CAMINO REAL

Estudios de las Hispanidades Norteamericanas

Número especial

2022

Número especial

Queridos colegas:
Es imposible pensar en literatura chicana sin que nos venga a la mente *Bendíceme, Última*. Es imposible pensar en literatura chicana sin trasladarnos a Aztlán. Es imposible pensar en literatura chicana sin que nos parezca ver Tortuga a través de nuestras ventanas. Es imposible entender la literatura chicana sin Rudolfo Anaya.

Por ello, queremos dedicar en esta ocasión un número especial de *Camino Real* a este artista nuevomexicano cuya pasión por la escritura tanto ha contribuido a lo que hoy se conoce por todo el mundo como Literatura Chicana.

Para rendir este homenaje, hemos contado con la colaboración de grandes académicos, escritores y amigos que han leído y admirado a Rudolfo A. Anaya.

Camino Real es una publicación abierta a la colaboración con otras instituciones e investigadores, especialmente en Norteamérica. En este sentido, y como en anteriores volúmenes, invito a colegas y grupos de investigación en disciplinas como Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades de los Estados Unidos a enviar sus propuestas de publicación como "Guest Editor" para futuros volúmenes proponiendo temas de interés para la académica comunidad hispano-latina de Estados Unidos.

Agradezco una vez más vuestra confianza en *Camino Real*. Gracias a vuestras colaboraciones esta publicación del Instituto Franklin-UAH es ya referencial en el estudio de los hispanos en Estados Unidos a ambos lados del Atlántico.

José Antonio Gurpegui

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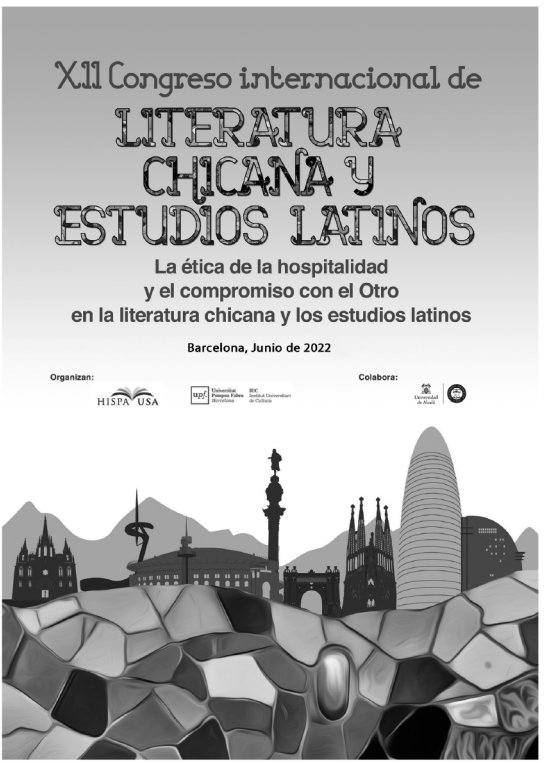

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La Llorona, an opera in 3 Acts. Based on the play *The Season of La Llorona* by Rudolfo A. Anaya, libretto and original story by Rudolfo A. Anaya, Music by Daniel Steven Crafts, Premier, Albuquerque Journal Theatre at National Hispanic Cultural Center, 25 October, 2008. http://www.dscrafts.net/LaLlorona.html

NOTES

1 Thanks to consultants Francisco A. Lomelí and Cecilia J. Aragón for their assistance in confirming bibliographical data.
2 Chronological order.
3 Chronological order.
4 Chronological order.
5 Chronological order.
6 Chronological order.
7 Chronological order.

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From *A Chicano in China* to Chicano-inspired subcultures in Japan: When Aztlan Intersects with Asia[1]

Julio Cañero
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I was a pilgrim who went to China, I visited the holy mountains and temples, and I prayed at the ancient shrines; I also walked the polluted streets of the cities, I mixed with the people, I touched them, I pulled them into my dream. I walked their factories, their prisons, their hospitals, and their markets, and I sat in their homes. I was a humble pilgrim who went to commune, and these are the impressions of that communication (x)[2]

Abstract

In the travel writing *A Chicano in China* (1986), Rudolfo Anaya offers the reader his perception of a society and culture, that of China, which should be alien to him. However, the New Mexican author does not live his Chinese journey as a mere observer, but, on the contrary, he turns his trip into a pilgrimage, a quest for a reality that transcends mere observation. Through his works, and the symbols that are present in them, Anaya tries to understand the reasons behind the epiphanic moments that he feels when walking the streets of Chinese towns and cities. A revealing recognition that influences him on three levels, as a writer, when he sees his artistic motives reflected in the Chinese culture, as a Chicano, when he verifies how the inhabitants of Southwest U.S. and China share incessant experiential similarities, and as a Nuevomexicano, when he identifies parts of the Chinese landscape with his native New Mexico. Starting from the experiences described by Anaya in *A Chicano in China*, this article will study the cultural connections between Asia and Chicanos through Anaya's eyes, but also through much more

unknown and current influences ranging from lowrider subculture to Chicano-inspired music in Japan. The ultimate goal will be to demonstrate that West and East have a common point in the Chicano people.
Keywords: Anaya, Chicanos, China, Japan, lowriders, music

* * *

INTRODUCTION

Everyone who works in the field of American Studies knows what Aztlan is. Yet, to give a specific connotation of the term is rather complex. Aztlan is many things at once and its meaning varies according to the political, social, educational, geographical, or cultural prism it is approached from (Anaya, Lomelí & Lamadrid). In short, defining Aztlan is a difficult task, although we all know what it is. For this work, Aztlan identifies with the place where the Mexica came from before the founding of Tenochtitlan. A mythical territory, to the north, which could well be the current southwestern United States. A space that Mexico lost in 1848 and in which a group of descendants of Mexica and Spaniards were located after the American annexation. From that indigenous, Spanish, and mestizo population emerged the Chicano (McWilliams). However, the origin of this community in the United States predates the Spanish and American conquests. It even precedes the Mexica migration to the Valley of Mexico. The origin of the Chicano is also in Asia, in the peoples that one day, around fifteen-thousands years ago, crossed the Bering Strait to settle in America. These people brought with them their cultures, languages, traditions, and a common Asian origin.

Chicanos, due to their double origin, are thus recognized as an intersection point between the West, represented by the Spanish conquerors who arrived from Europe, and the East, the original land of the first human settlers of the Americas (3). A crossroad that the New Mexico author Rudolfo Anaya experienced first-hand during his journey to China in 1984. Anaya began this trip to China as a tourist, but, very soon, he realized that it was more than that. The journey became for the author a vital experience and a return to the origin of the Americas, its people, symbols, and culture. His Chinese stay would end up influencing him on three levels: as a writer, as a Chicano, and as a New Mexican. The epitome of those

revelations resulted in the writing of his work *A Chicano in China* (1986). At the beginning of this book, Anaya pointed out how he embarked "on a trip to China, a pilgrimage that turned out to be one of the most incredible trips I have ever made" (v). A visit that would respond to many of his artistic and personal concerns, for, as Anaya acknowledged, "in the process of the trip, at the corners we turn in distant places [is] where we come face to face with the epiphany, the sudden impact of recognition" (vi). An affinity, both individual and collective, that led him to establish links between the Chicano people, his own literary production, and China (Torres; Fernández Olmos).

However, the connections between Aztlan and the East did not stop with Anaya's epiphanic experiences during his visit to China. Thirty-five years later, Aztlan can still be felt in Asia through three Chicano-inspired subculture realities currently developed in Japan. The first one is associated with the dressing manners adopted by some Japanese youngsters that essentially imitate the Chicano urban outfit: low shorts, high socks, loads of gear repping Los Angeles, and tattoos covering their torsos. This form of dressing is directly linked to the group's music preference for Chicano rap that includes Japanese Chicana-style rapper MoNa aka Sad Girl, very popular in her native country and California, or Japanese Chicano-style musician Night Tha Funksta, who focuses on the positive aspects of Mexican American culture. And the third aspect is the advance of a lowrider subculture that, along with dressing and music, has transgressed the streets of LA, San Antonio or Albuquerque and found a new spiritual home in Japan (Horncastle). This is the case of the Nagoya lowrider community, and whose best-known automobile association is the Pharaoh Car Club. This club was founded by Japanese lowrider Junichi Shimodaira and has been active for more than 30 years (Syakirah).

Drawing from the experiences described by Anaya in his travel writing, this article will study the cultural intersections between China and the American Southwest through the eyes of the New Mexican author. It will also seek that connection through the much more contemporary, and little studied academically, Japanese subculture derived from lowriders and Chicano-inspired music. The ultimate goal will be to show that the West and the East have a common meeting point in the Chicano people. To do this, the first part will present how travel writing is not only the result of curiosity,

but also a true vital necessity for the writer. The second part will present how *A Chicano in China* links the Chinese world to Anaya's vital experiences as a writer, as a Chicano, and as a New Mexican. And, before the conclusion, the last section will be a starting point for future academic studies on how Chicano culture is influencing Japan's own popular culture.

1. TRAVEL WRITING

There has always been travel literature because the journey, as part of the human condition, is not only the result of curiosity, but also a truly needed vital experience (Alburquerque-García). As human beings have sensed the urge to travel, voyagers have also felt the impulse to record their trips (Brettell) through the description of their experiences in foreign lands and cultures (Santos Rovira & Encinas-Arquero). When both premises meet, travel literature appears. In the Western context, for example, Homer's *Odyssey* represents the earliest typical masterpiece. Over the centuries, this type of literature was followed by innumerable variations and modifications in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish literary practice (Xia). On some occasions, these travel literary works were real, in others, they were fictious, imaginative or descriptive, poetic, fantastic or fictionalized (Porras Castro). And here is where resides the difference between travel writing (of factual nature) and travel narrative (of fictional nature). Whereas the former is generically aimed at the truth (Campbell)–i.e. Herodotu's *The Histories*,–in the latter there is room for adventure, science fiction, utopias, etc. (Alburquerque-García). In summary, all travel writing is travel literature, but not all travel literature is travel writing.

It is important to anticipate that this essay does not seek to identify any essential characteristic supposedly possessed by the bewildering diversity of forms, modes, and itineraries of travel writing (Fussell; Raban; Thompson). In that sense, the analysis sticks to the four features proposed by Alburquerque-García to recognize this type of literature:

1. They are factual writings because they are based on fact and because fiction is not the most prominent element, although it may appear. The story is born, develops and ends by following the thread of events lived in a time and space

that form its backbone. This condition does not exclude its literary character, although literary specialists have generally paid more attention to the voyage as a motif than to the travel account as a work of literature with its own literary devices (Brettell).

2. Description–of people, situations, customs, legends, myths, etc.–prevails over narrative. The narrative elements of this type of writings are also subject to the chronology of the trip, and the path traveled and described. And the rhetorical figures are used by the author as a descriptive mechanism to present the reader with reality.
3. Given its testimonial nature, in the balance between the objective and the subjective, this type of writing opts for the former. Travel writings tell what an author has experienced, showing closeness and commitment to what is narrated. Yet, it is possible to find elements of subjectivity, marks of a writer influenced by literary conventions and intellectual context (Fussell).
4. Paratextuality and intertextuality are present, too. The former is found in the titles of the books, the headings and the beginning of the chapters, the prologues, or the illustrations themselves. These paratextual marks make the readers realized that they are before an accomplished journey that comes in the form of a true experience. At the same time, travel writings are intertextual because they establish a dialogue with previous works that serve as literary referents (Romero Tobar).

At this point, it is important to mention the distinction between the explorer, the traveler, and the tourist. It is true that the three make journeys, and the three may write about those experiences. However, "the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveler that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, [and] the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity" (Fussell 39). Whereas Fussell prefers a more exclusive view of travel writing, limiting its production to the category of travelers, other authors, such as Thompson, opt for a broader and more inclusive definition, incorporating the other two categories. Anyhow, both the inclusive and exclusive positions

recognize that travel writing incorporates ethnographic (Brettell) and geographic (Suárez-Japón) descriptions.

To travel is to make a journey, a movement through space, which inevitably means to encounter difference and otherness. Travel writers record this meeting between the Self and the other, and narrate the negotiation between similarity and difference that the contact entails. Travel writings have, then, a two-fold aspect. On the one hand, they report unfamiliar people or places. And, on the other, they are very much influenced by the writer's values, preoccupations, and assumptions (Regales Serna), revealing, thus, much "of the culture from which that writer emerged, and/or the culture for which [the] text is intended" (Thompson 10). It is undeniable that throughout history, especially the European one, this type of expression has conceited racist intolerance. But it is also irrefutable that modern travel writing has also been an attempt "to overcome cultural distance through a protracted act of understanding" (Porter 3). Sharing travel stories help preserve and transfer cultural values from one generation to the next through re-enacting well-transited paths of memory (Oberholtzer).

Recent events associated with the pandemic provoked by COVID-19 have proven that we live in an era of escalating globalization. In our times, transnational mobility, travel, and cross-cultural contact are realities of life and an everyday experience for many people (Thompson; Cañero "El español como factor vertebrador de la latinidad"). Contemporary travel writings have echoed this new world, which, in turn, has made this type of literature very popular as it currently fosters "an internationalist vision, and implicitly, a cosmopolitan attitude that encourages tolerance, understanding and a sense of global community" (Thompson 6). If readers want to learn about the past and present of different places, travel writings made it possible to acquire that knowledge through the eyes of the travelers (Brettell). At the same time, this type of literature can help scholars, no matter whether they are historians, literary critics, or ethnographers, to understand the purposes behind such writings. This is the case of the author studied in this paper because, for Rudolfo Anaya, travel is "one of the crucial ways in which we gain knowledge about the integrated Earth on which we live" (ix).

2. ANAYA MEETS CHINA…

Rudolfo Anaya's *A Chicano in China* is a form of travel writing and, thus, part of travel literature. In this book, Anaya adopts the perspective of a travel writer who, through his inquiring Chicano eyes, introduces the reader to the Chinese landscape, people, and culture. He is able to do so because he always travels letting "the people and places to seep under my skin, to work their way into my blood, until I have become part of their secret" (vi). This knowledge allows him to give accurate physical descriptions of Chinese rivers, museums, people, and food. The author also reflects on past events, religions, and political theories through his many encounters with Buddhism, Maoism, the Cultural Revolution, and traditional Chinese wisdom. And very often, his day-to-day notes present one of Anaya's most remarkable literary characteristics: his wit and irony (Shirley). They both can be seen, for instance, when he compares Empress Suchi's sunk marble boat with the adobe-made airplanes and submarines built by the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF) and the Royal Chicano Navy during the Movimiento: "Let that be a lesson to you, Raza! Next time build the fleet of marble. It, at least, lasts" (28). *A Chicano in China* constitutes, then, a spiritual account of an expanding perspective in which the Land of Enchantment fuses with the Land of Dragons (Geuder). As in all travel writing, it is a text where reality prevails over fiction, although the author's dreams -or reflections, inspirations, intuitions, and divinations,–are constantly present to connect the West and the East–. A union felt and described by Anaya in three different spheres of his Self: as a writer, as a Chicano, and as a New Mexican.

2.1. The Recognition of a Common Symbology

A Chicano in China is the result of a journey that Rudolfo Anaya conceives as a quest to understand the set of secret symbols and images–"a fish, an owl, a door" (6),–which have appeared in his previous writings. That is why in the book he sees himself as a pilgrim who intends to find "a key to turn, a door to enter, a new way to see his role in the universe" (viii). At the same time, and, due to the discoveries he makes, he understands why he has gone to China: "to connect the streams of time, to connect the people. To connect and connect and keep making the connections" (124). This voyage is a homage to the ancient past of half of his nature, his Native American side, whose

origin is not in Europe or the United States, but in Asia. Thousands of years ago, Asian people migrated to the Americas crossing the then frozen Bering Strait. These migrants brought and preserved with them signs, symbols, archetypal memories, links, and an ancient history which have influenced Anaya's literary production (Shirley).

The images and symbols of his writings are reflected in China, and the author sets himself the task of arranging or rearranging that which he finds to give sense to his literature. Anaya realizes how many Chinese symbols are reflected in his own work. In *A Chicano in China*, he recognizes, when discussing the communion between West and East through the Chicano, that the "Waters of the Earth are connected; the memory of the people is connected" (160). Some years before this trip to Asia, Anaya wrote *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972). The protagonist of the novel, Tony Márez, is told by Ultima, the old *curandera*, that the "waters are one" (Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* 121). Acknowledging that connection, Tony is finally able to reconcile his, until that moment, antagonistic (vaquero/farmer) genealogy. Like Antonio in the novel, Anaya can understand his bond with China and the Asian world. The trip fills him with personal and artistic meanings that, eventually, will continue to appear in his works.

This is the case of the image of the dragon that appears in *Zia Summer* (1995) when the main character, Sonny Baca, remarks the parallels between ancient Aztec and oriental mythologies (Fernández Olmos). The connection made by Sonny is previously discussed by Anaya in *A Chicano in China*. During a walk in Beijing, the author compares the buildings he sees, where dragons are used as decoration to express supreme power and wisdom, with the constructions of Teotihuacán in Mexico. Like the dragon for the Chinese, the flaming Quetzalcóatl also represents power and wisdom in the Aztec world. It was the holy feathered Serpent who brought knowledge and learning to the Toltecs of ancient Mexico (21-22). This sudden epiphany reveals to Anaya the connection between himself and the first Asiatic people who moved into the Americas, and who brought with them their dragon dreams (21). Dragon visions that start to disturb the author's sleep while in China. Even though he tries to stay serene and centered (32), during his dreams, Anaya, swarmed with Chinese poetry, begins to absorb China–her land, and people,–as the dragon possesses his entire body. It is only then, when the thrashing dragon has completely

taken over his dreams, that the New Mexican writer is still. He is finally in peace with China. And when he wakes up, he feels refresh, a new man, a "dragon man" (46), a "Chicano Chinaman" (47). And upon his departure from China, Anaya takes the dragon dreams with him to plant them in New Mexico soil. The dreams and insights of "a pilgrim to China, a Chicano from the Southwest…" (179).

After his return to New Mexico, Anaya is very much aware of the reason why he went to China. He went to make connections, to learn about his soul as a man, and as an artist. As he was taught, he hopes to "teach others to see into the soul of things, to make that simple, human connection, which unites us all" (202). Of all the symbols that he finds and that connect his artistic imagery with China and Asia, the one that stands out the most is that of the "golden carp". In his most iconic work, *Bless Me, Ultima*, the golden carp represents a supernatural and pre-Christian divinity that destroys the corrupt universe and establishes a new order. Rudolfo Anaya finds the origin of this myth in China, which he revealingly calls the "land of the golden carp" (37). The author traces the origin of this symbol, which becomes a leitmotif during his trip to China and Japan, to the vision he had as a child of a group of carps swimming in El Rito, the little river in Santa Rosa, New Mexico. Years later, this vision would inspire him with the legend of the people turned into carps and the god who, also adopting the form of a carp, decided to live among them. The feeling experienced during his childhood is identical to the one he feels on his journey through Asia. Amidst the Chinese human swarm, Anaya sees a huge golden carp that leads him to point out: "[this] is the closest I have come to saying that a god lives among us" (152).

The similarities in the myths and symbols of his work and the Chinese world are not coincidental. These resemblances are part of the union that exists between Asia and Aztlan. It is not surprising that, when seeing a small lake full of carps, the author affirms that there "the West meets the East" (152). The different epiphanic moments experienced, when seeing how his artistic legends and symbols are connected to China, make Anaya exclaim: "Yes, I have returned to the land of the golden carp, I have returned home. My pilgrimage is complete…" (159). The East and Aztlan come together through a common past enlivened in the author's conscience. Centuries ago, "China sent part of her memory to the Americas and memory may sleep for thousands of years, but it will

awaken" (152). Through his work, Anaya tries to ignite in the Chicanos the urge for communion with the Asian peoples because the memory of both people "is connected" (160). As a storyteller of his southwestern culture, Anaya feels the impulse to tell the history of his people because with it, they will blossom with freedom. For Rudolfo Anaya, making a connection with China liberated him. He decided that it was his duty to liberate one more person, one at a time, who, eventually, will help him to liberate another. It is a continuous process, a historical process, "a slow march towards our eventual enlightenment–a knowledge and practice of our humanism" (177).

The golden carp is not the only symbol Anaya recognizes from his artistic production in China. "I find a pond." Says the New Mexican writer. "It is packed with turtles. Small turtles fill the pond, float in the water, sit in the rocks and sun themselves. In the water two golden carp swim slowly. What a sight. The turtles and the holy fish of my stories together..." (188). For Anaya, the turtles embody patience and resistance. *Tortuga* (1979) is of one of his most paradigmatic novels. The main character, called Tortuga, is a paralyzed young man who serves as an example of perseverance, of an endlessness capacity to excel (Cañero *Literatura chicana*). Like a turtle, the character moves slowly towards his future, liberating in his unhurried walk those who are locked with him in the hospital where they are staying. Everything in the clinic is designed to constrain the will of those who look for a cure in it (Ortego y Gasca). But Tortuga is able to transcend the walls of injustice and to transform himself into a symbol of hope for the rest of the hospital's patients. It is in China where Anaya finally understands why the turtle, as an archetypal image, has always haunted his writings. There, he finds a room with huge turtles supporting tablets with engraved words. Anaya considers that words are civilization, the Chinese civilization. Turtles, then, help to support the Chinese civilization. In the same sense, Chicanos need to move like Anaya's character, Tortuga, to make way into their future, overcoming the social difficulties they are certainly going to find. And in that journey, Chicanos need to rely on their own culture, on their own symbols, on their own identity. Those are decisive instruments to reach real freedom and equality.

Anaya does not endorse, however, a cruel revolution against discrimination. Quite the opposite. Turtles personify peaceful but

tenacious cultural resistance, like his own writing. And that is why Anaya was criticized as a writer during the Chicano Movement. Just as much as the Gang of Four curtailed the creative spirit of Chinese artists during the repressive years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Anaya recalls how some Chicano zealots derided artists "who dared to think and create in their own ways, that is, Chicanos who dared to think in ways other than the party slogan… I remember the Marxist critics who spoke out against me and others like me" (119). And those fanatics criticized him because he wrote stories like that of Tony Marez, who grew up in New Mexico seeing the beauty and magic of the golden carp, or that of Tortuga, who found freedom through resilience and appealing to the spirit of unity. The Chicano Marxist critics that dominated the academic arena at the time wanted Anaya to write about social reality, useful art. But Anaya did not give in the Chicano Gang of Four and, acknowledging that freedom for the oppressed was needed, he went on defending that Chicanos also needed "their house of art, their legacy, their history" (120). His Asian journey proves that the path he chose as an artist allowed him to connect with his own people. As much as he connected with the Chinese people during his trip to China.

2.2. A Not So Unknown People

There are two reasons that impel Anaya to call his travel writing *A Chicano in China*. The first one is because he is part of the Chicano community, which has nurtured his body and spirit. And second, because, as a Chicano, he also takes pride in the part of him that is an indigenous person of the American continent. "I always seek out the history and thought of the Americas," says Anaya, "because by understanding that past I understand better the present me" (vii-viii). This past links the author to the old Asian world, long before the arrival of the Spaniards, or the foundation of Mexico, when the original Mesoamerican populations crossed the Bering Strait bringing with them all the mythology and thought which has intrigued and interested him for many years (3). China is the ancestral homeland (Shirley) that pre-dated the foundation of Aztlan, and in her, Anaya seeks his own literary imagery. But there is more to get from China than mythical symbols. Anaya also looks for communion with the Chinese people, as when he recognizes a woman from

Laguna Pueblo in the face of Mrs. Wang, his Chinese guide. The writer is in China both to find part of his artistic Self, and to "embrace the Chinese Brown brothers, Raza!" (17).

Anaya is very much aware of the influence exercised by China and Asia on his literary creations and on the Chicanos. Thus, the writer seeks the footprint of China in his own people: "there is a strain in my memory that feels connected to the collective memory of these people. I see myself in their eyes and the color of their skin" (94-95). The Jungian communal unconscious, which all human beings store as a set of common archetypal formulas and memories (Abrams), connects the Chicanos with Aztlan, with pre-Columbian and contemporary Mexico, and with Asia. Cultural, racial, and even social similarities between China and Aztlan are perceived by the author during his trip, reinforcing the ties between both communities. He wants his *paisanos* to dream in Chinese characters (15). Anaya aspires to unite western Chicanos with oriental Chicanos, who are "a billion new souls for 'La Raza'..." (17). The combination between both groups could help them to even "rule the world" (17). Yet, Anaya soon discovers that in what both people are united is in their poverty. Both are part of the Third World: "We know it well. Chicanos are El Tercer Mundo in the soul of the United States" (27). Only the language is different: "I pause to talk to a man at work repairing a bike. He speaks Chinese. I speak the Spanish of New Mexico. We part on good terms" (66).

It is probably with the description of the Chinese people and their culture where Anaya finds the greater number of resemblances between Asians and Chicanos. As he spends time in the Asian giant, he begins to see more and more similarities, for instance in their culinary traditions. In the region of Sichuan, the writer has his first spicy meal in weeks and, as his tongue burns, he asks for more *chile*. He feels at home, eating at his favorite Mexican restaurant and drinking Chinese beer (83). Anaya's sense of humor is felt when he realizes that one of the beer's brand name is Tsingtao but pronounced like *Chingao*. The funny name makes him connect the Chinese with Aztlan: "Think of it, Raza, in the Southwest a beer with a name of Tsingtao would become more popular than Coors" (141). And he also feels connected to the Chinese cuisine when he eats lotus, the soul food, a delicacy he had not encountered before. The experience

is not completely new for the writer as, for him, it is like "eating posole for Christmas in New Mexico–soul food" (155).

There are many other moments during the trip that take Anaya back to the people and culture of his native land. In one of the cities, the group of Americans he is going with is invited to a ballroom. There is some dancing going on. The band reminds Anaya of a Mexican *conjunto*, and the first melody they play is like a Mexican *ranchera*. The writer and his wife, Patricia, take the dance floor and dance along the music. "Suddenly," Anaya declares, "it is like being back home at a wedding dance or in some small village where the dance hall is just getting warmed up" (155). In an antique shop, Anaya sees a porcelain Buddha with little children around his shoulders and compares it to the typical clay figures of a woman surrounded by children made by New Mexico Indian Pueblos (162). "History is recorded in the stories of the people; the Buddha is another Kachina we welcome into the pueblo", the author adds (162). And more similarities, like when Anaya sees millions of bicycles crowding the streets of Beijing, and he compares them to the Chicano '57 Chevys (22).

During his visit to a university dedicated to the teaching of Chinese diversity, Anaya is amazed by the fact that minorities are granted certain autonomy to preserve their culture, religion, and language. Together, he also acknowledges that the standard Mandarin is imposed by the central government in Beijing and is spoken by the majority of the population. He parallels this reality to his own experience at home, in the United States, where Hispanics are one of the oldest language-defined groups in the country. However, the Anglo-American authorities have always been reluctant to teach Hispanic or Native American thought and language (108). The Chicanos of the Southwest have been struggling to retain their history, language, and cultural identity, but the resources were always removed from them (55). This disadvantage position in the US makes Anaya think they are strangers in their own land; "Illegal aliens" (84). Anaya suggests, after he visits the Great Wall, to turn the Hispanic culture into a Great Wall of resistance against any kind of imposition. For the first Anglo-Americans who swept into New Mexico "the Great Wall of resistance was the Hispanic culture they found there. That wall of culture has been battered and bruised, but it's still in place" (43). Anaya believes that his Hispanic culture is "a

force connecting us to our history, a force as powerful as the Great Wall of China, that wall which is a symbol of Chinese resistance" (43). Both cultures have survived after suffering similar attacks from external forces. In 1984, Anaya felt the Chinese continued contesting foreign impositions, and that their endurance, working as the Great Wall, should also be the pathway for Atzlán (37).

Whereas Anaya seeks and appreciates the connections between China and his native homeland, the other Americans in the group only express complaints about Chinese culture and traditions. Just like the Eurocentric travelers from earlier periods, they display a cultural superiority that annoys the writer. The reason for Anaya's irritation resides in how Anglo-Americans went to Hispanic New Mexico in the 19th Century, telling New Mexicans how to run their own land. Those Hispanics had many strengths, but the foreign Anglo-Americans only saw weaknesses in them. Anaya equates those Anglo-American strangers from the past with this group of American visitors who only see China's weaknesses and never her assets. Anaya proposes to look at those strengths and recommends sending "people of good will to China" (146). Looking back in time, everyone in Anaya's group would be surprised of how quickly China has modernized and turned into a true economic dragon during the 21st Century.

But the China they are visiting in 1984 still has a long path to walk before transforming itself into an economic power. The country in front of Anaya's dissecting eyes is full of rice fields and vegetable gardens worked by Chinese men and women. He sees in the villages the same village life he grew up in rural New Mexico. The author feels connected to the brown men and women he sees working those lands (40). This communion is very similar to the one experienced by Joe Calabasa, a character in *Alburquerque* (1992), while fighting in Vietnam. Serving as a soldier during the war, Joe is shot by an old Vietnamese farmer. Instead of killing each other, Joe begins to sing an old traditional Native American chant from his Pueblo tribe. The old Vietnamese responds with a local song. The reaction of both contenders creates a communion that fills up their hearts and overcomes the external forces that impelled them to fight. The shot serves as an epiphanic moment to Joe, who finally realizes that people should always be above any ideology. The old Vietnamese farmer was not fighting for Marx, Ho, or Mao. He was just a farmer defending his

family and his land. Joe understands that a peasant needs strong arms to farm (Anaya, *Albuquerque*), not to fight. Like Joe in *Alburquerque*, Anaya senses a strong spirit of communion with all the Chinese farmers. His trip to China is full of meaning and endless associations. Practically everywhere he goes, he sees something which reminds him of his people and his home (Shirley).

2.3. The Importance of the Landscape

Rudolfo Anaya's literary production is closely linked to southwestern United States. For the nuevomexicano author, both its landscape and those who inhabit it are in communion. From this man-landscape relationship arises the 'metaphor' and the 'epiphany': on one side of the metaphor will be the man and on the other the landscape. The epiphany, according to Anaya ("A Writer Discusses his Craft"), is a human being's natural response to the landscape. In this way, once the individual opens up to the power of the landscape and, consequently, experiences the epiphany, he becomes a completely new being. This new-man is capable of dissolving the polarity of the metaphor (man-landscape) and is able of creating unity in the epiphany. The epiphany of the place produces a healing effect on the individual. Thus, when he is separated from his land, the individual becomes alienated and frustrated, since he loses its center and his source of redemption. But when he is in it, he feels safe and in unity with his environment and community. Although, as Anaya recognizes, a Chicano in China is far from Aztlan (115), the third element that connects his artistic discourse with the Asian nation is its landscape and the epiphanic moments the author lives through while observing it.

The communion Anaya feels with the Chinese symbols and people is also revealed through China's landscape. The author does not see himself as a foreigner while walking the Chinese cities, villages, and fields. On the contrary, he feels he is part of the landscape as much as, after his return to New Mexico, he doesn't know if he is "a Chicano in China, dreaming I am a Chinese visitor to New Mexico, or if I am a Chinese visitor to New Mexico dreaming I am a Chicano in China" (192). The conjunction between the Chinese landscape and the New Mexican author is such that it resembles the sensations that the writer gets from admiring New Mexico's landscape. The landscape epiphany so characteristic of his fiction transcends Anaya's literary works to connect with the East. The author assumes his oriental

heritage and looks through it at the Chinese landscape that is offered to him. The image that the writer sees gives him peace of mind, sure that the place he steps on is familiar: "Looking at the pines I do not know if I am in the western hills of Beijing or in Taos, New Mexico" (46); or "[in] the afternoon we ride home in an extraordinary light, a sharp, yet mellow light, the kind of light that comes slanting over my West Mesa in Albuquerque in the afternoon. The green of the canal is the radiant water of the golden carp" (36); and even more: "I feel as much at home here as I have felt walking the streets of Mexico. The hole-in-the-wall shops are the same, people sitting on the sidewalks selling soft drinks, eggs, and vegetables are the same" (67).

Anaya recognizes that he feels so close to China because, during his formative years, he experienced a peasant, rural culture in New Mexico. It was a difficult life, but rewarding. In his journey, the writer finds many villages composed of unites, communes, like Puerto de Luna, his grandfather's home. In Puerto de Luna, "the farmers owned their land, they nourished their families from the earth, they sold their produce, but they led a communal life" (39-40). On his road to the Great Wall, Anaya passes through small farm villages, and everywhere he sees men and women working and talking. The author senses how the "life spirit of the commune flows into the fields, fields of rice, wheat, peach orchards, vegetables; all around us as far as I can see in the haze…" (41). Many of these fields are nurtured by ditches, *acequias*. That is another aspect of New Mexican village life he finds in China: the canals that irrigate the fields. Growing up in Puerto de Luna, Anaya remembers how the *acequia madre* brought water to the fields from the Pecos River. The care of the ditch was a communal responsibility, creating "a communal sharing; all of one and one for all, assignment of labor, the equal sharing of the water" (40).

Not only the communal part of Anaya's life in Puerto de Luna is evoked by Chinese villages. Visiting a traditional Chinese house, Anaya is brought back to his childhood in that rural New Mexico. The owner of the house invites the author to enter her home, very much like *mi casa es su casa* Chicano / *Mexicano* style. Once inside the house, he notices it is plain, simple, and clean. Just like his grandfather's house in New Mexico. Then, he looks at the wrinkled face of the woman and feels at home: "I feel I am back in my childhood and the woman is a neighbor who has come to visit my mother. Our

home was much like this woman's home, plain and simple. We were a rural country people" (74). That simpleness is also perceived by Anaya's witty irony when he describes Chinese toilets in rural China. Chinese toilets are nothing but a hole in the ground. Chinese people have built their toilets around the art of squatting, and when they feel the urge, "a good squat clears the air" (70). This comic observation leads the author to another parallelism between both cultures. He remembers how, when he was a child in Santa Rosa, each home had an outhouse they called *comunes*: "Outside toilets without running water" (70). Those childhood experiences are long past, and he is now used to the Chinese toilets (and their stench). The author does not criticize this Chinese custom. On the contrary, he acknowledges how spoiled foreigners to China have become in dealing with their habits and how "natural the Chinese system is" (70).

Rivers also constitute archetypal landscape elements that continuously catch Anaya's attention. The author recognizes China and her people in the Yangtze River. It is China's history, her blood, and her past, future, and present (118). The same applies for the Chicanos and the Rio Grande River of New Mexico. Anaya sees in both the Yangtze and the Rio Grande a common current that goes beyond the similar chocolate color of their waters. Both rivers embody the writer's dreams, imagination, source of creative inspiration, and poetic numen. The real and the magical come together in the two rivers whose original connection is placed by the writer in the eastern migrations to the new world, many centuries before his European ancestors "disturbed the Rio Grande valley, disturbed the peace of the Pueblos" (32). As the Chinese in China, the Indo-Hispano people of Aztlan "are heirs of that magical realism that built the cities and temples of the Americas before Columbus" (118). Anaya realizes that both rivers figuratively run through his literary imagination, shedding symbols, metaphors, and magic realism all over his fictional work. The origin of his artistic creations is as much in Asia as it is in Aztlan. He finally finds the answer to the uncertainties he had before starting his journey to China. And the response produces a redemptive effect on the author: "I have made my personal connection to China and I feel liberated" (176). He establishes a bond that was primarily personal and artistic but becomes communal. Before leaving China, Anaya buys a wind bell

for his terrace at home so that the "southwest winds of Aztlan will make Chinese sounds on the West Mesa of Albuquerque" (190). In the author's eyes, that union will never be dissolved.

3. … AND ASIA MEETS AZTLÁN: PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Only someone like Anaya, whose educated eyes have also seen the hardness and beauty of growing up in a rural setting, can describe with such accuracy the connections between his homeland and Asia. A link that the author traces in his work and perceives in himself, as a Chicano descendant of the Spanish conquistadors and the native people who first populated the Americas. Today, there are others who have recreated those links from Asia. It is not the China described by Anaya, but the Japan of the 21st century. A whole new area opens up within American Studies thanks to Chicano-inspired subcultures in the country of the rising sun. There is no theoretical framework to address these subcultures yet, and it would be really important to develop academic studies in this regard. This article presents the issue, but it would be up to others to academically investigate the reasons behind the adoption of Chicano-inspired cultural traits by young and not-so-young Japanese.

There are three elements to highlight within the Chicano-inspired subculture currently developed in Japan. The first one is related to the dressing codes adopted by Japanese youngster that essentially try to imitate the Chicano urban outfits. Some Japanese kids dress like hip kids from a *barrio* in the United States. The *cholo/chola* style serves these Japanese kids to rebel, as nonconformist *cholos/as* did (Laboy). Japanese kids are influenced by movies, music videos, and the social networks. The Internet has become a globalizer in itself, allowing to put in contact distant cultures and cultural constructs. One of the most popular artistic creations is Chicano rap. When performed by Chicanos, this type of music presents unique features that include "lyrics that mix Spanish and English, Spanglish and caló and visual iconography that indexes Chicano nationalism and Mexicanidad" (Helland 25). Groups of Japanese youngsters have turned to dress in the Cholo/a style and are listening to this type of music. Chicano rap musicians regularly perform at Japanese concerts and collaborate with Japanese artists who perform Chicano rap. This type of music is the second element that today links Asia with Aztlan.

Helland has analyzed from a multilingual, multimodal critical discourse approach the music videos of a Japanese artist called Mona aka Sad Girl. This is probably one of the few academic approaches to this subculture. In her study, Helland explains how this artist has adopted the language, semiotic symbols, and themes of Chicano rap, but adapted to the local Japanese contexts. The Japanese female rapper even performs in Chicano rap style, including in her songs some words in Japanese, English, Spanish, and caló. As it could not be otherwise, the artist has also adopted a Chicano iconography and style. Another noteworthy Japanese Chicano-style musician is Night Tha Funksta. In his compositions, instead of emphasizing stereotypical images of Chicano culture (in themes such as gangs and the like), he only references the positive traits of Chicano culture. For him, elements of Chicano culture such as loyalty, bonding, unity, and the importance of family emphasize the connections between each member of the community (Syakirah). According to Helland, to understand "the growing popularity of Chicano rap in Japan, it must be seen as part of the broader phenomenon of lowrider culture worldwide" (26).

The third element that connects this Japanese subculture to the urban Chicano scene is that of the lowriders. Probably brought by the Mexican American soldiers serving in the American military bases of Japan, the lowrider culture, originally from Southwest US, goes hand in hand with rap and the *cholo/a* dressing style in Japan. There is a great amount of literature on lowriding, its origins in Los Angeles, and how Chicanos used their cars not as a source of transport, but as ethnic statements. By driving slowly and slamming their cars to the ground, some Chicanos showed their nonconformist and rebellious spirit in the urban areas of Aztlan. Their cars were full of religious imagery and Mexican American symbolism, making them more pieces of art than cars (Horncastle). This slow driving taste for Chicano imagery and symbolism are what today can be seen in Nagoya, Tokyo, or Chiba in Japan. There are even Japanese lowrider clubs that occasionally meet, and people from all over the country come to share hamburgers, guacamole, and imported beers. This is the perfect end for an "incredible fusion car scene" (Horncastle). There are many possible reasons to be researched on why these Chicano trends are so popular in Japan. Maybe, as Anaya saw in the Chinese a reflection of the Chicanos' ancestral origin, the

Japanese feel attracted to the Chicano culture because they do not see it as completely foreign to them. These are the answers that future studies should pursuit.

CONCLUSION

Travel writing represents a cathartic moment for the writer, but also for those who follow the author through the pages of a travel book. This is the case of *A Chicano in China*. Once it is finished, "the reader finds he has learned much about modern China, not only the physical features, but also about the cultural and spiritual life of the people" (Shirley 97). This is only possible thanks to Anaya's rich narrative as he enrolls the reader in a trip that will accompany him as part of the author's personal history. Rudolfo Anaya went to China, as a humble pilgrim, to learn. And he learned to connect the streams of time, to connect the people, and to keep making the connections (124). He saw his own literary symbols made real in the ponds and rivers of China. He was a Chicano in the arms of billions of Chinese. And China, her traditions, and her people, let the writer go back home in peace, "renewed, fulfilled" (196). He took some real and spiritual fragments from China to New Mexico forever. The sense of communion that Anaya found in China was not accidental. That union between Asia and Aztlan had always been there, in a common original culture brought by the Asian people to the Americas. Anaya was able to recognize those hidden connections in his own literature.

The China Anaya encountered in 1984 is very different from today. Now the Dragon has awakened and is a world economic and military power. The situation of Chicanos is also different, better maybe, although they still lag behind most U.S. social and economic indicators. It would be really interesting to know what Anaya had written had he visited the Asian giant now. He would probably be surprised by this change. As he would also be astonished to observe those groups of young people who have recreated Aztlan in Japan, revealing unexpected cultural preferences for Chicano rap, outfit, and lowriding. Anaya understood the importance of Chicanos in this spiritual union between East and West. It is the task of future studies to investigate the reasons behind these Japanese cultural preferences that seem to continue to place Chicanos and their culture as a point of communion between Asia and Aztlan.

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NOTES

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2 Anaya, Rudolfo. *A Chicano in China.* University of New Mexico Press, 1986. All subsequent quotes belong to this edition. They appear in the text only with the page number(s).

Directing a Play by Rudolfo Anaya: Un recuerdo y muchas memorias

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Although I consider novels my principal genre, I have always been fascinated with the stage. In my secret, imaginary life, I have seen myself as an actor. I did play the role of a shepherd in a fifth-grade Christmas play long ago. I described that scene in my novel, Bless Me Ultima. *Alas, that was the beginning and end of my acting career.*

(Anaya, Who Killed Don José *ix)*

Abstract

In 1987 I had the honor of directing the world premiere of Rudolfo Anaya's play, *Who Killed Don José*? for La Compañía de Teatro de Alburquerque[1]. Much has been written about the import and impact of Anaya's novels and other writings but very little has been published about his plays. In his "Comments from the playwright" preceding his collection titled *Billy the Kid and other Plays*, Anaya wrote, "I was a drop in the bucket of the Chicano Theater movement that came alive during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 70s." (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José* x). He then reminds his readers that performances and rituals have been a part of the of the indigenous, Spanish and mestizo cultures of New Mexico for centuries. Indeed, *Los Pastores* is undoubtedly the play in which a fifth-grade Rudy Anaya played that shepherd, a play that was brought to the *Américas* by the Spanish colonizers. It was only natural that this man of many voices should turn his gaze to the stage as another platform on which to bring to life his fellow Nuevo Mexicanos, their history and cultures.
Keywords: Anaya, Chicano theater, culture, *Who Killed Don José?*

* * *

Let me begin by telling the reader how I, this Chicano born in 1942 in East Los Angeles, became interested in the cultures and theatrical practices of New Mexico. Like Anaya, I began my teaching career as a high school teacher. It was during that period that I first witnessed the group that inspired the Chicano Theater Movement: Luis Valdez and the Teatro Campesino. The year was 1968, when Mexican-Americans from California to Chicago began to call themselves Chicanas and Chicanos, tired of "living on the hyphen," looking for their history as Mexicans living in the US. The Teatro Campesino performed at the University of California, Riverside and that performance changed my life forever. Although I had earned my B.A. and M.A. in Dramatic Arts, I had never been exposed to plays by and about Mexicans or Mexican-Americans. But here were these vibrant, passionate Chicanos in a moving performance with music as Luis Valdez recited the iconic poem, "I Am Joaquin," by the late Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, while slides of the Chicanos' troubled history were projected onto a screen to underscore the poet's passionate, angry and prophetic words.[2] I was curious to know what was being written about this thing called Chicano theater; was there a history I could explore?

Two years later I began my doctoral studies in Dramatic Art at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I went to the university library eager to learn about what was termed "Theater: Mexican-American" in the subject and card catalogues. There were no plays about Mexican-Americans in print and most of the articles and dissertations were about Spanish religious folk theater. Further, many of these resources had been published in the 1930s by anthropologists who had "discovered" the centuries-old Spanish religious folk plays of the Southwest. Indeed, the first play performed in what would become the Southwest was performed by Spanish soldiers on their way to found Santa Fe, Nuevo Mexico. Little is known about that performance, dated April 30, 1598, but three months later they performed *los moros y los cristianos* in Santa Fe (Johnson 35). Much more has been written about Spanish folk theater in the US beyond New Mexico and Texas but back then, I felt like I had "discovered" a part of my Spanish, indigenous, and Mestizo theatrical past. What fascinated me most was the fact that much of the information I read was about New Mexico as a major source of Spanish religious folk theater.

1. THE FIRST STAGES OF CHICANO THEATER 1965-1978

While the Spanish religious folk theater was not limited to New Mexico, its presence was not as strong in California, where Luis Valdez was born and raised. Records show that Spanish-language plays were recorded in the mid-1880s onward, especially in Texas and California. But those productions were often performed by touring troupes from Mexico, Cuba and other Spanish-speaking countries. Further, the plays were either Spanish classics or plays from the old country[3]. By the early 20th century popular entertainments were abundant, especially the Mexican *carpas* or tent shows that featured musical acts as well as comic sketches that preceded and inspired Valdez in developing the Teatro Campesino's early aesthetic. The first members of the Teatro Campesino were actual farmworkers, fighting for a union being organized by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. In a word, the early Teatro was "*rasquachi*" a colloquial Mexican term that denotes something unsophisticated, brash and raw, but not without spirit. The early Teatro could thus be described as having a "rasquachi aesthetic;" simple but not simplistic. The early Teatro Campesino and Valdez's leadership inspired other mostly young student activists to form their own teatros, mirroring the *actos* that Valdez and his troupe had developed in their first five years.

