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**Land of Enchantment, Land of Mi Chante:  
Four Arguments in New Mexican Literature**

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**Land of Enchantment, Land of Mi Chante  
Four Arguments in New Mexican Literature**

**by**

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**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

To our Nanas and Tatas, Abuelos and Abuelitas, who built the world.

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**Land of Enchantment, Land of Mi Chante:  
Four Arguments in New Mexican Literature**

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Laura Kathleen Padilla, Ph.D.,  
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Supervisor: José Limón

This project describes and analyzes literature written in English that concerns the development of ethnic and racial categories in twentieth century New Mexico. During the nineteenth century, New Mexicans of Mexican descent used the ethnic term “Spanish” to ensure their access to self-governance in the hostile, racist U.S. Congress. This ethnic term, however, was quickly adopted by territorial boosters to promote the region as a bastion of an authentically European culture in America, and it designated this group as culturally distinct from either the American “Anglos,” or the Native American groups that also populated the Rio Grande Valley during the conquest of Mexico. After statehood in 1912, these categories were refined into what came to be known as the “Tri-Cultural Balance.” The rigidity of this formulation provided both advantages and limitations in formulating new bases of political power and community formation. By pairing texts by authors who are usually read as dissimilar, I show that although the literary and cultural renaissance that accompanied the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s left its mark on New Mexican letters, the authors who came out of

this movement continue a literary discussion that began much earlier. Furthermore, although the movement did allow ethnic Mexican authors, particularly women, to speak in ways their ancestors could not, some Chicano and Chicana authors repeat the mistakes of their Anglo predecessors in surprising ways. This study presents four different rhetorical stances assumed by the authors (tourist, priest, dramatist, local) and describes how two authors within each category redefine for a reading public what it is to be a Hispano or a Hispana in New Mexico. In particular, this project examines the ways in which cultural formations allow authors to evade the consequences of possessing a racially marked body, but only at the cost of much intellectual and emotional strain. The arguments that occur across texts, between authors, reveal how New Mexicans of all ethnicities struggled, post-statehood, to describe the region's peoples in the wake of nineteenth century conquest and twentieth century attempts to contain difference with fantasy ethnography.

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## **Introduction: Land of Enchantment, Land of Mi Chante**

### **THE SPANISH PRISONER**

In the spring of 2001, a storm from Santa Fé blew into my email inbox in Austin, Texas. On February 25<sup>th</sup> of that year, a show called *Cyber Arte: Tradition Meets Technology* opened at the Museum of International Folk Art. Although my own work focuses on literary expressive culture, the excitement around this show proved illuminating to me, as the corollaries of literary movements to the plastic arts are often instructive. It was originally planned to cash in on the Y2K fad, but was postponed by the museum's board of governors. It featured works by Chicanas, primarily from New Mexico, but including the Californian Alma López (Nunn). Nestled in the foothills next to the School of American Research, this museum houses a permanent collection of Hispano folk arts and religious objects, named *Familia y Fé*. This collection encircles the gallery, and both of these in turn make up the entirety of the museum's Hispanic Heritage Wing. That spring, in this museum perched above the city, in a tiny gallery at the back of the wing, a small print of a representation of the Virgin Mary became the *cause célèbre* of artists and priests, free-speech advocates and Marian fundamentalists, and political hacks of all stripes. The scene was like a cage match between the two strongest cultural forces of Santa Fé's twentieth century, Museum Culture vs. Church.

I don't recall the date on which I first received a call to action to plead with the museum authorities against an attempt on the part of a well-funded Catholic group to shut the show down. I do remember that I wrote an impassioned and angry letter to the museum board in defense of liberty and art. I was raised in New Mexico's Catholic Church, and I have a familiarity with its triumphs, its failings, and its major scandals, which include the Archbishop Robert Sanchez's fall from grace with an underage

member of the Coors family, and the fact that the Jemez Retreat House was once a dumping ground for pedophile priests. With lawsuits and tell-all interviews on national T.V. in its recent past, condemnation from the Archdiocese of Santa Fé was, in my mind, a tacit recommendation: if Archbishop Sheehan disliked some part of the show, then really, how bad could it be? Soon after I saw a reproduction of the offending image, and was further convinced of the spuriousness of the protests against it; Alma López' depiction of the Virgin Mother, while racy, was not even in the league of the Italian masters or monastic illuminators who depicted her nursing the infant Christ child, nipples in full view. The protests struck me as affected prudishness, a tempest brewed to distract us all from the wrongs of the Church's recent past.

During the summer of 2001, I had the opportunity to see the gallery show. *Our Lady* was not my favorite piece by López in the show, but as I stood with my friend in the small space, I came to realize that the show itself was now beside the point for most of the museum-goers. During the short time that we were there, at least two large parties entered the gallery, viewed *Our Lady*, and left. One woman exclaimed, "That's not offensive!" in a tone of frustration at the bother of it all; she didn't even look at the rest of the show. I couldn't help but keep a tally in my head, of how many dollars to a head, per day that the show remained open. And while admittance fees probably couldn't begin to keep the doors of a museum like MOIFA open, one could factor in less tangible recuperations on the part of the museum, in visibility and patronage. A true showman would recognize this as a perfect museum moment in the tradition of P.T. Barnum, but with two different appeals. One appeal called out for the faithful to behold blasphemy and lechery, the imposition of sin on one immaculately conceived, with titillating kicks and a license for smugness for all who heeded that call. The appeal that I had heeded proclaimed the majesty of art, and that as an attendee of the show and the writer of an

angry letter, I had struck a blow against censorship for the sake of equality with my all-day, three museum pass.

That day, in the gallery, some part of me grew uneasy at the whole spectacle, which I struggled to explain to myself. The next spring, I attended the National Association of Chicano and Chicana Studies conference in Chicago, looking forward to a scheduled plenary talk by Alma López herself, on the topic of the MOIFA debacle. Her talk was rather long, and aided by digital reproductions of the defamatory, cruel letters that she had received from the man who instigated the protest.<sup>1</sup> Her voice was full of hurt and anger at the viciousness of the apostolic attack on her image. This hurt makes it difficult to blame her for what I am to write next, but her next statement enabled me to clarify the source of my uneasiness. Somewhere in that long plenary, in a room darkened for her power point presentation, Lopez made a joking aside to the effect that the whole controversy emerged from the fact that New Mexicans were too stupid to tell the difference between a museum and a church. That giant room felt like it was filled with beautiful, laughing Californians, and I was suddenly very isolated. As soon as the plenary was over, I checked in with another New Mexican woman, who was just as angry and distressed as I was. Did I hear that right? I asked her, and the look of anger on her face said yes. And although it was a long time before I could articulate it, it was at this moment I realized while the whole situation made me uncomfortable.

To me, the whole event had come to resemble a classical scam, “The Spanish Prisoner.” This trick, in its original sixteenth century form, involves sending a letter to a mark, explaining that a beautiful princess is being held hostage. Unless the mark sends a great deal of money to this unknown person, the princess will be executed; the mark is told that if he does supply the funds, he will have the princess’ hand in marriage

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<sup>1</sup> These letters are available to read at [www.almalopez.net](http://www.almalopez.net).



("Spanish Prisoner").<sup>2</sup> The princess in the Archbishop's call to the faithful was the Virgin Mary, and the kidnapper in this case was the seductive, mad wild woman, the "educated Chicana" (Nunn). The artist's call for help, which proclaimed the edifying and ethically wholesome nature of the show, presented art as the ransomed princess. The kidnapper in that case, was the implicit background geek, the bumpkin, the philistine, the inbred mountain Mexican who does the bidding of her devilish priest. At that moment, sitting in the darkened lecture hall in Chicago, I realized that the threat to both the church and museum princesses, the murderous kidnapper, in some ways, bore a strong resemblance to me.

It is not my intention in these pages to undermine the opinions of López's defenders, such as the extended defense that Luz Calvo published in *Meridiens* in 2004. I lead with this anecdote because this episode encapsulates the passions and anxieties that surround the production of culture in northern New Mexico, with struggles between priests, curators and collectors over the significance and value of religious and artistic objects and practices. For at least a century, the physical and social landscape of New Mexico has occasioned a series of symbolic struggles over the nature of American modernity and the Others generated by that modernity. The continuing salience of these issues came home to me in this instance. In the midst of this struggle, there were journalists, politicians, and academics to package the controversy for outsiders along some predictable lines. The painfully right-wing *Albuquerque Journal*, in its coverage of the story, emphasized the righteousness and cultural sensitivity of Archbishop Sheehan, defender of indigenous religious practices against the elitist museum curators. It was even accompanied by a picture him, sporting a cassock printed with a portrait of La

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<sup>2</sup> Email is actually the medium in which this scam most often appears to us now, in the form of Nigerian officials pleading for bank accounts in which to deposit money. For an extended meditation on this scam, see David Mamet's films, *The Spanish Prisoner* and *House of Games*.

Virgen de Guadalupe, a strange parody of Juan Diego in his high white bishop's miter and shiny black shoes. New Mexico, this coverage proclaimed, is a refuge of old-fashioned Spanish Catholic faith, cured and strengthened by centuries of isolation from the centers of ecumenical power. There was a different portrait of Santa Fé to be inferred from the electronic calls for solidarity that peppered my email account throughout spring and summer of 2001. This Santa Fé is a haven for artists and free spirits, a place where the pursuit and expression of beauty is afforded the respect that other cities give to commerce. One can see pictures of this city in any number of the brochures that are handed out in the tourist center that resides in the building that used to house the Loretto School in Santa Fé.

Neither of these versions of Santa Fé actually exists, except perhaps as a fragment, but one can shop in either one of them. Any number of influential authors, including those who appear in this dissertation, did shop in some version of Santa Fé, and so it is worthwhile to meditate a little on the plastic arts in New Mexico before moving into the discussions of authorship and identity. These competing versions of the city's identity are, in fact, auras produced by the tourism industry and have existed in the local imagination since the first Harvey House was built along the railroad and the whistle-stop to Santa Fé was named "Lamy." My use of the word "aura" here is borrowed from the reversal of Benjamin's term in Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. MacCannell explains:

Benjamin believed that the reproductions of the work of art are produced because the work has a socially based "aura" about it, the "aura" being a residue of its origins in a primordial ritual. He should have reversed his terms. The work becomes "authentic" only after the first copy is produced. The reproductions *are* the aura, and the ritual, far from being the point of origin, *derives* from the relationship between the original object and its socially constructed importance (47-8, author's italics).

In 2001, the museums and the conservative church groups mounted competing rituals, events that staged their authenticity as arbiters of the community values of Santa Fé. Each group moved within different auras produced by reproductions of ritual and household objects, selectively favoring those elements that best reinforced their historical and cultural claims to authentic New Mexican values, a basis then for wide-ranging, occasionally bigoted political pronouncements. The competing auras, the first of hardened piety, and the second, of artistic freedom, are the remainders of nineteenth and early-twentieth century letters, lantern slide shows, magazines and travelogues. While a discussion of these source documents is beyond the scope of this work, we must recognize that New Mexico, from a very early time was subject to intense, interested scrutiny, which produced a very peculiar, and some would say unattractive, aura.

Writing about New Mexico always comes with the burden of having to explain or otherwise deal with the problem of “Spanish Identity.” John Nieto-Phillips has written extensively about the generation of this term as a response to U.S. claims about the fitness of New Mexicans for self-government. Nieto-Phillips presents this unfortunately familiar passage from Senator John C. Calhoun’s 1848 speech concerning the expansion of citizenship to conquered Mexican subjects:

“Never will the time come,” Calhoun admonished, “that these Mexicans will be heartily reconciled to your authority. They have Castilian blood in their veins—the old Gothic, quite equal to the Anglo-Saxon in many respects.” But, he continued, they remained too loyal to their Mexican nation to ever become United States citizens. Calhoun posed important questions to the rest of his colleagues: If the United States was destined to reign over North America, was it capable of managing millions of mixed-blood subjects?... “Are Mexicans fit for self-government or for governing you?” He asked, “Are you... willing that your States be governed by... a population of about only one million of your blood, and two or three millions of mixed blood, better informed, all the rest pure Indians, a mixed blood equally ignorant and unfit for liberty, impure races, not as good as Cherokees or Choctaws?” (53).

Nieto-Phillips then documents the ways in which New Mexicans labored to enforce the misapprehension that they, as a group, represented a population of Spaniards, distinct from the population of Mexico in general. Claiming Spanishness, in this context, was an opportunity to claim fitness for self-government and citizenship. The claim of Spanish identity had the additional benefit of appealing to powerful Anglo desires and fantasies:

The impact of the Hispanophilic movement on Nuevomexicanos' sense of their own past was considerable. Hispanophilia afforded Nuevomexicanos an acceptable means of defining their historical identity in a language that catered to Anglo Americans' fantasies about the past... Anglo tourists' desires and historical imagination, and it could not have been created or embellished without a degree of collaboration, or cooperation, on the part of the "natives." Yet it was no less a tool that Nuevomexicanos plied to rhetorically reclaim the means of control over their declining political fortunes, land base, and language (148).

In fact, the rhetorical ploy appealing to the ahistorical fantasies of the United States served to help Hispanos develop powerful allies, including LeBaron Bradford Prince, a one time territorial governor, and Charles Lummis. The development of what Carey McWilliams termed a "fantasy heritage" was crucial to the formation of New Mexican statehood, and a means of procuring the opportunities of self government (35).

Ramón A. Gutiérrez has demonstrated that since the late nineteenth century, New Mexico had been transformed from a geographical inconvenience between Texas and California into "an America uncontaminated by the values of Europe, with aesthetic sensibilities quite independent of historic centers of fashion, and with cultures of creative genius that had constructed splendid edifices while Europe was still in the dark ages" (Gutiérrez, 12). From the late nineteenth century on, the collection of local handicrafts came to be a sign of the collector's awareness of, and ability to articulate, the dissatisfactions of modernity. Thus, authors like Lummis, a college friend of Theodore Roosevelt, helped to complete the transformation of New Mexico into an American Orient that had begun with Josiah Gregg's 1845 *Commerce of the Prairies* (Gutiérrez,

13). New Mexico became a place that could “deflect attention from the class conflict that plagued the Eastern centers of industrial capital and... create a new metaphor for American nationalism.” However, this vision of an oriental place, of New Mexico as “an Egypt locked in a time warp of the past, [facilitated that] New Mexicans could be romantically depicted as specimens of degenerate races destined to collections in museums and extinction on earth” (Gutiérrez, 24-5). From the late nineteenth century, the act of collecting so-called Spanish handicrafts came to be a sign of the collector’s ability to articulate dissatisfaction with the conditions of modernity. The influence of this sentencing of Hispano and Native American cultures has been continuously felt over the century since the publication of Lummis’ *Land of Poco Tiempo*. In designating New Mexico as the “Land of Poco Tiempo,” Lummis constructed a place in direct opposition to the harried industrial US, where “The opiate sun soothes to rest, the adobe is made to lean against, the hush of daylong noon would not be broken” (3). This idyll, always under constant threat of being overrun by modern life, allows Lummis the role of protector and preservationist of a quaint and picturesque but ultimately feeble way of life. One observes in the early twentieth century the founding of the School of American Research, the collection and translation of oral traditions and poetry, and the museumization of local craft products of weaving and pot-making. Much of this activity was premised on the necessity of observing these cultures and collecting specimens in the face of these peoples’ inevitable extinctions. This activity influenced the works of newcomer Modernist painters and writers, who incorporated their interpretations of locally produced crafts into what were later deemed masterpieces.

Because of this attitude, while the assimilation of New Mexican cultural products was underway, there was a lack of emphasis on naming individual craftspersons until the 1920’ and 1930’s. However, with the increasing demand for museum quality pieces and

the influence of state and museum-sponsored contests, it became more possible to link named artisans with their handicrafts. In spite of this, until the late 1970's there was a continuing inclination to see these artisans as the dying remnants of a disappearing way of life; the publication of Charles Briggs' *The Wood Carvers of Córdova, New Mexico: Social Dimensions of an Artistic "Revival,"* in 1980 marks the beginning of a movement to recognize these craftspeople as the sophisticated, market-savvy artists that they were. Briggs writes of the founder of the renaissance of New Mexican image carving:

... José Dolores [López] was a creative genius. Steeped in the traditional Hispano cultural system, including its image-making vocation, he evolved a highly individual interpretation of the religious representations of his own society. The peculiarity of his vision was also shaped by the friendship and advice of a number of Santa Fé artists and writers. Being intimately acquainted with aesthetic preferences of Anglo American culture, they were in a particularly advantageous position to mesh José Dolores' artistic inclinations with the tastes of the nearby market... thus setting the stage for the encouragement of a nascent handicraft industry (5).

There developed in the woodcarving industry a symbiotic relationship between Modernist desires and the "traditional" images produced to feed them. This relationship allowed generations of carvers to remain in Northern New Mexican villages, and to develop commercial followings for their works. However, the practice of advertising their works as traditional handicrafts has in some ways limited the ways in which collectors perceive these artisans as original, innovative artists. This allowed Modernist artists to look upon locally produced handicrafts as source material for their more worldly, cosmopolitan art. Thus, as with the case of Patrocinio Barela, who "became more creative and broke away from the 'Santero' heritage," it becomes more and more difficult to witness the evolving styles, subject matter, and influences of New Mexican wood carvers and to still describe this group of artists as the remainders of a moribund culture (Margaret Berg, qtd. in Briggs, 86). In the promotion of Barela's work, one can observe a concerted, often

painful effort to figure this High Modernist sculptor as somehow traditional. Later, in the works of image carver Nicholas Herrera a confrontation with the desires of his audience for a vision of uncorrupted pastoral faith, with his carved images of lowriders, Doña Sebastiana riding a Harley instead of a cart, and even an image of Bill Clinton in a confrontation with Hillary Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. A local artistic practice that was once used to defend Nuevomejicanos' homes, is now used to directly confront hierarchies of culture that would dare to test for authenticity.

The difficulties faced by gallery owners and art promoters in comprehending these artisans as modern subjects, reflected in the difficulties that Hispana and Hispano authors had in getting works published under their own names and the limitations on that market for arts by Hispanos, are fundamentally problems of imperialist nostalgia. Though I borrow this term from Renato Rosaldo, I elaborate on its characteristics through Bakhtin's work on the pastoral idyll, and Susan Stewart's work on nostalgia and narrative. I take my definition of idyll from Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," which allows us to make the important distinction between folkloric and romantic abstractions of time, and the idyllic mode often employed by Lummis and his literary descendents. The romantic chronotopes, both Greek and Chivalric, little resemble the "romance" evoked by the term "Southwestern Romance." Rather, they consist of what Bakhtin calls "adventure-time," an abstraction of time that allows for events to unfold without any accompanying maturation of the heroes. Furthermore, all of these events "that fill this hiatus are a pure digression from the normal course of life," and we may assume that normal time resumes at the end of the adventure (90). Those setting out for New Mexico, in search of improved health and new sights, might have been seeking this form of Romance. More related to the romance that many Southwestern authors wrote about after settling in the Southwest is the Folkloric

Chronotope, the major feature of which is the historical inversion. This is a tendency to locate an aspired-to golden age not in the future, but in the past—“such a past that which is eternal and outside time altogether, yet which functions as if were indeed real and contemporary” (“Forms of Time” 148). The Idyllic Chronotope resembles the Folkloric, but it is much more contained, often to a family that is rooted through generations to one spot. The idyll exists in opposition to the

...great but abstract world, where people are out of contact with each other, egotistically sealed-off from each other, greedily practical; where labor is differentiated and mechanized, where objects are alienated from the labor that produced them... (“Forms of Time” 234).

The idyll is under constant threat of intrusion from that abstract world, and is therefore always threatened with destruction. Nineteenth-century writers imagined that places like Taos and Santa Fe, in their exoticness, existed outside of modernity and therefore outside of time altogether. They believed that their own alienation from industrial America made them appropriate stewards for the idyllic residues of what they imagined was a dying way of life. Thus, a Hispano artist in the early twentieth century could overcome the barriers between herself and the marketplace, but only by acting out the part of the idyllic subject, an ideal for the modern subject to both displace and mourn.

I have spoken of the plastic arts, but this dissertation concerns literature written by Hispanos in New Mexico during the twentieth century. During that time, authors like D.H. Lawrence, Willa Cather, and Mabel Dodge Luhan sought to amalgamate what they saw as superior European culture with what they perceived as the more vital aboriginal lifeways of New Mexico’s Pueblos. These authors, now identified as members of what came to be known as the Taos Modernist Circle, thus revised New Mexican racial and



social relationships. This presented a problem for New Mexico Hispanos, because they needed to make themselves heard by a group of extremely powerful, wealthier people who moved to New Mexico from the cultural centers of the United States and Europe. Throughout the twentieth century Hispanos participated in the creation of what came to be known as the “Tri-Cultural Balance,” reaffirming some tenuous claims to a “Spanish” identity. In my dissertation I observe how Hispana and Hispano authors abuse this subject position, chafe against its limitations, and then eventually how they begin to write their way out of it.

### **THE PROBLEM OF TRADITION IN REGARDS TO MODERNISM**

First, a brief note on the context in which Hispano and Hispana authors worked in for the past decades. The early twentieth century saw the towns of Santa Fé and Taos become major centers for artists. This is due in no small part to wealthy patrons like the heiress Mabel Dodge, who married Tony Luhan, a man from Taos Pueblo, and proceeded to devote her life to promoting Taos as the new American cultural mecca. Luhan competed with the White sisters in Santa Fé, as well as Mary Austin, a one-time protégé of Lummis, for prestigious guests. Among the people that Luhan attracted to her home in Taos were:

...Mary Austin, Myron Brinig, Witter Bynner, Willa Cather, Harvey Fergusson, Aldous Huxley, Spud Johnson, D.H. Lawrence, Oliver LaFarge, Jean Toomer, and Frank Waters; painter, sculptors and photographers Ansel Adams, Dorothy Brett, Andrew Dasburg, Miriam DeWitt, Maynard Dixon, Nicolai Fechin, Laura Gilpin, Marsden Hartley, Ernest Knee, Ward Lockwood, John Marin, Georgia O’Keefe, Agnes Pelton, Ida Rauh, Arthur Rönnebeck, Maurice Sterne, Paul Strand, Rebecca Strand, Cady Wells, and Edward Weston; musicians Carlos Chavez, Dane Rudhyar, and Leopold Stokowski; theatre designer Robert Edmond Jones and dance choreographer Martha Graham; social theorists, anthropologists, and folklorist John Collier, Carl Jung, Jaime de Angulo, Elsie Clews Parsons, and Ella Young (Rudnick 7-8)

Luhan meant for her house and salon to serve as a catalyst for an American modern culture that combined European hardiness with Native American's organic integration with the physical environment. It is a testament to Luhan's persistence and determination that the guest list for her home reads like a Who's Who of Modernism, but her utopian vision did not take. Some artists, like Spud Johnson, Dorothy Brett, Nicolai Fechin, and Georgia O'Keeffe made northern New Mexico their home; most of Luhan's guests visited only briefly. A few, like Aldous Huxley, Willa Cather, and Martha Graham incorporated the scenes that they had observed as tourists into their own work. In the end, however, few of Luhan's guests helped her to fulfill her ambitions for Taos. Of all of Luhan's disappointments in this regard, D.H. Lawrence is perhaps the most bitter. She coaxed Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, to Taos in hopes of finally finding an author who could describe for the world her own vision of American Modernism. Lawrence, a famously recalcitrant author, bucked Luhan, caricaturizing her marriage to Tony Luhan in *Plumed Serpent* as he went.

It's strange, then, that for so many people, D.H. Lawrence is the representative author of the Modernist movement in New Mexico. This is in some ways unfair, since Lawrence lived outside of Taos for less than two years in the early 1920's, several months of which were spent traveling. Genaro Padilla describes the leavings of his stay as "a scattering of predictably insistent Lawrentian essays, a parcel of very bad poems, [and] a fragment of a drama—a kitchen piece set in Taos" (*My History* 210-11). Nevertheless, during the "Great Hippie Invasion" in the late 1960's, the poet Robert Bly stated that "keeping good faith with the Lawrence tradition" was part of his decision to move to Taos (Rudnick 235). Lawrence's enduring contribution to the discourse surrounding New Mexico figured it as a place where, in the meeting of "Indians and Englishmen" the "linguistic space between preconsciousness and rational cognition"

could be observed by perceptive Europeans in doomed communities of Native Americans. This “audacious nullification of Native American consciousness [which] was actually intended to valorize the Indian” served for generations as an invitation to a New Mexico where it was possible to set aside the conventions of modernity and to live out a fantasy of savage vitality (*My History* 211).

Lawrence famously wrote that “it was New Mexico that liberated me from the present era of civilization,” and that

...the moment that I saw the brilliant, proud morning shine high up over the deserts of Santa Fé, something stood still in my soul, and I started to attend. There was a certain magnificence in the high-up day, a certain eagle-like royalty.... In the magnificent fierce morning of New Mexico one sprang awake, a new part of the soul woke up suddenly, and the old world became new” (“New Mexico” 142).

This passage is now ubiquitously quoted on New Mexican tourist kitsch, including calendars, notecards, and a “New Mexico Passport” sold at the Albuquerque airport (9). Less quoted is the remainder of the essay, in which he states that “The Indian who sells you baskets on Albuquerque station or who slinks around Taos plaza may be an utter waster and an indescribably low dog” (144). As Lawrence’s assessment is actually meant to valorize those Native Americans who separate themselves from the modern world, when it comes to discussing the New Mexican Hispanos that he meets in the towns, his anxieties about the true blending of Americans and European cultures are revealed in his temperamental tone. Padilla sums up Lawrence’s attitudes towards Mexicans well, stating that

Perhaps because they were examples of Western devolution rather than his privileged figures of the “pre-animal” life force, Lawrence had little to say about Mexicans, except, of course, that “Mexicans insist on being Mexicans, squeezing the last black drop of macabre joy out of life” (*My History* 211).

To this we might add a passage from Lawrence's essay, "Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine," in which he establishes a racialized hierarchy of vitality, declaring that

Life is more vivid in the Mexican who drives the wagon, than the two horses in the wagon.

Life is more vivid in me, than in the Mexican that drives the wagon for me.

We are speaking in terms of *existence*; that is, in terms of species, race, or type (357, author's italics).

Lawrence figures those lower in this hierarchy as being "consumed" and "consummated" in conquest, "kindling from the torch of revelation" the "inrush of vitality" (362). Conquest, for Lawrence demands that higher orders exercise "fearless mastery," lest the barbaric peoples "consume the fire of the conqueror, and leave him flameless, unless he watch it" (362). This "scattering" of essays is representative, in a condensed manner, of the ambitions, the prejudices, the platitudinous assumptions, the contradictory desires and the racist presumptions of the Modernists in New Mexico. Not to paint with too broad a brush—Lawrence represents the extremes of imperialist hedonism and self-pity—but his legacy provides the outliers within which we can observe the mechanisms of the production of categories of race and ethnicity in New Mexico. Unfortunately, Lawrence's perspectives were well within the keeping of American literary critics of the twentieth century.

In his essay, "Southwest of What?: Southwestern Literature as a Form of Frontier Literature," Reed Way Dasenbrock establishes a central problem for those of us attempting to use region as a category for grouping authors and to deduce meaningful conclusions about their writings based on shared regional perspectives. Simply put, the regionalist tradition of America's 1920's and 1930's is hard to extricate from the projects of Southern Agrarianism, a school of literary thought that elevated regionalism as a means of categorizing literature, that prized

...a balance, a depth, and an aesthetic complexity that allow a glimpse of the essence of this culture: they are imbued with a subtlety, an ambiguity, and a harmonious *wholeness* inaccessible to a modern mind fragmented by industrialism and diverted by consumerist mass culture (Paradis).

One of the more unfortunate tendencies in this school of literary criticism was to naturalize categories of race such that the white man of leisure represented the best practitioner of American letters, gathering materiel from those lower than him in rigid racialized categories. In the South such writers claimed the authority of nativity to describe the region as opposed to capitalism and themselves as throwbacks to a genteel way of life; that they could not claim this authority in the southwest did not keep American authors from seeking confirmation of this theory in nostalgic re-visions of the peoples that they met there.

Dasenbrock writes:

The key difference is in the stance taken by the writer towards the region. Traditional regional literature is—or represents itself as—the discourse of the insider about his or her own region, a celebration of the local... Traditional Southwestern literature is just the opposite: it is the discourse of the outsider, not a celebration of the local but a celebration of the exotic (123).

Here, Dasenbrock is writing within a practice, consistent with Cecil Robinson's 1977 work *Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest in American Literature*, of designating authors such as Josiah Gregg, Charles Lummis, Willa Cather, Mary Austin, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Edward Abbey, William Eastlake, and John Nichols as traditional Southwestern writers, the founders and carriers of the Southwestern Regional tradition. The characteristic that binds all of these authors together is they are not from the desert Southwest United States. Few of them ever set foot across the Mississippi until well into their adulthoods. As Dasenbrock explains, most of them produced a discourse about the region that mystified its history, made idiosyncratic categories of race that responded more to their own prejudices than to the communities described, and rendered the pleasurable aspects of

encountered cultures as purchasable commodities of art and landscape. Dasenbrock explains that these authors, when read within the category of American regionalist fiction, actually do uphold some of the uglier tenets of Southern regionalism, in that many of these authors naturalize racial categories, and figure all “weaker” cultures as inevitably succumbing to the juggernaut of American industry. The discourse of what Dasenbrock designates as traditional Southwestern literature serves to render its subjects as anachronisms of a place and time outside of American capital, a place one can escape to.

This point is well taken, but the fact that Dasenbrock could write, in 1992, of a Southwestern Regional literary history that includes no New Mexicans of Mexican American descent, and of no author actually from the region, speaks in many ways of the broader academy’s limited scope and knowledge of the Mexican American literary heritage. Although the study of New Mexican folklore has flourished since the end of the nineteenth century, most notably through the works of Aurelio Espinosa and Arthur Campa, Mexican Americans in other fields of study have long struggled to make their voices heard in the ongoing construction of New Mexican cultural Heritage. Erlinda Gonzalez-Berry writes about the barriers faced by the historian Benjamín Read, whose history of New Mexico portrayed his Mexican American ancestors as subjects of American imperialism. Gonzalez-Berry explains that his work was such a threat to the status quo that members of the New Mexico Historical Society actively worked to suppress Read, and that upon his death Read’s friends chose to steal his archive and remove it to the New Mexico State Archives, rather than see it disassembled and buried at the hands of the suppressors (Gonzales-Berry). Perceptions of the literary accomplishments of New Mexicans have been equally slanted away from crediting Mexican American writers of New Mexico for their accomplishments. Peoples brought

to New Mexico through government jobs, ill health, or social contacts in the Anglo-dominated institutions of the region, have not felt pressure to learn Spanish in a very long time. One of the results of the domination of the English language is that very few students of U.S. literature actually read Spanish-language cultural productions, much less acknowledging important developments in New Mexican hispanophone cultures.

Thus, writing in English gradually became the means by which Hispanos and Hispanas could participate in the construction of racial categories in the region; even then, few academics read their literary output in the same context as Lawrence or Cather. Satisfied that Chicano literature had started with the publication of José Antonio Villareal's *Pocho* in 1959, academic institutions could dismiss Chicano literary studies for lacking a rich enough field of study to make it an intriguing course for inquiry, thus allowing prejudice to reinforce prejudice. Chicano and Chicana literary scholars of the 1960's and 1970's were then charged with establishing their field, both in its heritage and its contemporary productions. The result of such efforts, the flowering of the field over the last four decades, has made the moment in which I am currently writing an exciting one in which to be a critic of New Mexican literature, as the life's work of a generation of scholars has become readily available over the course of the past few years. Scholars of my generation have the privilege of exploring these archives, assembled through years of effort and interpretation, and of producing a critical literature that expands the fields of Chicano studies and broadens the American literary canon. Vast archiving projects, like the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project at the University of Houston, have expanded the range of resources available to scholars of American Ethnic Studies exponentially since the 1990's. A project to digitize decades worth of Spanish-language newspapers is now coming to fruition, complementing A. Gabriel Meléndez's important history of Spanish language press in New Mexico, *So All*

*is Not Lost*. The archival works of scholars like Meléndez, Francisco Lomelí, Tey Diana Rebolledo, Teresa Márquez, Antonio Márquez, and Genaro Padilla have allowed us to place the movements of the 1960's and 1970's in their proper literary and political contexts. This is a moment of vital importance, because these archives allow us to finally observe the larger picture of how Mexican American culture developed alongside the broader currents of American culture. Of equal importance, we can finally begin to observe how Mexican Americans, though marginalized in American histories of politics and art, helped both to shape the American Modern and to disassemble it.

The Hispano or Hispana writer who frames him or herself thusly has become, for critics, something of a dilemma. Nieto-Phillips explains:

Since the appearance of [George I. Sánchez's] *Forgotten People*, Mexican American scholars have, for the most part, regarded Spanish American ethnicity with apprehension, often viewing it as the basis of an assimilationist ideology that has always stood inimical to Mexican American interests and, more recently, Chicana and Chicano consciousness (3).

Representative of this perspective is the historical work of Rodolfo Acuña, who condemns what he frames as the claim of Spanish identity as a rationalization for turning a collective back on the rest of the Mexicanos in the United States. "By their denial of their heritage," Acuña writes, "New Mexicans thought that they could escape discrimination and become eligible for higher paying jobs" (49). He argues that in the wake of the failure of New Mexicans to overthrow the American occupation at the Bent's Fort rebellion on January 19, 1847, New Mexican *ricos* colluded with criminal political rings in Santa Fé to control the political and agricultural bases of the region. Now, his major source on the docility of New Mexicans in this matter is Fray Angélico Chávez, an archivist whose credibility will be the concern of Chapter 2 of this project. Acuña's work



here is representative of a general mistrust of New Mexican political formations, in that their claims on European ancestry represent a betrayal of the ideals of the nationalism of mestizaje, *la raza cósmica*.

Acuña's assessment of New Mexican political history has been influential in the field of Chicano literary criticism. Ramon Saldívar's chapter on Rudolfo Anaya in *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* relies entirely on Acuña's formation of New Mexico in order to condemn Anaya as a fantasist. Saldívar writes that

Far from an idyllic reenactment of a Golden Age, life in the pueblos was patriarchally rigid and organized along definite class lines. A few rich families owned large tracts of land and exploited their fellow villagers and the native American Indians (117-8).

Having condemned Anaya tidily with a history in turn based in the writings of Fray Angélico Chávez, Saldívar states:

... Chicano narrative... does not reduce to a single ideological formation. Nor may its narratives all be read as local expressions of one master narrative, even when they function under comparable forms of romance and fantasy (131).

Of course, the problem here is that Saldívar's formation does reduce Chicano narrative to a single, localizable master narrative. This master narrative does not accommodate well with the idea that people of Mexican American descent pursued political agency before the 1950's, and that the political movements of the 1960's and 1970's were in some ways repetitions of the previous manifestations of ethnic American political movements. That the Chicano movement might in some ways repeat the errors of earlier movements, especially in the suppression of complications on the master narrative seems to trouble Saldívar's account. While we will later discuss his specific condemnations of Anaya, it seems worthwhile to point out that Saldívar's impression of New Mexico is informed by

an anxiety about the significance of New Mexico's history of political and cultural activity.

This anxiety about New Mexican cultural formation seems to have become the widely accepted, shorthand version of New Mexican cultural history. Thus, it was possible for Héctor Calderón to write, as late as 2004, that

Before the contemporary Chicano period, a regional New Mexican literary tradition developed out of Anglo-American cultural hegemony and, in some instances, out of the complicitous relations of older Hispanic elites with newly arrived Easterners. After New Mexico achieved statehood in 1912, a set of discursive and cultural practices were set in motion by native writers and scholars which were marked by an emphasis on a beautiful, empty landscape, folkloric customs and religious rituals, aristocratic pretense, and an idyllic "Old Spain in Our Southwest" to the exclusion of the real historical and social conditions of the majority of New Mexicans (*Narratives* 34).

These kinds of overgeneralizations flatter us in the contemporary period, soothing us that in 2004 we are much smarter than our forebears, since we couldn't possibly confuse our historical claims with the things that we assume and want to hear reflected back to us. While in broad strokes this statement is true, it does the unfortunate work of reducing the actors in the process to a dichotomy: the quislings, and the subaltern. To remove these actions from the contexts of the political struggles in which they occurred, is to fail to recognize the bitterness with which this unsatisfactory compromise may have been reached, or the ugliness of other possible outcomes. Or as Genaro Padilla eloquently put it:

So, our *antepasados*... were not fools. There are moments of recognition throughout their work when with profound clarity, they voice their understanding of the social predicament in which they found themselves: they knew they were engaged in a battle for social, cultural, and linguistic survival, they understood the condescending rhetoric that daily glossed the material displacement to which they were subject, and they understood the sociodiscursive power that shaped and perpetuated a racial romance around them. Consequently, when they did speak in the public realm, they spoke their resistance through the master romance of the colorful Spanish past... The discourse of the Spanish colonial period provided a

means for authorizing “native” status even though the authorizing apparatus was a parcel of historical distortions... (223).

Padilla is the first critic to recognize that the rhetoric of Spanishness is part of a broader political conversation. However, in my opinion, his account is something of an overcorrection. For Padilla, this isn’t just a moment in which our ancestors make political statements, but a moment when our ancestors paradoxically parrot our late twentieth century political statements. The critic does need to carefully traverse the line between rejecting one’s forbears for not being us, and projecting ourselves and our anachronistic concerns onto them.

The intervention that I will make in this dissertation owes much of its scope and exigency to work done under the auspices of the University of Houston’s Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. The work of this group of scholars has truly expanded the range of materials available to literary scholars, and panel discussions at their annual conference. This project, however, would not fit comfortably under the auspices of the Recovery Project. My ambition here is to show how contemporary authors engage in similar struggles to their predecessors, and how in confronting shared problems such as the Spanish Heritage, contemporary authors reproduce and remake their literary heritage. In this project, I will forgo the attempt to distill an essential New Mexican author or text from my readings, mindful of Gayatri Spivak’s declaration in her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* of the death of the “Native Informant” as a useful subject position. Searching out and declaring an ideal “Native Author” could only frustrate the task of commenting on New Mexico’s overwhelmingly diverse ranges of ethnicity, politics and opinion. As Spivak puts it

...an ethnicity untroubled by the vicissitudes of history and neatly accessible as an object of investigation is a confection to which the disciplinary pieties of the anthropologist, the intellectual curiosity of the early colonials and the European

scholars partly inspired by them, *as well as* the indigenous elite nationalists, by way of the culture of imperialism, contributed their labors, and the (proper) object (of investigation) is therefore “lost” (60, author’s own emphasis).

In order to avoid these pitfalls in creating a useful field in which to discuss literary constructions of New Mexico, we have to reconsider basic assumptions. What categories are usually accepted as given? Where do we find ostensibly opposed authors making unexpected collusions? This approach to regional literatures, while freeing us from the trophy hunt for the ultimate New Mexican, acknowledges that talking about local literature does the work of allowing the individual to understand his or her existence within a global context, and to make sense of the workings of global power and capital in everyday lives.

For a model of New Mexicanness, we must turn away from the idea that it is possible or even desirable to find a native informant, or to draw on a map where New Mexico ends and the rest of the world begins. In an effort not to reproduce the errors of the American Regionalist schools of literary criticism, I will avoid defining the place in terms of geography, phenotypes, or social organizations, since the paragon of all things New Mexican will always recede before us. Instead, I borrow from Stewart a means of discussing how literature and expressive culture define the place, rather than the other way around. Stewart writes that, “It is not lived experience which literature describes, but the conventions for organizing and interpreting that experience, conventions that are modified and informed by each instance of the genre. She continues,

Descriptions must rely upon an economy of significance which is present in all of culture’s representational forms, an economy which is present in all of culture’s

representational forms, an economy which is shaped by generic conventions and not by aspects of the material world itself. While our awe of nature may be born in the face of her infinite and perfect detail, our awe of culture relies upon hierarchical organization of information, an organization which is shared by social members and which differs cross-culturally and historically. Not our choice of subject, but our choice of aspect and the hierarchical organization of detail, will be emergent in and will reciprocally effect the prevailing social construction of reality. As genres approach "realism," their organization of information must clearly resemble the organization of information in everyday life. Realistic genres do not mirror everyday life; they mirror its hierarchization of information. They are mimetic in the stance they take toward this organization and hence are mimetic of values, not of the material world. Literature cannot mime the world; it must mime the social. It cannot escape history, the burden of signification borne by language before literature takes it up (26).

These economies of significance are shaped by history, as well as social realities. However, the currency of these economies is in expressive documentation, something that only occurs at some significant remove from historical and social events. Narrative therefore becomes primarily a vehicle for nostalgia, a longing for the moment in which there is no gap between the event and its articulation. At the same time, narration cannot escape the historical and social circumstances that shape it, for it is comprised of the values and priorities of that organize the day-to-day life of the narrator. Literary expressions offer the opportunity for us to define what it is to be New Mexican, not by criterion of birthplace, race, or gender, but by recognizing shared economies of significance, instances in which mutual interest in subjects and themes binds authors together as companions to one another, fellow travelers in a familiar land.

Of all the values that shape discourse in New Mexico, White Supremacy is one that ought never be far from our assessments as fundamental to the formation of New Mexican letters. Since the Compromise of 1850, when the status of New Mexico as a slavery territory separate from Texas was settled, anxieties about the racial composition of the United States and miscegenation have shaped the ways in which New Mexicans

see themselves via the ways in which they present themselves to others. Subject to the vicissitudes of that most changeable of language genres, treaty law, New Mexicans of all backgrounds were forced by doctrines of social Darwinism and Manifest Destiny to demonstrate their willingness to be ruled and to adapt to entirely new systems of value and law. That some peoples refused this, including groups of Apache, Comanche, Taoseños of all backgrounds during the uprising at Bent's Fort, and armed bands like Las Gorras Blancas, prompted violent, often genocidal responses from federal law enforcement who acted with impunity (cite source). See, for an example, the actions of Kit Carson, who commandeered an expedition to pacify the Navajo, which ended in the massacre of women and children in Cañon de Chelly in 1863 (Sálaz Márquez 182). One can observe in the works of Lummis and his contemporaries a certain rigid and self-affirming cultural formation taking place: the Tri-Cultural Model. This model drew bright, heavy lines between communities of Native Americans and Hispanos, groups that had previously intermarried and cooperated almost as much as they had struggled against each other for the meager resources of the upper Rio Grande valley. Where there had once been a mutual history that ranged from shared agricultural practices to wars and mass abduction, there was now imposed a vision of a peaceable kingdom, three artificially defined races who lived in harmony under the watchful, wise eye of the Anglo.

