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**UNDERSTANDING CHICANA FEMINISM: THE FEMINIST
ELEMENTS IN SANDRA CISNEROS'S
*THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET***

MASTER THESIS

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CHICANA FEMİNİZMİNİ ANLAMAK: SANDRA CISNEROS'UN
***MANGO SOKAĞI'NDAKİ EV* ADLI ROMANINDAKİ FEMİNİST ÖGELER**

MASTER THESIS

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ÖZET**Yüksek Lisans Tezi****Chicana Feminizmini Anlamak: Sandra Cisneros'un *Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev* Adlı Romanındaki Feminist Ögeler****Gülsüm Tuğçe ÇETİN****Fırat Üniversitesi****Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü****Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Anabilim Dalı****İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı****Elazığ – 2014, Sayfa: V + 75**

Bu tez Sandra Cisneros'un (1954) *Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev* (1984) adlı romanını Chicana Feminizm ışığı altında incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Chicana Feminist düşünce, 1960'lardaki "Yurttaşlık Hakları Hareketi" sonucunda ortaya çıkan Meksika asıllı Amerikan halkının başlatmış olduğu Chicano Hareketi'ndeki aşırı erkek egemen yapılanmaya karşı doğmuştur. Genel olarak cinsel ayrımcılığa karşı duran Chicana feministleri tüm Meksikalı Amerikalıları etkileyen ırk ve sınıf sorunlarından da kopmamışlardır. Bunların yanı sıra beyaz kadınların yürüttüğü feminist hareketinde renklerinden dolayı kendilerine yer bulamayan Chicana feministleri, aynı zamanda ırkçı cinsiyet ayrımcılığına karşı da duruş sergilemişlerdir. Bu tez çalışmasında Amerikan edebiyat akımına giren ilk Chicana feminist yazar olan Sandra Cisneros'un *Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev* adlı romanındaki ırk, sınıf ve cinsiyet sorunları feminizm ışığı altında incelenecektir. Chicago'nun banliyösünde baskıcı ataerkil toplumdaki kadın ve erkek duruşlarının, cinsiyet, ırk ve sınıf sorunlarının anlatıldığı roman Chicana Feminizminin etkili bir örneğidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Chicana Feminizm, Sandra Cisneros, *Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev*, ırk, sınıf, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsiyet.

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

**Understanding Chicana Feminism: The Feminist Elements in Sandra Cisneros's
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This thesis aims to examine Sandra Cisneros's (1954) *The House on Mango Street* in the light of Chicana Feminism. Chicana Feminist thought has emerged as a consequence of male dominated structure of Chicano Movement, which is a product of Civil Rights Movement in 1960s. Chicana feminists, who are against the sexism in Chicano Movement, also carry the spirit of nationalistic discourses. Chicana feminists, who are the product of Brown society, cannot find a place for themselves with the White feminists, so they stand against racist sexism as well. In this thesis the issues of race, class and gender will be examined in terms of Chicana Feminism in Sandra Cisneros's, who is the first Chicana writer entered the American mainstream, *The House on Mango Street*. This novel, which deals with the issues of female and male roles in a male dominated society, race, class and gender in a Chicago barrio, is an effective sample of Chicana Feminism.

Key Words: Chicana Feminism, Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, race, class, gender, sexism.

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INTRODUCTION

Nothing is really simple for the word Chicana/o. Some critics claim that the term has been used for centuries while the others claim the actual usage time of the word was 1960s. Even though there is not an agreement about the time of the origin of the word, the term is an umbrella term that collects the “between” people, who are not really Mexican when being looked from Mexico and not really American just for they were born and have been living in the USA. The term itself is a culturally and politically self-identifying word.

The political relations of 1960s produced Chicano Movement among other developments. Chicano Movement was a multi-headed improvement act that aimed to change and improve the issues such as social justice, equality, educational reforms, and political and economic self-determination for Chicano society. Student organizations were the core of the Chicano Movement, for instance; the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), and the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC). Thanks to the declarations that were announced in the organizations and the awakening that was a result of these enlightenment movements, a unity was tried to be provided against the degradation by the white world. All efforts shared the sense of pride of being Chicano, a dedication to the Chicano history and culture, a desire to improve the social place of the Chicanos in the United States.

Chicano Movement undoubtedly provided a voice for Chicana/o society, but the general structure of the movement was male oriented. Equality was maybe the most essential issue for the Chicana/os, but when Chicanas demanded equality in the movement they faced double standards. They had to fight against sexism besides racism. Chicanos had the fear that Chicanas could divide the movement and could weaken the nationalistic demands and aims. They could not understand that Chicanas never separated themselves from nationalistic spirit. Chicanas were not supported by their brothers and they were demanded to postpone their ambition. Chicanas could not find a front place for themselves in the movement. So they had no other choice but to separate themselves from Chicanos since they believed that there could not be any hierarchy between the struggles.

After the separation from the Chicano Movement, Chicanas initiated a Chicana Feminist thought in 1960s and 70s. They were in search of a place for themselves in their own society. They had to fight against racism, sexism and racial sexism at the same time. As a part of brown society they were not fully a product of the United States, so they were not accepted by the white world. As they are traditionally seen as the biological and cultural symbol of the Chicano society, they were supposed to obey the male dominance and for centuries they were supposed to serve men, need men, and be protected by them. As they were the women of illiterate brown society, they were not seen valuable by white women even in 1960s. Generally the white women thought that Chicanas did not deserve equality as they did.

The core of the Chicana feminist thought was to end the male dominance and gain social equality, first in their community and in the American society in general. The real prosperity of the Chicana/o society can only be provided by the unity of Chicanos and Chicanas and by accepting the significance of Chicana women for improving their own society. Chicanas were against the discourses of Chicano Movement, which did not include the issues about Chicanas. They also revolted against the attitudes, which regard the gender issues inferior when compared to race and class issues.

As Chicanas could not find a place for themselves in Chicano Movement, they had a tendency to join into the white feminists, since they wanted to be heard. Theoretically the two groups were feminists, but in practice they were *different* since their color of skin was different. White feminists overlooked the racial issues of Chicanas and wanted to employ them as supporters in their own organizations. However; when Chicanas needed help, they were not there for help. So, the product of working-class brown society, Chicanas, could not associate themselves with the product of middle-class white Anglo *sisterhood*.

In this context, Chicana Feminism will constitute the framework of this study. Sandra Cisneros is one of the most essential writers of Chicana Feminism and her work *The House on Mango Street* (1984) is among the best novels that reflects the characteristics of Chicana feminist thought. This thesis is comprised of three chapters that analyze the Chicana feminist writer Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*, in terms of Chicana feminism.

In Chapter I, a brief history of the term Chicana/o; the cornerstone event for the beginning of Chicana feminism, Chicano Movement, and Chicana Feminism will be studied. The relationship of Chicana Feminism and White Feminism will be studied as well.

In Chapter II, detailed information about Sandra Cisneros, who is the first Chicana writer entered the American mainstream, her life and works will be provided besides the brief summary of *The House on Mango Street*, which is the focus of this study.

In Chapter III, a comprehensive analysis of *The House on Mango Street* in the light of Chicana Feminism will be examined. Additionally, the themes, motifs and symbols of the novel will be deeply evaluated. As a conclusion, this thesis aims to provide an elaborate analysis of the novel.

CHAPTER I

1. AS A SELF-IDENTIFYING TERM *CHICANA/O*

It was during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s that many Mexican American decided to call themselves Chicanos. The term is a cultural and political self-identifying word. As a whole, Chicanas and Chicanos, who are not welcomed by the American society and government, needed a term that will be integrating and will be identification for these “between” people. By naming themselves, they took on a new awareness of their place in American society.

Richard A. Garcia, who charted a new direction for Chicano literature, writes the informative summary in *The Chicanos in America* in the following:

The word Chicano has always been used by Mexicans in Mexico. It is not new. But today it is used with different connotations. Although in the past it was applied to lower class Mexicans by the upper class, it not signifies a complete person who has an identity, regardless of class. In the past a Mexican-American was not considered an American; he was hyphenated - Mexican-American. He was looked down upon by Anglos. If the Chicano goes to Mexico he is considered Pocho, a person who is not quite Mexican. He is too agringado (Anglicized). So, the term Chicano has been chosen by the Mexican-American youth to identify themselves. The Chicano is basically any person of Mexican ancestry who calls himself a Chicano. It provides a sense of identification not given to them by the majority of people in the United States. This word not only furnishes an identity; it carries a whole philosophical meaning. A Chicano is proud of his heritage, a person who is responsible and committed to helping others of his people. The Chicano is a person who may be working class, or middle class; he may aspire to have material things or reject them, but he is a Chicano because he is not ashamed of his heritage nor does he aspire to be what he is not and can never be – an Anglo. Once the word is accepted, the person who accepts it philosophically accepts his heritage, his brown skin, without shame or reservations (Garcia, 1977).

Mexican Revolution of 1910 caused disorder in the Mexican land and was the reason of the big immigration from Mexico to the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century. Many immigrants to the U.S. during this period were uneducated and unskilled. Another difficulty in this period was the language, English. The previous factors and the language together created menial, unskilled Mexican immigrants. So, the statements Mexican-American or Chicano evoked pejorative meanings. Even though the newcomers and those who were there already were in conflict from time to time, the common point was to hold on to the new life and to be accepted by the new country. Even today some people are uneasy being called Chicano, because they think that the term is pejorative, or linked to a political act that they do not support (Shirley and Shirley, 1988: 7).

Nothing is stable, and as time passes everything changes. So, in time this scene changed a bit. Thanks to Chicano Movement, the stream that brought a new understanding of the Chicano society and the term itself, the social life of Chicanos improved. Being a Chicano is a source of pride for the Chicanos even though it means dealing with a complex personal heritage in the United States. Armando B. Rendon, who is an activist in human rights law, a co-founder of the National Chicano Human Rights Council, is the writer of *Chicano Manifesto*, the first book about the Chicano Movement written by a Chicano with the aim of giving vibrant expression to the spirit of a cultural revolution. Armando Rendon tells the proud of being a Chicano as follows:

I am a Chicano. What that means to me may be entirely different from what meaning the word has for you. To be Chicano is to find out something about one's self which has lain dormant, subverted, and nearly destroyed.

I am a Chicano because of a unique fusion of bloods and history and culture. I am a Chicano because I sense a rising awareness among others like my—self of a fresh rebirth of self and self—in—others.

I am a Chicano because from this revived and newly created personality I draw vitality and motivation more forceful and tangible than I ever did or could have from the gringo world.

I am a Chicano in spite of scorn or derision, in spite of opposition even from my own people, many of whom do not understand and may never fathom what Chicano means.

I am a Chicano, hopeful that my acceptance and assertion of Chicanismo will mean a better life for all my people that it will move others into making the same act of will to accept and develop a newfound identity and power.... (Rendon, 1971)

Influenced by the same period's similar movements and experienced discrimination and structural inequalities in Anglo society, Mexican-Americans coalesced and composed their own ethnic nationalist movement in the 1960s. Chicano Movement was a continuation of the 1940's Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. The World War II, which was a shame of humanity, was a milestone for the Chicano society. Actually the post-World War II period provided background for the Chicano Movement. The movement focused on political, social and economic autonomy for Chicanos in the U.S. Industrial expansion and military expansion that come with the war served Chicanos to enter the jobs and industries that had been virtually closed to them during their U.S. history. When there was a military shortage, Chicanos were the supplementary force. These opportunities made Chicanos independent and they were active in traditional occupations as agriculture now.

After the superfluity of labor force in the 1930s, the labor shortage in 1940s changed the circumstances in agriculture and transportation. To complete this emptiness in these fields, U.S. considered Mexico as a resource. Almost 25 years the Mexicans were a really significant part of U.S. labor. After the war G.I. Bill of Rights, a law that provided a range of benefits as low-cost mortgages, loans to start a business or farm, cash payments of tuition and living expenses to attend college, high school or vocational education for returning World War II veterans, shaped the Mexican-American civil rights approach. From now on, with these changes Chicanos were more active in professional, technical, managerial, clerical, skilled craft and semi-skilled occupations and less active in agriculture and unskilled works. In spite of these improvements, Chicanos were not equal to the Anglos yet. The number of Mexican-Americans in better jobs increased, but they tend to hold inferior jobs and even if they did the same job the earnings of the Chicanos were lower than those of the Anglos. This

awareness and these inequities that Chicanos come across, made Chicano Movement something more necessary for a social change. Following this need during the sixties, American society witnessed the development of the Chicano movement, a social movement characterized by a politics of protest (Barrera, 1974; Muñoz, Jr., 1974; Navarro, 1974).

1.1. Chicano Movement

*I am a Joaquin
 Lost in a world of confusion,
 Caught up in a whirl of gringo society
 Confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,
 Suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society.*
 (Gonzales, 1967)

The Chicano Movement was a product of politics of the 1960s, like the other movements were. The events that the developing world witnessed influenced Mexican Americans and caused the creation of the movement. The core of the Chicano Movement was the student organizations, for instance; the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), and the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC). The walkouts, named as blow outs by the organizers, were strictly held to during the 1960s and the effects and the repercussions of the organizations went beyond the time.

The Chicano Movement was not a one-way, but a multi-headed improvement act, the movement focused on a wide range of issues: social justice, equality, educational reforms, and political and economic self-determination for Chicano communities in the United States (Garcia, 1989) and also the movement was a demand of more separatist ethnic nationalist rebellion (Garcia, 1997). The individuals and the organizations constituted the movement's base and they shared the sense of pride of being Chicano, a dedication to the Chicano history and culture, a desire to improve the social place of the Chicanos, change the American-mind about the Chicanos. However this change was not a simple process since this situation was a result of centuries. As Cherríe Moraga states: "... Anglo America proffers to the Spanish surnamed the

illusion of blending into the ‘melting pot’ like any other white immigrant group. But the Latino is neither wholly immigrant nor wholly white; and here in this country, ‘Indian’ and ‘dark’ don’t melt” (Moraga, 1993: 57).

As a consequence of the strict walkouts, the ideology of the Chicano Movement was enunciated in the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, in 1969, which was arranged by Rodolfo Gonzales and the Cruzada Para la Justicia. Many of the key figures of the movement came together in this conference. El Plan de Aztlán, which marked out the cultural-nationalist ideology of the Chicano Movement, was introduced with the motto “El Plan de Aztlán is the plan of liberation.” The opening lines of El Plan de Aztlán were;

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal "gringo" invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny.

We are free and sovereign to determine those tasks which are justly called for by our house, our land, the sweat of our brows, and by our hearts. Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent. Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come and who struggles against the foreigner "gabacho" who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán.

The *plan* was a call for unity in Chicano cultural-national values and a challenge to dominant white world of the United States. The cultural values of life, family and

home would be the key factors of resistance against assimilation in the gringo world. At last it was a call for self-defense against white World's racist politics.

Politics was the main part of the change. The Chicanos wanted more Chicanos to be candidates and wanted the present candidates to be more interested in their needs. The Chicanos wanted to be a stronger voice in the parliamentary. Their efforts gave results in time, but the growing number of Chicanos in the government was not regarded as a powerful development. Even though they were not taken seriously, the increasing number of elected Chicanos showed the real existence of so-called *minority* in the politics.