2. PROFESSIONAL TEATRO COMES TO NEW MEXICO

A young Rudolfo Anaya was in the middle of this emerging Chicano Movement as a high school teacher, university professor and as a writer. He was there in the very beginning as inspiration to all New Mexicans and was, himself, also motivated by the Teatro Movement. Confirming this, Prof. Cecilia Aragon wrote me: "Tio Rudy would always refer to El Teatro Campesino whenever we would have serious talks about Chicano teatro" (Aragon, Cecilia. E-mail to the author 22 February 2021). By the late 1970s professional theater dedicated to the Nuevo Mexicanos' history and themes was coming to Albuquerque. In 1976 the country's leading Spanish-language theater company, *Repertorio Español*, based in New York City, was touring the US and performed in New Mexico. A member of the cast was José Rodríguez, a brilliant actor born in Puerto Rico, who had trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. David R. Jones quotes Rodríguez: "I had never seen mountains that big with so much

space around them." Continuing, Jones writes, "[Rodríguez] later recalled, 'It felt like a spiritual gift had been given to me. It felt like being home' " (Jones 14). Rodríguez was so taken by New Mexico's history, traditions and cultures that he left a very promising career with the *Repertorio Español* the following year and returned to Albuquerque to find his place as a cultural worker. In 1979 he became the founding Artistic Director of *La Compañía de teatro de Alburquerque* (hereafter referred to as *La Compañía*). That same year, Rodríguez commissioned three New Mexican playwrights to each write a one-act play reflecting on the themes of *"Leyenda, Realidad y Fantasía."*

Naturally, Rodríguez invited Maestro Anaya to contribute to this inaugural event, titled *A New Mexican Trilogy*. along with Denise Chavez and E.A. Mares, well-known New Mexican writers. In Anaya's words, "He [Rodríguez] had read my novella, '*The Legend of La Llorona*,' and recognized its dramatic potential. So I wrote *The Season of La Llorona,* and with his guidance my first play was produced" (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José* ix). While people have compared the persona of La Llorona to the Greek *Medea*, in the words of David R. Jones, Anaya dramatized the legendary story "by following the myth about New Mexico's favorite bogey-woman back to Cortez and the Aztecs" (Jones 15). Anaya witnessed the audience's reactions to his *La Llorona* adaptation and his playwriting was unleashed. If he couldn't be an actor, he could create roles for actors, reaching living audiences beyond the page.

3. BEYOND *ULTIMA*

Like so many others, I was introduced to the wonders of New Mexico by Anaya's writings, beginning with *Bless Me Ultima,* which was published in 1972 while I was "becoming a Chicano" in graduate school. As the years passed, I also became fascinated with New Mexico by a collection of poems by Leo Romero, a native of New Mexico. In his volume of poems, titled simply, *Celso*, Romero introduces the reader to a simple man, Celso, *el sinvergüenza del pueblo*, who is a trickster and the village drunk. With Romero's blessings, in 1985 the late Ruben Sierra invited me to collaborate on an adaptation of Romero's poems, creating a one-man play under my direction. Together, Sierra and I would bring Romero's poems and

characters to life. We titled the two-act play "I Am Celso;" Celso relating his tall tales to the audience as if to a single observer. We organized the themes of each poem to reflect memories of moments in his life about love, loss, and his love of cheap wine, women and the beauty of New Mexico. The play was a great success and Ruben Sierra toured the country from 1985-86 performing the character of Celso to great audience appeal.[4]

In our adaptation Celso reveals how he had been unwittingly seduced by a beautiful woman but that when he awakened after a night of passionate love-making he saw that she was a *calavera, La Sebastiana*. He tells us that he ran out of the house and that as he ran:

> I noticed that the mountains seemed to be dancing but it was a slow patient dance done by black-veiled widows. A dance to make the heart grow cold! I crossed my heart and said 'Blessed is the Virgin, and so is her Child' but I couldn't escape the strange feeling that the mountains were in procession to a funeral. For who? For who? I thought frantically. If someone could have touched my heart at that moment he would have felt something so cold that it would have burned (Romero, "A Widow's Dance" 83).

4. ON DIRECTING PLAYS IN NEW MEXICO

It was also during the mid-1980s that I had begun to direct readings and fully-mounted plays for *La Compañía* and had fallen in love with "The Land of Enchantment." By now I had met Anaya; he was already a legend himself, in this land of myths, legends and fantasies. Around 1985 Anaya and his wife, Patricia, and I had attended an international conference in Paris and we had enjoyed a good time talking about literature and theater and drinking French wines, of course. I have in my files a type-written letter Anaya sent me after that Paris conference. It is dated April 14, 1986 and in it he writes:

> You mentioned you would like to do something of mine, so I am enclosing "Death of a Writer." I also have ready to go (except for rewriting a bit of the ending) a two-act murder mystery, "Who Killed Don José?" set in New Mexico, contemporary, it is about the last of a patrón, high tech, love, double crossing at the state capitol, probably great for New Mexican audiences."

Of course, I immediately read "Death of a Writer," but it was too short for an evening in the theater so I asked Anaya to send me a copy of his script for *Who Killed Don José?,* eager to work with such a generous, loving Son of Nuevo Mexico. After a first reading of the play, I knew that I wanted to direct it. My experiences working with *La Compañía* were always very rewarding and introduced me to a community of people who were serious about theater; a theater that reflected the lives of the people in the audience.

According to David Jones, Anaya was partly inspired to write *Who Killed Don José?* during a visit to London when he and his wife, Patricia, saw a production of Agatha Christie's murder mystery, *The Mousetrap*. As Jones tells it, "Walking from the theater, Anaya turned to his wife and said, 'I could write a Chicano *Mousetrap!*'" (Jones 199). And he did. As Anaya stated in his letter to me, *Who Killed Don José?* is just that, a murder mystery. Jones described the first version as "a 'whodunit' in which the title character, shot at the first act curtain, returned at the play's end to expose his enemies and marry his mistress." I was fascinated by this play about a New Mexican Patrón. In an interview preceding the opening of the play I told Jones, "I do not know of a [Hispanic] aristocracy in California. Sure, we have multimillionaires but they're basically nouveau-riche" (Jones 200). And I remind the reader that the majority of young people involved in the early Chicano theater movement were mostly working-class activists, the children of hard-working Mexican parents and the first in their families to attend college. Therefore, the actos and plays that were being produced reflected what they knew. If there were upper-class Chicanos or Mexicans in their dramatic works, they were stereotypically "the enemy," not real people. But the theatrical scene was about to transform.

5. CHICANO THEATER GOES PROFESSIONAL

Always at the forefront, in 1978 Luis Valdez altered the face of the American theater when he wrote and directed his now-classic play, *Zoot Suit*, with a fully-professional multicultural company in Los Angeles and New York. A new stage in the evolution and development of Chicano dramaturgy and praxis had begun: professionalism. This production opened the doors to professional and community theaters across the country inspiring Latinx theater artists to seek training in

theater departments across the country. The teatros, too, were reflecting this trend and women's voices came to the fore as Latinas began to express their realities in plays that challenged the producers to find professionals to direct, design and act in their productions. In his "comments from the playwright," Anaya writes: "Latino USA was marching onto the stage sporting a new language, Spanish mixed with English, and new themes….*Zoot Suit* led the way. Me? I was still loyal to my native earth, and if my themes and characters didn't fit Broadway, I didn't care. My gente loved my plays. That's what mattered" (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José?* x).

In the mid-1980s *La Compañía* had become my artistic home in New Mexico and having witnessed the appreciative audiences in Albuquerque, I knew exactly what Anaya was talking about and jumped at the chance to direct *Who Killed Don José?* After a series of artistic directors, Irene Oliver-Lewis had taken the helm as Artistic Director/Producer of *La Compañía* and invited me to direct Anaya's murder mystery. So off I went, back to New Mexico with my student assistant director, Jesse Longoria, and began the process of bringing this play to fruition. I recently asked Oliver-Lewis why she chose this play and she responded:

> In rereading the script I am reinforced on why I believed it was an important play for La Compañía to produce by a writer *who was the soul of New Mexico* (italics mine). Rudy was so instinctive of the changes that technology could bring for the economic and professional benefits for Chicanos—jobs, self-resilience, and education. What a crazy idea he [Don José] had: to support a bullet train and a computer factory that would hire Chicanos as workers and engineers on land that had been in his family for years (Oliver-Lewis, Irene. e-mail the author 3 March 2021).

In their "Afterword" to Anaya's collection of plays, Profs. Cecilia Aragon and Robert Con Davis-Undiano give the following assessment of his first play, *The Season of La Llorona*, which takes place in the present as well as the past; a play within a play. They write: "Anaya's use of the archetypal figure of La Llorona/Malinche has many theatrical functions, as she reflects the Mexican-American oppositions of fact/fiction, past/present, oppression/freedom, natural/supernatural, and reality/illusion as well as a "both/and"

blended cultural reality." (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José?* 372). In effect, this one-act sets a tone for Anaya's dramatic output to come. Further, in their discussion of *Who Killed Don José?,* Aragon and Davis-Undiano echo Oliver-Lewis's appraisal: "Anaya shows how the promise of shared cultural knowledge may motivate people, and he calls for his audience to empathize with New Mexican characters whose history is marked by conquest and exploitation, violent politics, intercultural politics and pressing rural/small-town community conflicts" (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José?* 374).

6. THE PLAY

Anaya was not new to dramatic literature and *Who Killed Don José?* reflects his knowledge of dramatic structure, in the tradition of the "well-made play." The playwright builds suspense as the plot unfolds with rising and falling action, minor crises and complications, and a major crisis at the end of Act One. It was fun to read and even more fulfilling, working with an internationally recognized Chicano author. The action takes place in Don José's hacienda and as described by Anaya in the stage directions, the setting evokes a mood and a sense of foreboding:

> It is a cold and windy October night in Santa Fe County. The spacious living room of Don José's ranch is decorated in old, traditional New Mexico style, including large fireplace, brick floor, Indian rugs on the walls, table with drinks, and comfortable sofa and chairs, all covered with well-worn Chimayo rugs. Outside the wind moans, dogs bark and the distinct bleating of sheep can be heard (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José?* 79).

Anaya was very particular in his description of the visuals. Recalling the designs for our *Compañía* production, Irene Oliver Lewis wrote me:

> The New Mexico cultural arts were also highlighted in the set design. It was very important to include examples of our carved Santos, tin work, adobe construction, weaving, and pottery…I asked my dad to recreate the carved woodwork that he learned as a young man in the art of traditional territorial woodcarving in 1939 in the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The set… was a tribute to our New Mexican arts and crafts (Oliver-Lewis, Irene. E-mail to the author 6 March 2021).

There are eight characters in the play, each with distinct histories and objectives that make them interesting and keep the audience wondering: if somebody is going to kill Don José, who will it be? The first characters we meet are Maria, Don José's daughter, and Tony, a sleazy car salesman who lusts after three things: money, power and Maria. Maria has returned, having graduated from UCLA and isn't sure what her next steps are. Enter Don José, a wealthy Hispanic, a Patrón in the tradition of New Mexican *hacendados*. He is portrayed as a good man, eager to bring the future to New Mexico with computers—we are talking about 1987, long before today's technological wonders. Thus, he is a visionary, working with Ramón, a computer nerd who appreciates the potential import and impact of technology. Ramón is also interested in Maria. The competition for Maria's attention between Tony and Ramón becomes humorous as the plot takes twists and turns and we meet all of the players. In contrast to these three characters are Doña Sofia, the housekeeper and her son, Diego, the foreman of the sheep ranch. Diego lends humor to the play, a lovable oaf who drinks too much.

Completing the cast are Ana, Don José's lover, and the Sherriff, known only as the Sheriff. As the first act unfolds, we learn about each characters' relationship to the title character. Essential to the plot, we learn that Don José has a computer disk with damaging information about Santa Fe politicos having stolen Foundation funds meant to help the community. Don José has learned that the state has chosen to build a bullet train that will cut right through his land, making him an instant millionaire. He also knows that the Foundation leaders know that he holds the key to their malfeasance and have a threatened to "get rid of him." The suspects line-up in our minds—everyone has a motive to kill Don José!

As in any good mystery, guns are at the center of our attention from the very first scene, when Maria takes Tony's pearl-handled revolver from him. She tells Tony that Don José's father was shot and killed, therefore he doesn't allow guns in the house. She then hides the revolver in the telephone table. As I learned decades ago, do not put a gun onstage *unless you plan to use it.* The gun and the table will play important roles in the action, as will other guns, meant to confuse everyone in the play. As other guns appear and change hands the audience enjoys watching the fast-moving action unfold.

Further, do not put a computer onstage unless it plays an important role. To wit: by the end of the first act, when Don José tries to find the program disk (which we've seen the Sheriff put in his pocket). Suddenly the lights go-out:

> "Damn! The lights!" (*Don José's outline appears in the glare of the monitor screen He senses someone in the room.*) "Sheriff? Is that you? *There is a gunshot, a flash of fire, a moan as Don José falls to the floor. A woman screams. The shadow of a figure runs across the monitor screen, footsteps sound, the woman screams again* (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José?* 105).

A moment later the lights come on and Maria appears at the door and sees Ana standing over Don José's body with a pistol in her hand. Then the Sheriff runs-in as Maria rushes to her father's limp body. Doña Sofia runs in from the kitchen, followed by Tony, who stops and slowly removes his gloves. Maria accuses Ana of killing her father and Ana calmly says "No, I didn't." The Sheriff shouts "Don't nobody move!" Then Tony shouts, "Listen!" *All pause and turn to the voice that comes from the computer. The screen is flashing wildly. A computerized voice is heard*: Mary had a little lamb. . . little lamb. . . little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. . . whose fleece was white as snow." END OF ACT ONE (Anaya, *Who Killed Don José?* 105).

One of the joys of a murder mystery, when well-constructed, as is this play, is trying to solve the mystery. The second act is dedicated to revealing the murderer as we slowly follow the logic. The action starts right after the blackout of act one, the Sheriff taking charge of the "investigation." During the intermission we decided to ask the audience members to submit their candidate of who was guilty, which the audiences loved. To Anaya's credit, people didn't always choose the culprit. As I stated earlier, every time a character's motive for killing Don José was revealed, there was a contradictory answer. At one point, even Maria is accused of the murder, however weak the accusation. After much deliberation and accusations we finally learn that Tony is the killer. End of the mystery and end of the play.

7. ON THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

One of the highlights of collaborating with Anaya and Patricia was going to their wonderful "mound house" in Jemez Pueblo to work on

the script. By mound house, I mean this house was constructed in such a way that the roof was actually grass. Thus, the only exterior wall faced outward to a beautiful New Mexican mountain landscape[5]. An incredible place to let one's imagination flower. Our first challenge was to change the ending of the play, as Anaya had indicated in his letter to me. I could not remember why he changed the ending so I asked Oliver-Lewis if she remembered and she responded:

> "If Don José stayed alive we wouldn't have the next generation of New Mexican progress being led by a woman—his daughter Maria, a college graduate with traditional ties to the culture and the land. This was very important to the new dynamics of Chicano power and wealth" (Oliver-Lewis, Irene. e-mail the author 6 March 2021).
> Anaya, the proto-feminist.

8. THE PRODUCTION

After working with Anaya on the script, we were ready to audition actors. It is a given that the level of experience varies widely when directing for community-based theater companies. Having directed actors from *La Compañía's* core of actors I knew that we had the talent to cast the play. José Rodríguez had laid a very solid foundation of professionalism during his tenure as artistic director. During the 1979 season and *A New Mexican Trilogy*, Rodríguez wrote: "Whatever we do, it must be with a seriousness of purpose. We're doing real theater, not just quaint, folklorish, picturesque garbage". Rodríguez made quite an impact on everyone involved in *La Compañía*. Succeeding artistic directors, Ramón Flores, Marcos Martinez and Oliver-Lewis continued to build on the foundation Rodríguez put into place.

9. THE ARTISTS SPEAK

Through e-mail correspondence with two of the actors involved in that production, so long ago, I was reminded of the joys and challenges of working with inexperienced actors. Of the two actors I was able to contact, Michael Blum and Pedro Garcia, the former had experience but the latter was new to acting. However, *La Compañía* inspired them to continue in the theater and both are working actors and directors today. Blum is based in Seattle, Washington and Pedro Garcia went home to Pharr, Texas, where he founded his own theater company *Nuestro Teatro*.

Ironically, Blum's first acting role in an Anaya play was in *The Season of Llorona*, which the reader will recall was Anaya's first produced play, inspired and guided by José Rodríguez. Blum writes:

> I basically played a soldier who had seen the woman kill her children. I was 19 but it was an exposure to Rudy Anaya. He was there at rehearsal, more so than with "Don José " and so I got to know him… and his work…. He was one of the smartest people I had ever met and the insights he had--not just the plays--but literature in general. I grew up exposed to Shakespeare, etc. And I remember having a conversation with Rudy about structure and the meaning of great writing (Blum, Michael. Taped e-mail to the author. 2 February 2021).

In response to my question "What are the 'fun' experiences you had, acting in this play" Blum writes:

> When I auditioned, I was first slated to play the Sherriff but the actor that you cast as Don José was not very strong so you cast me as Don José; the first time I had a lead role! And, the fact that I died at the end of act one so I could basically goof-off for half the show. Delightful! Also the comraderie of doing the play and in particular my good friend Pedro. A few years later I directed *Who Killed Don José?* and it was fairly successful (Blum, Michael. Taped e-mail to author. 2 February 2021).

In response to the rehearsal process, Blum writes,

> Rudy was delighted but then he'd go off and whisper to you and we're all thinking 'he hates it!' but he was very complimentary and for Rudy that was unusual because he wasn't a very complimentary person but it was very nice that he would take the time to say 'I like what you're doing. I appreciate what you're doing (Blum, Michael. Taped E-mail to the author 2 19 21).

Blum's good friend, Pedro Garcia was effusive about his participation in the premiere of this play. Originally from Texas, 1987 he was working in a local radio station in Albuquerque and had never been in a play. He reminded me that I had originally cast him as the understudy to the actor playing Diego:

> …and about a week before opening, the guy playing Diego stormed out of the theater and you looked at me and said, 'Are you ready?'

> and I said, 'yeah, I'm ready.' I had been a good understudy. I had learned all my lines so I played Diego (Pedro Garcia e-mail to the author February 17, 2021).

Early in Act One Doña Sofia tells Diego Diego that they are both in Don José's will, which gives them each a reason to see the man dead. In response to "fun moments" in the play, Gracia writes, "One of funniest moments playing Diego was when he says, "I want my CHAIR, meaning share—Not *chair*! I don't want my chair to sit! I want the money!" (Garcia, Pedro. E-mail to the author 17 February 2021).

On the question of whether this play would be appreciated outside of New Mexico, Garcia wrote the following:

> When I directed *Who Killed Don José?* in Pharr [Texas] 20 years later, I dedicated the play to his late wife and he was very grateful for that. I remember casting that play and the fun characters…. the audience having to guess, during the intermission, who killed Don José. A lot of them got it wrong. I had local actors and the actor who played Tony was really, really good and they were surprised to find out that it was the car salesman that killed Don José. The audience really loved the show and the theme of up-and-coming computers and how that was going to revolutionize the world. It was ahead of its time. We produced it in October with Halloween coming-up and Mr. Anaya, knowing that we were a community theater said 'I am going to waive my rights' (Garcia, Pedro. E-mail to the author. 17 February 2021).

10. AUDIENCES' RESPONSES TO THE PLAY

The premiere production of Anaya's murder mystery was not without controversy. It should surprise no one from the still-evolving teatro movement of the 1980s that a play about a wealthy New Mexican rancher would raise eyebrows and cynical criticism. Recall that this was what fascinated me about the play as well as the play itself. I think Irene OIiver-Lewis says it best:

> There were a number of *La Compañía* veterans that opposed and criticized this play, my decision to produce it, and felt Rudy betrayed his culture. What they didn't acknowledge is that Don José, despite his wealth, was the quintessential Chicano rooted in myth, tradition, political justice, language, economic equity, and love of the land and

> heritage. He was very much like Rudy who never forgot the relevance of our cultural roots in spite of all the fame, travel, and abundance that he experienced (Oliver-Lewis, Irene. E-mail to the author 6 March 2021).

In his introduction to this play, Prof. David Jones, a professor of English at the University of New Mexico and literary manager for the New Mexico Repertory Theatre, writes: "The play's premiere production had only a limited artistic success, but it ran for three weeks to good houses in the summer 1987." Concluding his narrative, Jones points-out the fact that *La Compañía* always took their plays to the South Broadway Cultural Center in Albuquerque's poorest neighborhood for a free performance. "Connecting with 'the community' may sound like cheap literary talk but I saw it illustrated in the starkest light," he writes, describing the audience at that performance"

> Out in the big world, I had been hearing too much from sophisticates, both Anglo and Hispanic, about the problems or contradictions of Anaya's play but now I stood at the rear of the Center watching that audience as they watched that second act….These people, I decided, were the living reasons I needed to include *Who Killed Don José?* in this anthology (Jones 201).

11. ANAYA'S WORK LIVES-ON IN THE PEOPLE

Working with Rudy on this play was a life-changing experience for me as well as for the many theater artists he inspired with his plays. People like Dr. Cecilia Aragon, Michael Blum, Pedro Garcia and Irene Oliver Lewis and so many more, have become leading professionals in the field. Anaya's spirit lives-on in the thousands of people who have participated in an Anaya production as actors, directors, designers, technicians, but above all, the audiences; people who have heard the stories of their people in their languages. Prof. Cecilia Aragon, who knew Anaya all her life, wrote me:

> I remember going to see the production of *Bless Me, Ulitma* with Rudy at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. After the show, he commented and said to me, "I never realized how many deaths there are in *Bless Me, Ulitma*…Wow, theatre really gives life to literature! I saw new things that I never saw before in my novel" (Aragon, Cecilia. E-mail to the author 21 February 2021).

Remember that "Death of a Writer" was Anaya's first play. Was it his death he envisioned? Thinking back, I am reminded of Celso's New Mexican mountains "like black-veiled widows in procession to a funeral. For who?" he asks. "For who?" And now I know. They are in procession and always will be, in honor of Rudolfo Anaya, the soul of New Mexico. Rudolfo Anaya, *¡PRESENTE!*

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NOTES

1 The founders of *La Compañía* purposely used the original spelling of Alburquerque, adding the first "r" in recognition of the original inhabitants.

2 Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's poem, "I am Joaquin," is in his book, *Message to Aztlan* (Arte Público Press, 2001):16-29. The poem was first published in 1967.

3 See Nicolás Kanellos, *A History of Hispanic Theatre in the United States: Origins to 1940*. (1990).

4 Leo Romero, *Celso*. Arte Público Press, 1985. The play, *I am Celso*, adapted for the stage by Jorge Huerta and Ruben Sierra, is not published.

5 According to Prof. Aragon, "It was their second home, a writing retreat for Rudy. Also, Rudy and Pat established another home for writers in Jemez, called La Casita de Jemez. I had a residency in La Casita during the summer of 1999" (Aragon, Cecilia. E-mails to the author 22-26 February 2021).

A Tribute Recordando a Rudolfo A. Anaya: From Aztlan to Mictlán

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Abstract

This represents an intimate tribute to the New Mexican writer Rudolfo A. Anaya shortly after his death on June 28, 2020. He stood out as one of the more outstanding writers of the Chicano novel-especially the unforgettable *Bless Me, Ultima*-where he explored his region's (eastern New Mexico) stories and tales about regular people sometimes coupled with magical-real occurrences. He was deeply motivated and inspired by folkloric storytelling via legend and myth, thus tapping into ageless characters, owls, golden carps, subterranean lakes and the captivating nature of La Llorona. He also delved into numerous other genres, such as the fictional memoir, poetry, theatre, essay and children's literature. He was a quiet leader of Chicano/a literature: both as a creator, editor and promoter. His inquisitive imagination led him to explore many themes related to the cycles of life, for example, rites of passage, levels of concientización, aging and death and other universal truths the individual must encounter.
Keywords: Quinto Sol Generation, Nuevo México Profundo, gifted storyteller, multiple awards, Picardía, sha manistic qualities, pied piper, myth and legend

* * *

El Llano is mourning the passing of Nuevomexicano writer Rudolfo A. Anaya (l937–2020). Time became suspended, the wind stopped, the juniper trees sighed. His death marks a watershed moment in many ways: the Quinto Sol Generation just got smaller; his legacy is forever an indelible memory; and his fame transcends his *patria chica*. He was a child from the dry landscape if eastern New Mexico, where hardy people eke out a hardscrabble living, surrounded by an intensely ingrained tradition of Hispanos who go way back to

the sixteenth century. In many ways, he embodied tradition. He always felt grounded in his *gente* and his long-standing Nuevomexicano culture. That solid foundation rendered in him a particular confidence and identity as someone who shared a common history and culture. This quality explains why his literary works did not dwell on formulating a new ethnos; he knew perfectly well where he came from, where he belonged, and who he was. As such, the Chicano social and literary movements benefited from his perspective because his characters were not interlopers or phantoms. Quite the contrary, they seemed made of flesh-and-blood or, some consider, were an embodiment of *un Nuevo México profundo*, a deep-seated and an ancient way of life deeply rooted in the Indo-Hispano history of the region.

Image 1. "Sueños del valle, vientos del llano / Dreams of the Valley, Winds of the Llano". Photo mural tribute to Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. Source: Miguel Gandert, 2015, Santa Rosa, New Mexico.

Such lived experiences helped shape Anaya into a keen observer of the human condition as filled with life stories from both an earthy and primeval world view. He was fundamentally grounded in oral storytelling, while transmitting a rich mix of Hispano and Indigenous folklore (tales, legends, myths) and folk culture (medicine, healing, song, and ritual). This world was the fertile ground, the cosmos of a limitless imagination,

upon which Anaya situates his characters in search of harmony, much the way the protagonist Antonio Márez y Luna recounted in a semiautobiographical coming-of-age novel known worldwide, the unforgettable *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972). Antonio represented the synthesis and reconciliation of two peoples and two generations, their religious and cultural beliefs, and their social practices. The Llano culture of New Mexico's eastern plains was the fountain that gave birth to Anaya's unique sensibilities; his youth in that world cultivated a deep appreciation for this rural culture, which never left him. He instinctively returned to relive the quest to relish, explore, and understand the New Mexican conscience because it nurtured his sense of place and purpose. In fact, most of his fiction, poetry, essays, and plays are products of such a quest, a *desdoblamiento* of his inner questions and doubts about life, tragedy and death, a sense of resolution and spirituality, and a deep awareness of humanity's dilemmas and paradoxes.

Born in Pastura, New Mexico in 1937, Anaya was clearly a direct product of his rural background in the Santa Rosa area, where the llanos or plains as memories of the past reign in the parched part of eastern New Mexico. His stories and novels and other works are extensions of that connection he had with his region. His iconic novel *Bless Me, Ultima* captures such an ambience of folk tales, curanderas, and magical-real happenings of a Hispano-Indigenous flavor. Many acknowledge that he was a key factor in the unprecedented acceptance of Chicano stories by the American literary mainstream and later by an international readership.

Anaya studied English at the University of New Mexico and eventually earned two Master's degrees in English (l968) and Guidance and Counseling (l972). In l974, he was hired by the English Department at his alma mater, where he taught creative writing until his retirement in l995. He was also very active in promoting Chicano literature, founding literary venues such as the journal *Blue Mesa Review*, while creating literary prizes for upcoming authors. For efforts such as these, he often received accolades as the dean and at times godfather of Chicano literature. Anaya was a trailblazer in so many ways by putting New Mexican Hispano-Indigenous culture on the map, influencing fields of literature, criticism, and history in the United States and overseas. His forte unfolds in his capacity to create archetypal characters, contemplate death, time and other features of

the cycles of life aside from the polarities in human behavior. In many of his works, he served witness to rural folks having to navigate the urban barrios at the same time he examined social issues related to railroad laborers and the trappings of urban temptations. Many of his writings contain autobiographical inferences that serve to unearth profound reflections about existence, a qualified philosophy of life, the dynamics of power vs the powerlessness, the politics where tradition and modernity clash, and the discovery of the myth of Aztlan as an alternative to the powers that be. He garnered a widespread following among his readership for his boldness in insinuating the need to confabulate a philosophy of harmony and balance along with the fundamental need to define new avenues of social justice.

Of course, his long list of literary works in multiple genres denotes a prolific writer of unmatched talents, endless curiosity, and profound courage. Anaya tended to produce literature in distinctive groupings. The first sequence was a trilogy about place and myth in his *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), *Heart of Aztlan* (l976), and *Tortuga* (1979). A second was a pre-Columbian exploration into the Chicano indigenous background in *The Legend of La Llorona* (l985), *The Lord of the Dawn: Legend of Quetzalcóatl* (1987), and, to some degree, *Jalamanta: A Message from the Desert* (1996) which seeks a philosophy of harmony in the modern world. Later, he pursued a predilection for the mystery or detective novel first explored in *Alburquerque* (1992), followed by a series of mystery novels based on the four seasons such as *Zia Summer* (1995), *Rio Grande Fall* (1996), *Shaman Winter* (1999), and *Jemez Spring* (2005). Another literary vein explored folkloric renditions combined with science-fiction in *Curse of the Chupacabra* (2006), *Chupacabra and the Roswell UFO* (2008), and *Chupacabra Meets Billy the Kid* (2018). He also made an invaluable impact in children's literature with his award-winning *The Farolitos of Christmas: A New Mexico Christmas Story* (1987), *Roadrunner's Dance* (2000), and *The First Tortilla* (2007). In addition, he effectively explored philosophical topics on love and death, for example, in *The Old Man's Love Story* (2013), and he has also exceled in writing plays, poetry, essays, and personal chronicles (for instance, *A Chicano in China* (1986) or what Patricia Geuder calls "a chronicle of oneiric dimensions"). *Y muchas más*.

Anaya's literary works have been extremely well received in general among readers and critics, although the acclaim has not always been

unanimous. For instance, some school districts in the United States voted to ban or burn *Bless Me, Ultima* for its supposed propagation of witchcraft and sorcery and its profanity and "obscenity." Other detractors questioned the novel's mythic qualities as fanciful or anti-historical constructions as if he should concentrate on social realism, but he always tried to keep his feet on the ground while listening to the imaginative tales of his people. It is noteworthy to mention that the first modern Chicano works to receive international acclamation up to and through the l970s were *Bless Me, Ultima* and theatrical productions by El Teatro Campesino. During his career, Anaya was the recipient of some of the most prestigious awards, such as El Quinto Sol Literary Award, the American Book Award, the National Humanities Medal (presented by President Barack Obama), the NEA National Medal of the Arts Lifetime Honor (presented by President George W. Bush), and twice the New Mexican Governor's Public Service Award, and many others.

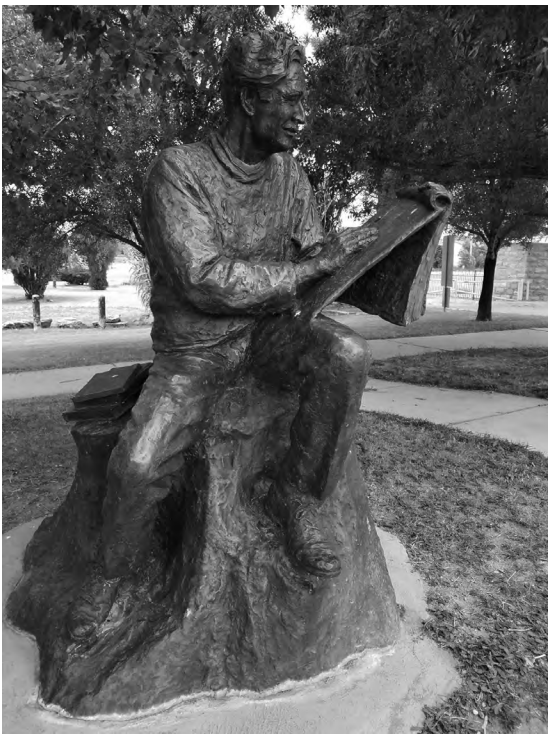

Image 2. Statue of Rudolfo Anaya in Santa Rosa, New Mexico, reading *Bless Me, Ultima*

Rudy Anaya was a man of simple tastes (he delighted in red chile enchiladas at Barelas Café in Albuquerque) with profound convictions about the potential of Chicanos/as as a people and culture in the United States and the world. As a gifted storyteller, he masterfully created compelling stories and trenchant characters, oftentimes with shamanistic and poetic qualities, that represent the struggle between conflicting cosmic forces, usually ending with an optimistic outlook toward self-realization. In fact, most of his works embrace a search for wholeness, opportunity, justice, and goodness, as Ultima instructed Antonio. His writings inspire because they express universal truths and values recognized and felt by readers from all walks of life.

Talking to Rudy was often a memorable event, for he possessed oracle qualities in his wisdom, a passion for writing, and a legendary generosity in promoting young writers. Rudy liked a good laugh *con picardía*. I loved calling him because his answering machine seemed to share his humor: "Can't answer the phone right now because I'm busy writing stories..." He was always promoting books, education, and reading like an exemplary pied piper. He was a consummate conversationalist, a friend with a long memory, a genuine gentleman with grace and dignity. His humility was overshadowed only by his greatness. Anaya has now forever returned to the realm of his imagination, the world he sought in life to capture glimpses of owls, golden carps, black stones, subterranean lakes, blue guitars and La Llorona. Rudy has left us but he will be with us *por y para siempre. Que en paz descanse nuestro amigo, hermano, maestro*, Rudolfo A. Anaya.

El Llano en Letras: An Intertextual Approach to the Works of Rudolfo A. Anaya

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The sun was shining so strongly, it turned the grassland into a burning plain. El Llano en llamas, the plain on fire.
(Anaya, Sorrows 15)

I like to make literary allusions in my work to other writers, if not names, then phrases.
(Anaya, "Bless Me" 154)

Abstract

This essay analyzes the value of an intertextual approach to reading the works of Rudolfo A. Anaya. My intention is not to discuss the influence of other writers on Anaya's works but, rather, the ways in which Anaya makes reference to authors and titles from multiple literary traditions. I explore the different types of intertextual allusions in Anaya's works to then concentrate on an in-depth analysis of intertextuality in Anaya's Sonny Baca quartet. I argue that Anaya uses intertextuality to both represent and transcend culture in a way that blurs the differences between the local and the global, the particular and the universal.
Keywords: allusion, intertextuality, literary history, reading, tradition

* * *

Since he first burst onto the literary scene in 1972, with the bestselling novel *Bless Me, Ultima*, Rudolfo A. Anaya has been praised and recognized widely for his talent for capturing the worlds of folklore and of the oral tradition, and for adapting them to the idiosyncrasies of print culture. Indeed, Anaya's works are full of references to and renderings of old *cuentos*, legends, *dichos*, folk beliefs, and the like. Old

myths coexist in his novels with newly created fictions that appeal to the laws of the ancestral lore and, thus, *La Llorona*, the golden carp, witches, and other fantastic and folk types (Coyote, Juan del Oso) pop in and out of his tales to enter the world of more mundane characters who inhabit the New Mexican lands of our own contemporary times.

But, alongside that reservoir of traditional narrative materials, Anaya's readers will also encounter a veritable treasure trove of literary allusions in his works, some more developed than others but all of them contributing to creating a constellation of interconnected worlds. As my two epigraphs demonstrate, that evocation of intertextual materials is both a conscious strategy on the part of Anaya (see the second epigraph) and one that requires readers to recognize the more indirect references on their own, as the first epigraph suggests, since some of those *phrases* alluded to in Anaya's works remain unidentified and unmarked as far as their origin is concerned.

My intention in this article is to categorize and analyze some of the major ways in which Anaya made his works dialogue with the written traditions of multiple countries, in order to place his œuvre at the center of a thick web of intertextual allusions that may be understood as the reclamation of a *literary lineage* for this New Mexican author. While there is no doubt that Anaya's works were centered on his native New Mexico, and while there is no sense in disputing their multiple ties to the New Mexican oral tradition, I argue that it would be reductive to see his books as just transliterations of folk into print or as ethnocentric narratives disconnected from the rest of the world. Behind the Rudolfo A. Anaya that delights in retelling ancestral beliefs and stories, we can always find the Rudolfo A. Anaya who wrestles with his readings as he weaves them into his own stories. It is in that sense that I have chosen the title "El Llano en letras," a not too subtle nod to Juan Rulfo's classic collection of short stories (and the intertext invoked in the first epigraph above), to suggest that Anaya's works are not only important for donning the traditional life and beliefs of his beloved New Mexican llano with an identity in writing, but also for doing so in a manner in which that exercise cannot be seen as a solipsistic triumph of the will (Anaya mastering the trade and becoming a writer) but, rather, as a celebration of the common bond with a lettered tradition that preceded him and that was also part of the life of the llano, regardless

of the multiple obstacles encountered by print culture in such an economically disadvantaged area. The author acknowledged as much in his essay "The Magic of Words":

> We know that as we preserve and use the literature of all cultures, we preserve and regenerate our own. The old ones knew and taught me this. They eagerly read the few newspapers that were available. They kept their diaries, they wrote decimas [sic] and cuentos, and they survived on their oral stories and traditions. (*Essays* 179)

At a personal level, the fact that letters were an integral part of Anaya's childhood in the llano (and—more precisely—in the neighboring town of Santa Rosa, NM, where his family settled) is easily verified by the author's reminiscences about the school library:

> I was the only one in the gang that used to go to the library on Saturday mornings. It was a decrepit, old building, run by one of the teachers, who volunteered to open it on Saturdays. Many Saturday mornings she and I were the only ones at the library. I sat there and read and leafed through books, and took some home. (Dick and Sirias 15)[1]

As he got to review and ponder on his life in his final few books, Anaya made sure to revisit that library in the fictional world of *Randy Lopez Goes Home*. Lopez's homecoming, a sort of Chicanø[2] riff on Pedro Páramo's return to Comala (in the famous novel by Juan Rulfo), includes a memorable encounter with Agua Bendita's librarian, Miss Libriana, a thinly disguised portrait of Anaya's Santa Rosa teacher:

> Randy fell exhausted into one of the desks. The very desk he had sat in long ago.
>
> My desk! he exclaimed.
>
> His initials were carved into the wood. Here is where he felt the first inkling of Sofia's love. She had been woven into the childhood stories he read, and he had fallen in love.
>
> She was still here! In the books and in the musty air that held the dreams of children. (52)[3]

Sofia's love (i.e. the love of wisdom) is connected unequivocally with books in that quote from *Randy Lopez*, and it constitutes additional proof of the significance that reading plays in the worlds of Rudolfo A. Anaya's works. In the research that supports this article, I have been able

to identify and catalog references in Anaya's books to more than three hundred authors and titles, whether through direct mention or through indirect allusion (e.g. by quoting a phrase or some lines from unidentified literary works).[4] Needless to say, some of those references are more meaningful than others, and my tabulation of citations also accounts for multiple mentions of a particular author/text in several Anaya books, as well as for their sustained or otherwise meaningful presence in a specific work. The latter is the case for the *Arabian Nights*, for example, which—while never mentioned by title in that book—nonetheless provides the narrative structure and plot setting for *Serafina's Stories*.

As for the former, alongside Homer and the Bible (the two most frequent citations), a set of several references appear mentioned in four or more of Anaya's books, including Pedro Calderón de la Barca (whose *La vida es sueño* provides a recurring leitmotif of sorts in Anaya's more recent books), Miguel de Cervantes (largely through the figure of Don Quixote), Dante Alighieri (a sustained reference as Anaya muses on the afterworld), William Shakespeare (Anaya cites, at least, eleven different works by the Bard), Sigmund Freud (often cited in a critical context), the *Arabian Nights* (cited in *The Silence of the Llano*, *The Man Who Could Fly*, *ChupaCabra and the Roswell UFO*, and *The Old Man's Story*), Mark Twain (four of his books are cited), Walt Whitman, and Frank Waters, who was also a personal friend of Anaya's.

Beyond the purely quantitative, it should be apparent to anyone who has read Anaya that there are other ways to think about the significance of intertextual presences in his works, as well as other trends worth noticing in that regard from a critical standpoint. To name just two, I could cite the increasing significance and presence of Thomas Wolfe in Anaya's latest books; Wolfe is quoted in *Randy Lopez* (2011), *The Old Man's Story* (2013), and *The Sorrows of Young Alfonso* (2016), but never before in his earlier writings, as far as I have been able to determine. The same is true of Juan Rulfo's presence, only directly acknowledged in *Randy Lopez* and in *The Sorrows*.

Cataloguing and analyzing all intertextual presences and trends would be beyond the scope of this essay, though I expect to do so in a future publication. As suggested above, here I will concentrate on a few examples that will serve me to highlight the value of an intertextual approach to reading Rudolfo A. Anaya. In order to do so, I will build on the existing scholarship on Anaya's links to previous

writers, but I should hasten to point out that—unlike most of my predecessors—I am not interested in noting or discussing *influences* but, rather, the reasons why certain intertexts are brought up to the reader's attention in certain passages of Anaya's works.

As for the potential danger that I, as a critic, might be "making up" or "making too much" of some of those alleged connections, I would like to stress that I will only analyze explicit mentions, including those that—while not involving the actual names and titles of works—are nonetheless irrefutable and evident when Anaya's text is contrasted with its hypotext.[5] To give but a quick example, the opening line of *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* does not mention Virgil or his *Aeneid* explicitly, but no one could possibly doubt that Anaya's "Arms of the women, I sing," (5) playfully invokes the Virgilian opening formula "Arma virumque cano" [I sing of arms and the man…] (24) of his celebrated epic.

Such an approach allows me to skirt the problems encountered in some of the early scholarship on Anaya and his alleged literary predecessors. Though Juan Bruce-Novoa constructed a convincing argument associating Anaya's early novels with James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* ("Portraits" 151), and with Robert Musil's *The Confusions of Young Törless* and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* ("Author" 185-203), much of the power of his reasoning inevitably relied on what his own cultural capital as a reader could do in processing Anaya's writings. Without suggesting anything wrong with Bruce-Novoa's approach, a most legitimate reader's response to those texts, the problem I am highlighting is the potential contradiction between the critic's cultural capital and the author's. In an interview with Dash and others, for example, Anaya had this to say about Joyce and/in his works:

> There are these little wispy things that we call literary influence that even we are not aware of. For example, there have been a few papers done on *Bless Me, Ultima* that compare it to *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* [sic] by Joyce. I did read Joyce but I didn't use that novel as a model to write *Bless Me, Ultima.* ("Bless Me" 154)[6]

Later in that same interview, Anaya elaborates:

> *Somehow* all of these writers do have an influence. I just don't believe that my work in any way imitates Faulkner or how he writes. As an

> undergraduate I knew that I was supposed to read him but I didn't know if I could understand him. The same thing with James Joyce. Did *Ulysses* make an impact on my writing? Probably not, I couldn't read it to really grasp what was going on in that stylistically complex novel. (159-160, my emphasis)

As far as this article is concerned, my aim is to explore that *somehow* which Anaya mentions at the beginning of the quote above, but only in so far as I can trace a direct invitation from Anaya to his readers to wonder about the intertextual dialogue at play in his books. The fact that, seventeen years after the Dash interview, Enrique R. Lamadrid was able to point out a subtle but unequivocal echo of Joyce's *Ulysses* in Anaya's *Randy Lopez* should serve as a reminder that: a) such an invitation may easily go unnoticed by many readers, and b) that authorial guidance in that regard might be contradictory and not the only parameter to take into account, hence the need for analysis.[7]

For instance, one of those intertextual presences that might easily be overlooked by some readers operates at a structural level in *Alburquerque*, in which Anaya adopts a technique introduced in Spanish literature by Miguel de Unamuno (in *Niebla*, 1914) and later expanded in theatre by Luigi Pirandello is his famous play *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (1921). In *Niebla*, the likely intertext for *Alburquerque*,[8] the book's protagonist pays a visit to the author (Unamuno), interacting with him as if somehow they both inhabited the same diegetic level. Anaya replicates the procedure by having the two protagonists of *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* (Chicaspatas and Al Penco) appear as characters in *Alburquerque*, where they dialog and interact with Anaya's fictional alter ego, Ben Chávez, said to be their creator. If the reader is not familiar with Unamuno's famous novelistic invention, nothing in Anaya's text explicitly suggests that the Spanish author might be behind Anaya's narrative trick; however, the fact that Unamuno is mentioned elsewhere in *Alburquerque* (and in *Zia Summer*) suggests that connecting these two particular intertextual dots is not unwarranted.

Anaya also exploited the playful nature of intertextuality by making several real-life critics appear as characters in his novels. In *Jemez Spring*, for example, a handful of European scholars—largely responsible for introducing Anaya's works to readers in that continent—are briefly interrogated by the authorities in connection

to an alleged murder. Michele Bottalico, Jean Cazemajou, Dieter Herms, Mario Maffi, Paul B. Taylor, and George Gurdjieff appear together sipping drinks at a hotel restaurant as they answer questions from the police. The scene is further endowed with intertextual meaning when character Sonny Baca compares it with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: "Scholars on the road to Canterbury wound up in Jemez Springs" (95). That Anaya found this strategy useful and/or funny is confirmed by the fact that he employed it in several other books, giving cameo appearances to other authors and critics such as Juan Estevan Arellano (*Shaman Winter*), José Armas (*Río Grande Fall*), Leroy Quintana (*Zia Summer*), Nash Candelaria, Pat Mora, John Nichols, Frank Waters (*ChupaCabra and the Roswell UFO*), Jorge Huerta (*Curse of the ChupaCabra*) and Roberto Cantú, who appears in several of Anaya's novels.[9]

In a more serious vein, the range of uses of intertextual citation in Anaya's works is exceptional, and while covering all of them in an article would be impossible, the following should offer a representative sample.

Perhaps the most straightforward case of citation is what we could call *thematically-driven* intertextuality. Examples of this variant are found in *Lord of the Dawn*, a short novel based on the figure of Quetzalcoatl. Because the action is set in pre-Hispanic times, the references to poems attributed to Netzahualcoyotl appear as a most natural recreation of the cultural life of the period. The same could be said of *A Chicano in China*, the only book by Anaya where Chinese authors like Li Bai and Lu Xun get to be referenced.

