

Niamh McNamara, University College Cork, Ireland

Mythology and Gender in the work of Chicana Writer, Luna Lemus

dearg.dawn@gmail.com

The central importance of family, or *la familia*, has dominated the construction of a Chicano (Mexican American) cultural, social and national identity, particularly since the creation of *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan*. However, the traditional representation of *la familia* has come under scrutiny, especially by feminist and queer writers within Chicano culture who disagree with the patriarchal, heterosexist construct it represents. This paper will examine the debut novel by queer Chicana writer Felicia Luna Lemus, *Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties*, in order to investigate the manner in which the author utilizes Mexican mythology to illustrate issues relating to gender identification and *la familia* within an ethnic minority located in the United States of America in the twenty first century. Unlike writers of previous generations, Lemus does not attempt to dissuade the protagonist from associating with typically negative archetypes in the construction of a personal identity. Drawing on cultural and literary theorists, this paper will investigate how the protagonist of Lemus' novel, Leticia, engages with the folkloric character of La Llorona from traditional Mexican-American childhood to post-queer LA hipster Chicana adulthood. It will examine the manner in which Leticia reconstructs notions of *la familia* in her construction of self.

Currently a second year Ph. D. student at the Centre for Mexican Studies, University College Cork, I have previously studied in NUI, Galway and the University of Edinburgh. My research involves a comparative study of writers Cherrie Moraga and Felicia Luna Lemus which examines the use of mythology and mythological characters in the works of two generations of queer Chicana writers.