Education was another part that needed a great change and improvement. The Chicanos struggled against the educational discrimination. Chicanos were against the controlling of their schools, teachers, administrators, and programs by the white majority. They demanded a broader education attainment, increase in higher education scholarships, improvement in bilingual programs, opening departments of Chicano studies and increase in the number of Chicano teachers and administrators. In high schools and universities through up Southwest, Mexican-American students organized their collective efforts into a radical confrontation with an educational system that they indicated for its patterns of discrimination (San Miguel, 1987: 119-41). The existing educational situation before awakening period was a block for the Chicana/o youth to get upward social life. As a consequence of this situation the Mexican-American youth organized boycotts as an indication of protest (Muñoz, Jr., 1989). These innovations took time to take shape. Nonetheless we can clearly say that the Chicano Movement inflamed the establishment of Chicano education unit.

1.2. Criticism of Chicano Movement

*Donde esta nuestro carnalismo?*¹

The Chicana must tell her brother, "I am not here to emasculate you; I am here to fight with you shoulder to shoulder as an equal. If you can only be free when I take second place to you, then you are not truly free – and I want freedom for you as well as for me" (Nieto, 1974: 41).

¹ Where is our sisterhood and brotherhood?

Besides the crucial and undeniable alterations on Chicana/o life, Chicano movement was paradigmatically masculine. The masculine form of the movement made the men have control over the nationalist discourse. Chicanas experienced the contradictions of Chicano movement when the women were the issue. There was an assumption that race oppression was not related to sex oppression. Even though women were one of the strongest parts of this battle of gaining rights and making the voice heard, just because of their challenge with patriarchy they were blamed of being hypocrite and betrayer. Anti-sexist criticism was seen as hatred of men. This process was not easy to overcome because Chicanas had to stand up to the accusation “*vendidas*” (sell- outs) (Nieto Gomez, 1974: 35) by their own society, above all.

Chicanas were not supported by the men and had been cautioned to wait and fight for their ideology at a later time since Chicanos had the fear of dividing Chicano movement. The assumption that the liberation movement of Chicanas would block the liberation of Chicano society caused Chicanas speak out. Chicanas were exposed to social ignorance, and because of all of these experienced inequalities and efforts of being subordinated by Chicanos, as well as being nationalist, Chicanas were feminists from now on. Chicanos have a history of dealing with racism and classism, including imperialism. Yet, Chicanas, who have shared the concerns of their male companions, have challenged the persistence of patriarchy and sexism in the Chicano Movement (Trujillo, 1997). As Yolanda Nova’s words were stated in Margarita Decierdo’s panel discussion for the 1982 National Association for Chicano Studies in Berkeley in 1983, “It is unacceptable to separate racial-sexual and economic struggle in a hierarchical list of priorities. It must be realized that it is illogical to ask a woman to ignore and postpone her struggle as a woman.”

Chicanas were against the patriarchal world, system and the obvious masculinity of the movement, so this objection was not necessarily related to the white feminists or Anglo world. But, Chicana feminism was denied by the Chicano society as they thought that the feminist movement was Anglo-inspired. Chicanos also had the fear that their sisters may be deceived and manipulated by the white feminists. The Chicana asked in return, “Is it your fear, my brother, that I be used against our movement? Or is it that I will assume a position, a stance, that you are neither prepared nor willing to deal with?” (Nieto, 1974: 3)

Actually the source of the conflict between the Chicanas and Chicanos was the demand of taking position of leadership of a Chicana. Traditionally Chicanos were not accustomed to active women, so they wanted to prevent women's rising. This prevention was the cause of oppressive mentality of Chicano's patriarchal society. But does not the role of women change as life changes? According to Elena Hernández, the core of the Chicana problem was the ignorance of Chicano society in Chicanas. "Chicanas cannot continue to live a life of apathy ... We cannot dismiss the Chicana issue because it carries a lot of validity. Ultimately I hope to see among La Raza relationships based on equality in which there is a respected attitude and a recognition of each other." (Hernández, 1972: 85)

Hernández also points out that the position that Chicanas were placed was the source of the problem. Traditionally they serve a man, need a man and are protected by a man. These womanish heritages make the women silent and not worth to be listened, since Chicanos are not used to Chicana self-expression. Because, in the Chicano society, the women are not allowed to speak out (Hernández, 1972).

We can conclude as a final decision that the main criticism of Chicano movement was that it did not pay attention to the political and social standing of Chicanas. When the Chicanos were in the search equality for themselves, they tried to put Chicanas in a secondary place, so it could not be mentioned to be truly free.

1.3. Chicana Feminism

What is feminist consciousness? In the words of Sue Tolleson Rinehart (1988: 29) feminist consciousness is a specific type of gender consciousness anchored in a commitment to egalitarian relations between the sexes. Furthermore Klein (1984: 66,67) claims that feminist consciousness includes not only advocacy of gender equality but a sense of subjective unity with women and a desire to change existing institutional arrangements that maintain the status quo as well.

Josephine Donovan asserts that women will remain trapped in age-old patterns of enslavement and they will lose hard-won freedoms unless they learn and transmit their history. An important part of that history is the extensive body of feminist theory that has been developed over the centuries. Women remain illiterate without knowledge of this theory (2006: 15). It is obvious that only with knowledge people can overcome the obstacles. Without knowing something there is no chance to realize its absence and

this darkness that is caused by the illiteracy was the main reason of the inequality between women and men for the centuries. The principle of feminist theorist comes from the natural rights tradition that women were citizens, were “persons” entitled to the same basic rights as men (Donovan, 2006: 21). As John Stuart Mill stated in *The Subjection of Women* “...the legal subordination of one sex to the other — is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other” (1997: 1).

Historically, feminism is explained with three waves. These three waves occurred chronologically. However, these three waves differ by their ideological and practical. Especially second and third wave feminists greatly differ from the first ideologically and in the reactions against the events. Historically, long before the first feminist wave, Mary Wolstonecraft, known as the first feminist, started to write about women-men equality in the 18th century. Wolstonecraft affected and inspired from French Revolution and claimed revolutionary requests by writing *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792. She wrote against the bourgeoisies, who were against the equality in education between women and men. For Wolstonecraft domestic affairs were not a destiny for women. The ideas that Wolstonecraft had mentioned at that time, came up after one and a half century.

The main points of first-wave feminism, as a result of French Revolution, were fundamental rights for women: voting right, education right and proprietary right. The first step of the woman-man equality was parliament. So the struggle for equality developed center around of voting right. In the United States only the women and the blacks had not the voting right. But this situation changed and black men achieved voting right, but women had not the chance to enter into the parliament. After the First World War many countries gave the right of voting to the women. In this period women achieved the right of high education and co-educational universities were founded, as well. Married women, who could not get an identity card without the permission of her husband and so, could not get properties, were allowed to own property in their own name, in this period.

Second-wave feminism was the period of defining gender and sex, and a period that have important achievements, between the beginnings of the twentieth century and the 90s. Having right on their own bodies, abortion and birth control were other main

issues of this period. Thanks to the struggles that were continued by the feminists, birth control and, in 1973, abortion became legal in the most of the US states. As Simone De Beauvoir, one of the most influential feminists of the period who draw the ideological and practical way of the second-wave feminists, claimed “the liberation of women starts with the stomach” (De Beauvoir, 1949). Second-wave feminists aspired a struggle, whose core is womanhood. That is; race, sexual orientation, and class distinctions were ignored because these distinctions were not obstacle to be exposed to oppression. Besides, second-wave feminists believed that gender role should be destroyed, they did not want to glorify a gender, so they were against feminine expressions.

In 1960s a *sisterhood* consciousness was created. Sisterhood stood for companionship without judgment and prejudice among the women, and it still continues in present day. Sisterhood is not only a companionship, but it is also a policy-making against colonizer structure, family, and world. As a conclusion we can summarize this period with Simone De Beauvoir’s words, “one is not born, but becomes, a woman” (1973: 301). When we evaluate it in terms of date, the boom of Chicana feminism coincides with this period, that is 1960s.

Third-wave feminism emerged in the first half of 90’s and aspired to exist with the expressions of the differences. According to these feminists, the differences (biologic or class distinctions) are needed to be seen and admitted and politics should be done in terms of these dissimilarities. We can conclude the mission of third-wave feminists as they defended to protect the differences, such as gender and race, even if a new world created.

During the years of the 1960s and 1970s Chicana feminist thought developed in the United States against the gender oppression that Chicana feminists were exposed to in Chicano Movement and Chicana feminism focused on the specific issues that affected Chicanas as women of colors in the U.S. (Candelaria, 1980: 75-80). They had to fight racism, sexism and racial sexism. Chicanas were oppressed by racist discourse as they were the member of Spanish-speaking society, and they were not accepted socially by the dominant Anglo race. Chicanas were also oppressed by sexism since they were supposed to obey the male dominance and traditions in their own society. Chicanas were exposed to sexist racism because they were not seen as valuable as the middle class Anglo women, who thought only themselves deserved equality with men. Even the *educated* and economically independent white women had not an entire

equality with the men; the *illiterate* brown race did not deserve it. As Roxanne Dunbar states: “We live under an international caste system, at the top of which is the Western white male ruling class, and at the very bottom of which is the female of the non-white colonized world” (1970: 48). As a product of brown, colonized world the challenge of Chicanas is to destroy the *-isms*, such as racism, sexism, and classism, which limit them as human beings.

The “awakening” that the Chicanas experienced, was a result of the Chicano movement. The origin of Chicana feminist thought had parallelism with the other feminist movements of the period such as black feminist movement and white feminist movement. Each of these three feminist movements was the offspring of male-centered movements, which demanded “equality”. Black Feminist Movement of 1960s and 1970s was an outcome of experiences that black women were encountered in the larger Black Movement. In the same way White Feminist Movement of this period was a conclusion of New Left Movement and Civil Rights Movement as women experienced the male domination within these movements. Feminist thought developed as a reaction to sexism in male-oriented movements.

Chicana feminists developed a feminist consciousness that was against social gender injustice, but it was never separated from nationalistic spirit. As Alarcón mentioned the rejection of a feminine essence in the belief that it is better suited to theorizing the experiences of women of color, they were not in the search of belauding the gender but in the search of equality (1990: 28-39). Chicanas were the bright side of their society that transforms their culture into that of the modern United States. As García notes (1997: 1), Chicana feminists are in the search of “room of their own” in the Chicano movement. They tried to find place for themselves to express their ideas. Chicanas began to question their roles in the Chicano movement and as Rowbotham states they were formed as “a colony within a colony” (1974: 206). They became a separate part in Chicano Movement, as they carry the feminist consciousness. However, they continued to respect and preserve the nationalistic spirit. As Nieto Gomez states “Chicana feminism is the recognition that women are oppressed as a group and are exploited as part of *la Raza* people ... Chicana feminists are involved in understanding the nature of women’s oppression” (1976: 10). Chicanas wished for the awakening all of the Chicana women.

Chicana feminists struggled for gaining social equality and ending masculine domination. They were aware that this feminist thought was more than identification of gender and finding place in male dominated world. They were also affected by the race and class issues as Chicanos did. Their fight was for ending sexist oppression in feminist thought and ending racial oppression in nationalistic thought. That is, their challenge was both nationalist and feminist. As a consequence, Chicana feminism worked as a two-headed movement: an ideological movement to end patriarchal oppression within the structure of a cultural nationalist movement (García, 1997: 10-12). The traditional pressures in the movement made the Chicana feminist thought develop and gain a broader effect. So, Chicanas should have improved their status in the movement. Francisca Flores, a leading Chicana feminist and editor of the Chicana feminist publication, *Regeneración*, points out that:

[Chicanas] can no longer remain in a subservient role or as auxiliary forces in the [Chicano] movement. They must be included in the front line of communication, leadership and organized responsibility The issue of equality, freedom and self-determination of the Chicana – like the right of self-determination, equality, and liberation of the Mexican [Chicano] community – is not negotiable. Anyone opposing the right of women to organize into their own form of organization has no place in the leadership of the movement (1971: i).

Chicana feminists reject being seen as a secondary force in their society. They want to take part in all spheres. They prescribed that equality, freedom and self-determination are the indispensables of their existence. They also state that individual advantages should be ignored. As an affirmation Bernice Rincon (1971: 15-17) states that Chicana movement that struggles for the racial/ethnic equality and justice would make the Chicano movement stronger. The raising voice of Chicana feminists, such as Marta Cotera, Enriqueta Longeaux Vasquez and Mirta Vidal was the sign and the proof of the severe challenge. Yet cultural, political and economic constraints limited the development of feminist thought and feminist consciousness. So during this period the gender roles that came with the cultural experiences limited the participation of

Chicanas in the movement; however these limitations made Chicanas and their thoughts stronger and powerful.

In the Chicano society cultural survival was one of the major principals of the Chicano movement. The values of Chicana feminism and the cultural values imposed to the women were in contrast. Because, according to Chicana feminists this task was not related to changing the existing condition and this situation was a clear obedience to the traditional rules and roles. As Toril Moi states the patriarchal society aims to create a modest, meek and innocent essence in the name of womanhood (1986: 209). The existing situation was the male domination in women's daily lives and their secondary and tame position in this masculine life. Rising of the women was seen as weakening the male ego, so Chicanas were expected to obey their institution; Chicanos did not approve any change in this sense. Chicanas were under pressure to be seen as the designated producers of culture and Chicana feminists criticized the "ideal Chicana" image that represents the Chicanas as strong, patient and the one who keeps the family together and in this way fulfills the ideal and cultural survival. They were against being seen as the biological and cultural reproducers of their society. Culturally accepted role of women relegated women to subordinate positions within the Chicano movement (García, 1997: 6). Consuelo Nieto, another leading Chicana feminist, points out that:

Some Chicanas are praised as they emulate the sanctified example set by [the Virgin] Mary. The woman par excellence is mother and wife. She is to love and support her husband and to nurture and teach her children. Thus, may she gain fulfillment as a woman. For a Chicana bent upon fulfillment of her personhood, this restricted perspective of her role as a woman is not only inadequate but crippling (1975: 4).

According to Consuelo, Chicanos see the possible change of Chicanas' approved identity and personality would harm the Chicano community and the American society in general. She specifies that Chicanos do not see women nothing other than an ideal mother and wife, which are the values of patriarchy. Despite the loyalty to the Chicano nationalistic spirit and the Chicano Movement, Chicanas' efforts for gaining sexual equality caused the assumption that Chicanas stood in opposition to the nationalistic discourse. However, even the name, Chicana, expressed both nationality and gender, it

was insignificant that they would be apart from nationalistic spirit. In order to justify themselves, the Chicano cultural nationalists gathered up three Mexican historical-mythical icons. These were *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Malinche*, and *La Llorona*, which shaped the boundaries of traditional Chicana image. Chicanas, who were active and insistent on their feminist thought or had relationships with white men were sought as *vendidas* and correlated with *La Malinche*, the Mayan woman who served as the interpreter for the conquistador Hernán Cortés during the Spanish Conquest of Mexico (1519-1521). This correlation was made to announce Chicanas as unreliable and symbolically point out them as responsible for the conquest of Mexico. That is, this Chicana awakening was interpreted as an occupation of the Chicano Movement. In their cast of mind the Chicanos had double standard; on the one hand they cherished women as *La Virgen de Guadalupe* on the other hand they thought her as a traitor. They even cannot think that a person can include the conflicting characteristics.