Also forthright is the type of citation that occurs when an Anaya title paraphrases the title of the hypotext invoked. To readers familiar with literary history, it should be apparent that *The Sorrows of Young Alfonso* explicitly invites a connection with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's eighteenth-century blockbuster *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In fact, Anaya not only references Goethe's classic title, but he also borrows the epistolary structure of Goethe's work. In Anaya's novel, an anonymous narrator writes to an equally mysterious character simply referred to as K. about the life of the writer Alfonso. As the reading advances, it becomes apparent that Alfonso is a fictionalized Anaya (Alfonso was Anaya's middle name), since the descriptions of Alfonso's writings match the plots and topics of Anaya's earlier works. As María Teresa

Huerta Velásquez has suggested, *Sorrows* may also be connected intertextually with Franz Kafka's *The Castle*, given that Kafka's protagonist in that novel is simply referred to as K., "a character—likewise—seeking information" (Velásquez).[10] Since *Sorrows* recreates Anaya's physical, creative, and spiritual autobiography, it is remarkable to note that the author chose to anchor such an endeavor in a web of literary allusions that begins with Goethe (and, perhaps, with Kafka, as suggested by Velásquez), and proceeds to reference (at least) the Bible, the Beat poets, Calderón de la Barca, Cervantes, Coleridge, Dante, Descartes, Dickens, Donne, James T. Farrell, Freud, the Greek epics, the Harlem Renaissance writers, Joseph Heller, Homer, Indian literature, James Joyce, San Juan de la Cruz, John Keats, Somerset Maugham, Mesopotamian literature, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Persian literature, Plato, Ishmael Reed, Rousseau, Juan Rulfo, Percy Bisshe Shelley, Socrates, Steinbeck, El Teatro Campesino, Dylan Thomas, Mark Twain, Sabine R. Ulibarrí, Gaspar de Villagrá, Frank Waters, Walt Whitman, Thomas Wolfe, and William Wordsworth, not to mention a considerable number of Chicanø critics and scholars. Undoubtedly, though Anaya's character and sensibility were shaped early on by the landscape and the oral traditions of his region, there is no denying that his endeavors as an author are also predicated on his ability to negotiate readings and insights from print culture to situate his work in the kind of intertextual web that the listing above suggests.

Sorrows can also serve to illustrate a particular type of intertextuality that acquires especial significance in Anaya's later works, a variety that could be termed *intratextuality*, in the sense that the referenced works in this case are his own earlier publications. While present since the very beginning of Anaya's literary career (*Heart of Aztlan* is already full of textual winks to *Bless Me, Ultima*), this strategy increases as we approach the author's final years, and it becomes a major narrative focus in those retrospective works directly or indirectly inspired by the death of his wife, Patricia. In that sense, along with *Sorrows*, *The Old Man's Love Story* offers a prime example of this metaliterary self-interrogation, a sort of taking stock exercise that further connects one of his books to the others.

The next use of intertextuality I would like to explore is, perhaps, the most complex and carefully designed in Anaya's entire output.

As he oriented his career toward detective fiction in the transitional decades from the 20th to the 21st century, Anaya published a quartet of mystery novels whose titles reference both New Mexican cultures and geography, as well as the calendar seasons. The so-called Sonny Baca series is composed of *Zia Summer* (1995), *Río Grande Fall* (1996), *Shaman Winter* (1999) and *Jemez Spring* (2005), and it follows the ongoing battle between private investigator Baca and his nemesis, an enigmatic evil-doer known as Raven. *Zia Summer* continues the political themes of *Alburquerque*, and it even features the murder of Gloria Dominic, the wife of one of *Alburquerque*'s central characters, Frank Dominic. *Río Grande Fall* is set against the background of Albuquerque's Hot Air Balloon Fiesta, and it involves murder connected to drug smuggling. *Shaman Winter*, in turn, is endowed with an historical depth that reaches all the way to the time of the Spanish exploration of the present-day United States Southwest. While in the previous two books Raven was involved in cult-like activities and environmental issues connected to atomic energy and to the present-day New Mexican economy, in *Shaman Winter* he is said to be endowed with the ability to travel into the past, where he is systematically kidnapping Baca's ancestors so as to be able to rewrite (Sonny's) history. *Jemez Spring*, in turn, returns the reader to the present, a time in which the Governor of New Mexico has been murdered and Raven and his co-conspirators appear to have planted a bomb near the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Throughout the series, Anaya is able to explore a multitude of historic and cultural developments that have shaped the New Mexico area and, as he weaves such a rich cultural tapestry, the author also uses intertextual citations and allusions as a major tool to reflect on its literary history and legacy as well.

In analyzing intertextuality in the Sonny Baca series, a number of findings are worth discussing. In the first place, it is worth noting those references that occur in several volumes in the series. The most commonly cited include some (perhaps) predictable books and authors. The Bible and William Shakespeare are referenced in all four books in the series, with seven individual works by the Bard explicitly mentioned in Anaya's quartet. Since the Bible appears cited in twelve other books by Anaya, and Shakespeare in eight other, their presence in the series is consistent with the author's œuvre as

a whole, though in the case of Shakespeare references to his works did not begin to appear until Anaya's fourth book (*The Silence of the Llano*) was published in 1982.

The folk/literary character Robin Hood, Frank Waters, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca are cited in three books of the Sonny Baca series, the latter mainly by paraphrasing the title of his famous play *La vida es sueño*, but Anaya does so in a manner that makes it clear he is citing Calderón's work and not using a saying that may have become commonplace and disconnected from its literary source. In *Río Grande Fall*, for example, the identification is explicit: "'La vida es un sueño,' don Eliseo had quoted Calderón de la Barca, 'so we are always dreaming, and our soul is the greatest dreamer'" (49). Elsewhere in the series, Anaya extends the quote beyond the famous title, indicating a more than superfluous knowledge of the play: "La vida es un sueño y los sueños sueño son" [sic] (*Jemez Spring* 3).[11]

Cited in just two books of the Sonny Baca quartet are Sigmund Freud, Joe Sando, Homer, and the explorer-writers Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Fray Marcos de Niza. Freud is almost always referenced in Anaya's works in a negative manner, as in "She didn't need Freud" (*Shaman Winter* 62) or "Forget Freud!" (*Jemez Spring* 278). The presences of Sando, Cabeza de Vaca, and Fray Marcos de Niza will be discussed below, but it seems important before doing so to reflect on the relatively limited references to Homer in the Sonny Baca books. Anaya cites the Greek epic poet in twelve of his books, and in all of them one finds references to Odysseus or to the *Odyssey*, with the possible exception of *Sorrows*, in which the citation is too vague to determine. This seems to indicate that, for Anaya, the story of the hero's long-delayed, adventure-filled homecoming must have held a special narrative value, and this can be further corroborated by analyzing the role that this intertext plays in *Heart of Aztlan* and in *Randy Lopez*, to pick just two books from Anaya's early and late career. Since the Sonny Baca novels are detective stories full of adventure, the relative minor presence of Odysseus and Homer is worth noticing, and it may require a bit of balancing between the quantitative, on the one hand, and the significance of the citations, on the other. Thus, while going just by quantifiable metrics, it would be easy to suggest that Odysseus—as the ultimate adventurer—is somewhat displaced in the Sonny Baca novels by adventuresome detective characters that Anaya invokes as intertexts (e.g. Sherlock

Holmes, James Bond), I would advocate for a more nuanced valuation of this potential replacement. As the table below will make clear, in the Sonny Baca mysteries Anaya mentions Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, Sherlock Holmes, James Bond, and Perry Mason in the first three books of the series. Interestingly, none of them (except for Sherlock Holmes) is referenced again in the closing installment of the series, *Jemez Spring*. Instead, *Jemez Spring* all but replaces the private investigator characters with references to the *Odyssey* and to Odysseus. A closer look at the actual Homer references in the Sonny Baca series, then, will help me further make the case for their significance beyond the quantitative.

In *Shaman Winter*, the first reference to Odysseus places him in the same narratological category as Juan Chicaspatas and Pedro de Urdemalas (129-130), sharing with them not only their adventurous identities but also their picaresque nature. Richer, or at least more original, is the second reference to Homer's epic poem in that book. As Sonny receives computer help from a teen nicknamed Cyber, he learns that the computer Cyber uses is called Circe, which prompts the private eye to reflect on Odysseus's story as it compares to the plight of Cyber's father, who has seemingly vanished after participating in top secret experiments. Because Circe was a sorcerer who could tell the future, Anaya offers then a somewhat playful comparison with the possibilities that computers allow in the present to surf the internet for information (309).

In *Jemez Spring*, however, the tone changes, and while Homer is invoked at the very beginning of the book, this time the reference is used to analyze a dream in which Sonny sees himself as a modern-day Polyphemus, blinded by Noman (1-2), thus recalling Odysseus trick to escape the cyclop's dwelling. The sensorial-based comparisons continue later in the book, when Sonny (who used to teach literature in high school) laments: "Should have plugged my ears with wax, not heard the siren's call" (63). From that point on, the reader perceives how Anaya appears to be using the Odysseus story as a sort of deep structure for the final Sonny Baca book and for his hero's eventual return to/embracing of domesticity in the arms of his girlfriend, Rita—Sonny's faithful and patient Penelope. Thus, while Sonny is out and about fighting Raven, Rita's restaurant fills with eager men who await Sonny's demise to propose to his girlfriend. Sonny's neighbor, the wise Don Eliseo, calls them "the

suitors" (283) further connecting these would-be-wooers to those who gathered in Odysseus's palace seeking Penelope's hand in marriage. Rita, our modern-day Penelope, does not weave and unweave a shroud to force her suitors to wait, but she has been "stalling them with her sweet apple pies and her blend of coffee that stimulates the blood" (284). When Sonny eventually returns and enters Rita's restaurant toward the end of the novel, the scene has an almost parodic ring to it, as Anaya replaces Odysseus's prodigious bow with the dream catcher that Sonny carries with him:

> THE ONE CLOSEST TO THE DOOR gasped, looking up as if he'd seen a ghost, questioning in his mind the appearance of the weary hero, eyeing the dreamcatcher that Sonny held like the jawbone of an ass. Was he going to smite the suitors? (285)

The ensuing description of Sonny makes the comparison even more explicit, revealing the entire extent of the analogy, and beginning to suggest its transcendental meaning:

> he had returned, one eye nearly closed from a blow received at war, a Greek hero returning home from Troy, if Jemez Springs can be conceived as Troy, and Burque as his Ithaca, *and if the world would allow a Chicano to be as heroic as those who fought on the fields of Ilium* (285, my emphasis).

The italicized phrase in the quote sums up the growth of Sonny Baca as a character, from someone easily dismissed by others at the beginning of the series as an almost derisory type who spent his days chasing deadbeat fathers to a present-day (Chicano) Greek hero. It is in this sense that Anaya's Sonny transcends both the figures of the fictional private detective and of the real-life Chicano soldier (the P.I. and the G.I.) to become an uplifting, cosmological hero.[12] Complementing his oft-noted spiritual depth and shamanic powers,[13] Sonny Baca also endows a literary gravitas that aspires toward the universality of the classics, a point to which I will return below in my final analysis of *Jemez Spring*.

I must insist, in that light, that intertextual allusions and references in the Sonny Baca novels (and, of course, beyond them) require both quantitative and qualitative research and interpretation to gauge their respective significance. In consequence, and to further

explore the richness of intertextual allusions in these detective works by Anaya, I offer a tabular listing of citations in each of the four books, first, followed by an analysis of some of the most significant trends I can distinguish.

The table includes references to characters, titles, and authors cited by Anaya but, for the sake of a clean, simplified presentation, I have omitted specific titles whenever I list the name of an author (for instance, Homer is listed in my table, but not so the *Odyssey*, whose significance for the series I have just analyzed). For the same reason, I have listed author names in the table even when only their characters are mentioned (e.g. I list Erle S. Gardner to account for the mention of Perry Mason, Arthur C. Doyle as creator of the cited Sherlock Holmes, and so on). Conversely, in the case of characters appearing in book series with multiple authors (including ghost writers), I have chosen to list the characters themselves (e.g. Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys). For some characters (e.g. Mephistopheles, Robin Hood), I have chosen not to associate them with a particular author, because they appear in multiple literary sources. Though I will briefly return to analyze them below, I have chosen to leave out of the table those playful mentions of critics and authors already discussed. Somewhat reluctantly, I have also decided to omit the many (and quite significant) references to folk plays such as *Los pastores*. My hesitation stems from the fact that these are relevant cultural/literary references (that would even strengthen some of the claims I will make below) but they are presented in the Sonny Baca novels as part of the New Mexican folklore; since I am not including other oral traditional materials here (folk tales, and the like), it seemed best to leave folk theatre out of the tabular listings as well. A final caveat about the table: I am not including references found to literary and paraliterary genres (e.g. poetry or comic books), to films based on literary works, nor other more general references to print culture that are present in the series. In other words, the actual web of references in the Sonny Baca mysteries is broader and more complex than what the table summarizes.[14] Still, because I focus here on literature and print culture, I feel that all those decisions are reasonably justified.[15]

With that in mind, here are the cited literary/print culture references I was able to identify in the Sonny Baca novels:

ZIA SUMMER	***RÍO GRANDE FALL***	***SHAMAN WINTER***	***JEMEZ SPRING***
Bible, The	**Acad. Nueva Raza**	**Bancroft, Hubert H.**	**Achebe, Chinua**
Book of Common Prayer	***Arellano Newsletter***	**Bandelier, Adolf F.**	*Albuquerque Journal*
Cattlemen's Journal	Bible, The	*Bhagavad-Gita*	Arms, George
Diario, El	Calderón de la Barca, Pedro	Bible, The	Bible, The
Entre verde y seco	Castaneda, Carlos	Calderón de la Barca, Pedro	**Blake, William**
Freud, Sigmund	**Chicano writers**	**Chávez, F. Angélico**	Buchanan, Edith
Hardy Boys series	Doyle, Arthur Conan	Fleming, Ian	Calderón de la Barca, Pedro
Nancy Drew series	Faust	Gardner, Erle S.	**Carroll, Lewis**
Ortiz, Alfonso	**Hinojosa, Rolando**	Hillerman, Tony	**Cervantes, Miguel de**
Ortiz, Simon	**Marcos de Niza, Fray**	Homer	**Chaucer, Geoffrey**
Robin Hood	*New York Times*	**Las Casas, Bartolomé de**	Chávez, Denise
Sando, Joe	**Núñez Cabeza de Vaca,** Álvar	*Las Vegas Optic*	**Coleridge, Samuel Taylor**
Shakespeare, William	*Playboy*	Lawrence, D. H.	**Dante Alighieri**
Silko, Leslie Marmon	Robin Hood	**Marcos de Niza, Fray**	**Descartes, René**
Steinbeck, John	**Rodríguez, René**	Martínez, Antonio J.	Diccionario Velázquez
Unamuno, Miguel de	**Salazar, Rubén**	Nichols, John	**Diogenes**
Waters, Frank	Shakespeare, William	**Núñez Cabeza de Vaca,** Álvar	Doyle, Arthur Conan
Whitman, Walt	*Washington Post*	Shakespeare, William	Freud, Sigmund

ZIA SUMMER	***RÍO GRANDE FALL***	***SHAMAN WINTER***	***JEMEZ SPRING***
		Usner, Don J.	***Gilgamesh, Epic of***
		Vasconcelos, José	**Hemingway, Ernest**
		Villagrá, Gaspar de	**Homer**
		Waters, Frank	**Huxley, Aldous**
		Wolfe, Thomas	**Irving, Washington**
			Jung, Carl
			Kama Sutra
			Melville, Herman
			Mephistopheles
			Momaday, N. Scott
			National Geographic
			Parson, Elsie W. C.
			Pearce. T. M.
			Plato
			Pyle, Ernie
			Rand, Ayn
			Robin Hood
			Rowling, J. K.
			Sando, Joe
			Shakespeare, William
			Shelley, Mary W.
			Wall Street Journal
			Waters, Frank
			Wordsworth, William

The first meaningful trend that should be noticeable from the tabular listings above is that intertextual citations increase as the Sonny Baca series progresses, from the eighteen sources that appear in *Zia Summer* and *Río Grande Fall* to the twenty-three in *Shaman Winter* and the remarkable forty-two in *Jemez Spring*. It appears safe to hypothesize that intertextual allusion—as a literary strategy—became more and more important for Anaya as he constructed his mystery novel quartet.

As to why that might be the case, I propose an interpretation that I have tried to make visually apparent by listing some of the references in the table in bold font. Much as the Baca series allows Anaya to paint a rich picture of the New Mexican landscape, history, cultures, and traditions, I argue that it also permits the author to focus on specific aspects of the state's literary/print heritage, and that there seems to be a deliberate effort on Anaya's part to highlight different areas of the print tradition in each of the four Sonny Baca books. For example, while *Zia Summer* includes—at least—eighteen identifiable explicit intertextual presences, it is the only book in the series that includes a cluster of references to four Native-American authors and/or their books. Cited are Alfonso Ortiz's *The Tewa World*, Acoma poet Simón Ortiz, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, and Joe Sando's *Pueblo Nations*. While I am aware that this represents less than twenty-five percent of all cited authorities in that book, I argue that this cluster of Native American sources is nonetheless significant, especially as it appears in the first book in the series. Symbolically, Anaya seems to recognize with these references the oldest New Mexican human and cultural heritage, and doing so in the first book of the series amounts to a declaration of principles, considering the author's longstanding engagement with Native American spirituality, since the days of *Bless Me, Ultima* until *Jalamanta* (published just a year after *Zia Summer* and centered on non-Western metaphysical meditations on spirituality), and beyond. But, while *Jalamanta* includes (to my knowledge) no explicit intertextual allusions, except for several instances of the phrase "dark night of the soul," which can be linked to the famous poem of that title by the Spanish mystic San Juan de la Cruz, what is most significant in *Zia Summer*'s intertextual map is that Anaya is referencing contemporary books and writings by Native American authors and scholars;[16] in doing so, Anaya acknowledges and celebrates not only the importance of the indigenous past, but also the contemporary Native American literary/print renaissance.

From that celebration of indigeneity, past and present, Anaya moves on to an acknowledgement of Chicanø letters in the second volume of the series. As shown in the table, I have been able to identify eighteen explicit references in *Río Grande Fall* as well. Of those, eight (more than forty-four percent) are direct mentions of Chicanø print and literary culture, ranging from the concrete references to Rolando Hinojosa, René Rodríguez, and Rubén Salazar, to the generic mention of the Chicanø "writers and poets" that character Alisandra Bustamante-Smith is said to have read at Yale University (165). Two of the cited authorities are of especial relevance for the New Mexico context, the references to the Academia de la Nueva Raza, and to the *Arellano Newsletter*. The latter would hardly be known outside New Mexico by anyone other than scholars but, together with the overall activities of the Academia, it represents a successful organic effort to bolster contemporary manito print culture. Seen from a broader perspective, it would have been possible to count the reference to the Carlos Castaneda character Don Juan as part of this Chicanø-centered cluster of references, considering how popular Castaneda's works were among Chicanø readers in the 1970s and 1980s (at least), but I opted not do so for consistency purposes. In any case, with close to fifty percent of all intertextual references pointing toward the contemporary Chicanø literary renaissance, *Río Grande Fall* complements the homegrown, native emphasis of *Zia Summer*, giving the first half of the Sonny Baca series a distinct—though broad and broadminded—ethnocentric flavor.

Several other elements are worth discussing to better appreciate how Anaya develops his intertextual writing in the Sonny Baca books. While the Bible, Robin Hood, and Shakespeare provide an underlying sense of continuity across the series, as already suggested,[17] all other cited works change from *Zia Summer* to *Río Grande Fall*. Unamuno and Whitman, to phrase it that way, yield to Calderón de la Barca and Castaneda, and so on. But, perhaps more significantly, variation is also found within categories of citations. For example, in both *Zia Summer* and *Río Grande Fall* Anaya mentions two newspapers, but those two periodicals are different from one book to the other. By the same token, both books reference earlier detective characters, but while *Zia Summer* cites the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew, *Río Grande Fall* sides with Sherlock Holmes. *Shaman Winter*, in turn, will also

cite two newspapers (the *Las Vegas Optic* and Father Antonio José Martínez's *El Crepúsculo*) which had not appeared before in the series as references, and it will switch from the previously cited detectives to James Bond and Perry Mason. Lastly, *Jemez Spring* introduces references to two additional newspapers never mentioned before in the series, and—while repeating a reference to Sherlock Holmes—it also cites (for the first time) the most recent quasi-detective character in all of the series, Harry Potter.

The noted combination of repetition and change might be better explained through a musical analogy in which the Bible, Shakespeare, and Robin Hood would provide something akin to the basso continuo proper of Baroque music, that is, the constant underlying harmonic base, to which Anaya adds the themes (e.g. newspapers, detectives) and the variations (specific titles and characters). This gives the Sonny Baca series a firm, yet quite flexible structure that dovetails with other elements that also rely on modifications of an existing element (e.g. the change of season in each book title, a new conflict in each book with the same antagonist from previous installments, and the like). By also changing the focus from one aspect of the literary heritage to another, Anaya further strengthens this pattern of repetition and change.

In *Shaman Winter*, the intertextual heritage highlighted could be best described as that constituted by early explorers and historians of the Americas, with especial emphasis on the United States, its Southwest region, and, of course, New Mexico. Seen from this perspective, eight of the twenty-three cited references (almost thirty-five percent) would form a cluster that would help to give *Shaman Winter* its historical flavor (which is supported thematically by a plot in which both Raven and Sonny are allowed to travel to the past). Alongside Bartolomé de Las Casas (the major coeval source for denouncing the abuses of the Spanish colonial enterprise), in *Shaman Winter* Anaya cites Cabeza de Vaca, Fray Marcos de Niza, and Gaspar de Villagrá from that same sixteenth to seventeenth century period. These are all sources that Sonny Baca consults as he tries to understand his own personal and cultural past. Through Baca's library research, Anaya represents a strong trend in Chicanø literary studies that began to gain momentum in the late 1980s and was institutionally consolidated in the following decades through massive archival projects devoted to recovering the historical and

literary heritage of Latinøs in the United States. In fact, the last three authors mentioned have been frequently listed in bibliographies of Chicanø literature and are considered by many (though not all) to be distinct representatives of colonial Chicanø literature.[18] Ever since Bruce-Novoa proposed the idea that Cabeza de Vaca was the first Chicano (because of his partial assimilation to the cultures of the Native American peoples with whom he lived and interacted during his post-shipwreck ordeal),[19] the debate over their status in that regard has been quite active. Beyond identity, though, it is impossible to deny their role as early historians and anthropologists of the United States Southwest, and it is in that capacity that I am counting them as part of the highlighted historiographical cluster in *Shaman Winter*. Of all three, Villagrá plays the most important role for New Mexico, since he wrote and published the first literary work about the area that is known to us, the long poem (close to twelve thousand lines) *Historia de la nveva Mexico* (1610). Arguably, Villagrá is also the cited source that allows Anaya to make some of the strongest points about cultural capital and literary heritage. Within a book in which the kidnapping and destruction of Sonny's biological ancestors drives the plot, the following comments made by Sonny as he checks out Villagrá's *Historia* resonate with a similar tone about the abduction and erasure of the Chicanø historiographical and literary past: "He picked up the volume in front of him. Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá's *Historia de la Nueva México*, 1610, published in Spain. This man wrote the first epic of the region. Never read this when I was doing my undergraduate work" (52-53); "The Villagrá epic is hardly ever mentioned in textbooks. History is supposed to start at Plymouth Rock" (53).

Therefore, by using Villagrá's *Historia* to check for specific information on his ancestor Andrés Vaca (quite possible modeled after the Mexican Captain Cristóbal Vaca, mentioned by Villagrá in his poem as a member of the 1598 Oñate expedition), Sonny Baca is also reclaiming a print-tradition past that is described as a suppressed, oppositional counter-history to the foundational Anglo-Saxon master narrative. By reading Villagrá, Sonny also learns about the earliest representation of the theatrical work *Moros y cristianos* (56) and about the exploration of the Río del Norte, later to be known as Río Grande (58). That does not mean that his reading of Villagrá

is entirely celebratory; in fact, we can feel Sonny Baca's oppositional reading in lines such as "[a]nd on it went. Taking possession of everything" (58), and "Took everything" (58-59). Sonny's ambivalence is predicated on the elation that results from discovering a lost or unknown cultural past, combined with a healthy dose of skepticism about the role of historiography as a tool for domination and for the suppression of earlier worldviews and hegemonies. As the healer Lorenza tells Sonny, history "begins with those who write history" (52), a message that Sonny is able to reconfigure soon afterwards by connecting geography and discourse: "History was a map the newcomer laid over the land" (58).

That critical view will be important to keep in mind for the more recent historiographical works cited. A not surprising one is Fray Angélico Chávez's *Origins of New Mexico Families*, given the fact that Sonny Baca undertakes his own genealogical search in *Shaman Winter*. The other scholarly works referenced in this novel are Don J. Usner's *Sabino's Map*, a cultural history of Chimayó; Adolf F. Bandelier's *Southwestern Journals*, one of the most significant studies by this Swiss-American archaeologist and pioneer of anthropological studies; and (although the title is not cited explicitly) Hubert H. Bancroft's *History of Arizona and New Mexico*, which includes a list of the men in the Oñate expedition, in which Sonny pretends to find his ancestor Andrés Vaca mentioned (the Captain listed by that name by Bancroft is actually Francisco Vaca).

What we see through this intertextual cluster of citations in *Shaman Winter* is a warning about how successive waves of arrivals have resulted in a continual exercise of "laying maps over the land." For the first time in the Sonny Baca series, the highlighted group of references points not so much to native sources but to authors of foreign stock, with the exception of Chávez (though his work cited is one that attempts to trace New Mexican ancestry to European lineages) and—potentially and partially—Usner (since he builds on the work of Sabino Trujillo).

In a sense, therefore, *Shaman Winter* is also an exercise of "laying maps" through which Anaya attempts to critically rewrite the history of his people and, for that reason, this novel is the one for which the cluster of intertexts works as a veritable palimpsest on which the New Mexican records have been entered and reentered at different points in time.

After highlighting Native American authors, Chicanø writers, and historians and explorers in the previous three installments, *Jemez Spring* closes the Baca quartet with a larger than usual cluster of cited references that I would describe as emblematic of the Western canon, with some of those intertexts representing the traditional curricula in place in United States schools. Included here are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (in itself, an intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*), Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, among a much longer list that also features William Blake, Lewis Carroll, Geoffrey Chaucer, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Ernest Hemingway, Washington Irving, William Shakespeare, Mary W. Shelley, and William Wordsworth. As for canonical works from other cultures, alongside the Greek Homer, Plato, and Diogenes, we find references to Cervantes, Dante, Descartes, and to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, among others.

In this final novel, Sonny Baca himself is said to be entering the list of obsessed characters found in some of the canonical works cited:

> You are an obsessed man, Mr. Sonny Baca. Like Agamemnon, Oedipus, Othello, King Lear, Don Quixote, or the weak and floundering Hamlet. And the worst of the lot, Captain Ahab! All obsessed with the bride of their dreams, a need that drives them to—you know, you once taught literature—drives them to tragic ends. (265)

Partially metaliterary in that regard, *Jemez Spring* thus produces a certain sense of arrival, a kind of rhetorical answer to fellow Chicano author Tomás Rivera and to the characters in his story "Cuando lleguemos," which is part of Rivera's "*…y no se lo tragó la tierra*", the winner of the first annual Premio Quinto Sol in 1970 (Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* would win the award the following year). In Rivera's story, the nameless migrant characters make all kinds of plans for their envisioned arrival to their new places of work (and, metaphorically, for when they "arrive" to achieve a better type of life), but they remain stuck en route, with a pessimistic voice among them proclaiming that, in fact, they will never arrive anywhere (69). By inserting Sonny Baca in the list of universal characters cited in *Jemez Spring*, and by completing the strategic task of connecting his Chicano books to a varied cluster of universal, canonical intertexts, Anaya appears to be leaving his mystery readers with the final message that "we have arrived," that—much as the history of New Mexico

is the result of the successive influx of different groups of population—so too is literature a field in which the different experiences and perspectives crisscross with one another creating a web of citations and references; in such a web, hierarchies and exclusionary practices of marginalization are toppled by the unlimited potential that literary texts possess to reference one another bypassing any criteria set from the outside. In that sense, inserting the cadre of international critics of Chicanø literature discussed above as characters in *Jemez Spring* further conveys the message that the old dialectic regional/universal should no longer apply to New Mexican Chicanø literature.

All in all, as far as literary/print history is concerned, Anaya's Sonny Baca quartet is donned with a symbolic structure reminiscent of the Zia sun symbol and its representation of the four directions and the four seasons. As my analysis aims to show, the Baca series also identifies and points to four *literary* directions in the four seasonally-titled novels: the Native American, the Chicanø, the historiographical mapping of New Mexico, and the canonical/universal. If in 1982 Anaya could say the following in a dialogue with fellow New Mexican author John Nichols: "The high school and college curricula had never exposed me to the history and literature of my ancestors. Now I had a purpose: to write the stories of my community. I would return to mythic time and reveal its symbols in my stories." (Dick and Sirias 60), then, it is clear that a decade and a half later he had found a way to both tell the stories of his community and talk back to the school curricula by returning not only to mythic time but also to a print history that he revises and appropriates as needed.

The types of intertextual citations I have highlighted and analyzed in this article offer ample proof that Rudolfo A. Anaya understood, since early on, that writing about one's own culture, history, and reality was not incompatible with acknowledging ties to multiple other cultures and experiences through the common bond of reading and readings. As he acknowledged in his essay "The Magic of Words," "[w]e know that as we preserve and use the literature of all cultures, we preserve and regenerate our own" (*Essays* 179).

But even at a less conscious level, before any will to preserve or use literature can take place, the cultural capital acquired through reading inevitably finds its way into the reader's mind, erasing

the boundaries between *all cultures* and *our own*. What we read becomes *our own* culture even when the words were written by someone entirely foreign to us, in part because those words cease to reside on the printed page in which we found them as they take up residence in our minds. Anaya acknowledged that process in *ChupaCabra Meets Billy the Kid*, one of the last books he published. In it, the Chicana protagonist, Rosa Medina, undertakes the job of writing a novel about Billy the Kid, which triggers the following brain reaction:

> Since she had started writing, entire novels she had once read passed before her eyes, Shakespearean sonnets, passages from *The Divine Comedy*, the Bible, stories by Chicana writers she admired. They all clamored for attention, each wanting Rosa to review her latest novel. Their names spilled out of her subconscious like pearls. (22)

Anaya's own conscious and unconscious intertextual "pearls" permeate his writings, as I have shown, endowing them with the power to both represent and transcend culture.[20] Realizing that literature creates a thick web of connections over time, Anaya embraced such a weaving with gusto but, true to his reverence to the teaching of his elders, he managed to connect it with ancient lore and wisdom as well. Nowhere in his œuvre is this seen more clearly than in *Serafina's Stories*, in which the title character, a New Mexican indigenous Scheherazade, gains the freedom of her fellow Pueblo prisoners by successfully telling the Governor a story each night. But, as the Governor observes with surprise during one of their conversations, "these are Spanish cuentos, tales I heard as a child" (132). When he asks Serafina "Do you ever tell the stories of your people?" (132), the young Pueblo woman answers that they are not permitted to do so, which results in a short conversation about the preservation of culture through storytelling. The interesting aspect of that exchange, at least for my purposes here, is the suggestion that the preservation of one's culture can only be achieved through transmission across others:

> Yes, you're right. If a culture forgets the stories of its ancestors then it dies. The Greeks are remembered because they passed their myths on to the Romans, and they passed them on to us. Those myths inspire our art and music, and the new stories that spring from ancient legends. (132-133)

A few pages later, after being questioned about giving some of the traditional tales she tells a distinct New Mexican flavor, Serafina replies to the Governor: "Doesn't it make sense that we should put some of our men as heroes in the stories?" (145). In Serafina's question we can see Anaya's intertextual writing strategy almost spelled out. By blending the local with the foreign, by basing one's writings on previous works from other cultures, the goal of blurring the line between the universal and the particular can be achieved, and it becomes easier to realize why Odysseus can become Sonny Baca (or the other way around) and why Anaya can tell New Mexican stories full of connections to works from other cultures, times, and traditions.

Literature is inevitably relational and self-nurturing, since all writers enter the world of letters as readers. As such a reader, in an essay celebrating a major milestone for the University of New Mexico libraries (that of reaching the level of one million holdings), Anaya wrote: "A million worlds. A million million worlds. And the beauty of it is that each world is related to the next, as was taught to us by the old ones" (*Essays* 178). Intertextuality, in that sense, is nothing but the print version of the cosmic interconnectedness acknowledged by the elders and, therefore, the most logical tool for an accomplished author, like Anaya, to set the literary plain on fire.

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NOTES

1 In *The Essays*, Anaya also talks about the book holdings in the town library: "Growing up with few books in the house created in me a desire and need for books. When I started school, I remember visiting the one-room library of our town and standing in front of the dusty shelves lined with books. In reality, there were only a few shelves and not over a thousand books, but I wanted to read them all. There was food for my soul in the books, that much I realized" (67).

2 The term "Chicano," adopted around the 1960s by many Americans of Mexican descent to denote a newly reformulated identity, has been subjected to a number of challenges since then, mostly related to its grammatical masculine ending. "Chicano/a," "Chicana/o," "Chican@" and, most recently, "Chicanx," among others, have been proposed as more inclusive labels to include female and non-binary sexual identities. In this article, I am employing the spelling "Chicanø" to acknowledge and honor those challenges while maintaining the spelling as close as I can to suggesting its original pronunciation. I am using "Latinø" for the same reasons. I use the spelling "Chicano" in those cases in which the grammatical masculine appears to be more appropriate. In quoted texts, I maintain original spellings.

3 The real-life librarian, Miss Pansy, is remembered by Anaya in *The Essays*: "Miss Pansy, the librarian, became my new guide. She fed me books as any mother would nurture her child. She brought me book after book, and I consumed them all. Saturday afternoon disappeared as the time of day dissolved into the time of distant worlds. In a world which occupied most of my other schoolmates with games, I took the time to read. I was a librarian's dream. My tattered library card was my ticket into the same worlds my grandfather had known, worlds of magic that fed the imagination" (178).

4 For such a study, I have canvassed all of Anaya's novels and short story collections, his poetry books, *The Essays*, and the travel book *A Chicano in China*. I have not included his plays nor his works for children yet.

5 In the studies of narratology and intertextuality the citing text is known as the hypertext and the cited text is called the hypotext, following Gérard Genette's nomenclature (11-12).

6 In my efforts to catalog all intertextual references in Rudolfo A. Anaya's works, I have not found any explicit references to either Musil or Mann. Joyce's *Portrait* is cited in Anaya's *The Sorrows of Young Alfonso*, and Joyce is referenced in both *Randy Lopez* (a minor quote from Joyce's *Ulysses*), and in *The Essays*.

7 Lamadrid (200) compares and discusses the lines "met him pike hoses." (*Ulysses*) and "bet him Mike's horses" (*Randy Lopez*).

8 Lamadrid suggested this connection, as part of what he described as Anaya's penchant for having his characters "walk freely between Anaya's novels and stories" (201).

9 Also in *Jemez Spring* a somewhat oneiric scene summons the ghosts of Miguel A. Otero and Erna Fergusson, among other famous New Mexicans. In the

largely autobiographical and metaliterary *The Sorrows of Young Alfonso*, in turn, appearances by Juan Bruce-Novoa and Sabine R. Ulibarrí, among others, are less playful and closer to being regular citations.

10 While I have not found any explicit references to Kafka in Anaya's works, I agree with Velásquez that this is a very likely intertextual citation of the Czech author. Arguably, an echo of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* can be found in Anaya's *Tortuga* as well, but only if one chooses to interpret Anaya's novel in that light; the text, as suggested, offers no mentions of Kafka or his works.

11 Additional evidence to the fact that Calderón's play has been known and important for New Mexican letters prior to Anaya's multiple citations (and further proof of the way in which the elders eagerly read what was available) can be found in the long poem "Los soñadores," by Alejandro Frésquez, originally published in a San Miguel county newspaper in 1933, and later included by Anselmo F. Arellano in his 1976 anthology *Los pobladores nuevomexicanos y su poesía*: "Quién no recuerda al famoso / Poeta, que en verso abarca, / Lo que sucede en el arca, / De este mundo veleidoso... / Oír el verso más chistoso / De Calderón de la Barca. // --'Triste sueño es el vivir' / Dijo el Vate más profundo; / Y el gran trágico del mundo. / Dice: --'Morir es dormir'..." (111).

12 Though Sonny is not a soldier, Anaya makes the military connection shortly after Sonny's homecoming: "Rita turned to look at her Chicano Ulysses home from the war" (287), blending and blurring the borders between Sonny's struggles and the Trojan war and, potentially, evoking in the reader's mind the abundant literature on Chicano soldiers and veterans.

13 See, for example, Sánchez's assessment: "Sonny Baca is thus not only the traditional gumshoe who follows clues, interviews people, visits different sites, does research, and consults and relies on assistants, but he is also a shaman, a good brujo, with powers" (233).

14 Full details on all citations (included those not listed in the table in this article) are catalogued in my Chicanø Literature Intertextual Database (CLID). Though not available to the public yet, at some point I hope to be able to share the complete listings of citations through links accessible from another digital project of mine, the Visual History of Chicano/a/x/ Literature (https://faculty.ucmerced.edu/mmartin-rodriguez/vhcl.htm).

15 I have also left out of the table references to historical figures who did produce writings of their own but who are not cited by Anaya as writers (e.g. Hernán Cortés and Juan de Oñate, among others).

16 Herrera-Sobek has explored in detail potential non-explicit connections with Greek philosophy in *Jalamanta* (102-108), as well as religious influences from the Bible, Aztec cosmology, Hindu religions, and American Indian beliefs (108-114).

17 Once again, despite the significance of these recurring references, I have no space to analyze them here, but I expect to do so in a future publication.

18 It is for that reason that I counted Fray Marcos and Cabeza de Vaca as part of the Chicanø cluster of references in *Río Grande Fall*.

19 See Bruce-Novoa's "Shipwrecked in the Seas of Signification," passim.

20 Though I have only explored conscious literary references in this article, other scholars have produced comparative analyses of Anaya's works that all but suggest the possibility of such subconscious connections as well, as does Bus in his study of Anaya and Mary Austin (especially on pp. 61-65). Horst Tonn, in turn, has made the case for cultural differences being not foundational but relational (242), a claim my analysis supports and expands.

Anaya's Spiritual World in Itself, and in the Context of Chicano and Latin American Literature

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Abstract

Among the readers, critics and publishers there are some who insist on using the term magical realism in relation to supernatural events which occur in Anaya's fiction. In the few years after the publication mega-success of García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), it was almost inevitable that beginning with Anaya's first and spiritually rich novel, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), many readers and reviewers might read the novel as a kind of Chicano magical realist masterpiece. Now, Anaya was aware of this and acknowledged in 1999 that a work like *Tortuga*, the third and last volume of his "somewhat autobiographical New Mexico trilogy [. . .] verged on magical realism". Nonetheless, Anaya never seems to have used that term in reference to *Bless Me, Ultima*, nor indeed to other narratives by him. And, as this study will establish, this is because Anaya recognized in the trilogy (whose second volumen is the 1976 *Heart of Aztlan*) the prior reality of the New Mexican cultural mestizaje between Spanish and Indigenous influences becoming one living and dynamic reality.

The aim of this paper is 1) to account for and otherwise describe Anaya's own representation of an essential, enchanted, 400-years-in-development New Mexican spiritual world, and how it develops in his work; and 2) to contextualize this unique world in fiction by Mexican American and Latin American writers during the last decades of the twentieth century. Much will be gained, it will be shown, by distancing Anaya's world from a magical realist one. Think of how Isabel Allende distanced *The House of the Spirits* (1982) from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a profound process of inter-textual dialogue which allowed her to emerge from the tremendous shadow of García Márquez and tell her own stories her way. Or, pause to consider how the spells and powers of Ultima and the Trementina sisters have as much and as little explanation as many popular and biblical beliefs in the supernatural, but how those powers and spells shape characters' lives within *Bless Me, Ultima.*

Keywords: Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima,* Chicano Literature, Latin American Literature, magical realism

* * *

Today (in late March, 2021), for the last time after doing it periodically for the few previous months with similar results, my google search "Rudolfo Anaya and magical realism" produces many pages of hits which address the topic more or less directly. I did the search because Anaya himself sometimes linked his fiction to magical realism, and because critics and publishers enforced the connection. For example: in a Warner student and book discussion group edition of *Bless Me, Ultima* Anaya writes that *Tortuga*, which he considers the third volume of his New Mexico trilogy, "verges on magical realism" (Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* x). But at least as early as on the 1992 front inside flap of the dust jacket for Anaya's fourth major novel, *Alburquerque*, the University of New Mexico blurb states that for this urban novel "Anaya draws on his trademark magic realism." Many others develop that point. In his readily accessible and reprinted literary encyclopedia article, the prolific writer for such publications, Nasrullah Mambrol of the University of Kannur in extreme southwestern India, begins by affirming that Anaya's "works project a Magical Realism that blends contemporary life with the hidden manifestations of humanity and cultural identity."[1] At the other end of the non-specialist literary critical spectrum, on weebly.com, a free website builder site, Brent Taylor starts his article "*Bless Me, Ultima*" by declaring that "Anaya uses several tools and elements to tell Antonio and Ultima's story. The most commonly occurring tool is magical realism, which Anaya skillfully uses to set the tone for a small but magical town in New Mexico." Taylor then concludes his short piece by asserting "it is clear that every page relates to magical realism in one way or another and this book would be nothing without it." Finally, seeing the importance given to supposed magical realism in Anaya, this introduction, which could be much longer, may finish with the empirical observation that Warner Books, Anaya's most important big commercial publisher, gives prominent place to *Bless Me, Ultima* on the dust jackets of its hardbound Anaya editions as well as on the covers of paperback ones. For example, the four

Sonny Baca novels have on the front of their dust jackets, right above the author's name, the words "A Mystery Novel by the Bestselling Author of *Bless Me, Ultima*," and for the short, trade-paperback formatted novel *Jalamanta*, both on the dust jacket for its hardcover edition and the cover of its paperback edition, Warner prints "Bestselling Author of *Bless Me, Ultima*" above Anaya's name. In the cases of all five novels and their various formats and editions, the type face used for Anaya's name is larger than than that used for the title of the books in question.[2] Beyond question, then, it is normal to associate Anaya with "his trademark magic realism."

Returning to the google "hits," normal in them are the following characteristics: statements as to Anaya's leadership role in creating—as a "father," "godfather" or "guru" of—Chicano literature; second, an affirmation that Anaya's first novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, is his best known and best-loved production; and, third, that this novel is a work of "magical realism". Now at the level of general reference works, Mambrol's 2008 article gives the best example of an organized, but non-specialist synthesis on how magical realism and indeed magic appears in Anaya. There Mambrol observes: Anaya's works "project a Magical Realism that blends contemporary life with hidden manifestations of humanity and cultural identity." Referring mainly to what Anaya himself calls "my somewhat autobiographical New Mexico trilogy" (*Bless Me, Ultima*, *Heart of Aztlan* and *Tortuga*; Anaya *Bless Me, Ultima*), and indexing them as Anaya's novels which "best exemplify [the following] themes and characterizations," Mambrol states: "the principal characters struggle with the sometimes contradictory notions of Chicano identity tied both to an Aztec and Spanish past and to the English-speaking world of the present." The primary goal of this article is to examine these "contradictory notions" as they relate to Chicano identity and the way Anaya deals with what from at least 1969 until, perhaps, the early twenty-first century, is his version of the synthesis in New Mexico of more than four centuries of Spanish-indigenous, indigenous-Spanish physical, cultural and spiritual *mestizaje*. It will be maintained that to use the concept of "magical realism" as a tool for understanding the synthesis is too blunt an instrument. This is particularly the case when the primary example for understanding the concept is its presence and use in Gabriel García Márquez' fabulously enduring and influential

1967 novel *Cien años de soledad* which was translated into English in the United States only in 1970.

1. THE NEW MEXICO TRILOGY IN ITSELF AND IN ITS TIMES

In Antonio Márez Luna, the young protagonist of *Bless Me,* Ultima, Mambrol sees as central to the novel the creation of "a psychological and magical portrait of a child's quest for identity." This occurs when the events of the plot leave him "subjected to competing realities that he must master in order to grow up." These realities come at the same time as Antonio's preparation for and fact of his First Communion. Mambrol stresses how Antonio's home-bred and religious-training by the local priest in "Roman Catholic beliefs" contrasts with "the magical world of the pre-Columbian past" into which he enters through Ultima, the *curandera*, who "is a creature of both worlds […] a magical character who guides Antonio through the ordeal of understanding and dealing with these challenges." Noteworthy is Mambrol characterizes the Catholic world as one of beliefs, the pre-Columbian as a world of magic. Also important: Mambrol does not address, perhaps because of the relative shortness of his article, the issue that Antonio's farming, maternal family—the Lunas—, and his father's family's—the Márezes—vaquero/ranching life seem to go back, at the time of the 1972 publication of *Bless Me, Ultima*, to the start of something no longer than a four-centuries-old New Mexico of Spanish, indigenous and, finally, mestizo culture rather than to the more abstract, distant "pre-Columbian […] world of magic." Anaya himself readily acknowledges in *Bless Me, Ultima* "the teaching of the Catholic church and the native spirituality" coming together in the novel" (Anaya *Bless Me, Ultima*). More specifically he stresses that in the novel what is operative is "The beliefs of my traditional New Mexican culture "which "are grounded in the Catholic religion and Spanish folktales from the Iberian world," but as "influenced by cultural borrowing from the Pueblo Indian way of life" (Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* x).

Turning his attention to *Heart of Aztlan*, the second volume of the trilogy, Mambrol asserts that the novel is, "like *Bless Me, Ultima*," "a psychological and magical portrait of a quest for Chicano identity and empowerment." And this despite neither addressing the fact

that the word "chicano" appears in a passing way but once in *Heart of Aztlan* (184) nor does that mention carry the contextual heft of directing or being a considerable factor in that "quest for Chicano identity and empowerment." That said, the family centering the novel, led by Clemente Chávez and his wife Adelita, is very different from that of the *Bless Me, Ultima* protagonist Antonio Márez Luna whose whole life during its extension in the novel transpires in the area of the same fictional Guadalupe, NM from which the Chávez family leaves after the first seven and a half pages of the first chapter of *Heart of Aztlan*.[3] This novel's primary setting is the alienated, industrialized big city Albuquerque instead of the tradition-rich New Mexico llano which permeates every page of *Bless Me, Ultima*, i.e., in "the flat country where the hills are smooth and gentle" and for which Clemente always pines (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 134). *Heart of Aztlan* portrays loosely the Chávez family as a less fortunate version of young Antonio's Márez Luna one. Names are changed, but it is the Chávezes desperate finances in the poor farmland of the real-life Pasturas-Santa Rosa, Guadalupe County, New Mexico (of Anaya's younger years) that drive them to Albuquerque. And it's not that the Márez Luna homestead in *Bless Me, Ultima* is better than the Chávezes. While the Luna farmers actually live off the land, Antonio's family survives in the country only because his father, the former-vaquero, now earns his and his family's living by working for the county highway department. In *Heart of Aztlan* the father Clemente must sell the family land for a pittance which barely covers its debts. Then the family drives two hours west, via the old, storied US Route 66 (today's I-40), to join older son Roberto (a simplification of the three Márez Luna brothers who after their return from WWII in the Pacific, physically unscathed, leave the family for the city). Roberto, having moved previously to the real-life Barelas neighborhood of south Albuquerque (and Anaya's real-life home during his teen years) prepares the way for Clemente to seek salaried work in the real-life Santa Fe (Railroad) Yards of that time. But rather than this novel centering on some version of the very young Antonio-very old Ultima relationship, *Heart of Aztlan* portrays realistically Barelas as a gritty factory-town dominated by the extensive Yards, and stresses the exploitative, post-war recessionary work conditions under which the local workers, Mexican American men in large numbers in fact,

labored. And, most importantly, it is in this strange, non-traditional world that the initial breakdown of Clemente's paternal authority in the family occurs.

