

Laurel Loyless (2019)

“Motherhood as Power in *The Book of Unknown Americans*”

There is very little scholarship on *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henríquez. However, the topic of motherhood has been written about by many feminist theorists who negotiate the position as one of either passivity or power. Using Wolfgang Iser’s idea of the author breaking reader’s expectations and interacting with the reader to form the text, one can identify the techniques that Henríquez employs in creating one of her mother characters, Alma Rivera, who comes from the marginalized positions of woman, mother, and Chicana. Alma is formed as a woman who is simultaneously privileged and marginalized due to her marital, work, and legal statuses. Through her experiences, she forms and develops her *mother spirit* to become a stronger mother figure for her daughter, Maribel, showing that the position of mother is truly a position of power.