Yet while the boundaries drawn between Hispanos and Native Americans are not natural, they are also not insignificant. In his book *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920*, Pablo Mitchell demonstrates that racing bodies became an active process with the arrival of the railroad in 1880. In order to distinguish themselves from the locals, Anglos began to type and group the peoples that they encountered as they stepped out of the depot. Native Americans found

themselves caught in the less than tender mercies of the reservation system, with every aspect of their lives open for scrutiny by colonial administrators who hoped to facilitate the Dawes Act's goal of transforming native peoples into deracinated farmers by educating their children to think of themselves as unclean and undisciplined. Thus, generations of Native Americans saw their children transported to Indian Schools as near as Albuquerque and Santa Fé, and as far away as Lawrence, Kansas, and Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Circumstances such as this have shaped the ways in which many Native Americans view themselves in relationship to the government, to their families, and significantly to the work at hand, to their Hispano neighbors. I would argue that there can exist between Hispanos and Native Americans in New Mexico a vague resentment, a historical memory fraught with anger and the knowledge that sanctioned histories do not acknowledge that a history that excludes Anglos can exist. Thus, comparing the burdens that Native Americans have endured compared to Hispanos can turn petty very quickly; Native Americans complain that Hispanos were much too eager to whitewash themselves in the wake of the Mexican-American War. Hispanos, on the other hand, complain that they have no federal beauracracy looking out for their interests, and that Anglo prejudices and hungers for noble savagery have done far more to protect Native American interests than any amount of whitewashing could do. Personally, I find the entire premise of the argument to be completely dispiriting, except in one aspect: as New Mexicans, we continue to teach ourselves about race, we continue to argue. Once, in the seventh grade, I was taken to task by one of my fellow students, a young woman from Cochiti Pueblo who rightly told me off for trying to pass off a report derived from High Modernist ethnography of Sandia Pueblo as an actual report on Native American belief systems. From our childhoods on, New Mexicans are taught that race is not an answer, but a

problem for Anglos, Native Americans, and Hispanos of working out how to fit into a hopelessly racist ideal.

So, as we embark upon the task of reading New Mexican literature, we are presented with certain tasks. One of these tasks is to fail, visibly, to recreate the ideal of the Tri-Cultural Myth; this involves resisting the urge to appear racially balanced by speaking of Anglo, Native American, and Hispano authors separately. This partly means that a major flaw in my dissertation should be readily apparent: none of the authors that I present in this work are tribally-affiliated Native Americans. I shouldn't try to justify this lack, but by way of explanation I would say that I worried too much that my friends and neighbors from pueblos and reservations would find a too-easy conflation of Hispano and Native American concerns presumptuous. If instead I had optioned to offer only one or two texts for examination, by way of offering a contrast, I worried that these texts would act as camouflage. I worried that I would be using these authors to give myself and my work the appearance of comprehensiveness, a lie that would offer my work a glamour of completeness that would serve to reinstate the Tri-cultural model as the organizing principle of race in New Mexico. So, I offer this picture of New Mexican literature as incomplete, indefensibly lacking. And as I did back in the seventh grade, I offer to you my willingness to be told off, and educated again, in hopes that in hindsight I will be able to get it right.

Replacing the Tri-Cultural model does present the danger that the significant presences of Native American peoples will be erased in this portrait of New Mexico. But it also offers the opportunity to denaturalize the perceived characteristics that are imposed upon each group. In his book, Mitchell reveals the ways in which whiteness must naturalize itself by using Native American and Hispano bodies as "proof of their



supposed inferiority to Anglos” (122). However, Mitchell argues that due to patterns of consumption that made it possible to contain and control bodies, that

Even under the most stable conditions, the emerging Anglo/Hispano order in New Mexico, exemplified by the shared white bodies of elite Hispanos and Anglos, took a great deal of work to maintain. Unruly folks (bourgeois women, poor Hispanos, Indians, African Americans, prostitutes) at times proved far more “gauzy” than New Mexico’s colonial order could fully contain or adequately tuck in. Physical bodies, the foundation of the search for racialized order, served simultaneously as the focus of anxiety as well as the stage for occasional small acts of resistance (173).

The Tri-Cultural model is just such an effort to “tuck in” some inconvenient facts of race in New Mexico, mostly that this is a context where the dichotomy of White: Not White will not serve to describe the facts on the ground, nor facilitate the incorporation of a large population into the habits of American capital. It was possible to maintain this dichotomy when gazing upon the Native American, to “other” the Pueblo, and to ascribe to it, as D.H. Lawrence did, all the characteristics that European civilization suppresses. That the Modernist gaze upon the primitive (in discussions of Gauguin, Picasso, Lawrence, O’Keefe) and the incorporation of primitive imagery into European art forms was a means for these artists to break the boundaries of their respective arts is by now practically a cliché; what the Tri-Cultural model represents is an effort to contain and naturalize a tension between the primitive and the civilized. Or, in Stewart’s words, “In order to awaken the dead, the antiquarian must first manage to kill them” (143). American rhetoric towards Native Americans has long leaned towards an oversimplified account of complete annihilation, an effort that they could extend towards the Hispano if only it were possible to define what a Hispano is.

Hispanos, in the bodies and in their cultures, represent the greatest threat to racial purity: miscegenation. The unruly body of the Hispana, often marked socially by her sexual comportment, then becomes an immediate threat to the stability of this strange,

unbalanceable attempt to enforce and naturalize white supremacy. While some, like Mabel Dodge Luhan, minimized the problem of Hispanos in New Mexico by ignoring them, the problem remained that a population as large as New Mexico's Hispanos (contrasted to the easily overwhelmed population of Californios) could not be simultaneously ignored and subdued. Now, whereas in Eurocentric terms Native Americans could be figured as romantic, Noble Savages, mestizos were often figured as the Wild Man, undisciplined, crafty, and predatory. Arnoldo De León's *They Called them Greasers* demonstrates how in Texas, in the absence of a large population of sedentary Native Americans, a tidy dichotomy between Anglo civilization and Mexican savagery could be used to impose segregation and discrimination in a relatively short period of time. New Mexico, however, presented the difficulty of housing two separate and relatively distinct groups to subjugate. The emergence of the image of Native American as Noble Savage was a flattering reflection on what it is to be European; the Hispano then presented a dour warning of what it meant to relinquish whiteness. Oddly enough, this attitude, while perhaps useful in a military context, proved unsuitable for anyone possessing political or commercial ambitions in the wake of the establishment of the Territorial government in 1850. Thus, the awkward effort to produce a racial category that was "not White" and "not Indian," and to behave as if this supplement to hierarchies of race in the United States was not only unusual, but also an indicator of harmony and good.

John Nieto-Phillips' work demonstrates how eager New Mexico Hispanos were to aid in the creation of this new category, but also how they used the conventions of white supremacy and Darwinism to aid their efforts to expand their rights and protect their property. From the late nineteenth century, during the struggle for New Mexican statehood, Hispanos made use of the racist vocabularies, particularly the designation of

themselves as “Spanish.” That this moniker does not accurately describe the Hispano peoples of New Mexico has been a source of constant debate for the past century, a debate which has always threatened to undermine the Tri-Cultural Model. Even using the term threatens to mark the user as deceptive and toadying, a body that truly blurs boundaries through dishonest presentation of self. The unruliness of the Hispana body reveals the fragility of racial hierarchies as a whole, and undermines the naturalization of rigid social and racial structures.

So to return to the problem of the MOIFA scandal, we have two cases in which cultural institutions are making claims about this undefinable body, the Hispana. The Church claims her for tradition, ascribing to her characteristics of sexual continence, docility, and static silence. Contrast that to the Museum’s “Lady,” who represents the kind of freedom of choice, liberty of sexual mores, and glorification of art that one can find in MOIFA’s “Neutrogena Wing,” a convenient walk away from the Hispanic Heritage Wing, and the gift shop. This “Lady” is the paragon of the consumerist use of the Hispana body, an opportunity to use imposed racial categories to advertise ideas about bodily hygiene and build brand loyalty. The church bids us to observe her obedience, the museum bids us to regard her as exciting and new. As one of those Hispanas who obeys only with the greatest resentment and reluctance, and who can’t remember the last time she was exciting, new, or clean, I must say that seeing these figures that I was meant to aspire to embody was, to say the least, unnerving. As a body, one only ever exists in these categories imperfectly, if at all. From this encounter with this unusually clear encounter with this dilemma, I took this: that Hispanas and Hispanos in New Mexico are presented with a choice, to mutilate oneself to fit into these imposed categories, or to endure the consequences of the fact that the person one is mutilates the category in return. Thus, we see the importance of reading literatures of and about

Hispanas and Hispanos in New Mexico: they do not complement Anglo or Native American Literature, but they call into question the possibility and the benefits of maintaining racial categories in the first place.

One can see such a dilemma played out through a century of Hispano and Hispano-themed literature from New Mexico. It is not Spanishness, or indigeneity, or geographic determinism that makes an author New Mexican, but the work of these factors within a shared “economy of significance,” a place where racial markers are unusually unstable, where the individual can threaten the entire racial status quo. Reflecting on the idea that narrative is a structuring of desire and memory, we can envision the roles that Hispano and Hispana authors played in creating narratives of New Mexican histories. The desires of these authors, to provide unmarked identities for New Mexicans, to preserve claims to lands and homes, to claim cultural authority and even to make claims to dominance at the expense of others, are all reflected in the literature that I present in the following pages. In order to discover the currencies of these “economies of significance,” I will resist the idea that any one author can in him or herself act as a paragon of an entire people. Currency is the object of conflict and exchange, after all, so it stands to reason that there will always be conflicting and complementary claims made to its cultural equivalent. Therefore, each of the following chapters will stage arguments and conversations between two authors, texts that on first glance would not appear to be particularly relevant to each other. The goal of this exercise is to use conflicts and collusions as indicators of cultural values. In doing so, we will be able to see more clearly the characteristics of a New Mexican “economy of significance,” and observe where this economy is absorbed by greater U.S. and international economies of meaning, allowing the localized system to expose the exchanges and transformations of significance that occur in the act of colonization.

The first chapter, “The Tourists,” is a direct examination of the kinds of exchange that occur in the act of transforming local cultures into souvenirs. This chapter, a side-by-side examination of Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Ana Castillo’s *So Far From God*, looks at how the later text works to reinforce and reinscribe the prejudices and errors of the earlier text. Primarily, I show how both Cather and Castillo reproduce images of New Mexico that are gleaned from resources made available to tourists—a New Mexico seen through car outings, promotional pamphlets, tourist traps, and books found in hotel waiting rooms. These images are of New Mexico at its extremes, rendering Hispano men as anxiety-provoking, uncontrollable libidos and Native Americans as landscape. This comparison reveals what New Mexico does offer to the touristic newcomer: a vacation from capitalism, an opportunity to purchase pastoral idyll at the expense of the locals. Most notably, what really pairs these authors is their liberty to leave and to take their collectible New Mexico with them.

The second chapter, “The Priests,” is an examination of the works of two authors, Rudolfo Anaya and Fray Angélico Chávez. Grouping these two authors together would probably dismay them both, considering their diametrically opposed opinions on matters of mestizaje and syncretic religious practices. Chávez, during his lifetime, was a Franciscan priest, an upright defender of the faith. During his career, he was known to have called Native American religious practices paganism, and as a mission priest he threatened his Pueblo congregants with hellfire should they not relinquish their traditional spiritual practices. As the archivist for the Archdiocese of Santa Fé, he was a major proponent of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, and he published his opinion that New Mexican Hispanos are the direct descendents of one of the lost tribes of Israel. He used this claimed position of racial purity as a high ground from which to harangue the Anglo and Hispano elite to recognize the importance of preserving Hispano cultural autonomy

and traditions, but at the cost of casting racist aspersions on Native Americans and Mexican nationals. Rudolfo Anaya, in contrast, has throughout his career embraced the *mestizaje* in his background, and through his work celebrated the commingling of European and American religious practices. Anaya's work would appear to be a direct repudiation of Chávez's, which it is, in many ways. However, Anaya too marks off for his own version of the poet/activist as priest, a similar authority to what Chávez reserves for himself. Therefore, both authors are tangled and implicated in the responsibilities and failures of the priesthood, most importantly in its tendency to monologia, and secondarily in a readiness to indulge in misogyny and homophobia.

The third chapter, "The Dramatists," pairs another two seemingly incompatible authors. Leading from the discussion of priestly misogyny in chapter two, this chapter seeks to examine how New Mexico Hispanas, doubly marked by gender and race, use literature to claim space and authority in a rigidly hierarchical setting. Cleofas Jaramillo, who lived through the statehood struggles of the early twentieth century, later wrote rambling memoirs of her life before the collapse of her family's agricultural powerbase. As the founder of the Sociedad Folklórica, Jaramillo could be accused of helping to establish the Spanish Fantasy heritage, were she more capable of covering her tracks; as it is, her work reveals a continued fascination with the trappings and powers of the theater and the potential for theatrical performance to facilitate the cultivation of political power. Denise Chávez, an author not yet born until several years after Jaramillo's death, would also seem to repudiate her predecessor in New Mexican letters. As an accomplished author of fiction, her work presents extended mediations on the humiliations and glories of possessing a policed body. Chávez, who was a dramatist before she turned to writing fiction, writes protagonists whose lives are informed with the knowledge of how the skills of theater can facilitate both personal and cultural survival. So, although the texts

of these authors are often in disagreement on matters of religion, morality, and how women ought to comport themselves, one can recognize between them a genealogy, a recognition across generations of the difficulties of being a woman in New Mexico, and shared strategies for coping with them.

The fourth and final chapter, “The Locals,” turns from the problem of temporality to the problem of space; namely, how do you claim nativity and investment in a land where you were not born? This chapter confronts two complementary problems in contemporary New Mexico. First is the problem of the multitudes of newcomers who came to New Mexico over the course of the twentieth century, seeking a place in which their life’s work and their beliefs could converge. Among these authors, John Nichols has consistently exhibited a political consciousness that is singularly focused on protecting the rights of indigenous populations, which is reflected in his fiction through his familiarity with local land conflicts and his apparent regard for his Hispano and Native American neighbors. Contrast to this perspective that of Nash Candelaria, a representative of another New Mexican issue, the brain drain of talented Hispanos and Hispanas to other states such as Texas and California. Candelaria’s version of being a local is mediated through interfamilial squabbles, and the transmission of family history from one generation to the next. Reading Nichols with Candelaria, one recognizes the limitations of measuring claims to local-ness in terms of nativity and real estate holdings. This last chapter reframes the issue of being “from there” as one of possessing the stories that can undermine and alter standard U.S. accounts of race, gender, and conquest.

The title of this work, *Land of Enchantment, Land of Mi Chante*, is in part inspired by a t-shirt sold at the Barelás Coffee House in Albuquerque. This play on the state motto, along with the ever-popular “Land of Entrapment,” reveals a general desire on the part of New Mexicans of all backgrounds to uncrown the terms under which we

are all grouped together. In the following pages, I hope to provide some clues to a much more usable way of creating a community than has been made available before, through the real estate and tourist industries and the much-bemoaned Tri-Cultural model. For the model I envision is one of communal grappling, a continued argument that makes our self images actually adapt to the peoples that we are becoming. It is my hope that the following pages demonstrate that it is this debate, this argument, that allows us to recognize our home, “our chante,” as the place where our togetherness is defined by our need to get it right. In that spirit, I recognize the limitations of my project, and that some important authors (Sabine Ulibarrí, Frank Waters, and Leslie Marmon Silko, among many others) are indeed missing from my construction. It is not my hope to have the last word on what it is to be a New Mexican, or even a New Mexican Hispana. What I hope these pages provide is a new beginning in this ongoing argument, a provocation of sorts. What I fondly hope is that my readers take what I have offered, and build something even larger and more beautiful with it.



## **Chapter One:**

### **The Tourists: Willa Cather and Ana Castillo**

In most places in New Mexico I am a tourist, but few places clarify this identity like Sky City, Ácoma Pueblo. I have only visited once, in a large group that included family and family friends who were actually from Laguna Pueblo. Since Laguna and Ácoma are two towns in the same Pueblo group, our friends offered us the opportunity to visit Sky City without signing up for the standard tour, but as invited guests. Instead of being driven to the top of Sky City's mesa, we would simply climb its famous ladder, and then be led around by people with real insider knowledge. At the base of the ladder, our hosts' daughters showed our cousin how to make an excellent slide of a large slab of rock by spreading dust on it to make it more slippery. All the way up and down the ladder, we were constantly outpaced by old women and small children, who had urgent business at the top or the bottom, and who waited for us to pass with varying degrees of patience. The ladder is actually more like a very steep staircase, with handholds worn into the rock and landings that let you stop and wait for others to pass; carved deep into the rock, the ladder is also shady and cool. At the top, you climb out into astonishing blond sunshine, and the vista of the landscape around you expands to the horizon on all sides of you. It was here, at the top of the ladder that we found out that we were in trouble. It was against the Pueblo's rules for us to be up there, looking around, and to not pay for and take the standard tour. We would have to pay the fee, and join a tour that would commence in a few minutes.

What could we do? We paid the fee, and joined the tour, a little chastened for having cost our family friends time and perhaps embarrassment. But as it turned out, the

tour was edifying, even if it was delivered by the most bored tour guide I have ever seen give a rote and memorized speech. If she was bored, it was because she'd heard our questions a hundred times or more, and was prepared to answer them quickly and precisely. Our family friends supplemented the speeches with small asides about their family histories, and technical explanations of the difficulties of living atop the mesa, such as the problem of keeping the cistern full during drought or housing growing families in such a small space. At the end of the tour, we stood by a table where two women were setting up a table for selling their pottery. I asked them how they polished them to such a fine shine, and the potters gladly showed me. That our status as tourists had been clarified by the purchase of tickets actually made it easier for us to do what we had originally come to do: take pictures, ask nosy questions, and gawk. And people who might have been obliged to treat us as friends, even if distant friends, went about their business as artists, promoting their craft to potential buyers. As a tourist, I enjoyed myself, learned some things. The label of "tourist" did little to impede on our enjoyment, and probably facilitated friendly interaction with Ácomans outside our circle of personal acquaintances.

I present this anecdote in a chapter on Willa Cather and Ana Castillo for two purposes. First, I would like to underscore that anything that I have to say on the subject of Ácoma or Laguna is probably as unsophisticated and colored by poor short-term memory as any of the writings that I am about to discuss. Second, the role of tourist is often adopted with a great deal of shame and more often disguised with titles like "traveler," "visitor," "flaneur," and "anthropologist." Yet, it is actually a useful position from which to understand the complex of meanings that are at the heart of modern culture. My approach follows Dean MacCannell's observation that:

*...sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society.* Sightseeing is a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, incorporating its fragments into unified experience. Of course, it is doomed to eventual failure: even as it tries to construct totalities, it celebrates differentiation (13).

MacCannell later explains that

When tradition, nature and other societies... are transformed into tourist attractions, they join with the modern social attractions in a new unity, or a new universal solidarity, that includes the tourist (83).

For these reasons, MacCannell describes tourism and its institutions as ideal positions from which to examine and ethnographize modernity. Tourist culture, in its components that please and discipline both seer and seen, provides a totalizing narrative of modernity. In that this narrative can be both ruptured and enhanced by the promise of the backstage tour, makes the element of differentiation both the siren call of the tourist experience and its downfall. Ácomans provide an excellent example of the kind of tourist site described by MacCannell, complete with work displays and carefully policed boundaries between the face the Pueblo presents to visitors and its backstage. Ácoma itself also provides a good point of departure, given its prominence in much of the travel literatures of New Mexico, its centrality to Native American resistance to colonialism, and its continued engagement with the problems of colonialism's aftermath (see Michael Trujillo or John Nieto-Phillips for more on this dynamic).

Our family friends, on that day, had offered us a true glimpse of the "real" Ácoma; that they were prevented from doing so indicated to me at the time that the people of Laguna and Ácoma Pueblos were active participants in the shaping of the pueblo's image. This shaping would surely disappoint an aboriginophile. On that day we witnessed the machinery of bureaucracy and tourist commerce interrupting our intentions to look around within the context of a friendly visit. Our family's hosts also made a point

of retelling to us the reason that there is a hole in the wall of the graveyard in front of Ácoma's impressive church, remodeled by John Gaw Meem in the 1920's (Wilson 238). Our hosts explained that in order to buy a bell for the church, the mission priest sold five girls and five boys into slavery in the interior of Mexico. The hole remains in the wall in order to permit their wandering souls re-entry, should they find their way home after all these years. The loss of these youngsters still marked the tellers, as it marks the wall; our consistently bored tour guide was suddenly aggrieved and angry at this portion of the tour, and our friends' voices caught with a residual sadness in the retelling of it. The hole in the wall referred to a long and troubled relationship between these pueblos and the colonial towns that sprang up in the surrounding country over the course of four centuries. A New Mexico local visiting now might read this hole as part of an ongoing discussion about colonialism in the state, as manifested on the faces of monuments, as in the case of defooting of the statue of Oñate (Nieto-Phillips 211). Yet, the focus of our attentions seemed to stray so often from things that our hosts wanted us to see, and toward the ominous break between the houses that led straight to the cliffs and then a precipitous drop. For tourists like us, the site of visual fascination seemed to be elsewhere: the cliff on the opposite side. The cliff face represents to tourists the unreachability of Sky City, the barrier between this strange place and the familiar world that can only be traversed through suicidal gestures. As an outsider at Ácoma, I asked if there was a reason why this cliff face was left vacant—weren't the residents afraid of falling off? And my host responded, a little amused, that this cliff is the place from which the residents threw away their garbage. I don't know if this cliff carries further significance among the peoples of Ácoma. I can't remember if this is the cliff from which you can see across the plain to the Haunted Mesa. And I don't know what lies beneath it, because I was too afraid to get close to the edge.

What I do know is that literary representations of Ácoma focus on these cliffs, almost to the entire neglect of the town's other characteristics (the hole in the wall, the shapes of the houses, the road that now travels up the opposite side of the mesa). has appeared in literary descriptions of Ácoma since Gaspar Perez de Villagr  described Spanish adventurers making a miraculous leap from the top, and then returning to destroy the town and massacre  coman men and boys. For Villagr , the cliffs represented the difficulties of the imperial task, the nefarious deeds of the recalcitrant locals, and the approval of a God who provided miraculous interventions on the empire's behalf brought them success in their siege of the stronghold.<sup>3</sup>

In twentieth century literary representations of  coma, the cliffs remain a major focus of careful description and fascination: both Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* feature falls from the pueblo's heights. That these cliffs make brief appearances in what appear to be dissimilar fictions might at first seem a very tenuous connection to make. However, that  coma and Laguna feature in these works only in an episodic fashion provides an important clue to the fundamental similarities between these novels and the focus of my analysis. I bring together these two authors, not based on the length of their stays in New Mexico, nor to disparage either author's interest or connections to the region. Rather, by comparing *Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Cather to *So Far From God* by Castillo I will demonstrate the importance of travel guide discourse for both works. Both of these novels --inferior productions from hands capable of better, in my opinion-- are written by authors with an impassioned interest in the region who lack either the willingness or the ability to make deep

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<sup>3</sup> It is worthwhile to note that Court of Phillip III disagreed with this conclusion, given that when Villagr  wrote *Historia de la Nueva Mexico*, he was banned specifically from the entirety of the Americas for these very actions, since members of his own expedition had brought charges against him for it in 1612 and 1613. When he was forgiven for his participation in the massacre decades later, he was given a government post in Guatemala, and died on the ship en route (*Historia de la Nueva Mexico*, xviii).

engagements with the places before them, the histories that are recounted to them, and the native artisans they observe at work. Both of these novels rely on scenic spots that have been previously packaged for tourists to set their scenes, and rely on a profusion of local types to populate the narrative (four priests in Cather, four sisters in Castillo). They also rely on market descriptions of the Penitente Brotherhood and their practices to bring titillation to their texts, and Penitentes in both of these texts are catalysts of major catastrophes.

These texts are linked by the kind of knowledges of New Mexico from which they are formed—broad, occasionally ecstatic, and for the most part, shallow. Both women, in their respective youths, were idealists and activists in charismatic social movements, Cather in the Progressive Movement in New York and Castillo in the Chicano Movement in Chicago. At the points in their lives when they came to New Mexico, these movements were past their apexes, with some of their accomplishments institutionalized to unrecognizability, but with others marginalized. In both cases, these authors were regarded as feminizing influences that reflected these movements' ebb<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Cather throughout her lifetime preferred the company of women, although her sexual preferences are still debated by the critics, and Castillo has openly stated her preference for women. Despite these preferences, both authors have been faulted for the dearth of

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<sup>4</sup> Consider, in regards to this assertion, the savaging of Cather's *One of Ours* by Ernest Hemingway, H.L. Mencken, and Sinclair Lewis (Lee 167-8). Christine Stansell observes that in the late teens and early twenties that the "depleting effect of feminization" was taken as fact, and that in response to the successes of Progressive Feminism and the anxieties provoked by the loss of a substantial portion of a generation of young men in the First World War, authors like Hemingway and John Reed reasserted the primacy of men and appropriated what they believed to be a "less troubled masculinity" by idealizing "the manhood of the proletariat" (270-1). Much of the criticism that Cather receives for writing *One of Ours* focuses not on the text, but on the fact that a woman is daring to write about war. This situation resonates with Castillo's assertion that "In the Chicano Movement men's regard for women's activism went from dominance to condescending tolerance to finally, resigned confusion if not, outright resentment" (*Massacre of the Dreamers* 93). For further readings on the use of sexist discourses as a response to setbacks in Civil Rights movement politics in the early 1980's, see Elizabeth Martinez' "Chingón Politics Die Hard," and the Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement."

respectful descriptions of lesbian partnerships in their works. One final link between their authors is that they share an urge to move, and much of their fictional output involves the activity of shuttling from town to town, state to state, country to country. Yet, even with these linkages, we must not forget that their visits to the region are separated by more than six decades, clearly suggesting an enduring touristic aura that appealed to both of these authors.

In New Mexico, there remain populations of Native Americans and Hispanos like the tour guides of Ácoma, who enforce their own rules and emphasise their own stories. While later chapters will discuss how Hispano authors struggled to either reinforce or alter similar boundaries, this chapter will focus on the tourist's pleasure: how within the license to play, authors can create and reinforce historical narratives, but also misperception and prejudice. The psychological/ geographical region of tourist play, described in an essay about *Ramona* tourism by Dydia DeLyser, is a major influence for these authors. DeLyser argues that the realm of touristic play permits wandering subjects the freedom to obey the urge to take and leave something behind, in the form of graffiti, scrapbooks, and souvenirs. DeLyser demonstrates that tourist activities are part of a powerful impulse to create a national consciousness that both assimilates and erases regional differences. That New Mexicans have felt the effects of that power, and experienced the ways in which tourism can alter community economies, has caused them to both aggressively reinforce the markers that define nativity and ethnicity and to produce caricatures of these same markers for tourist consumption. It is in this realm of play where tourists and locals meet and redefine nationalism and ethnic categories, although the results are often not what participants would expect.

In the following pages I will examine how both Cather and Castillo frame and present places and figures made familiar to a broader community through tourist culture.

The first section will provide a review of the critical life of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, in order to understand the enduring power of this text as well as some of its failings. Our focus will then shift to the later text, *So Far from God*, to relay some sense of this text's ambitions and limitations. Finally, I will revisit my introductory impressions of Ácoma, and the falls from the cliff that both authors describe, noting their similarities and differences. As an established tourist site that has developed well-policed boundaries over the years, its appearances in these novels provided a good jumping off point from which to examine affinities between these author's approaches to representing the cultures and peoples of New Mexico. This chapter will then proceed to read these authors' depictions of institutional churches, local types of men and women, travel in the state, and finally Penitentes, to observe the ways in which tourist gazes distort local culture. This chapter will conclude with a consideration of Cather and Castillo's mutual use of the unconsummable homosexual relationship as a feature of these novels, as an indicator of what Cather and Castillo's visions of New Mexico share.

#### **WILLA CATHER: IN THE IDYLL, THERE IS NO CARSICKNESS**

*Death Comes for the Archbishop* is unmistakably a Cather text in structure and prose style. Like *My Antonia*, the story begins with the journey of the central character into a wilderness, to live with strangers and build a new home, and to be both coarsened and refined in ways that he cannot anticipate. In an exclusive conclave in the Sabine Hills of Rome the archbishop, Jean Marie Latour, a fictionalization of Fr. Jean-Baptiste Lamy, is chosen in 1848 to serve the communities severed by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo from the Archdiocese of Durango. Cather eschews the opportunity to write an adventure story of Latour's arrival in his new parish, relegating stories of shipwreck, deserts, and recalcitrant Mexican priests to an aside that is artful in its appearance of carelessness. These mishaps are condensed into a few paragraphs, as Cather accents the



triumph of Latour's arrival in Santa Fé at the side of his loyal friend Father Joseph Vaillant, fictional counterpart to Lamy's companion Fr. Joseph P. Machebeuf, "claiming it for the glory of God" (20). Cather eschews straightforward narrative paths, and her book is neither a life history nor a collection of short stories. Each chapter represents an episode in Latour's long tenure first as Vicar Apostolic and then as Archbishop; how much time elapses between these episodes is unclear, but as these nine chapters are spread out over four decades (Cather notes that Latour's health fails in 1888 on page 269) it is reasonable to assume that a great deal of time passes in the meantime. Cather's de-emphasis of the importance of continuous narrative time calls attention to the poignance and mutability of the events in even a great man's life. In one chapter Latour is showing Father Vaillant the quarry from which his new cathedral will be built; and by the end of this chapter the narrator describes Vaillant as being long dead. Within this chapter churns the fundamental conflict of the novel, that having left his home and family to accompany his closest friend in a life of hardship and evangelism, Vaillant then proves unable to provide Latour with the exclusive companionship for which he longs. Latour's love for Vaillant is both the catalyst of Latour's journeys and his sacrifice to the construction of a new cathedral and a new church.

The purity and depth of this sacrifice make *Death Comes for the Archbishop* a romantic read; however, Cather is hopelessly out of her depth in matters of regional and apostolic history, since the absence of a correlation of scale between these personal sacrifices and the events that Cather herself unfolds around them wrecks the effect of seeing the events of history writ small on the lives that live it. In this novel, Cather makes the mistake of finding certain group of historical figures intriguing, and then forcing them into agreeability with minimal reference to the historical record.

Christopher Schedler asserts in an essay called “Writing Culture: Willa Cather’s Southwest” that our author

clearly articulates the differentially specific struggles of individual cultures against the forces of colonization... Thus the logic of difference, asserted throughout the novel, affirms the differentially specific cultural and historical contexts represented in the southwestern borderlands (122).

Schedler’s reading of this novel is an attempt to construct Cather as more culturally astute than the actual novel reveals her to be. In addition to Latour and Vaillant, we must now also consider the fictionalization of Kit Carson. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* presents all of these figures to a reading audience unfamiliar with the conflicts of the region, but does so in a fashion so patronizing to Native Americans and Hispanos and so laudatory of Carson, Lamy, and Machebeuf that this exposure does more to reinforce the reader’s preconceived ideas about native populations and the adventuring spirit of colonial and Church authorities. This novel did so much to obscure regional cultures under a rubric of the adventure of colonial domination, that it caused the sudden end of the friendship between Cather and Mary Austin, who objected strongly to it (Lee 263).

Ultimately, Schedler’s argument can’t cope with the inconsistencies and oxymorons of Cather’s authorial perspective; this failure is actually common to critics who want to grant Cather an interest in describing American ethnicity without recognizing the perpetuation of stereotypes in her work. Guy Reynolds reads other critics grappling with Cather’s inconsistencies, which he describes as an “increasing ‘gappiness’ as the texts move towards ever-increasing formal disintegration.” Following Cather’s own designation of the novel as “historical romance,” Reynolds describes her so-called Common Sense prose style, “metonymic, moving along a chain of inferable propositions,” used in the purpose of metaphor; that characters “grounded in historical

reality [are] pictured in a moment of extreme imaginative speculation” (153). Ultimately, for Reynolds, Cather’s formal play is the downfall of the novel:

Cather simultaneously envisages the history of the South-west as a matter of personalities and ideologies. It is possible to read the novel in either way, and finally one has to recognise the astigmatism of this text: Cather cannot quite focus her conflicting interpretations of American history (167).

Thus, Cather introduces Carson as “thoughtful and alert,” possessing a mouth of “singular refinement,” “reflective, a little melancholy—and something that suggested a capacity for tenderness.” Cather writes, “one felt in him standards, loyalties, a code which is not easily put into words but is instantly felt when two men who live by it come together by chance” (76). Hardly able to retract such a fawning description, Cather can only describe Carson’s integral role in the massacre of Navajo people in Canyon de Chelly as “misguided” (296). Her apologia for Carson, “a soldier under orders, and he did a soldier’s brutal work,” is a refusal to account in her text for the ambivalence produced by the personal attractions of the enforcers of colonial policy (297). Following Reynolds’ diagnosis of cultural astigmatism, we see how in the case of just one character, we witness Cather adopting a historical figure, blurring it with a romanticized idiom of Roosevelt-style strenuous masculinity, and ending with a figure both so idealized and so compromised that all that remains is that ambivalence, a sense of many impressions taken in too fast, presented undigested to audiences who were dazzled by the blurry newness of it all.

In their introduction to *Willa Cather and the American Southwest*, John N. Swift and Joseph R. Urgo describe “the focused intensity of her curiosity, her quick impassioned connectedness to people and places” (1-2). They describe Cather’s “literate tourism” as an urge to forge landmarks into landscape, and therefore into significant expressions of the souls of the country’s residents, ultimately including herself. They

situate Cather in Santa Fé in 1925, at La Fonda Hotel reading Father William Joseph Howlett's *Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf*. Their description of her "literate tourism" figures her as "ambitious and audacious," but following Reynolds I would add the word *disoriented* to this description. This characterization of the author echoes that of Judith Fryer, who quotes Cather commenting on the genre-confounding structure of the novel as saying, "The essence of such writing is not to hold the note, not to use an incident for all there is in it—but to touch and pass on" (42). Fryer concludes

Here in the vast desert spaces of the Southwest, journey and place meet to become legend. The journey of Willa Cather has been away from the "style markers" of the past; after her first experience in this felicitous space, and with each return, her task has been to simplify, to purify, to get back to the elemental form, the unfurnished space of "the novel démeuble" (46).

These assessments are complicated by Betsy Klimasmith's studies of Mary Austin's travels in New Mexico and Arizona, and the way that the automobile influenced the impressions that this generation of writers and artists developed of the region.

In "Naturist as Tourist: Mary Austin's "Automobile Eye View" in *The Land of Journey's Ending*," Klimasmith describes Austin's work as "a travel book that paradoxically makes tourism impossible" (55). Austin's work actively effaces the presence of roads that took her to the scenic places that she describes in her texts. Klimasmith comments:

Literally and symbolically modern, the car, like tourists it carried, raised questions about how to understanding place over time would change as new technologies transformed physical landscapes, methods of knowing the land, and notions of time itself (56).

As landscape is transformed into a passing blur, ordinarily long journeys collapse into the moment of encounter with scenery. Klimasmith envisions Austin as trapped in a paradox common among authors of her age, especially female authors: the automobile had for the first time freed women to explore the American west in relative independence, but at the

expense of depriving them of the intimate knowledge of landscapes that comes with extended, slow travel. Austin, privileging intimacy and familiarity with the surrounding environment, must then cultivate “Self-knowledge and imaginative power [in order to] counteract the blurred vision and decentered self that [she] associates with modernity” (58). In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* one can observe Cather in similar contortions—trains and roads appear in her text to herald the death of Latour, and the disappearance of the land that had both harbored him in his unification with divine and provided the barrier that separated him from his heart’s desire, the company and fellowship of Father Vaillant. However, the episodic nature of the text along with its tendency to revisit scenes made famous by the tourist industry make it reminiscent of a travel guide that, like Austin’s *Land of Journey’s Ending*, makes retracing the author’s trip impossible.

María Carla Sánchez observes how Cather attempts to cover her tracks in “Immovable: Willa Cather’s Logic of Art and Place.” Sánchez argues that as a francophile, Cather was inclined to see only European culture and art as truly durable and expansive, and New York as the only American conduit to that culture. Sánchez argues that far from changing her mind about American cultures, Cather’s travels and discoveries in the west hardened her opinions in her writings that only European culture could satisfactorily cope with the transformations of modernity. She quotes Cather criticizing the collection of Northern New Mexican religious statuary as an act that would denude these objects of their religious significance, and therefore of meaning. Sánchez observes that “in lamenting the pillaging of southwestern artifacts, Cather implies not only that the seemingly unspoiled should remain unspoiled, but that the pristine cannot accommodate transport” (120). In this estimation, New Mexican culture should therefore be left in an isolation that had long disappeared by the time of Cather’s appearance in

Santa Fé. For Cather to figure herself, via Archbishop Latour, as a protector and lover of New Mexican cultures and nature, she had to first figure it as weaker than dominant European culture, and then efface the modern tourist industries that make it possible to imagine herself as a discoverer.

Hermione Lee describes the novel as “history in the eye of God... a series of pictures all seen, in stasis, at the same time” (272). Lee’s assessment, however, does not allow that this matronising perspective towards what she perceived to be a weaker culture mirrored the attitudes of the collectors Cather herself criticized, in that it allowed her the authority to distinguish between pure and debased culture. Her novel is minimally furnished, but furnished from a store of plunder nevertheless, stories with a provenance that she refuses to provide. Like the car’s eye view, Cather’s protective stance towards her sources for *Death Comes for the Archbishop* allowed her to evade the fact that modernity had already touched her discoveries. Or as Susan Stewart put it, “Modernism’s suspicion of point of view can be seen as a critique of omniscience, but a critique rooted in a self-consciousness that proclaims the omniscience of its own ontology, its own history” (3). The text itself will continue to declare its own simplicity, its truthfulness to a place and time where higher bonds of love, faith, and devotion could form the center of a man’s life; it’s a pretty tableau, but it hides from us the fact that the furnishings, elegantly sparse though they may be, are of fraught and uncertain origins, a perfect example of Dean MacCannell’s staged event.

One thing that the blurring and simplification of local stories forces is that complex histories and conflicts will be reduced to dichotomous fables of good facing evil. Cather provides a villain in her fictionalization of Padre Martinez of Taos, a litany of American phobias about Mexicans. At one point, Father Latour bemoans his place in the diocese, complaining that, “The Indians traveled their old road of fear and darkness,

battling with evil omens and ancient shadows. The Mexicans were children who played with their religion” (212). While his own personal faith is renewed in the childlike devotions of Sada, he is embarrassed by the dramatic gestures of local priests and “gaudily decorated churches” (142). This embarrassment develops into disgust upon Latour’s arrival at the home of Padre Martinez:

Father Latour was told to consider the house his own, but he had no wish to. The disorder was more than his fastidious taste could bear. The Padre’s study table was sprinkled with snuff, and piled so high with books that they almost hid the crucifix behind it. Books were heaped on chairs and tables all over the house,-- and the books and the floors were deep in the dust of the spring sandstorms. Father Martinez’s boots and hats lay about in corners, his coats and cassocks were hung on pegs and draped over pieces of furniture. Yet the place seemed overrun by serving-women, young and old,-- and by large yellow cats with full soft fur, of a special breed apparently. They slept in the windowsills, lay on the well-curb in the *patio*; the boldest came, directly, to the supper table, where their master fed them carelessly from his plate. (144)

This passage, along with the bunch of women’s hair in the corner of his room, the remainder of “some slovenly female toilet,” tidily (of course) encapsulates American stereotype of the lazy, dirty, and bestial Mexican male (150). The presence of women in the priest’s house, giggling and sloppy, also inform the reader that sexual boundaries are not well policed here, which is confirmed by the fictional Martinez’s invocation of St. Augustine’s advice that it is better to sin than to burn (146).

In Latour’s observation of the dustiness of his house and the hopeless stupidity of the Martinez’ students, Cather writes Padre Martinez’s New Mexico as a place where Western knowledge and culture come to die and be buried. Father Latour’s mission in New Mexico is to counter the power of Martinez, and in this task Latour acknowledges the power of his opponent:

The Bishop had never heard the Mass more impressively sung than by Father Martinez. The man had a beautiful baritone voice, and he drew from a deep well of emotional power. Nothing in the service was slighted, every phrase and

gesture had its full value. At the moment of the Elevation *the dark priest* seemed to give his whole force, his swarthy body and all its blood, to that lifting-up. Rightly guided, the Bishop reflected, this Mexican might have been a great man. He was an altogether compelling personality, a disturbing, mysterious magnetic power. (151, my emphasis)

With this sublimated description of male erection encoded into an account of a religious ritual, there is no real mystery to the source of this Padre's power. Simply put, he's sexy. His ritual, far from celebrating the son of an abstract God's renunciation of the flesh, invigorates the host with his Lawrentian life force. The attractions of this "dark priest" stand in high contrast to Latour's beloved Vaillant (nicknamed *Blanchet*) in whom the virtues of self-abnegation and celibacy are embodied. In Martinez, Cather presents the object of the othering anxiety of early twentieth century tourists in the west, in their shock at discovering Mexicans in the United States. In order to draw a bright line around the category "American," Cather identifies those characteristics associated with "Europeanness"—knowledge, refinement, individuation and discretion, and provides us Latour as it's pinnacle. Latour becomes American by developing a sympathy for Native Americans in the person of Jacinto, and admiration for his pioneering neighbors in the person of Kit Carson. However, Padre Martinez exists in this text as one who bears the authority of European social hierarchy, but none of its values and behaviors. He cannot be innocent of cultural knowledge as Native Americans are perceived to be, and his debauchery is disgusting to the herald of European culture, the French priest. Cather's description of such a double digression is a textbook example of an American expression of the miscegenation anxiety inspired by the conquest of northern Mexico in the mid-Nineteenth century. In this novel, Latour's ultimate triumph over Martinez is made evident in the building of his Cathedral, through which Cather informs us that the savage outpost of Santa Fé has been reborn as truly American through the controlling intervention European knowledge that can shape American stones.