The other, "magical portrait" aspect of *Heart of Aztlan* invoked by Mambrol centers on the presence and activity of a long-time, but unlikely—neither family nor economic driven—immigrant from Mexico City: Crispín, the old, blind, blue-guitar playing "poet of the barrio" (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 13). The novel makes clear that Crispín came specifically to New Mexico decades before on a mission whose historical roots are not in the central Mexico of his youth, but are instead of two kinds. The first is that he is on a poetical/mythical quest determined by his belief that all Mexicans "are the fruit of the people who wandered from the mythical land of Aztlan, the first people of this land [i.e., the indigenous people of northern Mesoamerica, or specifically today's New Mexico] who wandered [about six centuries earlier] south in search of a sign" (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 83). And this sign, as becomes clear in the text, is perhaps the most famous one of Mexican culture: the eagle perched on a cactus devouring a snake. Or, in other words, the mythic sign which determined the founding of Tenochtitlán, today's Mexico City, two centuries before the arrival of the Spanish under Hernán Cortés.

The second motivation behind Crispín's journey to New Mexico is not found in the text per se of Anaya's novel. Rather it is contextual to the 1960s post-1964 Civil Rights Act's rising of Chicano consciousness for the rest of the decade and into the 1970s and 1980s of Anaya's own most militant period of Chicano consciousness.[4] Hence, the middle and late 1960s constitute the societal, then-contemporay reader's understanding of the motivation for Crispín's poetic/mythic mission: trace/find in the far Mesoamerican north the homeland left by—in effect the original New Mexican—Aztecs on their way to becoming the founders of Tenochtitlán, present-day Mexico City. But in the pages of *Heart of Aztlan*, the resonance of Crispín's properly Chicano homeland seeking mission among the men of Barelas is muted at best. In the bar where Crispín strums his guitar and sings the stories of Aztlan and its people, the men are interested but, with Clemente constantly asking how this helps their strike against the Santa Fe Railroad, and Crispín having no answer, we read: "the story was done, the men were spent," and "the grime

and poverty of the barrio enveloped them again and they understood the intriguing story did not get them back their jobs" and felt "the despair of going jobless that winter" (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 85).

The "magical portrait" of which Mambrol writes comes about in this way. It is late November, earlier December of the first early 1950s months of the Chávez family living in Barelas; the strike continues and men like Clemente are surviving because of welfare. Drunk as usual one night Clemente is the last to leave the bar in what could be called the "magical" Chapter 13. As he wanders the deserted streets in wind-driven snow, he stumbles and falls into the snow in the gutter. He contemplates his situation: failure in farming the land, failure in maintaining authority at home, failure at work and in trying to organize the workers against the Santa Fe. He is ready to give up and die, and would have laid there until he did. But in less than twelve full pages (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 120-132), the blind Crispín finds and rescues him, and then follows their successful visit to the old woman who controls the magic rocks which results in three pages in italics (129-131) wherein Clemente, at first accompanied by Crispín and then alone, makes a magical journey through a desert. Then, "Torn and bleeding and barely alive he found himself on a moonlit meadow at the edge of the sacred lake" (130). In words that I will presume neither substantially to quote or paraphrase, it seems that in the presence of all the victims of injustice that have succumbed to the "chains of steel" regime of the Santa Fe Railroad (130), Clemente feels "Time stood still and in that enduring moment he felt the rhythm of the heart of Aztlan beat to the measure of his own heart," and he has an ephiphany as he shouts out "I AM AZTLÁN" (131). Although he is ready to die, thereby joining all the victims he finds there, instead the elemental powers of place preserve him and, now in normal type font, he finds himself "gasp[ing] for breath and "fe[eling] the searing pain of reality returning" as he comes to himself down the mountain and hears the music of Crispín's guitar" and whose player/owner is coming to save him again from dying (131). Chapters 14, 15, less than two pages in 17 (169-170)[5], and last Chapter 21, the book ends with what can only be called a symbolic victory, and more an ending in literature than in life. The workers lead by Clemente are in the Santa Fe Yards. Crispin honors leader Clemente's request by "strumm[ing] a tune of liberation on the blue guitar," while the Clemente and the

Mexican workers of Barelas ready for a new confrontation with "armed guards" who "fingered their rifles nervously," while the "dogs they held on leashes growled uneasily" (Anaya 1988: 208). And this happens even as, above the din of the Clemente-led march on the Santa Fe Yards, all can hear "the blaring sirens announcing the mobilization of another force [the arriving police] at the barricades," but undeterred, to the united cry of "¡Adelante!", Clemente and the other Barelas Mexican workers surge forward as the novel ends (208-209). It remains, in the Chicano-Aztlan heated mid 1970s—as well as today—, for the reader to finish the scene and end the novel to "hir" satisfaction.

In *Tortuga*, the third volume of the New Mexico trilogy, missing is anything similar to the coming-of age themes of the cross-cultural llano world in *Bless Me, Ultima*, the Barelas barrio of Albuquerque and Aztlan quest themes of *Heart of Aztlan*. Instead front and center the reader confronts a completely different setting and indeed world: that of the remote Crippled Children and Orphans Hospital of New Mexico, a state institution for the poor, and its patients and staff (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 6).[6] Some of these patients, including the eponymously nicknamed protagonist (for the full body cast he receives upon hospitalization and which for many resembles a nearby mountain ridge[7]), are Mexican American or, better said in the novel's terms, *raza*. Others are indigenous or Indian, others Anglo, and, with time it is learned, that there are also "vegetable children." With no indicated race nor ethnicity they dwell apart in a remote ward never visited by most patients, nor indeed by their families. Shrunken by diseases like polio and with no prospect of recovery, they come to have a vegetable-like sameness among them. They survive for some unspecified period of time only thanks to the iron lungs they live in and to the real-life nuns who feed and clean them. Returning to the majority of patients, there are some who, like Tortuga, have conditions which may actually be treated and even cured at the Hospital. And Anaya, building off his own hospitalization in the real-life Carol Tinley Hospital for Crippled Children following a diving accident at age sixteen, tells the story of how his protagonist is changed by his time at the institution. This is because of whom he meets and how they all influence him as he successfully pushes through the horror on

one hand of the living with so many kids who have no hope, and, on the other, fighting the tedium and pain of rehabilitation to recovery.

Emblematic of the non-racial, non-ethnic essential oneness of the children is a spectacular and the reader suspects completely invented sequence. This occurs when those children who are ambulatory enough—even though they need wheel chairs or crutches, or are misshapen by their particular disease—are taken in the hospital bus to the one movie theater in the adjacent small town. As unthinkable, I believe, as it would be in real life, the adolescents are taken to see what seems to be—anachronistically, given the early 1950s time line of the novel—an imprecise, but novelistically efficacious retelling, in synthesized version, of the 1931 and 1935 Boris Karloff movies *Frankenstein* and, its sequel with Elsa Lancaster, *Bride of Frankenstein*. Anaya makes real the patients' greatest excitement and empathy as they view on the screen versions of their own crippled, misunderstood selves figured in the composite bodies of Frankenstein's "monsters." Selves, be it said, who understand and, more to the point, deeply feel the monsters'—and their own—capacity and need for the love, even if it be from a creature like them of the opposite gender. So intense is the experience that some of these adolescents, aroused into passionate fury, pair up and even couple in the theater aisle with each other. When the movie ends and order returns to the theater, the patients leave the theater. On their way to the bus some local high-school football team members and their girlfriends mercilessly razz them, all the time calling them "freaks." Not being able to stand that abuse, the more mobile adolescent patients unite in fighting and routing their mockers in a street brawl. Winning the field of combat, the patients, aided by the usually negative figure of the head nurse and helped by a large, strong orderly, are exultant and return to the hospital feeling, for once, very good about themselves.

Now only on page 168 of the 197 pages of *Tortuga* in its 2004 edition (with pp. 199-200 being Anaya's 2004 "Afterword" to the novel) does the alert reader of *Heart of Aztlan* understand who the protagonist known only as "Tortuga" in the novel really is and realize that his back-breaking accident was not in something like a car wreck. Rather Tortuga is actually Benjie, the youngest and wildest of the five Chávez offspring from *Heart of Aztlan*. It happens that he was in injured as the consequence of falling from the ladder up the

Santa Fe Yards water tower after been obliged to climb it, being shot in the hand and having fallen to the ground while in the middle of a dispute between his brother Jason and Jason's arch enemy: murderer, reform-school "graduate," and zip-gun wielding Sapo (Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan* 197-199). This knowledge, however, does not change the thematic center of gravity of *Tortuga*: it remains firmly centered on the not-ethnic, not-Chicano, deeply human hospital experience of what Mambrol calls Tortuga/Benjie's "symbolic entry into a world of supernatural transformation." And this process is begun by and shepherded throughout the novel by the most ambiguous person in *Tortuga*'s cast of characters. He is the bedridden, "small, thin boy" called "Salomón," and who, as he is more closely observed by Tortuga, becomes "the frail, angelic boy" who when he "open[s] his lips to speak," really only "speaks," at least to Benjie, "in the deep night and in dream" where paradoxically "there was only silence" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 22). One of the devices Anaya employs to communicate these magical communications is, as in the Clemente-reaching-Aztlan sequence in *Heart of Aztlan*, to represent Salomon's words to Tortuga/Benjie as italicized sections of the novel.

Towards the end of the book—when the reader realizes that Tortuga is Benjie—, his mother sends him from Albuquerque a package and a letter. In accord with the dying Crispín's declared wish, the package contains the old poet/singer's blue guitar (Anaya, *Tortuga* 168). Benjie/Tortuga is surprised. For he, running with the local *marijuaneros*, had no time nor special relationship with Crispín, nor understood how Crispín had become his father Clemente's guide in finding the magical lake and river of Aztlan in the mountains, nor how his transformed father had become the leader of Barelas against the Santa Fe Railroad. The Benji of *Heart of Aztlan* was nothing but a rebellious youth—and unlucky at the end to be Jason's brother—with no care for the loss of traditions and values which affect his father Clemente so grievously; nor, even more so, for the rights of passage which returned his father Clemente, thanks to the aid of Crispín, to the pride of his manhood and community leadership in the last third or so of *Heart of Aztlan* (Chapters 13-21). But by the end of *Tortuga*, the formally bitter and sceptical, but now healed and renewed Benji decides to accept Crispín's blue guitar. Instead, though, of singing of Aztlan and its wandering people, Benji will take up the now apparently-dead Solomón's wish.

And this is stated for the last time on the penultimate page of *Tortuga*, written in the italic letters which signify Solomón's dream-delivered messages to Tortuga/Benji. As the healed and transformed youth rides the Greyhound from the hospital town for home two hours north, he dozes off. What wakes him is the sense that the deceased Solomón is present there and has been whispering these words to him: "Make a song of rejoicing from all that you have seen and felt! Sing a song of love, Tortuga! Oh yes, sing of love!" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 197). But there is no Salomón on the sun-filled bus. The reader understands better why Benji has accepted fully Crispín's blue guitar, but will not sing of the people of Aztlan. Instead he will ponder the ill-fated Solomón's complicated message affirming hope and love despite his own tragic life and the worse ones endured by those sad shrunken creatures in the iron-lung ward of the hospital who in their vegetative, prospectless lives have all the same striven to live as long as possible. Solomón's choice of Tortuga/Benji for this labor seems to have been made even before he met the recently arrived boy in the body cast. Solomón, most definitely a magical creature, foresaw that Benji/Tortuga would be rehabilitated despite the despairing state of spirit in which he arrived at the hospital. Furthermore, Solomón knew that as a result of having been hopeless, but having fought back to health, Benji would have a unique understanding of suffering without prospect of recovery; and, perhaps even foreseeing that Crispín would pass his singer's mantle and blue guitar to the unpromising Benji, Solomón understood that Benji, despite the deteriorating patient Danny's attempt to drown him (when he was still in the body cast), would be the person of feeling and insight needed to sing of /for those with no hope but the vain desire itself to live.

Before moving onto the next section of this paper, it might be well to contextualize further the personal relation of Anaya to the places and themes of the New Mexico trilogy. And this is nicely done thanks to Anaya's twenty-six-page *Autobiography. As written in 1985* at the request of TSQ Publications, one of the derivative publishers resulting from the breakup of Quinto Sol Publications, the UC Berkeley-based publisher of the academic and storied *El Grito: a journal of contemporary mexican-american thought* (1967-1974) as well as the creator of the $1,000 Premio Quinto Sol, the first national literary prize for Chicano writing, awarded four times between 1972

and 1975.[8] The section headed "A New Life" is of special interest. Anaya begins: "I attended school in Santa Rosa [NM] until the eighth grade," i.e., when Anaya was around fourteen or twice as old as protagonist Antonio of *Bless Me, Ultima* (Anaya, *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* 8). He continues: "It was then that the gang of boys I had known began to fall apart. Some had moved away from the small town. Some began to fight with each other. Prejudices I had not known before appeared" (Anaya, *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* 8). In the next paragraph he describes a true loss of childhood innocence:

> We, who had always been brothers, now separated into Anglos and Mexicans. I did not understand the process. I had always known I was brown, that I was *mejicano* in the language of my community, that we were poor people. But those had been elements of pride, and now something had come to separate us (*The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* 8-9).

In the following paragraph he states that his family moved to Albuquerque in 1952 when he was fifteen, and so left behind the lands and childhood experiences that gave way to their literary recreation in *Bless Me, Ultima*, the first volume of the New Mexico trilogy, and opened the door to the second and third volumes, *Heart of Aztlan* and *Tortuga*, as he explains in following pages of the *Autobiography*. Here, though, the salient point is clear. *Bless Me, Ultima* is so different from the other two volumes in great part because it represents the author's best attempt to portray, what for him and, as it turns out, his protagonist Antonio Márez Luna, is a kind of pre-lapsarian world of people—good, bad and indifferent—who are experienced based on their behaviors, not pre-judged by their race or ethnicity. Despite everyone being poor in the Santa Rosa of Anaya's 1940s and very early 1950s, it was heaven on earth for the young Rudy. But around 1951 "something had come to separate us […] into Anglos and Mexicans," and then by the mid and late 1960s the *mejicanos* morphed into being "Chicanos." And being Chicano and the idea of Aztlan are themes of virtually all Anaya's post-*Ultima* novels as well as of the collection of the book *Aztlan. Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, with its first 1989 version edited by him and Francisco A. Lomelí, and a second "Revised and expanded edition"

more than a generation later in 2017 by them and Enrique R. Lamadrid. But the Chicano theme and reality is not in *Bless Me, Ultima*, no matter what can be called the "retro-reading," of it through the prism of the Chicano Movement which, as we have seen, is most present in Mambrol's and many others' reading of the New Mexico trilogy. As with the first and third, written-in-Spanish Premios Quinto Sol, Rivera's *… y no se lo tragó la tierra* and Hinojosa's *"Estampas del Valle" y otras obras*, the characters and situations of all three novels are the same: the downtrodden, poor life of the vast majority of Texan and New Mexican *raza* or Mexican Americans in the middle of the twentieth century. Yet, what—in the activist late 1960s and 1970s—identifies singularly these three novels' protagonists and their world is easy to see. Like the young Anaya in pre-lapsarian Santa Rosa and his younger protagonist Antonio living in a still remoter part of the llano of New Mexico, the protagonists and the people they live with and among do not self-identify—seem not even to know the word—as "Chicano," and less still with all the tones and attitudes of militancy the word acquires in the 1960s. Nothing could be further from the world portrayed in those first three Premios Quinto Sol than the 1969 Denver which saw, under the leadership of former boxer Rudolfo "Corky" González, the founding of the civil-rights organization Crusade for Justice; nor, from the Denver meeting in March, 1969 of the First Chicano National Conference. Resulting from the conference was the creation of the famously militant *El plan de Aztlan* designed to be "the ideological framework and concrete political program of the Chicano Movement—whose official language was English—because of its emphasis on [Chicano] nationalism and the goal of [Chicano] self-determination."[9] Arising at this juncture also was the activist Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) whose mission was indeed to implement the *Plan* which, despite the title in Spanish, was written in English.

2. THE FOUR PREMIOS QUINTO SOL AND THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

As was commented upon above respecting Anaya's "Afterword" to the 2004 or twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Tortuga*'s first publication, he acknowledged that "a few early critics said that [*Tortuga*] didn't fit the social realism we needed in the heady days of

the 1970s Chicano Movement." Perhaps in our "woke" times, it is easier to access the critics' position while understanding Anaya's. For he goes on in the "Afterword" to state that "In story and style I think *Tortuga* is a high point in my early years as a writer" even though "I am known as the author of *Bless Me, Ultima*" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 200). He then continues to explain why: that despite not being what could be called a "Chicano-Movement document," the novel centers on something more basic: the human. Stating that "I believe there is a universality in *Tortuga*", Anaya describes the grounds for that universality in the extreme suffering and long hospitalization the protagonist suffers and then poses the essentially rhetorical question: "Who has not undergone a traumatic event in life?" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 200). By extension, then, does Anaya not implicitly ask: who cannot relate to the life-robbing paralysis of the children he portrays as poor, largely forgotten little vegetable-like creatures in the seldom-visited iron-lung ward of the same hospital that is assuring protagonist Tortuga's health-restored return to the world? And does that miserable, albeit non-political plight, not merit attention? Moreover, as Anaya makes clear in his 1985 mini-autobiography, his own diving-accident caused hospitalization in the early 1950s at the real-life Carrie Tinley Hospital for Crippled Children was not political nor "Chicano". The hospital's real-life, then particularly remote location 240 kms. due south of Albuquerque both explains the impressive, angst-filled apprehension of narrator Tortuga's description of the ambulance ride to that Hospital, and, besides, answers with a definitive yes the question as to the importance of the human, non-politicized drama the novel develops. Hence, when P.B. Taylor gives a very Chicano reading (esp. pp. 139-143) to the process of Tortuga/Benjie's transformation from being broken, paralyzed and hopeless to restored health, he does so by retro-reading that process through the lens of two subsequent works: Anaya's next major novel, the politically-themed *Alburquerque* (1992), and his earlier mock epic poem *The adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* (1985). In the novel *Alburquerque* a sub-theme is that Tortuga/Benjie has become the forty-year old University of New Mexico professor and writer Ben Chávez who is trying to write the epic poem of Aztlan and its people. This, of course, was the mission entrusted to him around fourteen years earlier by Crispín when he left him the blue guitar. At the same

time a more universal "song" of redemptive suffering is what Salomón, the deathly-sick child with no ethnicity, no politics, wanted Tortuga/Benjie to do after having lived and survived the hell of all the mortally-ill children at the hospital. Those points stipulated, our purpose is not to discuss the competing claims of critics and author per se. Rather let us consider for a moment the facts of authors' fictions and the world into which they are published. While writers may, of course, write what they want, their public all the same and at all levels, from general reader to critics and scholars, has its expectations for productions by given authors. And, clearly, Anaya felt it necessary to explain his work—*Tortuga* in this instance—to his public understood in its broadest dimensions.[10]

Now, to the extent that the Chicano Movement owes it early literary masterworks—as represented by the four Premio Quinto Sols awarded between 1971 and 1975—to the efforts of the founders of Quinto Sol Publications and the sub-set of editors for the academic, but storied *El Grito: a journal of contemporary mexican-american thought*, one thing in the present context is truly noteworthy: not one of those prize winning works has a dominant political theme. Texan Tomás Rivera's *…y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) is the coming-of- age novel of an unnamed First-Communion age boy in the early 1950s of the lower Rio Grande Valley and the migrant laborer world of the Upper Midwest. New Mexican Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) sets its similar stage-of-life narrative in the llano of his home state when WWII is ending; First Communion also is an important part of his story. Texan Rolando Hinojosa's *"Estampas del Valle" y otras obras* (1973) is set in a few small towns of the lower Rio Grande Valley, and tells the parallel stories of two cousins orphaned early on in their lives and until as they come to early manhood, having both returned from the Korean War. In their stories, as in the one told by Rivera, there is injustice at the hands of Anglos, but in their worlds it is fellow *raza* members who are the worst of the *homo homini lupus* kind to their own.

Owing, it seems, to problems within Quinto Sol Publications, the fourth and last Premio Quinto Sol, was delayed until 1975, being published not by Quinto Sol itself, but by the derivative and short-lived Tonatiuh International and was awarded to the El Paso based poet and dramatist Estela Portillo Tambley. She won her Premio

Quinto Sol in 1975 for *Rain of Scorpions and Other Writings*. a collection of nine short stories and the eponymous novella set mostly in the *frontera* lands where Texas, New Mexico and Mexico create their own particular subculture. It is perhaps the most "political" of the awarded volumes, but not for any Chicano Movement politics. Rather it stands for the revindication of women's rights in patriarchal society. Thelma Reyna, in the second and longer of her two online reviews of *Rain of scorpions* (that of 14 May 2012), addresses this issue directly and in a way most important for this article. She states that "Portillo Trambley felt that Chicano writers must not limit themselves to Chicano themes and struggles" and, dramatist that she was, "believed that our stage is the human stage and that our characters and messages must be universal." Is this not in essence, as discussed above, Anaya's own defense, or, better said, informal apologia for not injecting the Chicano Movement into *Tortuga*? Reyna notes that, like the Anaya of that single novel, all Portillo Trambley's work "was sometimes criticized by fellow Chicano writers for taking this stance instead of joining in the militancy of Chicanismo" (continued from the 14 May 2012 review).[11]

3. MAGICAL REALISM AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE NEW MEXICO TRILOGY

By the time Anaya received the 2015 National Humanities Medal, awarded to him in the White House by President Obama on September 22, 2016, not only was Don Rudolfo confined largely to the wheelchair in which he was seated as the Medal attached to the distinctive red ribbon was placed over his head and then hanging from his neck, but most definitely "the heady days of the 1970s Chicano Movement" were long over. In fact with the 2014 or 9th International Conference on Chicano Literature hosted by the University of Oviedo, but organized, as from the beginning, by the Instituto Franklin de Estudios Norteamericanos at the Universidad de Alcalá, the conference title had been—as would be three years later the 2017 edition of *Aztlan. Essays on the chicano homeland*—"revised and expanded." It became what it is today: the "International Conference on Chicano Literature and Latino Studies."[12] And even though in *Borderlands/"La Frontera": the new mestiza,* first published in 1987, Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004) embraced fully and discussed

most amply the feminine dimensions of Aztlan's gods in the book's essays and poetry, and, fittingly then, dedicated it "*a todos mexicanos* on both sides of the border," her example in that regard was not followed. Subsequent researchers and essayists in borderland studies—interpreting "borderland" rather broadly since the new "borderland" really extends from deep into Mexico through the Mexico-Texas border areas per se and all the way across the U.S. from northern California, through Illinois and into the Northeast—have not emulated Anzaldúa's interest in Aztlan as a reality or useful concept. Last year, for example, Elizabeth Coonrod Martínez published a collection of essays titled *Teaching late-twentieth-century mexicana and chicana writers*. But this was not/is not just any collection of essays. For it belongs to the prestigious "Options for teaching" series of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). The Association solicits proposals by would-be editors for volumes in the series, and when one is accepted, organizes the respective calls for papers for the given volume, and once the volume is set, supplies much editorial help in creating the resulting book of which it is the publisher. Now from the narrow perspective of the present study, most significant is that not one of the twenty-six contributors to Martínez' volume—nor Martínez herself in her long, substantial introduction to volume of 344 pp. + x—invoke Aztlan, even when writing about Anzaldúa! But this kind of reality is in fact what the close, honest literary historian and cultural historian Lomelí noted in his revised introduction—"Revisiting the vision of Aztlan"—to the "Revised and Expanded" 2017 edition of *Aztlan. Essays on the chicano homeland*. Activists, from the mid-sixties onwards, in their zeal, "sometimes used myth to prevent expansion into a larger cultural agenda within the Chicano Movement, such as granting women a more central place in the Movement"; and so "by privileging a narrow nationalist agenda, they excluded those they meant to serve" (Lomelí 14). And despite Anzaldúa not taking offense not feeling excluded, but rather creating her own feminine Aztlan, she was the exception among Chicanas even as her example recedes to the margins of contemporary awareness.

For his part Anaya was content to let the version of his contribution to the 2017 edition of *Aztlan. Essays on the chicano homeland* remain as it appeared in the 1989 edition. Apparently, long-widowed and well-

advanced into his declining years, he let the essay, first written in the central epoch of his career, stand as an historical document on one hand, and, probably, the central and definitive discursive statement of his overall vision of who he considered himself to be. Yet, that said, it seems clear that both for readers and for Anaya more important than the conceptual underpinning of his work was his lifelong goal "to touch people" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 200). Referring precisely to the non-political, non-Chicano-Movement novel *Tortuga* which he considered, as we have seen, "a high point in my early years as a writer," he stated that as author, "My reward is the reader who thanks me" (200). Yet, as Anaya frequently acknowledged, and whatever the values of *Tortuga*, more people have been "touched" by *Bless Me, Ultima* than any other volume in the New Mexico trilogy, or, for that matter, in his entire oeuvre. Let us consider why.

The full Anaya quote about how readers reward him may provide the way in. In the third to last paragraph of the two-page "Afterword" to the 2004 edition of *Tortuga*, first published, remember, twenty-five years before, Anaya wrote:

> Stories are about revelation. I revealed Tortuga's experiences as much for me as for the reader. My reward is the reader who thanks me for *tackling the themes* in the book. That person's comment is worth more than twenty weeks on the best-seller list. *I write to touch people*, and when they respond the circle is complete. The pain is lifted. As we reveal the frailties of our human bondage, we touch others. That touching makes us stronger (Anaya 200; emphasis mine).

At least since Aristotle's *Poetics* the case in the West has been made that the reason a writer crafts a work is to produce an effect in the viewer, listener or reader. Anaya's desire "to touch people" is his way of saying that. Then, too, the *Poetics* premises that extended creative works, specifically tragedy in his case, are 1) poet imitating life processes deriving from the probable actions of personages of specific character confronted by specific circumstances, and, 2) the audience's reaction to how those actions are plotted or developed in a natural sequence through to their conclusion. Anaya, at least initially, refers instead to readers' response to his "tackling the themes" in the novel *Tortuga*. In so doing he separates from Aristotle by discussing his literary creation in conceptual, not experiential terms. Aristotle, writing specifically of tragedy—and

there is the most definite tragic pall which hangs over *Tortuga* as novel despite the protagonist's rehabilitation and release from hospital—posits, on the other hand, the critical concept of catharsis. This concept has nothing to do per se with the themes of any particular extended literary creation. It describes, rather, how the plot sequences protagonists' actions to produce pity and fear in the audience. Then, as the full recognition, the full feeling of the horror of the where the actions are leading, have lead the characters, those powerful emotions are purged, "catharsized." The spectator or reader or viewer has had a wrenching experience which, nonetheless, is valued for making present in "hir" life an *understanding through experience* of what our life sometimes is. In the last paragraph of the "Afterword" to *Tortug*a, Anaya—always the story-teller full with his material and preoccupied by how to reach his audience with it—adopts a less conceptual approach to his relation with readers than the earlier lines we have been discussing. He explains that "Writing is about sharing one's story with others" and his hope that "in sharing my story"—both his own hospitalization as rendered in Tortuga/Benjie's, and the stories of "those prisoners in the iron lungs"—that "I have touched someone" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 200). These comments by Anaya recall others in the "Q & A with Rudolfo Anaya" which comes at the end the 1999 Warner edition of *Bless me, Utlima*. When asked by the not-identified interviewer "Which of your books was the most difficult to write?", Anaya responds "*Tortuga*," and explains: "It was painful to recreate the hospital and the suffering of the children" (Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* 282). And every reader of that novel has felt some of that pain. What Anaya does not include in his response was everything in the novel that has to do with fellow patient Danny, described early on as "a pathetic kid, dressed in an oversize hospital shirt and holding his withered hand up" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 34). Danny, as it turns out, fails at one point to have body-cast-imprisoned Tortuga drowned by his hench-boys, but at the end of the novel Danny himself turns off the electricity to the iron-lung ward, thereby killing all the "vegetable" polio victims who depended on the power-driven devices. Both patients and staff know that Danny is being spiritually destroyed by the uncontrollable withering that began with his fingers and months later by novel's end has extended far up his arm. But when Tortuga, now Benjie leaves the hospital, the issue of what will be done to control the murderous boy is left unsolved. Fellow patients and the doctor in charge know what Danny has done, what he has become,

but the reader only knows one thing: a disintegrating, dead-end killer is loose, and the hospital society is not being protected from him. Another kind of novelist—think of Rolando Hinojosa taking Becky Escobar née Caldwell from being a minor character in *Mi querido Rafa* and *Dear Rafe* to making her the protagonist of *Becky and her friends* and *Los amigos de Becky*—could have made Danny the protagonist of his own novel (see Miller, "Twentieth century female protagonists" 159-164). But while Anaya instead leaves Danny behind as *materia novelable*, his reader cannot forget Danny. That "pathetic kid" of early on in *Tortuga* develops to become as monstrous and evil as Shakespeare's hunchbacked, limping Richard III, he of the withered arm, or Iago in *Othello* or Edmund in *King Lear*. But unlike those characters who meet their tardy, but just ends, Danny, at novel's end, will apparently carry on until only nature ends his tortured, deadly days.

Now one reason for Anaya leaving the not ethnically-characterized Danny behind as a character is that Danny is not Chicano. He is simply a patient at the state hospital for any and all New Mexican "crippled children" (as they were then described), and has no relation to the overall thematic of Anaya's oeuvre. Only because of Anaya's aforementioned diving accident as a Barales adolescent did that extremely diverse cast of hospital characters become part of the New Mexico trilogy. For, as suggested above, Danny as an individual character may in fact have more "relatives" in Shakespeare than in Anaya.

Let us, then, return to "central" or "core" Anaya, and, perhaps, in no better venue than when discussing *Bless Me, Ultima*, the work he always acknowledged was "the favorite" novel among his readers. The Chicano culture which he calls the "backdrop for the novel" is described in this simple, factual way: "The beliefs of my traditional New Mexican culture are grounded in the Catholic religion and Spanish folktales from the Iberian world. These beliefs are influenced by cultural borrowing from the Pueblo Indian way of life (*Bless Me, Ultima* x). Now, Anaya himself in "A homeland without boundaries" from the *Aztlan* essay collection of 1989 and 2017, David Carrasco in "A perspective for a study of religious dimensions in chicano experience: *Bless Me, Ultima* as religious text", and, to abbreviate what could be a very long listing indeed, Héctor Calderón in "Writing the dreams of la Nueva México: Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and the Southwest literary tradition" all

explore and expand magnificently on that simply-described cultural "backdrop" to *Bless Me, Ultima*. And the simple truth about the religious and spiritual in Anaya has, I think, absolutely nothing to do with magical realism as indexed always by reference to García Márquez' *Cien años de soledad*/*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the single work with which that ism is most identified and by which defined. In that novel there are bursts of events and persons which simply erupt into the action and lives of the characters with no preparation, no system of cause and effect unless their specific nature is associated by characters with traditional Catholic beliefs. For example, José Arcadio Buendía being haunted by the spirit of Prudencio Aguilar, the man whose killing leads eventually to the founding of Macondo, or perhaps even the somewhat blasphemous ascension of Remedios the Beauty into the clouds on a windy day while hanging sheets to dry. For an event or person to be magically realist, it can, by definition, have no explanation in any religion or myth known in Macondo among its people; it can be no part of any systematic meta-physics, no part of any organized accounting for what cannot be physically surveyed, described, catalogued according to any taxonomy but its own.

When Anaya is asked in the "Q & A with Rudolfo Anaya," "What is your own experience with the supernatural?", the first sentence of his response is fundamental to understanding his world at its simplest, most characteristic level: "The supernatural and ordinary reality are worlds that exist side by side" (*Bless Me, Ultima* 282). And that is for me the essence of any world vision or individual experience of the supernatural. And that is what I have been told by those who have heard in western Ireland the keening of the banshees; and in Celtic northwestern Spain by a famous Galician writer summoned when he was three or four to the Santa Compaña's council of his family's dead; and by relatives whose bad luck was to have bought an old farm house on Maryland's Eastern Shore which they finally learned was built on an old Indian burial ground. When the questioner of the "Q & A" asked Anaya "What would you like your readers to come away with after reading *Bless Me, Ultima*?", his response says it all: "I hope they experience a very unique world. I hope they follow Antonio's journey and 'live' with him through his experiences". Yes, exactly. In mid-March, 1980 it chanced that after having lost daylight while

driving the incredibly flat Texas Panhandle and arriving hours later at a motel in the almost complete darkness of Anaya's boyhood home of Santa Rosa, the next day I walked out of my room into the brisk air, new smells, transparent sky, confronted by huge lichen-covered boulders among which lower down the unseen Pecos River was making its way. Years later I took up *Bless Me, Ultima* and after that have often journeyed those lands with the Anaya-shaped, Anaya-derived Antonio. Then on June 30, 2020, with Antonio "riding shotgun" for me as for decades, and out of touch on purpose for not wanting to hear anything more about COVID-19, I drove through Santa Rosa on the way to Santa Fe. How strange to learn the next day in Santa Fe that Don Rudolfo was no longer with us. But that "odd couple" young Antonio Márez Luna and old Ultima with her familiar owl are always out among the junipers, and, strangely, the luckless Florence, the no-one's child who drowns for no reason whatsoever, lingers just out of sight.

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NOTES

1 At the end of the Mambrol literariness.org entry, this notice is found: "Source: Notable American Novelists Revised Edition Volume 1 James Agee — Ernest J. Gaines Edited by Carl Rollyson Salem Press, Inc 2008." In other words Mambrol's article may actually date from 2008, but be more readily accessed in its online literariness.org version. I in fact have three such entries in another literature encyclopedia, each one ten pages long, albeit shorter in the reprint because of not reproducing the illustrations from the original printing. The author's rights to the entries typically cease when s/he cashes the check received for writing them. Also typical: such authors are never notified of the reprint editions of their work; they learn of them by surprise while googling for something else.

2 Casting my eyes toward a bookshelf in my study I see dust-jacketed volumes by Saul Bellow, John Updike, Joan Didion, Philip Roth and others that follow a similar practice. Once a writer is well-known, publishers often demonstrate more confidence in the author's established name than in that author's new title by using a larger type face for the author's name than for the title of the book itself.

3 Just in case: see Anaya's short *Autobiography. As written in 1985* for the basic information that is the background to his own youth Santa Rosa, NM (after birth in Pastura some 30 kms. to the SW), and both located in Guadalupe County, NM, which becomes the geography of the Chávez family's life and culture before departing for Albuquerque two hours to the west.

4 We shall return to this matter further on. Let it suffice now to point to the 1989 and 2017 editions of *Aztlan. Essays on the Chicano Homeland.* The 1989 edition was edited by Francisco A. Lomelí and Anaya himself, with introduction by him and the lead article by Anaya. The 2017 "Revised and Expanded Edition" has a revised introduction by Lomelí and the same article by Anaya. Six more essays expand the edition; Enrique R. Lamadrid, whose contribution to the volume is not specified, appears as a third editor in 2017.

5 Pages 169-170 narrate how the sell-out Mexican community leaders, the priest Father Cayo and money-man Super, came to Clemente with a bag full of money in exchange for him, who would now be set for life, forsaking the strike he was now leading and leaving town for good. However, and this is depending on factors that will be discussed later either a magical realist or a supernatural event, Clemente simply touched the bag, it went up in flames, destroyed the money, and the priest and Super fled in fear.

6 The real-life equivalent for the novel's hospital was the Carol Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children founded in 1937 in Hot Springs, NM (since 1950, because of a contest run by a radio quiz program of that name, it is called now Truth or Consequences), with the direct aid of polio-victim and then sitting U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To the protest of locals it was moved two hours north via I-25 to more central Albuquerque in 1981 and became the Carrie Tingley Hospital located on the campus of the University of New Mexico. In our language of today the "carrietingleyhospitalfoundation.org" web site states the purpose of the hospital whose work it supports: provide "adaptive programs, resources, and assistance that allow children with special needs to discover their independence and creativity despite their physical limitations, as well as financial support to the UNM Carrie Tingley Hospital for equipment and research." For a period-piece document on the place, hospital and surrounding area, see the modern reprint of the 1940 *New Mexico: A guide to the colorful state* (1940): *The WPA guide to 1930s New Mexico,* pp. 257-258.

7 In *Tortuga* this mountain called "Tortuga" is readily seen from the hospital and the protagonist's resembles the outline of a turtle's carapace. In the real-life Hot Springs or today's Truth or Consequences, NM, there is a nearby geological formation which is called "Elephant Butte."

8 In case the younger reader lacks a reference point for how much $1000 was between 1972 and 1975, suffice it to say that that sum would have covered during those years more than half a year's rent for a one-bedroom apartment for my wife and I when we were living in Hyde Park, the neighborhood of the University of Chicago (where Luis Leal was awarded his Ph.D. in Spanish in 1950 and Ana Castillo earned her MA in Latin American Studies in 1979).

9 The text of the *Plan* may be found in many online sites. But, especially in the present context, most interesting is to consult its reprinting in both editions of the already cited *Aztlan. Essays on the chicano homeland*. While Anaya's contribution, "Aztlan. A homeland without boundaries," remains unchanged in the expanded and otherwise revised 2017 edition, the volume itself as well as Lomelí's new introduction present a Chicano world much changed from 1969. The near half century between 1969 and 2017 have changed so many things!

10 For more light on that heartfelt personal dimension to *Tortuga* see Anaya (The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas 9-11; 22).

11 This is not the place to go into the details, but of the four Premio Quinto Sol books only Portillo Trambley's had a revised edition. This was published in 1993. Maythee Rojas states that "The new edition, which consists of [the title piece] novella and eight short stories, features four new stories in place of five of the original ones" (Rojas 9). Thelma Reyna adds that the author's increasingly "refined critical eye caused her to replace a handful of the original stories with new ones and caused her to inject substantive changes to characters and themes in the original stories she kept" (from the 30 April 2012 review). It is clear that the author Portillo Trambley and scholars with a positive view of her work understood that the fourth Premio Quinto Sol volume had certain issues.

12 See Miller's "The Latinidad of *Becky and her friends/Los amigos de Becky* in the 21st century" (85-90). There is found a very short account and documentation of the expansion of the Conference's scope in the context of discussing the "latinidad" of Hinojosa's Becky Caldwell.

Sabiduría popular y filosofía anayana de la vida en *Bendíceme, Última*

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INTRODUCCIÓN

A los 82 años, el anciano es una biblioteca. Cuando el primero se muere, es como si ardiera la segunda. Esta idea que acuñó el etnólogo y escritor maliense Amadou Hampâte Bâ en el Consejo Executivo de la Unesco en 1962 —idea que suena hoy a paremia— es una metáfora del anciano convertido en biblioteca en el sentido de "pozo cultural". En el pensamiento del maliense se percibe la muerte del anciano africano como el incendio de ese pozo cultural inexplotado, pues el anciano africano más está en el inmovilismo de la tradición cultural o de los saberes ancestrales canonizados (Murad Machado 10) e imbuido de memoria oral; la cual es susceptible de desvanecerse con la muerte del anciano aunque éste tenga discípulos. En cambio, el anciano Anaya encarna tanto la memoria oral como la escrita. Por lo tanto, gracias a la última, la biblioteca que representa no puede ni debe arder.

Bendíceme, Última, novela llevada al cine en 2013, vehicula y perpetúa las historias, las virtudes y los ritos del pueblo nuevomexicano. La obra invita a explorar la trayectoria vital del chicano Antonio Márez, de la inocente adolescencia a la madurez espiritual. Las historias aquí noveladas están empapadas de sabiduría popular nuevomexicana y de filosofía autoral de la vida. Rudolfo Anaya parece haberse empapado del espíritu de la gente y la tierra de su pueblo. Por eso, plasma con cierta obsesión y habilidad el folklore del sudoeste estadounidense de donde es oriundo. En este artículo, distinguimos dos preocupaciones que hayan imbuido la acción y el

espíritu de este escritor nuevomexicano en su primera novela: 1) la plasmación de la sabiduría popular (folklore) y 2) la caracterización de su filosofía de la vida. Para ello, resaltamos por una parte las travesías culturales manifestadas por las historias sobre sus raíces ancestrales; por otra parte, la fuerza espiritual y existencialista encarnada por el protagonista-narrador de *Bendíceme, Última* (1994), traducción al español de *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972). Para llevar a cabo nuestras reflexiones, convocamos a la vez los postulados teóricos de la Semiótica de la Cultura, sustituto de la Antropología cultural (Eco, *La estructura ausente. Introducción a la semiótica*), y los fundamentos del Existencialismo.

1. DE LA SABIDURÍA POPULAR (FOLKLORE): ENTRE RAÍCES ANCESTRALES Y TRAVESÍAS CULTURALES

La cultura significa y comunica algo (Eco, *Tratado de semiótica general*). Para este teórico y crítico italiano, "la cultura por entero debe estudiarse como fenómeno semiótico; b) todos los aspectos de la cultura pueden estudiarse como contenidos de una actividad semiótica y c) la cultura es solo comunicación y la cultura no es otra cosa que un sistema de significaciones estructuradas" (Eco, *Tratado de semiótica general* 44). En consecuencia, la semiótica se convierte en una teoría general de la cultura y a la vez en un sustituto de la Antropología cultural cuyo objeto de estudio es precisamente el hombre mediante su cultura para así aproximarse a su modo de ser, hacer, pensar, etc. Dicha cultura puede analizarse recurriendo al folklore que se desprende del corpus.

El folklore es un constituyente de la idiosincrasia de un pueblo. Es lo que caracteriza mejor a una sociedad. Esta palabra acuñada por el inglés William John Thoms desde 1846 representa la sabiduría ("lore") de un pueblo ("folk"), es decir, un conjunto de "usos, costumbres, prácticas, supersticiones, coplas y proverbios antiguos" (Corso 153). Integran más concretamente el folklore las costumbres, los mitos, las leyendas, las tradiciones culturales, las supersticiones, las creencias, las magias, las normas y los valores que rigen el comportamiento de un pueblo. Con estos elementos constituyentes, el folklore se posiciona como sabiduría popular, coincidiendo con la concepción antropológica de la cultura. Sobre el pueblo nuevomexicano de *Bendíceme, Última*, nos interesan

particularmente los mitos y leyendas del Hombre Volador, de La Llorona, de la Carpa Dorada y de La Virgen de Guadalupe y la figura popular de la Curandera.

Efectivamente, Anaya (re)crea la leyenda del Hombre Volador que más tarde novela en *The Man Who Could Fly and Other Stories* (2006). Es un personaje popular cuyas hazañas atemorizan a quienes están enterados de sus poderes mágicos en contra de los pecaminosos. Es el guía espiritual de Última. El Hombre Volador, al transmitirle unos poderes mágicos a La Anciana, le ofreció el búho o la lechuza, ave nocturna capaz de ver en la oscuridad y que en adelante será su alma y la centinela de la misma y de la familia Márez, resguardándolos de los malhechores como Tenorio Trementina y sus tres hijas (las Trementinas). De hecho, este búho, encarnación del espíritu del Hombre Volador, se encarga de cegar a Tenorio quien, culpando a Última de la muerte de sus dos hijas, busca vengarse de ella. Al dejar tuerto a Tenorio, el espíritu del Hombre Volador ayuda a que nadie o nada interfiera en las buenas acciones de Última. Del mismo modo, tampoco deberá interferir Última en el destino ajeno a causa de sus poderes. Precisemos que la manifestación del Hombre Volador a través del búho encamina al lector hacia la simbología de este animal nocturno entre los indios y algunos pueblos africanos. En realidad, aunque este animal infunde miedo por ser dueño de la oscuridad o de las tinieblas, es también un ave que ampara, acecha y comunica misteriosamente.

En la misma óptica (re)creativa de la mitología, encontramos la leyenda de la Llorona, mujer-fantasma que vagabundea por los ríos llorando la muerte de sus hijos. Esta leyenda posteriormente la recoge Anaya en sus obras *The Legend of La Llorona* (1984) y *Maya's Children: The Story of La Llorona* (1996b). Según la versión más popularizada, María, mujer muy bella, habría contraído matrimonio con un hombre acomodado, un ranchero con quien hubiera tenido dos hijos. Engañada amorosamente por su esposo, María se habría vengado de este último ahogando a sus dos hijos. El efecto del arrepentimiento la llevaría a llorar toda su vida, recorriendo las orillas de los ríos y mares en busca de sus hijos. En el imaginario popular viene representada vestida de blanco y llorando. La figura de La Llorona suele asimilarse/confundirse con la de La Malinche, amante e intérprete del conquistador Hernán Cortés:

> entre nuestras más memorables leyendas de fantasmas, transmitidas de generación en generación, está la de La Llorona, la mujer que, de acuerdo con algunos folcloristas, es el fantasma de la amante e intérprete de Hernán Cortés disfrazada. La Malinche, dice una leyenda, estaba encinta, esperando un hijo del conquistador. Al ser reemplazada por una aristócrata esposa española, decidió vengar su honor acechándolo para matarlo. (Stavans 155)

Estas dos leyendas vinculadas se viven tanto en zonas rurales como en las urbanas. Reflejan un sincretismo cultural, una mezcla de lo indígena con lo español (González Hernández). Las dos figuras son partes del pasado indígena y configuran, de modo secular, la idiosincrasia de los chicanos, los mesoamericanos y unos suramericanos. En cualquier caso, separadas o superpuestas, las figuras de La Llorona y La Malinche son arquetipos culturales mesoamericanos y del sudoeste estadounidense.

