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The Witch in the Woods: An Exploration of Female Representation in Mexican American and Japanese Folklore

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THE WITCH IN THE WOODS: AN EXPLORATION OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN MEXICAN AMERICAN AND JAPANESE FOLKLORE

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

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An exploration of female archetypes that examines their display and representation in Mexican American and Japanese folklore. The study ties the two cultures together for the purpose of juxtaposing an older and younger culture utilizing folklore in similar ways of control over women's narratives. It examines how a patriarchal culture's folklore provides punishments through the medium of storytelling for transgressive or deviant women. When women act outside of their preferred archetypes or behavior in folklore, they are met with severe narrative consequences. The archetypes discussed in this thesis, "*La Virgen Armada* and the Final Girl," "The Bride," "The Sacrilegious Mother," "The Witch and *La Mujer Loca*," and "The Femme Fatale," are analyzed as didactic functions that perpetrate patriarchal notions of female identity outside of folklore. Film is treated as a natural extension of storytelling, and observed in the thesis as a modern mechanism of performing the same functions of surveillance and control.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate the completion of this thesis to my parents and sister. Thank you for telling me the stories of our culture and encouraging me to pursue higher education. I also want to give a special thank you to my mom. Thank you for daring to be *chingona*.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Folklore on its surface acts as an instructional tool which cultures utilize to teach moral rules and values to their young. Whether the tales are warning their audiences not to lie, steal, or cheat, their overall messages stay within the confines of communicating what the culture considers acceptable and unacceptable behavior. What is not considered in this inheritance of morality is how cultures can effectively pass down misogynistic attitudes based on the very same tales they value. However well-meaning and culturally significant some tales may be, folklore acts as a mechanism of control through the archetypes of women it presents. Folklore ignores its oppression of women and instead romanticizes it in the guise of traditional archetypes. The fantastical becomes inherently engrained in a culture's social system, affecting the overall behavior towards a gender. Messages from folklore also realize themselves through mediums like film, but its purpose stays the same: to reinforce portrayals of women that serve patriarchal systems.

In this exploration of female representation, I examine two social systems with historically rooted patriarchal values and behavior. For the purpose of this study, Mexican American and Japanese culture will be examined as two phallocentric societies that have contributed to the policing of their feminine agency through folklore's archetypes of women. These two patriarchal systems have contributed to damaging archetypes of women that have found durability due to their popularity and cultural significance. Archetypes of women in phallocentric societies are interrogated as impactful labels that seek to remove women's agency inside and outside of folklore.

Alongside literary examples, film will be treated as a natural extension of storytelling and as a modernized materialization of cultural folkloric archetypes. Film is examined as a system of control that has taken archetypes from folklore and implemented them in its entertainment to challenge or negatively portray how women are categorized. Archetypes of women in the context of this thesis will be viewed as identifications meant to control women's narratives, as they provide punishments through literary and cinematic storytelling for women that act outside of their preferred archetypes. I argue women are controlled, surveyed, and policed through the archetypes they are put in, with women needing to be transgressive towards the archetype in order to attain agency.

My interest in connecting the two cultures in this specific way comes from an appreciation of their art and folklore. While traveling and studying Japanese culture, I found there to be a similarity to Mexican American culture in how imagery is used within monuments, buildings, and everyday life. There exists a constant mechanism of storytelling, whether that be through religious or folkloric paraphernalia. Blending truth with folklore leads to an environment filled with images of lore, leading to a quite literal presentation of this thesis's review of cultural

mediums affecting perception. I wanted to explore this idea more through an older culture's folklore in comparison to a newer one to find if patriarchal values in storytelling is something aged into the culture or simply existing from its creation. My interest is rooted in the idea that the age of a culture does not matter if its core operating systems are based in phallocentric ideologies. Old or young, how a culture's folklore represents women will be equal if the culture seeks to control women's narrative.

Identifying the instrument of control therefore becomes essential by recognizing how it is being used. Folklore can be beloved by a community, but also needs to be held accountable as a mouthpiece for patriarchal values. Due to a blend of folklore and truth in both cultures, how women are seen and portrayed also end up in that realm between reality and myth. This thesis seeks to distinguish that space where women's narratives exist and discuss the systems of oppression that live in folklore.

CHAPTER II

LA VIRGEN ARMADA AND THE FINAL GIRL

"La *Virgen*" and "The Final Girl" are not new archetypes to literature and film. Combined, they represent an identity of purity expected of women. For women to remain virginal is to follow in accordance with a patriarchal culture's rule for social economy, which is a woman's currency valued at her body and youth. Outside of marriage, a woman must abstain from sexual identities and all things associated with pleasure. The two archetypes picture women as studious or artistic (think the original *Halloween*'s Laurie Strode), but never as self-indulgent or defiant women. Their characters in folklore and film are defined by obeying, listening, and supporting those around them. When a female character deviates from the virginal role expected of her, she is met with punishment through death. Therefore, the *virgen* and the idealized final girl become weaponized as systems of control over women's agency.

The "*Virgen*" archetype replicates the personality of the Christian Mary. Female characters that fall into this archetype in folklore resemble the same characteristics of Mary or *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. They are essentially saintly women who are expected to obey the father and put themselves second to men's needs. One can also refer to this archetype as an "angel in the house," but the point remains the same: A *virgen* character acts within the limitations of

kindness, purity, and selflessness. The archetype is not allowed autonomy and upholds chaste and desexualized motifs as a role model for women (Herrera 49) outside of folklore.

Portrayals of the "*Virgen*" archetype has been translated to film through the horror genre's "Final Girl" archetype. Alfred Hitchcock cemented the archetype in *Psycho* (1960) when audiences saw Marion Crane, a sexualized woman, die and her sister Lila live. Lila's character lives because her agency bases itself out of sisterly devotion and not self-preservation. Unlike Marion, Lila's character is not sexualized narratively or thematically. Norman Bates can rationalize killing Marion due to his "Mother" personality signifying her as a transgressive woman. The audience therefore witnesses patriarchal aggression and punishment to women like Marion who digress from virginal identities. Norman killing Marion removes her agency and autonomy, showing the narrative consequences for women like Marion. Lila's preservation glorifies the patriarchal virginal woman as a woman worth saving and idealizing, in contrast to women who show agency outside of patriarchal expectations.

Mexican American folklore's version of the "*Virgen*" is tied to the culture's view of women. The patriarchal culture sets a standard for women to age beautifully, get married, have children, and spend their lives taking care of their family. Gloria Anzaldúa expresses this standard best in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) when she states:

> The culture expects women to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels she is *mujer mala*. If a woman doesn't

> renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish. If a woman remains a *virgen* until she marries, she is a good woman (Anzaldúa 39).

The culture punishes women for not completing the trifecta of beauty, marriage, and children. While marriage and familial units are not inherently terrible things, it removes autonomy from women if they are offered no choice in the matter. Choice becomes an illusion if women feel pressured into systems of abstinence, family, and marriage by the culture's patriarchal beliefs. Women who deviate from the expected path are rebranded as failures or traitorous to traditional values, reflected by Anzaldúa in her novel as well. The threat of being branded *mujer mala* realizes itself through Mexican American folklore's treatment of women who go against virginal identities.

The culture's folklore weaponizes "La *Virgen*" by scaring women into remaining in virginal existences through providing narrative consequences for the ones that do not. Folklore such as "El Guapo Extranjero" and "The Devil at Boccaccio 2000" secure metaphoric punishments for women who stray outside of patriarchal expectations in their representation of death. They offer examples of young women meant to follow the rules of the "*Virgen*" archetype, then discipline them narratively by associating their sexual identities with the devil. By dramatizing their agencies and sexual awakenings as a negative, the tales execute "La *Virgen*" as the idealized role for women in and outside of folklore. They weaponize virginal characters against women's individuality in the form of their sexual identities, stripping women from their sexual voice.

"El Guapo Extranjero" presents a transgressive young woman named Dolores who is described as "vain, proud and cruel" (Sauvageau 28). Dolores finds humor in turning down men and takes immense pride in her beauty. Her mother warns her against playing with men's feelings, but Dolores continues to do so. Against her mother's judgement, Dolores attends a ball. Her mother senses something bad will happen to Dolores if she attends, deciding to go with her daughter to the ball since Dolores will not relent on attending. When they arrive, Dolores takes everyone's breath away with her beauty. Her mother's worries begin to fade until a handsome man arrives. Dolores' mother begs Dolores for them to leave, but Dolores hears none of this as she is solely focused on the stranger. The handsome man and Dolores dance, dancing faster and faster as the song goes on and past the corrido ending. Smoke lines the two dancers until they finally stop. When the smoke clears, Dolores is found dead on the floor with the consensus from the crowd being that she danced with the devil.

The intentional lesson to be learned from "El Guapo Extranjero" is one of purity and submission directed specifically at women. Dolores, the female lead, is not considered a good woman by patriarchal standards. She is categorized as vain, but through a feminist point of view, Dolores reclaims her sexual identity by weaponizing it against men. Dolores' awareness of self takes away from a patriarch's ability to control her narrative, yet she is characterized as an antagonist for enacting individuality. Through her suggestive branding of antagonist, the tale presents a patriarchal culture's standard for women and how they should behave. It punishes Dolores and all that she represents in a feminist lens as characteristics undesirable in women.

"El Guapo Extranjero" demonizes women's agency through their sexual identities. Dolores' devilish dance symbolizes a breaking of virginity, and because so, is given the consequence of death. Her sexual identity goes against the virginal archetype, allowing folklore to justify harm against women through the appearance of discipline. Cristina Herrera discusses this concept when she writes, "Good women cannot be sexual or rebellious, whereas the bad woman becomes synonymous with sexual desires and promiscuity" (Herrera 46). Dolores being a sexual woman categorizes her as a bad woman; therefore, she receives death as a punishment for her sexuality. Rather than respect the character's sexual voice, the tale silences it by providing clear punishments for women that go against virginal archetypes. As mentioned by Foucault, "One must punish exactly enough to prevent repetition" (Foucault 93). The tale enacts its metaphoric punishment to avoid real-life portrayals of the anti-*virgen* by reinventing itself over time with the same consequences for women.

"The Devil at Boccaccio 2000," an updated rendition of "El Guapo Extranjero," substitutes Dolores for a well-mannered woman who at first embodies all qualities associated with the virginal female archetype. Named Magdalena in the retelling, she respects her strong Catholic upbringing and ignores young men whom her beauty attracts. One fateful night, Magdalena slips away with a friend to go dancing in hopes of meeting up with a classmate she admires. Once there, she encounters a handsome stranger instead of her classmate. She dances with the stranger, ignoring the screams of those in the club pointing to the handsome man's hooved feet. Once the song ends, a dead Magdalena lies in the middle of the dance floor as the stranger walks away.

No longer are audiences presented with an already considered failed woman such as Dolores. They are provided with the ideal Mexican American daughter in the form of Magdalena. She characterizes a patriarchal society's goals for women by respecting her parents' and religion's wishes. Magdalena ignores all corruptions by ignoring the young men she attracts but gives in to temptation when she dances with the devil. The dance parallels Dolores' in the symbolism for sexuality, especially when described as a sexual awakening in the text: "Her stomach was set ablaze. Her limbs trembling, she watched as with deliberate, and patient steps he ambled toward her" (Bowles 26). To teach similar lessons of female abstinence and submission to patriarchal rules, the tale uses the same mechanism of fear through death. Magdalena must die in patriarchal folklore for partaking in a sexual identity outside of marriage, no matter how brief of a moment that sexual identity lasted. She is not allowed space for a lapse in judgement.

One cannot overlook the sexual oppression of Dolores and Magdalena as they are denied their agency to be sexual beings. Even Magdalena, who followed the rules up until a point, is not free from punishment by the literary patriarch. However much of a practitioner of virginity she may be, it is not a simple mistake that results in her death but an act of individuality by going against the culture. She commits a large sin by being attracted to, set aflame by, and deciding to dance with Satan, symbolizing sex outside of marriage. Regardless of whichever edition of the tale is told, the goal remains the same: to punish women who seek individuality and sexual agency outside of a patriarchal culture's definition of womanhood.