It is hardly surprising, then, that New Mexicans of all racial backgrounds have objected to Cather's portrayal of the region since its initial publication. E.A. Mares has devoted much of his career as a writer and scholar to countering Cather's defamation of Padre Martinez in historical essays and his one-man play, *I Returned and Saw Under the Sun*. Mares's work puts the conflicts between Lamy and Martinez in the context of the French post-Revolutionary backlash and Martinez's own training in Mexico within the milieu of Latin America's Bolivarian spirit of revolution. In New Mexico, far from the centers of power, local religious practices evolved as Hispanos and Pueblo peoples, sheltering against nomadic tribes, lived in close proximity out of necessity. Mares writes, "Life was far from idyllic, but in this most remote part of the Spanish Empire there was a kind of a social shelter for the evolution of distinct forms of communal sharing between peoples of different cultures" (21). Such complex social relationships between communities that both shared resources and fought bitterly over them, was in many ways too difficult for many Americans, accustomed to the brutal simplicity of Indian removal, to comprehend. From the first arrival of U.S. forces in the region, efforts were made to make fine distinctions between Indians and Mexicans and to separate their fates. Americans saw Mexicans as debased descendents of two cultures, European and American, unable to fully exist in either culture. Cather's unflattering portrayal of Padre Martinez and his household is generated by this common American perception of the Mexican as a savage body possessed of Spanish cunning.

The seeming beauty of Cather's vision, however, has proved hard for critics to put aside. Recall Swift and Uργο's delight at the thought of Cather's discovery of the life of Machebeuf in Santa Fé, and her so-called literate touring. Bette S. Weidman attempts to recuperate Cather at this juncture by contextualizing her discovery of Lamy's Midi-Romanesque Cathedral within the greater destruction of European cathedrals during the

First World War. Weidman writes that Cather's uncritical reading of Howlett's biography "doubtless related to her pleasure in locating a past epoch in which the recently threatened civilization was the conqueror" (60). Martinez's sin, in this evaluation, is that he withholds obedience, not recognizing "superior authority; they see the making of a new ethnicity as a loss" (53). But in Cather's carefully unfurnished account, real losses have been carefully removed from the scene with the distinct purpose of making local resistance to the French Bishop seem illogical, even perverse. Arguing that this book emerged from a longing inspired by these vestiges of nineteenth century clerical Eurocentrism does not excuse Cather's need to scrape Santa Fé clean of its complex history. This should in fact be a stinging indictment of Cather's project. Out of the failure of Europe, Cather nurses a miniature recreation of its destructive forces of colonialism, sectarian violence, and rigid social hierarchy.

Reynolds reads into the "open paratactic form" of this novel some of the fundamental dilemmas in Cather's progressive ideals. The paratactic text, which presents an open-ended, non-hierarchical story that refuses the easy connections of standard historiography, but it also often refuses to make historical stances. Thus, Reynolds writes, "Faced with the jostling, contradictory benefits of American progress, Cather favoured narrative structures which revealed ideological tensions but refused to work out solutions to these dilemmas" (173). While I agree with Reynolds that this is an evasive text, I do not think that it is as evasive as Cather might have hoped. To echo Stewart, suspicion of omniscience does not make Cather's perspective any less rooted in the prejudices and presumptions of her times. Cather's New Mexico is very much a reflection of racial and social hierarchies at turn of the century Santa Fé, and the overly-simplified stories that allowed the city elite to view themselves as the saviors of the cultures that they were purchasing one artifact, song, and folk story at a time.

## POOR NEW MEXICO<sup>5</sup>

With authors of Cather's generation, scholars of Santa Fé's history of literary representation are then faced with a fundamental mismatch between what the author seeks to capture and her methods of capture. Like so many artists in Santa Fé in the 1920's, Cather used the developing machinery of tourism to sample what she perceived to be a threatened idyll, and the machinery of the publishing market to present a vision of a region of wide open spaces that allowed for human freedom. The distillation of New Mexico's peoples is much less flattering than that of the landscape, as in order to make a place for herself in the order of things Cather must figure the locals as either incapable of appreciating their surroundings, or too benighted to have the leisure of looking about themselves. In particular, Cather's figuration of the region's Hispanos reflects Arnoldo De León's formulation of US perceptions of Mexicans in *They Called them Greasers*, of men who careen between indolence and violence, and their long-suffering but alluring women.

As a successor to Cather as a literary tourist, Ana Castillo is well-accustomed to the workings of tourist machinery, and therefore her novel not only refuses to efface its presence, but presents it for examination and mockery. There is a fundamental problem that Castillo's New Mexico shares with that of Cather's, in spite of Castillo's concerted efforts to give her novel an authentically New Mexican voice. Though *So Far From God* presents local voices and concerns in what appears to be a sympathetic manner, there are fundamental desires and anxieties presented in this text that mirror those of Castillo's tourist predecessors.

In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo declares:

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<sup>5</sup> The title of Castillo's novel is taken from a saying attributed to Manuel Armijo, the last Mexican governor of New Mexico: "Poor New Mexico, so far from God and so close to Texas!"

Socioeconomic status, genetic makeup and ongoing debates on *mestisaje* aside, if in search of refuge from the United States I took up residence on any other continent, the core of my being would long for a return to the lands of my ancestors (21).

Yet for this treasuring of this stable homeland, a place for which she longs, Castillo's fiction presents a life of constant travel as the lot of the modern *mestiza*. Her first novel, *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, focus on the peregrinations of two women from the cities of the United States, to the towns of Mexico, and all the miles in between. Castillo's later novels also present protagonists in varied states of more or less constant travel. This state of perpetual motion seems to be, in the world framed by Castillo, brought into being by her protagonists' ambivalence about the places where they are from, urban America in general, and most often Chicago, in particular. Chicago is quite often most significant in Castillo's narratives by its absence; her protagonists are often in a state of flight from this city only known by its name. More prominent in her texts are the places to which her characters fly: the made-up country of Sapogonia, Mexico, or New Mexico. Even *Peel My Love Like an Onion*, in which most of the action occurs in Chicago, is much more invested in an American vision of Romany culture in Spain than it is in representing Castillo's hometown. While it might be unseemly for us as readers to insist that an author's work reflect the surroundings of her childhood, the significant backgrounding of Chicago forces us to wonder what it is that the city does not provide, and compels us to examine the objects of her fascination, the fantasy homelands, that we might discover the

nature of the hunger that she describes.<sup>6</sup> What we discover upon this examination, however, closely resembles the lands described by Willa Cather and D.H. Lawrence; not so much the land of the ancestors where one can finally come to a comfortable rest, but an idealized landscape that one can visit if one is careful to watch out for the more savage locals.

Castillo's portrayals of an othered masculinity are often quite disturbing, in that she uses the barrier of cultural difference to add charge to the relationships in her novels and to explain the antisocial behaviors of men as she writes them. *So Far From God* is then of particular interest (as is *Peel My Love*, a topic for a different paper), because the image of the people is so much based in a version of New Mexico that is sold to tourists. The character of Francisco el Penitente is an unfortunately typical characterization of male behavior for Castillo. Although he is not a sexual predator, as many of the men in Castillo's work are, he shares with the dancers and poets of her imagination in that he feels "himself powerless to his desire—which he nonetheless [tries] to justify by equating it with his spiritual calling" (198). While Francisco, unlike Manolo in *Peel My Love*, does not express his desires through rampant sexual promiscuity, he is nevertheless powerless to act in any way that does not somehow impose his physical desires on the unreceptive Caridad. So instead of attempting to manipulate and abuse her, Francisco

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly enough, Chicago is much more prominent in Castillo's poetry. I will nevertheless insist that its relative absence from her fictional work is important. Her narrative work draws upon different, more public systems of meaning and value than does her poetry, and in producing narrative Castillo is participating in the broader cultures' attempts to shape and recognize themselves. The non-presence of Chicago in her narrative fiction is therefore a telling sign of her ambivalence about her hometown. As we will later explore, lesbian relationships are another element that are relatively absent from her fiction, but nevertheless the focus of much of her poetry.

follows Caridad everywhere she goes, even when she is in turn stalking the object of her own affection, Esmeralda. Thus his obsession with the glowing body of Caridad the hermit is incorporated into the penitential rites that already define his life. Ultimately, Francisco stalks Caridad and Esmeralda to the mesa city of Acoma, where in their terror the two women hear the call of Tsichtinako, Spider Woman, calling them to a perpetual refuge from Francisco's attentions. The two women jump off the cliff of Ácoma, and disappear into the loving embrace of the goddess. In his grief at losing his love, Francisco el Penitente then hangs himself.

In a most generalized context, this moment is an indulgence in the American tradition of depicting Mexican men as violently enforcing their sexual wills on sensuous *señoritas*. It is unnerving to witness such a depiction from the pen of a Chicana author, and unfortunately not the only occasion in this novel where this occurs. For Esmeralda's partner, Maria, has an earlier experience on the back roads that foreshadows Francisco's hunt. Along with her soon-to-be-ex partner Helena, Maria is attempting to drive from Santa Fé to Truchas in a VW bug when a man in a pickup begins to menace them, tapping their bumper and waving a shotgun until they pull over at a gas station. As they ponder how to deal with their "pickup-backroad terrorist," he walks up to their car, "his denim jacket open with a hand in the pants pocket to reveal a gun he had stuck inside of the belt of his jeans" (126). He chases them back to Santa Fé, with a warning to keep away. Castillo informs us that this event can in some way be interpreted as foreshadowing the destruction of Francisco el Penitente, meaning I think that the men of Northern New Mexico are frightened to the point of an actively violent response by the

influence of a loving couple of women. We are to understand that with the homophobia rampant in the area, along with the vast market in heroin, a visibly female couple can't visit Truchas in peace. It is therefore implied that a similar spirit of containing women's bodies motivates Francisco to try to capture Caridad and Esmeralda, and that it is a defiance of Mexican violence that motivates Tsichtinako to shelter the two women.

I would be remiss to suggest that homophobia, especially against lesbians, is not a significant problem in the lives of northern New Mexicans, and it would be unpardonable to suggest that violence against women in the region was exclusively an Anglo fiction manufactured for the purpose of making Hispanos look bad. That these injustices occur in the northern Rio Grande valley is well established; but that these things happen everywhere goes without saying. In this paper, I do not object to Castillo portraying New Mexican men engaged in acts of violence against New Mexican women. What I do object to is that she intertwines these acts of violence with her portrayal of local religious practice, to the point that we as readers can not tell if Francisco is a Penitente because he is naturally violent or if he's violent because he's a Penitente. Castillo portrays the Penitente brotherhood as an inherently sadomasochistic enterprise. In foregrounding flagellation and self-abnegation as the primary activity of a penitente, she joins in an established, sensationalistic discourse that originated with Charles Lummis' self-aggrandizing accounts of his encounters with a savage cult. This discourse continues through the works of Modernist artists.

The popular, received narrative about penitentes focuses not on the seasonal nature of the ritual, not on the historical purpose of the brotherhood's development, but

on the physical gratifications of self-torture. Castillo's portrayal of Francisco foregrounds this in his first meeting with Caridad:

...Francisco el Penitente knew that what he saw in Caridad was nothing short of a blessing, an unmerited reward for the physical suffering he was imposing on himself as penance (192).

Thus Castillo directs the reader to notice the Penitente practices that she borrows for her novel as focused not on the divine, and not on the brotherhood, but on Francisco's claim on Caridad's body. This moment of distraction is the point at which Francisco's path turns towards murder and suicide. This redirection is important, because this one small instance reframes the Penitente brotherhood as a group of men focused on sexual pleasure and control. There is nothing new to this misperception of local religious practice, and in fact it is popular fascination with this perceived sadomasochism that has made books and magazines that feature Penitentes such strong sellers for over a century. Furthermore, far from frightening people away from Lenten rituals, stories of self-flagellation, crucifixions, and fasting fuel tourist curiosity in Penitente rites. According to Alberto Lopez Pulido,

Lummis and others were attracted to the simplicity and primitiveness of southwestern cultures. According to some scholars, this represented an antimodernist response to intense industrial development, massive European immigration, and rapid urbanization occurring in the eastern United States during this period. Unfortunately, these sentiments were influential in understanding and explaining the cultures and traditions of the Southwest as primitive, stagnant, isolated (37).



Castillo's novel perpetuates the image of the New Mexican man as isolated, silent savage, whose one, albeit pure, mode of expression is cruelty. And like her predecessors, Castillo relishes both the acts of self-torture and the penitente's punishment and downfall.

The presence of penitentes in the novel suggests an apparent effort to make this narrative sound and appear New Mexican, along with the use of dichos, references to local businesses, and local foodways, that this is yet another in a long line of works written by newcomers to New Mexico who are more enamored of received stories about locals than they are interested in actually learning about actual local practices. Ibís Gomez-Vega notes that Castillo makes efforts to keep the narrator's voice within the speech patterns of local dialects ("Review of *So Far from God*", 180). Throughout the novel, the reader finds references to green chile, Lobo games, the Lenten pilgrimage to Chimayó. But ultimately, for reasons stated before, these things are ornaments on the typical modernist novel of New Mexican peoples. Castillo's tongue in cheek portrayal of a penitente in crisis is reminiscent of Cather's mocking portrait of Lenten rituals in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, in which she describes a bombastic acolyte of Padre Martinez failing to achieve crucifixion because he is so fat that the cross topples over. In the narratives of both of these authors, penitentes appear as exemplars of the primitive tendency to cruelty. And while in their more humorous moments many authors figure these religious practices as an expression of local quirkiness, there is an attendant narrative that names these practices as a source of local power, and therefore as a danger to established authorities (see Cather's portrayal of Padre Martinez). The penitente, in this figuration, provides a means for escape from the mechanization of modern life, while

at the same time threatening chaos to all systems of order through the upheaval of the principles of self-preservation and pleasure. Thus the penitente in popular fiction is a figure of profound ambivalence, and authors like Castillo and Cather simultaneously mock, lionize, and punish the faithful penitente for his activities.

Thus, we can see Castillo participating in the century long project to render New Mexico as stagnant and backwards, a bulwark of pastoral time against American industrial progress. And although in Castillo's version the devil drives a pickup truck instead of riding a horse, and even though the local curandera lives in a trailer and the Chimayo pilgrimage is dedicated to people afflicted with AIDS, all of these things are merely shiny new disguises on the conventions of idyll. With a flourish of contemporary details, Castillo uses this novel to reinforce the perception of New Mexico as pastoral, that lucrative getaway from the problems of the real world. And in this, Castillo once again participates in a process that makes her chosen subject more marginal than when she started.

Ellen McCracken's discussion of *So Far from God* in *New Latina Letters* is a stinging assessment of what she perceives to be the role of marketing in the book's production. She introduces her argument writing,

... U.S. Latina writers are receiving the national attention and exposure that they deserve. This new recognition... functions at the same time, however, as an attempt (albeit never completely successful) to secure the closure of commodification on both the literary production and the writers themselves. The creation of "minority commodities" attempts to reabsorb writers and texts into mainstream ideology as desirable elements of postmodernity that can be purchased and, to some degree, possessed (12).

In *So Far From God*, McCracken sees a particularly egregious example of this embrace of commerce, “Her compelling storytelling and highly pleasurable representation of New Mexican ethnic culture are overcoded with the predominant tropes of the postmodern ethnic commodity” (32). For McCracken, Castillo’s carefully crafted misuses of English, her references to Telemundo, and her descriptions of village life highlight the strangeness of U.S. Latino culture for a predominantly Anglo reading audience (35). New Mexican cultures here are portrayed as quirky escapes from modernity, in which a little determination can transform a backwater into a pastoral idyll.

In her book *Show and Tell*, Karen Christian makes a comparison between *So Far From God* and Cecile Pineda’s *The Love Queen of the Amazon*. Christian observes that authors of Latino descent in the United States are in some ways expected to echo the techniques of the South American “Boom” Authors, especially Borges and Garcia Marquez. Christian explains that part of this mimicry has to do with marketing and editorial expectations, but that U.S. authors also make clear stylistic references to *Cien Años de Soledad* and other Boom works. While many American critics then disdain what they see as poor imitations of magical realism, Christian posits that Castillo and Pineda reference Boom authors but deliberately avoid direct impersonation:

These stylistic drag costumes are associated with widely diverging historical contexts, making the text more pastiche than parody. *So Far from God* does not copy a single literary style but simultaneously mimics a number of styles; like *Love Queen*, it cannot be considered an imitation of a definable original (146).

Christian asserts that these authors’ imitations of Boom style, in combination with imitations of Golden Age novelas, television novelas, and Chicana/o protest treatises,

constitute performative gestures of Latina-ness. Thus, text performs identity as surely (or unsurely) as drag performs gender. In Christian's estimation, Castillo's many forays into literary and linguistic drag constitute a pastiche, in contrast to Pineda's parody of Boom style. Christian concludes, "Latina/o cultural identity, like gender, must be constantly reinforced and reenacted. Here the repetition takes the form of the array of anachronistic cultural codes, all eminently readable as "Latina/o" signs, with which the narrator fills her story" (145).

Christian herself is not unaware that the danger of the extended metaphor, "this view of identity as drag, as ongoing performance and impersonation, is its implication that ethnic difference has no social or historical foundation" (31). In spite of this caution, however, I remain uneasy at Christian's entirely correct description of *So Far From God* as pastiche, in its associations with violent reassembly. This uneasiness is further compounded by Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak's laudatory reading of *So Far From God* as an exemplar of the potential for postmodernist aesthetics to bridge gaps between cultural dominants and margins. Mermann-Jozwiak asserts that Castillo's uses the conventions of the family saga and the *telenovela* to defy the "image of Mexican-American women as victims of social and political forces and instead builds on their long standing tradition of community involvement" (105). She continues:

This tall tale... presents a serious political and social commentary: through both realistic and unrealistic events, Castillo paints a panoramic picture of Mexican-American women in American society. Castillo's novel demonstrates that life is as outrageous for Mexican-American women as fiction. (107)

While I find this assessment of Castillo's authorial project to be accurate, I object to her assertion that a postmodernist portrayal of Chicanas is necessarily a praiseworthy endeavor. In locating this "outrageous" woman in Tomé, New Mexico, Castillo is repeating the epistemic violence of the modernist's act of locating primitive man in Taos

Pueblo. The foundation of Mermann-Jozwiak's argument, that "postmodernism is a cultural politics that exposes the constructed nature of literary and social conventions," is wrong in both theoretical foundation and application (102).

In terms of theory, the assertion that postmodernism is a framework in which to pursue an agenda of political liberation for marginalized peoples is excessively optimistic, to say the least. Gayatri Spivak, in her chapter on culture in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, bemoans the conflation of post-structuralism with postmodernism, arguing that postmodernist thought is caught in a double bind: in making the repression of emergent or heterogeneous forms visible, "analysis can itself collaborate in that repression by refusing [them] access to the status of the idiom of cultural description" (314). Spivak argues that the postmodern moment's "commodity fetishism" is "not morphologically dissimilar to the Utopian moment" of nascent modernism, contrary to Frederick Jameson's "Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism". In fact, Spivak argues that Jameson's moment of "rupture" is actually an inverse repetition of the utopian vision. At the foundation of both the modernist and postmodernist moment is the viewing subject, an "I" that is "historically constructed and produced so that it can become transparent at will" (343), which always leaves the subject position of the native informant as foreclosed, contained by the necessity that it act as reflection and other to that "I." The postmodernist subject, at least as described by Jameson, does not renounce the privilege of the subject position; therefore the only true difference between modernism and postmodernism is in the scenery.

That this novel fosters political awareness, as posited in Mermann-Jozniwak's essay, thereby proves a mirage. As Gomez-Vega among others, noted, Castillo uses recognizably New Mexican speech patterns (emphasis through double negatives, some awkward code-switching), slang (*traila*, *Fanta Se*), and Albuquerque institutions (Lobo

games, Garduño's restaurant). The voice of the narrator is meant to blend seamlessly into what an observant outsider would consider an authentic New Mexican voice. This narrator, in other words, is meant to provide what appears to be unmediated access to essential New Mexican cultural and social formations, with the layers of author and editors rendered transparent. When I have caught Castillo in moments that I considered inauthentic, caution forces me to allow for authorial license, or editorial error. For example, the narrator tells us that in preparation for Esperanza's leaving the family, "Sofi prepared [her] favorite foods that weekend, like posole and sopa and lots of *chili*..." (48, my emphasis). Now, to quote Américo Paredes, *chili* is an American dish:

In the United States of North America, they take their left-over meat and grind it up real fine. Then they cook this mess with lots of red peppers. This kills all the taste, which is just as well (Paredes, 209).

Allowing for authorial license, we ought to concede that as American citizens, New Mexicans have long been at liberty to prepare and eat food just as bad as their neighbors'; allowing for editorial error, we could dismiss this as a moment of over-zealous spell checking on the part of someone who doesn't know the difference between *chili* and *chile colorado*, the sauce that usually accompanies New Mexican posole. But like Paredes' comic heroes, who hear an order for *chili* in a restaurant in Coahuila, we instantly recognize someone trying to pass him or herself as a local. That chili is an American dish may look like hairsplitting, but to focus on the actual dish is missing the point. As in Paredes' short story of an American filmmaker sneaking film of exotic locals, the word "chili," like a speck of dirt or a smudge on a windowpane, is a small flaw that renders a transparent barrier suddenly visible.<sup>7</sup> And as with Paredes' story, it's not the story itself, but the effort at disappearing into the scenery that makes me suspicious.

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<sup>7</sup> In fairness, I have seen the word "chili" used on menus, most notably at Garcia's Kitchen on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Albuquerque. It may be a common error, but it's jarring to my eye nonetheless.

## THOUGHT WOMAN TO THE RESCUE

This assumption of authorial/ editorial transparency not only damages Castillo's credibility, but it also confirms Spivak's suspicions that postmodern aesthetics are a repetition of the modern moment, rather than a break from it. Castillo's novel, unlike Cather's, jumbles the conditions of modern life up with the pastoralist desires of modernism. But the structure of the book repeats Cather's errors, because Castillo shares with her the assumption that she can appear to provide unmediated contact with a simpler more pastoral world. Though Castillo's novel is much more "furnished" than Cather's in terms of plot explication and local color, her pastiche of droll juxtapositions of pastoral conventions and contemporary social patterns do much the same work as Cather's to make a simpler, idealized way of life seem to be within the reach of the reader.

Like Jameson, Castillo wants the reader to feel rupture and pastiche as something new. The shock that comes with juxtaposing fragments of what we perceive as traditional cultures and mechanistic, modern organizations of trade, government, and culture is the force behind the humor of this novel. Rupture—the disconnects between the machinery of life, the language used to describe and contain it, and the peoples who navigate these disconnects—overwhelms the observing subject in its cacophony. In response, the subject may either yield to the disintegrative vision offered by rupture, and be reduced to incoherence, or the viewer may respond with laughter. Laughter is the response that permits the subject to maintain subjectivity—a defensive gesture that allows the chaotic vision its totality, which then mirrors the carefully maintained totality of the fragmenting self.

In the past, I have been warned that in making an overly earnest reading of *So Far From God*, that I missed the jokes. While I suppose that I must acknowledge that the accusation of humorlessness on my part did sting, I do believe that the moments at which

Castillo invites us to laugh must be critically evaluated in light of Gayatri Spivak's criticisms of Frederick Jameson's construction of postmodernist aesthetics in "Postmodernism, or: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." It is easy to look at *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *So Far from God* together, and read Castillo as a corrective for Cather's attempt to strip the American west of any characteristic or significance not directly related to the internal processes of a European man.

It is hard not to be in on the joke, and it is hard to be perceived as humorless. Laughter not only aids the ability of the individual to maintain the feeling of possessing an unfragmented self in the face of rupture, but it also allows the laughter to share with others a sense of group identity in unified reference. Bakhtin calls laughter an important corrective to the monologue of sacred language; in a Jamesonian world laughter is invested with the powers of sacred language as the appropriate response to sublime stimulus while it is denuded of its ability to interfere with the monoglossia of the requisite postmodernist snicker at rupture. If laughter has become the sacred language, then what on earth could provide a corrective for it? A critic is then forced from it back into the conditions of chaos, left either to make some poseur stance of *rebellion* or as a defender of tradition, both completely inadequate responses to the power of laughter to make all comers an ambient part of the scenery.

The unity of these two separate visions is made bare in the place of Ácoma, in two strikingly similar scenes. Both of these novels feature the image of people flinging themselves from the high cliff. The differences between these flights reveal differences in these authorial projects, but also a shared fascination with what is ultimately a tourist's view of Sky City. This view is framed in both cases by fundamental primitivisms: the utopian hunger for an existence in which the self is unified with nature and others, and a terror of the consequences of losing selfhood. The view from the cliffs of Ácoma does



inspire the tourist (this one included) to thoughts of the sublime, and the narrowness of the boundary between daily life and oblivion (it's many steps up, but only one step down). To quote Marianna Torgovnick, "The impulses behind Western fascination with the primitive are explosive and hot—but also potentially transcendent" (9). In search of transcendence, both Cather and Castillo take their novels to Sky City—and both of them, in morbid turns, push a character off.

Describing Latour's arrival at Ácoma, Cather muses:

It was very different from a mountain fastness; more lonely, more stark and grim, more appealing to the imagination. The rock, when one came to think of it, was the utmost expression of human need; it was the highest comparison of loyalty in love and friendship...

Already the Bishop had observed in Indian life a strange literalness, often shocking and disconcerting. The Ácomas, who must share the universal human yearning for something permanent, enduring, without shadow or change,— they had their idea in substance (98-99).

Nevertheless, Latour experiences great difficulty saying mass in the massive church atop the mesa, unsettled by the ancient buildings and customs that he cannot fully understand. Later in this same chapter, he is told the story of Fray Baltazar, which illuminates the roots of his uneasiness. Fray Baltazar, a sensualist priest from Spain assigned to Ácoma, demands tribute from the Pueblo in the forms of the choicest food and constant watering for his impractical mesa-top garden, which includes an impressive peach tree. During the course of an elaborate meal that he had prepared for his fellow mission priests, Baltazar accidentally kills one of the Pueblo boys trained to serve at the table. Now trapped on the mesa, he contemplates the gruesome fates of mission priests during the Pueblo revolt of 1680, and resolves to bear any punishment in fear of making things worse. Indeed:

The Ácoma people told afterwards that he did not supplicate or struggle; had he done so, they might have dealt more cruelly with him. But he knew his Indians, and that when once they had collectively made up their pueblo mind...(115).

Once more, children of the rock, reassured of unity and safety in their harmony with the piece of earth on which they exist, all move in concert to punish the priest's transgressions. They take him from the church to the cliff from which they dispose of garbage, free him of his bonds, and holding him by his arms and legs swing him out over the cliff and "after a few feints, dropped him in midair" (116). Thus the collective disposes of the tyrant like a broken pot.

There is in this story a literalness, an absolute and shocking simplicity of action and reaction. Cather on the one hand idealizes this literality, while also shuddering at what Marianna Torgovnick has termed the "oceanic," the quality of primitivism that was associated with non-western peoples and savagery (5). Cather envisions Pueblo culture as a hive, and her desire for the sensation of absolute belonging is coupled with a horror at the punishment that individual transgression can bring in such a system. For it is not an error that dooms Baltazar to flight, but that he understands the situation perfectly; either he endures the banishment that the collective allots to him, or he runs and in so doing selects an even worse punishment. In this case, a European man proud in his own learning and refinement submits to the collective will of his "simple" charges. In that Latour has difficulty saying mass in this same place, Cather echoes D.H. Lawrence's unease at Taos Pueblo, considering

...the faculties of individuation, distancing, and judgment essential to being European... Lawrence ascribed to the Indians the fullest experience of the blood, like the land itself the very image of the pure life force. He described this experience [observing a ritual dance at Taos] as offering unmediated access to creation and Being-ness—the core of religious emotion. But he imagined a different fate entirely for whites... The white man's burden-- but also his fate and glory—is the individuated self (Torgovnick 49).

In Cather and Lawrence's descriptions of Pueblo people we can observe shared assumptions about native peoples. They both rendered Native American cultures as

landscape, and saw in the Pueblos an ideal other, the very thing for which they longed but for the fact that it terrified them. In Cather, there is danger in being too accommodating to this other. The priest who replaces Fray Baltazar is

...a native Mexican, of unpretentious tastes, who was well satisfied with beans and jerked meat, and let the turkey flock scratch at the hot dust that had once been Baltazar's garden. The old peach stumps kept sending up pale sprouts for many years. (116-117)

This Mexican priest is the ultimate repudiation of Baltazar and his church, a descent from the dignity of his Spanish refinement to a priest who is willing to merge with the collective appetites, and to whom Cather does not give a name. It is no mistake that this chapter is a lead-in to the incident of the Cave of the Stone Lips, in which a storm forces Latour and Jacinto to shelter in a cave that harbors a potentially maleficent spirit. The story of Baltazar foreshadows Latour's moment of temptation here: to adhere to his French faith or to give in to the terror of "the extraordinary vibration in this cavern; it hummed like a hive of bees, like a heavy roll of drums" (131). To ask permission and protection from the spirit of this cave would be to deny the absolute truth of his church; and in this moment Latour embodies Lawrence's dilemma of the European man abroad.

The Modern primitivist had embraced a point of view that sought the other out, but only to represent it within the parameters of her own vision. The postmodernist moment (as opposed to the poststructuralist moment) was supposed to represent a break with this tendency. Spivak has stated that the moment of crisis in Jameson's vision of the postmodern is meant to be understood as such a break, but that it is in her estimation a repetition of the Modernist mindset. Castillo's staged flight from Ácoma demonstrates this tendency. If Cather's unfurnished novel is a heavily stage-managed tableau, then Castillo's novel is overstuffed with detail, lyrics, and digressions. But like McCannell's choreographed demonstrations of work that are supposed reveal the backstage of a city or

factory, we find that Castillo's work is just as aggressively managed as Cather's, for all of its overabundance. Furthermore, Castillo's vision of Ácoma repeats primitivist and Utopian ideals of Native American culture as a balm and corrective for the religious decadence of a sensualist, Hispano man.

It may seem odd to describe Francisco el Penitente as a sensualist, but he is not so much a negation of Fray Baltazar as a complement to him. While Fray Baltazar is a glutton, Francisco denies himself any pleasure in sustenance, going so far as to mix ashes into his food (191). As we saw above, however, Francisco's denial of physical pleasure in this novel is figured not as abstinence, but as sado-masochistic indulgences that are meant to bond his claim on the person of Caridad. He allows his yearnings, first for God and then later for Caridad, to determine his behaviors and his maintenance of self. When Caridad becomes obsessed with a woman from Ácoma, Esmeralda, Francisco becomes obsessed with her, too. The situation comes to a head when Francisco abducts Esmeralda from her job, dropping her off at the house she shares with her girlfriend, Maria, hours later. Rattled, Esmeralda takes Caridad to Sky City, ostensibly to help replaster her grandmother's house, but really to retreat. However, when they arrive on top of the mesa, they discover that Francisco has followed them and joined a group of tourists. In a moment of horror and revelation, Caridad recognizes that she has met her destiny. Esmeralda suddenly hears:

Just the spirit deity Tsichtinako calling loudly with a voice like wind, guiding the two women back, not out toward the sun's rays or up above the clouds but down, deep within the soft, moist dark earth where Esmeralda and Caridad would be safe and live forever (211).

The entire Pueblo, hearing the voice of Tsichtinako, understands what has happened; the tourists and the local priest see chaos and death, and are mystified by the absence of the

women's bodies at the foot of the cliff. Francisco, finally and absolutely parted from the object of his desire, goes back home and hangs himself in a field.

Now, as I said before, my knowledge of Ácoma is almost exclusively touristic. I can't presume to speak as to whether this is behavior appropriate to the deity of Tsichtinako. As a reader trained in the western tradition, however, I do know a cheap *deus ex machina* when I see one. Cheap, because Tsichtinako in this context, is a name for inchoate longings that are often directed towards Native Americans. Here, we have an almost direct invocation of Latour's patronizing reflection on Ácoman literality in faith, that when Ácomans are frightened they return to their rock:

*Tsichtinako was calling!* Esmeralda's grandmother holding tight to her little grandson's hand turned and nodded. The Pueblo tour guide heard, cocking her ear as if trying to make out the words. The priest in the church, who happened to be performing baptisms that morning, ran out and put his hands to his temples. (211, author's emphasis)

This is almost a direct invocation of the moment in which Latour has difficulty saying mass pressured by some great and ancient presence. That this presence is friendly instead of foreboding in Castillo's work is hardly a welcome development, in that she still preserves for the western author the *carte blanche* to disassemble and reassemble the beliefs of marginalized peoples into convenient literalities that keep their plots moving and do precious little else to return the favor. Caridad and Esmeralda need protection, so the rock envelops them for eternity. Like Cather, Castillo uses the fall from the cliffs as an opportunity to briefly touch on the nature of Pueblo faith, and then moves quickly on. It is dismaying to see Tsichtinako trotted out to resolve a plot point that could have just as well been solved with Francisco getting arrested by tribal police, or getting trapped underneath a particularly large *santo*, or anything that would not further burgle the people of Ácoma of their stories.

It is evident that Castillo punishes Francisco el Penitente as a representative of the terrifying, sensualist Mexican masculinity that chases defenseless women across the plains in a souped up pickup truck. His desire for Caridad, “La Armitaña Santa,” will not be satisfied through mere devotion; instead, he will suffer hunger and thirst for her, in hopes of possessing her physically. Castillo writes “in those black clothes he always wore he looked more and more like a zopilote, about ready to fly up and circle above his prey” (204). As discussed above, Castillo indulges in the stereotype of the Mexican man as violent exploiter of helpless Mexican women. Reading this with Cather, one can see the repetition of a major pattern: a man whose body is not enough in the control of his soul to quiet the body’s hungers, but whose soul is not controlled enough by the body to make him easily sated. Like Fray Baltazar, he represents a combination of rampant ego with gluttony, which lead both of these characters to exploit highly feminized representations of native populations. Thus, Castillo joins generations of colonialist authors in New Mexico who invoke the Black Legend by designating the role of snake in the garden of Eden to the Creole or Mexican man.

Perhaps locating the source of such violence in the character of Francisco is consistent with Castillo’s previous statement that “While I have more in common with a Mexican man than a white woman, I have much more in common with an Algerian woman than I do with a Mexican man” (*Massacre of the Dreamers*, 23). And once again, I gladly concede that rigid patriarchal control has been and remains a difficulty that young Mexican American women often face. What truly concerns me is that in the face of such a problem, Castillo repeats modernist discourses of race and gender, almost uncritically. This is especially disappointing from an author who earlier wrote:

While a growing nation suppresses the conquered one, an ethnocentric (that is, racist) attitude has traditionally accompanied it. The power that the new nation acquires as a result of the combination of stolen knowledge and resources of the

conquered race, geographical advantage, historical timeliness, technological or other material benefit—and always justified with a healthy dose of self-righteousness and divine conviction—has been justified by race supremacy (81).

Reading this passage together with the Ácoma passage *So Far from God*, with its own ample portions of self-righteousness and conviction, one is forced to wonder if Castillo has considered that knowledges, histories, and stories not appropriated for the purposes of white supremacy, but appropriated nonetheless, are still stolen.

This passage from *So Far from God* is like seeing Jameson's theories on overabundance and rupture in action. There's plenty of what MacCannell might have called a staged backstage, with specific references to conditions for reaching the top of the mesa and maintaining a house up there:

They were allowed to drive up because Esmeralda's grandmother lived there. Esmeralda's baby sister would one day inherit the little adobe which her grandmother had helped rebuild as only a thousand-year-old house would need to be, and which Esmeralda's baby sister also was having to mud-plaster those days. (*So Far From God* 208)

This is not a *novel démeuble* by anyone's stretch of the imagination. Every chapter title, every episode overflows with references to other art forms, with new characters, and with some new cultural nugget. As a direct response to Cather's unpeopling and unfurnishing of the landscape, *So Far from God* is a successful repudiation of technique. It is unfortunate that this overabundance does little to repair the fundamental repetition of the Modernist gaze, and that it repeats the expression of Modernist desires. As Spivak writes, "in colonialism, the colonizing impulse appropriates and reterritorializes a "past" to temporize itself more grandly" (410). While we acknowledge that Castillo is a member of a minoritized group in the United States, we can also observe her involvement in and reproduction of intellectual processes of U.S. imperialism. Her novel appropriates the ancient homes of Ácoma, along with its peoples. In the rest of the novel she

appropriates other cultures of New Mexico, most offensively the Penitente Brotherhood. Finally, Castillo' novel appropriates the lives of New Mexican women, those who live quiet lives by the acequia, who strive to have careers in a poor state, who work in factories that sicken them, and who try to maintain their links to the wisdoms of their ancestors. And to echo Spivak, matronizing and sororizing too are forms of silencing subaltern women, which I find just as inexcusable in her presumption to represent Nuevomexicanas to the world as is her presumption of knowing the Algerian woman.

## CONCLUSION

It has been my fear, since originally outlining of this project, that this would be a homophobic chapter. If it is, I hope that my colleagues take me to task for my errors. Homophobia, unfortunately, has long been one of the most-used registers of resistance to U.S. Imperialism in New Mexico, and one only has to read Fray Angélico Chávez describing Fr. Machebeuf as a “gossipy hen” in his biography of Padre Martinez to get a sense of how uselessly vitriolic this language can get (*But Time and Chance* 95). When I came across this slur early in my research, I was still looking for someone to designate as the true, authentic New Mexican author. In that moment I realized that in this project that many of my own personal ideals would not line up with my archive in an untroubling fashion. Indeed, it is almost impossible to think about race and gender politics in New Mexico in a manner that doesn't force a renunciation of one or the other.

Molly Mullin's *Culture in the Marketplace* identifies the origins of this conflict in the attitudes of the wealthy, often single women who moved to Northern New Mexico in the wake of the First World War:

One reason wealthy white women... found the Southwest such a liberating space was that the constraints of gender were offset by the power and control afforded by their class and race. While Hispanic and Indian inhabitants of the region struggled to cope with a newly imposed foreign language and political and



economic system, land and labor were cheaper than in the East, and it was easier for wealthy white women to wield authority over others, men as well as women.  
(74)

Thus, in seeking liberation in the “therapeutic ethos” these early “Fanta Seans” helped to establish a community that is known to this day as gay-friendly, a major draw for development. Local Hispanos often blame the growth of this community for pricing native Santa Feans out of the housing market, and it is dangerously easy for criticism of the status quo in Santa Fé to draw on homophobia. Conversely, knuckling under unquestioningly to rigidly normative heterosexuality is often figured as “traditional” behavior by Hispanos in New Mexico, and, as for many peoples descended from Mexicans in the United States, homosexuality is figured as selling out to Anglo culture. Gloria Anzaldúa’s *La Frontera/ Borderlands*, and the anthology she edited with Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*, blazed trails for the critical examination of the intersections of race, class, and gender. However, in cases like Castillo’s *So Far from God* (Sandra Cisneros’s *Woman Hollering Creek* also comes to mind), we are forced to examine writings by women of color in the light of fraught power relations between them and their subjects. Recognizing an anguishing convergence of systematic marginalizations, and that alliances built on ethnicity and gender are not discrete entities, I am, as a critic, in the uncomfortable position of appearing to decry the celebrated lesbian author as an outsider, a stranger with misguided ideas about what it is to be truly New Mexican.

I find it important to underline, then, that I am not decrying these authors strictly for being outsiders. A later chapter will discuss authors who trouble, in their works, the position of being a local; here, I argue that neither Castillo nor Cather really joined the communities that Mullin describes in any respectful or meaningful way. Cather’s distance from “The City of Ladies” is well-documented in Hermione Lee’s biography, in

that she kept her distance from Mabel Dodge Luhan even while a guest in her home, and later resented Mary Austin's suggestions that *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was written in her home (261-2). Her true interest was sparked, Lee states, when she "realized suddenly that the real story of the Southwest was the story of the missionary priests from France, with their cultivated minds, their large vision, and their noble purpose" (262). This perspective made it possible for her to create a story of Santa Fé entirely through her own Francophilia, a country that is more an abstraction than an actual occupied landscape. There are strong affinities between Cather's New Mexico and Castillo's *Sapogonia*, in that they are fundamentally unreal places where an author situates an abstract ideal, Cather's, a refined people on an American landscape, and Castillo's mestiza homeland. Cather referred to writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as "a happy vacation from life" (Lee, 263). New Mexico then is not simply a vacation spot, or a memory of a happy time, but an opportunity to withdraw from reality to a land of her own imagining.

I do not have any similar information on Castillo's stay in New Mexico, and I would question the ethics of developing contacts strictly for the purpose of getting gossip to relate in my academic work. What I can do is point out some important affinities between her work and Cather's. As stated above, she and Cather use the things that they see in New Mexico to retreat from the demands of living in a quotidian, modern world. This affinity is most notable in Castillo and Cather's authorial indulgences in the use of the unconsumatable homosexual relationship—Latour's possession of Vaillant is never again as complete as the moment that they decide to run away together, and Caridad and Esmeralda hardly converse before throwing themselves off the cliff. While the necessity that a homosexual relationship be tragic was a convention in Cather's time, by Castillo's day it is something worse than a cliché. The use of this motif points to a shared anxiety

about portraying fully realized gay relationships in their fiction; extrapolating from the use of this motif, and that in their own times they chose the same region as a backdrop for their personal abstractions of a sexual relationship, I believe that what bonds Cather and Castillo most tightly here is that in New Mexico they seek a Utopia peopled by characters in constant flight from the body. That this constant deferment is possible marks their New Mexicos as fantasylands, desirable as a place in which desire is without social consequence: a place where a girl can fall in love with a girl, or a man can harbor a burning passion for another man, and never have to tell their sisters or deal with burdens of keeping it secret. And really, this is what the realm of touristic play promises, that the tourist can assume new roles and forge new identities, and then leave these behind should they not fit in the luggage, so to speak.

Lee cautions us, as readers, against a reductive reading of Cather's declaration that her fiction concerns the "thing not named":

...[it] *remains* unnamable—that is its point. It is not a buried bone to be dug up, but the 'luminous halo, the semi-transparent envelope' of atmosphere and feeling evoked by the writing. (192, author's emphasis)

Of course, Lee informs us, her fiction concerns "the love that cannot speak its name," but the thing not named is an expansive category. However, Lee concedes that in this novel, explanations and motives are so minimalized that they create a "moving reality" that is its own story.