En *Bendíceme, Última*, el autor recobra esta figura de La Llorona, sobre todo cuando el Mal y el peligro están acechando al pueblo. Sus gritos se oyen, junto con los de la lechuza y los coyotes. Es descrita en la obra como una diosa solitaria cuyos gritos atormentados llenan el valle. Su "enroscado aullido hacía que se helara la sangre de los hombres […] la vieja bruja que llora por las riberas del río en busca de la sangre de los muchachos y de los hombres para bebérsela" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 28). Es evidente que sus gritos asustan sobre todo a los niños. Éstos, como Antonio Márez, suelen soñar con esos gritos que para ellos son un peligro, pues como leyenda, la figura de La Llorona conlleva misterios.

En sus novelas detectivescas, Anaya vuelve a utilizar esta figura, creando así un ambiente de miedo y de misterio en torno a la investigación del detective Sonny Baca. En un bosque, cerca del río donde se esconde el maléfico Raven, Sonny oye en la oscuridad gritos no solamente de La Llorona (o The Crying Woman), sino también de los coyotes:

> this was the song of the river: the cry of La Llorona withdrawing, frightened by the violence of the killing, […] In the dark there were other sounds. River coyotes began to yip yap and call to each other, and they came cautiously down the trail to gather around Sonny. Also, deep in the bosque the sound of a crackling fire could be heard, Raven's circle. (Anaya, *Jemez Spring* 260)

En este caso, la figura de La Llorona se presenta como un personaje que vela por la seguridad de la gente del pueblo. Muy a menudo aparece durante las noches cerradas, suscitando vulnerabilidad entre los aldeanos.

Otra leyenda es la de la Carpa Dorada, the Golden Carp. Ya aparece en el *Popol Vuh: Antiguas historias de los indios quichés de Guatemala* (1975), libro sagrado del indígena mesoamericano. Evidencia el castigo de los hombres y su conversión en carpas después de desobedecer a su Creador:

> Anaya creó esta historia, que se inspira en la mitología cristiana, y en la de las tribus Azteca y Pueblo. El joven Antonio oye hablar de la carpa por primera vez de boca de sus amigos Samuel y Cico. De manera similar a la historia de Noé y el diluvio del Antiguo Testamento, esta historia advierte que, a menos que la gente deje de pecar, la carpa provocará una inundación para purgar su mal. Antonio cree en la historia, pero no puede reconciliarla con su catolicismo. Después de oírla por primera vez, dice que 'las raíces de todo lo que siempre había creído parecían tambalearse'. Luego, cuando ve la carpa, queda maravillado por su belleza y se pregunta si una nueva religión podría incorporar la carpa dorada y el catolicismo. (National Endowment for the Arts 4)

De lo que precede, entendemos que en la obra de Anaya, la leyenda de la Carpa Dorada conecta sincréticamente el Animismo con el Cristianismo. Puede servir de religión a un personaje como Florencio, refractario a las enseñanzas del Cristianismo. En efecto, "Florencio necesitaba por lo menos un dios, y yo tenía la seguridad de que él sí creería en la carpa dorada [...]: por fin un dios que no castiga, un dios que puede traer belleza a mi vida" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 273). Como se lee de las explicaciones de la National Endowment for the Arts, los jóvenes Samuel y Cico son quienes le enseñan a Antonio la religión de la Carpa Dorada. Partiendo de esta exploración, Antonio Márez se entera también de la existencia de otra fuerza mitológica acuática. Se trata de la "mermaid o mer-woman", hada o ninfa marina con busto de mujer y cuerpo de ave o pez, ser fantástico con forma de mujer y poderes mágicos.

Con las dos acuáticas, el protagonista narrador y sus amigos saben ahora de otros dioses en quienes pueden creer. El protagonista

sabe que si el chicano desobedece por ejemplo a la Carpa Dorada –uno de los dioses que compadeció de los pecaminosos– el mar se encarga de castigarlo. Al respecto, confiesa: "me daba miedo la horrible presencia del río, que es el alma de éste, pero Última me hizo comprender que mi alma comparte todo con el alma de todas las cosas" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 16).

Hablando de La Virgen de Guadalupe, alcanzamos una figura que atraviesa toda la trama del corpus. Al lado de las figuras de La Llorona y de la Malinche, la figura de La Virgen de Guadalupe es uno de los símbolos culturales más auténticos y presentes en los textos chicanos y mexicanos; el que además hermana a la comunidad latinoamericana; "La Virgen de Guadalupe, [...], es una de las figuras trascendentales que da cohesión y hermana a toda la comunidad, al tiempo que la une con sus orígenes, como corroboran sus títulos de Reina de México y Patrona Celestial de toda la América Latina (este último concedido por el Papa Pío XII en 1945)" (León Jiménez 21). Pero el carácter trascendental de La Virgen de Guadalupe no solamente reside en la cohesión y el hermanamiento de la comunidad (de origen mexicano en particular y latinoamericano en general), sino también en la fusión de dos religiones: la indígena y la católica. En nuestras reflexiones fijamos esta figura como una de las divinidades aztecas, diosa de la tierra y de la maternidad. La figura de la Virgen de Guadalupe tiene una raíz india. Tanto en la obra de Anaya como en otras obras chicanas, esta figura se presenta como una mezcla de rasgos indígenas y cristianos; de ahí el sincretismo religioso y cultural que encontramos entre los pueblos hispanoamericanos.

En la novela, La Virgen de Guadalupe es adorada como diosa por Antonio Márez, María Luna (su madre) y más gente del pueblo Luna:

> Todos sabíamos la historia de cómo la Virgen se apareció a un indito en México y de los milagros que había hecho. Mi madre contaba que la Virgen era patrona de nuestra tierra y aunque había muchos otros santos buenos, a ninguno quise tanto como a la Virgen. Era muy duro rezar el rosario porque debía uno hincarse mientras se decían todas las oraciones, pero no me importaba porque cuando mi madre oraba yo podía mirar fijamente a la Virgen hasta creer que era una persona real, la madre de Dios, el último refugio de todos los pecadores. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 50)

Esta historia es similar a la que Antonio nos presenta otra vez en el capítulo dieciséis de esta novela:

> Mi madre me contó la historia de un muchacho mexicano, Diego, que había visto a la Virgen de Guadalupe en México. Ella se le apareció y le habló; le había dado una señal. Hizo que crecieran rosas en una loma desierta y rocosa, una loma muy similar a la nuestra. Así que yo también soñaba con conocer a la Virgen. Esperaba verla cada vez que daba la vuelta a una esquina. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 212)

De este otro relato del protagonista narrador podemos deducir que la figura de La Virgen de Guadalupe tiene un origen mexicano. En efecto,

> Doce años después de que los exploradores españoles desembocaran en tierras mexicanas, se produjo el milagro de la Virgen de Guadalupe. En 1531, la madre de Jesús de piel morena le apareció varias veces a un indio campesino llamado Juan Diego, un converso católico. Pidió que le construyeran una iglesia en el lugar. Juan Diego le contó a un Obispo lo que había ocurrido, y por supuesto no le creyó. Entonces apareció una colorida imagen de la Virgen en la capa de Diego para validar los hechos. Este milagro condujo a la conversión al catolicismo de unos nueve millones de indios mexicanos. El Vaticano reconoció este milagro en 1745 y la imagen de la Virgen ahora cuelga sobre el altar de la Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe en la Ciudad de México. (National Endowment for the Arts 9)

Nos consta entonces que La Virgen de Guadalupe es la guardiana del pueblo de Guadalupe del que lleva el apellido. Es la Santa Patrona de México y la adoran como patrona de la tierra. Así que entre la Virgen y el pueblo, se habrá entablado una relación como la que existe entre la madre y su hijo. Eso ocurre precisamente en uno de los varios sueños de Antonio Márez. Entendemos entonces por qué las alusiones a este personaje mítico abundan no solamente en esta novela de Anaya, sino también en otras suyas y demás escritores chicanos y mexicanos en Estados Unidos. Con frecuentes alusiones a esta divinidad, pueden leerse expresiones como "Virgen de Guadalupe", "Ave María", "Ave María Purísima", "Madre de Dios", etc. Refleja en general la manifestación de la religión católica en la forma de ser de varias familias hispanas. La creencia en la Virgen suele yuxtaponerse en este caso a creencias animistas y panteístas.

Por último, encontramos la figura imperante del curandero en el imaginario popular de la sociedad chicana de la obra de Anaya. ¿Encaja o no como figura mítica? El curandero

> es un elemento representativo de la cultura. En el contexto de la medicina tradicional, es una figura mítica y de relevancia, de respeto y de temor. En torno del curandero se construyen anécdotas, conjeturas, relatos extraordinarios, muchos de ellos son producto de la imaginación humana, pero sin duda, se le busca por su capacidad de explicar lo oculto, aquello que el ser humano común imagina sobre la existencia de fuerzas que escapan a su razón. (García Pereyra y Rangel Guzmán 5)

Práctica cultural y religiosa, el Curanderismo sustenta la vida del pueblo. El curandero o chamán, (re)creado por Anaya en *Shaman Winter* (1999), es un personaje siempre importante entre los hispanos. Es conocido diversamente como brujo, médium, mediador, practicante, charlatán, hechicero o, curador popular, huesero, partera o culebrero (González-Quevedo). Esta figura aparece como una alternativa frente a la medicina moderna. Es una forma tradicional de curar enfermedades, con hierbas y otros recursos psicológicos y religiosos. La encontramos en *Bendíceme, Última* con el personaje Última. Cuando Lucas (tío materno de Antonio) se enferma, Última es la última esperanza porque ni el médico, ni el sacerdote han podido curarlo. Después del diagnóstico, Última concluye que la enfermedad de Lucas se debe a un maleficio que le echaron los Trementina. Y ahora para curar esta grave enfermedad, recurre a su medicina tradicional:

> Última preparó su primer remedio. Mezcló petróleo con agua y con cuidado lo calentó en la lámpara. Luego tomó muchas hierbas y raíces de su maletita negra y las puso en el agua caliente y aceitosa. Murmuraba al revolver la poción [...]. Cuando terminó enfrió el remedio, y entonces, con mi ayuda, levantó a mi tío obligándolo a beber la mezcla. Éste se quejó de dolor convulsionándose como si quisiera vomitar la medicina. Sin embargo, era alentador ver señales de vida, aunque costó mucho trabajo hacer que se le quedara dentro la medicina. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 110)

Gracias a esos poderes de la curandera, hay enfermedades como el maleficio que pueden curarse. Entonces, es cuestión de creer que existen poderes mágicos, místicos o sobrenaturales que pueden

perder o salvar a una persona. Además del maleficio, hay también estados anímicos que se pueden sanar con los poderes del curandero. Queremos hablar aquí del "mal ojo" y del "susto" (o la "presencia") o "empacho" (West) que equivalen en la vida real a la depresión y la angustia. Estos estados del alma pueden aliviarse invocando a los santos y limpiando al mismo tiempo al paciente para que el alma atormentadora se salga de su cuerpo. El propio Antonio Márez experimenta el "susto" en forma de "presencia" cada vez que ve morir a alguien o cuando tiene un mal sueño. Rudolfo Anaya vuelve también a la figura del curandero en sus novelas detectivescas. En *Zia Summer* (1995) por ejemplo, el detective Sonny Baca está habitado por el "susto" y en este caso, por el espíritu de Gloria, su prima asesinada. Y para deshacerse de este espíritu, que además lo impide avanzar en su investigación, le aconsejan ver a Lorenza, la curandera porque "Lorenza would know what to do. She had gone to Mexico to study with brujos. She practiced a kind of indigenous shamanism, in the way of the good brujas, those called curanderas in the New Mexican villages. They had a way of healing, a way of knowing" (Anaya, *Zia Summer* 194).

Lorenza la curandera aconseja a Sonny Baca hacer la "limpieza" de su alma para deshacerse del espíritu de Gloria que está en él, ya que "A spirit has gotten into your soul. It has to be cleaned away" (Anaya, *Zia Summer* 179). Pero como Sonny aplaza el tratamiento que le recomiendan, sigue con este susto hasta cuando decide someterse a la terapia. Y en *Rio Grande Fall* (1996a), otro relato detectivesco de Anaya, Sonny Baca recibe otra vez el consejo de su novia Rita quien lo manda ver a Lorenza: "You have susto [...] Your soul has been inhabited by Gloria's ghost. That's what causes the fright. Go to Lorenza, she's a curandera; she can help you rud of Gloria's ghost" (Anaya, *Rio Grande Fall* 2). Durante el rito de sanación, Lorenza limpia a Sonny. Usa para ello hierbas, velas y todo lo que le permite conectarse con los santos y sus antepasados.

Como puede observarse, la figura del curandero (o espiritista), tema obsesivo que hallamos en la obra de Anaya permite viajar, mediante la superstición y la magia, al pasado precolombino.

En palabras esenciales, en esta primera novela, Anaya se inspira en su herencia cultural para entretener al lector. Recurre

obsesivamente a la mitología para revelar con poder mágico la esencia de su pueblo. Con las figuras de El Hombre Volador, La Carpa Dorada, La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe y La Curandera, nos conecta con creencias animistas (todos los seres y objetos de la Naturaleza tienen almas o espíritus análogos a los del ser humano), panteístas (identidad sustancial de Dios y el mundo) y cristianas (enseñanzas cristianas, en este caso). Con la cultura popular, la obra de Anaya llega a explorar y cuestionar temas transcendentales y existencialistas del mundo chicano. Consideramos desde luego que "no se escribe una novela para explicar una cultura; la novela crea la suya propia" (National Endowment for the Arts 2). *Bendíceme, Última* (re)crea por tanto su propia cultura, la chicana llena de folklore con mediadores culturales y populares que son El Hombre Volador, La Carpa Dorada, La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe y La Curandera.

2. FILOSOFÍA ANAYANA DE LA VIDA: COMBINATORIA DE LAS ESPIRITUALIDADES Y DEL EXISTENCIALISMO

Bendíceme, Última lleva un marcado acento autobiográfico (rasgos autobiográficos) sin por tanto ser una autobiografía en que un Yo fusiona las identidades del Autor, del Protagonista y del Narrador (Lejeune).[1] Entre los rasgos autobiográficos del corpus sobresale la similitud de la vida del protagonista narrador con la del propio autor. Durante la adolescencia, Anaya aprende de su abuela las historias sobre sus raíces ancestrales y sobre el Curanderismo, como también lo aprende Antonio Márez de Última, la Anciana, sustituta de la abuela del autor. Este nace, como el protagonista de la obra, en Las Pasturas, un pueblito de Nuevo México, procediendo de una familia católica, sin educación básica y donde el español era idioma casero. Ambos son hijos menores de vaqueros y granjeras. Empiezan a estudiar inglés en la escuela pública. La historia sobre el nacimiento del propio Rudolfo Anaya coincide con la de Antonio Márez. En realidad, "la curandera que presidió su nacimiento colocó herramientas de los dos oficios de la familia cerca del recién nacido, pero éste, sin embargo, intentó agarrar un papel y un lápiz" (National Endowment for the Arts 6). Hechas esas conexiones entre la vida del autor y la del protagonista de *Bendíceme, Última*, nos toca recalcar

los elementos que sustentan la filosofía anayana de la vida en esta obra. Observamos que la novela plasma una combinatoria de las espiritualidades y del Existencialismo.

Refiriendo a las espiritualidades, despuntan el Catolicismo, el Animismo y el Panteísmo como creencias y actitudes que caracterizan la vida espiritual del protagonista narrador y que parece promover el escritor nuevomexicano. Antonio Márez se educa en el molde católico. Su madre, María Luna, es muy devota, hasta parecerse a una sacerdotisa. Sigue la línea espiritual de la tradición hispánica que encarnan los Luna. Desea que Antonio también siga esta línea espiritual. Por eso reza por él, invocando a La Virgen de Guadalupe para que interceda por él: "Madre de Dios, haz que mi cuarto hijo sea sacerdote" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 51). Según piensa, "el sacerdote es un hombre que estima a su gente" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 164). Por eso, Antonio asiste a la catequesis para recibir enseñanzas doctrinarias cristianas que después le permiten recibir la Eucaristía. Esta educación cristiana debería preparar a Antonio para cierto comportamiento ético en la sociedad. Con el Catolicismo, va penetrando el misterio de la vida. Debe distinguir entre el Bien y el Mal, saber que Dios es bueno y bondadoso y recordar que el Bien termina triunfando sobre el Mal. Obviamente, porque la vida no es lineal, el protagonista vivirá más tarde distintas experiencias negativas que lo llevarán a cuestionar la Omnipresencia, la Omnipotencia y la Omnisciencia del Dios cristiano. De manera precisa, "no podía comprender por qué Narciso, que hacía el bien tratando de ayudar a Última, había perdido la vida, y Tenorio, que era malo y había segado una vida, andaba libre y sin castigo. No me parecía justo [...] Pensaba mucho en Dios y me preguntaba por qué permitía que esas cosas sucedieran" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 210).

Antonio quiere que venza el Bien sobre el Mal sobre la tierra, porque según las enseñanzas que recibe del Catolicismo, Dios castiga a los malos, a los pecaminosos. A partir del momento en que el Mal parece dominar sobre el Bien, el protagonista empieza a convocar, consciente o inconscientemente, unos de los principios existencialistas de la vida: lo absurda que es la condición humana, la propia existencia humana, la gestión de las emociones y de la libertad individual. Antonio busca comprender la vida, pero también debe superar la angustia existencial y el temor que experiencia. La

elección y la decisión son aquí términos que van a guiar su actitud ante la vida.

Guardiana y conservadora de las tradiciones culturales nuevomexicanas, Última encarna la combinatoria de las tres espiritualidades arriba mencionadas. Guiando espiritualmente a Antonio, llega a compendiar las enseñanzas del Dios cristiano con las de los dioses paganos para inculcarle la riqueza material y espiritual, la justicia humana y la cultura en la base de la sabiduría y del mérito.

Es precisamente Última quien llama la atención de Antonio sobre la predominancia del Bien sobre el Mal, puesto que "es porque el bien es siempre más fuerte que el mal. [...] El pedacito más pequeño de bien puede enfrentarse a todos los poderes del mal que hay en el mundo y saldrá triunfante" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 111). Los poderes mágicos de que se vale en su oficio de curandera sincretizan las creencias cristianas y paganas. Usando plantas e hierbas (el enebro, la hierba del manso, el orégano, el oshá, etc.) no deja de invocar al Dios cristiano para curar. El uso de la medicina tradicional y folclórica ayuda a Antonio a penetrar el mundo de la sabiduría cultural: aprende que el enebro puede curar dolores de cabeza, gripe, náuseas y picaduras de araña; que la hierba del manso puede sanar quemaduras, cólicos de los bebés y reumatismo; que el orégano, además de ser un buen condimento, puede aliviar la irritación de las gargantas, la bronquitis, la fiebre y la tos; que el oshá, además de sus virtudes curativas (lo cura todo, según el narrador), también sirve para alejar de las casas a las serpientes venenosas. Con todo, Antonio Márez tiene que establecer una relación con la Naturaleza o el medio ambiente (Federovisky 23).

Última, la Curandera, se vale cabalmente de los poderes de la Naturaleza para curar a Lucas, tío materno de Antonio, enfermado de gravedad. La familia Luna solicita los poderes mágicos de esta Anciana porque ni el cura de El Puerto (su pueblo), ni el gran médico de Las Vegas han podido sanarlo. Pero, antes de empezar el ritual, Última les aconseja a Lucas y a su familia creer en Dios, porque las plantas y las hierbas de las que se vale en su oficio encierran su voluntad. Así, Antonio aprende de Última que las plantas tienen alma; de ahí el Animismo, forma de creencia que hunde sus raíces en la América precolombina, con el curandero como figura prehispánica:

> El curandero es un personaje que forma parte de la cultura en México. Su presencia data desde la época prehispánica. En la colonia fue una necesidad ante la ausencia de médicos. Pese al avance de la medicina tradicional, nuevos medicamentos y nuevas especialidades, el curandero siempre ocupará un lugar importante en la diversidad cultural. Su método sincrético en la combinación de elementos de la medicina tradicional y aspectos de la religión, adquiere relevante importancia entre la comunidad y un facto en la cohesión del grupo social. (García Pereyra y Rangel Guzmán 13)

Frente a las dudas que generan la medicina moderna y la iglesia católica, el protagonista narrador quiere saber cómo el poder de los médicos y el poder de la iglesia pudieron no haber curado a su tío. Ahora que todo depende de la magia de Última, "¿Sería posible que hubiera más facultades curativas en Última que en el sacerdote?" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 112). Última aparece en este caso como la encarnación del poder mágico heredado del Hombre Volador de Las Pasturas. Y los poderes de esta mediadora llevan a Antonio a divinizar finalmente a la Naturaleza y a creer en las fuerzas de la misma.

Correlativamente a los poderes medicinales que la Naturaleza puede proporcionar al hombre que la escucha y la respeta, Antonio Márez presta particular atención a otros elementos de la misma, es decir, los astros, el mar y la tierra donde vive. Estamos ante una combinación mística de fuerzas o energías que, como símbolos naturales, influyen en el hombre. El temperamento que más tarde definirá a Antonio Márez y Luna dependerá de la relación que establezca con el Sol, la Luna, el Agua y la Tierra.[2]

La identificación de Dios con la Naturaleza convoca también otra espiritualidad, el Panteísmo, creencia filosófica y religiosa. Aquí, la Naturaleza, el Universo o el Cosmos y Dios participan de la misma identidad sustancial. Gracias a las enseñanzas de Última, Antonio sabe en adelante que los humanos, las plantas, los animales, los astros y otros elementos y fuerzas de la Naturaleza entrañan la voluntad de Dios.

En esta combinación de las espiritualidades, resaltamos además la escuela porque en ella Antonio recibe también enseñanzas. Su origen humilde, la devoción de su madre y sus afinidades con Última

—que unos llaman la bruja— lo discriminan negativamente (burlas y palizas) entre sus compañeros. Cae en la tristeza, emoción que le hace probar la angustia existencial:

> El dolor y la tristeza parecieron extenderse en mi alma, y sentí por primera vez lo que los adultos llaman 'la tristeza de la vida'. Deseaba huir, esconderme, correr para nunca regresar, no ver a nadie otra vez. Pero sabía que con esto, avergonzaría mi apellido, y el sueño de mi madre se derrumbaría. Tenía que crecer y ser un hombre, pero, ¡oh!, qué difícil era. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 67)

Con esta experiencia negativa, Antonio se siente frustrado. Pero el empeño que lo caracteriza lo lleva a hacer más esfuerzos para alcanzar su objetivo: "Y yo estaba ocupado en la escuela, guiado por el deseo de hacer mía la magia de las letras y de los números. Batallaba y tropezaba, pero con la ayuda de la señorita Maestas comencé a desenredar el misterio de ambos, en especial las letras" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 73). Esta actitud permite a Antonio superar las adversidades, a pesar de la angustia. Y esta angustia no debe suponer quietismo ni inacción. En la perspectiva existencialista, supone más bien elección entre varias posibilidades (por ejemplo, seguir o no seguir estudiando), compromiso en la posibilidad elegida (en este caso seguir con los estudios a pesar de todo) y responsabilidad en sus actos, pues, el hombre es lo que él se hace (Sartre).

El hombre desde la filosofía existencialista elige su moral y crea sus propios valores. Antonio debe contemplar su porvenir barajando su condición humana en relación con las circunstancias socio-histórico-culturales. Gabriel Márez, el filósofo anayano de *Bendíceme, Última*, le dice al respecto que "cada generación, cada hombre es parte de su pasado. No puede escapar de ello, pero puede reformar los viejos materiales, y con ellos hacer algo nuevo" (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 283). De ese modo, Antonio será un hombre de libertad y ésta es el fundamento de todos los valores (Sartre) que quiere encarnar. Le corresponde al propio protagonista dar sentido a su vida.

Desde el Existencialismo humanista, las consecuencias de los actos de Antonio Márez no recaen solamente en él. Sabe que representa el orgullo de la familia y los familiares. En sus actos, no se

encamina a sí solo. Encamina también a los que lo rodean, al pueblo. Esto implica que Antonio sea responsable tanto de sí mismo como de los demás. Creando una imagen del hombre de su elección, se elige a sí mismo y, por ende, al hombre (Sartre).

En la óptica del optimismo, el hombre se construye por sus actos. Antonio puede llegar a ser lo que quiere ser. Todo depende de él porque la libertad es lo que debe guiar sus opciones, sus decisiones y sus acciones. A modo de confesión y consejo, su padre Gabriel Márez le deja constancia de unas palabras aleccionadoras y que suenan para nosotros como el eje del pensamiento filosófico existencialista anayano:

> Yo dejé a mi madre, que Dios guarde en su seno, cuando tenía siete u ocho años. Mi padre me mandó a un campamento de ovejas en el llano. Me quedé todo un año, viendo por mí mismo, aprendiendo de los hombres que estaban en el campamento. ¡Ah!, ésos fueron días de libertad que no cambio por nada [...] me hicieron hombre. Después de eso, no dependí de mi madre para que me dijera lo que estaba bien y lo que estaba mal, decidía por mí mismo. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 283)

Estas palabras están encaminadas a estimular a Antonio hacia la elección de lo que quiere ser, en la medida en que está en derecho de romper el proyecto o los planes de sus padres. En este caso, no tendría la obligación de ser granjero, ni sacerdote, ni vaquero. Sin embargo, tomaría en cuenta lo que aprendió de su madre, de su padre y de Última, la Curandera:

> De mi madre aprendí que el hombre es de la tierra, que sus pies de arcilla, son parte de la tierra que lo alimenta, y que esta mezcla inextricable es lo que le da al hombre su medida para estar a salvo y sentirse seguro. Porque el hombre que siembra la tierra cree en el milagro del nacimiento y brinda un hogar a su familia; construye una iglesia para conservar su fe y su alma, que está unida al cuerpo, su arcilla. Pero de mi padre y de Última aprendí que la inmortalidad está en la libertad del hombre, y que la libertad se alimenta mejor por la noble expansión de la tierra y del aire, y del cielo puro y blanco. No me gustaba pensar en un tiempo en que no pudiera caminar por el llano y sentirme como el águila que flota en los cielos [...] libre, inmortal, sin límites. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 262)

Al final de la obra, Antonio diseña su proyecto existencialista partiendo de sus experiencias inmediatas y de los valores culturales y morales por los que ha optado:

> tomar el llano y el valle del río, la luna y el mar, Dios y la carpa dorada [...] y hacer algo […] La comprensión llega con la vida [...], cuando un hombre va creciendo, ve la vida y la muerte, se siente contento o triste, trabaja, juega, conoce personas [...] a veces toma toda la vida para adquirir la comprensión, el entendimiento, porque al final la comprensión significa sencillamente sentir amor por la gente. (Anaya, *Bendíceme, Última* 283-285)

Resumiendo este apartado, recordemos que esta primera novela de Rudolfo Anaya combina un conjunto de creencias y actitudes que después deben guiar la vida del protagonista narrador. Los rasgos autobiográficos despuntados de la obra nos permiten aproximarnos al proyecto filosófico autoral en la obra. Nos referimos al Existencialismo cristiano, ya que en sus actos de conducta que en adelante deben ser gobernados por la libertad y el libre albedrío, Dios y los dioses también existen para él. Además, porque siente amor por la gente, los actos reflejan el ideario existencialista humanista.

CONCLUSIONES

Bendíceme, Última plasma tanto la sabiduría popular (folklore) nuevomexicana como la filosofía de la vida de su autor. Destacan de la obra, en términos de sabiduría popular, los mitos y leyendas del Hombre Volador, de La Llorona, de la Carpa Dorada, de La Virgen de Guadalupe y de la Curandera. El protagonista narrador se imbuye de ideas, afectos y pensamientos inherentes a estos dioses y héroes populares. La adquisición de la sabiduría popular sirve de cimiento que luego permite al adolescente chicano de la obra cuestionar las diferentes enseñanzas. Y del planteamiento empieza la filosofía, y desde luego el ansia de aprehender la realidad a partir de la experiencia inmediata de su propia existencia. La fuerza espiritual y el proyecto existencialista (cristiano) del protagonista narrador toman forzosamente en cuenta la combinatoria de experiencias espirituales cristiana y pagana y las de la escuela moderna. En su basamento cultural e intelectual están su madre, su padre, Última y la señorita

Maestas para aconsejarlo. Porque el hombre es libertad, el propio Antonio es quien debe elegir lo que quiera ser —no lo que otra gente quiere que sea— siempre que su elección integre al hombre.

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NOTAS

1 En una autobiografía, existe un pacto (Lejeune) que consiste en un acuerdo implícito entre el escritor y el lector respecto del contenido de la obra. Se trata precisamente para el lector de pensar que lo relatado es indiscutiblemente la vida del autor; y que este último, el narrador y el protagonista representan la misma identidad. Se confunden el que escribe el libro (autor), el que relata la historia (narrador) y el que actúa (protagonista). Esto significa que las tres principales representaciones llevan el mismo nombre. Lo que induce forzosamente el uso de la primera persona: el Yo que escribe, relata y actúa.

2 Partiendo del ciclo de los astros, aprendemos que la Luna depende del Sol. Y es que este satélite de la Tierra recibe su luz del Sol. Este último da no solamente luz y calor a la Tierra, sino que también da ritmo a la vida en la Tierra (y el Agua). Por lo tanto, para un hombre apegado a la tierra como Antonio, hay que prestar especial atención al ciclo cósmico.

La mirada del niño chicano en Rudolfo Anaya: Ollie Tecolote
Identidad cultural chicana en la literatura infantil y juvenil de Rudolfo Anaya

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Resumen

A través de obras como *Farolitos for Abuelo* (1998), *Mayas Children: The Story of La Llorona* (1996), *ChupaCabra and the Roswell UFO* (2008), *The First Tortilla* (2007) del gran Rudolfo Anaya, se puede apreciar toda la identidad chicana. Esto implica claramente que no solo las obras mayores de Anaya se consideran chicanas. Las historias individuales que Rudolfo Anaya presenta en sus grandes novelas son vivencias de un colectivo, su visión de la realidad; un colectivo que mantiene una estrecha relación con el pasado, con las creencias, tradiciones o los valores. Sin embargo, también en la literatura infantil de Rudolfo Anaya está presente esta perspectiva de la memoria y la búsqueda de identidad, con la intención de una clara identificación del pasado, de las raíces y la búsqueda de un futuro mejor, sin olvidarse de su propia identidad cultural, la transmisión de abuelos a hijos, padres a hijos, etc. es primordial para el logro de la esencia del chicano.

Este estudio no solo intenta realizar una aproximación de la identidad cultural a través del análisis del tiempo y espacio de la obra literaria infantil en la voz de este gran autor chicano, sino también analizar la mirada del protagonista del último gran libro de Rudolfo Anaya dentro de este género, *El Tecolote del Sombrero de Paja (Owl in a Straw Hat)*. Con las aventuras del búho *Ollie* nos adentramos al norte del Nuevo México, a través de la perspectiva cultural y lingüística de Rudolfo Anaya sobrevolamos la frontera de México, El Paso, la memoria junto a las tradiciones autóctonas, el traslado de todo a la nueva cultura, etc. El texto se ve engrandecido gracias a las ilustraciones de Moisés Salcedo, y el manejo de la

alternancia lingüística (*codeswitching*) del autor, Rudolfo Anaya, y parte esencial de la literatura chicana. Así pues Anaya y el ilustrador de la historia, hacen vibrar una vez más con la identidad cultural chicana y ahora más allá de La Llorona.

Palabras clave: Anaya, *codeswitching*, identidad cultural, literatura chicana

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1. INTRODUCCIÓN. IDENTIDAD CULTURAL. ESPACIO Y LUGAR

Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya nació en un pequeño pueblo de Nuevo México, Pastura, mudándose a la edad de 15 años a Albuquerque, donde se graduó, para proseguir luego dos años con unos estudios de negocios que acabó dejando de lado, con el fin de comenzar estudios de literatura inglesa en la Universidad de Nuevo México. Antes de dedicarse a la docencia universitaria en la Universidad de Nuevo México (1974-1993), ejerció de maestro durante 7 años en una escuela pública de Albuquerque, de este periodo viene la gran necesidad que Rudolfo Anaya ve de promocionar la lectura entre los más jóvenes coetáneos en Nuevo México. Su esposa, la editora Patricia Lawless, le animó a comenzar con su carrera literaria y fue su gran respaldo con su primera gran novela, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) de la exitosa trilogía donde Anaya a través de un vínculo común, niños hispanos en EE. UU., analiza las emociones de los mismos en su nuevo espacio.

Rudolfo Anaya es considerado decano de la literatura chicana, sus traducciones han ayudado a entender mejor la escritura hispana en EE. UU., es considerado un gran defensor del multiculturalismo y el bilingüismo. Caben destacar sus numerosas obras infantiles como Farolitos for Abuelo (1998), Mayas Children: The Story of La Llorona (1996), The First Tortilla (2007), ChupaCabra and the Roswell UFO (2008) o el Tecolote del Sombrero de Paja/Owl in a Straw hat (2017), última obra de literatura infantil colmada de referencias de espacio y tiempo de la memoria chicana y que esbozaremos en las siguientes páginas.

El *Tecolote del Sombrero de Paja* (*Owl in a Straw Hat*) está repleto de referencias a la geografía del norte del estado y a la tradición hispana casera, como es el 'pozole' (9) o incluso las formas de organización que se contempla en el texto de las acequias que

ayudan a regar los campos; por tanto, está impregnado de lo que denominamos identidad cultural.

La identidad cultural puede ser entendida no sólo como un fenómeno en sí mismo, sino en contraposición a otras culturas. Muy particularmente, las tradiciones y los valores, incluso la ideología, que también pueden ser transmitidos de generación en generación, se ven contrastados y transformados en aquellos contextos que se ven confrontados con la exposición a otros valores y tradiciones; o bien, superpuestos por otros distintos. Esta exposición se da en muchos momentos: movimientos migratorios, presencia de medios de comunicación, el dominio de culturas hegemónicas sobre las minoritarias, etcétera.

En este sentido, y más allá de la concepción de la identidad cultural como algo esencialista, Raymond Williams recuerda que "we are born into relationships, and we live and grow through relationships" (Williams 135). Y, aun así, a pesar de cierta tendencia a esa universalización de los sistemas intelectuales en la actualidad, podemos encontrar también lo que Williams denomina "stubborn self-definitions" de la religión o la nacionalidad, y también de la lengua y la etnia.

En nuestra aproximación a la descripción de la identidad cultural de Rudolfo Anaya, vamos a considerar los conceptos de tiempo y espacio en su obra literaria infantil, concretamente a través de la imagen del búho chicano, *Ollie Tecolote del sombrero de paja*, así como la visión temporal en la transmisión de las tradiciones y valores. Creemos que este matiz es importante, en primer lugar, porque los vínculos identitarios más fuertes tienden a estar localizados con un lugar específico, y, en segundo lugar, porque estos tienden a ser recordados a lo largo del tiempo, aunque el contexto geográfico y humano más próximo haya cambiado. Las historias vitales "have a geography too; they have a milieu, immediate locales, provocative emplacements that affect thought and action. The historical imagination is never completely spaceless" (Soja 10), están bien definidas en toda la trama de la obra.

Creemos que es relevante preguntarnos, en primer lugar, cómo representa Anaya en sus obras literarias a sus personajes como participantes conscientes de esta transformación de la identidad a través del tiempo, no tanto en sus personajes individuales sino

en su transformación a lo largo de su trayectoria como escritor. ¿Es consciente del rol activo de sus relatos? Más aún, ¿es posible ese rol activo? En este punto, cabe recordar que el trabajo del poscolonialismo de las últimas décadas no se centra sólo en una reclamación de los textos y los personajes históricamente marginados, sino que tiene también su fruto en una (re)construcción de esas identidades a través de nuevos textos, nuevos enfoques, adaptándose a las nuevas situaciones sociales, culturales y a las nuevas fronteras.

1.1. Lo chicano

Durante muchos años han sido elaborados toda una serie de estudios semántico-lingüísticos para considerar el término a partir de sus componentes fónico-morfológicos, aunque en la actualidad el término 'chicano' abarca todo un universo ideológico que sugiere no sólo una postura de autodefinición y desafío, sino también "el empuje regenerativo de autovoluntad y de autodeterminación, potenciado todo ello por el latido vital de una conciencia de crítica social; de orgullo étnico-cultural; de concientización de clase y de política" (Ramírez 10).

Siguiendo a autores como Tino Villanueva, Heinz Dietrich, Carlos Muñoz o Joan Moor, 'chicano' es alguien que intenta cambiar estructuras sociopolíticas, con el fin de lograr justicia y dignidad personal y que, a diferencia de los méxico-americanos (o hispano-americanos, americanos de ascendencia mexicana), aculturados al sistema, forman el denominado Movimiento Chicano (o La Causa).

1.2. Tiempo

La novela infantil "El Tecolote del sombrero de paja" adquiere en muchos aspectos la forma de los cuentos tradicionales, en cuanto a los personajes y el desarrollo de la trama. Sin embargo, diverge de ello de manera significativa. Empieza mencionando el nombre del protagonista Ollie, el tiempo y el lugar en que vivía; con ello, parece evitar cualquier tipo de fórmula tradicional para iniciar su relato. Por otra parte, la novela insiste en la inclusión de una serie de cuentos tradicionales de la cultura occidental fácilmente reconocibles; así, menciona los ""grasshoppers who play all summer and don't store food for winter. Esos chapulines will go hungry" (8), refiriéndose a las fábulas de Esopo de La cigarra y la hormiga, Los tres cerditos y

Caperucita (23), y también la utilización de mochuelo como epítome de la sabiduría, o las referencias a la astucia de la zorra en el episodio del Puente Libre (17).

A través de estos episodios, el relato va alcanzando su clímax, pero de manera novedosa. Así, incluye una adaptación al contexto americano, al describir la astucia del coyote, animal exclusivamente norteamericano, y también incorpora el reflejo de la novedad de la preocupación por el engaño económico al pobre e ignorante cuando se le exige una moneda cada vez que alguien le tiene que indicar el camino. En este aspecto, difiere de la descripción del personaje pobre de los cuentos folclóricos europeos. Desde el punto de vista narrativo, cobra una enorme vigencia temporal la revelación del problema de Ollie (su desconocimiento de la lectura), pues se convierte en el detonante de sus aventuras. Esto supone un elemento fundamental en la trama de la novela, dado que le fuerza a dar un paso desde un espacio estable y confortable a una travesía llena de incertidumbre. La estructura interna nos recuerda un tanto a dos subtipos del *Bildungsroman* (novela de aprendizaje), el *Entwicklungsroman* (novela de desarrollo) y *Erziehungsroman* (novela educativa), porque que Rudolfo Anaya centra la trama en la formación y escolarización del pequeño protagonista, que impulsado "por las malas compañías" (9), los cuervos Raven y Crow, se pierde del camino.

Por tanto, podemos observar que la trama de la novela se estructura de la manera tradicional (personajes tipo, héroes, adyuvantes, adversarios…), e incorpora explícita y reconociblemente los elementos del relato tradicional. Sin embargo, el final queda abierto en cierta forma, pues no concluye la peripecia tradicional, sino que Ollie inicia un tiempo futuro tras a empezar sus estudios.

1.3. Espacio y lugar

Tal como se ha indicado al principio de esta aportación, la identidad se crea desde lugares reconocibles. Hemos mencionado también en la sección anterior el componente económico (la pobreza), así como el cultural (la ignorancia) como componentes identitarios. De igual forma, se puede decir que esa identidad de la infancia incluye idiomas y variedades lingüísticas específicas. En el caso de "El Tecolote", los

idiomas español e inglés forman parte de esa identidad, y aparecen en muchos casos entremezclados. Además, existen algunos rasgos significativos que dan indicios de cuál es esa identidad cultural a través de los nuevos espacios y lugares que el personaje tiene que ir encontrando.

El primero de ellos es el descubrimiento de su ausencia en el colegio y del hecho de que no sabe leer: "Mamá was shocked. She called Papá. "Ollie can't read" she exclaimed. "He's been skipping school!" (15). Este nuevo espacio trae consecuencias para Ollie, y también para sus padres: la ruptura de la confianza entre padres e hijos, la suavidad con que esa ruptura se convierte en una nueva confianza llena de esperanza hacia el niño. Igual de significativo aún es el reflejo que tiene el uso del español de la abuela, hacia el final de la novela. Esa esperanza viene dada por su afirmación de que "the Cloud People will bring rain", para inmediatamente añadir: "Agua es vida" (35). Un detalle relevante de esta escena es la inmediatez con que el conflicto se soluciona y llena de tranquilidad a Ollie; el uso de la expresión en español en la versión en inglés viene por la elisión del artículo, que sí se mantiene en español. Este sentimiento de confianza también viene dado por la descripción de su sentimiento al llegar a casa de su abuela: "Ollie levantó una pala y vio como su Nana echaba el agua por los surcos. Batía la tierra mojada con su pala. Sentía que había llegado donde pertenecía" (33). Culturalmente, el elemento del agua tiene una especial importancia con la cultura chicana en muchos casos, en parte como símbolo del río que se cruza para alcanzar el nuevo país, pero también como elemento integrador de la nueva cultura con su tradición cultural y lingüística.

Se observa también que, desde el punto de vista de la lengua, la novela comienza con la explicitación del nombre propio de Ollie. Se comporta como un niño tradicional, y, más aún, tiene nombre propio. Los padres, en cambio, aparecen sin nombrar. Aparece también nombrado con el término Tecolote, a través del término local "tecolote", propio de América del Norte y Central, no existente en Sudamérica o en Europa.

Tal como hemos visto, la identidad empieza a estar localizada en un espacio físico, frecuentemente localizable y reconocible. El inicio del cuento Ollie cuenta con dos elementos de lugar esenciales:

una primera aproximación fuertemente de lugar (orchard, nest, río Arriba), a los que, además se les da nombre. Empieza desde lo pequeño (el árbol, la orilla), hasta la descripción del río y volar, luego poder ver Santa Fe. La segunda aproximación tiene más que ver con la pobreza y el hambre, y la idea de obedecer al adulto y al maestro (3 y 4). Esto tiene que ver también con la ideología del pobre, y las inercias entre él y sus padres ante su desobediencia.

Lo que sí es destacable es la relevancia con que Anaya describe el *Spatial Turn*. El nuevo lugar de Ollie le abre nuevas fronteras, que son a la vez híbridas e indefinidas. Híbridas por la propia lengua que se utiliza; indefinidas por lo abierto del final del relato.

Vemos, por ejemplo, que en el texto español se dice "Los cuervos Raven y Crow", y que, en inglés, se elide la palabra cuervo. La elisión en inglés es lógica, pues de otra forma quedaría redundante. Otras traducciones como la de "Three sad homeboys went home for the day" ("tres homeboys tristes fueron a casa por el día") (10). El calco en español indica la hibridación de la nueva identidad, en la que, igual que con el nuevo lugar de Ollie, está en pleno proceso de cambio.

Ejemplos de esa incorporación de nuevas formas identitarias está la gorra de la UNM puesta del revés, o la aparición en español de sus juegos (jugaban al tag y al follow the jefe" (7), al igual que cuando "espantaban a los chipmunks" (7) o "drivers locos" (15) entre otros muchos ejemplos. Con todo ello, se está naturalizando el code switching como algo esencial en la nueva cultura, más allá de que sea solamente algo cambiante. Con ello, se enlaza también con las ansias de libertad generacional, que aleja el relato de Anaya de las formas más clásicas del folklore europeo.

El fenómeno sociolingüístico de las lenguas de contacto se caracteriza en mayor o menor medida por la intromisión de una lengua en la estructura de otra. Las consecuencias implican, en un primer momento, la coexistencia de ambos códigos en contextos específicos y particulares. Y es precisamente en la literatura chicana donde es especialmente notorio este discurso, tanto en la lengua inglesa como en la española, esto es que se incluyen ambas lenguas en el discurso literario. Gramaticalmente hablando, para poder llevar a cabo la transición de una lengua a otra se tienen que resolver problemas de orden sintáctico y no puede haber mezclas

fonológicas. Hay que ver cuál es la estructura gramatical de base y por ello hay que diferenciar entre lengua huésped y anfitriona. A través de las obras de Rudolfo Anaya, somos conscientes que su lengua es el inglés, pero en ella se hospeda claramente la lengua de su niñez, con la que se comunicaba con sus abuelos, padres y hermanos, esto es, la lengua española con elementos del *náhuatl*. La alternancia de códigos del contexto social en el que se dé la secuencia comunicativa juega un papel importante dado que puede incidir de manera definitiva en la particular motivación que hace que un determinado hablante opte o no por ella, se puede ver esto en muchos textos de Gloria Anzaldúa, donde claramente para hablar de sus propias emociones emplea la lengua española (familia, lugar de origen…) y para hablar de su perspectiva vital emplea la lengua inglesa, entremezclando y superponiendo una y otra vez ambas lenguas.

Cuando hablamos pues de code-switching en este texto de Rudolfo Anaya, hablamos de un código específico que el autor emplea en forma de alternancia en el texto en español en el sentido de solidarización y como forma de ayudar a comprender mejor al lector el texto, esto es, el autor quiere ayudar al lector joven. Con la decisión de usar un código específico, el vínculo entre los hablantes se fortalece automáticamente, mientras que los elementos oracionales dirigidos en inglés al resto de los lectores marcan la distancia entre ellos y el hablante, a la vez que refuerzan aún más la otra relación.

2. OLLIE TECOLOTE VOZ DE RUDOLFO ANAYA

La obra infantil bilingüe de apenas 39 páginas con textos paralelos en español e inglés sobre las aventuras del pequeño búho, llamado Ollie, representa al niño chicano que tiene una fuerte carga de la cultura mexicana, compartiendo con estas normas y valores con el significado simbólico de defender sus raíces y estar orgulloso como chicano dentro de la sociedad anglosajona contemporánea. En realidad, la obra consta de 35 páginas dedicadas a la trama propiamente dicha, 2 páginas con un glosario para el lector (36-37), 2 páginas con notas finales tanto del autor como del traductor, Enrique R. Lamadrid (38-39) que sirven de apoyo al adulto lector para promocionar la lectura dentro de la población chicana de

Nuevo México, tal y como sostiene el propio autor en la obra (38). Curiosamente estas dos notas, del autor y traductor, están escritas única y exclusivamente en lengua inglesa, pero también el code-switching están presentes, tal y como hemos analizado con anterioridad en estas páginas.