In her article, "Gender Inequality in Japanese Fairy Tales with Female Main Character," Fajria Noviana highlights Japanese patriarchal society and the inequality of the sexes when she

states women's place in the phallocentric culture: "In Japan, man is placed above woman, just as the head above the body" (Noviana 2). The culture's folklore matches Mexican American folklore in the reinforcement of patriarchal ideals and representation of women being secondary to men. Japanese folklore presents the same expectation of women to personify *virgen* identities, utilizing the identity as a standard for women. If a woman does not remain pure in the culture's folklore, she ends up being punished like Dolores and Magdalena. Even if the male lead is at fault, it is the *virgen* character's job to act as a virginial sacrifice for the crimes of men. "La *Virgen*" and "The Final Girl" become tools for men's redemption and salvation in this way, further romanticizing virginal archetypes of women as saviors for men.

The Japanese tale "The Green Willow" presents a young samurai, Tomodata, completing a mission for his *daimyo*. The *daimyo* asks Tomodata to not look at women on his journey and stay true to his quest. Storms sweep the lands, making the samurai fear for his life and mission until winds blow the storm away suddenly. He sees a quaint cottage, and from it, a young woman named Green Willow meets him. He demands hospitality and she complies. Tomodata is bewitched by her beauty, and the two fall in love. Unable to complete his mission, Tomodata and Green Willow forget their lives prior to meeting and run away together. In their final year together, Green Willow dies and asks Tomodata to remember her. Tomodata later joins a Buddhist shrine, spending the rest of his days in prayer trying to forget Green Willow.

Green Willow's sole purpose in the story is to act as a moral tool and savior for Tomodata's soul. Her fate is tied to him so much that because he fails to uphold honor, she suffers the consequences for him. Tomodata receives no actual punishment in life for his actions

besides Green Willow passing. The folklore does not provide a consequence for men in the same way it does women through death. On the contrary, it allows Tomodata to live despite going against his oath. The double standard of how death is utilized in patriarchal folklore only harms female characters.

Green Willow is depicted as the virginal archetype seen thus far. Young, obedient, and willing to please, she does not question a young man demanding hospitality in her cottage. She is flattered by a stranger's attention, described as, "her face few rosy red, from chin to forehead" (Grand 11). Her reactions to Tomodata are entirely physical, with blushing cheeks or running to him when he leaves. She always acts out her companionship in contrast to Tomodata who does not. He tries to continue his mission despite his immediate feelings for Green Willow, but it is she that runs out to him and joins him on horseback as they "rode the livelong day" (Grand 13).

The couples' escape and sexual connotation of riding off into the sunset imply the loss of Green Willow's innocence. She is not the good young maiden she once was prior to her escape, breaking past patriarchal norms. Though, she can still seek retribution through her death as a way of taking punishment away from Tomodata. Tomodata, who went against honor, has no real consequence present for himself. Instead, it is Green Willow that dies suddenly. Green Willow can be salvageable to the patriarch in this way, but not enough that she can escape death. She can only alleviate moral punishment from the male presence instead.

Folklore's transition from literature to film embodies the same didactic function of reinforcing female archetypes. The virginal female and consequences for her are expressed throughout Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue* (1997). Kon demonstrates the consequences for women

that seek out agency while also criticizing patriarchal societies that create those consequences and standards. His film is aware of the horror genre and utilizes its self-consciousness to further emphasize storytelling's response to feminine agency.

The film begins with the scanning of a mostly male crowd not entertained by a superhero show they are watching on a stage. Groups of men are huddled as the film shows the various ways the men have been keeping tabs on the J-pop idol group, CHAM!. Gossip sites, flyers, and concerts, Kon offers the many methods of male surveillance towards women that are apparent in modern life. The main character, Mima Kirigoe, is introduced as an adored idol who is a part of CHAM!. She is shown exiting the idol role and announcing it to her fans while Kon cuts to moments of her grocery shopping and sitting in agency meetings to juxtapose her real identity with the occupational identity of pop idol.

Perfect Blue's first ten minutes sets up the largest theme in the film, that being the theme of idealized, romanticized, and fantasized roles for women. Mima the pop idol is the preferred and ideal role in patriarchal society's eyes. She is a character for men to adore on stage but never more than an object to project one's own thoughts onto. When Mima wants to announce her exit, she is interrupted by male fans fighting. She kindly states that she wanted her last show to be a good one and is met with male aggression from a fan who attempts to throw his bottle at her. While stopped by her super fan, Me-mania, the aggressive response towards Mima on behalf of the male fan clearly signifies a strong reaction to Mima's direction of the fans. She is adored as a role on stage, not as an individual speaking out their thoughts and demands. Her fans are committed to the fantasy of Mima on stage and not Mima as a real woman (Norris 77). Kon's

film comments on women's agency in this way by providing the reaction from fans to Mima's autonomy, symbolizing how patriarchal culture treats women as fantasies and property.

Excuses for Mima leaving and becoming an actor are made by her male fans. They do not believe it is her who makes these choices behind the scenes, but her agency and manager. By removing choice from Mima, they can deflect blame onto men and the overarching Japanese patriarchal society. It is men who can be held accountable for the defilement of Mima as a property and not Mima herself in the eyes of her male fans. All the while, Kon reinforces the idea of male control and male surveillance. The conversation of Mima's life is one had mostly by men regarding men's decisions in her life. They fail to recognize Mima as someone capable of making decisions for herself. For Mima to remain a virginal pop idol in the eyes of the patriarchal fan base, Mima needs to be dependent on men and docile.

Of course, behind the scenes, the fans do not see Mima agreeing to leave music, nor do they view Mima agreeing to be on television as an actor. Male fans of hers are shown discussing her television show as something terrible and in need of rescue from when they say, "Somebody save Mima-rin! Please!" (*Perfect Blue* 0:25:06-08) Her fans are not interested in Mima the drama actor. They are only interested in the sweet, sugary, singer Mima on stage who needs rescuing from the role of Mima the actor on network television. Kon's depiction of male fans represents the surveillance towards women in a patriarchal sphere through the metaphor of toxic male fandom.

Categorizing Mima as a fictional virginal damsel in need of saving is more attractive than a real-life woman with a real-life identity, depicted when Mima does not tell her fans hello upon

arriving to work. They make the comment, “Do they get all unfriendly when they become actresses?” (*Perfect Blue* 0:26:26-29). Her male fans believe they are owed Mina’s affection in payment because of their contribution to her fame. Mima as a worker is not recognized on their behalf, but viewed as an occupation she has due to their own good will of supporting her by watching her show or attending her concerts. Through this belief, her fans disassociate Mima as an individual entirely.

It is not until Mima’s rape scene on the television show do her fans turn against her. Kon frames the scene as one full of men. The studio is filled to the brim with men watching and standing as Mima films the scene. Men in the scene clamor, cheer, and holler at her. They parallel the same men in the crowd when she performed with CHAM!, both groups hollering for her and seeking attention. In a patriarchal viewpoint, Mima on stage was acceptable as it was not sexualized. Her appearance on television with clothing coming off herself is believed by her fans permission to become aggressive towards her due to defilement. Having transgressed the virginal role, all adoration and respect previously applied to her is removed.

The message conveyed through the treatment of Mima post-rape scene is one of policing women into not being defiled through a sexual identity. As a woman, Mima can be adored with suggestions of sexuality such as CHAM!’s costumes, but not actual presentations of it through the assertion of the female body. Mima’s hallucination of herself stresses this idea when she says, “Oh, yeah, you’re no longer a pop idol. You’re a filthy woman now. Nobody likes idols with tarnished reputations!” (*Perfect Blue* 0:39:42-51) Mima’s insecurities as a sexual woman

embodies itself through her hallucination and bullies her into ideas of virgin versus the sexual woman and what that means for her reputation.

Mima's hallucination of her CHAM! identity haunts her with the role of virginal female throughout the film. It taunts her, looks down on her, and acts as the metaphoric idealized role for women. The hallucination, made from a culmination of self-doubt, patriarchal gender roles, and idealized roles for women, seeks to declare itself the real Mima. While Mima becomes slowly disengaged and shown to be progressively losing her sanity from a stalker, the hallucination of her idol-self appears during moments of Mima's career where she shows autonomy. The hallucination reveals itself to be an agent of patriarchal control and male aggression as it laughs at Mima for seeking roles outside of the one made for women. Mima's self-disintegration is aided by the hallucination idol version, highlighting the consequence for Mima leaving the virginal sphere and receiving mental torment.

The anger towards Mima and her choices comes to a head when her super fan, Me-Mania, and her agent, Rumi, are revealed to be behind the murders and stalking. Rumi, having been upset with Mima's decision to leave music for acting and nudity, takes on the Mima personality. She reveals that she had emailed Me-Mania Mima's daily life for the "Mima's Room" blog and proclaims herself as the real Mima. While much of the film focuses on the male surveillance and consequences for women who go outside of the virginal roles set for them, the female villain and female anger towards Mima on Rumi's behalf suggests women can be agents of surveillance on their own gender alongside men.

Rumi's anger was enough to murder men that sexualized Mima (the writer, photographer, and manager), stabbing them in their eyes and genitals. Where she chose to penetrate them, the eyes and genitals, signify Rumi's own anger at male surveillance and male treatment towards women yet does not refrain from Rumi also blaming Mima for her sexualized self. Rumi's character cannot accept Mima as an individual person just as much as Mima's fans could not. This is to say, it is not just one sex keeping women in roles of virginity. A patriarchal system can be assisted by the very same women bound to it, shown clearly when Mima's old friends in CHAM! are more than willing to slut-shame her for her nude photos in a magazine. Rumi, and women like her, contribute to the consequences made for women who seek to go outside of patriarchal gender roles and gender conventions.

Kon ends the film with Mima leaving the psychiatric hospital after visiting Rumi who still believes she is the true Mima. Mima walks past two nurses not believing it to be Mima visiting the hospital, gets into her car, and states: "No, I'm real!" (*Perfect Blue* 1:17:44-46) Mima's declaration that she is indeed real is to proclaim that she does have agency. Kon rejects notions of patriarchal control over feminine agency through this ending, challenging storytelling's habit of letting a sexualized woman die in comparison to the virginal final girl who defies death in the horror genre.

Despite this, the consequences for women that seek agency past roles created by the patriarch remain the same: tarnished reputation, redemptive death, or tragic death. Folklore and film weaponize "La *Virgen*" and "The Final Girl" as standards for women to follow. When women do not obey the virginal roles patriarchal societies seeks from them, they are silenced by

the metaphoric death. The representation of death becomes extremely important when it translates to real-life violence against women. It tries to excuse itself in the same way violence was excused against Mima because she was a sexual woman. Death's representation no longer exists as a metaphor or literary device when its meaning is transformed into an actual portrayal of hated, control, and disgust towards sexual women in the real world. *La Virgen* and The Final Girl are dangerous as archetypes when they begin to teach a standard of womanhood that later transforms itself into a didactic function expected from women outside of myth.

CHAPTER III

THE BRIDE

Patriarchal folklore favors two storyline structures for female characters: young maiden falling in love or maiden having found love. How that develops changes from tale to tale, but the idea of a woman's narrative tied to men remains the same. Women are defined by their relationship to men. Whether women await to be plucked from virginity or await to be mothers, folklore allows a space for the women in-between the two roles with "The Bride" archetype. "The Bride" is utilized as a symbol for women in what they must achieve in life. They must marry young and shield their husbands from moral consequences. Their narratives are not yet defined by motherhood, but by the bond of marriage. Characteristically placed as secondary to men, "The Bride" allows patriarchal culture to project its criteria for wives onto women. The archetype acts as a scapegoat for a husband's misdeeds and as a warning for women who seek to be brides past a certain age.