The continuation of women oppression is a result of existing patriarchy. Many basic Chicana works are based on patriarchy and the women's standing against male-dominated life. Here two different views appear. In the first one the oppression is women's own choices as customariness. In the second one; there is a myth created by the Anglo world, called as "machismo" to maintain continuity of patriarchy as a tool of racial/ethnic oppression. It was deliberately propagated and legitimated by the Anglo world as an organization for isolating Chicana/os from their world. So the Anglos had the chance to blame the Chicanos for not succeeding in American society. This labeling system was a kind of social control imposed by Anglo society on Chicanos, and the machismo myth ruined the gender relations in Chicano society by attaching the labels as passive and docile women to the Chicanas. But the truth of the matter was that economic structure and colony-like exploitation were the issues that were the causes of not achieving self-fulfillment of Chicanos. In fact in the Chicana feminist discourse this Anglo-centered myth was created with the intent of oppression of a nation by giving labels to them (García, 1989: 222-223). As an affirmation Nieto states:

Although the term "machismo" is correctly denounced by all because it stereotypes the Latin man ... it does a great disservice to both men and women. Chicano and Chicana alike must be free to seek their own individual fulfillment (1975: 4).

In fact, the inferior role of the women in Chicano society does not go back to the very beginning of the time. Women had the equal position in the society before the Europeans came to their land. The concepts that came with the Europeans such as patriarchy and church, made this “isolated” society similar to European society. So, “machismo” should be labeled as an Anglo sourced term (Vidal, 1971: 8).

Moreover; there was a part in Chicano society that was thinking machismo as a cultural nationalistic value for the Chicano males. Chicanas never accepted this idea because machismo was not a masculine pride, and was not a defense against the Anglo world for the Chicanas, it was a shame for their nation. So Chicanas supported the changes in the ideologies that caused a gap between the Chicanos and Chicanas.

The awakening of Chicanas was the outcome of this machismo discourse and attitudes. Machismo tradition was an obstacle to the Chicana struggle. As Mirta Vidal quoted from an article entitled “Macho Attitudes”:

When a freshman male comes to MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán – a Chicano student organization in California] he is approached and welcomed. He is taught by observation that the Chicanas are only useful in areas of clerical and sexual activities. When something must be done there is always a Chicana there to do work. “It is her place and duty to stand behind and back up her Macho!” ... Another aspect of the MACHO attitude is their lack of respect for Chicanas. They play their games, plotting girl against girl for their own benefit. ... They use the movement and Chicanismo to take her to bed. And when she refuses, she is a vendida because she is not looking after the welfare of her men (Vidal, 1971: 23).

This kind of thought system is a major problem for the Chicanas in the way of gaining liberation. It was claimed that Chicanas did not want to be liberated and even they did not need it. Undoubtedly it was an Anglo thought, whose aim was to continue the oppression. If the Chicana women began a liberation movement which included child care, marriage, abortion, employment and education issues, and accessed what

they wanted, white male rulers could not have enough power on the Chicano society any more. So, this awakening was not supported by the oppressor one, Anglo society.

Chicana feminists were aware of the interaction between gender and racial oppression. So Chicanas realized that this oppression matter was a collective problem that affected their entire nation and there should have been a common solution in the Chicano society and Chicano organizations. But when Chicanos failed to cooperate, Chicanas specified their lonelinesses.

There has always been feminism in our ranks and there will continue to be as long as Chicanas live and breathe in the movement ... Chicanas will direct their own destiny (Cotera, 1977: 12).

Chicanas were exposed to double oppression. As Chicano movement was presumed as a racial oppression movement, the issue of sexism was kept out and overlooked. As bell hooks (1984) emphasizes, one struggle should not take priority over the other. So in this challenge racial and sexist resistance were complementary and undetectable.

The rising voices of the Chicanas in the Chicano Movement and their view, which stated sexism was a problem as big as racism, frightened Chicanos as the feminist movement was comprehended as a threat to the general Chicano Movement. Supporting this position Marta Cotera states:

The aggregate cultural values we [Chicanas] share can also work to our benefit if we choose to scrutinize our cultural traditions, isolate the positive attributes and interpret them for the benefit of women. It's unreal that Hispanas have been browbeaten for so long about our so-called conservative (meaning reactionary) culture. It's also unreal that we have let men interpret culture only as those practices and attitudes that we determine who does the dishes around the house. We as women also have the right to interpret and define the philosophical and religious traditions beneficial to us within our culture, and which we have inherited as our tradition. To do this, we must become both conversant with our history and

philosophical evolution, and analytical about the institutional and behavioral manifestations of the same (1977: 9).

Cotera implies that this is an Anglo imposed situation. Here, she claims not only equality with men, she also sees Chicanas as interpreters of history and tradition. She also underscores that they have the ability of analyzing culture. Despite the fact that their determined and large-scale efforts that were not separatist but connective in fact, such obtrusive Chicana feminists were misunderstood and they could not get rid of being accused of being threat for their own society. In spite of all of these misinterpretations, Chicana feminists were all clear that their voices and efforts were not a disruption to the unity of La Raza. Instead of being separate, they argued that women and men must be together to make the Chicano movement successful.

We must come to the realization that we have to work together in order to save ourselves. If the male oppresses the female, perhaps it is because he has been oppressed. We can't turn against them, and they can't turn against us. We have to help each other (Del Castillo, 1974: 10).

She says that unity between Chicanos and Chicanas is the essential condition for the cultural survival of mestizo race. She also associates Chicanos oppressing the female with his being oppressed by Anglo society and she also implies that against this oppression Chicanos and Chicanas should stand side by side. Supporting this opinion Marta Vidal states:

While it is true that the unity of La Raza is the basic foundation of the Chicano movement, when Chicano men talk about maintaining La Familia and the 'cultural heritage' of La Raza, they are in fact talking about maintaining the age-old concept of keeping the woman barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. On the basis of the subordination of women, there can be no real unity....The only real unity between men and women is the unity forged in the course of struggle against their oppression. And it is by supporting, rather than opposing, the struggles of women that Chicanos and Chicanas can genuinely unite (1971: 31-32).

She examines the nature of unity between Chicano and Chicanas. It will not with the established concept of la Familia and la Raza but an equal and a new system that women and men are equal, because the oppression has affected the both sides. The role of the Chicanas was really difficult. They must be loyal to their nationalistic struggle, but they also must protect their women identity. They must support their brothers in the struggle to gain equality in the American society, but Chicanas' equality must not be denied any more, too. If the Chicanas' equality continued to be denied and then the struggle, the salvation would not come true in the real sense. Chicanas must avoid polarization, but they must work with her own sisters to be able to be free.

It is all clear that contrary to what was believed, Chicana feminists were not divisive, but they were the supporters of the unity. However; since Chicanas named themselves as women activists in the Chicano movement, an opposing group appeared as "loyalists" against feminists, they thought their priority was not sexist issues but nationalist ones. In general, these loyalists were the supporters of the opinion that sexism was not a legitimate issue in the Chicano movement. Since both Chicanas and Chicanos were exposed to racist oppression, sexual inequities were insignificant and not worth to talk about. The main point that had to be resolved was racist oppression. Even they thought that there was not a problem of sexism and even if there was such a problem, this should have been resolved in the movement itself. Nieto-Gómez quotes an anonymous loyalist who expressed her concern in a California State University Northridge student newspaper, *Popo Femenil*, in an article entitled "Chicanas Take Wrong Direction":

I am concerned with the direction that the Chicanas are taking in the movement. The words such as liberation, sexism, male chauvinism, etc., were prevalent. The terms mentioned plus the theme of individualism is a concept of the Anglo society; terms prevalent in the Anglo women's movement. The familia has always been our strength in our culture. But it seems evident ... that you [Chicana feminists] are not concerned with the familia, but are influenced by the Anglo woman's movement (1974, p. 13).

Throughout the seventies, the conflicts between Chicana feminists and loyalists continued. It can be concluded that the oppression that was encountered by Chicana

feminists supports the existence of sexist inequality in the Chicano movement and antifeminist thoughts of the Chicana feminists. However, to be truly free Chicanos should have made common goal with Chicanas. On the other hand Chicanas should have participated in the mainstream of women's movement and made a contribution with their Chicana perspective. As Nieto says, "How tragic it would be if all women did not promote and participate in a valid working coalition to advance our common cause?" (1974: 42) But, when the rights of one side were not looked after, separation was inevitable. The nature of Chicanas' struggle can be summarized with the words of Teresa Córdova:

Chicanas write in opposition to the symbolic representations of the Chicano movement that did not include them. Chicanas write in opposition to a hegemonic feminist discourse that places gender as a variable separate from that of race and class. Chicanas write in opposition to academics, whether mainstream or postmodern, who have never fully recognized them as subjects, as active agents (1994: 194).

Chicanas are in the thought that neither struggle is prior to the other. In other words, Chicana feminists took to find the absences and exclusions and to repair the distortions as a duty. They believed that race and sexist issues should not be separated and both should be solved.

1.3.1. Chicana Feminists and White Feminists

Chicanas are the victims of sexism like most of the women around the world. In the beginning, Chicanas were inspired by the efforts of those in the white feminist movement, as their efforts in Chicano movement were suppressed. Chicana feminists, as white feminists did, wanted to fight against gender inequality and the domineering male/female gender roles that controlled and limited what they could or could not do in the United States. In cultures, which race and class relations are at the exact center of the society, one may also 'become a woman' in opposition to other women (Alarcón, 1990). In the American society, in which race and class have central importance, a woman is forced to stand against even her sisters. The relation between white feminists and Chicana feminists that is precisely this relation. As Longeaux y Vasquez states,

“Some of our own Chicanas may be attracted to the white woman’s liberation movement, but we really don’t feel comfortable there. We want to be a Chicana primero [first]” (1971: 11).

There were two great obstacles for the Chicanas to reach their goal. The first one was the oppression of Chicano males, as we mentioned before, and the second one was the opportunist and oppressive behavior of white feminist movement. Many Chicanas supported the white women movement as their goals were related to equally in job opportunities, in pay, for instance. When white women demand support for their causes, Chicanas support them to get a place, to have a voice in the movement. But, when Chicanas are in the same position, when they need support in return, they reject it by the reason of the so-called powerlessness of Chicanas. They were also oppressed in the movement. When a Chicana suggested a meaningful and logical idea that was useful for the community, the oppressed Chicana was labeled as divisive by the white women (Cotera, 1980: 232). Most white feminist originations ignored the importance of class and race based on oppression experienced by Chicanas. Adrienne Rich underscores the “white solipsism” of white feminists as they do “not the consciously held *belief* that one race is inherently superior to all others, but a tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant” (1979: 306). Chicana feminists experienced that some expectations and demands of white feminists were irrelevant to Chicana feminist movement. So an autonomous organization was inevitable for Chicana feminists.

Actually, there were two major divisions between Chicana feminists and white feminists. The first one was the split of opinion about the focus of the movements. Chicana feminists criticized white feminists who believed that their “common” movement would be able to overcome the racial distinctions among women. However, white feminists overlooked the racial problems of Chicanas and the other women of color. So they were unsuccessful about this “union” according to Chicanas. In Chicano Movement the efforts of Chicanas in ending the gender oppression were in vain, since the efforts were overlooked by the Chicano males. However, Chicanas insisted on this issue as they thought that sexism weakened their power and prevented their participation. Chicanas did not think sexism was superior than racism or vice versa. They believed that the two issues had to be repaired for a full prosperity. “Thus, Chicana feminism went beyond the limits of an exclusively racial theory of oppression

that tended to overlook gender and also went beyond the limits of a theory of oppression based exclusively on gender that tended to overlook race” (Garcia, 1989: 230).

Second of the two was the difference of the cornerstones of the movements. While the white feminist movement was middle-class oriented, Chicana feminist movement was working-class oriented. Chicana feminist thought did not overlook the issues of Welfare Rights, Farm-workers Movement and undocumented workers in addition to their struggle against sexism. However, white feminism lacked race and class issues.

It is difficult to understand and accept that the white feminism, which was based on women solidarity, disregarded the racial, ethnical and social class distinctions that their “other” (Chicana, Black, Asian American) sisters were exposed to. In the words of Thornton Dill:

... the cry “Sisterhood is powerful!” has engaged only a few segments of the female population in the United States. Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American women of all classes, as well as many working-class women, have not readily identified themselves as sisters of the white middle-class women who have been in the forefront of the movement (1983: 131).

In the world of white Anglo women, the women of color had no place. Although their struggle and aim were the same, the white women believed that they were the ones, who should had the equal rights with men first. Even though Chicanas could not find any place in the white women’s liberation movement and decided to continue their way on their own autonomous organizations, they could not get rid of the shadow of the Anglo women and they were blamed by their society. The loyalists defined the Chicana feminists as “anti- family, anti-cultural, anti-man and therefore an anti-Chicano movement” (Nieto-Gomez, 1974: 36). Since they were in the search of equality and identity, and this search was seen as an attitude that was peculiar to Anglo women, Chicanas were evaluated as unreliable, *la Malinche*. The Chicana feminist movement was seen as a selfish and single-acting searching. From the same article Nieto-Gomez quotes:

Since when does a Chicana need an identity? If you are a real Chicana then no one regardless of the degrees needs to tell you about it. The only ones who need identity are the vendidas [sell-outs], the falsas [the false ones], and the opportunists. The time has come for the Chicanas to examine the direction they wish to take. Yes, we need recognition. Our men must give this to us. But there is danger in the manner we are seeking it We are going to have to decide what we value more, the culture or the individual (as Anglos do)? I hope it's not too late (1974: 13).

It is understood from this quotation that supporting Chicana feminist thought is something equal to supporting and helping the Anglo system, that is being advocator of Chicana feminism means betrayal. If the women continued to be against sexual inequalities, this was a clear position to be blamed as man-haters, frustrated women, and *agringadas* [Anglocized] (Nieto-Gomez, 1974: 35). In fact Chicana feminist had the Chicano Movement spirit despite the difficulties that they encountered in the male-dominated movement. While white feminists saw the men almost as enemies, for Chicanas the colonization, the system and racism were the real enemies. Besides, racism was more dangerous than sexism for the Chicanas.

It must be realized that the common point between Chicana feminism and white feminism was the roof of *feminism* and they were both women. The Chicana's political and socio-economic position was that they were non-Anglo, Spanish-speaking, and low income minority women. The low-income Anglo woman was not alienated since she did not speak another language and they did not have to fight against racism. The two were the women of different cultural and ethnic groups. These different socio-economic positions determine the different ways and needs of their movements.

Actually, historical distinctions determined the differences between the two women movement. Anglo-women were Protestant and were included in imperialistic Anglo-European capitalism. Chicanas were Catholic and they were the victims of colonialism and they had Southwest marks in their lives and thought system. On the way of social change, Anglo-women were independent; but Chicana feminists were bound to their society and they were a part of their own general movement. As well as the common problems such as welfare, abortion, birth control and employment, which

all women suffered from, Chicanas also struggled for racism (Nieto-Gomez, 1974: 34, 35). So the coalescence of racism and sexism made the situation tough for Chicanas.

It was in the 1980s when Chicana feminist ideology became a synthesis of race, class, and gender and Chicanas continued to struggle to overcome the obstacles. They believed that the sisterhood could be powerful only when the racial and class differences were respected and recognized. As Nieto concludes:

The Chicana must demand that dignity and respect within the women's rights movement that allows her to practice feminism within the context of her own culture ... Her approaches to feminism must be drawn from her own world, and not be shadowy replicas drawn from Anglo society. The Chicana will fight for her right to uniqueness; she will not be absorbed (1974: 4).