La nota del autor es muy curiosa porque está dedicada a la familia, y va dirigida a recordar a los niños y padres chicanos a que los hábitos lectores son necesarios en la vida y además deja constancia clara de su gran intención didáctica, creando programas estivales de promoción de lectura en Nuevo México.

Tal y como hemos dicho con anterioridad estamos ante un texto bilingüe, escrito en primer lugar en inglés por el autor Rudolfo Anaya, y luego traducido por el traductor de las obras infantiles de Anaya, Enrique R. Lamadrid, originario de Nuevo México, profesor de literatura española y portuguesa de la Universidad de Nuevo México, escritor de literatura infantil y reconocido activista del movimiento chicano en Nuevo México.

El plano de la expresión está convenientemente dirigido, gracias al texto bilingüe y el code-switching en el texto en español que, además aclara el traductor del texto original en lengua inglesa, Enrique R. Lamadrid. Él precisamente explica que es una realidad en Nuevo México, está latente en el estrato lingüístico y cultural del entorno y lo define como algo que "it's definitely not 'mocho' – substandard – Spanish or English, nor deficient in any way" (39), es decir, en absoluto con sentido peyorativo.

Rudolfo Anaya nos presenta esa realidad lingüística y cultural presente en Nuevo México, a través del texto en inglés y su traductor nos ofrece en el texto en español la transferibilidad del TO con code-switching y como un elemento claramente estructurador en ambos textos (inglés/español) del discurso.

A través de una personificación constante y dinámica (piensa, camina, fuma…) que realiza Anaya a través de la mirada de Ollie, que anhela leer y tener un lugar en la sociedad. Esta premisa recuerda claramente a María Moliner en "la educación es la base del progreso, considero que leer es un derecho incluso espiritual" y es precisamente la escuela un elemento que se empleó para lograr la asimilación y la eliminación de giros culturales no angloamericanos, y ¿cómo se conseguía y consigue? Claramente se logra a través de la familia, que

es el "último baluarte de resistencia frente a la pérdida de identidad y al desprecio cultural" (Cañero 265-290).

En boca de Cañero "la familia jugó un papel esencial" (265) y esto se refleja también a lo largo del quehacer literario de Rudolfo Anaya, precisamente en "El Tecolote del sombrero de paja" se denota la fuerte carga de la cultura mexicana, adaptando valores culturales reforzando sus orígenes para sobrevivir y satisfacer necesidades mínimas. Analizando el texto se ve como ese intento de asimilación al 'american way of life' está simbolizado por el sombrero de vaquero -"cowboy hat blanco" (3) que le regaló el padre a Ollie y que pierde por la travesía que debe encaminar hasta llegar a casa de la Nana Tecolote. Llegando allá la Nana le regala el sombrero de paja que perteneció al abuelo y que simboliza la vuelta a los orígenes y los valores familiares; denota al mismo tiempo gran emoción, el recuerdo de un ser querido y la conservación de su imagen, tal y como nos recuerda la cultura mexicana, su tradición y simboliza al mismo tiempo el viaje que se emprende entre la vida y la muerte, esa dinámica de la existencia.

El texto se ve acompañado y apoyado en magníficas ilustraciones que pormenorizaremos en el siguiente apartado de manera, pero llama la atención que en 6 páginas dobles (14/15, 22/23 y 32/33) aparecen solo texto, con el fin de reforzar el sentido de la familia y la educación, premisa fundamental para el movimiento chicano.

3. ILUSTRACIONES

Las ilustraciones brotan del pincel del ilustrador Moisés Salcedo, nacido en México, aunque criado en Arizona y famoso en Nueva York por sus murales urbanos pintados. La conceptualización urbana de las imágenes y del título de la obra están totalmente presentes y se pueden observar a través de los trazos de los 'tecolotes' y los espacios representados brillantemente por este gran artista. Cuando vemos los trazos de Moisés en esta obra, nos recuerdan a los graffitis urbanos pero cargados de colores que lucen vestidos y esculturas propias de los pueblos mexicanos. Los graffitis son representaciones que en realidad reflejan una combinación entre vida y arte, suponen la búsqueda de verdades y surge de esas representaciones el sentimiento de protesta. Creemos que Rudolfo Anaya ha querido mostrar a través de los grafos y trazos de Moisés Salcedo la lucha por encontrar una

identidad propia de los graffiteros, al igual que la identidad de lo chicano. El propio autor agradece en las notas finales (38) haber dado vida a Ollie con sus ilustraciones, pues las imágenes envuelven cada página y muestran incluso como perdernos por los paisajes vistos desde lo alto (desde el vuelo de los pájaros o desde la casa del protagonista) y a ras del suelo (camino a casa de la Nana Tecolote en Chimayó).

Estamos ante 31 páginas dobles con ilustraciones en cada una de ellas. En la portada y contraportada aparecen el pequeño búho, Ollie, con sus ojos grandes y su sombrero de paja, volando sobre Río Arriba y el valle de Chimayó.

La lectura con las ilustraciones insertadas lleva al lector a jugar con sus ojos, incluso diríamos que con el texto bilingüe los ojos se nos escapan a ambos lados, atendiendo a veces tanto al texto original (TO) como al texto traducido o meta (TM).

El lenguaje visual está presente desde la cubierta anterior, posterior y la portadilla de fondo azul cielo, que evidencia ya

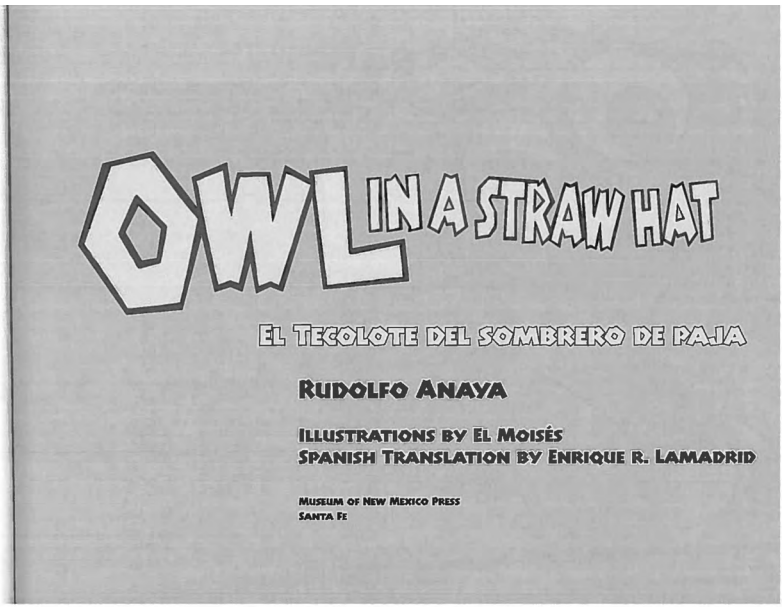

Fig. 1 (2)

desde los comienzos la importancia del color en la construcción de significados. El color de alguna manera se convierte en un elemento importante de la lectura visual de la obra, pues sin ésta, carecería de sentido, da armonía al conjunto textual.

La portadilla contiene un claro juego de trazos, imitando en sus letras los graffitis del arte urbano con letras en amarillo fuerte, trazadas y bordeadas con rojo para denotar las emociones del título, justamente contrapuesto a los nombres del autor, ilustrador y traductor de la obra que están en letras con fondo rojo fuerte y bordeadas en amarillo chillón. El amarillo representa la luz y se suele relacionar con la felicidad, la riqueza, la abundancia, la fuerza y la acción, aunque también puede representar la envidia, la ira y la traición, creemos que justamente los que quiere denotar el ilustrador con esta portadilla es la fuerza del protagonista de la obra y la búsqueda de la felicidad. El rojo de la otra información que aparece en la portadilla (creadores) tiene que ver con la fuerza, la sangre y la revolución que esta creación artística/literaria desea alcanzar dentro de la comunidad chicana, esto es, que el mensaje llegue a la comunidad.

Fig. 2 (3)

Fig. 3 (20)

Los colores que predominan en las ilustraciones de la obra son el verde, amarillo, azul, rojo, marrón y rosa chicle, con influencia de la tradición mexicana, pensamos que en Europa no estarían tan presentes esos colores tan fuertes.

La gama de verdes predomina primeramente porque representa la tierra, la juventud, la esperanza y nueva vida, todo encarnado en el entorno de los protagonistas, Nuevo México y luego matizado por el crecimiento personal y la renovación del protagonista. El amarillo que aparece en las imágenes está mayormente presente en ojos, indicadores representando la luz, la fuerza y la felicidad de la familia de tecolotes.
El azul que aparece está relacionado totalmente con dos espacios concretos, el cielo y el río que se observa desde el cielo, y que representa la tranquilidad, la frescura y la inteligencia. A nosotros personalmente nos transmite confianza y pureza, la misma que nos da la familia, concepto primordial, tanto en toda la obra de R. Anaya, y en la comunidad chicana. El naranja y el rojo que abunda en las ilustraciones las asociamos al entusiasmo, la pasión, la fuerza, la acción o el peligro (simbolizado claramente en la imagen de Ollie con su Nana aprendiendo a leer).

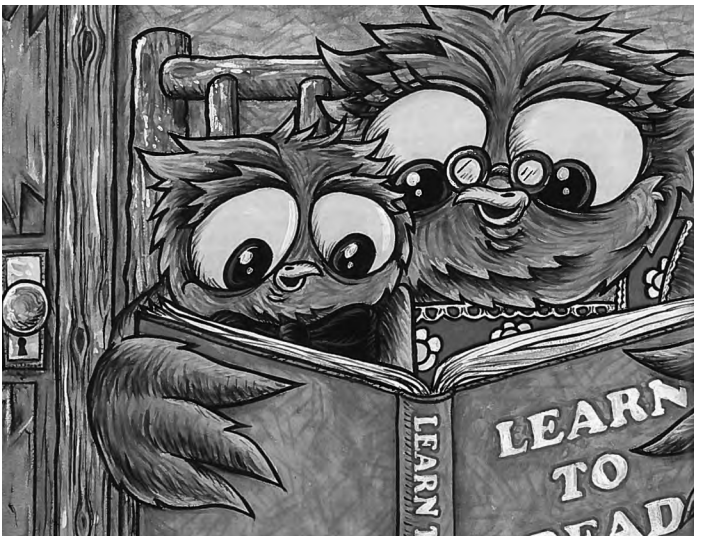

Fig. 4 (35)

4. CONCLUSIONES

Hemos visto que en los textos de Anaya se plantea como algo relevante "el fantasma del espacio. Tras la larga persistencia del legado antiespacial de las filosofías de la historia modeladas sobre el primado del tiempo, el espacio parece tomarse la revancha, poniéndose como condición de posibilidad y factor constitutivo de nuestro actuar y de nuestro concreto, corpóreo, ser-en-el-mundo." (Marramao 124). Creemos que, sin embargo, no desestima el componente histórico, como se observa en la no ruptura radical con el formato del cuento tradicional, y con la inclusión simultánea y de manera natural de elementos locales identitarios.

Más allá de las consecuencias de este cambio en la mirada hacia lo espacial, existe en Anaya una perspectiva afectiva en los aspectos que utiliza. Recorre todos los clásicos infantiles de occidente, pero no los inutiliza ni invalida: el cambio es *cariñoso*, y parece que para Anaya siguen vigentes, de manera que los recontextualiza en un espacio determinado, en el que la hibridación del lenguaje y el 'code switching' son componentes fundamentales.

Más allá, también localiza e incorpora con naturalidad los puntos actuales de emergencia, aquellos que incorpora con naturalidad; nos

referimos a la emergencia climática "La casa hace recycle todo" - "El tiempo se hace más caliente cada año" (23). Más allá del amor por la naturaleza, o una mera ubicación geográfica, Anaya incide en el vínculo entre tradición y modernidad -vista ésta como la nueva situación lingüística. Por ello, en sus textos se puede afirmar la coexistencia de ambos paradigmas, el del tiempo y el del espacio, de manera espontánea.

La herencia cultural chicana, sus tradiciones, sus costumbres, su lengua y su identidad a través del movimiento chicano está siempre presente y, sin lugar a dudas, gracias a toda la obra de Rudolfo Anaya se ha conseguido dejar de lado el aspecto físico para la aceptación por parte dominante y que se ejemplariza también en esta obra infantil analizada a través de los discursos que Nana Tecolote pretende enseñar a leer y comprender a su nieto (32-33), con el gran lema de "Sí, se puede" y que es un marcador claro de cualquier movimiento social y la acción de amar y querer bien, como bien dice la Nana, "la querencia" (33) y sin olvidar "la tierra es la madre, our mother (…). El agua y la tierra nos enseñan sabiduría" (33).

Anaya mediante el uso de técnicas discursivas propias del mundo adulto que lleva a otro lector, el texto se apoya en la ilustración y ayuda a comprender a través de la metáfora de la vida y la acción simbolizada por un tecolote la necesidad de saber progresar sin olvidar sus tradiciones, sus orígenes.

Ollie Tecolote representa la voz unificadora y polifónica de Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya, a través de la mirada del tecolote avistamos la frontera mexicana y sobrevolamos Nuevo México, descubriendo la propia identidad chicana y sin olvidar los orígenes materializados en la familia, la cultura y las tradiciones.

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CREATIVE WRITING
CREACIÓN LITERARIA

Nathalie Bléser
Robert Con Davis-Undiano
Melissa Coss Aquino
Juan Felipe Herrera
Jesús Rosales
Tino Villanueva

"El Camino Real del Alma"
A River of Words for You, *Channeled* from your Characters

Nathalie Bléser

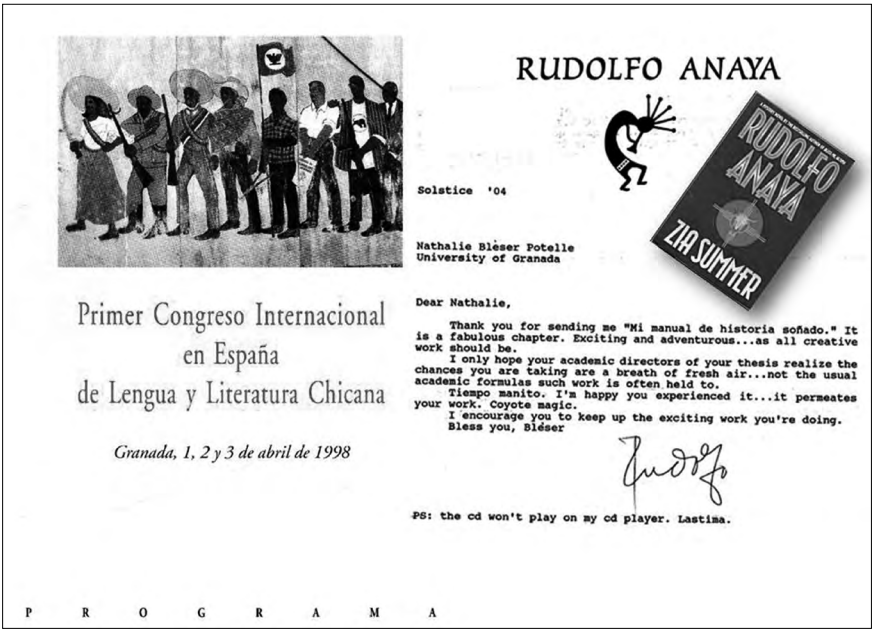
Dear Rudy. Time flies! Spring has sprung already. It's been one Winter Solstice and two Equinoxes since your Summer Solstice passing. How are *los Señores y las Señoras de la Luz* (1995) treating you up there in the clouds at the school you were enrolled in, last June? Was I right to see, in that Taos cloud formation above the Rio Grande Gorge, archetypal lovers, embodied by you and Patricia finally resting together on *a bed of clouds*? I have been inclined to believe so ever since I read your definition of love in *The Old Man's Love Story*, which described my cloud vision to a T.

All photos by the author unless otherwise specified.

I will never forget the surprised sparkle in your eyes when I gave you a copy of that cloud picture, which for some time you kept on the altar of your departed loved ones. Around the spring equinox of March 2021, I was blessed to see that sacred space for your muertitos again. Sadly, now the altar displays pictures of you, but it has managed to trigger sweet memories. Resting on a Kokopelli table runner —or maybe I should call it/him *mesa* player…— I have spotted one of the pomegranate tile coasters I had brought from Granada.

The sight acted as my particular "Proust's madeleine", taking me down memory lane not only to our first in-person meeting in December 2010, but also to the very first time I laid eyes on your literary universe, back in April 1998. I had come back from my first trip to the US, and the Land of Enchantment was definitely the icing on my summer tour cake. Your New Mexican landscapes had struck an everlasting chord, starting to show me the way up the kiva ladder emerging from the chamber of my subconscious, inviting me to espouse the rhythm of the spiraling pulse emanating from the *sipapu*, navel of my eternal higher self, to rediscover my soul's heart song. All

of a sudden on a spring morning, in my "mothership" University in Spain, I was emulating Sor María de Ágreda, bilocating back "home" while reading a copy of a letter of apology you had sent to the organizers of the Chicano Literature Conference. On the letterhead lived the same Kokopelli, who has adorned my finger ever since that first US tour of mine. He plays his flute melody from the center of a third-eye-shaped ring to gently take me by the hand along my soul discoveries. In the letter you said you could not make it on time for the Granada Conference; something was holding you back in Mexico… That story of a missed encounter was quite intriguing, but I won't lie here. Kokopelli is the one to "blame" for making me check your name again and look for your books at the Conference vendors' booth. I did not need guidance to navigate to your words' h(e)aven. The cow skull presiding over the inverted colors of the New Mexican Tata Sol on the cover of Sonny Baca's adventures was my particular brújula, and I knew from page one of *Zia Summer* why los manitos sometimes call la Nueva México the Land of EnTRAPment. I was hooked! After diving deep in the shaman-detective universe, I loved watching Kokopelli dance on the snail-mail letters you would send me every time you read a new piece dedicated to your work.



Primer Congreso Internacional
en España
de Lengua y Literatura Chicana

Granada, 1, 2 y 3 de abril de 1998

P R O G R A M A

RUDOLFO ANAYA

Solstice '04

Nathalie Bléser Potelle
University of Granada

Dear Nathalie,

Thank you for sending me "Mi manual de historia soñado." It is a fabulous chapter. Exciting and adventurous...as all creative work should be.

I only hope your academic directors of your thesis realize the chances you are taking are a breath of fresh air...not the usual academic formulas such work is often held to.

Tiempo manito. I'm happy you experienced it...it permeates your work. Coyote magic.

I encourage you to keep up the exciting work you're doing.

Bless you, Bléser

PS: the cd won't play on my cd player. Lastima.

Stumbling upon your response to *Mi Manual de Historia Soñado* made me feel a twinge of sadness because of its date: "Solstice". This is the cyclic measurement I have chosen to recall the time of your departure from Earth at the beginning of this open letter. I should not be surprised; you're the first one who made me consciously realize that life is a synchronistic and serendipitous journey on the path of the sun, marked by seasonal benchmarks invariably set along the *camino real del alma* in which, cual coyote hambriento, we sniff the wind to follow tracks and clues of who we really are, confident that our nagual, faithful power animal, won't lead us astray.

On your altar, next to "my" pomegranate coaster, there was a little (rain)bow tie, which I automatically associated with the colorful version of the black bow tie worn by the hero of your last children's book series: Ollie Tecolote, the *Owl in a Straw Hat*. Your niece Belinda and I have come to the conclusion that you gradually became Ollie while transitioning. Yes. You are Última's baby nagual again, a little owl delighted to be flying free to the heavenly Wisdom School owned by Nana, Ollie Tecolote's abuelita. It makes my heart sing to imagine you as the cute fledgling spreading wings to your soul's content, finally liberated from the earthly weight of the failing legs that had sent you back to the wheelchair. I can almost see and hear those gone before you cheering you as you soar in the cloud people's realm.

Up there Ollie's abuelita must be Rafaelita, your momma. I know, mixing moms and grandmas here, together with fiction and so-called reality. But that's how you functioned as a writer too, and time is an earthlings' construct, one we should learn to bend like a pretzel while still roaming the earth, to make our transition less mind-boggling, don't you think? In your writings you tiptoed on the topic of metempsychosis, better known as reincarnation. Both in Sonny's shamanic training and Randy's walk in the underworld, you were willing to test the dark waters of that sacred spot bubbling in your vast lake of consciousness. On our Samsara "Ferris Wheel" ride, we switch genders, ages and roles within our soul family. A father becomes a wife, a son becomes an uncle, a grandma becomes a mother… It happens every time we come back down for a new earth walk to add to the album of our *Camino Real del Alma*.


Rudy showing me the album of his statue by Sonny Rivera.
(Photo Courtesy: Rachid Mendjeli)

During our spring conversation Belinda remembered, with tears in her eyes, how you longed for Rafaelita and Mimi, your momma and wife, to come take you to the other side of the veil, and how, meanwhile, you asked your caring niece to tell you stories from Pastura and Santa Rosa. Quite the challenge to tell stories to a master storyteller… Imagining how it must have felt for Belinda, stories embryos developed in the matrix of my mind, glimpses of life scenes on the other side, where the time-space construct no longer ties us. In one of those scenes Rafaelita-Nana, the sweetest "ab-owl-ita" in Heaven, was tending her garden and inviting owlet-you to peek from over a cloud upon the Wisdom School you depict in your last story. Because… the school does exist! It has materialized in the realm of the living. I'll let your Ollie reveal more about it in his own words, as I get ready to *channel* him like Nana channels water to irrigate her milpa de maíz and huerta de chile. The owlet won't be the only one showing up, because your characters want to thank you for allowing them to carry a little bit of you throughout your 1001 pages.[1]

1. ÚLTIMA'S BABY NAGUAL: OLLIE TECOLOTE. VIOLET

Daddy Rudy! Or should I call you sunny-son-Sonny, now born to a new life beyond the rainbow bridge? Raven and Crow, my buddies from the orchard, say nobody cares enough to really learn what happens when the soul is set free. At least most humans don't because they're too afraid to peek into this side of the veil. All I know is that I owe you my being and you owe me your wings! How does it feel to live ***ABOVE*** *again? I hope you like it here. Mira lo que te quería platicar. El otro* día when I

peeked over *the cloud plot where Nana Rafaelita grows her water elotes, I saw myself, together with Uno the Unicorn, and all the rest of Nana's students! We were busy at our daily Wisdom School chores, down there in human form! You know how forgetful some mortals can be nowadays when dealing with precise coordinates, so they built our mirror school on Earth a few miles away from our Chimayó dream school, closer to my Española orchard, in the heart of Santa Cruz de la Cañada*. [At that point of my channeling session, I cannot help smiling, back into my own consciousness for a second. I knew it, Rudy! Your street name should have been spelled "CaÑada" rather than "CaNada"![2] Your reality cannot be understood outside your writings. But let's resume Ollie's channeling…] *Sunny Sonny Daddy Rudy, the address of that school on Earth is: "Camino de Paz". Don't you dig that name? On the day I watched our human clones live their lives oblivious of our own, a TV crew was there, and Uno and I were being interviewed![3] Just like in our real cloud world, my human self has a bronze skin; Uno's double is slightly more fair-skinned and taller than "me". Still like a big brother to me. I had let human Uno wear my abuelo's sombrero de paja for the interview.*

Christian, from Velarde, NM Orlando, from Tesuque, NM
Students at *Camino de Paz*, 2016

Image from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PPtxdgYkEc

You know how my buddy cares for his appearance, as all unicorns do. So he's the one who showed our farm goat milk soaps. The TV crew wanted some action, and told us to go out in the fields with the horses. It was fun! In the interview Christian/Uno said he had lived in California for some

time. Maybe California is the earth equivalent of Atlantis, Uno's magical island… (*No more Bullies*: 4) *Do you think it's why Antonio's father wanted to move there? Nana Rafaelita told me once that there IS an island, off the coast of Northern California, named after a sea bird in Spanish, but whose story was not exactly inviting humans to fly. No sé, there are many things I need to learn, and how to connect worlds… I know how you care for children's education, so I had to tell you about that school to give you hope! Like Antonio with the needle cross, I will always wonder if you wrote about the actual school or if it materialized after you wrote about it… Apparently our way of functioning at Wisdom School is very rare on Earth. Humans seem to have lost their way. But it will change! Like at* Camino de Paz*, more and more schools will teach their students how to farm and care for the animals while learning Math, English and History. Like us, they will study Martin Luther King's* I Have a Dream*, the* Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, the* Declaration of Independence *and Popé's Liberation Speech… (Owl in a Straw Hat*: 30) *Speaking of Popé, just before you came back "home" with us here at Wisdom School —the real one, the one in Heaven—, the leader of the Pueblo Revolt came here running. He asked me to fly to the Oñate statue in Alcalde, across from Popé's original pueblo and my family's orchard. The leader of the Pueblo Revolt told Nana Rafaelita that it would be like a field trip for me, but that I needed to pay close attention, because what I would see there needed to be faithfully recorded in a new History textbook. He seemed so happy! He did not even want to have a bowl of Nana's posole. "No," he said. "I don't have time.* Ta-ah, *auntie. I must go back to my Taos fields to tell my friends what happened!" So off he went and straight I flew. Long story short, when I reached the statue, it was gone! Instead of Oñate riding his horse, a young Pueblo man in regalia was dancing on the pedestal, a drum in his left hand and with his right fist raised. The gossipy pigeons on the flag poles above him said his name was* Than Tsídéh*, which in Tewa means Sun Bird*[4]*, like a phoenix! Isn't it wonderful? These are signs that the Earth is entering the Sixth Sun of the Toltec Prophecies! I think the human wounds we studied in our History class can start to heal with the changes down there. Maybe now little Antonio won't suffer so much from two worlds playing tug of war with his soul! It's time for the Cloud People to rain on him in Santa Rosa, by the way. Last time I checked he was by the Blue Hole, daydreaming and chatting with the Golden Carp* (*No more Bullies*: 14) *while* Última *was busy picking Russian sage.*

Rudy and a corn husk doll I made for him: Última picking Russian sage with her owl.

2. THE GOLDEN CARP: ANTONIO MÁREZ Y LUNA. ORANGE.

*Oh you finally came back **EAST**? You've come for me? Will you no longer leave me? I missed you so. You put a lot of pressure on my shoulders and my heart with the difficult things I had to witness, sort and solve in* Bless Me, Ultima. *That's why I love to let the Blue Hole waters soothe me. I love my quiet times with the Golden Carp. The orange hues of its scales make me feel safe, and sometimes when I'm back in Las Pasturas by the old house where* Última *delivered me, I mistake that old rusty truck with an Earth fish. Isn't that funny?!*

Pastura, New Mexico, 2019.

Maybe because when a baby comes from a mother's belly, it feels like a fish out of water? I like to sit behind the wheel imagining I drive to you… Is it because the world beyond the veil felt like being a fish out of water that you waited so long to come back? Are you staying now? You wrote about me from the big city, but I missed feeling you here. Is it what happens when one becomes "an adult"? Does one always have to leave the child spirit behind? Lately I felt less lonely when you sent Últimа's *owl. The bird kept saying: "he'll come soon now, you'll see …" The more the owl came back, the younger it appeared! Then it had to take care of things at some Wisdom School in the clouds above Santa Cruz de la Cañada. "Santa Cruz," I told the owl, "it reminds me of the broken needle cross I found after your wings knocked it off the door frame, para que* Última *"cruz-ara" el umbral de la puerta… This is how it happened, right?" The bird didn't answer. When it stopped coming I started hearing a sweet woman's voice. I don't know who she was, but she reminded me of mamá. She told stories from here, and I felt she spoke of mamá too, but she did not call her María. Maybe it was a parallel life, where similar stories suffered slight changes for me to "spot the 7 differences". If you're here, does it mean we've managed to reconcile the opposites in our world? Hey! The truck is coming to life, we're starting to move! I can drive! ¡¡¡La troca es una tortuga!!! ¡Mira! Aquí está el tecolote. Let's follow the bird flying towards that adobe wall with a purple door in the middle. There are orange lilies all over!*

3. EL HIJO PERDIDO, A POET STRUMMING A BLUE GUITAR BY A MOUNTAIN: BENJIE ~ TORTUGA ~ BEN CHÁVEZ. TURQUOISE

Lilies symbolize rebirth; and when orange, confidence. Quite appropriate for a man meeting his inner child before crossing over on a bright summer day under "the blue bowl that was the white sun's home" (*Bless Me, Ultima* 1)! *I love how you describe our turquoise skies. Nice metaphor, 'jito. It almost rhymes and it has rhythm; I like it. You liked it too since you used it here and there in your body of work. "Body"… Like Henry's corpse floating down el Río Grande. I love what you did with that axis mundi allegory. I don't resist the pleasure of quoting you:*

> The sun sucked the holy waters of the river, and the turtle-bowl sky ripped open with dark thunder and fell upon the land. **SOUTH** of Aztlán the golden deer drank his fill and tasted the sweet fragrance of the drowned man's blood. (…) The deep water of the canal had

> dumped Henry in the river, and the muddy current of the fish-thumping river sang as it enveloped its burden. It was a high river that bore the body southward, towards the land of the sun, beyond succor, past the last blessing of las cruces, into the dissolution that lay beyond el paso de la muerte. (*Heart of Atzlán*. 112)

If those were my words, I might have changed the deer color to blue, to honor Señor Peyote. Maybe my channeler thought of that too, therefore choosing turquoise for my psychic air time. New Age folks in Santa Fe relate turquoise to the throat chakra and self-expression… We made expression our "raison d'ẽtre", didn't we! Kudos to that clever use of the meaning of our cities names! Socorro, Las Cruces, El Paso. *How many self-important critics do you think "got it" before you told them? Some say you were "cutesy" in your allegories. I call BS. It stands for "bear scat". At least that's what the old man who owned* Spirit*, the fine-looking Appaloosa, told us* (*Randy López Goes Home*. 9); *BS could also stand for "belief system", heehee! I, for one, believe in the mountain, and in the magic of words. I was struck by the southward trajectory of the drowned body because it evoked Benjie's own journey to become Tortuga, while lying on a bed at the former seat of Carrie Tingley's Hospital for Crippled Children. Crippled all right, but saved for a new role in life! Much better than an accountant's career, if I may… In life, one always has to give up something to gain something new.*

Did my channeler tell you that some unknown pendejos tore down our Barelas *casita? She wouldn't dare to call them pendejos but I do. It was home! Only now am I noticing the magic in that house number on* Pacific, *the peaceful one… or the mighty ocean Antonio's dad never reached. 433 carries 4 to honor eternal cycles; 33 to remember the Catholic faith in which we were born, how redemption came through an exceptional man's sacrifice; and 4+3+3 scores un diez. ¡Número Uno! Also the unity you longed for through your words, since 1+0 is always 1.*

Thanks for choosing me as the first word of three novels. "Benjie" in Heart of Aztlán*, "I" in* Tortuga*, and "Ben Chávez" in* Alburquerque. *I was there in spirit when "hijo perdido" popped up from your mouth to define me in that exercise my channeler submitted you to. Isn't that interesting… To the son you and I longed for, you gave the name of the Patriarch of Judeo Christians, Abrán (Abraham), and you gave me, Cynthia's "*árabe*"* (*Albuquerque*. 94), *the name of the youngest son in a family, Benjamín. Rizaste el rizo con "Ben Chávez," since "ben"*

Casita de adobe que se nos fue. **The Anayas home in Barelas: 433 Pacific SW, Burque.**

and "-ez" mean "son of" respectively in Arabic and in the Spanish patronymic system. So, soy el hijo del hijo de… un chavo, kind of an hidalgo, ¡que no? That was clever, sonny!

4. SEARCH: SONNY BACA ~ COYOTE ~. YELLOW

Of course I was you too. You "revealed" it to Nathalie, explaining that you were becoming a shaman, like me, but she knew already. Consciously or not, you focused my search on harmonizing both bloodlines and soul's earth walks. I know because you made me hint at reincarnation when I felt my bisabuelo Elfego… I was honored to look for the four abuelas of my ancestry, on my journey in search of the WISE **WEST**. *If I were to pick a favorite season of my adventures, it would be Winter. It was the most challenging time, since I was wheelchair-bound, but it's also when I learned the most, dream-wise, sometimes through necessary nightmares.* [This non-stop channeling is intense, Rudy, I long to regain my own consciousness. I wanted to add that, for me, "night mares" are the shadow twins of so-called good dreams, sunny "day mares". Horses are psychopomps, and you must have wanted to see your characters ride "mares" since many of them operated in the dreamtime! But Sonny is asking me to step aside of myself again, so bye now…]

I liked what my channeler came up with: that fight in Raven's circle, our Zia circle, embodied by men representing two of many

cultures in the States. Yes, I was peeking over your shoulders, guys. Once a PI, always a PI! When you said you saw Uncle Sam more than Raven, I think you were failing to see yourself in my disguise! Writing opens a magic mirror, in whose reflection it takes time to observe ourselves as thoroughly as we observe others…

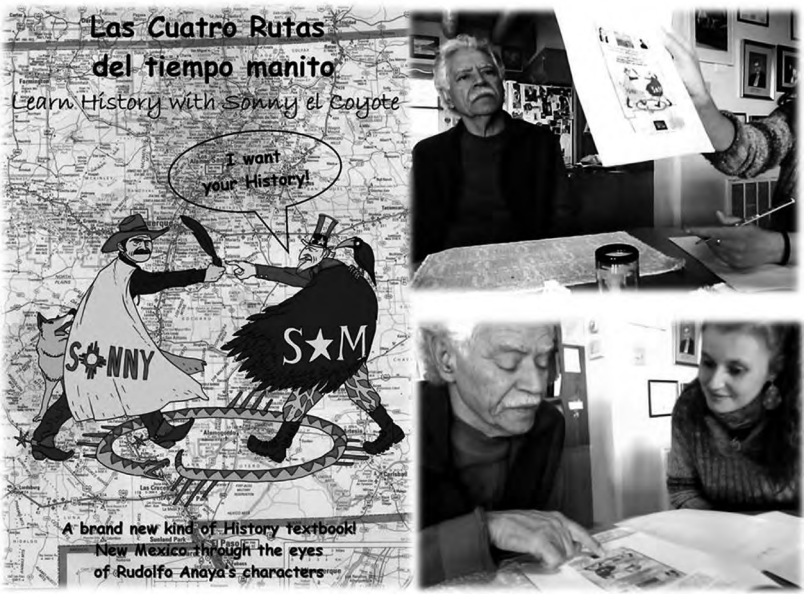
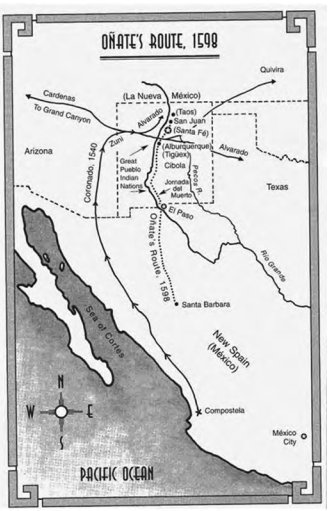


Illustration: Sergio García (original idea: Nathalie Bléser).
Photo courtesy: Rachid Mendjeli

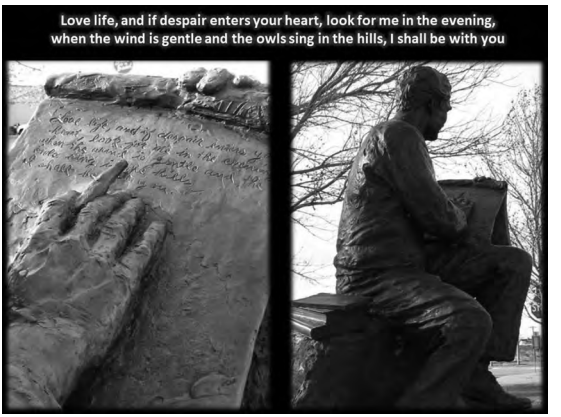
You know, her Manual de Historia Soñado (Bléser, "Mi manual de historia soñado") *might interest Nana for next school year! I miss teaching… Who knows, I might apply! Speaking of el tecolotito's school, I'm glad he didn't come to Burque on the "statue day". Thank God Ollie stayed in Alcalde to see the beauty of Sunbird's dance on Oñate's pedestal. In the Duke City things were chaotic. A man was shot over Old Town's statue. Both were artworks by your friend, mi tocayo,* ***Sonny*** *Rivera, sounds like a river. Rivera also made a statue of you, which people enjoy both in Santa Rosa and in Old Town's Albuquerque Museum. You were getting ready to journey to the clouds when his Oñate statue made people's blood boil, but maybe from inside the Museum the double of your Santa Rosa statue witnessed part of the mess. Wanna guess the name of the shooter? Stephen* ***Baca****. Yup. "Curiouser and*

curiouser…" On my hero's journey on the path of the sun, you made me take notes of dreams and stories, so now I like reading other people's notes too. It's what made me consider hiring my channeler as a helper. She uncovered interesting stuff regarding the Basque connection hidden in names (Bléser, A note to Oñate). There must be a reason destiny put friends of yours on her path, once in the Basque Country, at the Chicano Conference whose program displayed el Camino Real *on its cover, la jornada's path which inspired my Winter dreams.*



In that Shaman Winter *dream I loved being Andrés Vaca, Owl Woman's man; but I hated to belong to a violent culture. I guess embodying polarities was part of my shadow work. It must have been similar to what the "real life" Sonny felt towards opposite responses to his sculptor's work: his statue of you in Santa Rosa was covered in flowers when people learned about your passing, right after his two Oñate statues were defaced and taken down.*

Life and its contrasts will help our land in her healing process. As important to our Chicano history Oñate may be, we must recognize that seeing him daily, facing Ohkay Owingeh, birthplace of Popé, was a slap in the face for our Pueblo brothers and sisters who never forgot the Acoma massacre. *Healing was the ultimate goal of taking me down the coyote dream hole, right? I know Owl Woman's tecolotitos will live her dream of peace en la Nueva México.*



Statue of Rudy in Santa Rosa, with a quote of *Bless Me, Ultima*.

5. PUEBLO STORYTELLER ANGELS: SERAFINA AND "RUDOLFINA". GREEN

Let's leave Old Town to drive **NORTH** on Coors, to reach your place anew. You lived in the sacred direction of the elders, watching over tu Burque as she inspired you. I remember the very first time I rang at your door, anxiously waiting as I observed two turquoise wrought-iron hearts mirroring each other. On that December day it was obvious that I had found the (trickster) storyteller's abode, by looking at the tiles on the wall. Sí, "tu casa es TU casa", pero qué bien acogías a quienes allí te visitaban. Your Christmas regalito, the storyteller doll from your Jemez universe, is right here, watching me as I write. I named her Rudolfina. Qué otro nombre le podía dar…

December 2010, Rudy's home. "Here's your little regalito"…

She and Serafina, your Pueblo Scheherazade, know the true way to tell a compelling story: it must come from the heart and be willing to bring healing beauty. This is probably why artist Amy Córdova wrapped Serafina in green, the color of the fourth chakra: the heart, located between the three lower and three higher chakras. Our heart is a bridge, just like los cuentos son puentes, en tu obra tan frecuentes. When Seraphim gave their name to your Pueblo storyteller, they sealed in her soul their quality of in-between, for her to build bridges between languages, worlds and cultures, between above and below.

6. SHADOW: ANTHONY PÁJARO ~ RAVEN. RED

*Finally someone dares to come down **BELOW!** It rhymes with shadow or, for gringos only, with "Pájaro" and "Armando". All those years "fighting" Sonny, I wondered what his invisible twin had to do with my so-called "nemesis". Can't you see I am Sonny's true twin? Not in flesh and blood, but deep down in the soul. Sonny and I are the two sides of our Zia medallion. He's the sun, I'm the moon. Day light / dark night. The self-appointed channeler said it through the little owl, or maybe it was the other way around… We're entering the Sixth Sun, a Sun of Darkness. Fear not, reader. It does not mean your fabricated hell will break even looser (loser, heehee…). It means this new era is that of subtleness, intuition, silence and signs, AND the divine feminine, Hecate and the like. You, Rudy, attributed me the color red, because sometimes I deal with blood (someone has to), and because "black*

doesn't belong in the rainbow". Only from darkness will there be light though… And blood boils at least once on every soul's path, to cast a few karmic shadows. Sonny always put the blame on me, but I trust his growth: he is willing to better look at his reflection in the true mirror that reflects all, good and bad, WITHIN ONESELF. May your journey back home be peaceful, old man. Thank you for creating me, because light, without shadow, would be lonely.

Looooooooo-nah! (…) He's headed for la 'cequia. (*Heart of Aztlán*. 108)
(Photo courtesy: Rachid Mendjeli)

How Santa Rosa's newspaper, *the Communicator,* honored Rudy after his passing.

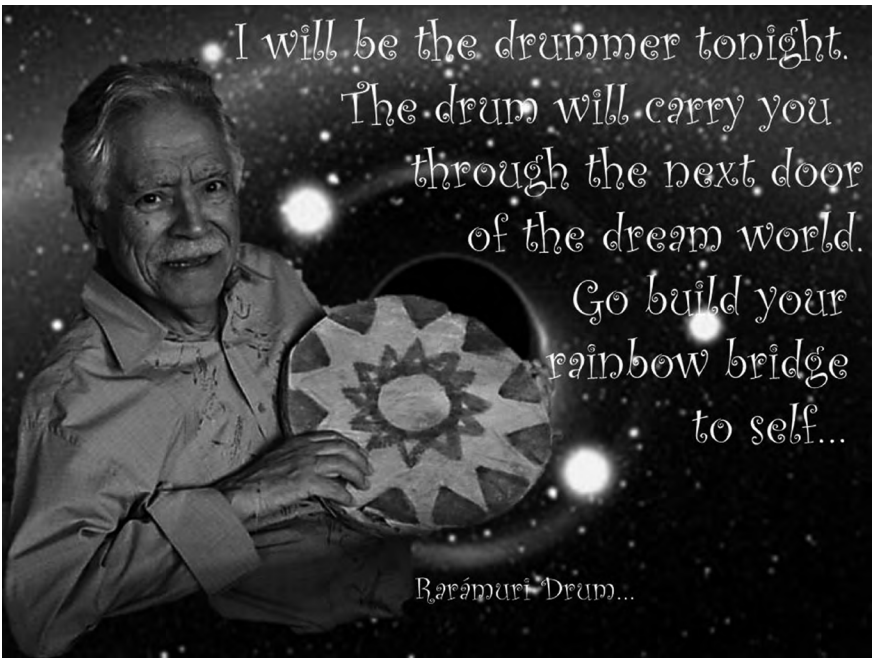
7. MENTOR, GUIDE: DON ELISEO. INDIGO

We made it safe and sound to the other side of the mirror, back in the land of the ancestors, through ***THE CENTER*** *of the rainbow dreamcatcher I once made for Sonny's fight, a cosmic third eye. I am glad to count you as our fourth Musketeer. "Snap, Crackle and Pop" were bored! As much as I hated acknowledging Raven's virtues, now that I'm here, I must admit it's true. The fight has always existed between light and shadow, but beyond the veil, down below, we forget that it is an inner fight… Once we find balance, we are healed, therefore allowed to become healers. I am humbled by all the teachings you wrote on my behalf, Rudy. Now you have arrived, you finally crossed the luminous door behind your ancestors' altar.*

Painting by Pola López (polalopez.com) behind Rudy's altar, what Antonio saw from his old turtle truck!

You're one of them now, un Señor de la Luz. Here on this side of the veil, you can choose to rest on a lovers' bed of clouds, or already plan your next walk on earth. Meanwhile, commit to guide those willing to hear the sound of their beating hearts, longing to hum the song of their

highest purpose. A storyteller is forever a guide; a storyteller never dies. Know that you'll always be in light and love, as you contemplate your Camino Real del Alma.



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NOTES

1 The titles of each "channeled" section—except for Ollie, a non-human character—are Rudy's own choices of words when I asked him to associate some of his characters with a trait, an object, a feeling, etc. Each is attributed its corresponding color of the rainbow and the chakras. Each section mentions a sacred direction to honor both the Medicine Wheel and the Zia sun symbol on the New Mexican flag. The "channeled" words are in italics, a tribute to Rudy's way of retelling dreams in *Bless Me, Ultima*, and to differentiate the character narrators' speech from my personal narration.

2 See excerpt of a previous open letter to Rudy https://recornection.com/2020/10/04/ravens-gift-part-two/

3 Video of the "real Wisdom School", the Montessori Middle School / Farm *Camino de Paz* in Santa Cruz [de la Cañada] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PPtxdgYkEc

4 True story. Two Oñate statues in New Mexico came down in Albuquerque and Alcalde. The latter (close to the "real-world" Camino de Paz, Montessori Middle School) was a pacific removal, followed by Sun Bird's dance; the former led to violence, resulting in man gunned down in Old Town Albuquerque. All this happened two weeks before Rudy's passing. Details of the Alcalde story can be found here: http://www.riograndesun.com/news/county-takes-down-o-ate-monument/article_2530ed9c-af2f-11ea-b2e9-4f1a4633c37b.html; details of the Old Town Albuquerque story are revealed in Sonny's "channeling session".

Put Me In Your Novel: A One-Act Play

Robert Con Davis-Undiano

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Rudolfo Anaya	Chicano writer
Patricia Anaya	Rudolfo's wife
Coatlicue	Aztec goddess of life and death
Coatlicue2	Duplicate of Coatlicue
Coatlicue3	Duplicate of Coatlicue
Young Boy	Enacts scene in Coatlicue's play
Two young girls	Enact scene in Coatlicue's play

* * *

SETTING: Rudolfo's office in his home. There are a messy desk, a coffee table, three chairs, a recliner, a table with a typewriter on it, and a Virgin of Guadalupe statue on the desk.
TIME: The year is 1969, middle of the night.

RUDOLFO

(He is sitting at his typewriter. His left wrist is in sling and pulley contraption suspended over the keyboard so that he can type with a partially functional hand.)

Oh, Dios mío!

(He abruptly slams his typewriter.)

Who am I kidding! None of this is going anywhere.

(He rises and yells at the typewriter.)

I just want to throw you away! Can you understand even a little bit of that?