A woman's currency through youth is by no means a novel concept. The idea has been repeated through many Western folklore tales and fairytales with its depictions of young heroines or young wives (see Bluebeard specifically and his taste for young women). To age out of preferred youth in folklore is demonized and used as a lesson to be learned from for female

audiences. Having not yet reached motherhood, “The Bride” archetype is shown in patriarchal folklore as a woman expected to be youthful in years and useful in policing men’s morality. “The Bride” must be young and willing to act as a pseudo-mother by keeping men on the good and moral path. By perpetrating this archetype, patriarchal folklore defines a newlywed woman as a woman only useful in her appearance and ability to survey men.

The Mexican American tale, “El Diablo Se Casa,” tells the story of Praxedes and her wish to marry. Praxedes desires marriage from the young age of fifteen, doing anything in her power to find a partner. The tale describes her venture as fruitless due to Praxedes’ personality and bad looks. Promising herself that if she is not married by the age of fifty she will consult the devil, Praxedes follows through with her proclamation and seeks him out for assistance after failing to get married. The devil obliges Praxedes and offers himself up for marriage instead of giving her another to wed. “El Diablo Se Casa” ends on the note that the devil regretted his choice to marry Praxedes as she was a bad cook and bad woman.

Praxedes’ symbolism has layers to its meaning. First, and perhaps most importantly, her agency in seeking out marriage. The tale asserts Praxedes’ initiative for marriage, then quickly belittles her as if to justify its treatment of her:

> “Since the tender age of fifteen, Miss Praxedes had had only one aim in life, to find herself a husband. She was rather uncomely and her temper was a mixture of black ink, ground glass and cactus thorns. This combination of bad looks and nasty temper made the catching of a mate a difficult task” (Sauvageau 46).

Agency in seeking out marriage instead of waiting at home for it becomes associated with having a bad temper and thorny attitude. The audience is meant to take her a little less serious and more comedically because of her personality description. A message of retaliating against women's agency through comedic identification is created through the treatment of Praxedes' assertion of the self. Something such as actively looking for love becomes gendered in a cultural sense and categorized as masculine.

Praxedes can be classified as a social deviant in her culture for her performance of masculinity in seeking out marriage. Her aggression in wanting something so much is treated by the tale as desperation and deviant, therefore in need of condemnation because of the suggestion of female agency. Gloria Anzaldúa reaffirms the patriarchal treatment towards those that deviate, asserting: "The Chicanco, *mexicano,* and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance. Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community" (Anzaldua 40). As seen with the virginal archetype, women must remain in innocent and submissive roles in a patriarchal structure. Praxedes' deviant behavior from the idealized version of women is therefore not tolerated by the culture, resulting in how the tale treats her narrative with cynicism.

She becomes described by words all associated with demeaning synonyms (ugly, bad, thorny) to reinforce the idea that her character goes against "The Bride" archetype. A woman can wish for marriage, but she cannot act out assertion in her desire as assertion is saved for the masculine. There cannot be performances of masculinity for the patriarchal folkloric female without seeing comedic comeuppance or devaluation, portrayed well with Praxedes' ending.

Following male control of feminine agency, the tale additionally focuses on Praxedes' age as a cautionary message for women. The trinity of archetypes in phallocentric folklore places women into three roles decided by age and marital status: The Virgin, The Mother, The Crone. Praxedes does not go quietly into the preferred role of crone after passing what is considered respectable marital age. She fights against a solitary life by pursuing the supernatural realm for assistance which the tale is meant to literally demonize through the devil's appearance. "El Diablo Se Casa" attempts to scare women into marrying at the appropriate age or they will settle for a demon, such as Praxedes. It cannot go unnoticed the metaphoric representation of women needing to settle in age and loneliness rather than marry as an older woman.

Praxedes, and women like her in folklore, are treated with cynicism because of their forceful characters. Although following the glorified roles for women by getting married, Praxedes is still devalued and treated as nonequal. By the end of the story, it is Praxedes who resembles more of a devil than the devil himself, "He was a rather nice fellow sometimes until then, I hear; but since his marriage to Praxedes he has become a holy terror!" (Sauvageau 48) Praxedes' strength in agency is used against her to make her the villain in the tale. A villain for seeking out marriage and not waiting for it. A villain for aging as a woman, and a villain for taking what the tales describes as a good man, "He was about 5 feet, ten inches tall, with broad, powerful shoulders, penetrating blue eyes and a touch of gray on the sideburns," (Sauvageau 48) off the market for young women. "The Bride" archetype anticipates marriage at home and knows when to step aside if she ages out of the favored state. To do anything past that is to be a selfish demonic woman.

The Japanese tale “The Cold Lady,” or “Yuki-onna” in Lafcadio Hearn’s rendition, chronicles the tale of a man breaking an oath to his wife. It begins with two men, one young and one old, as they journey away from their homes to an unknown province during winter. Stopping at an abandoned hut due to weather conditions, the young man awakens from sleep to see a woman hovering over his travel companion. The woman kills the older man, taking pity on the younger one who witnessed it. She makes him swear to never tell a soul about her, which he does. Sometime later, he stumbles upon a beautiful young maiden walking on the same path as he named O’Yuki. The two fall in love, marry, and have children. Years pass and one night, the man tells O’Yuki of the woman he met in the hut. O’Yuki turns into the woman he had met, lashing out at her husband for breaking his oath. Unable to kill him because of their children, O’Yuki leaves the family instead.

O’Yuki’s presence is meant to keep her husband on the straight and narrow of moral behavior. The man only escapes death twice because of the woman’s gift of salvation, leaning into the idea of the bride as a tool for policing in a patriarchal context. The bride saves her husband from death and moral corruption by removing herself from the equation of marriage. Although her husband, the human, is the one that broke their happiness by violating the taboo prearranged by O’Yuki (Makino 241), it is O’Yuki that suffers by having to leave her family. O’Yuki puts herself in between her husband and karmic retribution for breaking an oath, serving her role as a woman taking punishment for a man’s mistakes in folklore, implying “that women must be willing to do anything for men as a form of self-service, even if it hurts themselves” (Noviana 6).

The preservation of a bride's youth is also emphasized with O'Yuki's appearance. She is described as nonaging:

> "In spite of passing years, in spite of the joys and pains of motherhood, she looked like a slender maiden; there came no line upon her forehead, no dimness to her eyes, and no grey hairs. All the women of the place marveled at these things, and talked of them till they were tired" (Grand 186-187).

There is an idea presented with this description that women are captivated with another's beauty, romanticizing an eternal youthfulness and/or the preservation of how one looked when they got married. Folklore's communication to women through the glorification of a young maiden's beauty offers the impression of women not being allowed to age. Although O'Yuki's beauty is preserved through the supernatural element, folklore prioritizes her beauty for the sake of her husband: "O'Yuki's husband was the happiest man for miles round, what with his fair wife" (Grand 187). O'Yuki's beauty through the supernatural is not treated with cynicism but applauded, unlike Praxedes' agency through the supernatural. A woman can enter the supernatural realm for beauty in folklore, but she cannot for self-autonomy.

O'Yuki as a patriarchal device passes on notions of men keeping promises to their brides and preserving a woman's youthfulness. If a man deviates from the good and moral path, it is her job to correct it. The tale tries to warn men against hurting their brides emotionally, yet they do not have punishment in the same way as women (seen with O'Yuki being removed from motherhood). A male role can act outside of a marriage's oath and still be forgiven, meanwhile the female role must endure loneliness in the male's stead.

Kwaidan (1964) by Masaki Kobayashi visually demonstrates "The Cold Lady" with its story, "The Woman of the Snow." "The Woman of the Snow" leans into the themes of bridal-responsibilities with its costuming of *yuki-onna*. *Yuki-onna* as a ghoul resembles the Japanese *noh* mask, giving a hauntingly beautiful appearance of the apparition. Pale in makeup and landscape, the *yokai* version of *Yuki-onna* is associated in the film with lack of color or warmth. Yuki as a human when she first meets the young man, named Minokichi, is seen against the sunset with vibrant oranges and yellows alongside pastoral greenery. The two very different appearances visually categorize the expectations of a young bride and what she must look like. Yuki as a human bride reaffirms patriarchal beliefs that brides are meant to be beautiful, youthful, warm, and subjected to the male gaze unlike the cold powerful version of her.

The film's version of the young woodcutter, Minokichi, sees a husband more than willing to commit taboos if that means maintaining the male gaze. As stated by Laura Mulvey, "The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly" (Mulvey 808). Minokichi stares at the ghoul version of *yuki-onna* in the face with fear and wonderment, lacking any formality at being in the presence of a paranormal being. He stares at the human version of Yuki when first meeting her, made apparent through the stopping of his tracks to converse with her, lacking any respect towards a woman he has technically never seen before. When discussing *yuki-onna* with Yuki, it is because of his staring that he triggers the events that prompt her to leave. The male gaze acted out by Minokichi places fantastical expectations onto women as to what they should look like, emphasized by the transition of *yuki-onna* to Yuki and his different treatment of the two versions of her. His fear of a cold woman in

contrast to a warm one creates an expectancy of appearance and personality to be had for women.

Minokichi's presentation of the male gaze becomes his overall folly. He loses Yuki because of it, commenting on moral guidelines for husbands if they have wandering eyes. Minokichi learns the lesson through Yuki leaving of what happens to husbands when they stare at other women. Yuki's two appearances are used to monitor Minokichi's loyalty as a husband and maintain a presence of bridal authority.

However, Minokichi gets to remain in the human realm even when committing the taboo to his marriage in breaking a vow. Policing her husband by leaving as a consequence to his actions only benefits Minokichi's morality—not Yuki's. Minokichi gets to stay with his family, meanwhile *yuki-onna* leaves while still warning her husband of consequences for not being a good male figure, "If they ever have even the slightest reason to complain to you, I will treat you as you deserve!" (*Kwaidan* 1:19:21-33) Yuki's responsibility as a bride does not end because of Minokichi's betrayal, in fact, she hints to herself watching him from afar through the threat of coming back in case he does not follow patriarchal rules. Minokichi can escape being a husband through her act of leaving, but Yuki never escapes being a bride. The character's ghostly disappearance in *Kwaidan* still comes back for her shoes Minokichi leaves out, visualizing the tie to her marriage she will always keep in both the folkloric and film renditions.

Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak* (2015) embodies the folkloric archetype of "The Bride" through its main character Edith. Edith symbolizes all expectations placed onto a bride by acting as both sexual partner and pseudo-mother by keeping her husband on the moral path. Her

character loses agency and faces oppression while also needing to regain those parts of herself to save both herself and her husband from moral corruption. Only Edith, or "The Bride," can rectify a perversion in the marital unit and is expected to. Edith's husband is not held accountable for his actions or perversion of the marital space, and instead, seeks redemption through Edith.

Crimson Peak tells the story of a young woman, Edith, falling in love with a mysterious stranger, Thomas. Edith believes in ghosts, having seen her mother after her death warning her of a place called "Crimson Peak." Her admiration of the paranormal inspires her writings, as Edith is portrayed as a woman seeking publication in a male dominated space. Edith meets Thomas, who encourages her writing, and marries him against her father's wishes. Taken to his estate, Edith encounters ghosts of women who try to scare her multiple times all the while being secretly poisoned by Thomas and his sister, Lucille. It is revealed that Thomas and Lucille are in an incestuous relationship where they swindle wealthy, ambitious women, then kill them after they sign their fortunes away to Thomas. Edith battles the siblings, mostly Lucille, for freedom, ending in Thomas' death. His ghost assists Edith in killing Lucille, leaving Edith with many physical and emotional scars after her time spent at Crimson Peak.

All that happens to Edith largely ties itself to her agency. Her father dying brutally at the hands of Lucille, uprooting her life to the Allerdale Hall (dubbed "Crimson Peak"), the sham marriage, slowly dying from poison, multiple events are triggered from and by Edith's assertion of agency. Despite her father's warnings of Thomas, she still seeks him out, resulting in her father's research of him and later confrontation asking Thomas and Lucille to stay away from Edith. Lucille then murders him, and Thomas is able to marry Edith with no outside opposition.