Chicanas became aware that they deserved recognition, cherishment, and value. They were also aware that there were some points that dividing white feminists and Chicanas. They felt that their history and culture were also valuable and must be preserved. So, with their differences from the other people or even women, they continued their own way. Chicanas will preserve their prideful history and culture as well as her own rights.

1.4. Chicana/o Literature

Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weakness and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major fold of the garment.

(Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye)

"Why don't they write about us?" Nina asked her sister. "Who wants to read about Mexicans? We're not glamorous enough. We just live," Juanita answered.

(Arturo Islas, The Rain God: A Desert Tale)

Thanks to the improvements that were achieved by Chicano Movement, Chicanos found place for themselves nearly on all fields of modern American life such as art, music, literature and drama. Concordantly, the usage of Spanish language in media, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines expanded on a large scale. These developments in Spanish usage in modern world set the scene for the Chicano literary movement. Contemporary Chicano writers created novels, poetry, plays, short stories and essays. Of course, their works bear the stamp of their own lives and experiences. At this point, two essential characteristics shows up: firstly in the social life: Mexican-American identity, culture, experience, their relationship with Anglos, and discrimination. Secondly in the literary field: bilingual writing, English works containing Spanish were employed; however, there are many works written entirely in English. Chicana/o artists used their pen as a military weapon in order to survive in Anglo dominated world. Hereby, during the 1960s and 1970s with the sociopolitical changes, Chicana/os experienced a rebirth in culture and the arts.

Subsequent to World War II, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, with the Chicano Movement, gave a rise to the Mexican-American literature. As Marek states, "Chicana/o literature has been given much less sustained study and has had a much less visible presence in canonical and curricular change due to its relatively short history in the literary spotlight; the most visible period of Chicana/o writing was *El Movimiento* in the late 1960s," (1996: 178). At the third quarter of the 1960s, Chicano literature played a role as an expression of social and political movements. Advocacy of complete separation from Anglo society and Mexican-American cultural identification were the basis of these self-expressions. On the other hand, to be able to stand against the dominant order in Chicano society, Chicanas worked and wrote within the context of their own culture. Before the 1960s Chicanas did not write many literary works. The writers before 1960s were writing for preserving their own culture and for not disappearing in the Anglo society. After 1960s Chicanas began to write to contend with patriarchy and to stand against not only the white society but also their own people. However, Chicana literature exactly began in 1980s. It was difficult for the Chicanas to be able to exist in the Anglo centric and patriarchal world.

Since racism and sexism were the main themes of the works, the Chicana/o writers were prevented to publish their works until Chicano publishing houses were opened in this period. Thanks to these improvements, the Chicano literature found

chance to expand in all directions and many of the writers of this time were supported by these firms. Contemporary Chicana/o literature reflects the experience of Mexican Americans and mostly related to the ancient Mexican history to be able to create an expression of their ethnic pride.

Towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of 21th century, Chicano literature expanded with the increasing number of writing and reading novels, short stories, poetry and drama. In this period, Chicano literature has witnessed a development more than ever before. As the production has increased, the number of pressed works has increased. So, more people read examples of Chicano literature and Chicano literature became known by the majority of non-Chicanos in addition to Chicano people. So, Chicana literature has reached its aim, which “seeks to validate Chicano texts, for both Chicano and Anglo readers, as authentic modern literature” (Sommers, 2010: 55). Like any other ethnic people and literature, Chicanos were regarded as minority and second-class. However, the developed and developing writing proved their quality and the literature that is created by Mexican-Americans, *Chicano literature*, is actually forcing the limits of American literature (Shirley and Shirley, 1988: 10).

CHAPTER II

2. SANDRA CISNEROS AND HER LITERARY CAREER

Sandra Cisneros was born on December 20, 1954 in Chicago, Illinois, as the only daughter of a family with seven children. The author was born to a Mexican-American mother and a Mexican father. Her family, who were in financial difficulty, moved frequently between the barrios of Chicago and the areas of Mexico, where her father's family lived. Because of this transient lifestyle, it was difficult for Cisneros to make and keep friends and she felt a sense of displacement. She describes the alliance that her brothers composed as;

The six brothers soon paired themselves off. The oldest with the second oldest, the brother beneath me with the one beneath him and the youngest two were twins, genetically as well as socially bound. These three sets of men had their own conspiracies and allegiances, leaving me odd-woman-out-forever (Cisneros, 1987: 69).

As the only daughter in the family, she developed a sense of loneliness, which pushed her into literary creativity. In 1966, her parents saved enough money for a house in South Chicago. She describes the house as “an ugly little house, bright red as if holding its breath” (Binder, 1985: 57) Cisneros spent much of her childhood in this neighborhood and this neighborhood served as inspiration for some of the stories in *The House on Mango Street* with its colorful characters. Cisneros began observing people, at a young age, and later transforming them into poetry and short stories when she was in grade school.

The author was an introversive and shy child because, as she remarked, “Because we moved so much, and always in neighborhoods that appeared like France after World War II – empty lots and burned-out buildings – I retreated inside myself” (Sagel, 1991: 74). It was her mother who was an impetus for writing and reading. Although Cisneros' family “did not have any books in the house, [her mother] saw to it that [Sandra] had [her] first library card even before [she] knew how to read” (Binder,

1985: 56). Sandra Cisneros herself states in “Living as a Writer: Choice and Circumstance” that:

Because of my mother, I spent my childhood afternoons in my room reading instead of in the kitchen... I never had to change my little brothers' diapers, I never had to cook a meal alone, nor was I ever sent to do the laundry. Certainly I had my share of housework to do as we all did, but I don't recall it interfering with my homework or my reading habits (1986: 68-69).

Cisneros continued her education in Loyola University in Chicago and graduated with a B.A. in English, in 1976. She continued graduate studies in writing at the University of Iowa, and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing in 1978. In parallel with her master, she applied and was admitted to the famed University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. It was during these workshops that the role of which awaited her in the literary world suddenly became known to her and she found her true voice as an author.

The event that was a kind of revelation was like this: When Cisneros was in a seminar named “Memory and the Imagination”, the students were discussing a book from their reading list; *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard. As her classmates discussing “archetypes ... shells, with the shell as house with the house of the imagination, the attics and stairways and cellars of childhood,” Cisneros suddenly realized that she had not such a house in her memory. Cisneros recalls her realizing that she was “different” there:

It wasn't as if I didn't know who I was. I knew I was a Mexican woman. But, I didn't think it had anything to do with why I felt so much imbalance in my life, whereas it had everything to do with it! My race, my gender, and my class! And it didn't make sense until that moment, sitting in that seminar. That's when I decided I would write about something my classmates couldn't write about (Aranda, 1990: 65).

She came to realize that her experience as a Chicana woman differed from that of her classmates as well as from the majority of Americans, and offered an opportunity to develop her own voice. Cisneros once stated, “Everyone seemed to have some communal knowledge which I did not have – My classmates were from the best schools in the country. They had been bred as fine hothouse flowers. I was a yellow weed among the city’s cracks.” Until that time she considered herself as an American writer and she was in the American mainstream, but then she realized that she was a Chicana and the history, culture, and experiences that she had were different from the other people, with whom she shared her life. The author began to gather up her past experiences as a bicultural Chicana growing up in the United States, and use them in her writing. In this respect *The House on Mango Street* was a product of her “awakening”.

Cisneros says about her writing: “When I was eleven years old in Chicago, teachers thought if you were poor and Mexican you didn’t have anything to say. Now I think that what I was put on the planet for was to tell these stories. Use what you know to help heal the pain in your community. We’ve got to tell our own history. I am very conscious that I want to write about us so that there is communication between the cultures. That is political work: making communication happen between cultures” (López, 1993: 155-156).

After gaining her master’s degree in 1978, for the next three years she taught writing to high school drop-outs at Latino Youth Alternative High School in Chicago. Cisneros earned a variety of fellowships and guest lectureships including two from the National Endowment for the Arts, one for fiction (1982) and one for poetry (1987). During this time, she wrote a collection of poems titled *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* (1987). Susan Bergholz, her literary agent, encouraged her to publish a collection of short stories, and *Woman Hollering Creek* appeared in 1991. The collection won the PEN Center West Award for Best Fiction of 1991, the Quality Paperback Book Club New Voices Award (1992), the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award (1992), the Lannan Foundation Literary Award (1991), and was selected as a notable book of the year by *The New York Times* and the *American Library Journal*. Cisneros won the prestigious MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, in 1995.

Sandra Cisneros is the founding president of the Macondo Foundation, which provides socially conscious workshops for writers, and the Alfredo Cisneros del Moral Foundation, which awards talented Texas writers. Cisneros has been a teacher, a

counselor, an artist-in-the school and taught creative writing, a visiting writer and lecturer at numerous universities. She truly pays attention to the issues her works address and has earned her place in the American literature.

Cisneros is the first Chicana to enter the mainstream of American literature. Chicano literature that had crossed the border and became a part of American literature was male dominated – such as Gary Soto, Luis Valdez, Rudolfo Anaya, Jimmy Santiago Baca – until *Woman Hollering Creek* was published by Random House and *The House on Mango Street* was reprinted by Vintage Press. Women were underrepresented until Cisneros's success.

Sandra Cisneros's body of work includes four volumes of fiction, *Have You Seen Marie?* (2012), *Vintage Cisneros* (2004), *Caramelo* (2002), *The House on Mango Street* (1984) and *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), and four volumes of poetry, *Loose Woman* (1994), *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* (1987), *The Rodrigo Poems* (1985), and *Bad Boys* (1980). She is also the author of an Italian children's book, *Bravo Bruno!* (2012), and a bilingual children's book *Hairs/Pelitos* (1994).

2.1. The House on Mango Street

The House on Mango Street was first published in 1984 and has sold over two million copies since. It has won a number of awards including the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award, which Cisneros won one year after (1985) its first publication. The novel is a required reading in various levels of education across the United States, counting middle schools, high schools, and universities. 2009 was the 25th year anniversary of the book and in order to honor that, Cisneros traveled to twenty cities across the United States to commemorate the novel with the readers.

Critics were generally positive about the novel, when it first printed. The harmony of the language, the authentic voice and the picturesqueness of the coming of age story were awarded by the critics. In other respects, some critics claimed that the portrayal of men was so generalized that showed them all as larruper, predatory and dangerous. The book was also criticized in the Chicano society, since it was claimed that the novel disdained particularly Chicano men and damaged their position in the American society. In spite of the criticisms, Sandra Cisneros and her novel were admired by a large mass. Sandra Cisneros herself was insistent on her writing was neither more nor less. In an interview Sandra Cisneros deconstructs the romantic

atmosphere of ethnic suburbs and describes her reasons for writing *The House on Mango Street*:

I wrote it is a reaction against those people who want to make our barrios look like Sesame Street, or some place warm and beautiful. Poor neighborhoods lose their charm after dark, they really do ... I was writing about it in the most real sense that I knew, as a person walking those neighborhoods with a vagina. I saw it a lot differently than all those 'chingones' that are writing all those bullshit pieces about their barrios (Solitary Fate, 1990: 69).

In the beginning of the novel, *The House on Mango Street* welcomes the reader with a dedication in two languages, “A las Mujeres / to the Women.” Cisneros emphasizes her dual ethnic background by using both Spanish and English and she dedicates the book to the all women in her life. By dedicating the book to the women, she reveals that her main struggle is the gender issues.

The novel consists of forty-four vignettes, which Cisneros calls “lazy poems”, unlike the chapters in a conventional novel. The vignettes can each stand as an independent short story, maybe sometimes the subject seems not clear; while reading together, they all paint a portrait of a young Chicana struggling to find a place for her own. In this way, *The House on Mango Street* is an example of novel and bildungsroman – coming of age story. Whole of the stories, even if they seem irrelevant to each other, form the protagonist’s voyage of self-definition. By skipping from one topic to another, from one character to another (there are dozens of characters that some introduced just once or twice), the writer does not give too much importance to any event or person. By introducing many characters and events, Cisneros paints the structure and emphasizes the mobility of the barrio. In the barrio and on the pages, no one has much space; stories are told and there is no much importance if the story has an end or not, since in the barrio nothing is certain. In “Sandra Cisneros: Border Crossing and Beyond” Robin Ganz states that:

...Cisneros’s work is affecting, charming and filled with the humor and the rich cultural offerings of Mexican America. Her style is as clear as

water, as evinced in her unadorned syntax, her sphere and elegant phrasing, and the entirely original Mexican-American inflected direction of her poetry and prose. Yet, as with the clearest water, beneath the surface, Cisneros's voice is the sound of many voices speaking – over the kitchen table, out on the street, across the borderlands, and through the years (1994: 29).

The House on Mango Street maintains a stance against gender oppression, women stereotypes, class, race, and cultural norms. This resistance is showed by using a child voice. This is an intended choice, since the purity of a child does not allow prejudice and readers can evaluate the events with their own cultural backgrounds. Moreover, her voice is effective and convincing, since it is the creation of a sophisticated writer.

CHAPTER III

3. ANALYSIS OF *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* IN TERMS OF CHICANA FEMINISM

3.1. Issues of Race and Class as Part of Chicana Feminism

As the victims of sexism, Chicanas are also oppressed by racist and classist issues. As the product of brown society they have to struggle doubly; because white women achieved their desires, but Chicanas, like other minority women, had to continue to struggle for mere survival in the USA. Beverly Hawkins supports this:

The visible ethnic minority groups – the Asians, Chicanos, Native Americans, and Blacks – have had a unique history in America. They have been exploited, abused, dehumanized, and killed because of the color of their skin. America expressed its repugnance for the above-mentioned minority groups, while simultaneously exploiting them as a cheap labor source. Racism and oppression have traditionally been synonymous with good business practice for America (Hawkins, 1973: 2).

Human of color has been living the race discrimination for many of years, and women of color also have been exposed to social injustice because of their color of skin besides the inequities that is originating from sexist approaches. The unity of feminism and race and class issues, and the reflections of them on Cisneros's work is underscored with Myrna-Yamil Gonzáles's words:

In many ways Cisneros's work reflects the concern of contemporary Chicana feminism which combines the questions with gender and sexuality with issues of race, culture, and class ... [P]erhaps the most important principle of Chicana Feminist criticism is the realization that the Chicana's experience as woman is inextricable from her experience as a member of an oppressed working-class racial minority and an ethnic subculture ... In

writing, they refuse the objectification imposed by gender roles and racial and economic limitations (González, 2000: 74).

Chicana literature, in general, reflects the reality that race, class, and gender issues are intertwined in the community. As a reflection of microcosm of the ethnic substructure Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* incorporates the criticism of race and class issues. In this section, the selected stories will be evaluated in terms of racism and classism, within the context of Chicana feminism.

