true woman they were creating a "new understanding of what it means to be a

woman" (1994, 125). Likewise, it may be assumed that the Black Madonna may occupy a similar space of feminist resistance. Cross-cultural connections through recognition of alternative spiritual interpretations may support not only spiritual symbiosis as opposed to Catholic religious syncretism, but provide an avenue of solidarity for the development and embodiment of counter-hegemonic discourse. Las madonnas morenas truly symbolize the praxis of social justice and gendered/queered, racial/ethnic sexualities. As Bernardo Gallegos (2002) states, in reference to the *Virgen*, "we live in and produce narratives that are populated by a myriad of agendas that serve to support, resist, or legitimate particular social, cultural and economic arrangements" (181) and it is up to each one of us to determine which stories we believe.

End Notes

1. From "Assumptions of the Virgin and Recent Chicana Writing" by J. Doyle, 1997, *Women's Studies*, 26, p. 173

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