Due to going against the patriarchal father figure, Edith sets off the events that happen to her making it narratively her fault she is in the situation she ends up in. Now, this is not to blame Edith for her story—but it is to recognize the extreme consequences laid out for women in storytelling if they do not follow rules of the patriarch. Thomas and Lucille do not take accountability for their actions and instead place it onto Edith for seeking more from her life. This is described when Lucille says, "All had what was necessary: money, broken dreams, and no living relatives" (*Crimson Peak* 21:16-22). Edith, and the brides before her, dared to dream outside of patriarchal confines and that is why they are candidates for narrative punishment.

The ghosts of Thomas' brides try to warn Edith multiple times while she is at Crimson Peak. They are all woman who, like Edith, are shown to be intelligent and independent in life. Their agencies are stripped from them through their poisoning and deaths. All the brides killed were unable to fully enact their bridal duty of morally policing Thomas, and therefore, die from the consequence of female agency. In contrast to the previous brides, it is only Edith who consummates her marriage, making her the true bride in the eyes of a patriarchal structure. Heterosexual, nonrelated, and consummated through sex, Edith's transition to official bride from semi-bride puts her in the role of governess to her husband's perversions of the marital space. Unlike the brides prior, Edith's consummation drives a wedge between the siblings' incestuous relationship and acts as the reinforcer for morality. It becomes Edith's job to end the relationship to save her husband's soul.

Despite the trials and tribulations Edith goes through because of her marriage to Thomas, her role as "The Bride" serves as one meant to guide her husband back to the correct patriarchal

moral guidelines. Her official marriage is intended to rescue the patriarchal marriage from perversion through rectifying the relationship between the siblings, which she does. Thomas falls in love with Edith, wanting her to live instead of die like the rest of his brides. He goes against his perverse metaphoric marriage to Lucille, resulting in his death at the hands of his sister. When Lucille and Edith fight at the end to the death, it is Thomas' ghost who distracts Lucille long enough for Edith to murder her. The final act on his part signifies the bridal role realized: A husband revoking moral corruption due to his wife's influence.

Edith's role as the bride helps Thomas become a better man all at the expense of herself. Although Thomas dies, it is Edith that must live on with the mental and physical damage impacted onto her from the events. Much like the bridal ghosts that lingered at Crimson Peak, it is the brides that carry on in disfigured pain so that the husband can find moral redemption. The film reinforces misogyny in this way of narratively portraying consequences for women simply because they are females. Men are not punished the same way in this film at the rate it does women, and yet it is men that are given a redemptive storyline in the form of Thomas.

The film highlights "The Bride" archetype perfectly through Edith's characterization and narrative. Edith is not saved from patriarchal cynicism because of her marriage to a devil or from being responsible for her husband's moral soul. There is no space in storytelling for a bride in which she is not scrutinized. She must be young, lack agency, and willing to do all she can to save her husband from moral corruption, even if that is at the expense of herself. If she is none of those things, the consequences for the bride are death or being narratively subjected to comedic comeuppance for failing in her role as "The Bride."

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRILEGIOUS MOTHER

In every patriarchal structure exists a matriarch. The position is held sacred and treated as a role preordained for all women. Nothing is viewed as a more noble state of living for women than giving life and nurturing children to contribute successfully to society. A woman's purpose is tied to her biological ability, making her role as a woman in a phallocentric culture dependent on her capability of having children. Women who fulfill the ritual of motherhood ascend to a higher realm of respect in their patriarchal society if done so correctly. Meaning, a woman must go through all the steps of a proper courtship and marriage in order for her role as a mother to be legitimized. If she meets the right male, marries him, and bears a preferred son, a mother has completed the sacred duty placed onto her by patriarchal gender expectations.

To abandon the role of motherhood as a female is recognized as sacrilegious due to its held value. If a woman betrays her biology or familial unit, her consequence is not a quick death as seen with prior archetypes. Patriarchal folklore will punish women and mothers for not attaining motherhood, deserting the destined role, or revoking the very idea of it. Punishment can be layered and not something done simply through literary devices. No, for a role so revered, a penance must be hefty for women who betray it. Whether it be making an example out of

transgressive mothers by turning them into the bogeywoman for a culture, or making women atone religiously to seek enlightenment, traditional folklore will see to it that a message of consequence is conveyed.

The story of "La Llorona" is prolific in Mexican American folklore and culture. It is a tale used to scare children into behaving well or else the ghoulish woman in the night would come and kidnap them. "La Llorona" has been revamped multiple times in folklore, changing with what version a specific region favors. At its core, though, is the idea of a woman drowning her children. As atonement for the act, the woman haunts the Rio Grande or any nearby river wailing for her lost children. In a constant search to find them, La Llorona seeks out children she can take from other mothers to replace the ones she had.

To begin to analyze "La Llorona" as a folkloric prison for mothers, discussing La Malinche, or Doña Marina, is necessary. Doña Marina's origin begins with the fall of the Aztec empire. When Spanish conquistadors invaded Mexico, they took native women for slaves to distribute amongst each other. Doña Marina, one of the women acquired, showed a proficiency in language with her ability to speak multiple languages native to the land. The skill deemed her an asset to the Spanish invaders, as remarked by Hernán Cortés in his Fifth Letter, "Marina, who traveled always in my company after she had been given to me as a present with twenty other women" (Cortés 1526). She was deemed important enough to always have around due to her skill. Never freeing herself from the Spanish entirely, Doña Marina assisted the conquistadors in their invasion and bore Cortés a child.

La Malinche is viewed in the culture as a woman abandoning her role as mother, a *la chingada* female. She is *chingada* in her desertion of the motherly responsibility to country and family. Cast aside is any sympathy for a woman captured into slavery trying to survive. Instead, she is treated severely by the same culture that claims its biological tie to her. The shaping of her narrative offers up the idea of mothers unable to be autonomous women. It would have been better for Doña Marina had she simply died rather than find a way to live during an invasion in the eyes of the culture. Her perseverance disobeys the expectations of womanhood, slapping patriarchal gender roles in the face for expecting women to choose familial units over themselves.

Doña Marina's story has been revitalized and repackaged as "La Llorona." Its infamy spans generations, being the most notable of Mexican American folklore. The culture has demonized Doña Marina so much that she is punished for decades through the story's characterization of her. Her myth is meant to scare women into being good mothers or risk eternal punishment (Herrera 21). It creates a ghoul out of her circumstances. A traitor to her people, patriarchal culture reinvents La Llorona the character multiple times to justify torturing women through folkloric rendition. If women of the culture understand the consequences of abandoning motherhood, it's through the reinforcement of patriarchal society letting them know it will control female narratives in the way it sees fit. A woman does not control how a patriarchal culture conveys her own story, making "La Llorona" a figure of feminine resistance in feminist Chicanx retellings.

Catrióna Rueda Esquibel identifies the two types of storytelling associated with "La Llorona" in her text, *With Her Machete in Her Hand: Reading Chicana Lesbians* (2006). Esquibel categorizes them as the following:

> The first is the *encuentro*, which focuses on encounters with La Llorona. These are often first-person narratives, related by those who have seen La Llorona and lived to tell the tale. The second type, the *historia* of La Llorona, tells how an ordinary woman came to murder her children and why she continues to weep for them (Esquibel 29).

Juan Sauvageau's account of "La Llorona" follows the second type mentioned by Esquibel by providing the story of ordinary woman Luisa, the mistress of Don Muno Móntez Claro. Luisa lives in a barrio with her three children often doing house chores while her *sancho* spends his time away from home. The idealized picture of motherhood, Luisa does all she can to provide for her children, including begging on the streets for money. She is described as not wanting for herself and always putting her children first. One day, her *sancho* comes home to tell her that he is leaving her for another woman. Luisa, at her wit's end, realizes the rest of her life will be painful. She decides to drown her children in a nearby river to spare them life's misery, regretting the decision the next morning. Full of despair, Luisa jumps in the same river, killing herself. The tale ends by stating people will hear a sobbing woman near the river during a full moon, questioning audiences if she is La Llorona.

"La Llorona" portrays Luisa as an immoral woman facing immoral consequences. A mistress with children, she is not viewed as a legitimized mother through marriage because of

her sexual autonomy. Although she completes the desired status for women by being a mother, partaking in an affair supersedes any attempts at motherhood. The defense of narratively committing a crime so awful as a woman killing her own children is backed by the idea that a woman must have stern consequences for attaining motherhood outside of the desired route in a patriarchal culture. Luisa could be the most caring mother in the world, but that does not save her from the literary smiting of her character.

The *historia* version of the tale sees no focus on Luisa's *sancho* other than utilizing him as a patriarchal mouthpiece for the culture's machismo behavior. There exists a double standard between the sexes that does not punish the man for his sexuality (Perez 50). No further storytelling is done on his part because it is considered acceptable for Claro to go and come in his relationships with women. It would have been Luisa's job as a proper bride and mother to police Claro into good morals, but due to their lack of real marriage, Claro escapes accountability. He and Hernán Cortés do not become the monsters in the night wailing for their children. Instead, the men are allowed to project their machismo into a folkloric space by creating a double standard for the genders. Men may plot, scheme, lie, and cheat, while seeing no literary consequence for their actions. "The Sacrilegious Mother" archetype takes on all hardship in this way; mothering the familial unit even when she is demonized and ostracized.

The practice of passing down the tale itself comes in the form of mothering too. "La Llorona" teaches children moral behavior as a mechanism of discipline, ultimately nurturing good and bad behavior. She suffers for the culture as a designated sacrifice. Domino Renee Perez emphasizes this idea when she writes:

> It is the hope attached to this possibility that gives Chican@s a reason to hold on to her lore. Her eternal wandering and wailing teaches us the consequences of racial, gender, and class prejudices in a colonial world. At the same time, as a representative of Greater Mexican culture, she suffers so we will not make her same mistake (Perez 156).

La Malinche is not allowed agency because her purpose is controlled by themes of motherhood. She mothers the culture by showing it what a good and bad mother means, acting as a lesson to learn from. Abandoning motherhood in her real life makes mothering through a folkloric space her penance.

Despite this act of underlining mothering, the culture still mocks La Malinche and brands her a traitor. It justifies rebranding her character as a monstrous mother who drowns her children as an atonement for her real-life actions. With that said, the disregard for a mother's sadness in the tale, arguably a metaphor for postpartum depression, is filled with anti-female sentiment by demonizing Luisa's character. Folklore makes mental health for a patriarchal mother a myth to be realized only as fictional. A good mother in a patriarchal culture's folklore does for her children unselfishly with nothing to be gained other than the satisfaction that she contributed to the patriarchal society—only then can she complete the sacrament of motherhood in the pure sense.

La Llorona as an archetype of resistance in Mexican American fiction has been reclaimed by Chicanx feminist authors such as Monica Palacios ("La Llorona Loca: The Other Side"), Sandra Cisneros ("Woman Hollering Creek"), and Cherríe Moraga (*The Hungry Woman*). These

Chicanx feminist scholars have redefined the archetype as a space for othered women in Chicanx culture to celebrate their otherness. La Llorona as an archetype is political in this way of being both a medium to suppress women in traditional folklore and an archetype to liberate them depending on how she is contextualized in writing. Chicanx feminist writers will use the archetype to discuss queerness within the culture or anti-cultural gender roles by framing La Llorona as a hero to the women who transgress patriarchal values. La Llorona becomes a projection of mothers and women forsaken by the culture due to their sexuality, individuality, and mental health in an attempt to reclaim women's narrative from traditional folkloric oppression.

Patriarchal culture's stigmatized view of mental health for mothers expands through the film adaptation of "La Llorona" by Michael Chavez. Chavez's film, *The Curse of La Llorona* (2019) subjects the title character to the same narrative of a monster seeking children to murder, or as defined by Esquibel, the *encuentro* version of "La Llorona" storytelling. The film lacks any new development on why La Llorona murdered her children, framing her as the same sacrilegious mother who killed her children out of jealousy from her husband's affair. If any further analysis is to be drawn on why her reaction is so extreme, it is through the study of the character Patricia. How *The Curse of La Llorona* displays mothers, specifically Patricia and La Llorona, adds to the discourse of patriarchal culture mythicizing women's agency in the form of mental health.

