

### ***Woman Hollering Creek: Women and Water Imagery in the Work of Sandra Cisneros***

Sandra Cisneros is a Chicana writer mostly known for her award-winning novella *The House on Mango Street*. She often writes about characters that live on both sides of the Rio Grande, and they shape their identity by crossing back and forth over that iconic river. Water is described as an element with magical qualities as with Elenita, the witch-woman from *Mango Street*, who “makes the sign of the cross over the water three times” before she begins reading her cards (63). Water plays an important part in Cisneros’s works, notably in her short story “Woman Hollering Creek” from her collection of stories bearing the same name. Cisneros writes:

La Gritona [hollering woman]. Such a funny name for such a funny *arroyo* [creek]...though no one could say whether the woman hollered from anger or pain. The natives only knew the *arroyo* one crossed on the way to San Antonio, and then once again on the way back, was called Woman Hollering, a name no one from these parts questioned, little less understood. (46)

Here, Cisneros is closely equating the ideas of woman and water. The creek is “funny,” not in a lighthearted way, but in a way that causes the reader to feel the intense emotion of the woman. The crossing of the river expressed here supplies images of the Chicana experience of crossing back and forth over the Rio Grande, not only literally but in the sense of identity and culture. Here, we see the emotional, magical imagery describing the complexity of that dual nature and its relationship to water. The fact that no one understands the name of the creek, or cares to, indicates that no one understands the women La Gritona represents. Through water imagery, Cisneros passionately emphasizes the pain, the emotion, and the struggle of Chicanas.