The novel opens with a chapter of the same name of the book. Esperanza Cordero, the protagonist, describes how her family comes to the house on Mango Street. She recalls moving from one place to another, since more space is needed as the family grows up. Eventually, the Cordero family moves to the house on Mango Street even though the house is not the one that they, especially Esperanza, had dreamed. She dreams for a house like the ones on the television, and the house on Mango Street does not have any resemblance to the dreamt house. The house that she dreamed had to have at least three washrooms since when someone took a bath they wouldn't have to tell everybody in the house. Esperanza has a bad experience about the house; she recalls feeling ashamed of their former house on Loomis Street when a nun asked her to point their house. The conceit in the nun's voice asking "You lived there?" (5)² makes Esperanza "feel like nothing" (5). The chapter ends with the expression of Esperanza's ambition "I knew then that I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to" (5).

In the first chapter Esperanza realizes the gap between the white middle-class families on the television and the Latino working-class families in the barrio. The Anglo world has three bathrooms while in the barrio it is just one. She experiences that in order to be a part of American world, and in order to gain an identity, she needs a house. Esperanza's ambition is narrated in Leslie Gutiérrez-Jones's words:

Acutely aware of the disempowerment that results from lacking "a home of one's own," she yearns to stake out an architectural space—one which she implicitly assumes will provide her with the "space" to develop a sense of identity and an artistic voice. However, when architecture will not

² Hereafter the citations without references all belong to *The House on Mango Street*.

cooperate, she must look instead to her imagination in order to create a sense of space—one which can, in turn, provide a place for her writing (1993: 296).

In “Cathy, Queen of Cats” Esperanza introduces her first friend in the neighborhood. She tells about the other people in the neighborhood and disparages nearly all of them. Her comments are full of prejudices and they reveal that these are actually her family’s thoughts. Cathy admits to be Esperanza’s friend, but just for a week, until they move. Critic Annie O. Eysturoy states that, “Mango Street is a physical and psychological marker of an oppressive socioeconomic situation that makes Esperanza conscious of her own status in a socioeconomic hierarchy” (2010: 70). They move because of the people like Esperanza’s family and she suggests “the neighborhood is getting bad” (13), a racist reason that Esperanza immediately understands as Cathy’s family will “move a little farther north from Mango Street, a little farther away every time people like us keep moving in” (13). That Cathy’s family move to better neighborhoods reflects the reality that lower class and the “othered” immigrants begin to “occupy” the area. They do not want to share the same neighborhood with the immigrants.

In “Those Who Don’t” Esperanza witnesses racism and ethnicity directly. She observes the people who are out of their neighborhood scared of being attacked in Esperanza’s neighborhood. Esperanza and the other neighborhood residents do not scare, since they know the people the outsiders might find frightening, including the man with the crooked eye, the tall intimidating man in the hat, and a large retarded man. Esperanza says, “all brown around, we are safe” (28). Same color means safety. But she knows that white people are not the only ones who are responsible for this racist situation, she adds that when they go to another color neighborhood, they have the same fear. This is the social criticism of the fear that caused by segregation.

In the chapter “A Rice Sandwich”, Esperanza is jealous of the kids who eat lunch in the canteen at school instead of going home for lunch. She has the impression that only the special kids eat there. She forces her mother to write a note to the nuns to take permission to eat at the school. At school, Sister Superior does not accept the note of Esperanza’s mother, saying that Esperanza lives too close to school and must go home to eat. Then the Sister points out a home, a ruined, ugly house that “even the

raggedy men are ashamed to go into” (45), and claims Esperanza lives there. This is a social prejudice that Esperanza faces, just because she is a Chicana. The nun’s act reveals the social situation of Mexican families. Esperanza feels humiliated and nods her head, even though the house that the nun points to is not hers. She gets to eat at the canteen for that day but is too upset to enjoy the experience and she dramatically realizes that nothing is special. This chapter is an epiphany for Esperanza and she is forced to recognize her social place, again.

In “Geraldo No Last Name” Marin, who is one of the teenage girls in the neighborhood, meets Geraldo at a dance and he is killed after the dance in a hit and run accident. Marin stays in the hospital with him, although she does not know why. Geraldo dies because the doctors do not care for him very much and do not come sooner to the emergency room. Marin is upset, because she thinks that Geraldo would have been saved if the surgeon had come sooner. As she is the last person who sees him alive, she has to answer the police’s questions and help the police to identify the victim. She tries to identify Geraldo, but she cannot tell them much. She only knows that he is from Mexico and she does not even know his surname. He is just another wetback who does not speak English. Marin’s statement, “if the surgeon had come” (66) reveals that the death of Geraldo is not inevitable. The repeated questions such as “But what difference does it make?” (66), “What does it matter?” (66), “How could they?” (66) are a social criticism of American society’s treatment of immigrants as worthless and second-class human beings. As the nuns does not give value to Esperanza, the doctors does not care for Geraldo. In this chapter, Esperanza’s childish voice becomes an adult, who acts in empathy. By narrating Geraldo’s incident, Esperanza gives a place for placeless Geraldo. Esperanza becomes aware the social discrimination against her people in American institutions.

In the story “Bums in the Attic” Esperanza creates two model social classes: “[P]eople who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth. They don't look down at all except to be content to live on hills. They have nothing to do with last week's garbage or fear of rats” (86-87). While those who live on earth face challenges every day, as she and the people around her do, those who live on hills live in ease and comfort.

In terms of race and class issues, Cisneros adopts a critical approach to make the double standards for Chicana/o people in a white dominated society. In this respect, her

aim gets near to that of Chicano movement that tries to be the voice of oppressed Chicana/o society. In this section the combined vignettes that contain the samples about race and class issues have been evaluated. In the next section, not inherently but purposively established subservient Chicana women samples will be examined.

3.2. Reflections of Constructed Chicana Identity

The House on Mango Street discusses sexism as an ideology that forms the expected Chicana identity. What is sexism, then? We can find the answer in the words of Nieto-Gomez:

Sexism is a part of the capitalist ideology which advocates male supremacist values. These values define the nature of women and men in respect to being superior or inferior. Men are defined as “naturally” stronger, more logical, and able to economically provide for others. Women are defined as “naturally” dependent, childlike, and therefore always in need of authority. Her primary functions are to secure others as a wife and a mother since her primary abilities are conceive, procreate and nurture. Therefore, man is defined “naturally” superior to woman since man is independent and aggressive, and women are dependent and passive (1976: 10).

Sexism created a Chicana identity which was not natural but constructed in this way. In this chapter, Cisneros’s exemplifications on passive women, who are assimilated and obligated to follow the rules of men in patriarchal world will be examined. The tragic side of this status quo is that they internalize this situation that they are not aware of the fact that something is wrong or missing.

In “Boys & Girls” Esperanza observes the differences between genders. The “separate worlds” is a metaphor for sexism, which Esperanza wants to escape from. At home all siblings speak to each other, but outside the boys, Carlos and Kiki, have their own lives and they do not communicate with the girls. “They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls” (8). This lack of communication is a kind of reflection of older people around her. Esperanza is obliged to socialize only with her sister, Nenny, who is too young to be her friend. With

the impacts of constructed sexist thought even between the siblings, the dissociation is so real and sharp.

On the other hand, in “My Name” we learn that Esperanza’s name is a heritage from her great-grandmother. They both are born in the Chinese year of horse, which is believed to be bad luck if you are a woman. Esperanza does not believe in this myth, as she thinks that this is a men-created myth to make women tied and oppressed. She says “I think this is a Chinese lie, because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don’t like their woman strong” (10). Esperanza is aware of the position of women in her culture; the women can be bought or sold, and even stolen like a commodity. She narrates how her great-grandmother was abducted “as if she were a fancy chandelier” (11) and forced to marry; she never forgave her husband and spent her life looking out a window, “the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow” (11). The image of the women looking out of the window continues through the novel, which refers to the restriction of freedom by the husbands or fathers. The houses become prison in the patriarchal structure of *The House on Mango Street* for the women.

In the chapter titled “Marin,” Esperanza narrates us the life, the ambitions and expectations of Marin. She has a boyfriend in Puerto Rico and waits for him to marry when she goes back to her homeland. She also plans to work in Chicago for the next year if she stays in the USA and hopes to meet a rich man on the subway who will marry and save her from the barrio. She tells Esperanza useful things like how girls get pregnant and how to remove unwanted facial hair, as well as girlish superstitions, such as how the number of calcium deposits on their fingernails corresponds with the number of boys who like them. She lives with her aunt on Mango Street, and is forced to take care for her baby cousin, and not permitted to go further away the doorway of her home, just because she is a woman. Because being a woman means potential trouble, and in order to prevent the trouble the women must be prisoned in this male dominated community.

Marin is prisoned by patriarchal thought since she is a woman. Before 1970s, in the community of working-class (urban or rural), especially the communities that immigrate to the USA, young women frequently got married at 14 or 15, sometimes even at 13. Because the parents were in the fear of early pregnancy, marriage was seen as the only way to protect them from this trouble, since abortion was not legal. The women were supposed to be virgin until the wedding day and most of them were. So,

Marin is held inside so as not to cause a trouble and she is sent back to Puerto Rico because of the same reason.

In spite of the confinement, Marin does not resist against this behavior. Most probably she has grown up witnessing this inequity, so she does not find this situation odd and she accepts the position of the woman in her society. Esperanza is aware that Marin cannot reach her salvation – getting out of the barrio – because she does nothing for herself, she needs a man's hand, she waits for “a star to fall, someone to change her life” (27). Actually Marin's story is an example of Cinderella complex, the expectation that one will be saved by a prince. So, she chooses to be passive even though she has the qualifications that can save herself.

The next vignette titled “There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do” is a story of an abandoned woman, Rosa Vargas, who has too many ill-behaved children to take care for. She is abandoned by her husband without a penny and she is left obliged to cry after him. In patriarchal society it is the woman who should keep the family together, and in this story we witness a woman who is left by her husband without thinking the difficulties that she will face.

In “Alicia Who Sees Mice”, we witness the fate of Chicana in Chicano culture again. Alicia is a neighborhood girl, whose mother has died, and she is obliged to inherit her mother's place behind a rolling pin. She attends to collage to have a different life from her mother's, to be able to escape from marriage. Besides she has to take care for her siblings and wake up early so as to make tortillas for their lunchboxes, since she is the eldest sibling she takes the place of her mother's. Her father is in the opinion of “a woman's place is sleeping so she can wake up early with the tortilla star” (31) so as to take care of her family more. In this case, the “tortilla star” is a kind of conventional term for “morning star”, by which people are awakened. The substitution of “tortilla” for “morning” gives the original word an ethnic element, conveying the author's point that Alicia must rise very early each day because of cultural obligations she cannot escape. The “tortilla” is symbolic of the familial duties Alicia must fulfill as a Hispanic woman in a patriarchal family. Olivares states that: “Here we do not see the tortilla as a symbol of cultural identity but as a symbol of a subjugating ideology, of sexual domination, of the imposition of a role that the young woman must assume” (237).

The next chapter is “The Family of Little Feet.” In this chapter Esperanza describes a family whose body sizes are small. The mother of the family gives the girls, Esperanza, Lucy and Rachel, a bag of high-heeled shoes. The girls are amazed at those shoes because this was a chance for them to be Cinderella. At first their feet seem as not belonging to themselves and then Lucy suggests putting the socks off. When they put the socks off, they notice that they have “good to look” woman-like legs with these high-heeled shoes. The grocer in the neighborhood warns them that such shoes are not proper for the little girls and says: “Take them shoes off before I call the cops” (41). The grocer is a signifier how women’s sexuality is often regulated, not just by ordinary men in the community, but also by law enforcement (Saldívar, 1990). But the girls, attracted with the feeling of being woman, ignore him. They experience a boy’s crying out, “Ladies, lead me to heaven,” (41) which shows us how women’s bodies and their sexuality are often constructed as tools for men’s gratification. Then, some of the women pretend that they do not notice them, because they are jealous of the girls with high-heeled shoes and the girls keep on prancing. At last they encounter a bum who wants a kiss in exchange for a dollar. Suddenly the girls feel no swank anymore and they face the potential violence that is caused by male attention. We witness social criticism of the way women – even young girls - are treated as a commodity that can be ogled, purchased and possessed. As a result of realizing male violence the girls give up trying to be women. This event can be regarded as a hint that sexual relations that are narrated perfectly are myth in the real life. For the first time they encounter this kind of male sexual attitude and they are so frightened that when Lucy’s mother throws the shoes, the girls are glad.

In “The First Job” Esperanza takes her first job in Peter Pan Photo Finishers in order to help to pay for Catholic high school. Esperanza’s father wants his children to go to Catholic school because he believes that Catholic education will provide spiritual success and public schools are poorly financed. She goes to the job with the recommendation of her aunt and a white lie about her age. The job is easy, but the social aspects of the job are difficult for Esperanza. She does not know whether she can sit down while working and she eats her lunch in the bathroom. When the next break comes she hides in the cloak room. While she sits there a man Esperanza describes as older and Asian tells her they can be friends and sit together at lunch. Esperanza feels more comfortable now that she has someone to eat lunch with until he asks her to give

him a kiss because it's his birthday. Esperanza thinks that there is no harm in kissing, but she moves to kiss, the man grabs her and forces her to kiss his mouth. This disgusting experience is another (like in the chapter "The Family of Little Feet") layer that she puts upon the opinion; men are potential danger. Esperanza encounters with men's sexual exploitation of women and she develops the view that men are dangerous predators. We witness that an example of how grown man tries to exploit innocent young girls, and how these open hearted girls are victimized by insecure men.

The chapter "Edna's Ruthie" is the story of a child-like, naive woman, who is disenfranchised. The children like Ruthie because she is the only adult who likes to play games. She finds her own happy way in the life, as "She doesn't need anybody to laugh with, she just laughs" (67). Ruthie and Esperanza have common interests as they both love books and they see things in a special way, Ruthie says, "The moon is beautiful like a balloon" (68). The thing that Esperanza does not understand with Ruthie is why she has to sleep on the couch on her mother's house, why she does not go to her own home with her husband. Ruthie says that she is just visiting and her husband will come to take her, but nobody comes. Even though it is not clearly expressed in the chapter most probably Ruthie is abandoned by her husband, so she has to live with her mother. That is she is another woman who is let down by a man and is coerced to contend with its hardship. Since Ruthie is not mentally mature (maybe after the abandonment she lived a psychological trauma), she cannot resist against this difficulty, and eventually she is left to her fate.

The chapter "No Speak English" is another neighborhood woman story. Mamacita, whose fate is in the hands of her husband, must live where her husband dictates. Her husband is a hardworking neighbor who sends his wife and her baby son from Mexico to America. Mamacita stays inside the house all day, but it is not because she is too fat to emerge, as Rachel suggests. Esperanza understands that Mamacita is afraid of speaking English and this is why she prefers to be inside. She is homesick for her country and language and refuses to learn English as she refuses to assimilate herself into a culture that she does not belong to. Besides language, the machismo theme emerges in this chapter. The husband decides what they will do and where they will live. He rigidly dictates that "This is home. Here I am and here I stay. Speak English. Speak English. Christ!" (78) Her husband works in the States, and wants her wife to live with him and fulfill his masculine duties. Mamacita wants to live in her

homeland, but her wishes are ignored by the male domination. She is entirely alienated when her baby boy begins to speak a language that she herself does not want to know.