The film first introduces Patricia as a recovering alcoholic with anxiety neglecting her children. During a welfare check, Patricia's children are found locked in a room and Patricia

attacks the welfare agent. When the boys are taken from their room, they tell the agent to keep them in there for their own safety. Unaware to the agent, the boys are seeing La Llorona and have been in the room for their own protection. After being taken to a shelter, the boys become attacked by La Llorona and are found drowned the next day. Patricia tells the welfare worker it is her fault they are dead due to her taking them away and interrupting Patricia's attempts to stop La Llorona. Later, Patricia prays to La Llorona to take the welfare worker's children in return for her own. The trials of the welfare worker fighting against La Llorona span the rest of the film's plot, showing La Llorona to be a monster hurting children.

If any explanation is to be drawn as to why La Llorona might have done what she did in the past outside of a jealous rage, it is through Patricia's narrative. Patricia's behavior throughout the film symbolizes mental health within mothers and the lack of awareness for it. She is not given assistance from her society other than social services stripping her of her children. The paranormal relationship she has with La Llorona is the only real assistance offered to her in trying to keep her children despite La Llorona taking them to begin with. Horror film as a genre utilizes the supernatural as a metaphor for mental health, but not giving La Llorona a purpose outside madness for madness' sake contributes to the negative narrative surrounding her as a mother. If Patricia or La Llorona are portrayed as mad for madness' sake, placing them in the archetype of "Sacrilegious Mother" perpetuates the idea of there being only one correct way to be a mother in a patriarchal culture. The correct mother is not flawed nor has mental health problems, stressed in the film by the character, Anna.

Anna's character resembles the picture of preferred motherhood. She selflessly does all she can to recuse children, putting them first before herself. Although Anna suffers through fear due to La Llorona, her journey to heroism differs from Patricia by the mental health factor. Anna gets to live by the end of the film with her children saved while Patricia loses hers. If both women were mothers who adored their children, why then does the one with mental health imagery and metaphors lose out on motherhood while the other does not? *The Curse of La Llorona* prioritizes "The Mother" archetype over the othered mother in whom it gives a good ending to. The main source of difference being that of mental health in the mother's state of being. Happy endings offered to the idealized version of "The Mother" archetype strengthen punishments for mothers deemed not worthy of motherhood.

The Japanese tale, "The Beautiful Dancer of Yedo" differs from "La Llorona" by exhibiting a woman who denies motherhood. It tells the story of Sakura-ko, a young free-spirited geisha unwilling to settle into marriage. She is courted three times by men who she unknowingly mothers by teaching them each a lesson about themselves. Sakura-ko denies each man and shuns any proposal to be their wife or bearer of children. In the end, it is revealed that Sakura-ko gave up being a geisha to become a nun as she is seen accepting a donation from the son of a former lover.

Sakura-ko's character is challenged by patriarchal expectations in the shape of the three lovers. The first one, described as middle aged, is identified by how great of a man he is in wealth and status. His description paints the picture of what an idealized man in a patriarchal structure looks like; therefore, it is meant to be odd that Sakura-ko denies him. Sakura-ko tries to

tell the man he has lost his way and should leave the *geisha* district, but he stays to try and win Sakura-ko over. Her mothering of him to leave the area goes unnoticed by him, and like a child, he pleads with Sakura-ko to become his. He offers Sakura-ko the world if she marries him, yet Sakura-ko holds onto her autonomy stating, "I have a fancy to remain a *geisha*. It is a merry life" (Grand 295). Her profession gives Sakura-ko independence and agency because she chooses it, yet is treated by the tale as a position she needs to be saved from.

She is propositioned the second time by an older gentleman. Sakura-ko mothers him, telling him to go home and pray rather than look for love in her arms. The old man pleads for her, and yet again, Sakura-ko turns away a man offering her portraits of a marriage. It is until she meets the third man that Sakura-ko contemplates marriage and motherhood after time spent with him nursing him back to health. Although she falls in love with the man, it is remarked by Sakura-ko that the gods will not allow the two to be joined yet never expands on why. One can view the absence of an explanation as a breaking of the fourth wall in the sense of folklore not allowing Sakura-ko a happy ending for denying the two men prior. Sakura-ko is punished in the tale for being a woman of choice and chastising men without a commitment through marriage to them.

Sakura-ko also inherently mothers the men with her constant refuting. She tries to encourage the men to be better versions of themselves by asking them to take initiative or agency in their life. They fawn over her and ignore her words in favor of her beauty, but they are not punished in the tale for being foolish. Instead, it is Sakura-ko that is given a life of penance as a nun by the end of the tale who symbolically encounters the child of her third lover. The child

who was more than likely supposed to be hers if things had worked out is meant to torture Sakura-ko. He symbolizes what she could have had had she said yes to the man. How "The Beautiful Dancer of Yedo" ends reinforces the notion that women who disregard commitment to motherhood in its true form (marriage and children) are meant to seek forgiveness for forsaking their maternal duty in a patriarchal culture.

Takashi Shimizu's film *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002) captures consequences for a fallen mother well with its main antagonist, Kayako Saeki. The j-horror film understands what a motherly archetype is (Mariko and Rika), making Kayako's subversion of the role an example of punishment for betraying patriarchal expectations. Kayako's choices in life, like Sakura-ko, are considered a betrayal to the familial unit because of its selfishness. Therefore, Kayako must suffer a fate worse than death by carrying a curse she herself has no control over. The *onryō* (vengeful spirit) archetype dissociates Kayako from her agency, serving as a prison for women and their narratives if they deviate from the good and motherly path.

The film at its core surrounds the Saeki family. Consisting of husband Takeo, his wife Kayako, and their child, Toshio, the family's tragedy plagues anyone who comes into contact with their old home. As the story is told out of order, it is slowly revealed that Takeo murdered Kayako after finding out she had feelings for another man. Her ghost is cursed by the pain and shock of her death, described by the film as *ju-on*: "The curse of one who dies in the grip of powerful rage" (*Ju-on* 0:00:16). Kayako is doomed to kill all that enter their familial space because of Takeo's rage while murdering her. All but Rika, a welfare worker, is allowed to live because she is reborn through the *ju-on* curse like Kayako. The film ends with Rika resembling

Kayako in hair and makeup, with Rika wailing in the same ghoulish click tone that Kayako used to.

Kayako's curse, transformation, and narrative resembles the Japanese ghost story of Oiwa from the kabuki play *Yotsuya Kaidan* by Tsuruya Nanboku. Oiwa's story revolves around her marriage to Iemon. Iemon asks a local brothel owner to rape Oiwa after she is disfigured by a neighbor so that he may divorce her. The brothel owner, unable to commit the act, shows Oiwa her face instead as she was unaware of the disfigurement. In shock, Oiwa runs into a sword she had picked up and accidentally kills herself. After her death, Iemon marries the neighbor who had disfigured her, but becomes plagued by Oiwa's ghost. He kills his new wife's family and descends into madness from Oiwa's haunting.

In the play's performance, Oiwa resurfaces in her ghostly form with a child, insinuating she was pregnant when killed. "The Sacrilegious Mother" archetype in this appearance of a child with Oiwa is significant when discussing the idea of eternal motherhood as a consequence for failed mothers. Oiwa is subjected to eternal motherhood in death after having killed her own child through her death. Her haunting of Iemon selfishly seeks to destroy his new familial unit to fulfill her own revenge, yet the appearance of her child is, as Satoko Shimazaki writes, "at odds with its complex lineage of meanings, both as a sign of motherly sorrow and as a paragon of dutiful concern for the preservation of a household" (Shimazaki 239). Oiwa with her child in the ghostly realm still tries to resemble the idea of a family, but her sorrow overrules motherly compassion.

The revenge she enacts onto Iemon is punishment for ruining their familial unit with his betrayal and a lesson to be taught to men who stray and deceive in real life. Her story keeps her within the confines of mothering both in the folkloric and literal sense, especially when regenerated as modern media like *Ju-on: The Grudge*. However perverse Oiwa makes the role of mother through her subversion of the archetype, Oiwa's commitment to revenge prioritizes her agency over her role as mother. Therefore, in terms of folklore and genre, her character must be associated with that of a monster or an *onryō*.

Kayako's appearance in *Ju-on: The Grudge* parallels Oiwa in appearance and characterization. With long black *kabuki* hair and clothing, Kayako carries her son with her everywhere she goes. Toshio is always included in the sequence of events leading to Kayako killing someone. The two are inseparable and connected through the bonds of eternal motherhood, much like Oiwa and her child. Kayako's confines parallel Oiwa's in the two women's ghostly reimagining of mothers. They both are meant to live in ghostly immortality with their children as reminders for straying from the patriarchal familial unit.

Her betrayal is not explored in depth in the film because it does not need to be in order to justify killing her in the horror genre. Stepping out of "The Mother" archetype is all that is needed for this reaction to be had. Patriarchal rage towards Kayako for disrespecting her motherly role manifests through Takeo's brutal killing of her. His action controls Kayako's individuality outside of her marriage and motherhood, silencing her from having an identity outside of their familial unit. Her curse is meant to keep Kayako with her family, claiming her as an evil mother for a sacrilegious immortal family.

It would make more sense thematically if Takeo was the one killing everyone in the film given his history, yet he is not. Kayako is the character burdened with the curse despite her victimhood status. Resembling Luisa in "La Llorona," both women are given fates worse than death because of the immortalization of their pain. The supernatural element to their stories is meant to be a never-ending prison where subversive women can be held accountable for their actions. If women go against their motherhood expectations, then they can be disciplined with an immortal curse. They are not allowed in archetypes to become better women. "The Sacrilegious Mother" archetype stays in the characterization of a supernatural ghoul, serving as warning to women in patriarchal culture.

The motherly responsibility to look out for family in spite of one's own feelings is shown throughout the film with the constant presence of Toshio. Mariko and Rika each lookout for Toshio when they believe him to be a human boy. Though it is clear the women know something is strange about the home, they ignore that intuition to be there for Toshio. Their characters signify the expectation for women to put aside any personal agency in favor of taking care of the patriarchal son. Rika proves herself to be a selfless woman by putting aside fear, making her the perfect candidate to become the new mother figure for Toshio. Unlike Kayako, Rika exemplifies female expectations in a patriarchal culture and is rewarded for it with the same mechanism used to punish Kayako: becoming an *onryō*. For both women, *onryō* status means even if a woman does everything right, she is still at the mercy of a patriarchal structure.

"The Mother" archetype illustrates a standard for women in motherhood and what they must look and act like. If women stray from the archetype perpetrated by their culture's folklore,

they are given monstrous narratives as punishment (“The Sacrilegious Mother”). A patriarchal culture inherently threatens mothers with this idea of punishment outside of their control while governing how women’s stories are told. The archetype of “The Mother” exists to glorify a mother, but in existing, shuns other presentations of mothering through its preferred and sexist character traits.

CHAPTER V

THE WITCH AND LA MUJER LOCA

Prominent archetypes like "The Witch" and "*La Mujer Loca*" exist in patriarchal folklore as evil women. They are portrayed as women scorned by conventional society who often pursue revenge by means of magic or madness. Always a villain in the culture's lore, "The Witch" or the "*Mujer Loca*" archetype sees itself separated from other women. Their roles are outlined by the madness factor placed onto them by the culture. Perceptions of evil in folklore are controlled in this way of decisive labeling. The label of "witch" or "mad" looks to undermine women's authority and individuality by separating the woman from her feminine identity. Instead of folklore creating a punishment for "The Witch" and "*La Mujer Loca*" for their agency, it redefines them as traits in an undesirable woman. Patriarchal culture cannot control women who transgress, but it can redefine their characteristics in folklore as women who do not end up with happy endings or blissful lives due to their personalities.