The 'thing not named' works in [*Death Comes for the Archbishop*] not as a troubling pressure, but for a sense of serene accomplishment. We are being told, the book seems to say, exactly what we need to know, and in the best possible way (260).

While I think that while it is important to be nuanced in how one thinks about sexuality, and while I agree with Lee that Cather will never make an uneasy role model for lesbian identity, I also think it useless to be obtuse about the centrality of human emotional and

sexual desires to Cather's work. Lee likes Cather's work best when she writes those desires as denied, and describes *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as "secure, ritualized, and impersonal" (260). I would suggest that this security is the product of the novel's conceit, that there is a distant land where desire can exist in stasis, a heavenly respite that is neither loneliness nor lover.

Ana Castillo, at first glance, would appear to be the antithesis of Cather's controlling, concealing prose. Castillo's poetry is physically, and emotionally intimate, and she appears to cherish an ideal of total openness. Politically, she appears to renounce all of the premises of Cather's worldview, open to the myriad possibilities that come with undermining white supremacy and racial hierarchization. And yet, here we are again: a cliff, a couple, and a very short long walk. In an essay entitled, "The Homoerotic Tease and Lesbian Identity in Ana Castillo's Work," Ibis Gómez-Vega writes that throughout her work as a novelist, Castillo neglects to write a respectful, fully realized lesbian relationship. Even when two women are in an intense and erotically charged relationship, Castillo shies from writing them as a couple. Gómez-Vega wonders:

What kind of friendship existed between these women? Castillo denies her readers an answer because she either does not take the inner lives of her homosexual characters seriously or because she herself does not know the reason why homosexual characters continue to appear in her work as if they were subliminal messages of some sort. (81)

While Castillo's prose style allows her to ramble through genres, mediums, and historical periods, in relationships between her women characters she always stops short of writing them as committed partnerships in which neither woman is waiting for a man to make her complete. In *So Far from God*, Castillo diverges from her pattern of writing these "teases," in that she cuts it off at its inception. Caridad falls in love with Esmeralda, she retreats into the woods, she meets Esmeralda again and then stalks her, and then she and Esmeralda disappear from the cliffs of Sky City. Caridad hardly even speaks to

Esmeralda, and yet we are supposed to understand that their bond is so special that divine intervention protects it. Unlike Cather, Castillo is willing to be explicit in writing a relationship between two women, but like Cather, she controls and contains that narrative. In making the love between Esmeralda and Caridad mystical, Castillo informs us that a living relationship between two women is but an aside in her greater narrative (the car trip in which Maria and Helena are chased by the devil is there merely to foreshadow Caridad and Esmeralda's jump). Castillo's narrative, for all its busy clutter, mimics Cather's stasis; the sisters don't so much exist as balance each other out in terms of talents and gruesome deaths. Like Cather's, Castillo's New Mexico is a vacation from ordinary life, in that it is a site to indulge in drama without getting caught up in details.

If one were in a caricaturizing mood, one could imagine the ends of two eerily similar vacations. It's fun to imagine the mornings that each of these authors woke up and decided it was time to leave: was it the poorly thought out cowboy hat that sealed the deal? A particularly bad elevation nosebleed? The realization that people who live in romantic adobes can also be desperate and poor? At any rate, at separate points Cather and Castillo ended their times in New Mexico, taking with them the ideal of a place where rules of time diminished, and allowed for the lazy denouement of intense flirtations and extended appreciations of glowing sunsets. They took this land away with them, and as with most people on vacation, forgot or ignored that people actually lived there. And this is what, for me, defines this category of author in New Mexico: not their style, not their sexual preferences, but that their New Mexicos represent flights from the body's quotidian demands, and towards an ghosted place where the body is not where it lives. And in every sense, mentally and physically, when the needs of the body rear, they have the car keys, the liberty to pack their souvenirs and leave.

## **Chapter 2: The Priests:**

### **Fray Angélico Chávez and Rudolfo Anaya**

In 2002, the City of Austin, in partnership with the Austin Public Library and the University of Texas Humanities Institute, sponsored a program called the Mayor's Book Club. As in many other cities, a single text was selected for the entire community to read and discuss over the course of the year. Gus Garcia, then mayor of Austin, chose Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Última*, a text which in my opinion had the obvious advantages of consistent sales, the infamy of having been banned in libraries and schools, and a readily available Spanish edition. Throughout the summer and fall the University sponsored panel discussions in branch libraries, moderated by professors and librarians. All of these discussions culminated in a public reading by the author on October 23 at Fiesta Gardens, a community hall in the heart of Chicana/o East Austin. The event included live music from Grupo Frenesi, and was filmed by the local PBS affiliate for a special edition of its public affairs show *Austin at Issue*. In my notes from that evening, I observed that the crowd was diverse both in its ethnic makeup and in age. Kids actually danced. The whole evening, I noted, was a big success. Nevertheless, this event became for me yet another occasion for uneasiness.

I had tried to teach *Bless Me, Última* in my sophomore literature class at the University of Texas, and I struggled to steering the conversation, since nobody wanted to talk about the story. Instead, all of my students embarked on what seemed like a session of comparative Grandmothers, during which the children of Mexican, Czech, and Anglo Texas explored the diverse folk remedies and songs of their own families and imagined common Texas cultures among themselves. I wanted to talk about a novel; they wanted

to talk about themselves and the cultures that they had just found themselves sharing. I had left assuming that, for this particular class, no one had finished the reading, a discouraging development for a group of students that had breezed through more difficult material. Ultimately, I blamed my own inability to keep the discussion text oriented. For the Mayor's Book Club event, I assumed that the presence of the author would ensure that the questions would focus on writing, and on the novel. And so I sat there, on that evening in October, and I watched and listened as the beaming crowd held forth with tales of childhood in inner city Dallas, accounts of first encounters with the book, and with more grandmothers. Anaya smiled back at them, having read aloud from a different work. He made it clear that he was well past talking about *Bless Me Última*, but that he was happy to listen to the audience's impressions. It was an affable, fun event, and as I perched with my text centered questions, I began to feel more and more out of place. It seemed a bad-tempered sort of thing to actually notice the book, much less to have specific and critical questions about it. As Anaya autographed books at the end of the evening, he started to look tired, and I left without asking my questions. I was in a graduate student pique; my attitude and approach to the evening had been somehow inappropriate, and I could not understand why.

Looking back, the reasons for my discomfort are more apparent to me, but I continue to feel uneasy about starting to ask my questions. It's as if there is an ever-present, beatific audience of Anaya fans always standing at my elbow, smiling and wondering why I have to wreck everyone's evening. Won't this inquiry make his fans unhappy? Don't I have any respect for the author? Some adult, detached part of me recognizes that there is something beautiful about this kind of discussion about *Bless Me, Última*. Isn't it wonderful that so many very different people came together in the context of this novel and communed about their families and their common traditions? If

they don't leave these conversations with a mastery of vocabulary concerning figurative language, isn't it okay that they leave with this feeling of belonging, not only with their peers but with the ancestors? I am forced to recognize that these audiences' love is important, and worthy of my respect. However, the responses of these audiences also demand scrutiny, because one consequence of such universal accessibility is that *Bless Me, Última* is a New Mexico that doesn't need Manitos and Manitas to live on, as the New Mexico *llanos* dissolve into a universal nostalgia for childhood. The discussion about this text, so deliberately set in a specific time and place, too often shifts away from Las Pasturas as an actual and a fictional village to serve as a vague conversational or critical referent. And on this point we must investigate our tendency to let our conversations on texts about New Mexico devolve into Comparative Grandmothers. While an event that encourages us to celebrate familial and cultural bonds may be a fundamentally good thing, it too often goes assumed that this is the last word. these happy conversations are the sum total of what the books say, when the novels themselves presents much more troubling and complex visions of culture, literature, and history.

## **BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Hispano authors in New Mexico, in the wake of this original wave of modernist cultural appropriation, were at an advantage to observe its workings, feel its effects, and adopt its conventions to their own use. At the losing end of this exchange, Hispanos could sense that the choruses of praise for the combination of ancient tradition and modern aesthetics in their artistic productions drowned out their particular historically and geographically situated voice. One available response to this erasure, which this chapter will explore, was to adopt wholeheartedly the conventions and approaches of modernist authors, and by so doing, make a place for Hispanos to assert places for themselves within the aesthetic category of the Modern. We have in the writings of



Rudolfo Anaya and Fray Angelico Chávez similar approaches to the task of establishing voices authoritative enough to compete with the likes of Willa Cather and D.H. Lawrence. In order to explore these author's relationships to modernism, this chapter will describe how each author approaches the tasks of providing what they consider to be a complete and organized portrait of social life in twentieth century New Mexico. First, I will examine critical works on Fr. Chávez, many of which endeavor as much to ignore unsavory elements of his work as they do to celebrate his influence on New Mexican letters. This chapter will provide a corrective by directly confronting Fr. Chávez's anxieties about miscegenation and sexual activities of widowed women. These anxieties are readily visible in the primary texts, in contrast with those which are more concealed in the texts of Anaya. The critical canon on Anaya's work is much longer than that for Fr. Chávez's; it is also much more contentious than Fr. Chávez criticism about the virtues and failures of Anaya's work. It is my opinion that these critics fail to recognize the successes and failures of Anaya's works, because they fail to recognize that his novels exist within New Mexican literary traditions that span folklore, modernism, and commercial book marketing. By placing his works in dialog with those of Fr. Chávez, I will seek out commonalities between these authors, both in their interests and in those scenarios that they find taboo. This comparison will yield not a definitive portrait of a native New Mexican author, but a schematic of a rhetorical stance available to post-statehood, male, New Mexican authors—that of priest.

Fr. Chávez is an author who does little to disguise his prejudices, or to obscure his premises, as twisted as that path may be. Reading for Anaya's stance on his role and duty as an author proves much more tricky, and therefore requires a more incisive theoretical approach than when reading Fr. Chávez. Simply put, Fr. Chávez is more obviously present in his own work than Anaya is in his own. Anaya, like other authors of

the twentieth century, often figured New Mexico as existing outside of the normal course of history within an idyllic chronotope, under constant threat from the modern world. Our definition of chronotope will expand from Mikhail Bakhtin's more standard chronotopes, namely idyll and adventure, to use the most wide-ranging definition available in "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," which states that "they are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel" (250). Since Bakhtin gave many definitions of the chronotope, it is important to describe narrowly how the term is to be used. At its simplest, this is a term that allows the critic to identify the specific shapes that space and time take in a particular genre. For example, in adventure time, the space in which the action unfurls is unfamiliar to the hero, and yet constrained, and time unfolds in ever-repeating contingencies with each sudden event that keeps the story from reaching its conclusion. Idyll, however, is defined spatially by its distance from population centers and civilization, and temporally by an absence of hurry and strain that is always threatened by the looming presence of the city and its demands. What these classical genres have in common with each other is the element of abstraction. Bakhtin writes of adventure-time:

The most abstract of all chronotopes is also the most static. In such a chronotope the world and the individual are finished items, absolutely immobile. In [these chronotopes] there is no potential for evolution, for growth, for change. As a result of the action... nothing in its world is destroyed, remade, changed, or created anew. What we get is a mere affirmation of the identity between what we had at the beginning and what we have at the end (110).

Most of Anaya's more successful works, as I will show, are framed upon these most static and abstract of chronotopes, idyll and adventure time. Bakhtin admires the author Rabelais as a true artistic innovator, who aimed for "the recreation of a spatially and temporally adequate world able to provide a new chronotope for a new, whole and harmonious man, and for new forms of human communication" (168). For Bakhtin,

Rabelais invents the possibility of speaking from the interior of an individual, a messy movement through both the abstract and the particular. To include folklore, history, geography, and interiority in a character is to claim for the author not only the right to define concrete fact, but also the ability to assemble the profane and the divine into a working whole. Our definition of chronotope must then expand from the classical, abstract configurations of space and time, where the conventions are long settled and widely understood, with a reconfiguration in which concrete places and times are arranged by a specific consciousness into the peculiar (in two senses of the word) world of Rudolfo Anaya's *New Mexico*.

From the nineteenth century on in New Mexico, Anglo writers described its people and towns with the terms of idyll, and yet their own travels in terms of what Bakhtin called "adventure time." An idealized vision of the American west and its inhabitants beckoned them to "heal themselves through contact with nature and the life of simple people, learning from them the wisdom to deal with life and death" ("Forms of Time" 231).<sup>8</sup> From this early date, *Nuevomexicano* writers were toiling to impose historical accuracy on the magazine adventures that the railroads were starting to sell. Historians such as Benjamín Read, novelist Eusebio Chacón, and other Neo-mexicanos and periodiqueros described by Gabriel Meléndez worked over decades to establish a national culture for New Mexico based on accurate history and documented cultural practices. Meléndez criticizes the generation that followed (which he identifies as "The Daughters of Editors") for participating in what Genaro Padilla had already termed "a mass romanticizing project" (quoted in Meléndez 204). The quaint and colorful displaced the evidence of established New Mexican print culture, as public schooling "accelerated the displacement of Spanish as public language." Meléndez continues

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<sup>8</sup> Bakhtin is describing one of the tendencies of Tolstoy's Olenin. It fits for Charles Lummis.

Increasingly by the 1930's, if *Neo-Mexicanos* and *Neo-Mexicanas* wished to remain part of the public discourse that expanded around them, they were obliged to write in English, and within a modality of expression that precluded references to a social history of conquest and subordination. *Nuevomexicano/a* writers of the period almost without exception opted to present their cultural practices in a manner innocuous and inoffensive to outsiders. To accomplish this it became necessary to operate within the fiction that print culture had never contaminated the folk, and that *Neo-Mexicano* native practices offered unadulterated exemplars of what Padilla calls, "a harmonious and ahistoric plane of edenic cultural experience" (205).

While Meléndez's presentation of the almost forgotten founders of New Mexican letters is an absolutely necessary intervention, I do think that his condemnation of the following generation is too harsh. Meléndez recognizes that the terms of the discussion changed after New Mexico's statehood, and that in order to remain in the conversation *Nuevomexicanos* had to learn the new vocabulary. What Meléndez does not credit the "Daughters" with is their ability to recognize that the entire plane of the debate had shifted, from chronological lived time with its wars and its boredom, to the cruelties and certainties of abstract chronotopes in which Santa Fe and Taos Modernists took refuge by imposing order on the lives and cultures of their new neighbors.

How the generation of "daughters" coped with this imposition is the topic of other chapters. Here, we will focus on a pair of authors who could easily be read as the grandsons of the Neo-Mexicano *periodiqueros* and historians. Scholars and biographers describe Fray Angélico Chávez as a very young man as retaining the mystical fabulism of the "daughters." socializing in the Modernist circle, most particularly with Witter Bynner, writing poetry and subtly mocking the Santa Fe Fiesta by wearing an Argentinian gaucho costume (McCracken, 70). Rudolfo Anaya's upbringing is often described in more bucolic terms, with an ongoing allegiance to rural life read into the entirety of his literary output. Fr. Chávez was Anaya's elder by twenty-seven years, so grouping them together generationally is in many ways a stretch. What does occur in the work of these authors is

the catastrophic re-emergence of history in interbellum New Mexico, its sugary enchantments transformed into grotesques by the light of an atomic blast. As post war New Mexican authors, these two men were provided with a fertile literary heritage and a sense of the presence of history, if not with actual historical facts. They both continue to make use of the classical chronotopes favored by the Modernists, channeling the power of their certainties. However, by weaving within their works chronotopes of history and ethnography, these authors succeeded in what Bakhtin would describe as a Rabelaisian task—to bring the fictional Hispano out of the prison house of idyll and into his own glorious and damaged world (Bakhtin 206).

#### **TIERRA AFUERA**

Anaya's popularity, as evidenced by the Austin event, the voluminous annotated bibliography of Anaya works and criticism, and the Medal of Arts awarded to him by George W. Bush, seem to mirror the relative obscurity and ill repute of Fray Angélico Chávez. When I have told others that Fr. Chávez was included in this dissertation, those who actually know who this author is have often cautioned me with the words "You know he's a fascist, right?" Since his death in 1996, his scholarly defenders in academia and in New Mexican cultural institutions have encircled his work, in order protect his posthumous reputation as a scholar, an archivist, and a folklorist. In 2000, the University of New Mexico press released a collection of essays, *Fray Angélico Chávez: Poet, Priest, and Artist*, edited by Ellen McCracken. These essays are for the most part descriptions of his work, and are generally favorable assessments of his achievements. The purpose of this volume appears to be to establish for him a safe, dull afterlife as a beloved cultural grandfather. Very few of these critics go so far as to speak ill of the dead, and by the elision of his unpleasantness robs his works of some of their interest. This seems like an approach that is ill-suited for its subject given that even one of Fr. Chávez's own

staunchest heroes, Father Thomas J. Steele, describes him as “cantankerous, waspish, opinionated, outrageous, entertaining, charming, delightful, knowledgeable, intuitive, intelligent—everything that is opposite of boring” (ix). An author that is “irritating and even outrageous [in his] dimensions” seems to be poorly served by kid-glove treatment. This approach also serves to conflate the respecting the author with providing positive reviews of his work.

It is difficult to understand, having read so many such outrageous passages in the collected works of Fr. Chávez, how so many scholars write about them in such reverential tones. Take for example McCracken’s work on Fr. Chávez: her research on his juvenilia from his years in the seminary and as a young priest is exhaustive. Beyond reading his major publications, her work also refers to submissions he made to his seminary newsletter and *Saint Anthony’s Messenger* long before he was invested with authority as Santa Fé’s Archdiocese Archivist. Fr. Chávez’s years between seminary and his decision to leave the priesthood seem to have been busy with administrative and missionary duties, and his artistic output appears sparse, and gathering it together for reading probably took effort and should have made for a voluminous critical task. However, McCracken, along with the contributors to the volume that she edited in his honor in 2000, presents a much tidier and less controversial version of Fr. Chávez than that which exists in his own writing. McCracken’s essay “Iconicity and Narrative in the Work of Fray Angelico Chávez: Toward the Harmonious Imagetext” reveals how in Chávez’s early work “the verbal and the visual... are collaborative strategies linked by a common compulsion to narrate” (53). Be this as it may, this essay deftly avoids a discussion of what the images and words are narrating. When the combination produces a semiotic stick in the eye, as with the example of the cartoons from *St. Anthony’s Messenger*, stating that the effect is related to semiotics is hardly an adequate engagement

with the material.<sup>9</sup> In death, what is embarrassing to his eulogists—his racism, his sexism, his homophobia, his sympathy for the Falange in Spain—is excised and ignored in these acts of academic hagiography. This volume of essays establishes Fray Angélico Chávez as an appropriate cultural role model for New Mexican scholars. Ultimately, this scholarship's goal seems to work as much to conceal Chávez's errors as it does to reveal his strengths.

I can sympathize with the desire to secure for Fr. Chávez a place in the scholarly discourse on New Mexico. While Hispanos have long been seen as appropriate objects of study by academics and artists, circumstances of poverty, racism, and language discrimination all conspired to keep Hispanos out of positions of power in many cultural institutions for much of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez is one of the very few Hispanos of his generation able to leverage himself into a position of authority, and to make himself heard at the level of state and archdiocese politics. This is an accomplishment that deserves honor. However, his words were so often scabrous, or alternately, obscure, that it is hard not to conclude that this volume is an effort to edit him into an appropriate role model. It is difficult to imagine the kind of mental effort that it would take to ignore such baldly stated sympathies and unconcealed prejudices. In fact, it does not seem likely that Fr. Chávez himself would entirely appreciate this effort. It makes him more presentable, but it robs him of the aura of biting judgment that he seems to have worked so hard to develop, and sacrificed too much for to maintain. To me, transforming Fr. Chávez into a model citizen robs him of a certain acidic essence. Furthermore, ignoring the uglier aspects of Fr. Chávez's discourse is a great disservice to understanding the texts, and make it nearly impossible to read Fr. Chávez within the

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>10</sup> See Erlinda Gonzales-Berry's work on Benjamin Read's archive and the machinations of the New Mexico Historical Society for an excellent example of this.

context of authors of his generation. Fray Angélico Chávez critics and apologists, rather than point out his errors and their significance, go out of their way to concur with or ignore his most controversial statements.

If such deference makes for a bland and disengaged assessment of brief texts like “From Out of the Centuries,” then in the case of a really difficult text like *My Penitente Land*, it spells disaster. In the essay “Recovering the Noble Spanish Soul,” Clark Colahan states:

There is little doubt that he was powerfully moved by a desire to vindicate his worth as a Spanish New Mexican, and that such vindication required the clarity and dignity of an ethnic self-knowledge he found painfully lacking in his own family (103).

This is an especially awkward moment in an essay that must have represented a particularly trying task for this author: the title states that in *MPL* Fr. Chávez is “Recovering the Noble Spanish Soul,” but Colahan does not appear to grasp the ways in which the term “Spanish” came to be a useful identifier for New Mexicans.<sup>11</sup> It is unfortunate that Colahan does not possess a sense of Nineteenth century New Mexican political history, or that respect for Fr. Chávez has led him to deliberately affect naivete in regards to the racial dynamics of the southwestern United States. Without providing a context for how the term “Spanish” came into broad use during the statehood struggles, Colahan permits Fr. Chávez his assertion that New Mexico retained an enduring *anima hispanica*. He credits Fr. Chávez with seeking “ethnic self-knowledge,” and defers on the shakiness of the evidence. Rather than recognize Fr. Chávez’s phobia of mestizaje, he notes instead a tendency to idealization of Spanish purity (107).

Like many of the essays in this volume, Colahan’s essay is short—it struggles to cover seven pages. Fr. Chávez’s book is a sprawling, disjointed, and aggravating, and the

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<sup>11</sup> See John Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*.



brevity of Colahan's essay on it can be interpreted as unwillingness on the critic's part to engage this difficult, almost punishing text. However, even this discreet approach does not release the critic from the demands of the text, for excuses must be made for the author before the inoffensive conclusion can be reached. Colahan states:

Some Chicano critics have failed to recognize that the embrace of Spanish culture by Chávez responds to the same needs that led early twentieth-century Mexican writers to embrace Aztec culture as their nation's real identity (102).

Then he proceeds into the rest of his argument, as if this statement settles the argument about the legitimacy of Fr. Chávez's approach.<sup>12</sup> There is an assumption here that "pride" and "identity" somehow exist separately from twentieth century ideals and social movements, in all of their glory and trouble, as ends in and of themselves. The essayist is more concerned with quieting Chicano critics than with following up on his own proposition. And while this approach might endeavor to provide a respectful space in which to present the true virtues of Fr. Chávez's text, what it does do is prevent the writer from discussing the text at all.

Colahan approaches a topic of interest, only to step away from danger one more time, is at Fr. Chávez statement on the genesis of his search to find his Spanish roots. Colahan references (and in his notes, mislocates) an interesting Freudian slip in the prologue to MPL, in which Fr. Chávez identifies his mother's inability to provide an adequate narration of their racial and cultural background as the initiation of his inquiries. As Fr. Chávez put it, "The matter of antiquity, the very vagueness of it, played havoc with my young mind" (xi).<sup>13</sup> Throughout the text, Fr. Chávez identifies vagueness and emotion with sickness and indulgent melancholia, and therefore with popular perceptions of a Mexican fatalism. The racism that he internalizes is inherently linked with his

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<sup>12</sup> This as an intriguing possibility — why not read Chávez within the context of Paz and Vasconcelos? Does our essayist recognize just how controversial this proposition is?

<sup>13</sup> *not* 267, as Colahan places it.

mother's inability to give him a tidy narrative that counters a hierarchy that raises Anglos and denigrates Mexicans. His disgust at the possibility that he might be associated with something which he perceived as unclean leads Fr. Chávez to select moments from an already selective world history that prove that the Hispano is the heir of Abraham's covenant, and that all other people are fallen into worldliness and self-indulgence. Harshness and hardship define the *castizo* nature of these people, and for Fr. Chávez the desire for comfort is both a sign of weakness and of cultural degradation. Making a link between this anguished account of one man's inability to cope with the fact of Mexico and any true entity of Iberian culture is a fool's errand, and Colahan does well to make a couple of defensive statements and wrap things up as quickly as possible.

The most earnest and effective attempt to salvage Fr. Chávez's work and reputation from obscurity is done by Genaro Padilla, who edited and wrote the introduction for a collection of Fr. Chávez's short stories in 1987. Much of the work that has been done with Fray Angélico Chávez since then seems to echo the conclusions that Padilla made here. These stories, which include *The New Mexico Triptych*, are Fr. Chávez's most appealing and accessible work. They are often rigidly allegorical; as in the case of "A Romeo and Juliet Story in New Mexico," the title tells the whole story. If *My Penitente Land* was a theoretical exploration of the origins of the New Mexican soul, then these stories are an attempt to create a concrete vision of Fr. Chávez's ideal New Mexican person, village, and life. The characters in these stories are simple, with few possessions and wants, but with many vanities. When these characters find themselves acting out of pride, some force from without them, civic or divine, forces them back into conformity with their vecinos. Civic conformity, as in the case of "The Angel's New Wings," can indicate that the community has turned from the divine purpose of their presence in the high desert, as they sneer at Nabor's insistence that a carved figure has

taken flight. Alternately, in “A Romeo and Juliet Story,” the standards of a small, intimately linked community protect marginalized groups like mestizos and women from the arbitrary edicts of colonial hierarchy. This is a restoration of the divine over the earthly. Furthermore, God, the spirits, and the saints take part in reinforcing the bonds of civic duty. In “The Bell that Rang Again,” a suicidal young widow is talked away from a cliff by the lecturing presence of Santa Ysabel, who scolds her into accepting her place in her community, and therefore in the cosmos. Or in “The Penitente Thief,” the appearance of Christ during Holy Week leads two criminals to reenact the crucifixion at Gethsemane. Much more than *My Penitente Land*, *The Short Stories of Fray Angélico Chávez* is a clear and coherent vision of Fr. Chávez’s vision and ideals. In the stories that are set in the distant past, Fr. Chávez presents small communities bound in harmony to the land and to God. Those stories set closer to the present show once harmonious villages now rent by greed, envy, and drunkenness.

Padilla, in his 1987 introduction to this collection, described the stories as “genial, easy to read, written in a style that draws upon the rich resources of informal storytelling in the Hispano communities of New Mexico, as well as the more formal cuento tradition in the Southwest” (xi). He continues:

What makes Chávez original is that his stories locate themselves somewhere between the allegorical *cuento* and historical fiction. In a sense, Chávez’s fictive events, taking place as they do on an identifiable New Mexico landscape, constitute a socio-mythic world inhabited by Hispanos tested again and again for their ability to endure, to sustain their cultural lifeways, to preserve their customs in a society that devalues them (xi-ii).

Padilla’s assessment of Fr. Chávez’s stories points out what is important and worthy about these works. It is so rare to find a depiction of these communities written by someone who has an insider’s perspective. More often, these towns, parishes, and villages are described by ethnographers who frame them as exotic and endangered.

Unfortunately, Padilla falls into the trap of accepting Fr. Chávez too wholeheartedly as a native informant, neglecting to recognize that Fr. Chávez too has certain political and theological agendas to enforce on his source material. For as much as he is a child of New Mexico, Fr. Chávez is also a product of the 1930's, the missionary branch of the Catholic church, and American racial politics. All of these factors of Fr. Chávez's writings are glossed over with the word "oppositional." In reading Fr. Chávez as a Chicano role model, Padilla reads him anachronistically, ignoring crucial elements of the texts. Ignoring trouble, Padilla flattens the history and culture of Mexican Americans, making it possible to recoup our elders as our political peers, but only by ignoring who they were and what they said. His determination to make Fr. Chávez a comrade makes Padilla a comrade to Fr. Chávez's fear of women and Native Americans.

For Fr. Chávez, a key sign of cultural degradation is a sexually incontinent woman. By this I do not mean an unmarried women; both "A Romeo and Juliet Story" and "The Ardent Commandant" contain older women who control their own fortunes and bedchambers. In fact, Fr. Chávez uses extended virginity as a signal that the ways of village life are in decline. In "The Lean Years," the village of La Cunita (translated literally, the little cradle) goes into decline in sync with the heroine Soledad, who's pelvis is crushed by a fallen beam on her wedding night, rendering her incapable of walking or bearing children. "You are my wife—and my baby!" proclaims her husband, José, whose kind and attentive ministrations can only slow her progress from paralysis to death. Soledad's downfall mirrors that of the village, cut off from their pastures by land speculation and unable to produce a new generation. The family remains in the village for the duration of Soledad's life, but like many Northern New Mexican families they must sell off their handcrafted home furnishings to collectors in the railroad town of Las Vegas in order to have the cash to do so. Soledad's forced virginity is an allegorical

signal of the destruction of New Mexican village life. Without the means to reproduce, the men of the village are relegated to attending to its downfall, selling off handicrafts in an attempt to hold off the inevitable. When the end comes for both Soledad and La Cunita, José moves to Las Vegas to work on the railroad, and remarries. While his life is happy, it lacks the purity of his life in La Cunita. The hollyhocks at his gate, which grew pure white under the care of Soledad, grow red in Las Vegas, and “even the white ones had red and purple centers” (115). We are to understand that life in Las Vegas, working on the railroad, and raising a large family on a meager paycheck are somewhat poor compensation for a life on the land, in a house that you have built and furnished with your own hands. For Fr. Chávez, female sexual activity is a sign of vitality, so long as it is monitored and channeled for the benefit of the community.

For Padilla, this is the essence of Fr. Chávez’s project—to depict the exchange of organic, non-alienated village life for a place in the American wage structure. Framing this project with the term “oppositional” allows us to read all of these stories as critical of U.S. western expansion, and through this, critical of capitalist political hegemony. What Padilla’s assessment elides is Fr. Chávez’s phobic fascination with women and Native Americans, exemplified in how a young Mexican woman in “The Black Ewe,” receives a thorough beating from a Navajo shepherd for tempting the *patrón* away from the loving ministrations of his pure Spanish wife. Illicit, miscegenist sex is the sign of social breakdown, and justice at the hands of a stereotypical Navajo man is in Fr. Chávez work the sign that nature disapproves of sin. The objects of Fr. Chávez’s most pointed scrutiny are widows. Widows are sexually ambiguous, experienced and yet lacking the disciplining presence of a husband. Unlike virgins, they are released from societal and familial pressure to preserve their virtue, and unlike the temptress in “The Black Ewe” they have yet to earn a beating. Furthermore, widows in Fr. Chávez’s stories are often

predators, always in the lookout for their next husband. The mere presence of “the widow Casillas” in La Cunita signals trouble for José and Soledad’s marriage (111). In “The Ardent Commandant,” the handsome “Comandante del Fuego” (literally, “Commandant of the Flames,” an honorific for Satan), attempts to take up residence in the house of the widow Doña Casilda. Only a vision of the Blessed Virgin saves her from the decision to make the devil her fourth husband.

The most unnerving passage that is produced by this fascination appears in “The Bell that Rang Again.” In this story, a young married woman thoughtlessly contributes her wedding ring to the casting of a new church bell, inspired more by the charms of the bell caster than thoughts of heaven. In a rage, her husband challenges the caster to a duel, and in the end they murder each other. The young woman, Ysabel, wallows in grief and bitterness, which is compounded by the realization that she is pregnant. Despondent, she attempts to walk off a cliff, but she is met at the edge by her tocaya Santa Ysabel, who lectures her thusly:

The entire earth is red, my dear, red with blood and pain. It is red with the blood of women when they are not having children, and also when they do have them. And it is red with blood being shed by men through war and crimes. Bloody noses when they have children, bloody heads when they are grown... Hearts will ever bleed upon this red earth, my daughter, even the innocent. Why? I myself know it now, but you would not understand it if I told you, only darkly... (59).

I find it quite disturbing that Fr. Chávez renders the homicidal urge in this fashion, as mysterious, but natural and inevitable. Like the other widows of this collection, it is now the duty of young Ysabel to return to her home and give birth joyfully, and to raise her son with this knowledge in her heart. Fr. Chávez does not demand that Divine law regulate human behavior and prevent disaster, but instead that it be a consolation for the chaos of the terrestrial plane, New and Old Testament strictures be damned. In this passage, Fr. Chávez copes with sexual ambiguity by advocating that the widow surrender

herself to a role in life that she can't hope to understand. Human difficulties are not to be overcome, but accepted passively. While one could interpret this passage as an expression of mystical release, Fr. Chávez sees these fragments of village life transported to the modern world, in the form of stories, flowers, religious practice and household items. Fr. Chávez seeks out fragments of the old ways to shore up his own vision of permanent divine law. Padilla's statement that his fiction lies somewhere between historical fiction and cuento is quite apt, but it neglects to note how dangerous that place is. Fr. Chávez's fiction adopts the authority of the cuento, unencumbered by its specific social and historical locatedness. Therefore, the versions of immutable law and long-held tradition can appear peculiarly tailored the prejudices and beliefs of a mission Franciscan.

The fundamental insufficiency of the category "oppositional" is revealed in Padilla's reading of these stories. While Padilla correctly praises Fr. Chávez for identifying the ways in which American capitalism corrupted and destroyed the village life of Northern New Mexico, he neglects to thoroughly examine the nature of the counter-vision that Fr. Chávez provides. In short, his eagerness to make political allies of his literary ancestors makes Padilla ignore their politics. And while Padilla is not the only critic to use this term, his introduction appears to have provided the basis of most of the Fr. Chávez criticism that has been done since. Mario T. García sums up the oppositionalist school of Fr. Chávez criticism when he calls these works a redefinition of American history which does not eliminate "the Anglo-American story, [but puts] it into perspective by recognizing the heterogenous nature of the American saga" (25). This formulation would position Fr. Chávez's work as a static supplement to the standard American story. There is a polarity to this model, in which neither the American saga nor Fr. Chávez's history can actually ever touch. In supplementing each other, these different versions of history may refer to the other, but never synthesize. The work of declaring

Fr. Chávez's work oppositional, then, serves like a bell jar to separate his work from that of his contemporaries. In this state, the body of his work can only refer either to his own broad opposition or to the story that it is opposing. To call the work "oppositional" and then to leave matters there, is to leave the texts in isolation, ignoring any intertextual referents or further ambitions. Only in such isolation can these texts be forced to serve the needs of the reader to make the author a political contemporary, so much at the expense of the author.

Fr. Chávez's *My Penitente Land* is an ethnography of the New Mexican much in the same way that *Tristram Shandy* is a fictional biography of a country gentleman. It is infuriating, non-linear, and utterly ruled by an internal logic that belongs only to its author. To read this text as oppositional is a viable option; but oppositionality would require reading our narrator as a rogue, a clown, a *crank*, quite distanced from the author. To read this text as Shandyism is to read a layer of authorial play between the content of the text and the perceived meaning. Furthermore, to read it as oppositional forces the question, "what is it that this text opposes?" Certainly, statements like, "there were no Dark Ages in Spain," certainly do call into question just how seriously the narrator wants to be taken (126). However, the narrator of *My Penitente Land* is consistent in his contention that New Mexicans are the ultimate heirs of the Covenant of Abraham. Furthermore, there's little distance between the declared affiliations and biases of the narrator and Fr. Chávez's own institutional allegiances to church hierarchy, specifically the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. From these we can gather that the author of *My Penitente Land* is not presenting a rogue's commentary on New Mexican racist anxiety towards Mexico, but that our narrator and the author are enmeshed. This text, unfortunately, makes apologies for Francisco Franco (147), casts aspersions on the baleful influence of Moctezuma on Mexican corridos (170), and fashions New Mexicans as a lost tribe of



Israel (59). Fr. Chávez hardly opposes the vision of Santa Fe that is presented in Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. He states, "It is indeed a masterful painting of my penitente land; but with penitential strokes that hurt" (258). With this statement, it is unclear if Fr. Chávez even objects to Cather's characterizations of Taos, Padre Martinez, and Archbishop Lamy, much less that he stands in opposition to it. I have yet to read anyone declare that *My Penitente Land* is an oppositional text, because to do so is simply untenable. So we can step away from the text for a moment concluding first that the narrator and the author are in sync and that the content is in earnest. So while Fr. Chávez does exhibit distaste for one entirely objectionable historical view, the one that he presents in its place is equally objectionable. His is not a road forward for us, in spite of our desires for political forbears, and no dressing up with terms like "oppositional" will alter that. And as a declaration of Fr. Chávez's vision of what it is to be New Mexican, reading *My Penitente Land* calls into question the validity or usefulness of the designation "oppositional."

To reiterate: *My Penitente Land* is a sweeping, caustic, mentally and emotionally trying text, filled to the brim with sweeping overgeneralizations and poisonous little barbs. It begins by attempting to establish a geographically determinist genealogy that descends from the covenant of Abraham, through the Spanish Highlands of Seville, to the high desert of Northern New Mexico, where "they were better enabled to hear it because the dry uplands and their pastoral life had helped attune their ears and hearts to its call" (9). Fr. Chávez's vision of divine favor for upland shepherds, accompanied by a general condemnation of urban sophistication, is a rubric that excludes any element of history that contradicts it. Native Americans, he sniffs, had "a hard life of meager corn-planting and hunting of wild game by the most primitive means in an upland country that Nature had really intended for grazing" (30). Gathering from this that God had also intended all

the souls of these misguided “corn-planters” for the Catholic church, Fr. Chávez’s reader could assume that when Villagr  and O ate arrived on the scene that both “Nature” and God approved of the displacement of aboriginal peoples. Not satisfied to sever the histories of Hispanos from those of the native communities that surround it, Fr. Ch vez endeavors to separate the *New Mexico* from the interior, where “Bastard *mestizos* were all over the place, the sour fruit of armed invasions everywhere and in every age” (162). Fr. Ch vez most often associates the interior with corruption, both of institutions, people, and organic material. In this narrative, divine providence separates New Mexico from the old with a “Sinaitic wilderness,” providing this chosen people with “tierra afuera” in which to live out

...their simple Extremaduran pastoral and patriarchal life in their spacious Castilian landscape that was their very own, not the Old World estates of the feudal gentry or of the growing aristocracy in New Spain. Practically unbothered by officialdom and other such burdens of civilization, they could care less about the fortunes of that outer world to the south where the Crown’s viceroy and his court held sway (164-5).

Fr. Ch vez writes that this isolation was so thorough that the period of Mexican independence passed mostly unnoticed in New Mexico; only slightly more noticed was the Mexican American War. In this text he glosses over the difficulties between Mexican Franciscans and the new priests sent to shepherd the new Archdiocese of Santa Fe, perhaps keeping his powder dry for his own biography of Padre Martinez. But ultimately his work aims to portray New Mexicans as existing in symbiosis with the land, unchanging and untouchable, the immutable laws of God and the church playing out in a harsh landscape.

## INTERLUDE

The careers of these authors overlapped for a relatively brief time. Fr. Ch vez had been writing poetry for more than a decade by the time that Anaya was born, and his

most important poem, “The Virgin of Port Lligat” was published at about the same time that Anaya graduated from highschool in 1956. Nevertheless, they were rivals for a brief time in the early seventies, between the time after *Bless Me, Última* was published in 1972 and Fr. Chávez’s decision in about 1974 to give up his literary efforts to devote himself to archival work. Fr. Chávez reviewed *Bless Me, Última* for *New Mexico Magazine* in 1973. He gives mild praise to Anaya’s writing and to the plot, but also condemns it for a lack of “literary control.” He goes on to say

But now to the theme. Witchcraft, evil as well as benign, permeates the thinking of the characters, and as such it is not a true picture of Hispanic New Mexicans in general, just as Faulkner’s themes do not depict the American South’s true side. Hence one begins to suspect a lower stratum in local society for whom the occult is on par with a badly understood catechism (46).

It is interesting that Fr. Chávez links Anaya with Faulkner; it is also widely off the mark. While both Anaya and Faulkner meditate on unspeakable truths within close-knit, multi-generational communities, their approaches and the effects of their narratives differ. To put it obliquely, Faulkner writes about secrets while Anaya writes about mystery; to put it crudely, Faulkner’s writings reveal the influence of Freud, Anaya’s the influence of Jung. Mystery in general is not a topic to which Fr. Chávez can entirely object—*My Penitente Land*, which premiered a few months after this review, praises mystical connections (*hesed*) between upland Hispanos and a unique, all-powerful deity. What Fr. Chávez does object to is how Anaya peoples his mysteries, and it is interesting that Fr. Chávez sees a parallel between Faulkner’s post-Civil War visions of miscegenation and social hypocrisy and Anaya’s fictional portrayal of witchcraft<sup>14</sup>. The review obfuscates Fr. Chávez’s real objection to the novel: Anaya is on his turf, and interfering with his own

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<sup>14</sup> Witchcraft is the term that Chávez uses to describe the syncretic religious and medical practices of *Última*. Of course, Chávez was not the first or the last critic to find the sexual and occult elements of Anaya’s breakout novel objectionable. *Bless Me, Última* is perhaps most infamous for the number of libraries and school boards that have attempted to ban it for its references to witchcraft and prostitution, as well as for obscene language. That it is inappropriate for children is not the only charge leveled against it.

carefully constructed New Mexico origin myth. He leads his review with words like “imaginary” and sneers that the lack of catechist knowledge marks the work as low class. He makes a show of linking *Última* with a seventeenth century “mulatto-Aztec,”—all of this within three paragraphs-- revealing a writer on the defensive, capped with the statement that this is not “to disparage. There is unusual writing ability here which should not stop at this point” (46). According to Fr. Chávez, the writing should not stop, but the author should learn the rules and stable of characters as had been previously defined.

It is for this reason that I combine my discussion of Anaya with that of Fr. Chávez. As with Fr. Chávez, the criticism of Anaya, as we have seen, reads his work in terms of polarities: is it romance or novel? Activist or reactionary? Sufficiently or insufficiently Chicano? Saldívar’s chapter on *Bless Me, Última*, rather than put the argument to rest, merely continues the fruitless shuttling between diametrically opposed arguments. We must break the habit of speaking of these authors in merely political terms. However, to look at them only in aesthetic terms (as in the “novel” or “romance” discussion does) produces another intellectual impasse. Any reading of these bodies of work must look beyond these artificial dichotomies. These texts, and these authors, are very astute politically, and they have political ambitions, but to influence politics is not the exclusive goal of any one of the texts that I have read for the purpose of writing this chapter. Concurrently, these authors are both artisans, but neither ever writes for exclusively aesthetic reasons. The texts that these two authors, I argue, work to create a portrait of the New Mexican in a political, historical, emotional, and aesthetic totality. These texts may supplement a more widely held version of American history or letters, but this also is not the exclusive goal of these works. These authors, through their texts, embody the author’s visions of New Mexico in its totality. And as is the case with many

a visionary work, there are excisions and blind spots that reflect the obsessions and prejudices of these authors.