In “Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut & Papaya Juice on Tuesdays” we are introduced another woman whose fate is in the hands of her husband. Rafaela is a young woman “too beautiful to look at” (79), so her husband locks her inside her home by the fear of her escaping when he plays dominoes with his friends on Tuesdays. This behavior does not seem monstrous or insane since in America of 1960s, the husband has a right to lock up his wife, “protecting” her from men. We witness the example of a woman, who is like a commodity that could be possessed and confined. At those nights Rafaela watches the children from her window and asks them to get papaya juice or coconut juice and she mourns for youth sitting by the window. Esperanza resembles her to Rapunzel, but in Mango Street the princes do not rescue the princesses, they lock them. But Rafaela does not seem to be caring for her loss of independence or rights; she accepts the confined place of woman in her society and does not have an attempt to change the status quo. Instead she is waiting for “someone offering sweeter drinks, someone promising to keep them on a silver string” (80), something will make her another man’s woman, who is docile and dependent. Patriarchal thought system makes the women passive and unable to think about her own destiny.

In the next chapter “Minerva Writes Poems”, we are introduced Minerva who is not much older than Esperanza, but already burdened with “two kids and a husband who left” (84). Minerva is an example for Esperanza for witnessing the desire of man in an early age that can result in a life of full of misery. Minerva writes poems at nights, after her children go to bed. She and Esperanza show their poems to each other. Minerva is always sad because her husband beats her and then begs for forgiveness so that he can beat her again. One day Minerva decides to send her husband away, but he comes back and wants to enter the house. Minerva lets him in and he beats her again. Whether he is really sorry or not, Minerva does not know any way to break this cycle. She wants help from Esperanza, but as Minerva does not help herself while she is not consistent, no one, including Esperanza, can help her. In a way Minerva accepts her position in her family and society. In this chapter we witness again a man who affects a woman’s life negatively; again the situation appears as man equals danger.

In Mexican literature, there are two archetypes present in the Mexican psyche: *Virgin of Guadalupe*, the holy Mother, who has kept her virginity, and *la Malinche*, the

evil woman, who has lost her virginity out of marriage and betrayed her own society. Virgin of Guadalupe is the religious icon, which centers in the Mexican Catholicism. As Octavio Paz states, “The Virgin is the consolation of the poor, the shield of the weak, the help of the oppressed. In sum, she is the Mother of orphans” (1985: 76). Guadalupe represents the passive woman, whose place is home and forms the ideal Chicana woman. The antithesis of pure Virgin image is *la Malinche*, who is the interpreter and mistress of Cortés. As a young woman she was given to Cortés. She could speak Mayan and Nahuatl, and then learned Spanish and became the primary interpreter of Cortés. Moreover she and Cortés had a sexual relationship, and she gave birth to his son, Martín. Her helps as a translator are seen as the premier cause of Spanish conquest in Mexico (Petty, 2000: 122). *La Malinche* is seen as the one who “betrays the homeland by aiding the enemy” (Leal, 1983: 227). Malinche’s betrayal threatened authoritarian Mexican male, since she does not need of any protection and accepts the oppression. Her revolt makes the female sexuality something must be insulted and limited by the Mexican society.

The character who gives her name to the chapter “Sally” is Esperanza’s friend. She is a beautiful girl with “eyes like Egypt and nylons the color of smoke” (81) who is the center of attraction of the boys. Sally’s father is strict in his religion and restricts her saying “to be this beautiful is trouble” (81). Women’s sexual power and danger are closely linked, as it is in Rafaela’s story, again. Sally’s father does not let her out of the house. Sally is another woman who is prisoned by a man, a father in the patriarchal world. Since she is a woman she is obliged to be prisoned in the house. She is also exposed to physical violence (as we will see in a later chapter), since her father thinks that violence is a solution to prevent infamy. Sally’s abuse symbolizes the vicious cycle of domestic battering and social oppression that leave many women with no possibilities but to escape. The only way she knows to escape is to use her sexuality, to attract boys and young men. The trouble is that Sally’s promiscuity makes the boys exploit her sexual intimacy and try to get sexual favors from her, but none of them thinks to rescue or protect her from the other men, especially from her father. Sally is associated with *La Malinche*, since she has promiscuous behaviors; so her father feels justified as he prisons her. In patriarchal world, as Norma Alarcón states: “Insofar as feminine symbolic figures are concerned, much of the Mexican/Chicano oral tradition as well as the intellectual are dominated by *la Malinche/la Llorona* and the Virgin of

Guadalupe ... The Mexican/Chicano cultural tradition has tended to polarize the lives of women through these national [and nationalistic] symbols” (1981: 189).

In “What Sally Said”, Sally reveals her father’s abuses to Esperanza. She tries to make excuse for her father, “He never hits me hard” (92). In school she lies and says she fell. Sally’s father fears that she will bring shame upon the family in the same way his sisters did, so he tries to inhibit Sally by abusing. According to Sally the reason of his wild actions, she describes “he hit her with his hands just like a dog,” (92) is that she is a daughter. Right after this painful incident, Sally goes to Esperanza’s and her family’s house to stay, but in the evening Sally’s father comes with the eyes full of tear, begs for Sally to come back and promise not to do it again. Sally accepts his apologize and she returns to her home with Daddy. It is interesting that to call such an abusive father as “daddy.” She is safe until her father sees her with a boy. Her father beat her so badly that the severity of Sally’s situation is narrated by “he just forgot he was her father between the buckle and the belt” (93). Sally cannot go to the school for two days after this incident. Although the abuser is a father instead of a husband in Sally’s story, the abusive man who is repeatedly forgiven by the battered woman is a common theme in *Mango Street*. Just because she is a daughter, Sally is beaten madly and she is exposed to both sexist and physical violence by her father. Again, we witness the situation that men equal to danger. When Sally is exposed to her father’s violence, Sally’s mother is not on the scene. As a woman and a mother, as a passive character in her society, she cannot be included in the upbringing of her own daughter, and she cannot protect her daughter from her husband. The only thing she can do is just watching the cruel treatment, which Sally is exposed to.

Patriarchy is not a concept, which is in the human nature, but this concept is tried to be inflicted to the human being by the society. We can see this situation in Minerva’s husband and Sally’s father, who both give damage to his wife and daughter and then comes back to apologize and promise to do never again. However, with the pressures of the patriarchal system, they do not keep their promises and continue to damage their wives or daughters.

In the next chapter titled “The Monkey Garden” there is a walled, abandoned garden, where Esperanza and her friends go to play. A noisy family with a monkey was living there and they have moved away. The garden is taken over by the neighborhood children. At first, the garden is a wonder of botanical beauty, which Esperanza cannot

get enough of telling about and appreciates the beauty of nature, and then in time it becomes an overgrown graveyard for cars. One day Esperanza witnesses the importunity of Tito, a neighborhood boy, and some other boys from Sally to kiss them in return of giving back Sally's keys. Although Esperanza receives this incident with astonishment, it seems that Sally has already accepted the superiority of men and does not give reaction against the kiss demand. However, Esperanza goes to Tito's mother to snitch them, but she does not care, either. It seems that Tito's mother has accepted the place of woman in a male centered society many years ago; she does not find this situation bizarre. Eventually, Esperanza herself becomes a warrior armed with sticks and a brick in order to save Sally, but she painfully sees that Sally does not want to be saved, she also has accepted her role in patriarchal society; it is a simple kiss for her. She internalized this shameful and degrader situation. Esperanza feels so ashamed that she begins to cry under a tree and wants to die. Finally when she gets up, she is so unfamiliar to herself that as if her feet are not hers any more.

In "Linoleum Roses", we learn that Sally is married to a salesman she meets at a school bazaar. Sally says she is in love with her husband, but Esperanza thinks that she got married to escape from her father. She exchanges one repressive patriarchal prison with another one. However, her husband has violent tendencies like her father. Her husband does not let her talk on the telephone, a friend's coming to their home, and even looking out of the window. In the other chapters we witness the women by the window, but Sally cannot even stay by the window, she is totally prisoned by psychological force, "sits home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission" (102). We witness, again, the thought that women can be possessed like a commodity, as the things that Sally accounts in the last sentences of the chapter.

In this section the purposely constructed Chicana women samples are tried to be detected and analyzed in the light of Chicana feminist thought. In the next section, the revolt of the characters against the constructed women identity and place will be studied.

3.3. Resistance to Established Woman Identity

*I want to be
like the waves on the sea,
like the clouds in the wind,
but I'm me.
One day I'll jump
out of my skin.
I'll shake the sky
like a hundred violins.*

(The House on Mango Street, 60-61)

As we discussed above there is a constructed, but not neutral Chicana woman identity that wanted to be continued for the welfare of fulfillment of male ego. The sample of passive woman is tried to be made accepted to the women by the patriarchal thought. In spite of the powerful nature of women, they are despised and eventually made to believe that they are disabled. As Cisneros states:

I have to say that the traditional role is kind of a myth. I think that the traditional Mexican woman is a fierce woman. There's a lot of victimization but we are also fierce. We are very fierce. Our mothers had been fierce. Our women may be victimized but they are still very, very fierce and very strong. I really do believe that (Jussawalla & Dasenbrock, 1992: 300).

Cisneros emphasizes the reality that Chicanas are strong women, but implies that their fragility only comes from their physical weakness. For centuries, the men who are aware of this natural reality manipulate it with the encouragement of the Anglos. It is difficult to revolt against these artificial traditions and make a difference in one's life. Esperanza develops awareness with the experiences that she lived and observed, and eventually decides what she wants to be. In this section I will try to examine the challenges against the traditions and oppressive males.

In the chapter titled, “My Name” Esperanza narrates how her great-grandmother, whose name is inhibited by our protagonist, was abducted and forced to marry; she never forgave her husband and spent her life looking out a window (as previously discussed). They both are horse women according to Chinese calendar, which is believed to be bad luck if you are a woman. Esperanza does not believe this myth, and she says “I think this is a Chinese lie, because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don’t like their woman strong.” It is a clear resistance against the male oppression that is tried to be constructed by discourses. This statement also shows us Esperanza’s awareness of the lives of women in her society and raise awareness about the one she wants to be. She knows the culture that she lives, and she does not want to submit to what men say and admit the idea of women being powerless. She definitely decides she “don’t want to inherit her place by the window” (11), which is an actual revolt against demanded Chicana identity.

As the story continues, Esperanza mentions her wish to rename herself. She mentions that she is always Esperanza; there is no chance to shorten her name as Nenny’s. Nenny is Magdalena in original, but when she comes home she becomes Nenny. Esperanza also tells the names that she prefers; Lisandra or Maritza. Originally derived from a Greek name, the meaning of the name Lisandra is defender of mankind, liberator; it is also the feminine version of Alexander, in English and suggestive of Alexander the Great. This name is stronger, as she wants, than the one that her parents have chosen for her. Moreover; like Magdalena, Lisandra can be shortened to a nickname; Sandra. Esperanza says that her name means hope. When examining deeply it is seen that it shares the Latin root, which means breath, with the English word spirit. I think it is this spirit which makes Esperanza different and gives her the ambition to be strong, and to resist the oppressions of patriarchal world.

The desire to rename herself means to have control on herself, to write her destiny on her own, and this is a rebellion against patriarchal system. As Julian Olivarez states, “Esperanza prefers a name not culturally embedded in a dominating, male-centered ideology” (1996: 236). She wants to deconstruct her name, which contains the possibility of repetition of her grandmother’s misfortunate story, and she wants a new name and a new destiny that will give power to her, “something like Zeze the X”; she prefers to be someone unusual, mysterious and masked.

The chapter “Alicia Who Sees Mice” is a story of a young girl, who does not accept the life that is approved by her culture and father. After her mother’s death, she is supposed to inherit her mother’s place in the house and take care of her siblings and her father. She attends college and has to use two trains and a bus to go, but in spite of all of the difficulties that she live both on the house and on the college, she does not care of it because she “does not want to spend her all life in a factory or behind a rolling pin” (32). Her father demands her to sleep early so as to take care of her family more and persistently underscores that a woman’s place is sleeping, which will make Alicia more energetic for the chores. In spite of her oppressive father and cultural obligations, Alicia proves herself right that education will be salvation for her.

In the chapter titled “Beautiful & Cruel” Esperanza reaches the top point of her determination to not to follow the conventional women model. She decides how she will define herself sexually and describes her way to liberation. She uses the “ugly daughter” and “the one nobody comes for” descriptions for herself. She thinks that her sister, Nenny, is pretty and it is easy for her to choose and pick who she wants. But this is not easy for her she thinks, so she decides to create her own sexual identity by declaring her decision “not to grow up tame like others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain” (88). She rejects the slave-like position of women, that is tied to (physically and psychologically) a father or a husband and decides not to follow the accepted, the way her culture suggested, such as the examples of Rafaela, Minerva, Mamacita, Sally, Marin, and her own sister Nenny, who are waiting for someone to take them away from their dependency to (alleged) independency. Esperanza chooses to be “beautiful and cruel” so as to reject the conventional femininity without rejecting her own femininity. She wants to be like the *femme fatales* in the movies “who drives the men crazy and laughs them all away” (89). Esperanza ignores the possibility to be labeled as wicked or loose, she decides to be Malinche-like to stand against the oppressive patriarchy. She rejects conventional women role and says: “I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am the one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate” (89). Esperanza imagines herself as “mala mujer,” the women who “comes and goes ... looks for men and then leaves them,” whose power is her own” (Paz, 1985: 31). Paz calls these women as the female macho, “hard, impious and independent” (1985: 31). This

refusal to be passive and the desire to be independent make Esperanza closer to *la Malinche*.

In *The House on Mango Street*, the houses are the male dominant places, where the men fulfill their masculine ego. Critic Dianne Klein deduces that the house functions as a place of confinement (23), and this imprisonment is imposed on nearly all of the women in the barrio, who Esperanza introduces us. Critic Helena Grice asserts that “[T]he house, as the realm of patriarchal control, can become a more hazardous place for women than the barrio outside” (2010: 90). For Esperanza’s grandmother, who spends her life after marriage by the window; Marin, whose communication with outside is limited with the doorway; alone Rosa Vargas, who is crushed under the responsibilities of her children and sticks to the house; Alicia, who is tried to be imprisoned by her father to care of the family; Aunt Lupe, who is sick and condemned to live in a cramped, filthy room with “dirty dishes in the sink” (60); Ruthie, who is abandoned by her husband and condemned to live in her mother’s house; Mamacita, who has to obey her husband and has to live where he wants and eventually imprisoned to the house; Rafaela, who is locked into the house “since she is too beautiful to look at” (79); Sally, who is exposed to her father’s physical and psychological violence and tried to kept in the house and then seized by a husband like a commodity; and Minerva, who is also exposed to physical violence by her husband and house becomes transforms a place of trouble. Nearly all of the women in the novel are suffering from confinement and abandonment. However, Esperanza tries to build a house all her own and transform the prison-like houses into the places “clean as paper before the poem” (108) for herself. Esperanza deconstructs the constructed house’s features; only Esperanza has a different vision for the house and she wants “Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man’s house. Not a daddy’s. A house all my own” (108). This is a rejection to male traditions and the abusive physical power of men.

The prisoned characters in the novel do not have their own personhood and identity. Because they are bound to oppressive males and have to obey what the oppressor says, so they cannot develop their identities. However, Esperanza’s situation is different. As Ellen McCracken says, “Rather than mere desire to possess private property, Esperanza’s wish for a house represents a positive objectification of the self, the chance to redress humiliation and establish a dignified sense of her own personhood” (2010: 64). Esperanza’s desire to resist against the established women

form develops after the observations of women's role in her community. As Yarbrow-Bejarano states:

It is the fate of women in her barrio that have the most profound impact on her, especially as she begins to develop sexually and learns that the same fate might be hers. Esperanza gathers strength from the experiences of these women to reject the imposition of rigid gender roles predetermined for her by her culture (1996: 216).