The two archetypes also become associated with the picture of a jealous or passionate female driven to madness because of her relationship with a man. Jealousy and passion within the mad or witchy woman is usually utilized as a catalyst for her actions. Through a woman's eruption of anger or magic in folklore being strongly associated to her relationship with a man,

she remains controlled by patriarchal ideas of expected womanly attachment. Her action of eruption in itself then becomes an act given agency due to the male influence. Meaning, a woman cannot have agency in folklore without still being defined by her entanglements with a man. "The Witch" or the "*Mujer Loca*" archetype scares women into submission or else they will be deemed every woman's favorite word, "crazy." Folklore gaslights its audiences by labeling women "witches" or "mad women" simply because of their characters' desire to hold men accountable.

A distinct Mexican American tale presenting a woman riddled with jealousy is, "The Jealous Barn Owl." Labeled "La Lechuza" in some parts of Mexican American regions, the story usually contains a witch in the disguise of an owl coming to retaliate against a former lover. Depending on what version is told, the tale can end in her death as she is hung in her owl form or she succeeds in turning her former lover into an owl as well. Whichever iteration one reads, folklore identifies the woman as a being with evil magical intentions towards an otherwise good man. She threatens men with her *brujería*; therefore, she becomes identified through folklore as an unwelcomed archetype in women.

In Juan Sauvageau's version of "The Jealous Barn Owl," it follows the story of a young couple confined to their home. Any time they are seen in public, it is with the husband close to his wife and holding her. Neighbors find them odd and think the husband to be a jealous man, until one neighbor is attacked by a large owl. The husband comes to the neighbor's rescue, chanting in tongues to exorcize the owl. Once the owl is gone, he offers the following explanation for the it:

> "I've got to tell you the truth," he sighed, "that owl is my former wife, who died three years ago in Lebanon. I married again, last year. She tried to ruin our marriage since the very beginning. She's jealous, I can't leave my wife for any length of time, because I'm afraid she'll be dead upon my return" (Sauvageau 132).

His explanation rationalizes his constant surveillance over his wife to the audience because in the context of a patriarchal culture, he is protecting her from evil. Neighbors in the tale look the other way in favor of criticizing another woman's inability to let go of her former husband. It is easier to categorize the owl as a jealous evil witch instead of questioning why the man knew witchcraft to expel the owl in the first place. The othered female loses her voice in this way of being immediately silenced in her culture for seeking to hold her husband accountable in betrayal.

The husband's heroism in eradicating his previous wife speaks to how phallocentric folklore can apply magical elements to men for getting rid of evil without identifying them as evil too for using the same mechanism of magic used by witches. The double standard for magical empowerment only benefits "Wizard" archetypes and/or "The Witch" if she resembles "The Mother" archetype. The story is unfair to *la lechuza* in that she is demonized for practicing magic when it is clear her husband practiced the craft as well, shown in his ability to speak in tongues. Magical deviance is allowed for the husband and not the wife.

Female *brujería* as activism against patriarchal control begins with its power to give agency to women in Mexican American folklore. Witchcraft, magic, or any realm of the

supernatural empowers women, but also mystifies agency as something only attainable through supernatural interference. Hinted in Chapter 3 with discussion on an *onryō* identity, supernatural components in folklore have a double-edged sword in its ability to empower female characters while also seeing to their demise. A supernatural status may help women achieve their goals in a tale, but it also associates their agency as something only attainable through the mystification of their identity. Its activism to fight against patriarchal identification becomes trapped by the culture's understanding and association with the word "witch" or "*bruja.*" "The Witch" archetype can theoretically achieve justice, such as the barn owl successfully scaring her old husband into hiding but is still branded a villain for seeking it out to begin with.

In the case of "The Jealous Barn Owl," the owl is not afforded sorrow. Instead of portraying the woman as a woman who has lost her husband and wants to be reunited, the story frames her as a scornful nuisance who must be eradicated a second time. The story focuses on the jealousy trait that excuses violence against women because the woman is not a woman if she is a witch. If women are separated from feminine identity and placed into a box of "supernatural witch" in folklore, then how women are punished or violated is thought to be acceptable because they are not considered real women. "The Witch" archetype, although empowering for a woman in folklore due to its allowed space for agency, becomes the same label that others her to the point of disassociation from patriarchal audiences.

Magic is replaced by madness in the archetype of "*La Mujer Loca*." Depicted as crazed from jealously or passion, "*La Mujer Loca*" performs irrational behavior in the name of love for a man without magical assistance. She will follow a lover's new girlfriend home, threaten to kill

other women, burn down homes, or butcher a bunny rabbit, all to presumably get the attention of the man she loves. Her archetype is meant to strike fear in the balls of men to not cheat on their wives or have premarital sex, meanwhile also creating a label for women to be fearful of being placed in. The label of "*loca*" controls women's identities by not allowing space for them to explain themselves or have ranging emotions. It is an immediate tool of suppression, seen well with the Japanese tale, "The Sad Story of the Yaoya's Daughter."

The story is that of a man named Yaoya and his fifteen-year-old daughter O Schichi. Yaoya's home accidentally burns down during a large fire in his city, making his family relocate to a temple. In the temple, O Schichi meets a young acolyte that she begins to see in secret. Fearful that the gods will punish them, O Schichi and her acolyte swear themselves to each other. When Yaoya's home is restored, O Schichi believes the move back home to be a punishment for her and the acolyte's love. Wanting to be reunited with him, O Schichi burns down her family home in a fit of proclaimed madness thinking it will return her to the temple. Her crime is realized, and O Schichi is sentenced to standing on a bridge for seven days until she is burned at the stake on the eighth. As she dies, she yells, "It was all for love" (Grand 327).

O Schichi's story tries to warn its audience of the dangers of premarital relations. The divine intervention of the gods O Schichi is so fearful of symbolizes the watchful eye of the patriarchy as it tries to survey women. O Schichi is always being watched by this eye, adding a layer of paranoia in her life that she cannot act out sexual or individual desires outside of marriage. In her and the acolyte's attempt to hide their love away, they naturally anger the patriarchal eye for trying to work around its vision. To hide from the patriarch's rules is to be as

Anzaldúa discusses in *Borderlands*, a cultural deviant in need of reprimanding due to the lack of tolerance towards nonconformity. O Schichi's death can then be viewed as karmic retribution for her deviance from patriarchal marriage.

Foucault connected madness and passion when he wrote, "The savage danger of madness is related to the danger of the passions and to their fatal concatenation" (Foucault 85). One can apply his connection to O Schichi's character in her resemblance of that internal battle of passion versus loyalty to patriarchal ideals. Passion's association with madness removes control from women in the case of O Schichi when she burns down a family home in order to see her lover again. Her reaction is extreme, dramatizing women's passion as a negative if not within the confines of a marriage. The madness identification keeps O Schichi a prisoner of her own emotions, with madness as a punishment for being a passionate woman.

Her coping comes in the form of identifying herself as mad rather than a woman with carnal wants. To deny herself eroticism is to police herself into believing she cannot act on those thoughts. If O Schichi entertains sexual and independent thoughts unapologetically, it makes her the wrong sort of female. The tale curbs agency when it allows O Schichi to define herself as mad rather than a human being with wants and desires. It humiliates her by presenting her as a criminal to the city in her seven public days of waiting for death, then burns her like a witch. It is no coincidence that the mad woman and the witch die in the same form of flames as they are meant to be metaphorically cleansed from their agencies in folklore and stripped of their fleshy desires.

Film's translation of "The Witch" and the "*Mujer Loca*" archetype personifies itself through Kaneto Shindô's *Onibaba* (1964). *Onibaba* argues women at their fundamental core are all disfigured, lustful, and treacherous through its two female leads. The landscape of the film taking place during wartime emphasizes how much of their true personalities are revealed because of war. Apocalyptic undertones of a lawless land in war is meant to expose women in their natural states as it exposes human nature through barbaric acts of self-kind slaughter. Who the women were before war is considered to be the lie, and who they are during the film is their truth as females. Through the lens of a patriarchal culture's archetype of women, the film strengthens patriarchal ideologies that women are intrinsically evil beings behind the mask of femininity.

The film tells the story of two women, an older woman and her young daughter-in-law, who kill wandering samurai in their area. The women sell stolen materials found on the dead men for food in order to stay alive during wartime. One day, they are visited by a family friend, Hachi, who deserted the war with the old woman's son, Kishi. Hachi informs the women that Kishi has died and takes an interest in the newly widowed daughter-in-law. Throughout the course of the film, the young woman has an affair with Hachi despite the old woman's feelings against it. The old woman unsuccessfully tries to manipulate and dissuade her daughter-in-law from forming a physical relationship with Hachi.

When the old woman comes upon a samurai that wears a *hannya* mask, she kills him and steals the mask to scare her daughter-in-law with it. Though the scare tactic works initially, the old woman is undone when the mask will not come off of her. In the film's final sequence, the

young woman is able to get the mask off of her mother-in-law, only to reveal a disfigured face covered in sores. The young woman runs, claiming the old woman is now a real demon. *Onibaba* ends with the old woman claiming she is a human and not a demon as she chases her daughter-in-law.

Onibaba's old woman character lives in a constant state of contradictions with patriarchal culture's agenda. While she serves the agenda through motherhood and surveying the young woman, her actions are out of jealousy and self-preservation. She is not intentionally assisting the agenda. Her loyalty is to herself and in wanting to be sexualized by the young male gaze. When she is not sexualized because of her crone appearance, her reaction is to control other women's desires and eradicate the male presence out of jealously. The old woman works against other women and the patriarchy in her wish to still be seen as desirable, placing her sexual identity as the most important part of herself.

"The Witch" archetype, as seen with the barn owl, is often the forgotten women of patriarchal society. Women who are labeled spinsters, crones, queer, or women who altogether become desexualized from not appearing appealing to men reside in the category of the forgotten female. The old woman in *Onibaba* exemplifies many of these traits in her status as a left behind mother and wife. Her sexual self is lost in aging out of a desirable youth, making her anger at the young woman's sexual rendezvous a metaphor for resentment towards herself for aging. The old woman as a metaphoric witch turns into an *oni* by the end of the film to symbolize a woman's jealousy taking over her entire identity.

The old woman characteristically resembles a *yamauba* in her hag appearance prior to the film's ending and in the cannibalistic imagery of killing other human beings for physical sustenance. The old woman dualizes the *oni* and *yamauba* identities into one singular space by being an original witch overcome with jealousy, then turning into an *oni*-woman as punishment. Although there exists discourse in not coupling the *yokai* together, specifically by Michael Dylan Foster in his book *The Book of Yokai, Onibaba* allows space for both of the female archetypes to exist in a singular character. It's the old woman's witch features that transform her into the punishment of an *oni*.

The old woman's performative magic comes in the form of utilizing the supernatural element to control her daughter-in-law. She does so by inciting magical imagery in the form of the *oni* haunting and utilizing folklore to suppress the young woman's sexual deviancy. In a quite literal presentation of this thesis's argument, the old woman uses cultural tools against the young woman to oppress women's sexual agency, shown when she states, "The punishment for sinful lust is the worst of all" (*Onibaba* 1:01:01-06). The old woman is aware of the cultural religious patriarchy and weaponizes it to serve her own goals. She acts as a tool for patriarchal gaslighting through folklore by making women feel wrong for seeking sexual agency. Her hypocrisy in allowing herself a sexual identity and not her daughter-in-law imitates hypocrisies within patriarchal culture that allow deviancy from men and not women.

Men's deviant behavior is treated as natural for their gender. The film's dialogue between Hachi and the old woman during her failed seduction emphasizes this when Hachi says, "I'm a red-blooded man. I can't stand it" (*Onibaba* 0:51:31-33). Hachi's character is allowed

animalistic lust with specifications to who he projects it on, yet the old woman is not. The old woman is propositioned by an older merchant, and she says no out of disgust. Then, she parallels Hachi in desire for youth in seeking Hachi out for sex. Both characters prioritize youth as a specification for a sexual partner, yet it is Hachi that successfully attains it through his affair with the young woman. Hachi's ability to win over the young woman outside of marriage paints the picture of which gender and age is allowed deviance in a patriarchal landscape.