(He sits down at his typewriter again.)

Lots of good stuff, and it would be great in a few short stories.

(He rises and stomps with anger around the middle of the room.)

Maybe I should forget this.

PATRICIA ANAYA

(Dressed in a robe, she knocks once and enters.)

Rudy, are you okay? I heard yelling. What is it?

RUDOLFO

I've hit a wall. I can't write this damn thing!

PATRICIA ANAYA

What are you talking about?

RUDOLFO

I have nothing to show. NOTHING, absolutely NOTHING has worked!

PATRICIA ANAYA

Maybe you need to get away for a fresh perspective.

RUDOLFO

I've already tried that.

PATRICIA ANAYA

Maybe it will come with more time.

RUDOLFO

But it needs to be in this lifetime, Pat. Why did I think that I could write a novel?

PATRICIA ANAYA

(She stands and moves downstage very near the audience.)

Because you can. Come here for a moment.

RUDOLFO
(He joins her looking out at the audience.)
Now what?

PATRICIA ANAYA
Look out there and tell me what you see.

RUDOLFO
I see faces, lots and lots of faces, and...

PATRICIA ANAYA
And, and...

RUDOLFO
Well, stories. The two over there...
(He points out toward the audience.)
are about to get in a fight, and the ones over here are getting close and supporting each other, maybe too close—they've done this before. So what? Usual stuff.

PATRICIA ANAYA
No. Scads of other people would look out this same window and see only clouds—no stories, no faces, just clouds.

RUDOLFO
I know, I know. This is so frustrating.

PATRICIA ANAYA
You see the world through stories, and you have a gift. You are the best writer I know. I've seen that in your stories, and your work is rare and powerful.

RUDOLFO
I thought I knew how to write a novel, but there are so many little parts that don't add up.

PATRICIA ANAYA
You can do this.

RUDOLFO
I'm not so sure anymore. My confidence is wearing pretty thin.

PATRICIA ANAYA
I can also tell that it's going to be a great novel, a classic. Come to bed soon and work on it when you're fresh in the morning.

RUDOLFO
Yeah, probably. Give me a few minutes.
(They embrace.)

PATRICIA ANAYA
Wake me so that I know you've come to bed.

RUDOLFO
(He sits down at the typewriter.)
Good night. Te amo.
(She exits, and he leans over on his typewriter.)
Oh, Dios mío, I hate this!

COATLICUE
(She enters from the side, not through the door. Her face is painted white in the calavera style showing two snake heads with their noses meeting in the middle of her face. She is wearing a black top and black leggings.)
It is Coatlicue, the one who loves writers, and I bring solutions!
(She walks closer to slumped-over Rudy. She speaks in a sweet and precious voice.)
Someone is here to help the one who writes so many purposeful words.
(He stays slumped over the typewriter and periodically pounds the table with his fists.)
Yoohoo!
(She waits a couple of seconds.)

Hmm. Okay, I'll try another way and see you in a minute...
(She exits to the side, and quickly there's knocking at the door.)

RUDOLFO
(He raises up.)
Pat, I'm coming now...
(There's more knocking at the door.)
Querida, I'm on my way...
(He goes to the door, opens it, and stands facing Coatlicue.)
What the hell?

COATLICUE
You are a writer in need of solutions, right?

RUDOLFO
What on earth are you talking about!

COATLICUE
Well, I talk about a great many things, but tonight I'm here to help with your...
(Brief pause.)
naaw-vil.

RUDOLFO
Please get out of here right now, or I'll call the police.

COATLICUE
As I always say, take your cookies when they are passed. I'm the when-good-fortune-comes-knocking lady.

RUDOLFO
Are you crazy?

COATLICUE
Okay, look—I'm coming in, and I'll explain along the way.

RUDOLFO
Along the way to what?

COATLICUE
I'm the last person you'll need to talk to about finishing your novel.

RUDOLFO
What do you know about my writing?

COATLICUE
(She speaks slowly with condescension.)
You're writing a novel. It isn't going well...

RUDOLFO
How do you know that?

COATLICUE
I just do, and I am la ultima persona that you'll need to talk to before you finish your novel.

RUDOLFO
What makes you think that you are la ultima?

COATLICUE
Because it's true, and you won't need more than what I can show you. Sabes?

RUDOLFO
Well, I am having a little trouble with my manuscript...

COATLICUE
Of course you are, and you are a sweet little man. In a word, you need to put me in your book.

RUDOLFO
I don't see... Why would I do that?

COATLICUE
It's simple. You won't have a novel without me.

RUDOLFO
Put you as a character in my book? That makes no sense.

COATLICUE
(In exasperation.)
Okay, try this: I am going to show what I mean so that we can solve your problem.
(She looks around.)
Get me three chairs.
(He hesitates.)
Geeeet them!
(Rudolfo brings three chairs from his office.)
Here—right in front of the window.
(He places the three chairs in a row facing the audience.)
Now, I need your help. Say my name—kwat—lee—quay—three times slowly.

RUDOLFO
Why?

COATLICUE
Just say it.

RUDOLFO
Okay, okay. Coat-li-cue... . .Coat-li-cue... .
(As he says these names the lights flicker.)
Coat-li-cue...
(As he says it the last time, the stage lights go dark for several seconds.)

COATLICUE
(As the lights return, there are three identical Coatlicues sitting in the chairs facing the audience. The one on the far left stands and speaks.)
Alright—this is strange for me, too, but it should work...

RUDOLFO
Why are there three of you now?

COATLICUE
For one incredibly important reason. If you are going to put me in your novel, you need to know who I am, and there are three sides to me.

RUDOLFO
You're la ultima persona ... .

COATLICUE
Yes, yes. good. I am la ultima persona, but I want you to know about life, death, and new, revitalized life.

(She looks at Rudolfo, but he does not respond.)

Okay, here's what we are going to do.

(She comes down stage near the audience rubbing her hands.)

I'm going to show you two little scenes, like scenes in a play, and then an overall sense of me to see how I fit into your work.

(She moves in close to Rudolfo.)

You good with that?

RUDOLFO
I don't know if this makes any...

COATLICUE
It does make sense. Just go with it. Okay—since I'm the Aztec goddess of life, death, and new life, we'll hear from the three parts of me separately—bing, bing, bing. Let's start with a new sense of life and vitality that you need in your book.

(She leans her head back and pinches the bridge of her nose as she thinks.)

I'm… I'm seeing a time when your character is a little boy, and I'm coming to live with your family.

RUDOLFO
So this should be an actual scene in the novel?

COATLICUE
Definitely, an early, actual scene. Now just watch. So in this scene...
(As she speaks, the lights dim on center stage and come up down stage right. Revealed there are a small boy [6-8 years old] and two sisters a little older.)

FIRST SISTER
Antonio, be polite, and call her "la grande."

SECOND SISTER
Don't offer your hand until she does…

COATLICUE3
(Coatlicue3 rises, joins the scene with the children, and stands in front of the boy.)
Buenos días, Antonio.

BOY
(He holds out his hand.)
Buenos días, Ultima. I'm glad that you are here.
(As they are shaking hands, the boy and Coatlicue3 freeze in place.)

COATLICUE
(She steps down stage to address the audience.)
When he holds her hand, he connects in very powerful ways with the life force all around him.
(She pauses to look back at them.)
He feels... he feels that something like an electrical charge is flowing through his arms
and into his body from every direction possible.
(She looks around again.)
Everyone still with me?
(She waits for a reply.)
He felt and saw the beauty of the earth, the sky, and all living things as if for the first time. He stands at the center of the four directions and a fifth that is his own perspective.
(As she says these lines, the light on down-stage right brightens even more.)

It is a powerful, rare moment!

(As she says the previous line, down-stage right lights go dark, and Coatlicue3 returns to her chair.)

RUDOLFO

So I need a spectacular sense of life in my novel—to convey great vitality.

COATLICUE

You do, for starters—but that's only part of what I'm showing you.

RUDOLFO

I, I... I don't know.

COATLICUE

There's more. Hold on.

(She approaches the audience and addresses it again.)

There's no sense of life if death isn't there, too. They define each other.

RUDOLFO

So, should I have more characters die?

COATLICUE

That's one way to do it. Sure. In a book teeming with life, there could be six, seven times that we pause for death, until finally...

(Coatlicue2 goes to down-stage right, where the lights come up on a cot—or small bed— that she lies on. Lights dim on center stage.)

there should be an irrefutable sense of death as a condition of all life.

COATLICUE2

Antonio, my time has come. I lived as fully as I could and blessed all that came my way.

YOUNG BOY

(He is fighting back tears.)

But I need you here. I'm not ready to live without you.

COATLICUE
She has shown Antonio a unique and powerful view of the world. That was her gift to him.

RUDOLFO
But she shouldn't discourage him by showing too much of the world's pain and unhappiness.

COATLICUE2
(She takes one of his hands.)
Antonio, my death will be part of righting the balance for you and others.

YOUNG BOY
You can't leave me. I need you...

COATLICUE2
I feel gratitude for all of the beauty in my life, and my death now makes me full. I embrace this moment, too.

COATLICUE
(COATLICUE2 returns to her seat.)
This death will validate the moments in your novel when life emerges as a precious
triumph of beauty and power.

RUDOLFO
So death needs to be a big part of my novel.

COATLICUE
Exactly—along with great vitality. That's the Coatlicue Effect. What I still have to show you is the beauty of life and death circling around each other in a kind of eternal dance.

RUDOLFO
How can I show that?

COATLICUE
That's where I come in again. Vitality isn't an idea, an image. It's something becoming something else.

RUDOLFO
But if I can't make it part of the story...

COATLICUE
Everything that changes and grows in your book will show what I am about.

RUDOLFO
I don't understand.

COATLICUE
I'm talking about the experience of the novel itself.
(She looks at him and sees that he doesn't follow.)
Mira, put me in your novel, and it will glow with its own life force.

RUDOLFO
How does that happen?

COATLICUE
One experience ending and leading into another, on and on.

RUDOLFO
So you come into my book as new possibility...

COATLICUE
Yes. Your readers will hold your novel and see not words but a ball of light in their hands.

RUDOLFO
You are talking about a mounting sense of re-invigoration!

COATLICUE
I am. Do the things that I have described to make this novel truthful and powerful, and you'll be putting me in it. Yes.

RUDOLFO
And if I don't put you in this novel?

COATLICUE
It won't work, no matter what you do. It's who you are as a writer.
(She pauses to tilt her head back and pinch the bridge of her nose for a second or two.)
Hold on for just a moment. Say my name three times again.
(The stage lights go dark for several seconds, and when they return, there is only one Coatlicue left on stage.)
There...
(She stretches and pulls her shoulders forward and backward.)
—this feels better.

RUDOLFO
But I didn't have time to say your name three times.

COATLICUE
Doesn't matter. That's not really a thing. I was just having fun with you.

RUDOLFO
Oh, okay. I will try what you've given me and see what difference it makes.

COATLICUE
(She starts backing away.)
It will work. Glad that I could help. I do love writers.
(She is exiting on the side.)
Didn't mean to overstay. Give my best to the missus. Hasta.

RUDOLFO
Gracias, Ultima. I will never forget you.

PATRICIA ANAYA
(She enters through the door.)
Did I hear you talking to someone? What's going on?

[SCENE GOES DARK]

[END OF PLAY]

Querida Ultima

Melissa Coss Aquino

SHORT PREFACE

In his introduction to a later edition of *Bless Me, Ultima*, Anaya wrote: "The truly magical moment in the creative process was when Ultima appeared to me and instructed me to make her a character in the novel. Suddenly a boy's adventure novel became an intense exploration of the unconscious. For me, Ultima la curandera, is a healer in the tradition of our Native New Mexico. She is a repository of Spanish, Mexican, and Native American teachings….With the arrival of Ultima, Antonio begins a journey into "the world of spirits", the realm in which the shaman operates. Antonio enters a new reality."

I have been teaching *Bless Me, Ultima* at Bronx Community College for ten years now, and it is a student favorite that inevitably elicits student stories about their own *curanderas, brujas, santeras*, and other healers from their traditional cultural backgrounds. In essence, they read about Ultima and tell me origin stories of their own. We also meander through the *llanos* till they lead us to the open sky across the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, the vista from our historic landmark campus, and finally to our own connections to other places of nature and beauty in the dense urban environment in which we live. The Bronx in New York City is a place very different from the *llanos* of New Mexico, but the sky is a place we can look to imagine the *llanos* in some vast and open way. This is a letter to Ultima, and ultimately Anaya, about all the ways Anaya's novel, Ultima's story, and Antonio's journey, take us back into our own stories and journeys in ways that do more than expose us to literature or diversity. Ultima is more than repository, as Anaya called her; to her readers she is light shed into corners and stories long hidden and

buried. Most of my students are from the Caribbean, many of them are Dominican and Puerto Rican. Some are from various countries in Africa or African Americans born in the U.S., many with links to traditional healing practices in the south or in the Bronx. My students are immigrants and U.S. born, but they all have ancestors tied to the land in some way. Ultima gives them access to their own lost histories and in this letter, that is both a thank you and a love letter, I share some of their, and my, recovered stories with her.

Querida Ultima,

Tus manos catch babies, braid secrets, knit dreams, trace worlds of lost history; each finger a direction on the map we thought lost, but find hidden in the lines carved deep in your palms. Might we tell you stories your story reminded us we knew, but had forgotten to value? Or no, actually, forgotten is not the right word, forced to devalue is more the truth. More the truth. Pura verdad is your biggest gift. There is no magic without truth at its very core. We are the magic, you remind us, from the moment of our birth. Our very beings are magic and you the witness. There are not many places that tell us this. No books we have read in school proclaim it, and yet, here we are in school, in a literature class, and you quietly arrive, just as you arrived at Antonio's door step, to affirm that our ways of knowing are real.

You get us started talking about our dreams, and the abuelas who play numbers based on who appears in our dreams or where it takes place. The girl who sits quietly in the desk closest to the door in the front row, and has not yet spoken all semester says, "I have a tía who said my cousin was pregnant when she walked in the room. I looked at her like she was crazy and then my cousin says it out loud five minutes later. I ask her 'Tia, how did you know?' She laughed and said, 'I dreamt it last night.' I didn't believe her and was like 'No, you didn't.' She looked at me and said, "Why would you ask me if you aren't going to believe my answer?"" This story, that the quiet student tells with little provocation, gets us going into the realm of why we believe who and what we believe and if any of it is true. Who taught us to mistrust our own wisdom?

"Do you really think Antonio remembers his own birth?" one student asks, and another answers, "Of course his personality doesn't, but his dreams do." The room opens in ripples as it becomes safe, because

you, Ultima, have made it safe, to talk about dreams not through a Freudian lens, but through our own lived experience in a college class. You are in a book assigned by the teacher, so it opens doors to what can be said and how. Yet, it only takes seconds before Freud arrives in the room as the next student says, "I learned that in psychology, Freud and dreams and the unconscious. Like we know shit we don't know, but we actually use it to make decisions, mostly bad ones, I think. I can't remember that part." They laugh knowingly, bad decisions form a common language they have been taught to use to refer to their struggles to survive. Usually, they apologize if they let a curse slip, but once the room is open for truth telling the language seems scarcely to matter; poetry, like curse words, enter and exit without fanfare.

"Sueños, mi abuelita likes to say, are the place where our exhaustion and our poverty disappear, and we can actually be who we really are and know what we really know. Todo el mundo es libre en sus sueños, así que suéñate algo bueno." That is what she would say to us when we complained about a nightmare." My student says this in a classroom too small for the twenty-five students crammed into it, that was once a dorm room for maybe two students when the Bronx Community College campus was NYU. For them it was dorms, and for us a room for twenty-five desks. There are windows with spectacular views we can't see because of some film that has obscured the glass permanently. The student, Milagros, reminds us that the confines of our physical reality rarely reveal the truth of our grandeur in much the same way the trappings of the wealthy hide all manner of flaws and criminality.

"I'm good with the dreams and everything Miss," some of them still call me Miss even though I am fifty years old and a Ph.D. and they try to fix it, but it comes from years of school training and is hard to shake. We make jokes about my eternal youth in their eyes and let it slide, as there is so much else to do and care about.

"What I really love is all that talk about the sky and the *llanos* and the river." He is sitting in the back row in the seat closest to the window through which no sky is visible, unless you open it. The transition from winter to spring gets the windows cracked open. From a good window that opens you can see our beautiful campus built atop the highest elevation in the Bronx, the sunset over the Harlem River and Manhattan just beyond. The sky is blue and gold and generous

when the window can be opened. Many are shut beyond repair. Not ours. In this room, we count ourselves lucky. The boy with the black hooded sweatshirt takes every chance to open the window and stare outside at sky and the river that reminds him of the *llanos* he can't quite even imagine, but can feel.

"Do you want to say more about that?"

"Not really, I just like it. Wide open space. It sounds like the rios and campos in Puerto Rico my grandfather was always talking about." He said more, he said everything, without even meaning to. This is the effect you have on us.

Querida Ultima, can we tell you our visions of you walking alongside us on the streets of the Bronx, far from the land you love, but under clear skies you would recognize? How the very ground beneath our feet and the river that runs just outside our windows becomes fertile and new as we contemplate yours. One student writes to you:

Dear Ultima,
I apologize for the un-called for hatred and lies –
I apologize for those who couldn't see the love inside of your eyes –
I apologize for them not recognizing the wisdom you would always provide –
I apologize for the deaf who are still living - and the blind who have long ago died-
If they would've looked deep inside of your eyes –
They would have seen the moon starting to set – and the sun starting to rise –
You were the seed and the soil –
True disciple of the Lord-
You were the doctor and the nurse –
The cutter of the cord-
Mother of nature –
Definition of patience –
Helper –
Healer -
Deliverer of many creations –
I APOLOGIZE

Sincerely,
- Joseph White

Then, after weeks of struggle to finally get into the flow of writing for the class, the same student, Joseph, engages with both literature, and himself, in ways only the best stories, the best characters ever make possible. He offers his own story, uses in text citation and does all the things I have asked. Ultima, often your story works miracles from across the vast mystery of inspiration.

> Antonio was almost 7 years old when Ultima enters into his life, and the author writes, "When she came the beauty of the Illano unfolded before my eyes, and the gurgling waters of the river sang to the hum of the turning earth. The magical time of childhood stood still, and the pulse of the living earth pressed its mystery into my living blood" (Anaya 296). That statement alone expresses how much Ultima enlightened and opened Antonio's eyes to a new world. From reading the story I recognized that Ultima wanted Antonio to know that he could depend on the land for many, many things. Ultima was passing down traditions that she believed have been forgotten by many of her Mexican people. Without verbally saying it out loud, I believe that Ultima thought that if she kept little Antonio close, she could equip him with knowledge and information that would be with him for the rest of his life. As much as Ultima was great for Antonio's life, he, Antonio, was great for the remainder of Ultima's life. Ultima was a teacher, a healer, and one of the bravest individuals in the county. "Many times late at night I was to see Ultima returning from the Llano where she gathered the herbs that can be harvested only in the light of the full moon by the careful hands of a curandera (Anaya 196). It shows how brave Ultima was and how far she would go to help her people. Many of the elderly people I grew up around have always been some of the most fearless people I've known. Mami Luz (aka The mother of the Block) is a feisty 77 year old Panamanian lady who I love and adore, and consider her to be my Panamanian mother. She is a tough old lady who always reminds grown men that if she catches them out of line, she will pick up anything that she can use as a weapon and beat them with it. Like Ultima, Mami Luz would always come up with these concoctions that would make a cold, upset stomach, fever, ear ache, or pink eye disappear. And what would always make many of us laugh is that out of nowhere she would just pull these concoctions right out of her big pocketbook. Mami Luz speaks in a hard aggressive Spanish, so when she tells you to do something you do it

> whether you wanted to do it or not (Lol). Mami Luz has fed the whole block more times than anyone can count, and that is why until this day she walks the streets without a care in the world because she knows that she is safe and protected by the people she has impacted on the block and that she has mothered on many occasions.
>
> Whether we know it or not, there is no country in the world who doesn't have an Ultima. Mami Luz is my very favorite Ultima, but we also had several other wise and elderly women who would sit in their 5th floor window watching over us, informing us, and taking care of us. As they did for me, I do for others.
> - Joseph White

Es esto, Ultima, that I most want you to see. The students opening the path of a classroom with their own ways of knowing validated. The years of 2020 into 2021 have been hard ones for all of us. I lost both parents, three months apart, in the spring semester of 2020. I taught your work and tried to float above the grief with the wisdom you left Antonio that all you gave him would remain, but also that what must be buried had to be buried, and quickly. I had no owl, but I had Cardinals in my backyard in the Bronx and they came and sang to me every day. There has been so much death, so much fear and so much isolation. We "meet", if you can imagine us, on a computer screen, a series of little black boxes and a face or two in between. Children, pets and family come in and out of view. Students work from beds, and often it is easy to forget that may be the only space they have to call their own. There is no sky or river or windows to open. There is no classroom, only the screen and words. Yet, you invite us forward, and students I will not meet in person share their spirit and their stories through yours. I am relieved to discover you can still work your magic, even through Zoom and Blackboard. I am not surprised, but I am thrilled. One such post arrives like this:

> Isabel Alfonso Rojas Friday, March 26, 2021 2:15:35 PM
> The traditions in places like our countries, or the foreign lands that host us, are beliefs and celebrations that connect us with our environment and our roots. In the story *Bless Me, Ultima* the boy Antonio is with Ultima and they are around the river and they are feeling the breeze and enjoying the tranquility of that moment, then Ultima tells him "the river

> can talk to you, what can you hear?". He answers her "What does she say?" and she answers, "You want to know a lot and you are too small for that", in this we could see how Ultima transmitted her love of nature, land, and river to Antonio. This reminded me a lot of when I was a girl. My family took me to the beach and we stayed calm there and enjoyed all day. When night came, we made a bonfire and enjoyed the beach called Boca Chica in Santo Domingo. I remember my parents saying "Can you hear that wind and the sound of the waves?" and we answered "yes", my father told us "that sound is called tranquility." Also, Ultima made him a remedy with natural leaves to heal the scratch that he had on his face. This reminded me a lot of my grandmother who always, when I was sick, had a remedy or a natural tea to calm my pains. In fact, my grandmother went out to the patio of our house in Santo Domingo and asked permission from the trees for her to take their leaves and make me tea, she always told me that "if you are going to touch a tree in the night you always have to ask for permission to be able to touch them since they are asleep". I was so surprised to see Ultima do the same thing. I don't believe in that, but I really think that our tradition keeps us alive, and it does no harm.

This question of harm and critique does emerge, always. The students defend you from the shunning you received both within the book from the daughters in Antonio's house and from the people at church, but also form the critics who see you as simplistic or stereotypical. The students acknowledge that in our communities we are not of one mind about such things, nor should we be, and that we are allowed, encouraged even, to have different beliefs. One beautiful mind, whom I have never met in person, adds this to the conversation about how we handle the critics of what some would call superstitions or backwards, even primitive beliefs.

> Ana Escano
>
> In *Bless Me, Ultima* the tradition being lost is that of curandera and all it means. The connection between the spirit and the earth, and the secrets behind Ultima's herbs and remedies were dying because she was dying, and they would leave with her. It wasn't just the curandera traditions that were being lost, but that of helping each other living as a community and respecting our elders and the traditions they try and pass on. We Latino's have great faith, and we are spiritual. I come from

> the Dominican Republic and I have seen many women like Ultima who have the "Don" to see past the spiritual veil, who walk around and help others with their herbs, remedies and wisdom. I have seen people *que se montan* as spirit invades their body and they lose control over themselves. I have also seen people offering you the heart of the one you desire for a special price and it's a subscription thing, so you pay monthly, so he can keep on loving you obviously, like lay away love.
>
> I believe the Latino's would be split about Ultima being a curandera and her role in the community. Some would believe and understand it was not anything evil but beautiful, others would condemn her and maybe accuse her of being a witch. This is also based on faith as defined by the faith in God that proclaims any worship that is not to a certain God is evil and devil worship. Yet, are they not the same? Wanting to do good and help others? "And I heard that Ultima could lift the curses laid by brujas, that she could exorcise the evil the witches planted in people to make them sick. And because curanderas had this power she was misunderstood and often suspected of practicing witchcraft herself" (Anaya 298). When Deborah said "isn't she a witch" (Anaya 302), it angered her mother because even her family thought these horrible things about Ultima, the mom was angry because she knew Ultima and what she represented. Ultima dying would mean the loss of traditions, culture and therefore, identity.
>
> I'm Catholic, but I have strong connections with my Latino culture and its traditions. One such tradition being Santeria, which in some parts of the Latino community tends to have a negative connotation. Yet, if you really took the time to read and learn about Santeria, you would see how it plays a great part in our culture and history. We were force fed centralized religion and denied our own spiritual roots. You will see so many connections in the saints that are worshipped by the Catholic faith and those worshipped in Santeria, some might even be the same.

This student, Ana, is always prepared to speak with clarity and truth. She takes up the critique and holds space for it, even as she affirms that "we have been denied our own spiritual roots." Finally, Roglenys, a student learning English and attending college as a returning adult student, offers us this:

> Roglenys Perez Santos Romero Friday, March 26, 2021 12:28:50 AM
> This reading reminded me of my grandmother. She always used plants and herbs to make remedies to cure me when I was sick. "It was because Ultima was a curandera, a woman who knew the herbs and remedies of the ancients, a miracle -worker who could heal the sick" (Anaya 298). I remember one day I had bad stomach pain, I could not sleep, I was crying because of the pain, I spent the weekend with my grandmother in the "campo" (farm). She went outside in her garden picked some herbs. She made a tea for me, which was strong and bitter and had a weird flavor. I felt content that my grandmother cured me with her natural herbs.

It is this that stands out. The gifts of reclamation your story continuously invites. Gracias.

Con Mucho Cariño,
Grateful readers in the Bronx

Rudolfo Anaya por la tierra roja

Juan Felipe Herrera

Por la tierra roja
arenas de bendiciones
cruces de aliento y magia
voces de Última y de
nuestros pueblos
de lunas verdes y aberturas
entre las montañas
y los ríos pequeños
salen las palabras
salen las lagartijas
salen los fuegos y los sueños
de los muertos y los vivos.
Por allí entre las cortinas
de piedras y mesas
saliste, naciste, escribiste.
Fue una casita de llamas redondas
época ronca partida
entre las piedras allí
nos sentamos por primera vez
para leer tu letras y siguen
girando luz y sigues cantando.

Sueño Finito (*In Dreams*)

Jesús Rosales

I lay in bed curled up in a fetus position, a human question mark. Under the blankets my body shelters an empty space that is secure and inviting. I cannot hear my heart beat. I cannot feel the blood run through my veins. The warm embrace of my hands—laid motionless between my knees—comforts me. I lay thinking that my protruding face may not belong to the body that hides beneath the blankets that cover my bed. I have not slept for hours. I have spent a great amount of time staring at the streaks of light that torment the darkness of the room. I open and close my eyes snapping shots at everything unconditionally. Nothing matters in my solitude, at least not until the powerful leonine voice that thunders through the stereo speakers slips into my ears. Vulnerable and unprotected, I surrender to the story of the song that unfolds inside my mind.

The voice that speaks to me comes from a man dressed in a black suit and dark glasses. He stands stoically inside a circle created by a bright spotlight. I cannot determine if his feet are touching the ground for the spotlight only draws attention to the upper part of his body. It is not possible for me to see outside that circle of light that shines over him. His electric guitar shields part of his body as he slowly strums it. My eyes focus on his timeless face but are unable to penetrate his gaze. His magnified tinted glasses impede such intimacy. But it is of no consequence for the power of his voice overpowers my senses. His story unfolds before my eyes as the melodramatic first stanza of the song induces me into the mystery of his world:

A candy-colored clown they call the Sandman
Tiptoes to my room every night
Just to sprinkle stardust and to whisper:
"Go to sleep, everything is all right"[1]

The landscape that the singer has created in the opening lines of the song soon becomes my own. I appropriate it to serve my self-seeking melodrama. The "candy-colored clown" tiptoes into my room slowly soothing its silence. He approaches and whispers in my ear to surrender my worries to the darkness, assuring me that the silence of the night is a friendly and faithful companion to the lonely. Do not fear it, he reassures. It is soothing for the soul. He tells me that the singer believes in him. And I want to believe he who believes.

I slowly emerge from the center of a stage that is lighted by multicolored floodlights. They guide me to the entrance of a Catholic church carnival where the "candy-colored clown" greets me. He takes the moistened entrance ticket from my sweaty hand and welcomes me in, patting me on the shoulders as he silently leads me through the gate. Inside, I stand alone captivated by the powerful colored light bulbs that illuminate the festival grounds. In the distance I hear the singer's voice encouraging me to speak to myself and confess my concealed desires. To crave like all dreamers do.

In dreams... I walk with you
In dreams... I talk to you
In dreams... You're mine

I faithfully obey what the author of the story—now my story—commands and an unexpected scene unfolds before my eyes. A familiar face steps out from the side of a giant tent. Anna walks towards me with the resilience of a Puritan pilgrim. In our cultural history her people and mine have known each other for centuries but to this day still speak in different tongues. Her self-confidence deeply attracts me. She smiles as she approaches me and gently holds my hand. Momentarily, her presence weakens my will without either one of us articulating a word. That intimidation soon dissipates and we walk side by side up to the main altar of my barrio church. Together—facing the towering suffering Jesus that is nailed to the cross—our reciprocal embrace celebrates the mestizaje of our cultures in the silence of a reconstructed language. There is no pain or contradictions in our relationship. There is no cultural nationalism to be voiced. No tragic corrido stories to be sung. No conquering country specifying war treaty promises to be signed and later broken. It is not an affirmative action love story. Anna caresses my face while the image

of a nurturing Guadalupana watches us from her pedestal on a side altar. I desire to perform a human ritual that is both sacrilegious and sacred. I am urged to seize the moment and melt my body into hers. But as I proceed to perform my ceremony, I hear the thundering cry of the man that altered my reality several minutes ago as if to admonish me for my contemplated intentions. Ironically, he who has led me to dramatize a fleeting love affair abruptly eradicates it with the power of that familiar leonine voice. And I acquiesce, for I have no power to contradict the reality of a make-believe story.

Unexpectedly, the intangible images begin to fade away. My wishful lover is the first to disappear from the melodramatic scene. Then the buildings, the mechanical toys and the clown's colorful costume vanish. The lights rapidly begin to diminish. Soon, only I am the only one left standing in the spotlight generated from the fabricated moon hanging from somewhere in the sky. But, promptly, I am also erased from the magic circle of the spotlight. The man in black suit and dark glasses has returned to his domain.

But just before the dawn
I awake and find you gone

The agonizing gestures on his face stress the emotion that encompasses the final chord of his stirring song. The dramatic voice and the equally powerful music seem to be heading on a collision course, and they do, abruptly ending the story of the song. The music stops, the voice subsides and once again complete silence reigns over me.

As the song ends, again I lay motionless, overwhelmed by the darkness of the room. I am curled inside the covers with my hands praying between my knees. My protruding head remains a spectacle and my eyes blink sluggishly. But inside I feel alive. My mind rejoices to the fact that Roy Orbison was destined to write and sing—"In Dreams"—for the lonely. Because of this I am able to emancipate the feeling that tumbles inside my muted heart. I feel fulfilled and rejuvenated. My faith is restored, momentarily. In my mind I look forward to tomorrow's night when, once again, I will fold myself into a fetus position, create another human question mark, and be swept away into another imaginary story. In dreams I will be born and I will die, and in between I will resurrect another, or perhaps the same timeless sueño finito through the voice of the man in the black suit and dark glasses.

Tonight, like countless times before, the singer has assured me that dreams do have a purpose. That their vision and truth create a deep emotional impact that will allow me to someday step out of bed and decipher their meaning. Like stain glass windows inside of a church's wall, dreams unite the multiple hues of light that carry the secrets and answers of one's existence. The man in the dark glasses has convinced me that dreams are real, as long as within them, one is able to remember the dreamer's name: Carlos. With this truth firmly in place, it is determined that dreams do imitate life, thus validating the enchanted power of the fairy tale and of the miracle.

And I want to believe he who believes.

NOTES

1 All the quotes in this selection are taken from *In Dreams* written by Roy Orbison.

Fotografía: Picasso a los catorce (La Coruña)

Tino Villanueva

Imagen de Picasso a los 14 años rodeado de alguno de sus familiares. Málaga, © Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2022.

Caminando por la Calle San Andrés
y doblando en Payo Gómez, me detuve en el 14
un día de cielo anubarrado e incoloro.
No más subir a la Casa Museo
empecé a respirar el aire de otro siglo,
llegando a comprender de una habitación a otra
(y otra todavía)
cómo parte de una vida puede ser vivida
a lo largo de un pasillo largo como un sueño.
Al bajar pensaba en eso…y entré en la tienda.

Exactamente en la pared
(más allá de los regalos y postales)
qué nitidez de foto una y otra vez magnificada,
magnífica en blanco y negro reluciente.
Y todo ello al aire libre—
once comensales a la mesa;
un servil sirviente al fondo.
Esos rostros. Esos ojos, sobre todo los del joven
en primer plano.
Educado en los colores, pintor lo es—ya se sabe,
pues sabe acostarse con las telas y dejarlas
paridas de figuras.

Hubo un momento
cuando apartarme de allí no fui capaz.
Se apresuraron dos preguntas:
A esa edad, ¿se le habría venido en el alma
la ilusionada tarea de hacer algo importante?
¿Qué estaría pensando
antes de que la cámara hiciera c l i c…
antes de que alguien le dijera,
"Pablito, a ver, ¿quieres volverte un poco y mirar
hacia la cámara? Y mantén la pose".

Yo también mantuve la mirada y seguí por donde iba:
¿En qué pensaría después de que la imagen
fuese captada?

¿Se relamió los labios y simplemente empezó
con los demás a servirse del gazpacho?
¿Entablaría conversación con su tío a su izquierda?
O al claror de ese día malagueño,
¿estaría ideando su próximo dibujo, acaso intuyendo
lo que le esperaba en Barcelona, lo inmenso
que sería su porvenir?

Me retiré de allí, finalmente.
Salí a la calle con ansias de continuar la caminata,
llevándome conmigo la singular visión de una tarde—
luz andaluza venida de una foto;
mirada que me mira y exige ser mirada.
Dije para mí:
es 1895 y no ha llegado a ser Picasso todavía,
pues le queda mucho por probar.
Mas por su ánimo y arrojo
tuvo que haber estado contemplando
el objeto de su deseo—alguna reciente obra suya,
resplandeciente,
queriendo hacerla superior a muchas otras
dentro del marco de lo grande.

Lloviznaba. Saqué el paraguas
y me sumé al natural fluir de los peatones calle abajo,
bajo nubes agrisadas y flotantes. Torcí a la derecha.
Llegué al Restaurante Calypso y me sentí elevado
al tomar asiento en un taburete del bar.
Pedí, para empezar,
el ámbar de un soleado y meloso vino de Málaga.
Fue entonces que de lleno me entraron,
como relámpago y trueno, las ganas de escribir.

Quincy Market (Boston)

Tino Villanueva

Dando un paseo
gustosos hemos entrado
(mercado cubierto, 1826),
van cambiando
Desde el principio sentimos
de este sitio
que el lugareño, y el turista
van bebiendo
No más entrar nos sale
¿Habrán venido aquí
Daniel Webster,
William James,
y en este instante iremos
Vivimos preguntando,
el ojo va viendo
Mas, por ahora, olvidemos
echemos a andar hacia
de ladrillo, cemento,
Vayamos con nuestros pies
de cuando en cuando,
a ambos lados
el panorama de los puestos
beber y también a curiosear
las comidas conocidas
La presentación,
con amigos un día de agosto,
en Quincy Market
donde a cada paso
los aromas y colores.
lo evidente—la historia
y el fervor
llegado ayer del mundo,
del ambiente.
al encuentro una pregunta:
alguna vez Edgar Allen Poe,
Mary Baker Eddy,
Horace Mann y otros,
yendo sobre sus pasos?
porque así somos…porque
y concibiendo.
tal viaje hacia el pasado y
adelante en este edificio
hierro y vidrio.
tan obedientes, parando,
y apreciando
del pasaje
que nos inducen a comer,
la pastelería variada y
tan bien dispuestas.
después de todo, es seducción

en este mercado
porque aquí
Caminemos, pues,
sabiendo que al avanzar
cuando ya no seremos
sino una masa humana;
una multitud como
y vuelta—
los demás que vienen,
pero sin pausa,
satisfacer el paladar
Tendida
la comida rápida
las tortaletas, los *brownies*,
por ejemplo,
cómo los *cookies*
cuando no van decorados
pasas o cerezas,
Cuánta dulcedumbre
He aquí las sopas,
el *chowder* bostoniano.
con sus aromas
en todos sus sabores.
smoothies,
todas las bebidas
Continuemos por este
entre los olores
Pero circulemos
con la libertad del ocio
como si el tiempo
olamos alimentos
caros y baratos:
recién hechas; los *hotdogs*;
los chorizos polacos
los tacos al pastor.
que cuando vivos
sobre las olas
aquí, casi concientes,

de comidas y consumo,
donde comen dos, comen tres.
entre el gentío,
llegará el momento
los individuos de antes,
un centro de gravedad;
en un desfile de ida
nosotros que vamos,
todos sin prisa
predispuestos a
con manjares populares.
ante nosotros
es el deseo mismo:
bretzels y yogures,
nunca faltan. Ver
y los *cupcakes*
con almendras, nueces,
llevan confites de colores.
repetida en rededor.
la más rica la de almejas—
Aquí el café
demuestra ser versátil
Aquí el té con hielo,
botellas de agua y
habidas y por haber.
cosmos de comidas
de cocina.
a lento paso
del que disponemos
ningún valor tuviera y
grandes y pequeños,
la pizza y hamburguesas
el sushi y el maki;
e italianos;
Los pescados,
no pudieron saltar
para salvarse,
han aprendido a nadar

en aceite
El kebab
las tortas calentitas
Aquí donde hay cola
rellenos de langosta.
pollo frito siempre tierno
Más adelante,
con frutas tropicales
la buena pinta que tienen
de sandía fría
¡La de fronteras culinarias
Sigamos y saquemos
tanta plenitud, porque
para cada vendedor
Démosles un vistazo
los frascos de miel
Estos panfletos
a disfrutar mejor
igual que esta taberna
Finalmente, porque
el paisaje de esta tarde,
Aquí donde termina
y rodeados de verano
pero con cúpula,
de las mesas a fin de
que no podemos resistir—
de colores en el arcoiris
nos hemos recreado
tras mercadillo
marche bien ligero.
pasará a ser memoria
una simple historia,
o bien como

o en agua hirviendo.
es de cordero y
son de manzana.
los sándwiches vienen
Aquí el sempiterno
nos está tentando.
los cocteles se preparan
y locales. Ahhh,
esos gajos rojos
en vasos transparentes.
que vamos cruzando!
dinero del cajero entre
sólo el presente importa
que busca comprador.
a estas postales, los souvenirs,
y de conservas.
publicitarios nos alientan
de la ciudad y la comarca,
nos invita a la *Happy Hour*.
dentro ya llevamos
pasemos directamente al postre.
nuestro horizonte,
bajo este techo blanco y plano,
sentémonos en una
consumir estos helados
helados de exóticos sabores y
no encontrados. Sin duda,
viendo mercadillo
y dejado que el tiempo
Nuestro paseo un día
y la contaremos como
como algo pasajero…
una urbana alegoría.

Viandante de lejos y de cerca (París)

Tino Villanueva

Dirigiéndome al metro Place de Clichy,
tiré por el lado donde los comercios y edificios
ofrecían tranquila sombra.
Iba sintiendo los calurosos vahos de junio
cuando apareció ante mis ojos
un viandante
que por la misma acera venía hacia mí
por la rue de Batignolles.
Lo divisé a no muy lejos y, puesto que era él
el único brote en la calle,
no pude quitarle la vista de encima y los dos
seguimos avanzando.
Eran casi las tres y media de la tarde
y sin percatarme todavía en ellos,
sus pasos eran otros—
pasos cortos y medidos
de tres pulgadas de extensión, cuando mucho…
pasito tras pasito sin cesar.

Poco a poco
fuimos reduciendo la distancia entre nosotros,
y al tenerlo casi al lado
observé por fin sus pies de cerca.
De todos los ruidos de la calle que ascendían
aquel día

solo pude oír el *chuf-chuf…chuf-chuf*
de sus zapatos como un cansancio pesado
contra el suelo.
Intenté memorizar sus otros atributos:
alto, cincuentón de piel color cobrizo exacto,
barba de cinco días,
vestido de arriba abajo de aceituna deslucido.
Yo vestido de vergüenza,
pues cuál no sería mi sorpresa al descubrir
que un impedimento ajeno a su control
le trababa la acción de caminar.
Y de ahí el *chuf-chuf…chuf-chuf* acompasado.

¿Qué enfermedad le complicaba sus pies y piernas?,
me pregunté.
¿Cuál cruel dios habrá dejado caer sobre él
la maldición de sus pies accidentados?

Seguimos caminando, alejándonos uno de otro.
Y cuando hube con mis pies llegado al metro
(brillando estaba el sol sobre la plaza entera)
sentí que de par en par
se abrían las puertas de la compasión.
Y con la voz que yo llevaba aquella tarde,
se me vinieron a los labios:
en el nombre
de todo lo bueno que existe por la calle,
que nadie lo maltrate
ni se burle de su porción de vida que lleva
por delante.
En el nombre
de cualquier bocado que su boca pruebe,
que termine bien alimentado.

Más tarde,
sentado ya entre el bullicio de un café,
me salió la misma convicción:
en el nombre

del agua bendita de las fuentes de París,
que nunca tenga sed; que sane de su enfermedad
y tenga larga vida; que siempre llegue,
tarde o temprano,
adonde tenga que llegar.

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TESTIMONIALS
TESTIMONIOS

A. Gabriel Meléndez
Alejandro Morales

Rudolfo Anaya, Mentor, Maestro y Camarada

A. Gabriel Meléndez
Distinguished Professor, University of New Mexico

In New Mexico's mestizo and hybrid Spanish, the word *camarada,* like the word *querencia,* has taken on a local color that denotes notions of friendship, of family, of homeland. In this useage *camarada* does not connote a political or revolutionary meaning, rather, when first spoken, it is given to a friend, a neighbor or a relative, those who need not knock at the door to enter one's house. And *querencia,* a word which has been appearing with more frequency of late and being further defined in books and commentaries, is that land of the coexistence among *camaradas.*

Before I had the pleasure of meeting Rudolfo Anaya in person, like many of us, I came to know of him by encountering his first novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*. I was in the last stages of finishing my undergraduate degree. This was around 1973 when I ran into another student who was a poet and the radio host of "Raíces" our Chicano hour on the campus radio station. My friend told me —this was before social media and when what traveled by word of mouth was gold— that in Colombia, Gabriel García Marquez was just finishing *A Hundred Years of Solitude.* Now I see that gold can arrive late, and come polished by what had just been overheard in a literature class. I don't know why I put so much stock in this friend as a source of information. It had to do with youth or with being *camaradas.* The information was late being that *A Hundred Years of Solitude* had been in publication for six years and it was early since also mentioned in the class was a novel in the genre of "magic realism" that had to do with our impoverished and forgotten *querencia,* New Mexico. The novel had been written by someone named Anaya. My friend couldn't

remember that first name of the writer and he hadn't taken notes. This information was important but incomplete and I immediately made my way to the card catalogue and found the entry: Anaya, Rudolfo, *Bless Me, Ultima,* Berkeley, Quinto Sol, 1972. Not bad, I was coming to the information with only a two year delay. I jotted down the details and ran to the stacks and searched them from one end to the other only to learn that the three copies owned by the library had been checked out and were held by a professor and two graduate students. This gold was being held hostage.

Some time later I found a copy of the book at John Randall's bookstore which he famously named "Salt of the Earth." I have never come upon a single reader who has not been taken in by the first words Rudolfo Anaya published, "The magical time of childhood stood still and the pulse of the living earth pressed into my living blood." I was not different. I devoured the book and read it a second and third time.

I came to know Rudolfo some time later and after I had started my graduate studies in Hispanic literature and after I had become involved with Mesa Chicana, a graduate student organization supporting Raza graduate students through the publication of a newsletter and through monthly meetings. Rudolfo sponsored us as a faculty member and came to our monthly luncheons to support our work and share his experience with us. This was a time of great unity and of coming together, a time which saw an increase in Chicano/a graduate students across a number of programs on campus. I came to appreciate Rudolfo as a mentor given the key role he had in literary studies and the special concern he had for our development as Chicano/a students. This was also when I had some first poems published in *El Noticiero de la Mesa Chicana.*

I quickly came to view Rudolfo as a role model and guiding light for all of us. He was always generous with his time, even-handed in his comments and congenial in interactions with us, his students. We all waited with anticipation for his next novels to appear and they soon did. Anaya completed his first trilogy with *Heart of Aztlán (*1976) and *Tortuga* (1979). A few years would pass before Anaya brought forth another novel, a point that might interest some bio-bibliographers, but these was a very active time for Rudolfo, years in which he with Antonio Márquez published two edited volumes of short stories:

Cuentos Chicanos (1980 & 1984). This was also when Anaya invested a great deal of time and effort in support of a new generation of Chicano/a writers. In no small way he became the senior editor of a generation of emerging voices and published early works by Denise Chávez, Ron Arias, Ana Castillo, Juan Felipe Herrera, Alberto Ríos, Juan Bruce Navoa, Francisco Jiménez and many other young writers.

I recall the afternoon when Rudy, Genaro Padilla and I met for lunch at the Frontier Restaurant just across the street from the University of New Mexico. At the time I was living in Oakland, California, teaching at Mills College and was on a visit back home. By then and by all measures, Anaya was the most widely recognized Mexican American writer around and yet he kept to his usual routines and expressed his genuine fondness in getting together as he would say "con la plebe." I took to calling him by his more familiar name "Rudy." Over lunch, Rudy, who we continued to appreciate as a mentor, raise his eyebrow (as only he could do) and turned to us and cajoled, "hey vatos, I'm your editor." This was certainly true since he had accepted two of my short stories for publication, the first appearing in *Voces* (1988) and the other in *Tierra* (1989) and he had also published an essay by Professor Padilla in *Aztlán* (1989).