As in the way of constructing her own identity, Esperanza cannot understand the passive women, who do not anything for themselves, and chooses to stand on her own feet. Here Cisneros underscores that the women do not have to admit the status quo.

In *The House on Mango Street* the revolt against the constructed male-dominated world is also underscored by using naturalistic elements. Being a part of nature helps Esperanza to escape, to gain a new identity by sloughing her old one.

In "Four Skinny Trees" Esperanza associates herself with the trees. The trees resemble her, both in physical form and stubborn spirit as they are "Four raggedy excuses planted by the city" (74). She thinks that both she and the trees do not belong to the barrio, but are stuck there anyway. Both Esperanza and they have secret strength and anger. Esperanza admires their fierceness and the trees remind her to fight against difficulties. They also teach determination, deep-rootedness and to not to forget her reason for being: "Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep" (75). "[t]heir arms around each other" (75) represents Esperanza's community and the most important reason for being, to live for each other. Esperanza makes observation with inanimate objects. In spite of the unsuitable living conditions, the resistance of the trees makes Esperanza courageous against the difficulties. As critic Annie O. Eysturoy states:

In her longing to escape her present circumstances, Esperanza sees the trees as role models for her own liberation: they grow "despite concrete," thus symbolizing Esperanza's own struggle to grow in a hostile environment, her desire to reach beyond the concrete, beyond class and race boundaries, for self-definition (2010: 71).

A tree cannot live without its roots, and in the same way a person cannot find any place in the life without her/his roots. For good or ill, the place, where she lives contributes to Esperanza's new identity and the one, who she wants to be. She will go beyond the race, class and gender issues with the consciousness that she have raised from her experiences.

In "Monkey Garden," the loneliness and betrayal that Esperanza have lived in the face of Sally's choice, which she obeys to the desires of the boys, make Esperanza so disappointed that she tries to soothe and erase her own pain saying, "I wanted to be dead, to turn into the rain, my eyes melt into the ground like two black snails" (97-98). She longs for becoming part of nature, a member of the beautiful natural garden, and becoming a part of nature is the only way for her to get rid of the bitter sensations.

Throughout the novel there are several characters, who serve as role models for Esperanza, as they will be evaluated evaluate in the next section. Her mother, both as a role model and a source of realizing the importance of being an individual and standing on her own feet, that is not to obeying the oppressive male traditions, will be evaluated in this section.

In "A Smart Cookie" we witness Esperanza's mother's regrets about she "could've been somebody." Her mother is bilingual, handy, talented in art and music, and she still sings opera, but she does not know how to use subway. She is a stranger for the "outside" life. she cannot even do the basic requirements of the life. While preparing the breakfast she sings *Madame Butterfly*, which is a story of a Japanese woman who falls in love with an American naval officer, has a child form him and dedicatedly waits for him to return as he promised and eventually is betrayed by him. Choosing of this opera is intended since it gives the message, "do not wait for a man to make a life for you, create your own life." She offers her life as a cautionary tale for Esperanza, and encourages her to choose education and fulfill her dreams instead of men and love: "Esperanza you go to school. Study hard. That Madame Butterfly was a fool" (91). Mrs. Cordero knows her own reason of quitting school and she is aware that her reason was really stupid: she leaves school due to shame on her clothes. She warns her daughter about not accepting shame and choosing her life and ignoring the social norms that imposes models. Mrs. Cordero is smart enough as she does not tell merely what to do to Esperanza, but also what she has lost by quitting school. Though she does not know

even to use the subway, with these sincere confessions, she is an ideal role model for Esperanza.

Chicana feminism criticizes the suppressed sexuality, and the censorship in mentioning sex. The revolt against the silenced sexual urges and their expressions is reflected in Marin's story. In the chapter titled "Marin," her candid attitudes toward the boys and expressions about the relation between girls and boys are narrated like this,

What matters, Marin says, is for the boys to see us and for us to see them. And since Marin's skirts are shorter and since her eyes are pretty, and since Marin is already older than us in many ways, the boys who do pass by say stupid things like I am in love with those two green apples you call eyes, give them to me why don't you. And Marin just looks at them without even blinking and is not afraid (27).

The sexual issues are so suppressed that the girls – Esperanza, Rachel, Lucy, and Nenny – does not know what to do with their hips, which are in fact anatomically a part of them: "What I'm saying is who here is ready? You gotta be able to know what to do hips when you get them" (50). In the same way when Esperanza is abused/raped in "The Red Clowns," she is angry not only at Sally, since she left Esperanza alone, but also at the society that always have imposed rosy and romantic picture, and have not told the realities about sex. Critic Patsy J. Daniels (2010: 83) states:

The patriarchal system she and her community live under covers up the truth and romanticizes women's roles so that the women will accept their roles as either whores or wives. For example, the system romanticizes sex, but Esperanza finds out through her violent and humiliating initiation to sexual intercourse that there is nothing romantic about sex. Esperanza blames her rude awakening not only on her individual friend Sally, who knows about sex already and who has failed to either inform or rescue her, but also the whole system: "Sally, you lied. It wasn't what you said at all ... The way they said it, the way it's supposed to be, all the storybooks and movies, why did you lie to me?" (Cisneros, 99). Later, Esperanza continues

her diatribe: "I waited my whole life. You're a liar. They all lied. All the books and magazines, everything that told it wrong" (100).

Here Esperanza directs her anger not at Anglo world or men; she directs her anger to the all women and society. Maria Herrera-Sobek supports this and explains "The Red Clowns" as a "diatribe" that is directed not only Sally, "but at the community of women in a conspiracy of silence ... silence is not denouncing the "real" facts of life about sex and its negative aspects in violent sexual encounters, and *complicity* in romanticizing and idealizing unrealistic sexual relations" (Herrera-Sobek, 1987: 178).

In this section the characters' resistances toward the oppressive patriarchal thought and their own ways to deconstruct the constructed status quo have been introduced. In the next section, the development of the protagonist will be examined.

3.4. Regeneration

The woman, who follows the crowd, will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before.

Albert Einstein

As an example of bildungsroman, in *The House on Mango Street* we witness Esperanza's personality development. She is presumably 12 or 13 years old at the beginning of the novel. It does not much time to the end of the book, so Esperanza does not grow mature in age but in mentality she does as a result of her experiences and growing perception. In this section Esperanza's intellectual and sexual development will be examined.

In the chapter "My Name" we have mentioned the revolt against oppressive male-oriented culture that makes the woman accept the role imposed to her, and Esperanza's desire to rename herself. Her regeneration begins here; Esperanza, who is aware of the life that she wants and does not want to live, gets started first on her name. She wants to baptize herself under a new name to change her destiny.

In the novel the stories that Esperanza wants to escape from Mango Street and the stories that she is tied to her root are meshed. In the first chapter, she is definitely

sure about her desire to have a “real house”, and does not by any means accept the house on Mango Street as her house. In spite of her passion to go away, she is tightly coupled to her family; in “Hairs,” when she describes the hairs of the family members, she actually finds the peace of home in the smell of her mother’s hair. She says, “my mother’s hair ... is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin, and you sleep near her, the rain outside falling” (7). However, in the next chapter she associates herself with “a balloon tied to an anchor” (9), which symbolizes her wish to leave the shameful Mango Street. For this chapter the anchor is her sister Nenny, but in general we see that the anchor is actually her root and culture that she can never erase. Nevertheless, in a later story named “Laughter,” when Esperanza, Nenny and their friends see a house, which looks like to the ones in Mexico, the other girls do not perceive the resemblance, but Esperanza and Nenny have the common history and Esperanza lives the comfort of unity. Along the same line when Esperanza learns her grandfather’s death and that her father has to go to Mexico for the funeral, Esperanza comes up against the truth of her root, once more. When she thinks if her own father dies, she expresses her sadness with the repetition “I hold my Papa in my arms. I hold and hold and hold him” (57). The repetition of the word “hold” represents the tie between Esperanza and her deniable root. On the other side, Esperanza’s desire to escape is reflected to her poem, which she read to her Aunt Lupe. “I want to be / like the waves on the sea, / like the clouds in the wind, / but I’m me. / One day I’ll jump / out of my skin. / I’ll shake the sky / like a hundred violins” (60-61).

In the chapter “Four Skinny Trees” as Esperanza associates herself with the trees, she underscores that she does not belong to Mango Street like the tress, “[F]our who do not belong here but are here” (74). On the other hand Esperanza is affected with their strength and strong roots. She says, “They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep” (74). Here Esperanza, who identifies herself with the trees, can observe that they are the roots that make someone grow and reach her aim, even if she is not yet aware of it. In a later chapter titled “Bums in the Attic,” Esperanza is still determined to have her own house. Until this chapter Esperanza dreams to escape from the Mango Street and never to come back. However, in this chapter she realizes that if she goes away from the barrio, she will not be happy in a world that ignores the existence of less privileged

people. So she vows: “One day I’ll own my house, but I won’t forget who I am or where I came from” (87). She dreams of letting the bums in her imaginary house and lives the joy of her dream.

In the funeral of Rachel and Lucy’s little baby sister, the mystic three sisters, who are Rachel and Lucy’s aunts seem so magical to Esperanza that she says, “Three who did not seem to be related to anything but the moon” (103). Esperanza does not tell their names, she only describes them, “One with laughter like tin and one with eyes of a cat and one with hands like porcelain” (103), and these definitions make them more magical. Maria Elena de Valdés correlates them to some of the myths:

In pre-Hispanic Mexico, the lunar goddesses, such as Tlazolteotl and Xochiquetzal, were the intermediaries for all women (Westheim 105). They are sisters to each other and, as women, sisters to Esperanza ... At the symbolic level, the sisters are linked with Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, the three fates.... In Cisneros’s text, the prophecy of the fates turn to the evocation of self-knowledge (1992: 58).

They speak to each other about Esperanza, “Look at her hands ... She’s special. / Yes, she’ll go very far” (104). One of them asks Esperanza to make a wish and she wishes for a house, going away from Mango Street. We see that, whether she believes them or not, the only wish for her is to go away when it is asked. They perceive Esperanza’s wish and say her, “When you leave you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can’t erase what you know. You can’t forget who you are” (105). This experience is a clear evidence of Esperanza’s endless desire to escape and on the other hand this is a factor and preview of Esperanza’s decision.

In the next chapter “Alicia & I Talking on Edna’s Steps,” Alicia listens to Esperanza’s sadness about not having a house. Unlike Esperanza, who wants to escape from Mango Street and never accepts this place as her house, Alicia wants to go back to her homeland, Guadalajara, Mexico. Esperanza does not accept the house on Mango Street as hers and says, “I don’t belong, I don’t want to come from here” (106). However, Alicia tries to make Esperanza face to the reality, “No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street and one day you’ll come back too” (107).

With the final chapter “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes” Esperanza’s regeneration is completed. In this chapter Esperanza defines herself as a story teller. She mentions how she likes to tell stories and transforms her own life into a story. She says that she is going to tell a story about a girl who did not want to belong, and she repeats some of the sentences at the beginning of the book. Until this time she has been narrating the stories, but now she is writing them. According to Harold Bloom this is an intended move that “reinforces the act of writing as a mode of bearing witness for the many disenfranchised individuals who appear throughout *The House on Mango Street*” (54). Writing is an act that provides Esperanza to find peace and achieve (spiritually) her ambition, to escape, “I put it down on paper and the ghost does not ache so much. I write it down and Mango says goodbye sometimes. She does not hold me with both arms. She sets me free” (110). As she writes, she moves away. Esperanza vows that “One day I will pack my bags of books and paper. One day I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever” (110). It is significant that she chooses to be a writer to escape and create a new life for herself. Writing means creation, so this is a kind of regeneration as well. Critic Myrna-Yamil Gonzales states, “Ultimately ... Esperanza’s true identity and freedom will be found in her writing; there she discovers the recipe for achieving her goals while never forgetting her origins” (2000: 110). Then she imagines the neighbors wondering where she has gone and why she goes so far away. They will not be aware that Esperanza’s ambitions were transformed into a moral commitment to save Mango Street’s less fortunate inhabitants. After the experiences, fluxes and refluxes that she lived about belonging and not belonging, and her root, she eventually decides who she is and will be and what she wants. As she says, “Let one forget his reason for being, they’d all droop like tulips in a glass” (74), eventually she realizes her reason for being. As critic Bridget Kevane suggests:

The barrio is Esperanza’s place of origin and, thus, synonymous with the origins of her identity. Esperanza observes, in both subtle and not so subtle forms, patriarchal oppression, domestic abuse, sexism, intolerance, oppression, bigotry, and poverty. Her sense of self will be derived from these observations; she realizes that she can potentially become any of the women she observes. That she survives, like the four

skinny trees outside her window, is tribute to her strength, the strength of a young girl who already knows she does not want to inherit a place by the window. The collective community that surrounds her functions as a chorus of voices. They present her with advice, and they show her the potential dangers facing a young Mexican American girl on the verge of womanhood. Esperanza would not have remembered and returned to her roots without the voices of the other members of her community (2003: 58).

As Esperanza is mentally growing up, on the other side she is growing up sexually, as well. The sexual development goes parallel with loosing of innocence in some of the vignettes. Esperanza's sexual awareness begins in the chapter "The Family of Little Feet". When the girls wear the high-heeled shoes they notice that they have women-like, attractive legs. This moment is a revelation for the girls that they are women to be and they can attract the men. Michelle Scalise Sugiyama states:

Their resolution to never go back to wearing the other kind of shoes comes after they realize that the shoes make them sexually attractive to men ... This power to arouse men and to make women jealous initially exhilarates them—they "just keep strutting," enjoying for the moment their position as the source of power rather than the object (1999: 10).

They enjoy the power that she had, but in patriarchal society, the potential danger of the men shadows their power. However, when the girls meet a homeless man, who offers a dollar for a kiss, their pleasure that is arising from male attention gives its place to fear that is arising from male sexual gaze. That is, their innocent play of woman to be results in loosing innocence and frustration.

In a later chapter "Chanclas," which means sandals, Esperanza attends a party after her cousin's baptism, and she is asked for dance by a boy, and Esperanza refuses to dance because she is embarrassed by her old brown saddle shoes. Her Uncle Nacho insists Esperanza is beautiful, and finally the uncle puts her to the floor, they begin to dance, and everyone applauds them. When she returns to her seat she lives the pleasure of "All night the boy who is a man watches me dance" (48), which brings Esperanza a step further in her developing sexual awareness. In the next chapter "Hips," Esperanza,

Nenny, Lucy, and Rachel play jump rope and they begin a conversation about having hips and their function. Rachel says that hips are for propping a baby on while cooking. His comment makes Esperanza disgusted, because Rachel's comments cannot go beyond gender roles. Lucy says that hips are for dancing. Nenny, who is too young to understand what it's like to have hips, says that without them, one becomes a boy. Above all, Esperanza tries to make a scientific comment that she has learned from Alicia. She says that hips widen to give birth. Esperanza also questions if they are really ready for having hips. They actually do not know what the hips are, and what they are for. These comments and questions reveal that the girls are insecure about the women body and role of the woman. Then they begin shaking their hips with the rhythm to the rope and create their own rhymes. Three of the girls, except Nenny, create their own rhymes. Since Nenny is younger than them, she recites the old rhymes that she already knows. The three girls notices their developments compared to Nenny's childish acts. Olivares supports this:

Suddenly the awareness of time passing and of growing up is given a spatial dimension. Esperanza, on the outside, is looking at Nenny inside the arc of the swinging rope that now separates Nenny's childhood dimension from her present awareness of just having left behind that very same childhood (1996: 238).