The "*Mujer Loca*" archetype expresses itself through the actions of both women. The young woman, mad with passionate lust, consistently goes against her mother-in-law's wishes. Her role as "The Bride" to a dead husband becomes abandoned, and she seeks out Hachi for sexual fulfillment all throughout the film. There comes a moment where she, like Sakura-ko, worries about godly intervention and punishment when her mother-in-law threatens her with ideas of hell. However, that does not stop the young woman for long from being seen running frantically in the reeds to her lover. Although she never burns down a home such as Sakura-ko, she does embody ideas of the crazed unmarried woman with uncontrollable lust. Her *loca*-ness threatens her mother-in-law back with agency inspired by her lust for Hachi. However, her story ends in loneliness like her mother-in-law when Hachi dies. For both women, their punishment is in ultimate loneliness for acting on lustful and jealous thoughts.

The old woman also displays the "*Mujer Loca*" archetype when she goes to such extremes to maintain food on her table and control over her daughter-in-law. She tries to blame wartime for her murderous occupation, but the film argues that there are other ways to survive (selling the body, begging). The old woman would rather see men die than not have agency over

who she chooses to give her body to, giving the character her own form of activism. However, the film does not frame it as such. *Onibaba* frames the *loca*-ness as a side effect of losing moral codes in a patriarchal culture. No matter how much the women may blame their immoral behavior on immoral times, the film's *hannya* mask disfiguring the old woman symbolizes that women intrinsically carry *loca*-ness inside of them.

Lastly, it is important to note the silencing of the women through their lack of names given to them. Each man in the film is given a name, even if it is a name tied to their occupation (ex: "Samurai General" and "Runaway Warrior"). The women are identified solely by their age, perpetrating the idea of women's currency being in her youth. Despite being lead characters, the film reduces who they are as women to their age. Their age is used to prop up the archetypes the women play into, ultimately providing the idea of woman's life only being two options in patriarchal culture: young, lusty, and beautiful or old hag.

"The Witch" and "*La Mujer Loca*" as archetypes execute harmful narratives that women cannot be emotional, sexual, aging individuals without being branded with a label to control them. Ignoring a woman's agency in a patriarchal culture is easier if the culture is assisted by folklore that categorizes transgressive women as mad witches in the woods, eating men and burning down homes. To paint aggressive images of women with no depth other than madness driven by emotions for a man is to still keep their narratives tied to a man. In the archetype's desire to strike fear into audiences with a supernatural or mad driven character, it eventually strikes fear of women altogether. Stripped of magical or madness elements, the archetypes control women's emotions by ascertaining which ones are allowed in a patriarchal culture and

which are not. These identity determiners then become harmful when women are subjected to these narratives outside of folklore. If labeled a “witch” or “crazy,” women more so than ever are othered to the point of not recognizing them as individuals within the patriarchal construct. When women are not viewed as people, how society ostracizes becomes irrelevant.

CHAPTER VI

THE FEMME FATALE

Of all the female archetypes portrayed in folklore and film, there exists one who culminates all transgressive and deviant characteristics, “The Femme Fatale.” “The Femme Fatale” was popularized by noir film, but her presence in art existed before then. Tracing her back to folklore, “The Femme Fatale” is often the woman who says, “No.” Her character says no to a patriarchal structure and no to confined gender roles. More than anything else, the archetype portrays a danger to male-dominated cultures due to her *chingona* and *mestiza* rebellion. *Chingona* and *machisma* women in folklore and film are meant to be the personified characteristics of what to avoid as a female in a patriarchal context yet simultaneously act as symbols of rebellion for women.

“The Femme Fatale” archetype is all about choice and upending a phallocentric structure. The characters within the archetype recognize there is a lack of real independence in whether or not they enter a domestic sphere. When the domestic sphere is not offered as a choice for women, “The Femme Fatale” unapologetically rejects the culture and domesticity. Due to her refusal to participate in a patriarchal society, folklore and film frame the “The Femme Fatale” with paranoia. She is always a woman who breaks men’s hearts or savagely

kills them with a lack of compassion. Where a femme fatale exists in art also exists the man she screwed over to get what she wanted. Her successes cannot come without the pitting of her *chingona* attitude as a threat to masculinity and the male space.

Gloria Anzaldúa described the idea of *mestiza* consciousness as an act of insurrection when she stated:

> The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. (Anzaldúa 101)

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* mirrors the femme fatale in the archetype's duality of meaning and contradiction. A femme fatale recognizes the structure she exists in, and by doing so, challenges it with a proclamation of independence by having agency over her own life. She creates "motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" (Anzaldúa 102). A femme fatale's alterations of patriarchal expectations within her culture allow her a new space to exist in, birthing her own *mestiza* femme consciousness. "The Femme Fatale" archetype performs as a symbol of feminist resistance to cultural definitions of femininity.

The Mexican American tale, "The Bride Says No," resembles the "bet to obtain a female" archetype popularized in theatre and film (George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, George Cukor's *My Fair Lady*, Robert Iscove's *She's All That*). The archetype of "bet to obtain a female" is

described by simply that: A bet made between two male characters to see if they can obtain, change, or get a woman to fall in love with them. Usually ending in the male and female's romantic love of overcoming the bet, "The Bride Says No" subverts a happy ending. Its female character, Blanca, denies a forgiving ending in favor of humiliating her fiancé. Blanca refutes a patriarchal culture's expectations to be a forgiving woman for the sake of a man's pride, and instead, celebrates female independence through cultivated chaos.

"The Bride Says No" begins with a bet being made between Juan, a lothario, and his friend to see if he can win the heart of Blanca Almendares. The two men place a $100 bill into an envelope labeled "Juan and Blanca" to seal the bet's creation. Juan sets out to win over Blanca, eventually falling in love with her. As time passes, the two decide to get married and Juan forgets the wager. On the eve of the wedding, a previous girlfriend of Juan's tells Blanca that she is just a bet and nothing more. Blanca finds the letter and sets out to punish Juan for his actions. On their wedding day, when asked if she takes Juan to be her husband, Blanca says no. She produces the letter to Juan and leaves the altar.

The folktale's purpose in a patriarchal landscape is to warn men of societal consequences if they stray from the moral path. Agency is allowed to Blanca as a device to morally police men and to show them there is punishment for not falling into expected gender behavior. However, through the same allowed agency, Blanca sabotages the archetype by not forgiving Juan. Her tactic of humiliation as punishment gives Blanca power over the patriarch by making a fool of it, resembling Virginia Grise and Irma Mayorga's poet-speaker in "From Cha-Cha to Panza" when she says: "I claimed power through my pussy, and I didn't even have to let any one in" (Grise

and Mayorga 51). Blanca does not need a sexual identity to claim agency or independence. Her agency in declining forgiveness makes a fool of patriarchal culture that asks women to forgive men for their misdeeds instead of seeking accountability from them. Women who place men's needs above themselves are considered good and loyal women (Herrera 23), but "The Femme Fatale" is not loyal to a patriarchal society. She is loyal to herself.

Blanca's femme fatale identity comes in the form of Blanca rejecting the expectation to be a good woman. She specifically waits until she and Juan are at the altar and during an important moment of vows to produce the letter. Her actions are purposeful, thought out, and characteristically petty. Blanca means to hurt Juan emotionally, avenging her feminine identity that was thought of as something to be obtained. Blanca reclaiming power over Juan represents a larger discussion of reclaiming power from the culture. She humiliates men in the culture who act like Juan, hurting their *machismo* with her *chingona* voice.

The tale is in no way favoring women by allowing Blanca vengeance. Rather, it seeks to show a wickedness inside scorned women. How the tale describes Juan's ex-girlfriend accentuates the scorned theme by identifying her as a "jealous woman" (Sauvageau 147). The identification completely removes autonomy from the ex-girlfriend, playing into the same *loca* label as a system of control. The woman is not given a purpose outside of pitting two women against each other, therefore not allowing space for women to feel angry at men's treatment of them. "The Bride Says No" does the same to Blanca in depicting her as a vengeful and unforgiving woman. Only through feminist reviewing of the tale can one see the femme fatale

existing in-between the lines with Blanca's denial of Juan's wants and reputation overriding her own.

Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (2001) exhibits the theoretical femme fatale with its main female character, Luisa. Luisa's character translates folklore to film through agency in saying no to a patriarchal culture's fanaticized version of women. Her existence upends cultural masculinity and *machismo* behavior, eventually killing it entirely when she reveals the homoerotic sphere between the two male leads. *Y tu mamá también* criticizes *machismo* bravado through the voice of Luisa, creating a femme fatale in her decimation of traditional male roles. Luisa's *chingona* attitude and erotic space are acts of defiance to the culture's oppression of feminine identities.

Cuarón's coming of age film tells the story of two young best friends, Tenoch and Julio, entering the summer before going to college. The two are shown to be consumed by their sexualization of women, consistently fixated on women as objects to project their fantasies and criticisms onto. When the boys meet older woman, Luisa, they go on a road trip together in hopes of having intercourse with her. Luisa's presence in the friends' relationship turns it upside down when it slowly reveals how the to two young men truly feel about each other. The film comes to its major climax when the three engage in a ménage à trois, revealing Tenoch and Julio's feelings for each other as they kiss fervently. On the day after their sexual act, all three characters go their separate ways. Luisa dies a month later from stage four cancer. Tenoch and Julio stop hanging out altogether.

Tenoch and Julio's sexism comes in the form of cultural gender roles. The two are a product of patriarchal culture's beliefs that allows men sexual freedom and not women. Women, as mentioned with prior archetypes "*La Virgen,*" "The Final Girl," and "The Bride," are placed into boxes of angelic virginity or whore depending on if they follow patriarchal orders or not. Tenoch and Julio exemplify this policing of identity in how they categorize women. The two possessively focus on loyalty from their girlfriends while the girls travel abroad, yet they act out sexual deviances in their absence. When Luisa asks them if they think their girlfriends would cheat on them, they are both confident that they would not, given their angelic perceptions of them. Of course, when it is revealed the two have slept with each other's girlfriends, Tenoch and Julio quickly change how they discuss the women. They categorize them as whores and sluts, aggressively dismissing women for being sexual beings.

The two are perfectly okay with cheating on their girlfriends and acting out sexual debauchery, yet the expectation of how women behave away from the patriarchal eye is scrutinized. Luisa contrasts this patriarchal expectancy by being a sexual woman with self-agency.

She leaves her cheating husband, knowing that she will die soon from cancer to live out sexual debauchery and self-fulfilling dreams of traveling. Luisa would rather spend the remainder of her days living away from the patriarchal husband and all that he symbolizes, than devote another minute to the role of wife. Unlike the men in the film that deny their sexual acts or seek pity in them through shame (Luisa's husband when he begs for forgiveness, Tenoch and Julio lying about their debauchery and attraction to each other), Luisa unapologetically owns her

space of sexual womanhood. She, like Blanca, chooses agency over the forgiveness of men. They are not considered good women in the culture's eyes, but they prioritize their own feelings instead of the *virgen* or whore label that threatens women.

Luisa acts a femme fatale to cultural *machismo* in her revealing of the queer space between Tenoch and Julio. Her commentary on ultra-*machismo* behavior as hidden desire between men highlights this when she says, "Like all men, you mark your territory and get all holy when what you really want is to fuck each other." (*Y tu mamá también* 1:08:54-1:09:01) Luisa's critical statement plants the seed in the friends' minds that their true anger is not with the betrayal of sleeping with the others' girlfriends, but that they cannot sleep with each other. Their anger unconsciously is with the same systems of oppression used against women and their sexuality. *Y tu mamá también* recognizes the confines men exist in as they too become victims of the patriarch due to gender roles. (Anzaldúa 106)

Luisa breaks down the barriers of cultural heterosexual requirements with her body, allowing the two young men to engage in their queerness through her sexual agency. When the two men awaken the next day with shame and stop being friends, it is again Luisa who brings them together one last time when they discuss her death. Luisa as a femme fatale in a feminist perspective uses her agency and sexual identity to tell a patriarchal culture no to its rules and regulations. She creates her own space by leaving the culture's expectations of women.

