

*Willful Subjects* offers the reader a “glimpse of a willful subject [in] a fuller form” (3) as a way to “queer the will,” that is, to “slow down” and be “enchanted by matter” and perhaps perceive “how the will has already been given a queer potential” (11). Such a description affirms Ahmed’s aim to offer “a model of the social that includes antagonism and disagreement, as well as that which does not pass between or is shared among bodies” (218, f38). This fuller form might now include the errant will reaching out and disturbing the ground, not by right, but by that shimmer of imagination that can make present a not-yet-present horizon of possibility (204). *Willful Subjects* is essential reading for those working in feminism, disability studies, queer theory, critical race studies, and/or phenomenology who reject the notion that a new world or a better one is simply tied to asserting the will to make it so. This is a book for those willing to slow down to queer the will and contemplate what we have been up to, willingly or not.

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Motherhood, maternity, and intergenerational relations have formed a popular vector for critics of ethnic women’s writing for some time now, as Cristina Herrera acknowledges in the introduction to her study. Such an approach facilitates interpretations of such issues as ethnic feminine identity formation, prescriptive patriarchal stereotypes, and the family as a productive matrix of ethnic sociocultural roles. *Contemporary Chicana Literature: (Re)Writing the Maternal Script* integrates several of Herrera’s previously published essays into an extensive account of contemporary Chicana literary engagements with these issues, highlighting in important ways the revisionist work achieved in these texts. Focusing on the cluster of character relations defined by maternity – grandmother, mother, and daughter – Herrera shows the sustained critique of patriarchal Chicano “life scripts” as a dominant concern in contemporary Chicana literature.

The first substantive chapter addresses the three central stereotypes of the Chicana mother (La Malinche, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and La Llorona) that support a cultural mythology of the mother as passive victim. Mother-daughter relations based on this mythology, Herrera cogently argues, are thematized as “a source of tension, frustration, and angst” (7) that have the potential to become a relationship of empowerment that nurtures agency when the life script of maternity is rewritten outside the polarities of good versus bad mothers and virgins versus whores.

Herrera’s work is interpretive rather than theoretical, which is its strength, as well as its limitation. In her acknowledgments she notes the motivational advice of one of her mentors to “push the analysis further,” and this advice could itself have been pushed further. The autobiographical vignette that opens the book sets the tone for the critical work that follows and structures a framework of approach that addresses “the mother-daughter relationship as a theme [that] stems from Chicana authors’ lived experiences” (11). Herrera’s work could, then, be more fully grounded in the literariness of the texts under discussion, in questions that raise the representational techniques deployed in texts that revise patriarchal narratives of feminine identities, and in a more theoretically oriented investigation of how concepts such as “daughter,” “mother,” and “the maternal” are constructed. Although Herrera rightly observes that “[m]any existing mother-daughter theories have been formulated from the perspective of Anglo, middle-class women and do not adequately explain issues significant to Chicana women” (12–13), in her readings, the concepts foundational to her interpretations tend to be treated as theoretically unproblematic. This tendency influences her rationale for the selection of her textual corpus; she explains, “The novels I have chosen are important because they demonstrate rich variation in the portrayal of mothers and the dynamics of the maternal relationship. The texts highlight that there is no universal way to theorize Chicana mother-daughter relationships” (30). Rather than an alternative approach to theorizing these relationships, Herrera focuses instead on the ways in which literary characters define key concepts such as motherhood and daughterhood. Consequently, an effort to theorize the fundamental concepts underpinning maternal relations beyond their thematization in selected fictional texts, as well as an account of the principles by which these literary thematizations and their sociocultural effects beyond the text are assumed in Herrera’s arguments, would greatly enrich her textual interpretations and empower the “real-world” implications of her conclusions.

Having said this, the strengths of Herrera’s work are undeniable. She offers insightful and nuanced interpretations of selected canonical Chicana writers – through Denise Chávez’s *Face of an Angel* (1994), Ana Castillo’s *The Guardians* (2007), and Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo* (2002) – as well as the lesser-known and relatively understudied novels, Carla Trujillo’s *What Night Brings* (2003)

and Melinda Palacio's *Ocotillo Dreams* (2011). The specifics of Chicana mother-daughter relationships are thoughtfully contextualized in her introduction in relation to other ethnic women's literatures (specifically African-American and Asian American writing), and Herrera goes on to offer a series of sensitive textual readings focused on the interlocking structure of discriminatory discourses of classism, racism, sexism, and homophobia. Indeed, her discussion of queer Chicana motherhood and patriarchal heterosexism, through the work of Cherríe Moraga and focused on Trujillo's novel *What Night Brings*, offers a very productive model for critically embedding queer representations of sexual and gender formation in the context of allied "straight" texts. Here, and throughout her study, Cristina Herrera questions in important ways the matrix of discursive oppression that has historically shaped Chicana identities, while illuminating the potential for empowerment in creative rewritings of this script.

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Johnson, Barbara. *A Life with Mary Shelley*. With a foreword by Cathy Caruth, introduction by Mary Wilson Carpenter, and essays by Judith Butler and Shoshana Felman. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. Print. \$22.50. Paperback.

The publication, for the first time in this volume, of Barbara Johnson's last book *Mary Shelley and Her Circle* (2009) will be of interest to feminist theorists and literary critics alike. The volume as a whole takes us back to Johnson's early career as a teacher, literary scholar, and feminist critic, when she understood that decentering Romanticism through the reclamation of a marginality fraught with tensions – this is how she pieces together the life and work of Mary Shelley – required nothing less than a new critical idiom. In keeping with this insight, her last book weaves together several narratives, seamlessly moving between close readings, psychoanalytic insights, and theoretical claims unexpectedly emerging from skillful juxtapositions. Completed only a few weeks before Johnson's death, *Mary Shelley and Her Circle* is, perhaps one should say *above all*, a measure of the value of intellectual labor: Johnson's concise, yet pithy and unfailingly rewarding style is here refined in the relentless temporality of terminal illness.

Her last narrative assumes the deceptively simple form of a gallery of portraits – William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and