Now she becomes aware that she is not a child any more. In this chapter the girls become closer to the sexual awareness since they begin to explore their bodies. Moreover, Esperanza goes a step further in maturing.

In the next chapter titled "The First Job," when Esperanza is exposed to an older man's forced kiss, her innocent childhood is damaged. Her first kiss experience is destroyed by the predator man. The chapter titled "Sire" is an important story in Esperanza's sexual development. One day, Esperanza notices Sire is watching her. Esperanza is both affected and scared, but she does not let him know her fear. Sire is looking at Esperanza while she is walking and she acts bravely and looks back fiercely. She describes the looking: "It made your blood freeze to have somebody look at you like that" (73). Critic Harold Bloom states about Esperanza's development: "The experience excites her, makes her feel like she is finally becoming a woman because she

has been viewed as one by a curious young man” (2010: 39, 40). But, in Chicano society becoming a woman is not an enjoyable, entertaining or pride arousing phenomenon, but contrarily an experience containing anxiety and fear. This is especially true for a young girl, who does not want to adapt an established role of woman. Sire has a pretty, petite girlfriend, Lois, who does not know how to tie her shoes. Esperanza watches them and wants to be in the place of Lois. She hears their laughing and wants to know about what they are doing. She lives physical awakening and is so attracted by Sire that she says: “Everything is waiting to explode like Christmas. I want to be all new and shiny. I want to sit out bad at night, a boy around my neck and the wind under my skirt” (73). She knows that if she answers her sexual urges, she will be called loose, but instead of dreaming this experience she prefers to live what she wants.

In “Beautiful & Cruel,” Esperanza decides how she will define herself sexually. Esperanza chooses to be “beautiful and cruel” (89) so as to reject the conventional femininity without rejecting her own femininity. She wants to be like the *femme fatales* in the movies “who drives the men crazy and laughs them all away” (89). In a later chapter “The Monkey Garden,” when Esperanza witnesses the grown up play, which is based on Sally’s and Tito’s kissing each other. Esperanza cannot understand this play and is extremely annoyed that she feels responsible for saving Sally. However, Esperanza discovers that Sally does not want to be saved, and at his point she feels ashamed and her sexual comprehension goes a step further, and the acquiring of knowledge causes a lapsarian perception that Esperanza loses innocence. As Champion and Austin state, “The climax of the work is formed by Esperanza’s bitter passage into maturity, via her expulsion from an Eden of childhood innocence in ‘The Monkey Garden’ and the betrayal and sexual assault that occur in the following chapter, ‘Red Clowns.’” (2002: 68).

Esperanza’s real loss occurs in “Red Clowns.” Esperanza and Sally go to a carnival. Sally leaves Esperanza with “that big boy” and says her to wait by the red clowns. While waiting for her friend, Esperanza is sexually assaulted by an older boy. Her innocent childhood is destroyed by a male, again. Besides, Esperanza lives the sorrow of being left by her friend Sally. Sally does not fulfill her responsibility to her friend/sister. For Esperanza any boy could have been guilty, but primarily the women should be the ones responsible for keeping each other safe. The repetitions of “you lied” (99), “why did you lie to me?” (99), “you’re a liar” (100) emphasize how Sally deceives

Esperanza emotionally. Similarly, the questions, “Why didn't you hear me when I called? Why didn't you tell them to leave me alone?” (100) and “you never came for me” (100) reflect the helplessness and abandonment that Esperanza experienced. Her innocence is also destroyed by the so-called sisterhood.

Her sexual development is completed with a (physically and psychologically) painful experience. After the observations that she make on the neighborhood women and the experiences that she has lived, Esperanza realizes that having power on herself cannot exist with men, so she chooses autonomy instead of sexuality. She dreams of a woman-oriented future, and a female based house, a house of her own.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* (1984) has been examined in the light of Chicana feminism. Before analyzing the novel according to its feminist elements, the background information about being a Chicana/o, the activist movements that shaped Chicana/o identity, Chicana Literature, Chicana Feminism have been studied.

In the first part of Chapter 1, the root of the term Chicana/o and its function as a self-identifying unifier word have been rendered. Chicana/o is used for the identification of the people, who are Mexican in origin, but have been born or grown up in the United States. These "between" people were neither Mexican, from the perspective of Mexico; nor American when looked from America. Actually, the term has been used for the centuries in the Mexico territory. However, the peak years that the term Chicana/o was used for the Mexican Americans were 1960s. These years were a kind of awakening for the people of color, and the politics of the period caused Chicano Movement to emerge, mainly the Civil Rights Movement. In those years the term also gained a political meaning with the Chicano Movement, whose core was to gain equal rights with the Anglos and to make educational reforms. The individuals and the organizations that constitute the core of the movement shared the common sense of pride of being Chicana/os. The Chicano Movement was a multi-directional act that contained the improvements in social, educational and political fields for the Chicana/os. Eventually, Chicana/os could find a place for themselves in the politics, and gained educational improvements such as bilingual education (Spanish and English) in the high schools and the Chicana/o departments in the colleges.

In the second part of Chapter 1 the historical process of Chicana/o Literature has been evaluated. With the improvements that were gained with Chicano Movement, Chicana/os could find a place for themselves in literature in the American mainstream. The main subject of the Chicana/os' works was their social lives, and their bilingual writing gave a new impulse to American literature in the 1960s and 70s. Chicana/o writers lived difficulties in publishing their works because of the racial issues. However, in this period Chicano publishing houses were opened and Chicana/o literature found chance to expand. The peak period of Chicana/o Literature were the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21th century. Although Chicana/os were exposed to

racism, the production of the works expanded and Chicana/o literature found its place in American mainstream.

In the third part of Chapter 1 a critical approach to the Chicano Movement was developed. Chicano Movement was a male oriented movement. Having equal rights with the Anglos was the core and the primary aim of the movement. When the Chicanos were struggling for improvements, they ignored their sisters, Chicanas, and did not give active position to them in the movement. As their tradition suggests, the women should be at home, take care of her children and husband and support her family. But this constructed position for the Chicanas was not relevant to the active and effective women in the fields. Chicanas were exposed to sexism by their own “comrades” besides racism. Chicanas, who revolt against this male dominant structure, were seen as betrayals. They were asked to postpone their struggle against patriarchy. These conflicts between Chicanas and Chicanos caused the emergence of Chicana feminist thought. After the 1960s Chicanas started to write standing against patriarchy.

In the fourth part of the Chapter 1 feminist consciousness, the historical process of feminism was briefly evaluated. First, second, and third wave feminisms were examined in terms of periodic characteristics. Chicana feminist movement chronically coincides with second wave feminism. Their revolt was against the oppressive males in their own society and they also struggled against racism and sexist racism as women of colors. As brown and colonized people, they aimed to deconstruct the -isms, such as racism, sexism, and classism. They embodied both racism and sexism; they never separated themselves from the nationalistic spirit. As a sub-title of the fourth part, the different routes of white and Chicana feminists were examined. Chicana feminists who tried to find a place for themselves in struggling against male dominance, wanted to join into white feminism at first, in spite of the rejections from their Chicano brothers. However, in time Chicanas noticed that they were not recognized enough to raise their voices. As the members of Anglo and middle-class society, the white feminists ignored brown, illiterate, and working-class Chicanas. In this term the white feminist movement betrayed the unity of sisterhood by ignoring the racial issues of women of color.

In chapter 2, the biography of the writer Sandra Cisneros has been narrated and the importance of her in terms of Chicana and American literature has been expressed. Sandra Cisneros expresses her style of writing in an interview, “I’m trying to write the stories that haven’t been written. I felt like a cartographer; I’m determined to fill a

literary void” (Sagel, 1991: 74). Her experiences are broad, since she is bilingual and bicultural. While she reveals her biculturalism, she lives the pleasure to have “twice as many words to pick from ... two ways of looking at the world” (Sagel, 1991: 74). She can draw the picture of the barrio as well as the educated and cosmopolitan Chicana/o artist’s life. Quintana suggests that Cisneros “subverts conventional literary form” (56) and counters the hegemonic discourses of “the American Dream” (57). It is interesting that Sandra Cisneros is the first Chicana though she stands against the American dream, who enters the mainstream of American literature. Until Random House published her *Women Hollering Creek* and *The House on Mango Street* by Vintage Press, the Chicano literature that could enter the American mainstream was limited by the male writers such as; Gary Soto, Luis Valdez, Richard Rodríguez and Alberto Rios. Until Cisneros’s success, women were suppressed. She says in a radio interview:

I think I can't be happy if I'm the only one that's getting published by Random House when I know there are such magnificent writers-both Latinos and Latinas, both Chicanos and Chicanas-in the U.S. whose books are not published by mainstream presses or whom the main-stream isn't even aware of. And, you know, if my success means that other presses will take a second look at these writers ... and publish them in larger numbers then our ship will come in (Morning Edition, 1991).

As understood she is delighted and proud of her success as a path-finder for the future generations of Chicana/o writers.

In chapter 3, background information about *The House on Mango Street* has been rendered. As a sample of bildungsroman, *The House on Mango Street* consists of forty-four vignettes. The vignettes can be evaluated separately, but as the stories continue, the stories create a picture of the barrio. Cisneros introduces dozens of characters, as if she wanted to underscore the mobility of the barrio. In the sub-titles the race, class and gender issues were examined in detail in terms of Chicana feminism with the samples from the stories. As we discussed above, Chicanas were exposed to racism, sexism and racist sexism. So, in the products of Chicana literature it is highly possible to see racist and classist reflections in the stories.

In the first part of chapter three, the reflections of race and class issues have been examined in the selected stories. Cisneros adopts a critical approach to the society, which applies double standard to the colored people. In this respect Cisneros takes the responsibility of reflecting racist and classist attitudes of the dominant society. The difference between the middle-class Anglo world and the working-class brown barrio is clearly reflected in the details of the novel. The gap between the two worlds is so large that the people in the barrio can see the houses of outer world only from on television. These inequalities, poverty and the double standards have been examined on the basis of the selected stories. While criticizing racism, Cisneros also underscores that this racist attitudes between the races are not one sided. As the white people live fear when they are in the barrio or any immigrant neighborhood, the people of color also live the same fear when they are in the white world. Cisneros criticizes the melting pot theory, and underlines that all people should live with their differences and cultural values should be reserved. However, she also emphasizes that racial differences should not be interpreted with prejudice. She also exposes the fact that the U.S. has not achieved equality among races, yet. There is not equality in the social life and the institutions, and these inequalities affect negatively whole society, this is a burden for the society.

In the second part of chapter three, the samples of the constructed and passive Chicana women have been evaluated. The Mango Street hosts many passive women, who are smashed under the oppressive patriarchal system. Most of the women in the Mango Street are described as the women by the windows. They are obliged to spend their lives behind the windows. Tragically, most of them are not aware of this confinement, since they traditionally witness the passive women cliché throughout their lives. Women are the ones who were supposed to keep the family together. The men are irresponsible with their families and the women become responsible for the familial, social, material, and even sexual issues, as it is in the example of Rosa Vargas, who has many children and being left by her husband. Men can leave their women without thinking of their future. They ignore the needs and wishes of the women. Patriarchy has caused these men to adapt this mode of behavior; in this mode there is no responsibility, love, affection or loyalty and a feeling of justice.

In the patriarchal societies, as we witness thorough the stories, a girl cannot have and develop a healthy sexual life, as in the story "Family of Little Feet." Because the woman is repressed and does not allowed to explore herself and live it. Sexual issues

are concealed, as they are thought as immoral concerns. So, the girls grow up with fallacious knowledge about them. There is not patriarchy in the nature of human being. The system and the current conditions impose patriarchy to the people. In fact, patriarchy is not a neutral, but an artificial concept that takes over the lives of human beings. So, as a consequence of the patriarchal society, some mottos, which include the views of women and men to each other, settle to the people's lives. For example, "men equal to danger or violence," and "the place of beautiful women is home." The passive women with the specific samples, who have accepted the established traditional role, with the issues of men and violence relationship, patriarchy and oppressive male dominance examined, too. In patriarchal Chicano society the women are polarized as good/*Virgen of Guadalupe* and bad or whore/*la Malinhce*. In this polarized system of life a girl cannot have the chance to explore herself, her body, and her feelings towards the opposite sex with the fear of being labeled as bad or whore. The pressure on girls can lead a girl to wonder more the sexual issues and direct her to prohibited actions in an early age, as Sally.

In the third part of chapter three, the resistance against the established women identity is discussed. This resistance is showed in the protagonist's discourses and thoughts, which have been developed by the observations that have been made in the neighborhood. The relationship between women and the nature, and how this relation opens a new door into the individual life, has been also examined in this part. As a problematic issue, in Chicana feminism, the denial of suppressed sexuality has been also discussed. Women do not have to obey the patriarchal system and accept the roles as passive individuals in the society. They do not need anyone, especially a man, to change lives, but courage in themselves to make their conditions better. The protagonist Esperanza and Alicia resist this system. Esperanza does not accept the passive constructed women role and identifies herself as the men in the patriarchal society. Alicia chooses to go to college to get rid of marriage and being decaying under the burden of chores.

In the fourth part of chapter three, as an example of coming of age story, the protagonist's development has been evaluated in detail. Throughout the novel Esperanza has observed her neighborhood and its inhabitants (mostly women). As a consequence of her observations she has decided that she does not want to live a dependent life like many women in the neighborhood, instead she has decided to have

an autonomous life and house to actualize herself. With the experience that she has witnessed in the barrio her mutual desire to escape from the barrio has stiffened. These observations help her in terms of intellectual development. Besides, Esperanza has developed a sexual development with the various experiences. Some of these have been innocuous in the way of being mature, while the others have been vicious. In consequence of all of these experiences and observations Esperanza has developed a new identity, which has returned to self and taken the responsibility of doing something for the other women, not just for herself. Moreover, in the way of developing, the possible role models for the protagonist are also examined.

As a result, in *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros draws a picture of the barrio life and its inhabitants. With all of the stories and the characters, Cisneros tries to deconstruct all the hegemonic and patriarchal beliefs, and tries to reveal the racist and classist issues on the base of Chicana feminist perspective. She clearly criticizes the Chicano community in which the men are the absolute source of power and authority and the women are passive, worthless, having no right on their lives, and are treated like a commodity. She also criticizes the society, which polarizes the women as bad or good, *la Malinche* or *Virgen of Guadalupe*. Cisneros also tries to deconstruct the constructed house. The houses in *The House on Mango Street* are prison like places for the women and the places that the oppressive men can confine the women and beat them. So, with Esperanza's dream the house becomes a female-oriented, peaceful place, which does not belong to any male. At the end of the novel, Esperanza eventually finds out that the search for self involves more than mere personal satisfaction, and she understands that in the future she will serve both herself and her community, "for the ones who cannot out" (110).

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