The Japanese tale "The Land of *Yomi*" provides an equally *chingona* femme fatale in the form of Izanami. Izanami does not sit in her pain from being betrayed by her brother/lover, Izanagi. She takes initiative and action in seeking revenge for Izanagi's lack of respect towards

her wishes. Although Izanagi traps her in hell for eternity, Izanami's agency in exemplifying her rage towards Izanagi embodies feminine defiance in a patriarchal structure. Izanami does not forgive Izanagi, nor does she go quietly into hell. Her femme fatale persona kills the relationship between man and woman if it is built on patriarchal characteristics favoring a man.

Japanese folklore's story of creation, "The Land of *Yomi*" tells the account of Izanagi and his sister/lover, Izanami. The siblings/lovers are created to give birth to Japan and the many deities ruling its lands, seasons, and elements. When Izanami gives birth to the Fire God, Kagu-Tsuchi, she is burned to death and sent to the Land of *Yomi* (the underworld). Izanagi, full of rage, murders their child and follows Izanami to the gates of *yomi*. When there, he meets Izanami who asks him not to look at her until she says so. Growing impatient, Izanagi disregards Izanami's wishes and draws a curtain back to view a hideous and decayed Izanami. Izanagi runs from disgust and fear, while Izanami calls upon the Hideous Females of *yomi* to track and kill Izanagi for his betrayal. Izanagi outruns them, putting a boulder between the entrance of *yomi* and himself. Izanami promises eternal revenge on him by killing one thousand of his people a day, and Izanagi promises to make more people each day to cancel out her efforts. The tale ends with Izanagi waiting to recover enough strength to purify the Land of *Yomi*.

Of all the elements the twins spawned, fire killing Izanami symbolizes death to female agency. Fire's symbolism of female individuality, agency, and voice is treated in the tale as a product of self-destruction. It is a creation worth deeming women to death and sent to the underworld to become hideous. Why, of each element allowed, is the metaphoric representation of spirit and independence the one to kill Izanami if not to perpetrate a consequence to women

who embody the symbol of flames? The folklore purposefully utilizes the tale of creation to subject women to places of inferiority through Izanami's death by fire and villainous reprieve.

Izanami's femme fatale persona in the tale reclaims her sexual and independent voice when she takes revenge on Izanagi. Izanagi does not respect consent in the form of Izanami's wishes to not look upon her, calling for Izanami to weaponize herself and women in *yomi* to punish Izanagi. If read in a sexual context, the tale lacks punishment to men who go against women's wishes or consent to sexualize them. It is complacent in men's disregard for female voices. As mentioned in Allan G. Grapard's article "Visions of Excess and Excesses of Vision: Women and Transgression in Japanese Myth," Izanami's request is a bold one, "as to put a condition of resuming sexual relations: namely, that the male not look at her" (Grapard 9). Her female voice in asking for agency in her sexualization is denied, yet her narrative disfigures her act of revenge as a villainous one.

Izanami's attempt to murder Izanagi, if read in a feminist lens, undertakes rebellion against folklore's complacency with allowing patriarchal culture to disregard female autonomy. Even though Izanami fails to kill Izanagi, her attempt at it is intended to place her in the category of villainous. However, if anyone is a true villain in the tale, why would it not be a male who sexualizes a woman without consent? The tale favoring Izanagi as a hero contributes to patriarchal folklore and film disregarding disrespect towards women, then being surprised when women retaliate through the space of "The Femme Fatale." "The Femme Fatale" archetype purposefully strikes fear into the men of its story, as seen with Izanagi and his fearful reaction to purify *yomi*. Nonetheless, the archetype also allows women the space to reclaim agency in who

they permit to sexualize their narratives. Izanami can enact revenge for a broken oath because her agency is reclaimed through revenge itself.

Izanami's femme fatale characteristics are converted into film through Takashi Miike's *Audition* (1999). *Audition*'s villain, Asami Yamazaki, murders men who do not keep their promises, much like Izanami's intended goal. Takashi's film criticizes patriarchal gender roles by stressing misogyny in the form of the male lead, Shigeharu Aoyama, and his friend, Yasuhisa Yoshikawa. The two men strip women down physically and emblematically in their quest to find Shigeharu a wife, with Asami being revenge for such actions. Asami's symbolism represents female rage towards patriarchal cultures that sexualize, humiliate, and seek to keep women in narratives of submission.

The film revolves around a lonely widower, Shigeharu, who decides to seek out another wife. Shigeharu holds auditions for the role of a television show with his friend Yasuhisa, as the two scheme to really utilize the auditions as a way to find Shigeharu a wife. Shigeharu becomes transfixed by a resume letter a woman named Asami writes, falling in love with her after her audition. He courts Asami despite Yasuhisa's apprehension, and later sleeps with her during a beach getaway. When he awakens to find Asami missing, he goes down a rabbit hole of trying to find her where he begins to discover horrific things. Men mutilated, women dead, and a trail of blood follows Asami's disappearance. Shigeharu is finally reunited with her when she drugs and tortures him, fully aware of his audition farce in order to obtain a wife. Shigeharu's son arrives home in time to stop Asami, pushing her down a flight of stairs and killing her. *Audition* ends

with a dying Asami reciting lines she told Shigeharu during a dinner and an image of a young Asami lacing up her ballet dancer shoes.

How Shigeharu and Yasuhisa view women is essential when discussing how Asami manipulated those views to her advantage. The two men are shown in the beginning of the film grabbing a drink and discussing business at a lounge. Takashi keeps the men in frame while also showing women to the corner of the lounge talking and laughing. Their invasion of the male space is made clear when Yasuhisa says, "Awful girls. No class and stuck up. Stupid as well. Where are all the attractive girls?" (*Audition* 0:10:01-11) He follows up this statement with, "Japan is finished." (*Audition* 0:10:15-17) The idea of women in the same lounge as men insinuates the changes in Japan for women and women's careers, something that brings about disgust in Yasuhisa.

For him to state that Japan is dead is to cling onto patriarchal gender roles that covet the working space as a space for men. Miike's inclusion of women in the same shot highlights this theme by intersecting the two genders in the same area. Yasuhisa knows next to nothing about women he has never met before, but he nevertheless feels inclined to make a remark on their personalities in order to easily dismiss them. His action of dismissal is representative of patriarchal cultures controlling women through negative labels, as seen with "The Witch" and "*La Mujer Loca*." How men describe women they deem attractive or unattractive becomes strongly related to their positions in the patriarchal structure. In the case of Yasuhisa, his threatened masculinity tries to punish women by categorizing them with negative stereotypes.

Similarly, how Yasuhisa and Shigeharu classify beauty also acts as a label of control. They describe attractiveness as almost a modern-day geisha, requiring the woman of Shigeharu's dreams to be able to play piano, sing, and practice traditional Japanese dance. The version of a woman they categorize as attractive is a performance and fantasy of women. It is not real to the complexities of which women truly are. They fantasy a role for women, something Miike ironically presents through the entire metaphor of the audition process. Shigeharu and Yasuhisa's total disregard for women as people is pictured in a grand scale simply by holding the auditions to begin with. The women who attend think they are being hired for a job; a job for women being an important symbol of independence.

Their audition process undermines women's independence, time, and efforts in securing a job, however the two male characters see no problem with it. Patriarchal society, specifically in the symbolism of Shigeharu and Yasuhisa's characters, have been allowed to trick and disrespect women's narratives (Izanagi) therefore they do not see anything inherently wrong with their actions. Izanagi does not view himself as immoral for betraying Izanami because he believes he possesses her narrative. For women to reclaim their space in film and folklore is to become "The Femme Fatale" that rejects concepts of second-class citizenship or any man defining their story.

Asami is a picturesque dream for patriarchal society at first. She dresses purely in white, presenting herself as the metaphoric virginal bride ready to be married. Asami plays into the archetypes created for women, portraying herself as meek, subtle, submissive, kind, and unproblematic. By utilizing the archetype of virginal female, she weaponizes the patriarch's definition of women against men. Asami replaces expectations for women in a patriarchal

society by reclaiming space through her sexual and violent characteristics. Specifically, when she reveals to Shigeharu who she really is during the beach hotel scene.

In the scene, Asami strips her clothing as Shigeharu babbles on about what they could do to kill time before dinner. Asami tells Shigeharu to really look at her for who she is, showing him her naked body and scars. She asks Shigeharu to love only her. This pivotal scene is Asami reclaiming the male gaze on her terms. She sets conditions on Shigeharu before she allows him to touch her by making him proclaim his loyalty to her. Through her sexual voice, she commands the sexual space and takes on the masculine identity of initiation. Her command of the patriarchal male resembles Izanami's command in asking Izanagi not to look upon her. Both women seek to regain control of their identities by reclaiming their sexual space from the patriarchal male.

How Asami targets men coincides with the idea of reclaiming sexual identity with Asami specifically choosing men who think of her as an object. Asami's backstory reveals that her aggression is largely in part due to abuse suffered as a child with her stepfather sexualizing her. The scars she has on her body are symbolic of patriarchal belief's that all women are intrinsically evil and must be punished. Asami's rage at men's treatment of her identity then seeks to be reclaimed by making the sexual sphere her own and not the patriarch's. Her character as a young girl was not treated as a physical human being, so Asami's revenge killings equally do not treat men as human beings. "The Femme Fatale" archetype retrieves the female body from men, reclaiming the sexual identity as one powerful enough to not be objectified.

The sequences shown of Shigeharu sexualizing women through the audition process and in the hallucination, he has of his son's girlfriend and assistant performing fellatio on him demonstrate how Shigeharu (the patriarch) does not recognize women as people outside of pleasure. Asami is aware of how a patriarchal culture views women, therefore her actions towards men are a metaphor for female anger towards men's archetypes of them. Asami enacts revenge for women that are not allowed agency over their own bodies nor allowed control over how a patriarch views them.

She murders expectations for women by reclaiming identity through the same mechanisms used to confine women. In her redefining of women through "The Femme Fatale" archetype, Asami takes metaphoric revenge on the male gaze for sexualizing women without their consent. Specifically, when Asami places the needles into Shigeharu's eye ducts when torturing him. Her mutilation of men's senses (taste by chopping off their tongues, hearing in taking their ears, touch in removing fingers and feet, sight in pain to the eye ducts) are all metaphoric revenge for a patriarchal culture's various forms of control towards women's autonomy and agency. Asami as a femme fatale understands how the culture sexualizes her, something she has understood even as a child. So, in true femme fatale fashion, she removes men's ability to do so by saying no through the form of silencing their senses.

"The Femme Fatale" archetype, although meant to scare and create another bogeywoman from women's rebellion, hides feminine insurgency in plain sight. Her self-serving motives of revenge are tied to the emancipation of her narrative from patriarchal culture. Perhaps a symbol of the many women subjected to the five archetypes discussed thus far, "The Femme Fatale" is a

symbol of defiance for folklore and film that continuously perpetuates the same narratives of women. “The Femme Fatale” simply says no.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, patriarchal folklore strongly iterates control over female archetypes through its framing, punishment, and expectation of female characters. Viewed throughout the course of this thesis, archetypes of women are merely literary and cinematic mechanisms of surveillance and control. How a culture's folklore labels women impacts how women are defined in the culture's real-life structure. Whether it is patriarchal culture passing down ideas of submissive, *loca*, or evil characteristics in women in seemingly innocent tales, those same characteristics become associated with women in the grand scheme of media representation. An inheritance of either controlling women through labels or being fearful of women gets passed down through generational storytelling, contributing to misogynistic and sexist ideologies towards women. For women's narratives to gain independence outside of patriarchal archetypes, they must be subversive. They must be witches in the woods reclaiming space.

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