### HEART OF AZTLAN

Much of the early criticism of Anaya suggests a struggle between the Marxists and the Jungians over how to judge *Bless Me, Última* and *Heart of Aztlán*. Juan Rodríguez's "La búsqueda de identidad y sus motivaciones en la literatura chicana" criticizes the fantastic novel for not communicating beyond the closed system of its own artifice, stating

Nótese que el protagonista a través de la novela nunca le dice a nadie de su hallazgo, nunca comunica su nueva visión de la realidad... Las consecuencias pésimas de esta manera de "encontrar" la realidad nos da obras como *The Road to Tamazunchale*... [y] *Bless Me, Última*... obras en que los problemas reales del chicano se ignoran, se callan, se distorsionan o se dan por resueltos, hecho que se debe a que estas obras parten de un identidad mental ya recuperada...

[Observe that the protagonist throughout the novel never tells anyone of his discovery, never communicates his new vision of reality. The heavy consequences of this manner of "encountering" reality gives of us works like *The Road to Tamazunchale*... [and] *Bless Me, Última*... works in which the actual problems of the Chicano are ignored, silenced, distorted, or given as resolved, due to the fact that these works proceed from an identity that is already recovered... ] (174, my translation).

The novel of individual psychic discovery, for Rodríguez, pales in comparison to novels where the "hijo del sol" (son of the sun) resolves his psychic troubles in "la esfera de la acción física, la esfera social" (175). In later days, Anaya would compare such doctrinaire criticism to China's Cultural Revolution, calling the most outspoken of his critics "The Chicano Gang of Four" (*Chicano in China* 119-20). Antonio Márquez, in a slightly more circumspect response to such criticism, wrote that *Bless Me, Última*

stood in stark contrast to the shrill polemics of that emerged from the political cauldron of the 1960's and attempted to pass for literature. *Bless Me, Última*, a muted and subtle work that dissuaded politics, projected reams of symbols and

archetypes, and fused realism and fantasy, demonstrated that it was a painstakingly crafted novel (34-5).

Márquez's essay, along with the early works of Roberto Cantú, demonstrates that from its beginnings, Anaya criticism has focused on the relevance and relation of fantasy to material life.

Through the eighties and early nineties this argument chiefly centered on genre; in response to those who would call his work insufficiently concerned with the manners and conventions of lived life there seems to have been a general movement to absolve *Bless Me, Última* of the conventions of the novel. Enrique Lamadrid's "Myth as Cognitive Process of Popular Culture in Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Última*: The Dialectics of Knowledge," spans the divide between the critical labels of bildungsroman and romance, stating that the narrative is "not a quaint, ahistorical sketch of rural folkways, but rather a dialectical exploration of the contradictions between lifestyles and "cultures" (100- 1). According to Lamadrid, the consciousness of the boy is "exceptional," and in its "seeming contradictions invite[s] a reexamination of the relation of myth to social consciousness, often defined as antithetical or incompatible categories which erode and undermine each other" (101). Hector Calderón's "*Bless Me, Última*: A Chicano Romance of the Southwest" uses Northrop Frye's maxim about the possibility of romance during times of cultural transformation to establish a generic lineage for the book. The purpose of the romance here is not to represent local people or behavior, but to "lead, on one hand, to the representation of subjectivity and, on the other, to the reconstruction of historical events in the romance form" (Calderón 69). This movement to remove the narrative from the realm of the social into that of the psychological is completely achieved in Cantú's "Apocalypse as an Ideological Construct: The Storyteller's Art in *Bless Me, Última*." This essay states "Anaya criticism is still disputing whether

BMU, at an ideological level, is Chicano or not Chicano enough.” He claims “Chicano literary criticism... becomes easily entrapped in essentialist notions of an assumed Chicano ontology which would determine the structural limits of our “experience” and our expressive culture” (Cantú 13).

In a decisive break from such efforts to relieve Anaya of the burdens of materialist ontology, Ramón Saldívar savaged *Bless Me, Última* as a novel in *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*. The chapter is a sophisticated response to the assertion that a fantasy genre releases the work from the need for it to refer to human struggle; it appears to be an attempt to restart Rodríguez’s argument that *Bless Me, Última* resides outside of “la esfera de acción física” from a more sophisticated and critically relevant footing. Saldívar demands that the novel be true to a specific history of struggle, and states:

Our [analysis]... suggests the ideological service that his narrative of romance performs by repressing worlds of history and work (by ignoring the effects of the force and forms of production on New Mexican history) and of the protopolitical conflict (by assigning the conflicts between Spanish colonialism and Native Americans, between Mexicans and Anglos, and between New Mexican workers and capitalist interests to the margins of the text and to the subconscious realm of Antonio’s mind). History is vanquished in Antonio’s superior narrative by being subsumed to only one of the four levels of temporality with which we began our discussion, the level of non-durational myth and dream (Saldívar, 126).

But are non-durational myth and dream necessarily outside the realm of history? Many of Saldívar’s assumptions about Anaya’s text seem to be grounded in Rodolfo Acuña’s dismissive description of New Mexican cultural formation. His assessment of Anaya makes the author Anaya complicit in the constant re-creation of fantasy heritage, stating “Anaya attempts to create a substitute history of the young boy... His story... must be read as a nostalgic projection of wish fulfillment” (118). His ultimate assessment of the book continues:

Unlike other Chicano narratives with which we have dealt, *Bless Me, Última* cancels out “realism,” attempting to cross it out and lift it up to a higher realm of truth, as in some Hegelian dialectic. The facticity of this precritical idealist venture is nowhere more evident nor more dissatisfying than in Anaya’s writings, which impose upon us the burden of restoring the whole socially concrete subtext of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Southwestern history, mythified and reified on so many levels of utopian compensation (126).

Saldívar’s argument is sophisticated, but his reliance on Acuña’s baldly polemical account of the region’s history limits the extent to which he can criticize Anaya for its lack of realism. Saldívar’s claim, for all its remarkable insights on the nature of romance and the political failures of Anaya’s first novel, remains mired in a historical model that treasures the narrative of the “esfera de acción” to the detriment of envisioning diverse modes of action. And what Acuña’s history can’t account for is the extended literary and cultural history of the region, and that New Mexico’s fantasy heritage has been the site of social contest since the nineteenth century. Distorting popular perceptions of New Mexican history has been one of the few open avenues for New Mexicans to participate in their own cultural formation. Neither Saldívar nor Acuña recognizes that Anaya might be participating in an already established discourse, and that his work both participates and chafes within it.

As we have seen, much of the criticism of Anaya centers on his early works, almost to the exclusion of any work after *Bless Me, Última* and *Heart of Aztlán*. Most of the criticism is sober and earnest in tone, in keeping with the tenor of Anaya’s first novels. Anaya’s latest grouping of novels, beginning with *Albuquerque*, and then proceeding through the trilogy of mystery novels *Zia Summer*, *Rio Grande Fall*, and *Shaman Winter*, has until lately been neglected by critics. One wonders if Anaya’s choice of genre, the careless reading of which is often associated with the boredom of titillation-free zones like airports and waiting rooms, tends to put critics off. The first two of the detective novels themselves do not disappoint the casual reader in this



regard—there’s plenty of car chases, gunplay, and true love waiting for the hero to tire of temptresses and come home to settle down. *Zia Summer* and *Rio Grande Fall* in particular seem to revel in the constraints of the mystery genre; it’s only when Anaya has to wrap the sequence up by bringing the villain Raven to justice and sending Sonny Baca home to Rita that Anaya’s broader ideas begin to chafe once more against genre. In *Shaman Winter* we have an opportunity to revisit certain critical controversies about Anaya’s first novel, and to explore those elements of his project that have remained unchanged in the decades since *Bless Me, Última* debuted more than thirty years ago.

*Bless Me, Última* is a literary phenomenon, if my observations from the Austin Library event hold true. In my assessment, it is unnecessary to declare it either a romance or a bildungsroman—in fact, that it combines elements of both might be the key to its continued success. There are at least two chronotopes contained within the narrative of *Bless Me, Última*: the idyll and the bildungsroman. Bakhtin believed that these forms tend to cancel each other out, and that Goethe and Sterne’s bildungsroman destroy idyll (“Forms of Time” 229); that they coexist in Anaya’s text is therefore a major accomplishment. Última, Cico, and the Trementinas all exist within the idyllic, watery confines of Las Pasturas, in that their lives blur temporal boundaries, are limited to a few basic realities, and are fundamentally conjoined with nature.<sup>15</sup> Antonio observes the idyll, but positioned as he is as narrating the story from far in the future, he is always slightly outside of it, eulogizing its imminent disappearance. The details of his life progress as bildungsroman, with the early shock at the death of Lupito, his apprenticeship/ scapegoat experience at Puerta de Los Lunas, and his growing disillusionment with his elder brothers. In this novel, balance between chronotopes is

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<sup>15</sup> Saldívar, following Taussig, argues that the Trementinas represent the arrival of capitalist destruction of nature. That the Trementinas are bound by the same rules as Última, even in the abuse of nature, makes me doubt the strength of this claim. Última herself is fearsome.

aided by Anaya's Jungian vocabulary. A psychoanalytic frame renders the progress of the bildungsroman as something natural and universal, making for a tidier fit with idyll. Conversely, this is an approach that renders as archetypes the basic elements of life that are central to idyll, giving the pastoral childhood another layer of significance. There is a very delicate balance between idyll and bildungsroman here, and it often threatens to tip entirely out of one or the other. The ending arrives as a disappointment, because it fulfills none of the needs of its various chronotopes; idyll is destroyed, and though Antonio is blessed and precocious, he remains a boy.

Outside of the mythical confines of Las Pasturas, the balance between bildungsroman and idyll cannot be maintained. Idyll is too confining for Anaya to truly locate his project in a specific place and time, and the continued maturation of his characters demands that conditions be very specific—Albuquerque's working class barrios at the middle of the twentieth century. Outside the relatively placid and speculative domains of childhood development, a Jungian vocabulary ceases to be an adequate framework, and also confines characters to rigid roles. In order to progress politically, the narrative must step away from a lost paradise in the country and into conflicts of urban industrial life. In *Heart of Aztlán* and *Tortuga*, Anaya achieves freedom from idyll, but at the cost of providing a reason to continue a Jungian framework. His prose here is hardly more stilted or affected than in *Bless Me, Última*, but when it is not working to balance out two chronotopes, Anaya's grandiosity seems to be an unnecessary aggregation on a realist novel, a mystical co-narrative that seems like a discordant accompaniment to the rail yards, strikes, violence, and injury of Barelás in the 1950's.

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As a prose writer, Anaya works best with rigid narrative frameworks. It is hardly surprising that later Anaya turns to writing mystery novels. Mystery-time, like idyll and adventure-time, is bound by strict conventions and is therefore necessarily static. The

reader of mystery novels relies on a beginning with a corpse, an ending with the arrival of civic justice (courtroom or arrest), and in between the unraveling of a puzzle that facilitates narrative snooping in the habits and folkways of whatever people happens to provide local color to the technical proceedings. Within this very set and particular chronotope of the legal-criminal process, Anaya's *Albuquerque*, *Zia Summer*, *Rio Grande Fall*, and *Shaman Winter* all present portraits of New Mexican political and cultural life, with much more variation and detail than was available in any of his previous novels. The genre of mystery writing actually provides a broad audience of readers access to a sort of popular ethnography, as it provides "specific forms for uncovering and making private life public" ("Forms of Time" 124). Authors such as Tony Hillerman and Rolando Hinojosa have also used the genre of mystery not only to great narrative effect, but also to introduce a large audience to the concerns of isolated and marginalized peoples. *Albuquerque*, while not technically a murder mystery, does feature a young man's search for his birth parents, with concomitant opportunity for Anaya to explore the houses of Barelás, Martineztown, and the Country Club area of Albuquerque. Actual bars and restaurants, such as the now-defunct Jack's on Central and the local institution of Barelás Coffee House, provide the background for the action in this novel and the trilogy of mysteries that followed it. *Albuquerque* is a sort of interlude between the earlier novels and the mystery trilogy—to this point, there is a continuation between his first trilogy and this book, in that certain characters reappear in different contexts. In *Albuquerque*, the necessary corpse is that of Cindy, an Anglo girl who first appeared in *Heart of Aztlán*. While in her earlier appearance she was sexually

needy and meddlesome, in *Albuquerque* she is the dying birth mother of the hero, Abrán. The novel involves our hero's quest to find his birth father, which turns out to be Ben Fr. Chávez, a character from *Heart of Aztlán* and *Tortuga*. The quest narrative of *Albuquerque*, which leads Abrán through the dangers of Albuquerque's corrupt city hall, into the bed of the sexy mayor Marisa, a boxing championship and then finally to knowledge of his father and of himself, provides Anaya with an ideal means of roaming and mapping the city as it existed in the early nineties.

Considering that the murder mystery is a more constrained type of quest narrative, there is an obvious genealogy between Anaya's earliest writings and his mystery novels. The corpse in the first novel, *Zia Summer*, is that of Gloria Dominic, another woman who made her first appearance in *Heart of Aztlán*. The detective-questor, Sonny Baca, is written to be at least ten years younger than Ben Chávez, his cousin Gloria, and her corrupt developer husband, Frank. This is not only a shift in protagonists, but also a sign of changed narrative strategy—Sonny is no mere searcher or wanderer, but a pistol-toting private detective with all of the things that go along with that role. He has the true-hearted girlfriend, Rita, who cooks for him, has sex with him, and pleads with him to rest. He has a mentor, Don Eliseo, that teaches him how to solve mysteries by listening to the people of the barrio and to nature. Finally, he has an arch-nemesis in the person of Raven, the world's most evil environmental terrorist. Sonny's mother, the murderous Tamara Dubronsky, and the curandera Lorenza round out the cast of character filling Sonny's needs—for safety, for thanatotic sexual conquest, and finally for an erotic urge towards natural order and peace, respectively. In these respects, this series of novels conform to the most popularly recognizable conventions of the mystery genre. Mystery

time allows the reader to amble from expected shock to expected shock without demanding much attention. It would be easy to dismiss all of the included descriptions of Albuquerque as mere local color meant to liven up the hackneyed proceedings. However, when these novels are read within the context of Anaya's entire career, the successes and failures of these late novels reveal much about his lifelong pedagogic and literary goals.

As stated above, the chronotopes of idyll and bildungsroman coexist uneasily in *Bless Me, Última*. Idyll imposes stasis, which is then resisted by the drive towards metamorphosis in the bildungsroman. Yet far from rendering the novel incomprehensible, this tension is what makes it a success. The narrator, a grown Antonio, renders his childhood development in the closed, timeless vocabulary of archetype. His childhood is past, and at the same time, his childhood is eternal. Bakhtin writes in "Discourse in the Novel" that that novelistic discourse actually depends on such tension in order to function. The artistry of the novel lays not in the writer's ability to embody one voice, but in his ability to manifest dialogic perspectives in a single discourse. And while bildungsroman and idyll coexist uneasily in *Bless Me, Última*, late in his career Anaya mastered novelistic discourse by using languages and chronotopes that serve as easy companions to one another in the form of the detective novel and ethnography. The ends of both are complementary—to investigate, to record detail, and to report findings to a sympathetic audience. For the sake of this complementarity, the later novels lack the urgency and sense of rupture that made *Bless Me, Última* such a sensation and lightning rod for critics. However, the fact that these genres converge so easily makes *Albuquerque*, *Zia Summer*, and *Rio Grande Fall* untroubling reads, suitable books for an afternoon's distraction with a few more substantial elements for those willing to pay attention.

That dialogic tension and harmony is at work in Anaya's artistic successes reveals much also about his critical and artistic failures, by which I mean *Heart of Aztlán*, *Tortuga*, and *Shaman Winter*. First, they are all sequels to more artistically successful books. They all continue a story already in progress, but each one reveals in its own way the difficulty of extending the world of a novel that exists as itself as an artistic whole. This is especially true of *Heart of Aztlán* and *Tortuga*; *Bless Me, Última* is such a delicate composition, ruled by its own internal physics of tension and counter--tension, and Anaya has to struggle to try to recapture its energy. He tries to do this by imposing the order of symbol and archetype onto barrio life, but he cannot manage to balance the stasis of archetype with the chaotic moods and social arrangements of a group of a people under duress. *Heart of Aztlán* begins well by presenting the whole family's perspectives and opinions on the move from Las Pasturas into Barelitas, but early in the novel the voices of the women and the neighbors almost entirely disappear, a lost opportunity to write a full novelistic portrait of Albuquerque's south valley in the 1950's. Instead, the narrative turns entirely to Clemente's personal quest to regain his standing as a righteous man in the symbolic order, first by inciting the men of the rail yards to strike, and then through a vision quest aided by the musician Crispín. *Heart of Aztlán* illustrates the reasons for which *Bless Me, Última* should not have worked: symbol silences discourse, while discourse abhors order.

*Tortuga* is another attempt to capture this balance, but under much constrained circumstances. In *Tortuga*, Anaya grasps at creating a chronotope of illness and recovery, hospital time. The isolation that occurs in hospitals and sickrooms breeds long monologues, and a shortage of intellectual stimulus facilitates a patient's tendencies to see symbols in everyday events and objects. In writing about injury Anaya in fact seems to be struggling with poetic language—*Tortuga* is a book full of adjectives and blank

verse, little of which appears to be communicated to the other patients. Much of the novel reflects the self-pity and self-aggrandizement that are the products of long periods alone in bed. But if this is poetry, it is without craft or care. Observation and memory mix willy-nilly with vagueness and cliché, as in the following passages:

*Why question the ways of creation. Know that every man, in one way or another, must cross the desert. Life is such a thin ribbon, so fragile, so easily transformed...But as we teach you to sing and to walk the path of the sun the despair of the paralysis will lift, and you will make from what you have seen a new life, a new purpose...* (41, author's italics and ellipses).

My body throbbed and grew under her soft, warm touch.  
My flesh tingled (57).

... that bright spring day when they mixed the miracle of their god with the pagan rites of spring and dared to shout for all to hear, come dance with us! Oh pain of innocence! Oh pain of love... I am full of love...  
(151, author's italics and ellipses).

That overwheening first-person perspective, that unrelenting "I" is part of what makes this book really insufferable. Even if the cast of characters is large, most of it functions to describe Tortuga, to cheer him on, or to provide comic relief and gravity through suffering.<sup>16</sup> Late in the novel, during a discussion with a doctor, when Tortuga meditates, "I wondered what penitence he was doing, but I didn't ask" one is forced to wonder why the narrator would refuse to engage other characters (176). If this is poetry, then it frighteningly bad; if it is a novel then the failure for the language and genre to exist in any sort of dialogic relationship is major. *Tortuga* is a punishing read on technical terms. Each passage is a monologue that listens neither to itself nor to the wealth of respondents that it invites. If the text listened to itself, maybe it would avoid being so impossibly corny. If Tortuga were in dialog with the characters around him, such as the nurses and doctors, he would then be a more complex if somewhat diminished character. The

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<sup>16</sup> I started out trying to remember each distinctive character, but found after a couple of chapters that all the boys seemed to answer to the name "Exposition."



failure to create a framework that could adequately contain or balance *Tortuga*'s recovery and the rhythms and workings of the hospital makes this another missed opportunity for Anaya. Without the constraints of an established genre his narrator roams aimlessly, and as a consequence the text is an almost uniform amalgam of adolescent, narcissistic versification.

*Shaman Winter* is not as great a failure as *Tortuga*. Anaya is a more mature and practiced writer at this point in his career, as the successes of *Zia Summer* and *Rio Grande Fall* reveal. The comfortable fit of the detective genre with ethnography is much too durable to suffer an interruption in any of its elements disrupting the course of events. However, in this text we can sense a growing tension between the author's project and the demands of the mystery chronotope that mishaps occur and that justice be sought. And here we find not only a reminder of the failure of *Tortuga*, but also an important link to the project and perspective of Fray Angélico Chávez. *Shaman Winter*, firstly, is a mystery that mostly takes place within the dreams of Sonny Baca. In each of these dreams, he finds himself enacting the life of one of his ancestors, battling the many reincarnations of the evil Raven. In each dream, Raven steals one of Sonny's grandmothers, in a plan to blot out Sonny's very existence, all the while kidnapping young women in order to start his own new family. Each dream takes the reader into a different historical era, and brings us into contact with different historical figures, like Juan de Oñate and Pancho Villa. So in addition to the already functioning chronotopes in this series, *Shaman Winter* brings the chronotope of historical fiction into play. So it would appear that this novel, with its many generic valences, would embody Bakhtin's observations on novelistic discourse ("Discourse" 332). This novel, however, reveals Anaya once again chafing against genre, as the dream sequences interfere with the progression of the detective story. The historical interludes in the dreams allow him to

disobey the mystery rule that the story progress from crime to punishment. Each dream is full of historical detail—dates, dress, context—that provide the reader with a child's chill at public television. We realize, having let down our guard for a little light entertainment, that we are meant to be *learning*. While the earlier novels in this cycle certainly served a pedagogic function, in that they present an ethnographic portrait of New Mexico, in them Anaya keeps a careful balance between information and action. Here, perhaps in an attempt to bring the series to a head in as weighty a fashion as possible, the entirety of New Mexican history from Oñate's 1598 Entrada on is brought into the narrative. Nevertheless, the shift to reading historical short fiction is relatively comfortable, until Anaya brings in a character named *Cyber* to crack into the Los Alamos mainframe and find out the secrets of the atom bomb and the true fate of the Roswell space aliens (*Shaman Winter* 318). Then we have a moment of wondering where the story about Raven kidnapping all of those girls went, and isn't Sonny supposed to be doing something about that? The crime narrative falls apart and becomes an afterthought, and the narrative ceases to be a novel and more a series of events that we, as readers, should know more about. Like Chávez, Anaya's writings are always struggling between the urge to be pleasing and the urge of the author to be perceived as knowledgeable and authoritative.

#### **LOCAL KNOWLEDGE.**

Anaya's novels, while superficially situated in the plains and barrios of New Mexico, really move in the plane of archetype. Confrontations occur not between characters or in places, but between figures that represent universals like Man, or Woman. And while there is a lot of fuss in the stories, nothing actually ever happens in the plane of archetype—resolution always arrives at a return to balance and the status quo. In this case, it is not the duty of the author to generate original plot lines, or to

encourage the reader to seek out the views of her neighbors and foes. The purpose of this narrative is to turn us away from the details of individual life as it is lived, and towards a plane of unachievable ideals. While the details of Anaya's many novels differ significantly, his authorial perspective is for the most part remarkably consistent with that of Chávez. Recall that the heroine of "The Bell that Rang Again," Ysabel, is directed by her sainted namesake to defer not only on suicide, but on any action that is not in accordance with laws that she cannot know or understand. This response to the pains of this world that, perhaps a monumental overcorrection, directs its acolytes, primarily the oppressed, to cope with their troubles by trying not to care so much. To direct attentions away from the plane of observable phenomena and other people is consistent with certain Pauline traditions of Catholic priesthood—the kind of priest that seeks to replace internal and social conversation with one set of immutable rules. And while experience may teach us that churches possess more than a small share of this world's monologic priests, Anaya's works demonstrate that they do not need a church to work the trade of speaking from a pulpit to quash dissenting voices. Anaya bares in *Bless Me, Última* a fascination with the power of priesthood—the man of learning and leadership, whose condemnation can kill, as in the case of Florence's heresy. Yet in this first novel, Anaya shows the Catholic priesthood to be limited by dogma and Eurocentrism. The ideal priest, embodied by the writer that Antonio is to become, combines the learning and judgment of the parish priest with a deep-rooted sense of the power of the terrain that surrounds him. Thus Antonio is both the heir of Última's powers, and a decisive break with her world.

However, Anaya's description of the terrain resemble a materialist history of the *periodiquero's* New Mexico less than they do the fabulist confections of the "daughter's" generation. Anaya and Chávez have eerily similar models of New Mexican cultures.

There exists in both of their fictional works an idealized, irretrievable village: Las Pasturas for Anaya, as La Cunita is typical for Fr. Chávez. Its conventions are the referent of all reasonable fears and desires. Men typically long to explore the world beyond its boundaries, but those who do return hardened and undermined by the dehumanizing forces of the wage economy and, in Anaya's case, global warfare. It is therefore the proper job of men to preserve the village from the encroaching tide of the outside world—a truly Herculean task. It is not made easier by the women of the village. In Anaya's Las Pasturas, Rosie's brothel captivates the younger generation, preventing the boys from becoming the men that will preserve Las Pasturas. The mothers also do their damage, by coddling and smothering their boys. In Chávez's "The Angel's New Wings" and "The Hunchback Madonna," the sanctity of the village is preserved by the faith and acts of frail and elderly semi-outcasts. Their sacrifices and quests of these men will serve for the moment to stave off disaster for the group, but within the text there exists a threat: when these fragile shores against ruin are gone, there will be no replacements. In Bakhtin's definition of the idyllic chronotope destruction is always imminent ("Forms of Time" 233); in the works of Anaya and Fr. Chávez, it is either upon the characters or so recently arrived as to still be fresh in the author's mind.

The roles women are to play in this destruction is far more fundamental than the aggravations that they cause for men. There is a strict dichotomy in these works between good women and bad; good women embody the values of their village, even dying with them, as in the case of Última and Soledad in "The Lean Years." To do any less is to instigate the downfall of the already precarious social structure. As María Herrera-Sobek writes of *Heart of Aztlán*, "Women serve as metaphors for the Chicano's loss of economic and political power and will be transformed into signifiers..." (169). Loss of control over women and their desires is a marker of imminent destruction for both of

these authors. Fr. Chávez demonstrates this in the form of predaceous widows. In *Heart of Aztlán*, the eagerness of the sisters to leave Las Pasturas behind marks the beginning of don Clemente's fall; soon, the girls will have jobs, go to dances, and leave him to eat dinner alone. Out from under the thumbs of patriarchs, girls and women blithely go about the business of destroying the patriarchal family.

Native Americans work in the capacity of examples of idyll untouched: Pueblo peoples and Navajo are figured in both of these authors' works as less affected by history than Hispanos or Anglos, and therefore more in touch with the mystical forces of nature. In the Fr. Chávez's aptly named "A Desert Idyll," a small Navajo boy questions the wisdom of his male elders, who tell him that the sun is a god. His ailing mother entreats him to sing out, in order to bring San Antonio to her; the beauty of his song stops a priest on the road—and Padre Jerome knows to bring the church into their isolated hogan. In this regard, nothing could be more powerful than the heart's call of the little shepherd boy, but neither could it be made more artificial and far away. Native American characters are more integrated into the storylines of Anaya's novels, but not to a much-improved effect-- Cico's Indian in *Bless Me, Última* provides an avenue to present a mythical counterpart to the hero's troubling preparation for his first holy communion. In *Albuquerque*, the character of Joe stays in the city, frightened to bring the trauma of his Vietnam war experiences home and therefore sully the home of his grandfather. Only Abrán's victory against the evil developer Frank Dominic can motivate him to leave his past behind and return to his love and his home, to protect native water rights and their lives as farmers. Both Anaya and Fr. Chávez figure aboriginal peoples as more in touch with the earth and nature, to be protected either by the Church or by the fighting spirit of their *vecinos*. This stance is a direct echo of Anglo Modernist efforts to preserve their

own visions of Pueblo life through legislation and patronage; the sum of all of these stances is to isolate and silence native voices.

Anglos, when they appear in the works of these authors, are usually wealthy, meddlesome, foolish, or some combination of the three. Anaya's reappearing character, Cindy, is perhaps a more favorable portrayal of Anglo womanhood; in her youth she interferes with Ben's relationships, but as mystery mother to Abrán she settles nicely into the role of invisibly admiring Hispano culture. In *Albuquerque*, her behavior stands in direct contrast to the brutality of her wealthy father, the timidity of her crypto-Semitic mother, and the all-around venal awfulness that is the evil real estate developer Frank Dominic. Pregnancy, childbirth, and then never seeing her lover again seem to root her in the Hispano culture of Albuquerque's south valley. Her mother, Vera, mostly cowers in her husband's house with her few precious clues to the identity of Abrán's father. Meanwhile, her father, Walter Johnson and Frank Dominic go about the work of extracting money from the region's fragile ecologies, all the while envying their neighbors of the residual nobility of land grant inheritances, to the point that they invent titles and lineages for themselves. This perceived envy is also a topic of humorous interest to Fr. Chávez—the last of the collected short stories, "My Ancestor—Don Pedro," centers around it. In this story Dobie-like researcher named J. Payton Smiggs approaches the home of old Don Juan, to record a fragment of local folklore which he will then try to negate with a standardized historical timeline. The local dignitary, however, is already familiar with Smiggs' work, and sees through his condescension and flattery. Don Juan proceeds to spin a tale about a distant ancestor so ridiculous and engrossing that Dr. Smiggs does not realize that the storyteller is pulling his leg until Don Juan concludes by stating his ancestor died tragically before he could ever meet his wife, Don Juan's great- great- Grandmother. The tremendously funny beat, in which the

ethnographer realizes that he has been had, is a crystalline representation of how Fr. Chávez positions Anglos in his model of New Mexico—possessing the markers of institutional power, but without appropriate respect, real local knowledge, and the humility to recognize their own lacking. In this dig at eastern academia, Fr. Chávez undermines the authority of Anglos and academics to speak knowledgeably about his own land.

Which brings us to the major problem that each of these authors present, and to their mirror solutions: who is qualified to speak for manitos? The viejitos are old and dying, the patriarchs are collapsing under the dual burdens of maintaining home and culture, the mothers are smothering, the sons are deadbeats and the daughters are sluts. The Native Americans aren't interested in the world beyond their reservations, and the Anglos wouldn't know a relevant fact if it walked up and introduced itself. Who can we, the addled readers, turn to as a port in this storm, for a true knowledge about the idyllic village, now long gone? And here, funnily enough, both Fr. Chávez and Anaya have the same sly little answer: "Why, you could trust me, of course." There is a feint here that supplements a chronotope based in New Mexico in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a chronotope of the author's own making, which incidentally elevates the storyteller to the position of the last surviving authority on his own topic. And in this case, the collapse of village life, the patriarchal family, and the failure of institutions to help all serve to underline the resolution and fortitude of the storyteller, so long as we take him at his word that the destruction is complete and his own retrieval of knowledge is as complete as any we will be able to find. With a sleight of hand, a tremendous amount of effort and fuss goes into keeping the audience from noticing that the coin has been palmed; here, in the works of these authors a similar amount of fuss prevents the reader from imagining that the villages and barrios are still there, if changed, as are the mothers, fathers, children and the

viejitos. And here we have the root of Juan Rodríguez's initial reservation about *Bless Me, Última*: no, these characters don't exist in the sphere of action, but it is never the author's ambition that they do so. It is the purpose of the characters to reflect the mysticism of the narrator, and if the narrator is our point of contact with the divine then the author is its evangelist. The production of these texts, and the distinction that such authors bestowed upon themselves as unique sources of knowledge, gave these authors the license to also influence the sphere of action. While *manitos* faced economic, legal, and linguistic struggles in the twentieth century, these troubles also offered to New Mexican authors the rhetorical stance of the priest.

In my own discontents with Anaya and Fr. Chávez, I am reminded of Raymond Williams dissatisfaction with the ways in which D.H. Lawrence, in his literary afterlife, has been digested and contained. Williams accounts for a new crisis of representation in England, the writer on the border between rural and industrial life. For Williams, Lawrence is a paragon of those authors attempting to cope with the transformation of rural life, but also something of a disaster:

He pushed beyond... to ideas of natural independence and renewal, and he saw quite clearly as an enemy a materialist and capitalist industrial system. But it is characteristic and significant that he then aligned the ideas of human independence and renewal—the ideals of nature itself—with an opposition to democracy, to education, to the labour movement: a restless, often contradictory opposition... His is a knot too tight to untie now: the knot of a life under overwhelming contradictions and pressures. But as I have watched it settle into what is now a convention—in literary education especially—I have felt an outrage, in a continuing crisis on a persistent border. The song of the land, the song of rural labour, the song of delight in the many forms of life with which we share our physical world, is too important and too moving to be tamely given up, in an embittered betrayal, to the confident enemies and of all significant and actual independence and renewal (*The Country and the City*).

Lawrence's insistence on unlinking freedom from political agency provides cover for the university and city people who don't listen to country people; his work renders the



country absolutely inchoate, and that this perception had become convention in Williams' time meant that one not even try to build alliances across boundaries of country and city. The boundary, we are to understand, is uncrossable, and the quicker that we get along to bemoaning how bad things are on *our* side, the better. Williams' outrage at the growing conventionality of this belief is fitting, given that we can observe the violence he helped to facilitated in New Mexico through his beliefs about nature, compounded by his racial anxieties.

As I said before, of all the authors in this study, though Rudolfo Anaya is the name most bandied about in relation to Lawrence, it is actually Fray Angélico Chávez who most embodies Lawrentian ideals of silenced nature, crass heteronormativity, and praise of the individual ego/phallus in reparation for the unnamable things of which civilization deprives us. Fr. Chávez, alone amongst these authors, saw New Mexico as a world apart from modernity, with a boundary that could be monitored geographically and eugenically. While both Fr. Chávez and Anaya aspire to occupy the position of authority that is the priesthood, it is Fr. Chávez who does so by imitating Lawrence in the creation of a political vocabulary that relies on conventionality based in "restless... often contradictory opposition."

So, in spite of my inclination to lose patience with Anaya, I am nevertheless grateful that his work stops short of securing his figurative parish by portraying New Mexico as "Tierra Afuera." Towards the end of *Albuquerque*, Ben Chávez leaves Jack's Cantina having closed the place down with a reading of his ongoing work, a poem about the people of downtown Albuquerque. Drunk and lonely, he laments that there is no one who truly appreciates beauty anymore: not the bartender, not his fellow drinkers, not even the wife at home who keeps his bed warm while he's out carousing. We have in this passage the densest and most concise expressions of Anaya's artistic project. The

artist, in this figuration, is always alone, is principled, is educated. Ben Chávez, the fighter and poet, can solve mysteries, quell arguments, and express enduring love. As a guide and a sage, his presence fuels his fellow patrons' appetites for poetry as it distracts them from their drink, and thus he is as unwelcomed by merchants as he is beloved by his audience. Ben Chávez, stand-in for Rudolfo Anaya, is an ideal writer priest, of the people and yet always lonely, enamored of the landscape as a reflection of his inner states. In his loneliness, he seeks an acolyte, one person to whom he can reveal his secrets and methods, before he can take his rest from the world, and, in a final crumpling of owl feathers, retreat into the divine. The Author waits to impart his blessing, which in Anaya and Fr. Chávez's world is an initiation into vocations of power and mystery.

### **Chapter 3: The Dramatists:**

#### **Cleofas Jaramillo and Denise Chávez**

In the heart of Santa Fe, just down the road from Archbishop Lamy's cathedral, there is a tiny gothic chapel that contains a miraculous staircase, said to have been built for the Sisters of Loretto by Saint Joseph himself. Where there used to be a convent, there now stands a Best Western Hotel, a mini-mall, and a gift shop. It costs a couple of dollars to enter the chapel and witness this miracle of interior decorating, and the man who watches the door bears all the markers of a hipster enduring a day job. Opposite the ticket booth is a plaster figure of an angel crouching over a basin that is meant to contain holy water, which appears to have been bone dry since the Sisters of Loretto sold the place. Carved and painted in the base of this figure are the words "In Memory of Angelina Jaramillo." A couple of years ago, on trip up north, I asked the man at the door if he knew where her mother's house was. "She was some girl who was murdered, is all I know," he answered.

Angie Jaramillo was a student in at the Loretto School 1931, who lived with her mother, Cleofas, in an apartment off of the plaza in Santa Fe. Late one night, her mother was startled awake by a flash of light, and running to Angie's room, she found the girl sexually assaulted and murdered in her own bed. The assailant struck Cleofas on the head, and then fled. The man who was eventually charged with the crimes was an African American named Thomas Johnson, who had been caught with a stolen car. He was the first person to ever be executed in the electric chair in New Mexico, and there is speculation to this day about his innocence—the case against Johnson has since been debunked, and Cleofas's estranged brother in law is rumored to have later made a

deathbed confession to the crime (Melnick 194). Angelina's death was at the time not only a local outrage-- her story was covered in newspapers throughout the region, as well as in tabloids and true crime magazines.

While this plaster angel, erected by Angie's peers at the Loretto School, sits in the foyer of the desacralized chapel, a different monument to her life is gaining new attention. The loss of her last surviving child prompted Cleofas Jaramillo to begin a career as a folklorist and a historic preservationist so that she might honor her daughter's memory. In her memoirs she would recount that she started to record the stories that her aunt had told her when she was a child because Angelina had once suggested that they should be preserved and shared. In the years between Angie's death and her own, Cleofas Jaramillo wrote a children's book, a cookbook, and two volumes of memoir, *Shadows of the Past* and *Romance of a Little Village Girl*. She helped to found the Sociedad Folklórica in Santa Fe, as well as revitalizing the Hispano customs of the annual fiesta. Each of these books and activities is a testament to the role that Angie's memory continued to play in Cleofas's life until her death in 1956.

In his 1991 essay "Fables of the Fallen Guy," Renato Rosaldo evokes hispanophiliac sentiments similar to those expressed by Jaramillo, which he calls "the 'pureza' ethic," which "often derives enduring cultural forms from a primal patriarchal order" (85). Jaramillo's account of her daughter's death and her life after could be described using Rosaldo's terms, as a fall from what became unattainable ideals of the "epic Spaniards who above all else value their honor and dignity" (Rosaldo 86). Reading works by authors including Denise Chávez's *Last of the Menu Girls*, Rosaldo sees authors in the post-charismatic era Chicano movement moving away from "moribund masculine heroics" (88). He reads Chávez, Sandra Cisneros, and Alberto Ríos as innovators using the marginal genre of the short story cycle to introduce and explore new

and alternative modes of resistance to entrenched authority. Rosaldo writes of these authors, “What culture is losing in coherence and “*pureza*” it is gaining in range and engagement” (93). Since Rosaldo’s essay was published, Chávez has further explored this shift in sexual relations in two novels, *Face of an Angel* and *Loving Pedro Infante*. In the following chapter, I will pursue Rosaldo’s observation of increased explicitness in the writings of two New Mexican, Hispana, women authors. First, I will discuss how Jaramillo’s attempt to describe a culturally pure past is hampered by the compulsion to narrate and yet to obscure her own complicated story. In contrast, I will show Chávez writing deliberately explicit and revelatory family drama, which not only expands the range of topics available to Chicana authors, but also fundamentally alters the ways in which we read her literary predecessors.

To anyone familiar with these nominally New Mexican authors, a connection between Cleofas Jaramillo and Denise Chávez would seem tenuous at best and manufactured at worst. Although both could trace familial roots back to the general area of the Upper Rio Grande Valley, the similarities would appear to end there. Jaramillo was born near Taos near the end of the nineteenth century, to a family with pretensions to aristocracy. That she received formal education was unusual; while her time with the Sisters of Loretto did leave its mark, just as important were the lessons she received in the forms of daily prayers and *dichos*, important forms of decentralized, non-literate pedagogy. After a prominent marriage, Jaramillo’s star began to fade; the period after statehood saw the loss of her family’s land and the death of her children and husband. The remainder of her life, spent under the care of wealthier relatives, was devoted to preserving the so-called Spanish traditions of Santa Fe. Chávez, born a scant eight years before Jaramillo’s death, is from the southern end of this part of the Rio Grande basin. She self-identifies as a mexicana, and traces her roots to the Chihuahua side of the Rio

Grande. In interviews she states that she is descended from a line of voracious readers who used their educations to support themselves and their families (Eysturoy, 159). Jaramillo wrote cookbooks and an extensive, meandering memoir, constantly decrying the poverty of her writing gifts; Chávez, in contrast, has spent her professional career exploring the genres of drama, poetry, and fiction. Beyond the superficial designation of “New Mexican,” it seems that there is very little that these two authors could be seen to have in common. What bonds these two authors together, though, is not superficial. Both of them write almost exclusively in the first person, women accounting for their own failures and efforts at growth. They share a common interest in the technologies of theater, especially in the ways in which costume and cosmetics can help to construct boundaries around vulnerable bodies. And through the lens of these female, brown bodies we can observe the transformations of the twentieth century, and the dangers that make it necessary to discard romanticized visions of cultural and sexual authenticity.

The most evident similarity between their works is their mutual fascination with the bonds between daughters and mothers. In these authors’ books, the lives of young girls orbit around their mothers and grandmothers, who participate in and interfere with the lives of the protagonists in ways that suggest intense love and violence at the same time. Maria Gonzales writes that in Chávez’s *Last of the Menu Girls* “the love between mother and daughter is never questioned” but that

...the heavy expression of passions leads to conflicting values, pride of the daughter and envy in her, love and yet no understanding of each other. One generation had limited and few opportunities but at least a clear understanding of their role in society. The next generation had unlimited and diverse opportunities, but unclear and often contradictory roles to perform in society (167).

One of Chávez’s major authorial tasks is to explore the complexities of this relationship, which is at once in her novels a refuge and a source of profound betrayal. In a similar fashion Jaramillo, looking back on her own life as a daughter, wife and mother, seems

utterly baffled at how her efforts at all of these went so wrong. In describing the mutual relationships of mothers and daughters, these authors also reveal a deeper, more troubling response to some of the ongoing troubles of being a woman and a manita. For it is in motherhood that New Mexico's rhetorics of whiteness and "Spanish identity" break down, as each generation of mothers tells the lie to a new generation of brown babies. The texts of these authors show girls and women both as objects of policing gazes and questioning subjects testing the limitations of their bodies and the rules by which they are constrained.