The Chicano conference in Torredembarra, Spain in 1989 convened an energized group of students, writers and critics of Chicano Literature that included a large contingent of participants from outside the United States. Within a first cycle of European conferences, I believe Torredembarra was the first to take place in Spain following those of France and Germany. It became a transformational event for me personally and professionally and I believe this was the case for all the participants in as much as it stands out as the moment when a mirror was held up to us that was external to our experience of living in the United States and the reflection it provided came through from a whole different perspective. Thinking back on that meeting one can appreciate how it included a standout group of promoters of Chicano/a literature, then a still emerging field of endeavor. And I cannot over emphasize how important it was that the work of the conference was nested in collaborations with international participants. It was also important that we were able to gather there with our mentors and *maestros,* those writers who had been engaged in the work of creating a new and dynamic new

literature and who were creating an engagement with it, right there, standing at our side. The leading figures at Torredembarra were Rudy Anaya and Alurista given the high number of papers delivered at the conference dedicated to their work.

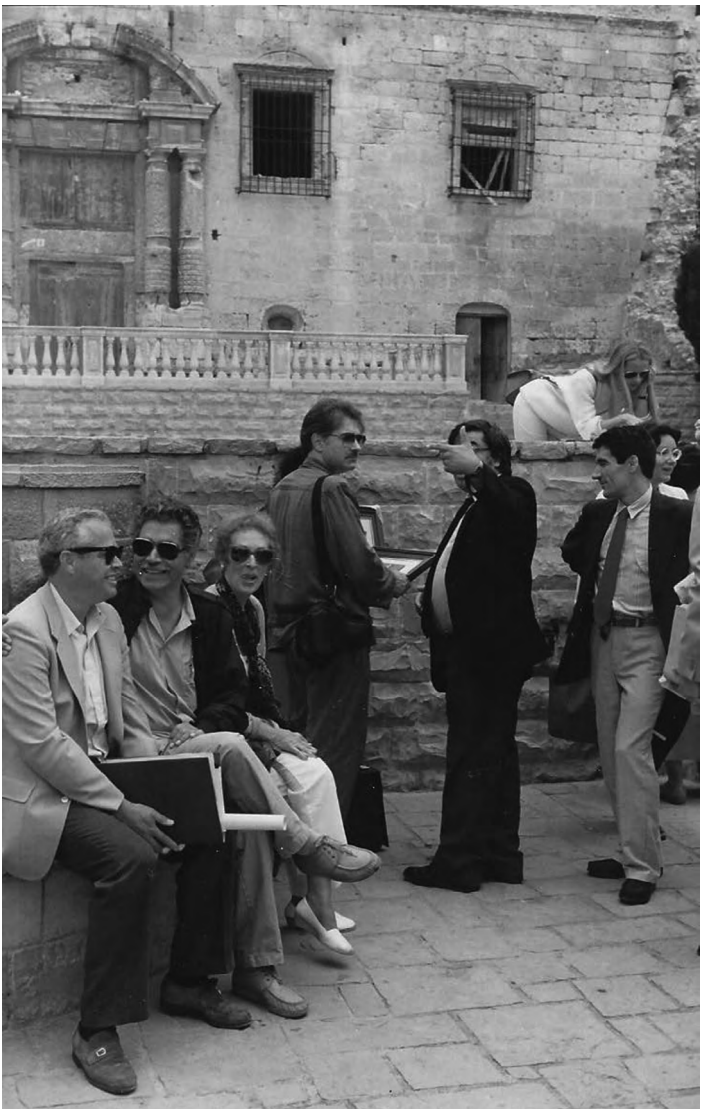

Image 1. Torredembarra Conference, 1989,
Rudy and Patricia Anaya with Richard Griswold del Castillo.

In Rudy we had the seasoned writer who had managed to open up the space of Chicano literature over the course of the prior two decades and in Alurista we had the writer standing at the crossroads of new and uncharted creative possibilities. All this made for a rich exchange of ideas and fellowship throughout the days of the conference. The energy was contagious and took the form of exuberant conversations during the panels and at the social exchanges that followed. The photographs I have of Torrdembarra confirm the enthusiasm of the participants. One photograph is of Rudy and Patricia Anaya sitting next to the historian Richard Griswold del Castillo. Rudy, his arm thrown over Griswold del Castillo, is saying something that causes a great deal of joy and laughter. Walking about in other photographs are a number of notables figures in Chicano/a literature and cultural studies: María Herrera-Sobek, Francisco Lomelí, Gary Keller, Juan Bruce-Navoa, María Teresa Márquez, Aída Hurtado, Salvador Rodríguez del Pino, Sylvia Rodríguez, Alejandro Morales, and Tino Villanueva. That I was there had everything to do with Rudy in his role as mentor and editor setting forth a pathway for us.

These were years when I often kept in touch with Rudy through conferences and colloquia. I recall that we extended an invitation to him from Chicano Studies at the University of Utah to be our keynote speaker for our annual Chicano Scholarship Banquet. He accepted and came one spring day and as always he was gracious and lifted our spirits by sharing his gift for humor and laughter with all those present. He chose to read from *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas,* a parody in verse about the camaradas Juan Chicaspatas and Al Penco, two "Chicano boys," who leave their life on the streets and enter into a series of adventures across time and space that will lead them back to Mexico, Tenochitlán. There they meet and talk with la Malinche on a plaza in Anahuac. Rudy got up to podium in a room filled with parents, students and faculty and began:

> Arms of the women, I sing,
> arms of the women I have known,
> women I have left behind
> as I , a proud Chicano boy set out
> to find Aztlán.
> To these women I sing:
> Malinche,

Madre de los mestizos
Mother of all Chicanos,
To her I return.

During the time the poem lasted Rudy modulated his delivery in the voice of a camarada, a streetwise pachuco and a son of barrio Barelas where Rudy had spent his teenage years. But also present in the reading was the well-read literature professor and the consummate storyteller, the author of a hybrid poem that held something of the old Nuevomexicano *colloquios* or dialogues, a sharp-edge parody of Whitman and a reckoning with historical identity. If I remember correctly it was the parents of the students who cheered the reading on with appreciative whistling and laughter. Later in a session with my students, Rudy asked me, "Do you know what a chicaspatas is?" This was a term in caló that I was not familiar with and when I said as much, Rudy answered, ,"Chicaspatas, you never heard that, it's the Chicanos, hijos de la movida chueca. We used to say it in Barelas all the time."

I also keep a photo of Rudy taken at a reception I hosted for my students in the Bread Loaf Writers program at Middlebury College who were taking summer courses in New Mexico. Rudy had agreed to come visit the group at my home after they had been to an exhibit at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, located in Barelas and after having read Rudy's novel *Alburquerque.* Rudy was please to learn that they had gotten to see his beloved Barelas. The photo catches Rudy in front of a painting by María Baca, who also had grown up in Barelas and who in this period was painting exuberant scenes of her youth in vivid, dramatic and bold colors. Rudy is visibly alive and accents his speech by raising an eyebrow and gently waving his hand as if he were painting with graceful brush strokes.

Later that summer and in others that followed, Rudy accepted my invitations to come to do readings for my summer students. These turned out to be special moments, in part because they took place outside Santa Fe and at a place that had once been a working vaquero ranch. The ranch was on a stretch of the Pecos, the same river that runs through Puerto de Luna where Rudy spent his childhood and the scene of the first ten years described in *Bless Me, Ultima.* For a split second reality stood at the doorway to fiction and from where one could literally breath in the fragrance of the fields. Rudy would

come into the room after having walked past the piñón trees, the sage bushes and other plants. Rudy's readings took the form of synesthesia recalling a moment in the novel: "As Ulitma walked past me I smelled for the first time the trace of the sweet fragrance of the herbs that always lingered in her wake" (11). And if it happened that an afternoon wind, mysteriously shut a door or the shadow of a crow crossed over a nearby hill, Rudy torque up his reading by looking up, raising an eyebrow and saying, "Must be that Ulitima is nearby. Must her owl."

Image 2. Rudy at my home. Summer, 2005.

Just about then I sent Rudy some pieces I was writing which I later published in *The Book of Archives/El libro de los archivos*. There was no internet then, and as some of as will remember, everything needed to sent by mail, knowing that there would be a lag time in getting a response. I remember that one day an envelope from Rudy showed up in my mailbox at Mills College. The ten pages I had sent him had come back and where marked up by the hand of a careful editor and included a final comment from Rudy, "this needs work." I wasn't disappointed to learn the draft required more polishing, to the contrary, I was very grateful that Rudy had given of his time and attention and this was not the reason it took so much time for me to finish my book of short stories. Other projects and teaching duties intervened and I didn't return to the book until I was able to return to it when I received a Fulbright teaching award to Hungary.

Once again I was made aware of the impact Anaya's work beyond the United States when I and several Hungarian professors, decided in 2014 to convene "La Frontera: A Borderlands Multidisciplinary Symposia." The colloquia was part of my residency at Ezterházy Károly College in Eger, Hungary. To be honest, early on I had doubts that the meeting would draw participants given that Eger is two hours from Budapest and where perhaps a handful of people concerned themselves with Latinos in the United States. Still, we steeled our resolve by relying on Gloria Anzaldúa's insights on the borderlands and sent out our call. Folks responded, like the professor from the University of Miskolc who had been a Fulbright scholar to the University of Texas at El Paso and shared a presentation on muralism at the border between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Well, I thought at least we are nearing the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The most unexpected paper was delivered by Professor Zoltan Abádi Nagy of the University of Debrecen which he titled "Analysis of Intercultural Information Processing in a Multicultural Borderland: Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. Even though Professor Nagy had presented his paper on prior occasions it shown again as an intuitive, agile and well-argued analysis. Here was a scholar who had plumbed the depths of the novel and connected with it on a personal and collective level. I suspect that some of the attraction to Anaya's work in that part of the world stems from Hungary's rural life and villages with their own abuelas who know the medicinal arts or from Hungary's Roma

enclaves or from the Hungarians heroic resistance to the Russian tanks in the streets of Budapest in 1956. The connections made by Nagy's presentation are a testament to how much Anaya sowed the seeds of mutual and shared understanding leading to unexpected exchanges in unexpected places.

Having taught Rudy's works throughout my career I welcomed the opportunity to analyze the long-awaited film adaption of *Bless Me, Ultima* in 2013, but the film opened as my book *Hidden Chicano Cinema* was headed to press. As the trailers for the film began to appear I had to reconcile myself to the idea that I was not going to be able to include a discussion of the film in my book and so I noted, "I have seen the YouTube trailers and premiers of the film are being planned for El Paso and Santa Fe. If ever there was a film to include in my study, this would be the one. […] For now it must stand as an example of how difficult it is to close a book on film (viii, 2013)." Some time later, I came back to this work and managed to place an article on the film in CHIRICÚ. I used the opportunity to reflect on how we might understand the lapse in time between the publication of the novel and its adaptation to film after some four decades. I also wanted to point out how important it was that film now provided a way for many more people to come to know Anaya's masterpiece. As I researched the article I came upon Rudy's comments and views on the film. The movie had resulted from a positive collaboration with the production team made up of Carl Franklin, an African- American director, Cindy Walton, the executive producer and Santiago Pozo, a Spanish film producer and promoter. Their work pleased Rudy and he said as much at the film's premier when he told the audience, "You are going to see beautiful faces that are Nuevomexicanos, part of our culture, our traditions, the landscape and it all comes together. It's a very moving, well-made, excellent film."

In 2014, following the release of the film, Professor John Nieto-Phillips sought to invite Rudy to the Second Latino Film Festival at Indiana University that was also hosting Edward James Olmos, who was featured "In the Time of Butterflies," the Julia Alvárez novel that had also just been turned into a film. I took the idea to Rudy and hear back from him by email after a few days. He wrote that he appreciated the invitation but that he no longer traveled much. Rudy's reply caused me no small amount of sorrow, akin to what Sancho felt when he asks

Don Quixote to take up another adventure and the maestro replies that times have changed and things are different. Rudy and I talked about getting together for lunch soon and not long after that Rudy called to say that we should plan to meet at his house because he no longer went out to restaurants in town. Rudy was experiencing some health troubles, maladies some persisting since the days when he was hospitalized at the Children's Hospital in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico and the days he wrote so poignantly about in *Tortuga* had returned. When President Obama awarded Rudy a National Humanities Medal in the Arts, Rudy traveled to Washington but had to make use of a wheel chair. Still his voice was as strong as when he encouraged us as students to seek our dreams. He let out a grito, strong and clear as he left the stage, "¡Viva Obama!"

And so I come to pay tribute and acknowledge the many wonderful things Rudy taught over his lifetime. I am truly grateful that he was there for us as a mentor, maestro and camarada. Viva Rudolfo,"Rudy" Anaya!

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Rudolfo Anaya, One-of-a-Kind Writer and Monster of Literary Abundance

Alejandro Morales
University of California, Irvine

Rudolfo Anaya, as I reflect on your life, I think of your writing career and of your influence on me as a writer. You have been the most productive and remarkable Chicano writer of your generation, with your novels, short stories, plays, poetry, non-fiction, children's books, musical adaptations, and anthology editions. Your work garnered prestigious national and international awards, including the 2015 National Humanities Medal presented to you by President Barack Obama. Throughout your career, you wrote like a *monstruo del arte de la escritura*. You produced literary creations that continue to entertain and enlighten me and other readers and writers worldwide. With the pen as your instrument, you explored the follies, wisdom, and spirituality of populations, towns, and cities in the vast and beautiful territory of *el llano* of New Mexico.

You crafted magnificent characters weaving positive and negative elements that transformed the world they inhabited into spellbinding masterful stories. In your masterpiece novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, you present us with *Última*. She is not only the elderly woman who acts as guide and protector to the young Antonio and who helps him cope with and understand the many experiences he faces as he grows into adolescence, but is also a prime example of much more. *Última embodies* an archetype of the beautiful, powerful, magical, mythical, mystical, and spiritual women found in the history and cultures of Mexico and of Chicanx in the United States. These are women about whom I began to learn as a child and continued to discover throughout my education. Since, I realize there are more and much to learn from

them. Hence, I have recorded their stories and began to incorporate them in my work. Female figures, such as Coatlicue, Coyolxauhqui, La Llorona, *mujeres indígenas* who accompanied Spanish explorers and soldiers, epitomized by Malinali Tenepal–doña Marina, La Malinche–, La Virgen de Guadalupe, sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Las Ilusas, Las Soldaderas, Jesusa Palancares, María Sabinas, Gloria Anzaldúa, Última, Frida Kahlo, Sandra Cisneros, La Santa Muerte, Chavela Vargas, Sandra Coe, J.I. Cruz, and Juana Contreras Ramírez, live in my writing.

Rudolfo, doesn't everyone have an Última in their life? I realize that my grandmother, doña Concepción Morales Martínez, or mamá Concha–as I called her since childhood–was my *Última***.** As my guide growing up, mamá Concha taught me how to love and be happy. She showed me, as well, that plants and fruits had medicinal properties and were used as cure for different conditions. I clearly recall an instance, when I was attacked by one of my father's cockerel fighting roosters and mamá Concha convinced my mother to allow doña Marcelina, the barrio *curandera*, to perform several *curas*, until I recovered from the *susto* that I had suffered. Later, I learned that mamá Concha herself was a *curandera*: She knew about *brujería* and *hechizos* and had learned how to enjoin and neutralize them; she related strange events that had occurred in the barrio, stories about *el diablo,* and miracles and tragedies, a number of which I have included in my novels. Mamá Concha first appeared in my novel *The Brick People* and, later, in "Concepción," a story I wrote as a writing fellow of the Nebrija Writing Fellowship of the Franklin Institute at the University of Alcalá de Henares.

Rudolfo, your *Bless Me, Ultima* demonstrates that great characters and stories reside in our place of origin, in the ordinary, familiar, and strange individuals we see in our daily lives. Your fiction reveals and records the life of your ancestors and their contributions to the development of their land, towns, legends, myths, and culture. However, continually and deliberately, the history and contributions of Mexican Americans, Central Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Cubans, and other Latinx groups, as well as the current immigrants living and working in the United States, have been whitewashed, demeaned, ignored, and practically erased from history books and curriculums of American educational institutions. Alas, your novel *Bless Me, Ultima* became a target of efforts to have it eliminated from libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. The

accusations made by school districts included "Satanism, offensive language, obvious sexuality, and violence." Ironically, in some cases, these charges augmented the readership and demands for the novel.

Clearly, you *Bless Me, Ultima* exemplifies a literary work that challenges American exceptionalism or ruling with national everlasting racism that repeatedly *ningunea* and suppresses the presence and importance of Chicanx and Latinx in the United States. The calculated attacks against it and, thereby, against all Chicanx, failed to silence you, Rudolfo: You simply continued to write and publish your vision of the world. I followed your lead: Several of my books center on life in the Simons barrio where I grew up. Your Última taught and encouraged me to concentrate my literary endeavors on my ancestors and Mexican family's story. My mother migrated to the United States in 1914 and my father in 1918. Both families came from the state of Guanajuato and settled in the company town of the Simons Brick Co. Plant #3, near Montebello, California. My education started at Vail Elementary, the Simons Brick Co. segregated Mexican school. Simons established my ancestral cultural roots, my identity and, slowly, my vision of the world–the catalyst of the development of my thinking and writing. As a child I heard many stories from family members and friends. Moreover, the workers and their families inspired me to write about what I saw, heard, and felt about them and the world beyond. Life in Simons influenced me significantly; to this day, I cherish it in my mind and heart. My family's story, just as that of other Chicanx Latinx, merits recognition and its place in the American historical and literary discourse.

As a graduate student in 1973, I along with my wife Rohde, our 2 year-old son Gregory, and our baby girl Alessandra, lived in an old WWII army barracks on Camp Kilmer on the Rutgers University campus, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. We were surviving on a TA's salary and food stamps, thousands of miles away from our home and family. At the time, I took medieval courses from one of the leading medievalists in the country, Professor Samuel G. Armistead. I truly enjoyed his courses and thought of becoming a medievalist also. Near semester end, Rohde and I invited Professor Armistead to dinner. During dessert, he suggested, "Alejandro, study this new Chicano literature, dig up its history, and write your dissertation about it." That night I made several changes in my career path.

Accordingly, I decided to take Professor Armistead's advice: I was not to be a medievalist. Instead, I wrote my dissertation on the subject of Chicanx literature which, I believe, was to be the fourth dissertation on the subject in the country. Also, I was editing my first novel *Caras viejas y vino nuevo* and, coincidentally, I was reading *Bless Me, Ultima*, your then recently 1972 Premio Quinto Sol winner. Your novel intensified my desire to find a publisher for my own novel, which was eventually accepted by Joaquín Mortiz in Mexico City. Hence, Professor Armistead's advice and your protagonist Última secured my future as a writer and, subsequently, as a professor at U.C. Irvine. I still have that first edition of *Bless Me, Ultima*.

Rudolfo Anaya, your presence in Chicanx literary space further changed my writing trajectory in an unexpected way. It happened at one of the Chicanx literary conferences in Spain, where you were scheduled to read from your latest work; of course, the attendees expected you to read from your then recent novel. I arrived late to the venue and there was no room for me. Fortunately, just outside the conference room, I found a perfect place from where I could hear you clearly. On that occasion, you opted to read "Walt Whitman Strides the Llano of New Mexico," a thirty-one-stanza poem. Fascinated, I listened attentively as you read beautifully. At the instant you finished, the room filled with a silence followed by a loud, prolonged applause. I didn't applaud, as I sat enthralled by you, an eminent novelist who wrote magnificent, engaging, and enjoyable poetry just as well. At that moment in my career I had written quite a few poems, but had never presented them publicly. I never saw myself as a poet; yet, listening to you read the Whitman poem, I felt, in some way, validated. As a result, I embraced poetry, along with novels and short stories, as another focus of my writing. Now, I have produced a respectable number of poems, some of which I collected in *Zapote Tree*, my first book of poetry. Currently, I am well on my way in compiling my second volume of poems.

To honor you and your essence, Rudolfo Anaya, I offer in your memory two poems from *Zapote Tree*: first, "Morena Survivor on Andalusian Sand," because of the protagonist's spirit to thrive in an unfamiliar horizon; and second, "Coyoacán: Written by a Woman Periodista Who Feared for Her Life," because of the journalist's admiration towards a mentor that foments in her the courage to write her story.

Morena Survivor on Andalusian Sand

Moroccan dark reddish-brown curly hair green eyes
sharp nose full African gaze educated English French speaker
full red lips smiles dreams of a *morena*'s new life

Though unwanted by Spain steps off a slow barge
a quarter-mile swim her uprooted body stands firm
a survivor on Andalusian sand

She hides behind rocks she sleeps the sun rises the beach fills
with *guiris* German French Spanish families invisible nobody notices
her fear hunger her blank lost eyes she tries to walk the beach
nonchalantly like she belongs

An open bar too expensive she figures fifty euros in a plastic bag
worries thirsty she sits at a table distant alone she asks the waiter
una *coca* the waiter smiles leaves

A sudden panic grips her where's the money she loosens her belt
reaches under her pants children play laugh and scream on the beach
in the palm of her hands the damp euros and a note with an address

The waiter brings a tall *coca* and *un trozo de tortilla*
¡Mira! he makes a gesture toward the beach boardwalk
she sees two *Guardia Civil* officers coming her direction

¡Ven conmigo! Come! she follows him to the women's
SERVICIOS lock door I come twenty minutes
the waiter returns and takes her back to her table
no volverán they come once no return

She wonders why he helps her she sips slowly eats
little bites of the generous slice of *tortilla* she places
a five-euro note on the table he pushes to her

He offers a small glass of red wine *toma este tinto te calma*
I speak English like you relax the deep red wine moistens

His tall body stands by her he doesn't back away
there is an immediate comfort between them
his light complexion hand grazes hers he has brown eyes
black wavy hair his father is *mestizo mexicano* his mother
Irish Norwegian

He understands she needs help her clothes damp no shoes
she finishes the last of the wine walks away from the bar
she covers her head with a gray scarf suddenly removes it
jams it in a small cloth bag she walks

He follows feels an unexplainable attraction to her
she strolls not in any particular direction turns right
and again goes right five blocks later the girl stands obviously
confused no doubt she is lost but can't admit to that fact
fearful of the *Guardia Civil* she moves faster to a bench
in a plush green park with her hands clenched on her lap stares
angrily across the grass toward the sea

The bright intense Andalusian sun pulsates on her
she reaches for a fragile wet folded missive that she
carefully opens and flattens on the bench struggles to read
what the sea has taken away tears cover her blouse as she
sits glaring at the blank white sheet

He remembers how he felt when he crossed the border
the first time separated from his mother by the *coyote*
pushed into another truck that drove him to the other side
alone not knowing what to do he spoke with few English
words at least he had a name address telephone and city of
an uncle written on a small white dinner napkin in his wallet

She crossed an ancient sea swam a quarter mile to shore
to the city where somebody would pick her up take
her to a safe place

He knows salt water erases information
about her contact no matter how much she tries
nothing of that history is in her memory but in the Mediterranean
under a hot golden sun in the bluest sky of the southern Spanish coast

* * *

Coyoacán: Written by a Woman *Periodista* Who Feared for Her Life

1
I am a young woman raised and educated
in the northern part of Mexico City
in a small *colonia perdida* called *El Escondite*
next to the *Reclusorio Norte*
I lived always under the watchful
loving eyes of my parents

It wasn't until I attended UNAM
that I ambled alone through the southern
sections of the city during those
months of daily traversing to the university
I discovered and fell in love with *Coyoacán*

2
These strange places in the south I knew
through conversations with neighbors
who undertook the long walk in search of work
before I was born my family lived in *el DF*
yet neither my father nor mother
had ever seen the university let alone
la milagrosa colonia de Coyoacán
for me it was miraculous because
there I found you

3
I don't exactly recall where you appeared to me
but hold dear forever that instant when the sweet
clean melon scent of your hair made me
turn to see you for the first time it was probably
in one of the warm murmuring streets that I ritually
roamed imagining of the cool gardens the clean kitchens
fine wooden furniture the living rooms in the
large homes I promised myself that I would
some day own

When my eyes rested upon you
I found the woman I loved
your dress your elegant manner your beauty
reassured me that I wanted to be like you
and so on that afternoon in *Coyoacán*
I followed you and I have never stopped

4
That day you walked to your parents' home
I waited for hours until you came out and
walked to Frida's house then to *El Parnaso*
por pan dulce y café con leche I began to
love *Coyoacán* somehow feeling that I
belonged because of you J. I. Cruz

5
Before you truly knew me you frequently
said hello at *El Parnaso* where I often
sat next to you almost touching shoulders
I listened to you speak to your friends
your lover and to his disfigured brother

Finally I gathered the strength to overcome
my fear and as your companions left I asked about
your shoes you laughed probably didn't
even remember me but you were kind
siéntate un rato conmigo I did most of the
talking about my job as a freelance reporter
you asked about where I published my articles
surprisingly you invited me to walk with you
yes I loved *Coyoacán* as much as I loved
to follow observe work with you and
write about your life

6
God how I wish it could have been a different story

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INTERVIEW
ENTREVISTA

Manuel Broncano

"I have never pushed anyone to be a Chicano" A Conversation with Rudolfo Anaya

Manuel Broncano
Texas A&M International University

Rudy Anaya passed away on June 28, 2020. Death visited with him at his home in Albuquerque, the gorgeous house on the hills surrounding the city where several times Rudy hosted me, my family, and even my students. What follows is the transcript of our conversation at his home, during a sunny afternoon in the early spring of 2012. Many a time during these nine long years, I have meant to transcribe the recording, a task that now becomes my duty to the memory of a dear friend. I have kept the Spanish words and expressions as Rudy used them, rather than translating them into English. Those readers who do not speak Spanish will easily understand their meaning; those who do, will appreciate the uniqueness of Anaya's code switching. It was not a formal interview, but rather the distended chitchat of two friends catching up after a long separation, and as such, it dealt with personal as much as literary matters. I have left out most of the former, and selected the parts relating to Anaya's writing and to Chican@ letters in general. Listening to the recording, I must confess, has not been an easy task, the thousand memories brought back by his voice on the tape being too overwhelming at times. I hope the reader finds some value in this long-overdue transcript, in which Rudolfo Anaya reveals, probably for the first time, some illuminating clues about his life and his work.

* * *

Manuel Broncano (M.): Have you ever looked into the origins of your surname, your Spanish ancestry? As I recall it, Anaya is the name of some monuments in my hometown, Salamanca, like "palacio de Anaya" or "plaza de Anaya."

Rudy Anaya (R.): Patricia and I were traveling in northern Spain and one day we joined an organized tour to visit some museum, and the bus driver was surprised by my fluent Spanish, and was curious. So I explained to him, and he asked my name. Through that driver, I learned that Anaya is a Basque surname, and it means "brotherhood" or "clan," but I don't really know to what extent that is accurate.

M.: I know you had a difficult time when Patricia passed. When did she die?

R.: The first week of January 2010, hace dos años y tres meses. In fact, I had just finished the manuscript of *Randy López* when it happened [Patricia suffered from cancer] One day she broke a hip and underwent surgery and then rehab for a while, and after that we brought her home and we took care of her all the time she was sick here in the house. Aquí la cuidamos y estuvimos con ella. We didn't want to let her go, y estuvo muy contenta. We talked a lot about what was coming. But things went downhill quickly. Two months before she died, Patricia went to what they call here a hospice. Mientras estuvo aquí en la casa, al principio salíamos al jardín, y luego no más aquí al portal a platicar y ya después estaba en un cuarto aquí al lado, pretty close to the bed and the chair and the bathroom. I have just finished writing a manuscript about those emotions. [*The Old Man's Love Story*, 2013]

M.: Is that what went into *Randy López*?

R.: No, this came after *Randy.* I showed the first draft to my editor at Oklahoma University Press and right away he said, "I want it, I want it." I have worked some more on the manuscript and I think it is now ready for publication. A ver, it was my way of writing through the emotions, the experience, being alone, y cosas así, fictionalized by creating a character que solamente se llama The Old Man, and the Old Man was through these experiences, these emotions. That's it, that's what I am doing now. Ya lo terminé, pero siempre estoy tweaking esta palabra, la otra. I go to the park everyday, I walk, and the park has a school of goldfish, these little goldfish that probably people have thrown there from aquariums, a whole school, and I have

a relationship to them. I go every season, spring, winter, summer… A lot of what I am writing now has to do with memory and the world of spirits that figures into a lot of my work. Especially the four books of Sonny Baca, that begin to tell about the world of spirits. That is where the soul goes.

M.: So you believe in an afterlife?

R.: The novel I am working on now is a journey towards what I really believe. And that's where I start, with that world of spirits, but that is not where it ends up. So it finally ends up in memory, la memoria. And dealing with how much illusion there is in the world, and I am going to tell you this example I told Belinda [his niece]: voy al parque y veo mis peces, ah! my fishes, and I relate to them, and a big fish is floating dead on the surface of the water, y digo, "what is surface?" It is where the sky meets the water. We call it surface, but there is no such thing. Es una palabra, but we use it to describe something that is not, you know. Why don't we call it for example, "the belly of the sky?" The Old Man is going through this process, trying to understand what the final reality is, what we really do have.

M.: When you wrote *Randy López*, was Patricia already sick? I ask because *Randy* is also a journey towards death.

R.: Sí, it was a journey that both of us were going through. We talked a lot about her failing health. But instead of writing it about us, the vision of Randy López came. I had this vision of this young man riding his yegua, going back to the village where he was raised. That's what I had to write. It was similar to the vision that had inspired Última to me, and I don't know for sure whether it was a vision or a dream. Última came through the door one night and I felt her presence behind my back, and she told me to include her in my novel.

M.: While reading *Randy*, *Pedro Páramo* and the village of Comala came to my mind.

R.: In fact, I have a friend in California, Roberto Cantú, who loves *Pedro Páramo*. I had a beautiful edition and I sent it to him. But I don't think that was an influence. After I finished, Roberto Cantú in Los Ángeles right away pointed out that he felt, he knew it was an allegory somewhat like *Pedro Páramo*, but who knows... The most important thing was the vision that I had of this young man. Here is another interesting thing, Manuel: on the road to Jémez Springs, about three miles before you get in, it is about one hour

and fifteen minutes from here, entras a la sierra, a la montaña. Es un cañón bonito, muy chiquito. About three miles before you go in está un descanso, una cruz blanca, grande, y quizá la familia la cuida, porque está bien cuidada. Randy López, está el nombre en la cruz. El descanso de Randy López. Very few people know. Of course, the people in Jémez and la familia know, the question is, was that the spirit that came to me, to have his story told?

M.: I have always admired the kindness and care you show for all human beings in your writing, your understanding of the many flaws we humans have, and your understanding of creation. When I read *Randy*, I thought, 'this is a summary of Anaya's writing career.'

R.: I think it is, como dicen, the bookend to *Última* in a way and I am very pleased with it. I think it is a strong work, and Jesús Treviño, the photographer, told me after reading *Randy*: "This is it, man, this is it!" And I agree, I see the combination of elements from my previous works. Nowadays I write less and less in terms of time: as a young man, I could write four hours every morning, and now I am happy if I can write for an hour. This new book is different, it is something that happened to me, and I felt I should write it down. And it is not only for me, but also for people who go through grief, through grieving, through mourning, they share stories, and I felt that one way of sharing my story was writing it. Some of the things I am writing about, not even my immediate family knows. I have been composed, carried out with my writing, I keep the house and the Jémez house, invite friends, but underneath is all those memories you have to deal with, so maybe on behalf of someone else... And then, as soon as I have time, I want to collect my poetry, poems I have written along the years, because I think they will make a nice book. I also have a play I am working on, so, you know, siempre va a haber algo que hacer.

M.: What connection is there between Randy and Antonio?

R.: Well, I had not thought of it, but perhaps there is something between the two characters. Is Randy López a version of Antonio, going back to his hometown years later? Perhaps. It doesn't seem to be the same place, one is the llano and the other a mountain, a canyon; the ages are also different: Randy López is thirty, and he is working at odd jobs in the city, went to the navy, and went to night school, decided he would be a writer... Now, would Randy be Antonio

as an older man? It is possible, no lo sé... in a universal sense, sure: you leave the little hometown where you have grown up, and then at some point later you feel you have lost something. There are symbols and themes that seem to repeat: the river, the schoolteacher, the priest... The priest in *Bless Me, Ultima* was authoritarian, one of those who preach 'my way or hell', 'eternal damnation'...

M.: When you spoke of the gold fish earlier, the golden carp in *Última* came to my mind, that powerful spirit of the river.

R.: Oh yes, it keeps appearing. I don't know, very often I drive over to the park, and walk, short walks these days, obviously, but I enjoy them immensely. It is not a big park, but it is nature for me. I would like to walk all along the river, climb the mountain in Jémez as I used to, to discover my little heaven, you know, my little nature, pero ya no puedo. In this new manuscript, the Old Man says: "my Walden," "my Walden Pond," and it is not the New England pond, que está toda bonita y verde. This is a little pond, manmade. Pero ahí están los golden fish, ducks, geese come in, all sorts of birds I can see and identify, y los árboles...

M.: Nature has always been a central element of your fictional universe.

R.: Yes, even in this new work, the Old Man finds some comfort as he goes along, and he is always talking to his wife, he tells her what he sees, and sometimes he goes for two or three chapters talking to her, telling her the things that are happening in his life. And all of a sudden she talks to him, to his great surprise: "you are here!" "Yes, I never left." Throughout the story, she keeps telling him the she has not gone away, never left his side.

M.: I have always thought that *Bless Me, Ultima* is the story of your childhood. Of all its characters, I find Narciso one of the most endearing, with his fallen nobility and his gift for gardening. How much of your life did you pour into the novel? Was Narciso somebody you knew?

R.: Many of the characters in *Última* are people I knew growing up, and sometimes I don't even change their names, even though in fiction they always tell you to change their names, pero por qué, es más bonito dejar sus verdaderos nombres. And yes, there was a Narciso, he was the town drunkard. Man, he was tall for a Hispano, muy alto, grande, with a big moustache. I'm sure he spent his life

in the ranchos, doing construction, odd jobs. He knew my father very well. They were drinking buddies, and whenever they went de parranda, he would come to the house. And there he is, in the novel. In his garden, he is like Zorba the Greek, and dances drunk while he sows his seeds in the moonlight, y sin querer he grows his plants because of his dance. Narciso warns Última that Tenorio is coming, and Tenorio kills him, shoots him near the river. I remember the real Narciso with special fondness. When he came walking down the street, we kids would hang around, si tiraba una bacha [cigarette butt], we would pick it up and smoke it. Nowadays children are told to avoid people like him, but I remember Narciso as an essential fixture of my hometown and my childhood. The other characters are like that, too: the Vitamin Kid, Gene and Bones, etc., they are based on children I grew up with.

M.: And Última?

R.: Última is a secret. Última is inspired by the same vision that inspired Randy López, as I said earlier. Randy's vision didn't tell me anything, but I knew I had to write the story. I don't remember whether it was a vision or a dream, but it was so clear; was I awake or was I asleep? Última was an apparition, una viejita like those you still see dressed all in black in Spanish villages, and more rarely, here in New Mexico. Última the character is a composite of several women I knew that did the work of a curandera. But I don't go into that, have never gone into that part of me. Enough to say that Última appeared to me, and once she found her way in, she became the soul of the novel, and everything else made sense all of a sudden. It was no longer the story of some kids growing up, but the story of some kids in a world that had this substratum of cuentos; cuentos that open the doors to mythology and the uncanny.

M.: And this world, somehow timeless, is set against the background of WWII, whose echoes reach the small town in rural New Mexico, as if the crude reality of the war assaulted this self-contained universe in an attempt to disrupt Antonio's childhood. After all, *Última* is the story of a vanishing world, a world passing away forever...

R.: I grew up with WWII, and my three brothers were deployed, like Antonio's in the novel. Yesterday, I received the visit of a large group of teachers, writers and friends. They were *librotraficantes* on

their way to Arizona. We met to discuss the situation created by the removal of Mexican-American Studies from the curriculum of a large school system in Tucson. After the meeting, a couple of teachers approached me and we talked about the importance of keeping our cultural memory in textbooks and educational programs, because the loss of that memory in our youths would represent an overwhelming change, overwhelming disruption. Pop culture, mass media, what they see on Facebook and similar places, all this is promoting this loss of cultural roots, which is alarming among our Mexican-American kids. That is the way society wants them, the way to control them, to turn them into consumers. Y nosotros, we say, hey, stand back, stand back awhile, you don't need a hundred CDs, use the radio instead, and things like that, and they don't understand. That's the power of economics...

M.: Is there a future for Mexican-Americans as a cohesive community?

R.: Yes, I am convinced there is, if we make the effort to preserve our memory, the collective consciousness of who we are, of our shared history as a people. And I believe in the Darwinian principle of adaptation; we need to adapt, of course, but we need to ask ourselves, what value is there in your history, what kind of continuity do you want to keep. Y en cuanto te cortan el hilo of that continuity, that thread weaving the past and the present, you find yourself adrift. We know, at least I know that, being adrift, you are apt to drop out of school more than the other kids; you are apt to wind up in prison more than the kids whose cultural, historical continuity is in the curriculum, is being kept up. Kids who are told, this is who you are, this is who your forefathers were, these are your values, and you can go to college. Y aquí está el chicanito. To me, that is the key to continuity. Yes, adapt to change, adapt to the circumstances; we have to learn English, of course, and we have to learn the history of the country, of course, learn its culture, its customs, todo. But it is so easy to keep more than one of those continuities, so easy to preserve one without relinquishing the other. You have it in Spain, people who speak two or three languages and identify themselves with more than one continuity

M.: Well, that is not always the case, I'm afraid...

R.: I understand, but at least quite a few of you speak two or

three languages, and travel abroad often. Y aquí no pasa. Here in the United States, we have different cultures, pero quieren cortarles el hilo, cut their continuity, erase their distinct identity, their history.

M.: I consider *Tortuga* one of your finest novels, unique among your works. However, it has not received the critical attention it certainly deserves. Why?

R.: I am glad that you mention *Tortuga*. Pat always loved that novel, and I agree with you, it is one of my best works, but it has never enjoyed the popularity of *Última*. Years ago, there was a company in Great Britain that was planning to turn *Tortuga* into a movie, but the project finally fell through, and it is a pity because it would have made an excellent film. I am an old-fashioned writer who sees the plot as the backbone of the narrative, unlike these modernists and their sudden fiction, sudden flashes, avant garde... My narrative is rooted in the cuentos and legends from the oral tradition, and it is traditional in this sense. Sometimes, the writer goes deep, it happened in *Última* obviously, I know it happened in *Tortuga*, and I think it happened also in *Randy López*. That is the only way, metaphorical way to describe it: sometimes you go deeper, you keep the narrative line, but you touch something else, you begin to touch the depths of the human soul.

M.: Is there a real Tortuga Mountain?

R.: I call the Sandías the Tortuga Mountains. The hospital where I was treated when I was sixteen [Rudy was in the hospital for several months because a spinal injury suffered while swimming in an acequia] is located in a small town called Truth or Consequences. In the 1950s, the town changed its original name, Hot Springs, because of a contest in a radio show of the same title, very popular at the time. The hospital, Carrie Tingley Hospital, is situated on a hill, overlooking the town and the river, the Río Grande; on the other side of the river, there is a mountain, and they call it Tortuga. In the novel, the other kids call the kid with the cast Tortuga because of the mountain. So now, he has an affinity with the mountain. He is completely paralyzed, and asks himself, 'will I ever move again?' 'Can that legend that the mountain will one day move be me?'

M.: And the Vegetable Ward, was it real?

R.: The Vegetable Ward is a fictionalized..., I do not know if that is the best way to put it, but in a sense, it was real, the boy in the iron

lung was real, but then I placed him in that place, in a place perhaps of my subconscious, or the subconscious of Tortuga the character. They hear screams at night, they know that there is pain, when one of the kids dies, they know, they sneak out at night, y ellos saben, they know that beyond that door it is a place of death.

M.: Last time we met, I asked you whether you considered yourself a magical-realist, and you answered, somewhat dismissively, that it was a question for us critics and scholars to answer, and not you. Would you like to add something to that response?

R.: It is simply the reality of my imagination. Now, if that reality is magical, well, you have to figure out what words you will use to phrase it. Honestly, I never felt I was in that literary stream, but you have to leave it to the person who reads your work, leave it to the critic, and if the critic places it in one of those categories, pues fine, I have nothing to object. I would say that *Tortuga* is a reality, and this leads inevitably to the next question, 'but what is *real*?' That is the question I have been struggling with all my life, and it comes out more in this new manuscript I am currently working on. The Old Man deals more and more with illusion, more and more with time, what he wants to believe, what is real, what he calls, what I call a creative imagination, is my soul, but what is the beginning of soul, and on and on and on, until he finally strings all these things together and comes to some conclusion. And the conclusion is memory, and he is afraid for a while, porque dice, 'is that all there is?' If that stream in my writing takes you to magical realism that is fine, and it is fine if it takes you into another category that has not been explored yet. By the way, this is just coming up a wonderful plática, Manuel, a dulce plática that leads us to think of new ways, new things. Maybe we need to come up with a new definition. If magical realism is a category, a label, and we are not completely in it, what are we in? Maybe that is the next critical step. I read as many works by Chicana and Chicano writers as I can, and I also read many articles that are sent to me by scholars, and I don't think I have seen a new definition. In many cases, those writers were reading the Latino writers that magical realism comes from, so many of us grew up in English departments..., even the ones who went to writers like Gabriel García Márquez, I sense they went later, so it is not bred in the bone, en la sangre.

M.: But still, the vision is there...

R.: It is there because of the stream of the migration. The Iberian Peninsula entering Mexico, meeting up with different peoples there, and then our ancestors coming up here into Nuevo México, Arizona, California, it is all one stream. Is what García Márquez tied into different from what we, after our education in English departments, tied into? Do we have added conceptions, perspectives, that he didn't? I don't mean worse, or better, simply that a people changes as he gets to a different place, a different community. I recently read several articles on the New England Transcendentalists, and this led me to think of what Transcendentalism and the Chican@ movement may have in common, and started to see some. Were we influenced by the Transcendentalists? No. I read them in college, an essay here and there, and remember a few things, but did not *study* them.

M.: I would say you are a transcendentalist, for you share the concept of the oversoul.

R.: Well, yes, the world of spirits is the oversoul. The Chican@ writers of my generation, the ones who got a degree and studied literature, we have to have brought all those influences into who we are. How can you read Emerson, or Mark Twain, or T. S. Eliot, or Tennessee Williams, and not be influenced. How can I be at the University of New Mexico during the Beatnik era, reading Allen Ginsberg and going to the coffee shops que había aquí en Albuquerque, and their poetry readings, thinking we were poets, and not be influenced. Therefore, let's create a Chican@ aesthetic that we have not seen described yet. It will no doubt be different from the aesthetic that, let's say, a García Márquez, or a Carlos Fuentes, grew up with.

M.: Do you agree with me in that the Chican@ movement has been excessively essentialist at times, excessively self-centered?

R.: Yes, I agree, but the essentialism that you mention has been a mechanism of self-defense against the aggressive threat of uniformity, the fear of disappearing as a group, as a community. I have recently read four or five novels by Chican@ writers, and there is much in them that strikes me as essentialism, in the sense that you describe it. How we came from Mexico and now live in the United States in perpetual conflict, over and over. I am more eclectic, and try to be syncretic at the same time, seek unity in divergence, and I guess I have a faith in that. After all, that's what literature is precisely about.

M.: What are the differences and continuities between Chicanismo in the 1970s and what Chicanismo may be today? A movement eminently political in its beginnings, gradually evolved into an artistic and literary phenomenon, into an aesthetics and a poetics apparently seemingly divested of all ideological activism. Is this appreciation accurate?

R.: The aesthetics and the poetics contain the humanity, and humanity operates under a political ideology. You cannot separate them. In the seventies we had poets like Ricardo Sánchez, Alurista, Nephtalí De León, we had Luis Valdés in teatro in California, and many others... Back then, the activism was in your face, up front, in the classroom, en las huelgas, in marches. I don't see that now. Is it enough for us that, in the course of things, revolutions bygone are incorporated into the aesthetics and the poetics? Well, yes, that is history, revolutions are written down. It is not enough for us Mexican-Americans, Chican@s, in this country; it is not enough to be preserved only in the scholarship, and in the aesthetics and the poetics. We need people in the streets. We need activism. We need these young people, the librotraficantes, saying, 'if you remove our books from the shelves at the schools in Arizona, if you hide them in storehouses, we will take them back and pass them out to the people, and we will overcome,' as that song from the Civil Rights movement said, 'We shall overcome...' I feel that activism is getting back to the political. We had the Occupy Wall Street movement, and they are tied together. The young people, but not only the young, seeing this inequity, the ten per cent ruling over a country, and the way they rule is to make us consumers. The corporations need consumers, and suddenly so many are saying, 'ya basta!' Once I told Tony Díaz [the leader of the librotraficante movement], 'Tony, what we need to do is to occupy Arizona,' and that caught on, you saw it in emails, people were commenting on it. Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Arizona, it is the same. Power does not want, not only your perspective, power does not want your consciousness.

M.: Before I turn off my recorder, allow me to revisit briefly my earlier question about the past and the present of the Chican@ movement, and how you envision its future.

R.: Yes. I am glad to have lived through that time in the seventies, even though sometimes I got knocked down because *Última* was not

a political tract. Quite a few of those early critics who questioned my novel missed the crucial fact that cultura is always political, always. All in all, that was a fascinating time. We don't see much of that activism of the 1970s anymore. Instead, we've been promoting the Studies, the curricula, the scholarship, the aesthetics, and the poetics. If you are assimilated completely, your culture dies, and part of you dies, because you've been given. In the worst of situations of our community, in the pobreza that we've known, we've been given something to sustain us. Our parents gave us their language, gave us Spanish, and they gave us values, the cuentos themselves had those values. We learned to listen to the oral tradition and keep it in us, we learned the value of work. Como dicen ahora, 'these Mexicans don't know the value of work...' Hey, gimme a break, we invented it! We had that set of values, you see, we had that continuity. My parents struggled for this, struggled for that, and so did mis abuelos before, and so did most parents. 'So, why don't you assimilate?' they ask. Well, yes, but at what price? The consequence of assimilation can be a dying people. I always leave it up to the individual. We can write and say as much as possible about these things that happen in our world, but I have never ever pushed anyone, 'you be a Chicano.'