In her germinal essay on the politics of poetics, Rebolledo declares that "I believe that our critical perspective should come from within, within our cultural and historical perspective" ("Politics" 137). Rebolledo means to caution her reader against the dangers of imposing academic theory onto local cultures—to let the organic concerns of the local dictate the usefulness of theory. I find this assertion, while inspiring, to be less than useful. For in New Mexico, we find ourselves always already theorized: we have already been described in accordance with preconceived notions of what a small and isolated population of settlers in the midst of a hostile population ought to look like. We must be careful to recognize that authors like Jaramillo were instrumental in creating this focus on New Mexican types. Shepherds, diminished aristocracy, and soldiers have been emphasized in the works of so many authors for the very reason that they correspond so well to treasured Western archetypes. Furthermore, the texts are much too complex to provide simple, satisfactory access to an lost, authentic New Mexican past. Jaramillo contradicts herself almost constantly, and Chávez deliberately challenges the possibility that one can access a perspective from within in a straightforward manner.

I will in the following pages discuss how these authors share a common desire: to conceal and call attention to the grotesque body. By highlighting the grotesque body, I

mean to call attention to the ways in which women's bodies blur boundaries between public and private space in manners both heavily policed and taboo. Susan Stewart says that "The grotesque body can be effected by the exaggeration of its internal elements, the turning of the "inside out," the display of orifices and gaps upon the exterior of the body" (105). Both of these authors write extensively of the ways in which women conceal their bodies, through costume and cosmetics. I propose that the similarities between these authors in their descriptions of the body and the protective strategies that they invoke are produced by similar longings—for an always-absent masculine ideal, and to be perceived as a match for that ideal. Here we find one of the strongest connections between Chávez and Jaramillo: both of these authors note the general superiority and increased reliability of the tools and potions that you make yourself for your own use. Jaramillo comments that although modern appliances make the preparation of New Mexican food less laborious than in the past, that the appetite is rewarded for extra care taken in the preparation of a meal. In "Face of an Angel," one character, Chata, comments,

... one of God's best inventions has to be the fingernail. You can keep the earlobes—they're useless until you wear earrings. And the breast, well, it has its use with babies... But a fingernail... God knew what *she* was doing when she invented the fingernail... What would we do without fingernails? If I had money I'd invent a cleaning tool, like a scrappy-scrappy thing, made out of fingernails. Nothing tougher (212, author's emphasis).

Here, the tools that one produces naturally from one's own person are judged as far superior to any solvent, perfume, or mesh scrubber; the ability to bring order to a home resides in one's own DNA. For both Chávez and Jaramillo, nature can provide for all the wants of its people, should they be willing to put their trust in it. However, their faith often fails, and all of the texts described in this chapter deal with women trying to cope with their simultaneous longings for a life in which their appearances and their inner



selves can merge, and to successfully use available technologies of costume and cosmetics to enable survival.

#### **ALL THE NECESSTIES OF LIFE**

Cleofas Jaramillo's books, from the times of their respective publications, remained largely forgotten for several years, until the Chicano movement reawakened an interest in New Mexican culture. *Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes* and *Shadows of the Past* were both reprinted locally during the 1970's, and *Romance of a Little Village Girl* was reissued by UNM press in 2000. Much of the criticism of her memoirs underestimates the complexity of this book, either dismissing it as saccharine ramblings or overstating the claim that the work is not politically naive.

In spite of the fact that she frequently bemoaned the poverty of her writing abilities, Jaramillo defended her sense of ownership of her manuscripts. In *Romance of a Little Village Girl*, she writes:

I tried sending my manuscript to some of our Western Universities. After holding on to it for several months, they would return it, saying they did not have the funds to publish it. One professor said he was writing a book. Would I permit him to use two or three of my stories in his book? I then understood. All they wanted was to read my manuscript and get ideas from it, so I decided to have it published by a small press here in my city (168).

Her determination to assert her own authority and to defend the unity of her text reveals her awareness of her own vulnerability in the cultural market of early twentieth century Santa Fé. Her stories were commodities easily stripped of their context for re-packaging and profitable sale. That she decided to forego further attempts at institutional acclaim for authorial control should also serve as a caution to readers.

There is an unfortunate tendency in many of the readings and critical work on Jaramillo to not read these works as having internal integrity, and instead to use her

writings as source material for an argument structured for academic consumption; that is say, critics have a tendency not to see a distance between Jaramillo as a historical figure, an author, and a character narrated in a text. In doing so, critics risk collapsing the difference between scholarship and creating a collection of her stories that only have meaning in the context of the critic's thesis. For example, Carol Jensen cites Jaramillo's account of her own wedding to Venceslao Jaramillo in *Romance of a Little Village Girl* as the primary source for a 1982 article in *The New Mexico Historical Review*. Jensen describes certain breakdowns in legal and social protocol, and concludes that the wedding was a crossroads between traditional culture and American bureaucracy, and a harbinger of American cultural dominance. This thesis, while entirely likely, ignores Jaramillo's initial reticence to marry and the regrets that she expresses from the vantage of old age. Therefore the messiness of the event in her account could just as easily be the eagerness of a regretful woman to read omens of doom into a mishap with a cook.

A much more grievous example of this occurs in Ralph Melnick's *Justice Betrayed: A Double Killing in Old Santa Fé*. This book, a vital intervention in the discourse around the life of Thomas Johnson, the man who was executed for murdering Angelina, does an excellent job of dismantling the prosecutor's case against him. Unfortunately, Melnick's work both literally reproduces the prurient detective magazine coverage of the crime, as well as intellectually reproducing the cultural misunderstanding that a "white" girl had been murdered by a black convict. While Melnick correctly identifies this element which helped to fuel the drive that sent Johnson to the chair, he seems unaware that the Hispano community might have been fearful of being associated with violent crime by the Anglo elite, and eager to see an outsider punished. This tremendous omission appears to be a product of Melnick's reliance on current accounts, including Jaramillo's memoir, which he quotes to mock her for her loyalty to her family,

once more making an Anglo outsider the arbiter of morality among a colonized people. That Johnson was in all likelihood wrongly executed I would not dispute, but Melnick's approach is merciless, mean-spirited, and it actually interferes with developing a fuller understanding of the circumstances surrounding Angie's death by reproducing, uncritically, gossip and ephemera.

Genaro Padilla wrote one of the first critical studies of Jaramillo's work in 1987, including her memoirs in a broad overview of Mexican American autobiography, *My History, Not Yours*. He cautions us, writing,

...our *antepasados*—Cleofas Jaramillo among them—were not fools. There are moments of recognition throughout their work, when with profound clarity, they voice the understanding of the social predicament in which they found themselves: they knew they were engaged in a battle for social, cultural, and linguistic survival, they understood the condescending rhetoric that daily glossed the material displacement to which they were subject, and they understood the sociodiscursive power that shaped and perpetuated a racial romance about them. Consequently, when they did speak in the public realm, they spoke their resistance through the master romance of the colorful Spanish past (222).

In a chapter of his book entitled "Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Cultural Autobiography as Resistance in Jaramillo's Romance of a Little Village Girl" Padilla describes much of New Mexican discourse as "diffident, abruptly self-censoring, sentimental narrative" (204). It is only a "detailed recontextualization" that allows Jaramillo's reader to see through the nonnative cultural configurations that are imposed on her narrative, and to understand her stories of a lost Spanish past as a space for voicing resistance to imprisonment in the museum that the southwest had become (213). Padilla can be criticized for reading Jaramillo's memoirs of genteel, aristocratic life in turn of the century northern New Mexico as protest literature; it flattens out Mexican American culture into an essentialized model of defiant victimization. Jaramillo's accounts are so contradictory, it is difficult to discern any political belief from them. She will describe an

event, or a resistance group in great detail, only to denounce it in the next sentence. She does appear to resist making definitive political statements that might alienate an Anglo audience; she seems equally resistant to ignoring them completely. This diametrical pulls shape the text, and to ignore this tension is to not notice what the text actually does.

During the 1990's, Tey Diana Rebolledo was the critic most responsible for recuperating Jaramillo as primary source material. Selections from *Shadows of the Past* were included in *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, which Rebolledo edited with Eliana S. Rivero in 1993. She also wrote the introduction for the latest edition of *Romance of a Little Village Girl*, released in 2000 by the University of New Mexico Press. As a critic, Rebolledo has included Jaramillo in a broad pantheon of Chicana authors that ranges from María Ámparo Ruíz de Burton to Lorna Dee Cervantes. In "Tradition and Mythology: Signatures of Landscape in Chicana Literature," Rebolledo describes how Jaramillo records her early journey's through northern New Mexico in such a way that "Landscape... contains metaphors of change, a tragic sense of loss of place, loss of culture, and loss of language" ("Tradition" 105). In "Las Escritoras: Romances and Realities," Rebolledo that the Hispana authors of early twentieth century New Mexico, including Jaramillo, wrote

...against the overwhelming dominance of Anglo culture and language, against patriarchal norms. Their narratives are valuable not only because they preserve accounts of folk life but because in particular they document the customs a woman thought important to record: those accounts of private lives and duties of women not usually included in male narratives. Thus we are able to glimpse something of the experience of the female half usually left out of history (208).

Rebolledo argues in *Women Singing in the Snow* that in practicing this sort of writing, women authors like Jaramillo not only assumed responsibility for the terms on which their loss of land and culture would be described, but they were also "actively resisting culturally defined roles for themselves and for all Hispana women" (33).

Jaramillo sets the scene in Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico, as a land that she calls “a unique formation [that] is difficult to describe” (*Romance* ix). From this grounding point, Jaramillo proceeds to describe the people of Arroyo Hondo. She recounts the creation of the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant, of which she is an heir, and in the middle of this abundance she situates her father’s house. Her father’s house, she relates, was built in what she calls the old Spanish style. She tells how the house and its store rooms fulfills many functions: domicile, craft center, factory, and, as she put it, “a workshop for all of the necessities of life” (*Shadows* 14). The chapter entitled “Weddings, Baptisms, and Other Ceremonies” rambles through a dispersed series of events, including references for interior decoration and an account of her younger brother Tomasito’s death by diphtheria. The chapter entitled “Harvest Moons” ends in May. In that her account is more stream of consciousness than systematic reveals something of the nature of the project, in that it’s proclaimed goal of presenting an accurate portrait of the people of northern New Mexico is only the most public of the narrator’s purposes for telling her story.

It is important here to distinguish between the historical figure of Cleofas Jaramillo and the Little Village Girl that is narrativized in her memoir. It is impossible to know what the historical, deceased Cleofas Jaramillo knew or did not know about her daughter’s life and death. There is a strong possibility that she was involved, with her family, in a cover up; but there is an equal possibility that she genuinely believed in the prosecution’s case. All of the principal witnesses in the case are now dead.<sup>17</sup> Since the official record is so obviously corrupted, barring the release of a previously unknown memoir by one of the other principals, it is impossible to judge the historical veracity of

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<sup>17</sup> The copyright of *Romance* belongs to Virginia M. Smith Rogers, as noted on the copyrights and cataloging information page of the 2000 UNM Press edition. I assume that this is Jaramillo’s niece, daughter of Mae Martinez and Bob Smith. I have been unable to determine if Ms. Rogers is still alive, and since she was a very small child at the time of her cousin’s death, it seems unlikely that she should count among the relevant players in the case.

Jaramillo's account of the murder and the trial. And on this account, previous critics have erred in tangling their readings of the narrative with their readings of the author's biography. Pictures, maps, and historical documents all serve to confirm or contradict the narrator's story, and encourage critics not to look at the *Romance* in the barest terms of narrative, which leads us to miss the strongest narrative thrust of the book—that the relationship between mothers and daughters is fraught with misunderstanding, betrayal, and longing for a lifelong connection.

The narrator of *Romance of a Little Village Girl* and *Shadows of Past* is, in the barest term, utterly unreliable. Her wandering style is only the first clue to this, since her claims to infallible authority in matters of culture and crime force us to question her honesty with herself and with her readers. Her narrative is redolent with self-doubt, as with the moment when Venceslao Jaramillo proposes, and her mother teases her, “‘*Pobrecitas de las feas si no hubiera malos gustos.*’ This proverb translated means that if there weren't men with bad taste the poor ugly ones would never be proposed to” (68). Her mother uses such disparaging remarks about her daughter's looks to pressure her to leave school and accept Venceslao's proposal, reinforcing a pattern of detachment and criticism that Jaramillo will later engage in with Angelina. This is just one moment in the narrative in which she makes disparaging remarks about her own looks, while claiming not to worry about them. When shopping for wedding clothes, she hears constant remarks about how small she is, and she is overwhelmed by the weight of her wedding dress, “making me feel like a very small, insignificant being, and wondering how Ven had ever picked me out,” leaving the idea that it might have been for money or political alliance out in the open (74). After her marriage, she is bullied by her inlaws:

His two sisters, who were disappointed because their brother had not married a girl of their choice, did not feel friendly enough to come to my table; but their

mother had the temerity, as soon as the meal was ready, to come in, pick out the choicest portions and send them on a tray to the girls' room (*Romance* 89).

These moments directly conflict with those moments in the narrative in which Jaramillo claims to be an authoritative source as a representative member of a bygone society a country girl out of her depth in the modern world. Her insecurity about her appearance, coupled with her doubts about her own abilities as a writer, force the reader to regard a narrator lacking not only omniscience, but even the authority ascribed to her by her critics. While she might attempt to claim to represent physically a type, there is at the same time in her narrative an anxiety of being something of a misfit.

The narrator's relationship with her own mother is colored by loss and rejection; she describes her marriage as a forced choice between her mother and her fiancée (*Romance* 71). The early deaths of her children reinforce the perception that the narrator does not trust herself to make decisions; she allows a nurse to persuade her not to hold her infant son, but instead to leave it in a basket next to an open window. The boy then goes into kidney failure, and later bleeds to death during a circumcision (*Romance* 107-8). As her second child, a daughter named Rosa, lies ill in bed, above the bed there is a picture of the narrator's ideal of motherhood:

... a beautiful mother sitting by an old-fashioned crib, with one hand rocking her sick baby and her other arm resting by a lit candle in the table beside her, her eyes fastened on a picture of Christ compassionately looking down at her (*Romance* 111).

This picture figures both her predicament as mother of an ill child, and the possibility of transcendence of the body; even after little Rosa dies of cholera, the picture remains one of the narrator's favorites. She becomes emotionally cautious and distant in her marriage, extending a practice by which she "...encased [her]self in quiet reserve..." even though she fears

...giving people the impression of being stupid, and many times felt dissatisfied with myself because I was not a smarter woman, more able to help my husband more intelligently to carry on his social and political ambitions... (*Romance* 114-5).

When her husband dies young, she expresses regret that her “ardent love” for him was kept concealed from him by her “reserve” (*Romance* 128). In all of her relationships, she seems to preserve a distance between herself and her beloved, with the goal of projecting an appearance of calm and control that she does not feel. As her third child, Angelina, comes into adolescence, this reserve serves to alienate her from her only living child, with possibly fatal results. Again, the text relays both her pride in her own dignity, and grief at having alienated those she loved the most.

This tendency to undermine her own authority is particularly painful when Jaramillo is describing the last two years of her daughter’s life, since it becomes more and more clear that her daughter’s life is a mystery to her. Their alienation is rooted in a dispute over a boy; Cleofas disapproves of Angie’s developing relationship with him because his parents are divorced (*Romance* 140). Even when she thinks that the dispute is over, our narrator perceives a lingering coldness between them. Hurt, but attempting to maintain her aura of maternal authority, she exacerbates their alienation by pretending not to care, telling her daughter “Kisses have germs, they say” (*Romance* 141). Once again, emotional self-preservation occurs in the retreat from the physical body’s humiliations and pleasures. She indulges Angie’s desire to leave Santa Fé for boarding school in Albuquerque for one year, attributing that desire to the fact that Angie had recently lost a friend and needed a change of scenery. Yet she still sees that Angie does not entirely fit in with her maternal grandfather’s family. The narrator explains:

We are a reserved family. Our love is a restrained, formal one. She was the emotional, affectionate kind, like her father, and she must have longed for that



warm demonstrative love, which she did not receive from her family (*Romance* 144-5).

The narrator couches a perceived lack (her inability to express affection towards her daughter) in terms of emotional restraint. As with those whom the narrator fears will perceive her social awkwardness, we can sense in her restrained mother-daughter relationship an attempt at emotional self-preservation. In hindsight she recognizes that she had not met her now deceased daughter's needs. If she lives up to the example of the woman in the picture that hung over her daughter's bed, the only things left to her in the vantage point of retelling her story are resignation and religious faith. Yet even in her own account of her stories, her ideals fail, as she scatters clues that force us as readers to indict her for the failure to protect Angie from harm, even as she mounts her own defense.

Our narrator informs us that her home did not provide warmth and affection for a girl who craved both; we must then infer from her words that Angie sought these elsewhere. The narrator, for the most part, avoids mentioning her daughter's friendships in favor of focusing on the catastrophes in her life: the death of her friend Margaret, the unsuitability of her first boyfriend, and the need to withdraw her from her beloved school. And still she notes, in this last year of her life, Angelina was behaving strangely. She'd been elated to go away to school, and Jaramillo tells us that "For some unexplainable reason, I did not like to see Angie on the streets so much that year, coming and going from school" (*Romance* 145). One of her friends comments that Angie has changed so much in the past year, in a way that she can not identify. Angelina appears restless, admired, and stifled by her mother's overprotectiveness, a fault that Jaramillo admits to when she says:

I now feel that to have been kept so restricted must have kept her in an inner conflict with herself, trying to please me and longing for the freedom she saw her

friends have. My mistake was, I see, that in trying to keep her free from gossip and innocent of worldly knowledge, I had failed to see that she was living in a different age, when girls were not so submissive as in my time (*Romance* 146).

I find this a particularly maddening passage in the midst of a maddening chapter. Is there something that we are to infer from Jaramillo's expression of regret? Was her daughter rebelling against her? Did she lack guidance in embarking on the adventures, and therefore make naïve mistakes?

Jaramillo demanded absolute conformity to her rules, and even in hindsight complains,

She was so sensitive about being corrected and cried so easily, it irritated me. My nerves were already overwrought with so many sorrows and cares. It was trying, to have her come late from school when I had errands for her to attend. She had so many excuses—choir, plays, music—all required practice (*Romance* 147).

She cries through her last birthday, and pleads for her own room away from her mother. On the last day of her life, she runs her fingers over the piano where she had once played so happily, and then leaves the room without having played a song. "How strange she was acting," her mother comments (*Romance* 152). She makes excuses to leave the house, and is late for dinner. As the girls are retiring for the night, Jaramillo notices that the girl is wearing her best silk pajamas, and scolds her for it:

She looked down at them and, with a queer, little smile, turned and went back to her room without a word—not even her customary goodnight. I was surprised, but thought that I had vexed her, and went to bed (*Romance* 154).

This is the last time the author sees her daughter alive, and it also ends the chapter that focuses on her daughter's life. The next chapter focuses on the murder itself and the trial, with the explicit goal of deflecting blame from her family. From this point forward, Angelina is an angel, "virgin and martyr" (*Romance* 155). But at the moment that she closes the door on her mother, she is still a girl, our image of which is complicated by the fact that we know her only through her mother's description of her. And those of us who

know the ways of teenage girls are forced to add all of these elements together—a girl elated to leave town, who makes excuses to get out of the house, a loving but stifling parent, and finally, strange outbursts of tears, and not just when she's being criticized by her mother. Working from generalizations, we can assemble other stories for Angelina, most of them sad. She was angry with her mother's rules, she was sexually abused, she was in love and planning a tryst. Maybe she was pregnant, and her death was the result of a botched abortion. Maybe she was preparing to denounce her abuser, who killed her rather allow exposure. Maybe she had a secret boyfriend, whose abusive behavior mimicked the treatment of her family so closely that she didn't recognize the danger of keeping secrets until it was too late. No matter now. Her story is not recuperable, the damage is done, and the secrets that she kept she keeps still.

The mother's loss is therefore felt even now through her writings. The bodies of her husband and her children, as well as that of Thomas Johnson, provide important indicators of broader problems of being a Hispana or a Hispano at the beginning of the twentieth century. The death of Venceslao left her destitute, trying to manage his large investments and even larger debts. The loss of the Jaramillo's first two children, while devastating, occurred within the general context of the high infant mortality rates that plagued the state throughout the twentieth century. And while it is difficult to regard the judicial lynching of Johnson without a sense of horror, it is important to understand that, as culpable as Jaramillo may have been in facilitating the execution, that she too was caught in the storm that was and is racist public opinion about violence and crime, and that she was part of a community with good reason to fear providing the newspapers with another example of its lawlessness and cruelty. Johnson, for many in Santa Fé, must have been a blind spot that they simply could not afford to integrate into their own vision; to identify with him would mean to disidentify with the cultural powerbrokers of the

state, and to tarnish the few institutions that the Hispanos of Santa Fé had managed to preserve.

The implication of these vacillations is that Jaramillo may notice the abuse of her fellow Hispanas, but she will always be in a poor position to help them. These apparent contradictions and wanderings are most poignantly represented in the moment when Cleofas, acting as tour guide and native informant, introduces Ruth Laughlin Barker into the home of one of her Hispana friends who is down on her luck. Their tour, ostensibly to see the grand homes of the Spanish nobility of northern New Mexico, had at that point proved a failure, since so many of the families had disappeared and abandoned their houses to the elements, or had modernized the homes beyond all recognition. In this last house, the owner, Juanita Gonzales, serves tea, and Barker proceeds to make an offer for the silver tea set, the last of the homeowner's remaining articles of a previous, more genteel life. Jaramillo watches as Gonzales sets a price, and then as Barker bargains the woman down to a price well below the tea set's actual worth.

Juanita asked for \$35.00. I am sure it was worth more, but my friend continued to bargain until finally she said, "I will give you a \$15.00 check." I shook my hand at the side "no," but Juanita only smiled at me, showing her pretty dimples, and answered, "Alright." This is how our rich Spanish families have been stripped of their most precious belongings. "Why did you do it?" I whispered as I was going out the door. "I need the money to fix the house," she said (119).

As readers, we can sense Jaramillo's outrage and grief at this singular example of an everyday occurrence in the gradual attrition of the means of survival from Hispanos to Anglos. However, this is also a particularly unnerving instance at which we are forced to reconsider Jaramillo's reliability as our own guide to northern New Mexico. After all, she leaves the house with Barker, and still writes of her as a "friend," even though she's just accused her of robbing Juanita Gonzales blind. She is having it both ways: making points off of Barker's avarice while preserving the privilege of dropping a famous

author's name. And in this moment we have the fundamental problem of this memoir, that we are never sure exactly which Cleofas Jaramillo we are getting from one paragraph to the next.

She must defend her public image, even to the point of absurdity. In her efforts to insert her family into a narrative of "Spanishness," Jaramillo provides the reader with ample reasons to dismiss her work as cultural whitewashing of the most tiresome sort. "Romance and adventure," she proclaims at the beginning of her memoirs, "have always ridden hand in hand with the Spanish race." She continues:

When wise Columbus conceived the idea that there was land across the Western sea and, with the aid of Queen Isabel of Spain outfitted an expedition, and in wind-tossed vessels dared the perils of an unknown sea, he was not only seeking discoveries but also adventure and romance (*Romance* 1).

This seasick version of events continues for another four pages, which deliver a genealogy of New Mexican character as descended from Queen Isabel to Padre Martinez. Taos, as she envisions it here, is a forgotten bastion of the imperial Spanish spirit. Having situated the reader in such an isolated, yet happily self-sufficient place, Jaramillo proceeds to discuss at length the activities of the population, as she remembers them from her childhood. Her style here seems to be borrowed from the adventure story genre, and quickly gives way to the domestic stories that she wrote for *Shadows of the Past*, some of which are reprinted here without citation.

In chapter six of *Shadows of the Past*, "Memorias," she presents the figure of her Aunt Dolores, an older, almost painfully formal woman who comes to live with little Cleofas's family. This catalog is interrupted by directions for the proper method for baking bread (mark it with a cross), and rules for proper hospitality (always prepare more food than you need, always keep hay for the horses of your friends). Jaramillo also provides instructions for making pomade, spicing wine, dying cloth and dipping candles

in this chapter. Her grandmother makes an appearance to demonstrate how one makes chocolates. Jaramillo's nostalgic vision of household lives is one of beauty in devotion. Every activity is fundamental to the survival of the family, so every object and activity is infused with the mutual acknowledgment of the many other implements and products of the farm that must be in place for the sake of its own existence (*Shadows* 24-30). There is a cruel side to this highly regulated system, in that within this web, the body is always under surveillance. Jaramillo concludes this chapter by recalling the terrifying stories of Mal Hijo, a physically deformed man who wanders between villages. In each town, he tells the story of how he dishonored his parents, and that in punishment that God had struck him with physical ailments (*Shadows* 30). Although it is unusual for her to admit physical distress into her folkloric work, this is just one instance in Jaramillo's writing in which the corporeal body confesses sin to the world at large. As we saw earlier, Jaramillo writes in her own memoir of her own body being overwhelmed, and of not being up to the tasks that life presented to her.

And finally, a chapter on the Feast Day of San Geronimo at Taos Pueblo digresses into an account of one of the most painful events in New Mexican history: the failed and often forgotten uprising of Hispanos and the Taos Pueblo against the American Occupation. The narrative launches from a troublingly racist description of Pueblo religion, into this passage:

During the Indian and Spanish uprising against the American Occupation, and while the United States soldiers were bombarding the pueblo church, where the natives had fixed their stronghold, the biboron (a sacred figure of a snake) was being moved to safety from the north Pueblo to the south side across the river, on a hand cart covered with blankets. The Indian who braved the shower of missiles, in order to save the idol, dropped wounded, as he reached the mouth of the kiva; he dropped the monster wrapped in blankets down the ladder, only to drop dead at the bottom of the kiva (*Shadows* 44).

This tragic and dramatic moment is not only unanticipated by the chapter's introduction, the subject is also completely dropped right there. The passage is demarcated by a row of asterisks, and then Jaramillo proceeds with a description of the feast day's hustle and excitement. She speaks not at all of the execution of Governor Bent, nor of the forty Mexicanos charged and hanged for treason in Santa Fe. She refers to the turn of the century revolutionary group, Las Gorras Blancas, only to call them bandits and criminals (*Shadows* 23). At this point we might credit Padilla for titling his chapter on Jaramillo "Lies, Secrets, and Silence," but we might also wonder how he read political resistance in such a spotty and often unsympathetic rendering of New Mexico's history of anti-Imperialist actions, especially from a woman whose life and heart had been so thoroughly broken by the conditions of American Imperialism.

That Jaramillo's work emphasizes her own cultural acuity in the face of the invading culture's lack of discernment can hardly be denied. What Jaramillo presents is an accumulation of remembered objects and activities. At first glance, the aggregate might appear tiresome. The author appears to lack the power to generate an extended narrative. More than once, Jaramillo recounts a childhood anxiety about her inability to write a theme long enough to satisfy the nuns at the Loretto School. This block is probably bound up in the fact that she was never confident in her fluency in English, but it is also emblematic of her project as an author. She explains her method of writing at the end of *Romance*, stating:

Each time I come to the end of my story, something happens to incite me to keep writing a little longer... [it is] a challenge for everyone who can to make an effort to help, no matter how poor our talents may be. Yes, I must contribute my bit. I must try to put this little work on the market..." (*Romance* 198-9).

Her contribution, memoirs of a life retold in a language almost foreign to her, is more than just nostalgic rambling. However, it is also more (and less) that political resistance.

The structures (or lack thereof) in her writings reflect some of the major difficulties of her life, and her struggle to come to terms with these. We should read her not as a political peer, but a person whose problems foretell their grandchildren's efforts at creating solutions.

Jaramillo's account of Angelina's murder confronts the rumors surrounding the involvement of Angie's uncle, Bob Smith, and the guilt of Thomas Johnson. Seventeen years after the event, she refers vaguely to story that lingers around her family, stating:

...I am only now finding the courage to tell about this most terrible tragedy—not for the curious, but to let the truth be known and to dispel false stories told by ignorant people, always ready to invent lies (*Romance* 155).

For some, this moment would be the central confrontation of the text. Her voice in this passage is so clear and insistent, her sense of purpose here is much more apparent than at any other point in the book. One could say that her fundamental confrontation with modern, Anglo-cizing Santa Fé occurs here when she claims the absolute right to narrativize her daughter's death. Her insistence here on this right parallels that of her claim to authority as a New Mexican cook: in both cases, she informs us that an outsider had left out a vital ingredient, which could result in a disastrous misunderstanding of New Mexican lives and cultures. However, that she refers to the rumors of Bob Smith's involvement demands that she provide a definitive alternative to the commonly known story, and this is where her own story breaks down. While she is insistent that "the one who had been seen lurking around the windows in the vicinity, since he had been freed from the penitentiary" (ie, Thomas Johnson) was the one who had killed the girl, her account of what he was wearing conflicts with the prosecution's case, and she goes so far as to say that "I was spared the terrible fright of seeing his face" (*Romance* 156). The contradictions in her statement reveal a new and troubling facet of her account: that she does not understand what has happened, and she does not know her daughter. In



hindsight, it is possible to both indict and exonerate Johnson, just as it is equally possible to indict and exonerate Bob Smith, to both accept the deathbed confession that he is said to have made as well as to explain it as the ravings of an extremely ill old man. Whatever happened to Angelina, in spite Cleofas' central position the storm of events, the girl's mother does not at any time seem to know or to understand what is happening to her. Here, the breakdown of her claim to authority and her bewilderment at modern Santa Fé is most apparent. And this moment invites us to revisit previous chapters, in which it becomes apparent that the growing alienation between mother and daughter was more confounding and dangerous than Jaramillo could have recognized.

One thing that colonialism does: it destroys memory, it corrupts history, and uses a people's disorientation against them. Ultimately, we are left only with Jaramillo's word on all of these events and the people that she claimed to know best. The stories that I read in these pages are assembled from scraps—I only ever know Angie by reading between the lines, and drawing inferences from my own knowledge of the problems of teenage girls. And in the difficulty of knowing one of the major figures of Jaramillo's life, we come to one of the major problems of her memoir, one which reveals itself in her style of writing. The problem is that Jaramillo the author is not secure in who the little village girl is or how she ought to be presented, and to what public. To use Bakhtin's terms here, her "I-for-myself" is muddled with her "I-for-others" ("Author and Hero" 59). Which is to say that she can not decide whether it is more important to record her life as she has known it in all of its painful and embarrassing detail, or to present an idealized version of her life that makes emphasizes her specialness to a reading public. An account that consists of only "I-for-others" would allow her to participate in the fantasy heritage of Santa Fé, and to receive and dispense acclaim through institutions like the Sociedad Folklórica. In a life stripped of other pleasures and means to a sense of

communal continuity, to have claim to an idealized, attractive history would be a powerful shaping force for the author. However, this account would force her to leave out the true details of her life, of which grievances are a significant factor of the retelling.

In one intriguing moment, Jaramillo describes the work that Angelina did in Mae Smith's café, and complaints that Angie didn't help enough, saying, "It has always been that way—my family taking for granted all that I have ever done for them. The little others do is always greatly appreciated" (*Romance* 148). On first reading, one is struck by her tone of recrimination and bitterness, which leads the reader to wonder just how much she has sacrificed for family peace (justice for her daughter? A fair share of the family fortune?). Here, the urge to reveal "I-for-myself" is powerful: to conceal grief is to be taken for granted. In order for her to be truly appreciated, her sorrows and embarrassments must be presented in a true and thorough account. The movement of the narrative is shaped by the narrator's inability to decide between the attractions of being appreciated for the fiction of herself and being known for the person who she is.

Unfortunately for Jaramillo, the body confesses all weaknesses to the detriment of the person as a whole, as in the case of El Mal Hijo. Her own conviction that the smallness of her body made her the object of comments is one of her major complaints throughout her memoir. At the sanitarium in Battle Creek, she and Ven are summoned to the office of the famous Dr. Kellogg, presumably because her "history of my tests had been sent to him and he was curious to see if we were a family of midgets." She continues:

One morning, when my turn came to sit in the double electric chair, the monstrous woman was already sitting on one side and then I took the other. The line of women going through other exercises had to stop and laugh at the curious sight we must have made. I wonder which of the two were funnier (*Romance* 121-2).

That it is not a grown woman sitting voluntarily in an electrified chair that is the comical sight, but her size in comparison to a much larger woman gives credence to Stewart's assertion that the process of othering bodies, perceiving "freaks" from a normalizing colonialist perspective, is "characteristic of colonialism in general" (110). Public scrutiny remains painful to Jaramillo throughout her life, with exception of those moments when she is modeling "traditional" dresses. Costumes make it possible for her to make a contribution to and therefore to control the spectacle. Lacking this recourse to control how she is othered (by costume rather than by size, or ethnicity), she is tremendously vulnerable. Stewart states that "The freak must be linked not to lived sexuality but to certain forms of the pornography of distance" (110). Her aloneness makes her particularly exposed, especially on one occasion when she is alone with a potential buyer of the ranch:

I asked him to come in and gave him a description of the land and price, but still he sat, asking me if I would rent him a room. I said no, that I did not rent rooms. He walked behind me, where I sat at my desk, and looked into my bedroom. "This is a nice room," he said... That was the first time I had brushed against an unpleasant situation. It warned me of the danger of being alone. I decided to pack everything and close house (*Romance* 135).

Houses do not protect the lives of their inhabitants. That this event foreshadows the terrible events of Angelina's death reemphasizes the stakes of the theater in which Jaramillo engages; the boundaries of costume prove to be her only, eventually inadequate, protection.

That these authors present us with complex visions of the self, and the self in relation to cultures, makes the essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" a useful framework here. In this essay, Bakhtin warns us:

If, however, an authoritative position for such concrete axiological seeing—for perceiving myself as another—is absent, then my exterior—my being-for-others—strives to connect itself with my self-consciousness, and a return into

myself occurs, a return for the purpose of selfishly exploiting my being-for-others for my own sake. In this case, the reflection of myself in the other, i.e., that which I am for the other, becomes a *double* of myself. This double irrupts into my self-consciousness, clouds its purity, and deflects my self-consciousness from its direct axiological relationship to itself. Fear the double (59, author's italics).

Jaramillo, in *Shadows of the Past* and *Romance of a Little Village Girl*, steps out of herself and then doubles back in so many times that reading a consistent author-hero relationship is a virtual impossibility; one can simply never tell which Cleofas Jaramillo we are getting at any given moment. Are we reading the memories of a high-flying youth and the sobering realities of aging? Are we reading a metonymic representation of a class of women removed from their homes by the powers of American Imperialism? Is this the confession of a woman who has failed to protect her family from harm? Or is it a work of amateur autoethnography? The author never seems to decide, and so makes it difficult for the reader to settle into a relationship with the narrator. This is to be feared, as Bakhtin tells us, because it is a problem that reaches much deeper into the text than any mere novelistic conceit or device. The perspective of the author is shattered, and the narrative voice splinters into many narrative voices. The text then mirrors a culture beset by uncertainties, as villages were removed from the map by land speculators and a people were forcibly removed to the railyards of Las Vegas and Albuquerque, and the beet fields of Colorado. Chávez, on the other hand, skillfully uses the problem of doubling to explore issues of sexual and emotional agency, race, and the vulnerability of the grotesque body.

## **LA TEMPESTAD**

In her second full novel, *Loving Pedro Infante*, Chávez shifts her focus from costumes to the body itself. One of the greatest challenges in life are made by her tocaya

St. Therese of Avila; Tere is panicked by the words of the Prayer of St. Therese, which begins “Christ has no body on earth but yours” (38). Both St. Teresa and Tere are “Jodida by doubt,” and longing for visions of the divine. However, the saint’s visions are of God are fulfilling, while Tere, in her search for transcendence has to make do with the flickering image of Pedro Infante, an unconsummated wish, an lack that cannot be liquidated. Tere believes,

If I’d had a chance and been born earlier and in a different place, I might have tried to take up with Pedro... The closest I’ll ever come to Pedro Infante is in El Colón on a Thursday night. In here time is suspended. In here I want to imagine the impossible, to leave, for an hour or two, my life behind (*Loving Pedro Infante* 5-6).

Tere’s idol is a cruel one, who prizes his freedom over companionship, who loves women and then abandons them, cruelty and passion personified, yet ironically existing only in the glimmering of light and shadow on a screen. Her relationships in the physical world are modeled on Pedro’s movies, and are therefore pale imitations of the love that she desires. She has a nostalgic vision for a normatively heterosexual relationship, in which the man behaves like a true macho. Tere fears the trap of dating “super-stud Coors drinkers and forget the boycott grape eaters and half-baked Hispanic party boys,” because she fears being one of their partners,

... women with sculpted hair, artificial bodies, and giant nails, wearing ironed jeans from the Popular Department Store, all answering to names like Kimberly Ann Guzmán and Lisa Jane Velásquez, pronounce that Goose-mon or Velaskweez (*Loving Pedro Infante* 52).

Pedro, for her, evokes a culturally and sexually authentic relationship that always evades her. The partners that she picks possess some of the charisma of her ideal, but always end up lacking in some way. The last of her partners, Lucio, embodies all of the cruelty of her ideal, with none of Pedro Infante’s redeeming physical beauty, principles, or

hungers. The truly glamorous and ideal Mexican man is as unreachable from Cabritoville as Columbus is unreachable from Santa Fé.

In many ways, discussing the work of Chávez is much easier than writing about Jaramillo. Chávez is a professional writer, skilled at developing characters, so for the reader the boundaries between author, hero, and history are much easier to navigate than they were in Jaramillo. In a 1996 interview with Karin Ikas, Chávez discusses her path to her profession as a writer. Her parents were both educated—her father as a lawyer, her mother as a teacher. Her parents divorced when she was a child, and her mother was assisted in the task of raising three daughters by many women from across the border. Chávez herself is extensively educated, with a B.A. in drama from the New Mexico State University, an M.A. in fine arts from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, and an M.A. in creative writing from the University of New Mexico. She has taught writing and drama courses at the College of Santa Fé, Northern New Mexico Community College, the University of Houston, and New Mexico State, as well as the Radium Springs Center for women, a mid-security prison. She has worked as a playwright and actress for La Compañía de Teatro de Albuquerque<sup>18</sup>, and her work has been produced to acclaim at the Edinburgh Festival (Heard 47). Her works reveal advancing technical skill, access to communities of authors, and well-nourished talent. Little wonder then that she refers to writers of Jaramillo's generation and inclinations "the little *viejitas*, the little old ladies who were writing cookbooks or memories of the family that they published themselves" (Ikas 52). In the interview with Ikas, she states that the New Mexican author with the most influence on her career is actually Rudolfo Anaya: he was first a role model for her

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18 I have very fond memories of being taken to see La Compañía de Teatro de Albuquerque's production of "The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit" when I was a girl of about seven years old. I have racked my brains, trying to remember if Chávez was one of the performers, but true to the conceit of the play, I only really remember the suit.

as an Hispano author writing about New Mexico, and later her mentor in the creative writing program at the University of New Mexico. From this we can conclude that as an author Chávez prizes her craft and the popular reach of her work, and perhaps would not be entirely pleased to be grouped with Jaramillo in these pages.

Regarding the tendency of New Mexico's municipal government to perpetuate fantasy heritages by romanticizing the conquistador, Denise Chávez is considerably more willing to challenge the fantasy heritage that was used to build political and social and agency throughout the twentieth century. In *Loving Pedro Infante*, she confronts the dilemma that is implicit in this construction: if we are the descendents of the conquistadores, surely then a few other figures from the conquest are of equal importance and worthy of attention. And if some of us are characteristically the second coming of Hernán Cortez, then shouldn't La Malinche be around here somewhere too? In *Loving Pedro Infante*, the appeal of fantasy heritage is utterly deflated, when a reverie on the implications of the story horrify the protagonist, Tere Ávila:

The city fathers, currently a blustery, overfed, slightly constipated quorum of short older men, had named the spot Cortez Park last year in a citywide festival. The park honored Hernán Cortez, never mentioning, of course, his guide/translator/mistress, Doña Marina, La Malinche of the legend, una vendida who sold her people out to the Spanish conquerors. Ay, was the same act repeating itself? Was Lucio the conquistador and I the woman whose shame would go down through history? (92-3).

That women should mistrust and even fear the implications of New Mexico's fantasy heritage reoccurs often in Chávez's work. In *Face of an Angel*, the character Albert Francis Chanowski makes it the major activity of his retirement to sexually harass the protagonist, Soveida, at every opportunity, to the point where he is banned from the restaurant where she works. He asks her "What are you? Spanish?" When she responds that she is Mexican, he retorts, "You're not Mexican. I know a Mexican when I see a

Mexican. You're Spanish!" (*Face of an Angel* 237). Chanowski insists on this point, since her physical appearance does not conform to his notions of what a Mexican looks like. As focus of his desire, she relinquishes the authority to describe herself, and in his mind this proves that she should relinquish her body to him as the person better able to appreciate her. If she does not respond to his desire, it is because she is lacking culture and the ability to appreciate a refined man such as he. In this situation, her grandmother's house and her family history are a base from which Soveida can fend off these unwanted, and eventually threatening advances. Chávez's work presents the dangers of living within someone else's ideals. While it is easy for her protagonists to identify and repudiate misapprehensions about ethnicity and race, it is just as difficult for them as it was for Cleofas Jaramillo to live within the pornographies of race in small town New Mexico.

Chávez's authorial mission is scrutinizing the workings of gender and race in New Mexico. In 1988, Martha Heard described in *The Americas Review* what was already a distinguished career in local theater, including the authorship and production of *Santa Fé Charm*, which La Compañía de Teatro de Albuquerque transported to the Edinburgh International Arts Festival in 1984. At that time, Heard stated, "Chávez must be considered *the* chicana play-wright from New Mexico." Heard continues:

She celebrates the traditions and customs of Hispanic New Mexico. The *sabor nuevomexicano* serves to root the plays in a time and place. Yet there is a universal quality that makes these plays produceable [sic] outside of New Mexico... The inner conflicts of the characters are common to all humanity; so are their triumphs and defeats (91).

Since Heard's piece was written, most of Chávez's plays remain difficult to find. Nevertheless, her work in fiction continues to garner the kind of acclaim the Heard gave to her playwriting. Chávez characterizes the production of plays as a collaborative process; her turn towards fiction has allowed her to turn her sights inward. In a 1999



interview with Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, she says, “Playwriting is a communal creation, and I love the process, but I really do appreciate the aloneness of a long, sustained fiction piece” (41). However, this turn from the stage to the page has left its mark on Chávez’s work, in the technique has influenced the shapes of the fictions.

Like the criticism of Rudolfo Anaya, much of the criticism of Chávez focuses on genre. Her first book, *The Last of the Menu Girls*, has provoked a debate over whether it is a collection of short stories, a novel, or a short story cycle.<sup>19</sup> Alvina Quintana argues that, “By employing both written and performance techniques, her works also allow readers to make important connections between oral traditions and the private, ritualistic practices of traditions and Chicano folk culture” (94). Each short scene or “vignette” captures an episode in the life of a young woman named Rocío; while the book loosely follows her maturation to adulthood, the stories don’t appear in any particular order and there are long gaps between each one. Cordelia Chávez Candelaria writes that though Chávez’s stories may not be sequentially organized, Rocío’s character is “[etched] through meticulous attention to the specifics of her surroundings” (253). These details “show both how the interconnected zones shape her characters’ lives and imaginations and also how they persist as catalysts of memory” (254). Margot Kelley demonstrates that the randomness of the assemblage of these catalysts necessarily reflects the developmental processes of a young girl:

...*Menu Girls* demands that readers explore sundry real and imaginary spaces, moving eventually to an exploration of the idea of space itself. Rocío’s stories are told from several narrative perspectives—disrupting the continuity that could be afforded by a single narrative stance. And the stories are further defamiliarized by Chávez’s use of a wide variety of strategies which fragment the narrative (76).

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<sup>19</sup>After the lawsuit, this collection was re-released by Vintage Books. Here Chávez has edited and rearranged some of the stories. While we might consider the newer edition more authoritative, I will be referring to the first edition for the sake of being consistent with the current criticism.

A fragmented narrative that harks to a suppressed oral tradition is understood in much of the criticism as “privileging of domestic space(s) as a metaphor for women’s limitation and subordination” (Quintana 107, author’s parentheses). Tey Diana Rebolledo sees Chávez as emphasizing

the importance of [domestic] work, and [she] does so by ennobling it. [She describes] this work as larger than life, heroic and almost, at times, mythic. Thus we have representations of women’s work that parallel those robust descriptions of men on horseback, riding unafraid, valiant and proud through the southwest... (“Tools in the Toolbox,” 46).

For Rebolledo, the fragmented stories of *The Last of the Menu Girls* and Chávez’s second novel, *Face of An Angel* combine and overlap in a manner that both Quintana and Rebolledo describe as reminiscent of a fugue. In this criticism, women’s work as described by Chávez is elevated and priestly; as Quintana puts it, “A woman, like a closet, is private, functional, and often overlooked, yet like a closet she can facilitate new levels of organization” (106). Too clever by half here, Quintana reveals a limitation of this line of criticism. Reading only for the explicitly celebratory and political awareness in these texts leads her to ignore all but the functional characteristics of the closet, which in *Last of the Menu Girls* organizes memories of the dead, disappointing gifts, and broken saints. Reading only for functionality is deliberately facile.

Of this line of criticism, which focuses on describing the empowering, politically progressive qualities of Chicana literature, Rosaura Sánchez writes:

No one can deny the importance of struggle at the discursive level, but it is at best risky and at worst foolhardy to confuse represented emancipation with social emancipation.. Exploitation and oppression are not, of course, simply discursive constructs (353-4).

She later continues, “Quintana’s own celebration of gendered cultural representation takes priority over her critique of counterfeminist discourses” (354). While she correctly faults Quintana for conflating orderly storage with political agency, Sánchez’s own

critique is limited by the fact that her own reading neglects to account for the contents of Chávez's many closets, or even the significance of the closet as a metaphor for the emotional and sexual lives of women. The closets appear in this book as a means of exploring women's relationships, especially between mothers and daughters. Another grounds for objection is Chávez's continual valorization of domestic work.

Ana Louise Keating objects to the suggestion that *Menu Girls* is anti-feminist, in spite of the fact that it is a struggle to come to that conclusion. In her essay "Towards a New Politics of Representation? Absence and Desire in Denise Chávez's *The Last of the Menu Girls*," she revisits many attempts to understand *Menu Girls* as a book that fills the gaps in patriarchal discourse; she later concludes that *Menu Girls* destabilizes genre, destabilizes boundaries, and "does not flourish between the gaps but allows the gaps to flourish" (80). She further states that "*Menu Girls* exposes and critiques the limited representations of female identity available in masculinist discourse" (76). She continues to critique those who describe this book as counterfeminist, writing:

Multiculturalist calls for expanded representational practices rely on a politics of visibility that assumes realistic representational strategies bring about political and cultural change... Rather than produce new forms of knowledge and new concepts of identity, multiculturalists' attempts to attain increasingly accurate, authentic representations of the racialized, gendered, or sexualized other inadvertently replicate already-existing standards—beginning with the notorious binary between self and other. Yet the solution is not to forego all representational practices... but instead to expand them further and to encompass the representation of absence itself (79).

Other critics have joined Keating in recognizing the importance of absence and lack as a major authorial concern for Chávez. As referenced above, Maria Gonzales writes that intense loves and jealousies shape even the mother-daughter bond, and as an author Chávez is particularly interested in the ways in which women see themselves in relationships with others. The absence of men and fathers is a theme that reappears in

Chávez's work, but of even greater importance is that mothers, while physically present, are emotionally unreachable to their daughters.

Citing Julia Kristeva, Douglas Anderson sees Rocío in flight from the abject body, making an "effort to transcend the body and leave it behind." He continues:

Seeking to elude the body and its humiliation, one imagines oneself as pure will, as that which transcends the physical through its power to judge, impose order, create categories, ascribe meaning. In her roles as official "menu girl" and unofficial and unwilling nurse, Rocío [sic] Esquibel illustrates this effort of transcendence both on a personal level and as it defines one society's response to the abject body (237).

The elements that Sánchez identifies as "counterfeminist," Anderson asserts, are the responses of a young girl to social spheres in which the characteristics of her Chicana body puts her in an inferior position to the white doctors that she works next to. It is not failure to recognize the abject body, but in her embrace of that body in the form of her dance for her Aunt Eutilia that Anderson sees Chávez's liberatory project. Maya Socolovsky cites trauma and the revisiting of psychic wounds as a major concern for Chávez: she reads in Chávez's second novel, *Face of an Angel*, a refusal of mothers to recognize the sexual abuse of their daughters for fear of losing means of the entire family's livelihood. The daughters' responses then work to separate the emotional self from the "sinful" body. One cousin, Mara, flees the family and then spends decades abusing her body to ulceration with alcohol and rage. Socolovsky sees the protagonist, Soveida, as attempting alternative means of "overcoming the body's memory-knowledge" through the adoption of "methods of transcendence... exorcism, clothes, and mystical experience," as well as the "strengths involved in the body's affective enjoyment" of demanding physical labor (cleaning, waitressing) (200).

Chávez deals with the narrative of the fantasy heritage by enacting Norma Alarcón's directive to return flesh to the object of the idealized woman (188). But what

we find in that flesh is not necessarily empowerment, but also pain, the wounds of being both a girl and a Mexicana in a psychic landscape that devalues both. From her first published fiction she shows a fascination with the intimate details of the female self. As an author, Chávez does not shrink from sexual, scatological, and gastrointestinal details. From the beginning of her work as a fiction writer, she balances the triumphs of the body with an awareness of the body's tendencies to falter and decay. In *Last of the Menu Girls*, the story is situated in the contrast between Rocío's growing sense of the vibrancy of her body and her dying Aunt Eutilia's decreasing awareness and energy. The body, in this work, is not a place in which to get comfortable, a fact which is only re-emphasized in Chávez second book, *Face of An Angel*. In this book, the enraged Mara demonstrates a damaged spirit that is completely incapable of restraining the body. Mara faces the death of the man who molested her as a child with uncontrollable rage, which is mirrored by the tendency of all of her bodily functions to overwhelm her, to overabound and spill over. Her diarrhetic bowel floods a public bathroom, her bile escapes her stomach and burns her throat, and her alcoholism is impossible to conceal from her cousin Soveida as she talks to her on the phone, crouched on the toilet,

Without warning, the acid comes up, and then it gurgles down. Sometimes I think I'm going to regurgitate my whole life on the floor. I'm afraid I won't be able to stop spitting myself up. It makes you feel like a child. (341)

While it is important, both in these texts and more generally, to recognize that women's ownership of and control over their own sexual selves is of fundamental importance, it is of equal importance that we recognize that this ownership does not necessarily provide a happy ending. Chávez's characters provide almost unmediated access to the processes of their bodies and minds, which in turn provides the reader with an unnervingly accurate depiction of the processes and effects of patriarchy, misogyny, and abuse on the female

body. Lingering in sensual details, for Chávez, reveals horror and humiliation as often as it does sensual gratification.

In “The Last of the Menu Girls,” Chávez’s narrator, Rocío, describes a world entirely bounded by three trees that mark off the sphere of her grandmother’s influence. As a child, Rocío ranges through these familiar houses, sensing how the pressures of supporting this family constrains her mother and wears her down. At the same time, she imagines within the corners and crawlspaces vast spaces, “blue rooms” as big as the sky. For Rocío, these houses contain secret trapdoors to a world of flight. In one of the more poignant passages in this novel, she tries to restore to her mother this sense of freedom, through the gift of “An Evening in Paris.” That this bottle of perfume does not produce the intended effect, but instead collects dust in her mother’s closet, causes Rocío to embark on years of archival research in the closets of her house. Every photograph, memento, and abandoned prom dress becomes an artifact of another woman’s attempt at flight. The closets also contain “ointments, medicines, potions to make us softer, more beautiful, less afraid. [They] held vials to relieve us, to deceive us” —to make it easier to cope when the ability to fly mysteriously disappears (*Menu Girls* 85). Chávez’s heroine at first seeks romantic stories in these closets—tales of how handsome men sweep into the lives of young girls, and makes them queens of fantasy homes. What the closets provide instead are some unnerving indicators—that love often fails, and that even the most auspicious beginnings can produce an ending which leaves you supporting a family on your own.

These are unnerving facts that Chávez faces down with both unflinching concentration and abundant good humor. In the character of Rocío, *The Last of the Menu Girls* provides a narrative of the maturing female body, in which the protagonist arrives from childhood into both sexual maturity and emotional parity with her parents. *Face of*

*Angel* revisits these themes, but with an intensifying focus on the damage that occurs in the emotional lives of women under conditions in which sexual access is conflated with affection. As in the case of the Jaramillos, having an old and venerable name is part of the realities of assessment and exchange in the sex lives of teenage girls, as the protagonist, Soveida, describes her first real boyfriend, Jester:

He left me wet, full of juice, confident in my ability to love. But we never spoke much. He was the pachucos from the other side of town, the low-rider from the barrio, my Chiva Town boy, and I was la princesa, admired, inaccessible, and inexperienced, a member of that once wealthy, still regal, family, the Dosamantes (*Face of an Angel* 116).

Here, class and ethnic distinctions provide a patina of romance and quasi-pornographic fascination, fueling Soveida's sense of independence from her mother which leads her to lie about her whereabouts to ride around the country in a busted Trans Am.

As redolent as these images are with the sense of freedom that comes with first expressions of sexual maturity, Soveida is forced to reassess her charms when the actual sexual act reveals to her what Jester actually wants. He complains about the smallness of her breasts, and encourages her to be alone with him in more and more dangerous circumstances, culminating in a scene during which Soveida has lied so much that no one knows her whereabouts, trapped in a car at the drive-in, where Jester wants nothing from her or for her but an obliging hand. When her sexual inexperience makes even that least engaged sexual act frustrating for Jester, he cuts off their date and barely bothers to drive Soveida home, dropping her off several blocks from her house. Soveida's humiliation and injury force her to realize that for Jester she had not been a real person. As a more mature woman, she states:

I now realize that Jester had taught me well. He prepared me for rude men, crude men, the ones without shame, who use women like me and then discard us when they're done. In the silence of my room I had many questions for Jester, all of which went unanswered. Eyes open, I stared at the ceiling of stars as my mind

soared high over the rooftops of Agua Oscura, and higher still, into the dark navy-blue sky where there was nothing but silence, and everything below looked helpless, insignificant, and small (*Face of an Angel* 121).

Previous critics, namely Socolovsky and Douglas, have described such moments as occurrences of disassociation from the body. While I agree with this assessment, I think it important to underline that while her characters are often in flight from the humiliations of the body, Chávez as an author revels in uncomfortable details of physical processes and their attendant embarrassments. In Soveida's words, these humiliations are vital life lessons, which either shape the ability to hold danger at bay, or in the worst cases, leave the character so wounded that she spends her life holding everything at bay.

If one were to assemble a chronology of Chávez's works in fiction, one could trace an arc from her first assemblage of stories, *Last of the Menu Girls*, through her latest novel, *Loving Pedro Infante*. In *Last of the Menu Girls*, we see Rocío making first encounters with the juxtapositions of pleasure and degradation, like pilfered chicken dinners eaten in secret in closets of full bedpans (*Menu Girls* 29). In this first collection, we glimpse these moments of confusion, and some initial responses to the disorientation that they cause, either through disassociation or through thorough, grounding attention to the materials of women's lives. In her first novel, *Face of an Angel*, Chávez writes with more extended attention to the physical and sexual abuses that girls endure, and the physical and emotional restraints of each character is rendered in loving detail. And here, while the horror of having a body is written to be much more apparent, there is also a corresponding presentation of the consolations of having a body, namely the "strengths involved in the body's affective enjoyment" of physical labor. That such strength and such vulnerability are co-present in the individual body is of great importance to Chávez as an author, a fascination that is rendered much more forcefully in her third major work, *Loving Pedro Infante*.



In March of 2005, I had the good fortune of seeing Marisela Barrera's adaptation of *Loving Pedro Infante*, retitled *¡Ay, Pedro!*, at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, Texas. This adaptation was faithful to Chávez's authorial reluctance to punish her protagonist, Tere Ávila, for her proclivities for alcohol, fast dancing, and married men. The production presented a cheerful woman living in a small community, with a small, quirky, group of friends who were extremely nosy but nevertheless supportive of her. It was like a *Bridget Jones' Diary* for Chicanas, which is a pleasurable enough way to pass an hour in a theater. Nevertheless, there were a few things missing from the adaptation that later bothered me. Not only were small cultural details lost (references to enchiladas Christmas style, green chile and cream cheese rolls, the snotty put-downs of those from el Rio Arriba for those of us from el Rio Abajo), but also gone was the sense of rootedness in place that marks New Mexican cultural experience. Gone was the protagonist's sense that she was from *here*, Cabritoville, as were her parents and grandparents and ancestors back to the first grant of land to the ancestor who couldn't hack Mexico City or even Parral, and whose descendents animated the town with the same sad, tiny dramas for generations for the amusement of their neighbors. Therefore, the atmosphere of the play was significantly different from that of the novel. While the story filtered through Texas eyes preserved Chávez's sense of the fluidity of borders between New Mexico, Texas, and Chihuahua, it did not preserve Tere's social claustrophobia, as she lives out the scandalous destiny that her neighbors would expect from the granddaughter of her grandparents.

There was another important omission from the play: a scene where Tere struggles with spermicide during a tryst with Lucio. This is an important omission, because for Tere and her best friend Irma "La Wirma," this sense of relationship to the

past is part of what gives a person a sense of belonging, and therefore some social ethics.

Speaking of Tere's careless, married lover, Irma states:

The real problem with Lucio is that he's more Americano than Mejicano. No one ever taught him who he really is and who his people were and are. No granma. No granpa. No loving mom or dad who knew where they came from and where they were going. He's about as deracinated as they come," Irma said, without batting an eye (*Loving Pedro Infante* 88).

In this context, to be American is to lack a sense of the past and one's own place within the context of that past. Lucio is written as gleefully violating the boundaries of acceptable behavior, an entirely venal and amoral man whose entire life's effort seems to involve charming love from women: his wife, his mistress, his mother and his daughter. And since he has no sense of the relationships between people, he is oblivious to the qualitative differences between the different kinds of love he receives. In one of the most grueling, yet oddly hilarious chapters in this novel, we witness Tere's anguished attempts to prepare for the sexual act in the darkness of a motel room. She stumbles into furniture on the way to the bathroom. She struggles to insert her diaphragm, and stumbles back only to discover that Lucio has fallen asleep in the meantime. The unsatisfactory tryst over, Tere leaves, only to remember that her diaphragm is still on the rim of the bathtub. After an embarrassing and obvious lie to the clerk, an acquaintance, she retrieves the diaphragm, only to mistakenly leave it on the hotel desk in the place of a bag of biscochos that Lucio's mother had made. She pauses a moment to meditate on the texture of spermicidal jelly, "something greasy like a fingerful of Morrell lard" (*Loving Pedro Infante* 99). Sitting in the car, her diaphragm on the counter inside, Tere takes one of the biscochos out of the bag and eats it. "Too dry," she opines (*Loving Pedro Infante* 103).

And at the risk of absolutely killing this joke, I would say this moment is the crux of her relationship with Lucio. To satisfy Lucio Tere is willing to endure any

humiliation, public or private. His mother skimps on lard in her biscochos, and still Lucio calls them “the best” (94). Tere coats herself in lardy spermicide for his sake, and he can’t even stay awake for her, and then cuts their tryst short to take his mother out to dinner. Pointing out the omnipresence of lard in Lucio’s pleasures is a particularly deft and bawdy transgression on the part of Chávez, as she blurs the boundary between holy and inviolate motherlove and casual sex. Lucio does not make choices between the loves of his mother, his wife, his daughter, or his mistress, because he feels entitled to all of them; but in this entitlement he feels uncompelled to recognize qualitative differences in the loves that others have for him. He can easily slip from wife to mistress, mistress to mother. When there are consequences, such as when his daughter catches him with Tere, it is Tere who pays the price, losing her job, and once more becoming the subject of town gossip.

In this chapter, the significance of the texture of a fat unfolds slowly, as Chávez gradually builds its associations with onerous duty and sacrifice in love. The last beat of the chapter, the perfectly timed assessment of “Too dry,” deliver in two words Tere’s realization that her lover has abandoned her without much care. These words also contain the bitter (or dusty) realization that she has left her most secret desires out for public scrutiny, in exchange for a view from her car where she has only discarded and inferior treats with which to console herself. This one assessment is hilarious, chilling, and heartbreaking at the same time, and it is for these carefully chosen details, the flawless comic timing, and the devastating significance of these in combination, that we are at ease in Chávez’s able authorial hands. Tere’s many trips to a bar called *La Tempestad* where she spends Saturday evenings trying to see the usual romantic prospects as something new and exciting, are seen in contrast to her desires for stability and peace.

Above the events of Tere's life flickers the image of Pedro Infante, that most unobtainable image of the nationalist Mexicaness and masculinity. And in this we have yet another difference and affinity between the writings of Cleofas Jaramillo and Denise Chávez. In the case of Chávez, timing and choice of detail give the reader reason to believe that she is in the hands of an expert, and that it is okay to relax and give into the story. And while the boundary between author and hero, writer and narrator is well defined in Chávez's work, it is interesting to note here that she writes almost exclusively in the first person. Her narrators account for their own lives: Rocío trying to form herself, Soveida aspiring to bring a sense of self worth into concert with her life of . Each of these narrators, true to Chávez's training in theater, face their audience directly and speak their problems and their truths. In their stories we can read echoes of Jaramillo, as they dream of love and future homes, as they scheme and ultimately deceive only themselves. The direct and confrontational appeal of heroine to the audience puts the reader recognizes how little the character's her-for-herself, confided to the audience, corresponds to what she wants others to think of or feel for her. Thus we are in the position to watching a personality shatter, something made even less comfortable by the behind-the-scenes presence of a capable author, as Chávez chooses the most poignant and devastating details for our edification. Chávez's fictional work mimics so many characteristics of Jaramillo's memoirs: first person narratives in which dissembling about the grotesque body calls more attention to it, and technologies of theater are used to hold off danger. We can use these texts to focus on the ways in which modernity deprived women of a sense of cultural connectedness, and the process by which it is possible to reclaim it. With this in mind, we can then look at the works of Chávez and Jaramillo in relation to each other, and begin the explore how the texts of one author might be read as the granddaughters of the other.

## SCRAPY-SCRAPY THINGS

If the paths of Jaramillo's narrator and Chávez's Tere ever converge, it is at the fundamentally New Mexican event of public theater that is the Santa Fé Fiesta. The comparison that these moments offer should probably put us off our campaign to generate a shared genealogy between these two authors. Jaramillo's version of the Fiesta, circa 1930, celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> century neo-Spanish Santa Fe. "How can young hearts resist the fun of dressing up in colorful costume, or resist the music, song and dancing?" wonders Jaramillo (*Romance* 142). Her daughter, Angelina, wins a prize for "Spanish" dancing, her partner dressed as a Charro, causing her mother to warn her not to be such a proud Señorita. This dignified if lively event stands in high contrast to the Civic Fiestas (that is to say, not sponsored by a church) that I have experienced, which, as far as I can tell, commemorate Budweiser. My experience seems more in tune with that of Denise Chávez's more contemporary heroine Tere. Heartbroken by the cruelty with which Lucio treats her, she means for the day to be a moment of reconnection with the miracles of Santa Fé. She plans to visit to the mysterious Loretto Staircase, and then the burning of Zozobra, old man Gloom himself. Instead, she and her friends end up with a trio of northerners who make it clear that they are *Spanish*, and that their language and breeding is far superior to that which Tere received growing up near El Paso. She states:

I hate that north/ south shit. The northerners can't understand that the Spaniards came up through Méjico. Who do they think they had babies with? What are we but mestizaje, a mixture of all the people of the world? (*Loving Pedro Infante* 186).

These passages on the fiesta argue with each other about what it means to be New Mexican, in terms of ethnicity, geography, and linguistic norms. Yet in spite of the appearance of diametric opposition between these two authors, a careful reading forces the recognition that each author's claims of communal identity are premised in

knowledges of places not New Mexico, and that are in fact quite distant geographically. Angelina wins a contest of dances taught by an imported Spanish instructor, and Irma wins an argument with the three “Spaniards” by invoking her indigenous roots in Nahuatl, not one of the local Pueblo languages. While the rhetorics of the narrators claim the authority of nativity, they look away from their provincial towns to something more glamorous. While Jaramillo costumes her ideals as Conquistadores in her memoir, in Chávez the ideal man flickers onscreen in the vision of the Mexican nationalist hero and tragic movie star, Pedro Infante. In both of these cases, these narrators envision their essences in terms of the abstract and exotic, while in their own homes they suffer the localized consequences being ordinary, vulnerable bodies. Glamour is always borrowed from someplace else, be it Madrid or Mexico City. Of the many challenges that the narrators in these works face, one of the major ones is the challenge of being mindfully present in their own bodies and homes as a means of valuing them, even though this valuation forces them, even temporarily to abandon the unobtainable men who are their ideals.

That the figures so often fail to trust their bodies is a testament to how endangered they feel outside the boundaries of a heterosexual relationship, since in their singleness they are subject to social scrutiny and physical threats. In the works of both of these authors, women can approximate an idealized heteronormative relationship through the technologies of pageantry and theater. However, maintenance of this appearance comes at the cost of humiliating the body in its specificity, unworthy of partnership in its unadorned state. The narratives of both of these authors call attention to the constant vacillation of women between the roles for which they are validated and the bodies and lives that they actually possess. While this longing is latent in the works of Jaramillo, Denise Chávez’s authorial project focuses on the processes that tear women’s bodies down

in the hopes of making them into ideal, traditional women. Both authors describe houses as refuges from prying, policing eyes, with particular attention paid to women's closets as repositories of healing unguents and clothing that would elevate the body above reproach. Yet both authors also discuss the ways in which households betray the desires of young women, and express nostalgia for a lost way of life in which balanced, normative gender roles make hiding the grotesque body unnecessary. Finally, and most importantly, these authors both describe instances in which bodies bleed and disintegrate, and give birth; they both obsess about the details of a narrator's body only to find these bodies decidedly wanting. These authors invert the boundaries of the personal and the private to reveal *pelitos*, perspiration, and fatal blows.

To have means of creating distance, including clothing, cosmetics, and glamorous ideals and fantasies, is a necessary element for survival for the women in these works. For both the waitress and the folklorist, skilled manipulation of personal appearance can bring tips and civic acclaim. A higher, more glamorous ideal helps to complete the role, by providing the story. For Jaramillo, the ideal of Spanishness allows her to recast the scraps of her life that remain to her as something grander, and more significant to the cultural institutions that would as soon forget her. In Chávez's *Face of an Angel's* Soveida, a waitress, a well-developed understanding of the theatricality of her career, the ideal of service helps her to evaluate every aspect of her performance against unchanging standards of timing, appearance, and graciousness. And for Tere, the movies of Pedro Infante provide frames for her to insert herself into a multitude of stories, many of which glamorize the struggles of women to receive the love that they deserve from a beautiful man who will never truly appreciate them.

Throughout her writings, Jaramillo betrays an insecurity about her own appearance, judging herself too small, and too dark, to be a beauty. She does not appear

to be the first woman in her family to worry about this, as her folklore study includes extensive instructions for making and using cosmetics. Jaramillo recalls making pomade from beef marrow, cosmetics from tallow, and fine soaps with herbs and bran (*Shadows* 27). She describes women using the deep window sills of adobe houses as dressing tables, having spent the week before bleaching their faces with raspberry juice and ground eggshells. Face powder is made by burning the horns of deer and elk to a fine ash; rosemary is added “*para el aire,*” with ground nuts and seeds added to prevent wrinkles. A blushing powder is made with ground bran and dried flowers. Jaramillo writes:

With hair dressed high on top of their heads, with a few flat ringlet curls pasted on the forehead with wet sugar, the high bustled dresses donned—the *doñas* and *señoritas* were ready to be escorted or chaperoned to the dance (*Shadow* 50).

There is an element of ritual, almost of communion, in these women’s preparations for a party. The resources of nature fulfill and enforce the natural social balance of the village, as mothers and daughters go forth to celebrate, and to make shy and well-chaperoned gestures towards their male counterparts, which will result in marriages and the production of the next generation. In this narrative, the act of making cosmetics is practically idyllic, contrary to both nineteenth century American disdain for the painted face, and twentieth century, mass-produced cosmetics.

For both of these authors, the boundary between daily life and theater is tenuous. Their narrators make us party to secret anguishes, but they shape them to fit pre-established dramatic roles: the brave widow, the cultured señora, the lover, the harpy. Their mutual interest in clothing is also part of their shared interest in theater. There is a definite sense in Jaramillo’s writing that she does not feel strong enough to bear the weight of her costumes, and that her marriage is at times primarily a struggle to maintain the appearance of a political wife. It is interesting that after the death of her husband, she



puts most of these dresses away in trunks, only to take them out to dress her daughter. For fiesta, she dress her daughter in one of her old gowns, putting the brave face of the traditional on what would otherwise just be old and unfashionable. Jaramillo cuts down a pink chiffon skirt to make a low waisted dress for Angie, finishing it with a black velvet sash; later, Angelina will be buried in this dress (*Romance* 141, 159). These dresses, which were to be Angelina's inheritance, signify the distinction with which she was meant to start her life, and the passage of the burdens of appearances onto a new generation. And if Jaramillo's determination to write can be attributed to Angelina's encouragement, then her involvement in the reorganization of the Santa Fé Fiesta is actually inspired by a visit to the Natchez pilgrimage, in which the descendents of the defeated south don hoopskirts. Jaramillo muses:

Our mansions have crumbled back to the earth from which they sprung.  
Nevertheless, if we were to ransack our mother's old trunks, I believe we would  
find some fine old-fashioned silk gowns and jewels. So far we have been seeing  
mostly what the Americans have arranged (*Romance* 174).

Her invitation in 1935 to twenty of the "elite of the Spanish families of the city" to participate in costume events bears some of the markers of a guerilla assault on the Fiesta planners. While the Hispanos of Santa Fé were kept out of almost all of the planning for the Fiesta, style shows of "traditional" dresses proved to be one means for this population to assert cultural authority. The first show was such a success, J. Frank Dobie invited Jaramillo to join the Texas Folklore Society. Instead, she helped to found *La Sociedad Folklórica* (*Romance* 176). Clothing, in this case, was used as cultural leverage; it even reinforced the choice of a Hispana for Fiesta Queen—when planners objected, they were told that it was too late because her costume had already been ordered (*Romance* 175). If no more of the mother's gowns are to be altered for the absent daughter, then at least the dresses remain to mark the place where regeneration should have occurred.

Yet by the time of Chávez's generation, the trunks are long emptied, their contents replaced by modern prom and wedding dresses. Nevertheless, some of a similar significance remains. In *Last of the Menu Girls*, we see Rocío catalog her mother's closets, stating:

Children assign mystery to small objects and create whole worlds from lost objects, pieces of cloth. This closet, then, was a glistening world of dances and proms and handsome dates... The closet meant dancing life to me. (88).

For Chávez, the fascination with old clothing merges the young girl's anxieties about the woman she is to become with her curiosity of those who have already experienced the transformation. Each dress represents an opportunity, and in the discarding of a dress there is a closure of possibility. In *Face of an Angel*, Mara makes tragic purges of her closets, mailing dresses and suits in a range of sizes to Soveida, and then telling her the story of each garment and the dashed hope that it represents—the marriage that didn't work out, the interview she thought she'd aced, and the weight gains that render favorite garments unwearable. Each ensemble represents a pleasure past, which no longer fit with aging body or the welling rage of the owner. The closet purge indicates that as Mara continues to abuse herself, and it grows more and more difficult to costume herself as an actress in the part of a happy person (195-8). For in Chávez's world, women knowingly costume themselves for the stage. Soveida, the waitress, has this to say:

*A waitress's dress can only be called an "outfit." You will eventually grow to hate it, be it short or long, low-cut or high-collared. The darker the color, the greater the loathing.*

*It helps to imagine that you are an actress in a play, and that the outfit is your costume. The play will last from ten-thirty until three-thirty if you are lucky (the lunch shift), and then the costume can be retired. Forgotten (Face of an Angel 231, author's italics).*

The discontents of a job, such as the smell of a uniform or messes in the kitchen, can be minimized through the distancing conventions of theater and performance. Also, the

details and rhythms of capable waitressing are enhanced by careful attention to the performative aspects of the job. The costumed actor can be physically present in the most trying of situations, and yet they can leave both physically and emotionally at the end of a performance, having paid close and careful attention to the rhythms and cues of all the other players. While dresses as objects are less important in this later work, in her short stories the importance of costume remains central to the survival and sanity of the narrator.

To have means of creating distance, including clothing, cosmetics, and glamorous ideals and fantasies, is a necessary element for survival for the women in these works. For the waitress as well as for the folklorist, skilled manipulation of personal appearance can bring tips and civic acclaim, producing a specific response by means of a strategic theatrical gesture. A higher, more glamorous ideal helps to complete the role, by providing the story. For Soveida, with her well-developed understanding of the theatricality of her career, the ideal of service helps her to evaluate every aspect of her performance against unchanging standards of timing, appearance, and graciousness. For Jaramillo, the ideal of Spanishness allows her to recast the scraps of her life that remain to her as something grander, and more significant to the cultural institutions that would as soon forget her. And for Tere, the movies of Pedro Infante provide frames for her to insert herself into a multitude of stories, many of which glamorize the struggles of women to receive the love that they deserve from a beautiful man who will never truly appreciate them. What all of these situations lack, however, is the opportunity to merge the I-for-myself with the I-for-others, which leaves our heroines often disoriented, wary, and deprived of peace.

It is in the figure of Tere that Chávez forces us to witness the purpose and exigence of these gestures; her carelessness with her own safety, emotional and physical,

cause the reader to critically evaluate the clothing, cosmetics, and stories that she chooses. Tere brings out the judgmental neighbor in the reader, donning “full battle gear” for a night at La Tempestad:

¡Híjole! We looked good. I wore a short, tight, black imitation-leather skirt, black textured panty hose, a maroon tank top and long white tie-up boots, on sale from the White House in El Paso, sixty-five percent off (*Loving Pedro Infante* 23).

Miniskirts and cosmetics enable Tere and Irma to “waste ourselves on a few mangy, played-out dogs at La Tempestad” where no one new has walked through the doors. At La Tempestad, Tere’s appearance announces her availability, physical and emotional, to an audience that has time and again proven its disinterest. And Tere and Irma realize, one more time, the appearance of readiness and loveliness in the absence of a supporting cast is empty. Physical experience and pleasure, be it sexual, be it dancing, be it “the body’s affective enjoyment” of demanding physical labor, is crucial to the enterprise; mere perfection of appearance is like a set without a play. Nor is mere physical gratification an adequate reason to leave the house: witness Tere’s disdain for Graciela, a woman she describes as like “an over-heated chihuahua,” with little taste and no sense of smell (*Loving Pedro Infante* 28). For Tere, only the total experience of her own movie will do.

For Tere also, neither home nor clothing are adequate protections from the destructive gazes of those who mean to harm her. Alone in her home, she does not require the presence of Lucio to continue the damage to her person that he has started. Under the spotlight of his disapproval, even her home becomes a liability, as she wonders if the spiders in the bathroom or the ants in the kitchen are what drives him away from her. “What is it about me that you don’t love, Lucio?” (*Loving Pedro Infante* 143). She then produces a viciously negative blazon of herself, as she proceeds to detail every characteristic of her body and personality, and hypothesize why each one might make her

unlovable. In her mind she shreds the clothing that had made her feel brave and adventurous before, searching for some clue to Lucio's rejection of her:

What is it that you don't like about me? Is it my posture, with the beginnings of a humped back? You've told me that I walk slightly stooped. Is it my clothes? (You didn't like my pink-and-orange velour pantsuit that I was so proud of, and outfit that I wore just for you. Albinita gave it to me, and yes, I thought that if was wonderful.) Do I dress too shabbily, too brightly, too tightly, too loosely? You keep telling me not to dress like a Mejicana in dresses from Juárez. What are you talking about? Mejicanos dress the way they can. Have you ever bought me a dress, Mr. Fancy Dresser? You like my chichis. They're real, every inch of them, so what does it matter to you what I wear? (*Loving Pedro Infante* 144).

Though these words are addressed to Lucio, they are actually a monologue; her lover is so unavailable to her that even his abuse of her must be done for him. And as every rag of clothing she owns, every piece of food, and speck of dust becomes an avenue for Lucio's rejection, the harsh criticisms mingle with violent verbal gestures that reduce her body to series of faults and disappointments. Tere's recriminations for Lucio disintegrate into desperate pleas for his love and attention. As clothing is Jaramillo's best line of defense against the humiliations of life, for Tere it is the point of vulnerability at which Lucio can undermine her mental and emotional well-being.

This anxiety about the significance of cosmetics is very much present throughout Chávez's work. Makeup can alter a face into a new "potential self" and transport one to a more glamorous world, as in "An Evening in Paris" (*Menu Girls* 69-70). The body of the plain girl is made into something more worthy and valuable, and cosmetics are used as a signal of self-respect. In *Face of an Angel*, Soveida informs us the Mexican women "are unparalleled when it comes to applying stratas of makeup to their faces..." (176). Genuine artistry goes into applying creams, bases, rouges and mascaras. And yet she expresses a measure of disdain for the artisan, "someone who knew what pleased men: a well made up woman who filled out her clothes" (177). The waitress, though, should use

makeup only in moderation, “A little may help you feel more attractive... Lipstick is fine, but don’t expect it to last” (437). A woman at work will find herself too busy to maintain a made-up face; a daily makeup routine indicates a suspect excess of free time. But when applied for a night of festivities, the element of pastorality that exists in Jaramillo’s text is gone. In *Loving Pedro Infante*, the application of cosmetics focuses sexual and self-destructive energy, preparation for an evening of punishing the body for its unlovability:

I put my makeup on carefully, looking at my face in the mirror... I was ready for anything that came my way. And it would, the world could be assured of that (250).

A mermaid deliberately headed for *La Tempestad*, driven by loneliness and heartbreak, and cosmetics are one means by which she will bring these states to an end, without a care to how. In Jaramillo’s nostalgic figuration, cosmetics are artistry in service of nature, tools that should smooth the course of courtship and marriage. However, outside of this nostalgic vision in which makeup is a ritual object, it returns to its more theatrical purposes, useful in specific occasions, when the application is targeted for a specific effect. Jaramillo’s pastoral descriptions of face painting can not encompass this self-destructive moment, because the discourse serves to efface the physical presence of the woman being painted.

While both Jaramillo and Tere share a love of elaborate and highly feminine clothing, one set of dresses is marked as Spanish, while the other is marked as Mexican. While changes in the economics of dress making and fabric make comparing the actual clothing moot, it is interesting to note that the bodies that both of these sets of clothing conceal are of women with deep roots in the Rio Grande valley of New Mexico. In Jaramillo’s world as in Chávez’s, the Mexican body is subjected to scrutiny: how in control is it? Will it spread disease, violence, or licentiousness to non-Mexican bodies? In their own times, these authors struggle to define their persons against the prejudices of

American culture. Nuevomejicanos of Jaramillo's generation attempted to dodge surveillance with a deliberate Iberianization of New Mexican culture, while in Chávez's generation there was a general movement to embrace the most powerful and exotic elements of the interior Mexican culture. However, both of these methods of coping with American racism neglect to validate and prize the present flesh of the Hispana body, but instead praise it in terms generated for other purposes. This neglect has its effect on narratives of the bodies and cultures of New Mexico. Jaramillo praises the unity and fellowfeeling of native communities, but in spite of this her own body and the bodies of her children remain vulnerable. In the years after Ven's death, she turns his mother away from her home, complaining, "my health was so bad I could hardly keep up... For five years I had been putting off a badly needed operation, waiting for my little daughter to be older and more able to attend to herself" (134). This is the only mention of the procedure in the entire memoir, and it is easy to sense her that Jaramillo's physical and emotional exhaustion override any sense of obligation to a woman who had been unkind to her in the past. There is a yawning need in her life at this point, for support both as a woman and as a parent. Her body, already fatigued, refuses further obligation regardless of familial or cultural connection. She complains about her family, "It has always been that way—my family taking for granted all I have ever done for them. The little that others do is always greatly appreciated" (148). Her fatigue manifests the breakdown of the pastoral economy, and angrily signals the divorce between her ideals and her life. Her losses, and her confusions, are representative of the breakdowns of social relationships in New Mexico at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In Chávez's world, these positions of vulnerability are not without consolation. Soveida's grandmother, talking about why she never wore lipstick, tells her, "My face is my face. With lines where lines should be, a few hairs where shouldn't be hairs, with

skin the way it should be for someone my age. We rub away, Soveida. I am exactly how I should be. Lived.” She continues,

...we are more than this change, more than this face, Soveida. We *become* our mothers, our grandmothers. And when we see people who wear their antepasados in their face, it is a relief, and a blessing to know that the ancestors are near (*Face of an Angel* 449, author’s italics).

This is the flip side of the of the social claustrophobia of Chávez’s small town lives. If your most embarrassing life moments are never far behind you, neither are the people who love you in spite of these moments. As Irma says to Tere in *Loving Pedro Infante*, “You and I have roots here that go so deep we’ll never get away from them” (25). In her most peaceful moments, she visits her favorite cottonwood, Gabina, metaphorical representation of these roots:

That great giant tree. The mother tree. I would sit there in the darkness of those great deep roots for a while and breathe in the immensity of that old, steady cottonwood. I would say a prayer that had been running through my mind. That old familiar prayer. That prayer of long ago. And then I would look at the mountains, watch the sunset and head toward home (320).

The link to the past eases the sense of loneliness, and as these associations linger with images of nature and its continuity. Thus, *Face of an Angel* ends with Soveida returning to her grandmother’s house to have a baby, renewing the link between nature and culture through the process of her life. *Loving Pedro Infante* ends with Tere sitting underneath Gabina, rooted in Cabritoville instead of gazing upon the shadows of Pedro Infante or tossed about at La Tempestad. The last paragraph of the book, quoted above, is a plan for the future, one that will not include the kind of love that has nearly destroyed her. For, although Chávez does not stage the wedding that would end a classical comedy, she does present to us a union: that of Tere’s I-for-myself to her I-for-others. At this point, she has worked through the personal failures that made her vulnerable to Lucio, and in forgiveness to herself she can now integrate her public self with her roots.



Facing the future without her daughter requires of Jaramillo more courage than she thinks that she can bear. For weeks after the murder she can neither bear to go out or go home. Gradually, visits to her cousin's home and walks outside begin to soothe her, "I again felt my love for that pure beauty which fills the world and like a tonic injected into me, it lifted my spirits." Her niece, Virginia, dances for her, "singing and dancing until she bowed herself out at the door and disappeared like a beautiful apparition, leaving my mind in a state of relaxation" (164). Again, the sense of continuity in love and place make it possible for the narrator to begin again. She moves out of her house, and in packing up Angelina's belongings, she finds a letter that the girl had written to her future self, which inquires, "Has Mother kept you as she used to? You are supporting her nicely, I hope" (165). In the same scrapbook are newspaper clippings about her family. Jaramillo recognizes that Angelina had been fueled by these stories and associations, and it is her memory of Angelina's desires to hear more of these stories that she commences a new career as a writer and folklorist. For Jaramillo, the forces that made her a writer and the facts of her motherhood are inextricably linked; that both are complex and confusing is not accidental. The tragedy of Cleofas Jaramillo is that she will never integrate her many selves, and that she will always feel too personally endangered to make a definitive accounting of her life. She must protect Virginia Smith from the fallout of her family's disintegration, started by the forces of colonialism, but accelerated by Angelina's death. Reading Angelina's letter to herself, one can almost imagine a different outcome, where with her daughter's help she could have reassembled her unified self.

Pairing these texts in a conversation has not been easy; they seem to argue about what it means to be woman and New Mexican at almost every turn. They are the products of different generations, and they regard each other across the space of time like a great-grandmother might regard a wayward, out-of-control teenager. Yet like the

antepasados described in *Face of an Angel*, the past recognizes our faces even if it disapproves of how we describe it; if we in the present see the desperation to be Spanish as kind of nutty, it's because we see ourselves in the faces of the past and wish that our loved ones could be relieved of the burden of being unvalued for what we truly believe them to be. There are so many things in Jaramillo's world that clash with Chávez's. What links them together is what remains when their glamors are rendered transparent: they write about the worlds of ordinary New Mexican women, in a world that treasures non-white women only when they appear exotic, dramatic, or otherwise exciting. Perhaps the greatest challenge for both of these authors, one that neither one fulfills to her own great credit, is to embrace and yet hold off her own ordinariness.

## Chapter 4: The Locals

### John Nichols and Nash Candelaria

#### HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE *THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR*

Of all the authors in my project, John Nichols bears the distinction of being the only one over whom I have had an argument with my parents. For that matter, he's been the subject of some of the only arguments that I have ever had about an author outside the confines of a seminar or writing group. To a person not from New Mexico, this may sound a little odd, since a vast majority of the people with whom I have discussed this project have never even heard of Nichols, much less developed an opinion about him, the importance of his work, or the politics of his authorial position. However, I reside in the privileged position of having been scolded by my parents, by aunts and uncles, and family friends for wanting to write a dissertation on the literature of New Mexico that did not include him. One late summer picnic at my aunt's house stands out in particular: I, a new graduate student impressed with the breadth and depth of my knowledge of native literatures, announced to someone who had politely asked about my studies that I had no intention of including Nichols in my dissertation. What followed still stings a little; my father's siblings gathered around me at the picnic table and told me in no uncertain terms that Nichols' novel *The Milagro Beanfield War* was important to them.

When *The Milagro Beanfield War* debuted in 1974, it went into a second printing, which was quickly remaindered. The paperback version of the book took off, however, and the word *Milagro* soon developed a local association with people centered, pro-Chicano politics. The novel appeared as the crises of the late 1960's and the early 1970's were grinding back into glacially-paced disasters; even as Nichols wrote *Milagro* it

seemed a certainty that the Indian Camp Dam would go through, and that the taxes in the resulting conservancy district would deal a death blow to the remaining Hispanos in the Taos Valley (*Milagro* 450). The recent past had seen a new effort to foster a popular uprising, in the struggle for recognition of *ejido* rights for land grant holders. After confrontations with federal authorities at the Echo Ampitheatre at Kit Carson National Park, the Alianza de Federal de los Pueblos Libres, led by Reies Lopez Tijerina, attempted to make a citizen's arrest against Tierra Amarilla District Attorney Alfonso Sánchez. On June 7, 1967, an armed group engaged in what later came to be known as "The Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid," in which a courthouse guard was shot in the face, and a great kerfuffle led to a months long pursuit of Tijerina through the Northern New Mexico mountains. As so often happens, the goals of the Alianza shifted from the higher purpose of reclaiming land grants to keeping Tijerina out of jail; in the end, he served two years and was released in 1971. A radical newspaper, *El Grito del Norte* had started up in support of the Alianza cause, but folded in 1973. Nichols himself had helped to found *The New Mexico Review*, which also folded in the months before he started writing *Milagro* (*Milagro* 450). At that moment, the euphoria of the late 1960's seemed to be coming to a close.

This sensation was confirmed in the transformation of the population of Northern New Mexico, in what Lois Palken Rudnick calls "The Great Hippie Invasion." Thousands of young people, including young men running away from the Vietnam draft, made homes at communes in Northern New Mexico, seeking to reconnect to the land through lives of subsistence farming and ranching. They arrived expecting to make political coalitions with local natives, not anticipating that their superior financial positions would engender resentments: this was a supposedly spiritual movement that found its expression in the conspicuous consumption of land and water resources, and

tensions with impoverished locals was inevitable. A great deal of effort went into containing violent conflict between Hispanos and Hippies, and in the end political coalitions between these groups proved fleeting. Nichols, to his credit, sided decidedly with local Hispanos in these conflicts, and his satiric treatment of Hippies in these works alone are enough to make him a local hero among Taoseños of this generation. His “New Mexico Trilogy” appeared at the moment when the Hippie Invasion was changing from a utopian movement aimed at a political transformation into one focused on individual fulfillment. It is unfortunate that, for all of his sympathy for local Hispanos, Nichols’ political development similarly narrowed in focus, a progression that we can observe in these three novels.

In previous chapters, we have examined the writings of people who relate to New Mexico as tourists, as well as authors whose perspectives as New Mexicans come from living their entire lives in communities built by their ancestors. In this chapter, we will examine two authors, Nichols and Nash Candelaria as representative of two different kinds of New Mexican local. Nichols represents a long tradition of artists, journalists, and activists who came to New Mexico from elsewhere, seeking a site to make their political, social, and utopian schemes take root. Candelaria, on the other hand, represents New Mexico in its diaspora: the long twentieth century brain drain, that took the brightest of New Mexico’s Hispanos far from home, to places where in song and story they would celebrate the place that made them permanent newcomers to cities where they raised families and built careers. I must assert that terms of “authenticity” and “nativity” as they are traditionally understood do not help us to differentiate between these two different kinds of local. I have, in my time, met many people born places other than New Mexico, who can make much better claims than I can to a mastery of local knowledges. Conversely, I grew up among people for whom the accident that New Mexico was the

land of their birth meant relatively little, and whose ambitions took them decidedly elsewhere.

The purpose of this inquiry should not be a race to the position of “most authentic New Mexican author.” In keeping with Spivak’s dictum that the native informant always recedes from our grasp, we must remember that such a quest will only ever end in frustration and evasions. However, we must remember that when writing accounts of the ways and lives of New Mexico, that diasporic writers will have a certain advantage that newcomers will have to work very hard to acquire: historic memory. To clarify: the truly local artist, the abstract ideal of a New Mexican writer, is not out there. Anything could disqualify a candidate from being a native informant. What we pursue in this chapter is catching authors in the act of making themselves locals. We have in Nichols and Candelaria two authors who make highly visible claims to the authority to define the region for others, and to designate what separates insider from outsider.

The contrast between their choices is educational, because it provides us with two divergent models of what makes one a local. In Nichols, we observe an author’s fetishization of land, and along with that the bodies of those who reside on it. Candelaria, in contrast, prizes memory in his work, and writes about the importance of relaying history to the unreceptive audience of one’s own offspring. The consequences of the different perspectives is most vividly apparent in these authors’ portrayals of women’s sexual choices. Nichols’ portrayal of female sexuality is pretty much exclusively from the male point of view; even at the height of his sympathy for women, his works is really only ever a presentation of male fantasies of female sexual liberation. . Throughout this trilogy, Nichols experiments with the comedic possibilities of the grotesquerie of the sexual act. But, as we will explore further, the novels grow progressively more sinister as Nichols increasingly focuses on degradation, denying the element of renewal that

characterizes the genuine grotesque. Candelaria's relation of the sexual act, on the other hand, always occurs within the context of broader social relationships: marriages that reshape entire families, or violations that produce consequences for generations. Candelaria can account, in ways that Nichols can't, for the ways in which allowing women sexual choice shapes the communities that exist in New Mexico, showing the necessity of having a sympathetic understanding of women's perspectives on sex to understanding the communities that produce what these authors recognize as local cultures.

### **DRAGGING THE FIELD**

Until a relatively recent time, I had never been able to read the entirety of John Nichols's *The Milagro Beanfield War*. Every few months I would take a valiant stab at finishing it; after all, it is probably the most widely read novel ever written about New Mexico. So I'd pick it up, find myself annoyed with the details and the tone, and put it down again with a mixture of guilt and relief. Guilt, because in spite of my antipathy towards the book, I know that it is beloved by many Hispanos as the first truly sympathetic portrait of our traditional culture to have a real impact on the national culture as a whole. Relief, because once again I could offer myself the option of disliking the novel's characterization of local culture on my own terms, as a nuevomexicana who knows the "real thing" when she sees it.

Both aspects of my continued negative response disturb me, in spite of my steadfast conviction that "the reader of New Mexican fiction" and "the fan of John Nichols" are not mutually inclusive categories. What really worries me is how easily the cultural markers that I recognize as "New Mexican" become for me shibboleths that

prevent the entry of a popular work of fiction into the extended community of those works that I, an urbanized academic, deem “correct.” The immediate, dialectical response to this judgment provides that I justify my claim to the role of arbiter of cultural authenticity. From there, my previously firm stance regarding Nichols disintegrates into an unending cycle of self reproach (“Who am I to write this book off?”) to reproach of Nichols (“Who does he think he is, using our cultural markers to decorate his novel?”). As a critic, I am forced to shift between singular and personal pronouns for myself, and as I sort through the many ways it is possible to be a local in New Mexico I often find myself coming up short. For example, I have never lived in a small town in the northern part of the state, like Española or Truchas. I cannot speak to the experience of living through the gentrification of local villages, as Nichols has. So once again, I approach the task of criticism with a sense of recrimination.

Nichols’s style of writing makes the New Mexico trilogy even harder to evaluate. I have to state that of all the authors I have read for this project, none is so consistently irritating as he. In stylistic holdovers from his earlier novel, *The Sterile Cuckoo*, he jars the reader with constant asides presented ENTIRELY IN CAPITAL LETTERS, and overenthusiastic use of exclamation points! The effect of this, a prose equivalent of mugging for the camera, is utterly gruesome. It is a style that is fundamentally a breed of narcissism— like that of his contemporary Richard Fariña, Nichols’ work in the late sixties is in love with its own outrageousness. Hating Nichols’ novels is made only slightly more difficult by his own assessment of his prose style:



My habit has always been to move on as soon as a work is finished. I have never been able to read one of my novels or nonfiction pieces after it has appeared in print.

A reason for this is that I usually find countless errors, poor writing, asinine metaphors, and garbled syntax, all of which make me sick to my stomach (*Milagro*, 448).

Some people have advised me that such self-deprecation ought to be read as the kind of digging for praise that is common in fiction-writing workshops. As I have often agreed with Nichols' more unfavorable assessments of his own work, I feel that I ought accept this invitation to eviscerate the New Mexico Trilogy. I find all three of these novels to be punishing, often artless reads, and they get worse as the series proceeds. However, respect for the significance that these works still hold for critics and readers of my parents' generation compels me to recode my distress into a more thoughtful assessment of what this trilogy actually offers.

Most of the early critical work is much more ambivalent about Nichols's position than I had expected. Chicano critics in the 1970's differentiated between Nichol's politics and the patronizing racism of other authors of *chicanesca*, crediting him as an author who had earned respect by submersing himself in the lives and needs of his literary subjects. In their groundbreaking effort to define Chicano literature, Francisco Lomelí and Donaldo W. Urioste state that

...the uniqueness of Chicano reality is such that non-Chicanos rarely capture it like it is. For this reason, we propose the... efforts [by non-Chicanos] to be termed *literatura chicanesca* because it only appears to be Chicano. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that the perspective is from the outside looking in. This perspective loses the spontaneity of a natural outpouring of people's subconscious through a writer's creativity; instead, it becomes a calculated study which is valued from relative distance, that is, not lived (11-2).

Lomelí and Urioste are understandably dismissive of most of the literature that they put in this category, but they reserve the word "convincing" for *The Milagro Beanfield War*,

even though “the use of Spanish is limited to occasional stock phrases” (110). Antonio Márquez’s elaboration on the term *literatura chicanesca* is more laudatory of Nichols:

His fiction... reveals a remarkable knowledge of the Chicano experience in northern New Mexico, and offers an acuteness and sensitivity that are extraordinary when compared to the general product of *literatura chicanesca*. Two noteworthy facts distinguish [his] work. It is free from the racist legacy and the dilletantism that mark so much of *literatura chicanesca*. Nichols lives and works with the Chicano people he represents in fiction, he knows and shares their needs, fears, aspirations, and dreams... Foremost, Nichols work is nerved with political argument. His central theme is the exploitation and disenfranchisement of people... (76-77).

Yet not even Márquez’s glowing recommendation of Nichols as an author who really gets it can entirely ignore the problems that Nichols presents to his reader. He hedges, “Often Nichols’ fine novelistic gifts are dampened and his fiction burdened by polemics and ideological broadsides” (77). What I think what Márquez wants to say here is that Nichols has a tendency to rant, but that sympathetic portrait of Hispanos that Nichols provides makes Márquez willing to cut him some critical slack.

One possible flaw in Nichol’s work that neither of these critical assessments addresses is the broadness with which he painted his comical characters. The cast of *The Milagro Beanfield War*, often verges on burlesque, with its grotesqueries of clumsy sex, bodily odors, and constant exclamations of, “Ai, Chihuahua!” emanating from almost every character. We have to wonder, is Nichols drawing upon stereotypes of the unbounded Mexican body? Heiner Bus confronts this notion, that *The Milagro Beanfield War* can be lumped together with other works of *chicanesca*, stating that Nichols’ novels advocates for the Chicano way of life in a comic literary medium.

The closeness to the stereotype is, of course, also due to Nichols’ choice of the comic as his literary medium which forces him into a balancing act between superficial caricature and profound tragicomedy. In many places the author applies the folk humor of the oral tradition, ridiculing and affirming at the same time. There is a grotesqueness as a typical human condition. People need the

pompous, the blowing up of minor incidents to mythic proportions, the dreams of the wholeness of life, the nostalgia of the idyllic past as strategies of survival. In this respect *Milagro* serves as a universal example (Bus 222).

Bus defends Nichols against an assumed accusation that his work appropriates and exploits the cultures of Northern New Mexico. However, there's hardly much to laugh about in either of *Milagros'* sequels. Furthermore, I do not think that that matter of humor in these novels is nearly as straightforward as Bus would have it be. Nichols' increasingly sinister use of the grotesque body will tip the balance between caricature and tragedy into a disgust that is just as broad and ugly as stereotyping.

Most discussions of Nichols' work, when it is discussed at all, focus exclusively on *The Milagro Beanfield War*. Márquez refers to *The Magic Journey* in order to reassure us that despite Nichols increasing reliance on polemicism, "Nichols pinpoints the large truth that Chicano and other cultures are indeed colonized peoples and suffer gross social and political inequities" (77). The problem with this assessment is that polemicism is not the major problem with Nichols' prose; rather than becoming more consistently and stridently political, through the course of the New Mexico Trilogy his prose slowly loses the urgency that a centered political vision gave to *The Milagro Beanfield War*. These texts are so messy, it is hardly surprising that academic assessments of *The Magic Journey* are rare, and of *The Nirvana Blues* apparently nonexistent. The closest thing that I have found to a full assessment of the trilogy as a whole is a review essay by Fred Pfeil, which appeared in *The Nation* on June, 20, 1987, and which provides as apt a description of Nichols' prose style as I have ever seen:

In *Milagro*... there are some dumb, cartoonish characterizations, several inert stretches and a smattering of big-boobed-buckaroo sex fantasy that seems compounded of equal parts *Playboy*, *Rodeo World*, and *Outdoor Life*... All this might have made for an entertaining read from a writer of more conventional gifts, but in Nichols' hands, despite some fine low comedy and high political commitment, the result is a longwinded, tedious mess (858).

I agree with Pfeil that this approach might eventually prove entertaining, were it not for the disappearance of “the collective, carnivalesque will to struggle buoying everything up” (858). Pfeil, an admirer of Nichols’ radical vision, recognizes the power that *The Milagro Beanfield War* had to inspire pride and political consciousness for the peoples of northern New Mexico in the 1970’s and reads the compounding failures of his next two novels as symptoms of the times, “a forced retreat from a vision of collective struggle to a fantasy of private redemption” (860).

One hardly wonders, then, at the slightness of the critical dossier on Nichols’ work, as it seems to boil down to personal and political endorsements and only the most cursory efforts at close reading. For reasons I share with my critical predecessors, I have, until a relatively recent time, been perfectly content to proceed in this study without a chapter on John Nichols. The novels, read as isolated documents, hardly seem worth the effort of translation into intellectually consistent and coherent text. For a long time I prided myself on *not* writing about Nichols, as if by ignoring these works I could cause their mass and ugliness to dissipate into mere ephemera. My adolescent rebellion could not last, unfortunately. Graduate colleagues with no prior knowledge of New Mexican literature never missed him from my lineup of prospective dissertation texts. However, fellow New Mexicans, to a person, asked “So, are you writing about John Nichols?” as soon as I told them my dissertation topic. This response seemed to cross all boundaries of educational background, literary interests and lack thereof, and ethnicity: New Mexicans simply expect to see some accounting for John Nichols in any work on New Mexican literature. I have grown, in time, to recognize the importance of this expectation. While I’d be surprised if many people that I have talked to about this project have read the entire trilogy, he is widely regarded as the author that made New Mexican

cultures and struggles known to the world. I am compelled by this expectation to unshub Nichols, to try to understand the value that these books still hold for so many.

One could make the case that John Nichols is a kind of James Fenimore Cooper of the twentieth century. As with the work of Cooper, almost no one gets past the first book, which doesn't seem to stop people from casually praising the entire oeuvre. Nichols, like Cooper, offers his readers the chance to simultaneously condemn the moral failures of western expansionism and experience the necrophiliac thrill of witnessing the ends of conquered peoples. Unlike Cooper, whom I have never heard of as embraced by the Mohegans, Nichols has had the experience of seeing at least one of his books accepted and then assimilated into the cultures of the peoples that he was attempting to describe, an accomplishment that few non-Hispanos can claim. I must argue that this assimilation of Nichols' text is very complex; it affirms in the reader a sympathy towards social struggle and affective bonds to some vision of a homeland, while also naturalizing the disappearance and death of that same place. I would echo Limón's assessments of Americo Paredes' condemnations of Tejano music, by stating that Nichols' radical poses depend on the premise that "the war is almost over and the hegemonic victory of the dominants is nearly complete" (94). The process of this defeat is begun in *Milagro*, keeping in mind that in Bakhtin the pastoral idyll is always threatened by the advancing city. New Mexico, of course, is no pastoral idyll, and it never has been; Nichols is reproducing a local discourse that locates in its *viejitos* a link to a past that is unmediated by cosmopolitan troubles. What Nichols does not seem to understand is that *viejitos* are a renewable resource, and that the disappearance of the old ways is a classic twentieth century lament. As I will illustrate below, Nichols' New Mexico Trilogy is a descent from vulnerability, to danger, to utter destruction, and in some ways it is an important indictment of the financial, ecological, and spiritual excesses of Anglo Taos. However,

because Nichols cannot portray manitos and manitas as modern subjects without calling them either vendidos or victims, he effectively disappears them from the modern scene.

This is not to say that reading *The Milagro Beanfield War* is not a poignant or affecting experience. Since the cast of characters is so expansive, it is very hard to do justice to its many styles and themes. Indeed, the conflicts in this book are not a simple dichotomy between the old ways and the new, but a struggle between at least five separate poles of influence: Ladd Devine's real-estate development cadre, the old-timers, Joe Mondragon and Charley Bloom's dance of incompetent masculinity, local law enforcement including the Sheriff and the Forestry Service, and the goddess-like progressive organizer, Ruby Archuleta. This is a plot that defies summary, as the movements within one circle of influence ripple out into other circles and back. At its barest, the plot goes like this: Joe Mondragón makes unauthorized use of an acéquia; Chamisaville understands it as an act of rebellion against water regulations; and all kinds of charmingly quaint heck breaks loose. While his politics might be sympathetic with the material and political realities of Northern New Mexico in the 1970's, I break with Bus here. The tone of the book is one of wonder and gratified fantasy; one spends the last quarter of the book waiting for the narrator to command us to clap our hands loudly if we believe in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

This is masculine fantasy, as the women in the book hardly speak to each other and seem to exist for the exclusive purpose of either granting or denying sexual favors. Even the untouchable Ruby Archuleta is represented as a paragon not of local knowledge, political aspiration, or mechanical skill, but primarily as an ideal of the feminine sublime. Nichols introduces this character as Amarante Córdova spies on her morning bathing ritual in a heavy-handed allusion to the story of Actaeon and Diana:

...never before having blundered onto such a wonderful sight, he couldn't believe his eyes... Then Ruby jumped from the water, Amarante noticed a deer tiptoeing through the sage... The instant Ruby spotted the buck she charged after it... the young woman flung her arms around its neck... For a moment both the deer and the woman were fused together, as frozen and as straining as the winter air, Ruby's hair already a glaze of transparent crystals, her breasts powdered with white ice; then she snapped the buck's neck sharply back, breaking its' neck, and the blood suddenly gushing from the animal's mouth covered her icy body as she lifted the deer and carried it back to the house (65).

The less goddess-like female characters are tormented by the sexual demands (or lack thereof) of their husbands. Flossie Devine drinks herself to an oblivion that matches her loneliness (134). Linda Bloom tries to disown her Chicano roots by denying her husband sex and her children the Spanish language, refusing Charley's hunger for a new life that "was going to be Down to Earth, Humble, Unpretentious, *Real*" (81, author's italics).

Carolina Montoya waits at home for her husband to return from the arms of his mistress, mourning the emptiness of her home and her departed children (308). Women exist in this text as opportunities for men to achieve ecstasy, or to meditate on the very human failure to receive communion with the divine:

...Bernabé [Montoya] would have loved to talk. This was nothing unusual with him, he had always wanted to talk with the women he bedded. But all his life he'd found that the women in his affairs were exactly like Carolina; some kind of mystery about them or an aura about them, or some kind of barrier erected by the macho culture in his blood made it impossible for him to converse. Often they prattled like guinea hens to him, baring their souls... [but] all it ever seemed he could do, [was] just listen... Wanting to talk, all he could do was harken to their patter... and lay them... and harken some more... he wanted to communicate, get things off his chest, share secrets, confess, bare all, ask for advice, probe and interrogate, let loose torrents of rage, or maybe even release whatever it was he might have to say about love. But he was terrified; he had a vision of his own awkwardness, of how clumsy he would sound, of how startled and ashamed the women would be. And so he kept his mouth shut (112).

Nichols' writing about sex would verge on the pornographic, were his description of the act not so tinged with disgust and the anomie of fallen idyll. Women, especially Ruby

Archuleta, still offer, through sex, the possibility that modern isolation and alienation can be overcome. Failure to climax is a motif that continually reappears in Nichols' work, as men struggle to make their brains, hearts, and genitalia work in sync. Sex and its actors are props, transformed into the most reductive versions of their roles ("macho," "guinea hen,") making blundering, exhausted efforts to do what presumably came naturally to their idyllic forbears.

Then what is it about this book that makes it so prominent in the consciousness of New Mexico Hispanos? Why not any of the other artless, exoticizing authors who wandered through New Mexico during the twentieth century? Why don't people ask me if I'm talking about Mabel Dodge Luhan, Frank Waters, or D.H. Lawrence? Why has no one insisted that I devote some time and thought to *St. Mawr*? Having thought about this for a while, I would say that there are two things that *The Milagro Beanfield War* really has going for it: the hunger of this one, isolated reading public to see a sympathetic description of itself, and Nichols' naivete about what producing this work actually means. It is rare to see American policies of conservation described as what they also are, policies of containment and control of peoples and resources. American rhetorics of stewardship of public lands are revealed here in their effects on the livelihoods of the peoples of northern New Mexico; rather than protect idyllic countryside, the National Parks service is shown here to have consolidated the transformation of communal lands into cash commodities that can be parceled out as political favors to the wealthy and powerful in the form of grazing permits. Hispanos who work within this system, the *rico* Eusebio Lavadie and the *floresta* officer Carl Abeyta, skim financial rewards and the gratifications of siding with the powerful, detested by their neighbors and family. Nichols also reproaches the so-called counterculture in Northern New Mexico, in its efforts to reclaim the idyllic west in the name of returning to the land. Nichols offers a



window to local perceptions that commune residents are terrible farmers who waste resources and cooperate with local authorities in controlling local Hispanos in exchange for the law turning a blind eye to their trades in drugs and underage girls (156, 259). In a place where land is controlled and social relations are chaotic, it is possible to battle in symbols. The symbolic watering of a single beanfield Joe Mondragón can turn a system founded in politics and perception on its head.

I argue, however, that Nichols' greatest character is not beanfield Joe Mondragón but Snuffy Ledoux, the itinerant santero. His creation of the anti-santo/ voodoo dolls of Smokey the Bear encapsulates the conflicts and frustrations of Nuevomexicanos who live with the consequences of federal control over grazing and water, and the Smokey the Bear Santo Riots reveal the power of art and symbolic struggle to overturn local power structures. The trouble starts when Snuffy is commissioned by the Forest Service to make carvings of Smokey the Bear. Soon everyone in town owns a little Smokey santo, and

... they kicked the little Smokeys around their houses; they poured kerosene on the little Smokeys and lit them; they hammered nails into the little Smokeys; and in a great many other imaginative and bestial ways they desecrated Snuffy Ledoux's carvings in hopes of either destroying the United States Forest Service or at least driving that Forest Service away from Chamisa County... (193).

This abuse of the image of Smokey actually works to hurt the Forest Service. The prospect of a profitable business in Smokey santos makes Snuffy renege on his contract, and the local authorities impound his entire stock. When the Anglo in the office locks up that night, the Chicano officer, Buddy Gabaldón quietly mourns the impending end of his job, and as he anticipates the next morning the officers return to find

...the throats of three Forest Service horses... had been slit, and a little Smokey statuette shoved halfway up the ass of each horse. Likewise, the tires on... [the] big green government truck had been slashed, the slogan CHINGA SMOKEY! had been painted all over the vehicle, and another santo had been whittled down

so it could be jammed up the truck's tailpipe. The remaining Smokeys had perished in the fire that had quietly, without any alarm being given, burned the district headquarters to the ground (193).

The power of symbol to incite action is the major theme of *The Milagro Beanfield War*. Like its namesake sacrificial trinket, the town of Milagro and its one revitalized field is a sign of prayer and of unseen forces at work. The return of Snuffy Ledoux from his post-riot exile is a sign of the renewal of the militant, rebellious spirit of the people, "a vision of the future as composed, in part at least, of what had been okay about the past" (410). The novel ends on New Year's Eve, with Snuffy carving another Smokey the Bear santo in the home of Amarante Córdova, Nichols' reassurance to the reader that the past and the future are linked in the symbolic imaginary of the present, and that as controllers of symbolic production Hispanos and Hispanas in New Mexico have a fair shot at controlling their fates.

Of course, Nichols tries hard not to look naïve by hedging his words a little, and in the character of Bernabé Montoya, the sheriff, he tries to give voice to the cynicism of a conquered people. Still, the book comes off as that of a newcomer, in spite of Nichols' best efforts to fake the accent, so to speak. Reed Way Dasenbrock accuses Nichols of writing a description of Chicano activism that doesn't fundamentally improve on "Lummi, Cather, and Fergusson" since native people are figured as in opposition to modernity: "indolent Hispanic is transformed into Chicano activist, but the two do much the same, which is throw a wrench into the works of the American technocratic economy, mostly by staying faithful to their own traditions" (129). While this is an important criticism of Nichols' authorial perspective, I think that it is his lack of an education about the twentieth century in Northern New Mexico that makes *The Milagro Beanfield War* his most readable book. The optimistic ending of the book reveals him to be a newcomer, to believe or imagine that the forces of the American government,

commercial development, and ecological exploitation could be held at bay by a few armed refusers. This is an appealing fantasy for Chicanos, too, which is why this book remains so close to the heart of so many who have been forcibly separated from the homes of their ancestors. Still, it is also a vision that cannot cope with the lives of its most adamant defenders, Chicanos and Chicanas who live in and cope with a modernity that is just as cruel in New Mexico as it is anywhere else.

This thesis is confirmed by Nichols' second New Mexico novel, *The Magic Journey*. Nichols put much more time and research into this book than he did for *Milagro*, and to a much diminished effect. No one could be more surprised than me that John Nichols did not drop dead in the effort to produce *The Magic Journey*. Hundreds of pages of barely digested research, fictionalized and published doesn't make much of a read anyway, but one suspects that Nichols decided somewhere in the exhausting process of giving Chamisa county a history that making a place in this world for a character like Snuffy Ledoux was offering a kind of false hope. Ledoux is replaced in *The Magic Journey* by the attorney and revolutionary Virgil Leyba, whose entire life is consumed with filing hopeless lawsuits against developers' inevitable seizure of the lands of the people of Chamisaville. While this might be a more accurate representative of the sort of people who struggle against technocratic domination, the figure of Virgil Leyba is also not nearly as much fun as Snuffy Ledoux. Although Nichols devotes at least 150 pages out of 510 to a detailed account of the history of Chamisaville, he actually provides a summary of his historical perspective early on:

United States history that commenced with Columbus, the Pilgrims, and the Thirteen Colonies became mandatory fare; the story of the native tribes on the North American continent long before the birth of Christ were squelched; the settling of Mexico became a footnote. Indians, dubbed "bloodthirsty savages," were only mention in passing as the dull-witted victims of heroes like Kit Carson: once castigated and reservationized they were forgotten. And human beings of

Mexican descent, called lazy and shiftless, pictured always under a fat hat and snoozing, existed only as the butt of a few crude jokes before they were totally buried (65).

While this is indeed an important critique of the emergent Anglo hegemony of the early twentieth century that echoes Américo Paredes' account of education in *George Washington Gómez*, a second look forces us to recognize that Nichols is doing some disappearing of his own. Gone from this account are tales of the fence-cutters and burners of haystacks and Forest Service signs. The revolutionaries are literally ghosted, specters that ride the mesa waiting for the day when they can return to their bodies and their homes. The emotional weight of the book relies on making the burden of preservation of all Hispano culture in Northern New Mexico fall on the shoulders of a single, heroic man. Even then, a writer with a gift for detail and tragedy could have made the life of Virgil Leyba into an epic, but dependent as Nichols is on both low comedy and broad stereotypes, *The Magic Journey* morphs at a glacial pace from a very long description of the history of Chamisa county into the over-the-top lifestory of a heterosexual male fantasy, the always accommodating April McQueen.

I will conclude this chapter with a consideration of Nichols' continued return to the event of father-daughter incest, but I will note here that the character of April inspires a spiritually unsettling lust in every man that she meets, including her father. Her love affairs and marriages range across decades and continents, and her partners include a daredevil pilot, an alcoholic artist, a French fisherman, a Spanish bullfighter, and finally a Black Nationalist in New York. For all the great and frantic lengths to which Nichols goes to make us understand that April is hip, free, and modern, the story boils down to this account from Pfeil:

Outside these events [of April's life], there is not much juice to spare for stories of Chamisaville's oppressed. So when we do turn from the evil schemes of the Anglo Axis or the flamboyant exploits of the marvelous April to drop in on the

suffering natives, we generally find them in the same rut as the last time we looked (858).

So, in spite of Nichol's lack of attention to the area that is meant to be the focus of this book, we are supposed to understand that late in her marriage to the Black nationalist, after what I find to be an entirely gratuitous bout with cancer, that the character of April suddenly remembers the town in which she was born, packs up two kids and moves back to Chamisaville to start a radical newspaper that challenges the business practices of her father. Just as we think that we're finally getting to the point of all this silly meandering, and that the wondrous April will finally make some kind of valuable and interesting connection to the peoples of Chamisaville, the narrative once again turns into an extended meditation on the fantasy sex life, a gobbling, insatiable vagina. Nichols devotes page after page to April's renewal of an affair with a former highschool football hero. The newspaper, *El Clarín*, exists in this text as an aside, an excuse for April to leave the kids with her mother and meet her lover. In the end, April is kidnapped by the authorities and murdered, blown up in her car on a deserted road as Virgil Leyba scrambles to un-plant the evidence left in her house that is meant to make her look like an incompetent, bomb-wielding terrorist:

A thousand other people in Chamisaville, and in the valley surrounding the town, heard [the explosion], and they would go on hearing that explosion for the rest of their lives. It was permanently forged in their memories, whichever side they supported, a lesson and warning to all, a great lie which many understood to be a lie, a murderous distortion, a definitive end—or a beginning (485).

Now, that federal agencies have used explosives to discredit and murder radical groups in the United States is an established historical fact. That Nichols chose this ending of April's life and for his novel leaves me divided. I do appreciate that Nichols has chosen to represent these events for what they were—political assassinations—and to use his fiction to make this tactic more widely known. But I am also deeply offended that April

McQueen, this spoof of an activist woman, is killed in this fashion. After the burlesque show that is April's Lovers of Many Nations, it is possible to read this ending as the only way for Nichols to quell the life force that we are meant to admire in her, and that historical events are conveniently outrageous enough to make an end to this book. "What but a bullet to the brain and a carfull of dynamite could kill her?" he seems to ask jokingly of us. And in this, the end of the novel is not so much a political statement of solidarity with the activists of Denver and Philadelphia, but a quasi-pornographic parody of their lives and deaths.

So, where can Nichols go from the zany hijinks of state-sponsored murder? Who fancies a 600-page rant on sex, feces, and real estate? *The Nirvana Blues*, Nichols' final, exhausting installment of the Chamisa County trilogy, does its weary best to be more outrageous than any of its predecessors. The story itself is a trifle, featuring major holes in its plot. Eloy Irribarren, Nichols' so-called "Last Chicano" in Chamisaville, is about to lose the last remainder of his land to foreclosure, and wants to sell it to Joe Miniver, a wannabe-Marxist who he believes will be a conscientious caretaker for his land. Joe desperately wants the land in order to build a house for his wife and two kids, so that they can put down roots and live the bucolic life they've been looking for. We know from page after page of Joe's complaints that he possesses a passing familiarity with the logics of banking and capital, but it never seems to occur to him that a 20% down payment could get him a mortgage. Instead, Joe uses his savings to buy a kilo of cocaine in hopes of making enough money to buy the land outright. This foray into lawlessness catalyses the disintegration of his life. Soon, he is cheating on his wife with a woman who keeps a monkey as a spiritual guru, a fragile young hippie woman in a tent, and a sexually insatiable documentary filmmaker.

Joe finds himself in competition with the monkey cult for possession of the land, and in a double-cross with his drug-dealing partners. The local mafia are angry that he's selling the drugs on their turf, and are also in the market for Eloy's land. The drug deal falls apart when Joe realizes that his connection has not sent him cocaine, but sugar, and Eloy and Joe decide to rob a bank. Eloy is shot in the attempt, so he and Joe go back to his land to clean the acéquia one last time and kill all of his animals before he dies. The police arrive at Eloy's farm just as he expires, and believing that Joe is holding him hostage, they shoot and kill him, too. As he dies, Joe is driven in a taxi towards heaven, and gets into an argument with the angel driving him. He doesn't want the airy comforts of heaven, choosing instead a worker's paradise, insisting that the angel take him to Cuba. The novel, as well as the trilogy, end with the image of Joe Miniver's soul fleeing towards a real place of escape from the logic of capital, "the sweetness of a fresh and real start infused in his spectral protoplasm!" (527).

This hole-ridden and moribund excuse for a plot is in one way educational. Nichols is no longer interested in telling a story, and he lets us know it. *The Nirvana Blues* is, instead, an indictment of the financial and spiritual excesses of Anglos in Northern New Mexico, especially in Taos. He writes:

On Monday, all of the fine valley carpenters, schooled in their trade for centuries, either spoke Tiwa or Spanish. Next day, half the valley's carpenters had graduated from Yale Law or Columbia Medical and were married to brilliant psychotherapists who had decided to be pregnant with a genius for nine months...

Trapped in a cutthroat economy, old-timers, the impoverished sons and daughters and grandchildren of local residents, could no longer afford building with adobe. When finally losing their land to inflated taxes and unscrupulous developers, they moved into cheap Mutual Help- Operation Turnkey deathtraps... The newcomers, refugees from AT&T, MONY, or Merrill Lynch, Pierce, et al., had excess boodle, and immediately began building elaborate adobe houses... (7).

When these new households prove unstable, due to what Nichols terms “Peyton Placeism,” it turns out that divorce is good for the economy and all of these dream homes go back on the market, and as the newcomers abandon the Chamisa valley they also leave behind “ a little more confusion, a slightly bigger mess, the transient unrealized tatters of their dreams composing the flabby garbage of their brief struggle to achieve self-worth, an identity... Fulfillment” (8, author’s ellipses). That this social and economic upheaval is so much founded in narcissism seems to enrage Nichols, and it is this rage and not a working plot mechanism that seems to keep the book going, page after angry page. Furthermore, Nichols seems to strive to include himself in his critique; the book is replete with withering asides about the kind of person who comes to an impoverished community, exploits the facts of the real estate market, and settles in to write a novel. The character of Joe Miniver, our own hero, is a vicious parody of the well-intentioned, spiritually inclined but morally vacant Anglo who wants to live the life of the Taos mexicano, but not to share his fate.

Of course, Joe only wants to live Eloy’s life within certain limitations. The well from which Eloy drinks daily, “Real live H<sub>2</sub>O, no fluoride, no chemicals, no asbestos fibers, no chlorine,” is in fact polluted with “horse piss and human feces” (120, 122). Joe’s fascination with Eloy’s life is bound up in the older man’s ability to renew himself and his land in by ingesting and spreading fecal matter:

Each time they passed a clump of horseshit, he kicked it, saying: “You got to spread the wealth around. If I had a tractor, I would drag this field. But I don’t, and nobody else does either, these days, so I won’t” (278).

The wisdom to find wealth in excrement is something that Joe sees disappearing from the valley. He rails against the city sewer system, its wastefulness and smell:

Chamisaville had a semifunctional new sewage plant... Already, it was badly oversubscribed. But recently the city fathers had wangled a half-million dollars for sewage system expansion... Of course, once the trunk lines were buried, both



private citizens and municipal organizations would be forbidden by federal law to hook into it, given the inadequacy of the new sewage plant. The plant itself could not be expanded, because the valley's rapidly depleting water table could not be tapped any further to form additional fecal slurry necessary for moving more shit (259).

The contrast between these two ways of life is made apparent in the differences in how they handle feces. It is useful to recall here that Bakhtin calls urine and feces "gay matter," which "lend a bodily character to matter, the elemental force, born from the body itself" (*Rabelais and His World*, 335). The containment and industrial processing of feces is in Nichols world, a sign of life out of balance, a misuse of resources to hide from the facts of the grotesque body, a sentiment that is quite conventional in the context of the late 1970's. Joe's horror of drinking feces, coming fast after his horror at drinking fluoride, provides Nichols with an opportunity to wink at his reader, making us a chummy little club lucky enough to be smarter than our protagonist, as he works to condemn Joe Miniver to a fate beyond hope of renewal.

It is hard not to read a certain malice in Nichols' treatment of Joe, and through his protagonist, a malice towards his reader. His condemnations of his fellow newcomers in northern New Mexico will allow no tiny redemption to complicate his bill of accusations. The subject that most fires Nichols' novelistic imagination is sex, but his characters' sexual misadventures never fail to inspire disgust. One of the recurring themes of the novel is of Joe's inability to climax without declaring his love for his partner. Unable to love any of the many women with whom he copulates, he is unable to climax at all. He is only able to reach orgasm when he has the inspired idea of stealing Sasha the Monkey Guru's sex doll; declaring his abiding affection for a lump of plastic, he finally achieves release (462).

It is bad enough that Nichols never develops female characters, except as projections of male sexual fantasy. With the character of Joe Miniver, Nichols falls into outright misogyny:

Women. One was vicious enough to call him about his watch [which he'd left at her house after an affair], the other would emasculate him with sarcasm in front of his own daughter. And the daughter, in cahoots with her mother, would seek to poison that paramour while at the same time assisting in the castration by handing over the sterilized scalpels, scissors, and other assorted tools (140).

Miniver has sex with four separate female characters in the course of the book, as well as turning an evaluative eye towards his daughter, Heather. His physiologically improbable failure to reach orgasm due to his partners' unworthiness of his love is a judgment on all the women of the town, "middle-class honky women (outfitted in diaphanous turquoise and salmon-pink crepe)—calling themselves Sahdra, Meshak, and Jamila (who used to be Penny, Peggy, and Paula)" (179). He describes these women as "always turning up as chairperson of committees to save things, to Save the Whales, to Save the Farmer's Market, to Save the Historical Old Roybal Home (though never the old Roybals)" (79). Although this swipe at countercultural movements founded in quests for self-fulfillment is welcome, here we also witness Nichols indulging in the age-old fallacy of blaming the ebb of a charismatic movement on women. Miniver's misogyny invites the reader to feel superior to the protagonist, in his growing willingness to deceive these women into thinking that he is interested in their individualistic quests. "Curses on that sexual drive leading people into these arenas where they paid for their tits and ass in priceless emotional coin!" he proclaims at one point (458). Implicit in this invitation to judge Joe, however, is the reassurance that we as readers are redeemed by our ability to condemn anyone who would debase himself in order to enjoy congress with "middle-class honky women." While Charley and Linda's marriage in *The Milagro Beanfield War* shows that authenticity can not be obtained through sex, in the final book of this trilogy we are

nevertheless informed that sex is the factor that makes men lose touch with their urge to more authentic living, and that the desires of women are ultimately impediments to making more worthwhile commitments.

The continuous flow of obscenity in the pages of this novel begs questions of how closely we should identify the protagonist with the author, and whether Joe Miniver is a reliable narrator. After all, Nichols' representation of the Anglo counterculture in northern New Mexico, with its shady drug deals and shadier real estate deals, is a necessary corrective to popular perceptions of Taos as an egalitarian, mellow place. That should make it easy to read Joe as a nightmare citizen of an American dystopia, Nichols' prophecy of social and cultural apocalypse. The extraordinary effort that Nichols puts into making this novel as sexually profane as possible is really such an impressive sideshow that one almost misses the moments in which misogyny and masculine self-aggrandizement jump their authorial scare quotes. In *The Milagro Beanfield War* Nichols describes machismo in the tenderest terms, in Joe Mondragón's loving musings on the bravery of his neighbors; *The Nirvana Blues*, with its own bedraggled hero named Joe, is at moments a tatty elegy for a model of manhood rendered anachronistic by modern capital. It's not in the moments of Joe Miniver's greatest brutality but in his moments of tenderness that we witness Nichols' own complicity with modernist projects of representing New Mexico as an idyll, fallen though it may be in Nichols' work. So that the work of elegizing may proceed, Nichols must first produce something to mourn.

The fallen is here embodied in the character of Eloy Irribarren, designated in dignified capitals as "The Last Chicano." Nichols is quite rigid with this designation—Eloy apparently has no relatives, no grandchildren, no nieces, nephews, or family friends who also happen to be Chicanos or Chicanas. The loss of his land will be the end of him, and Miniver is at once guilty for his part in displacing him and eager to

assume the trappings of his life. A fatal gunshot wound received during his attempt with Miniver to rob a bank can't stop him from returning to his land one last time, to clean the ditch and irrigate the land, and to execute his horse and his dog. Nichols milks the death of Eloy for every drop of bathos he can wring out of it. With Eloy, a way of life is decidedly gone, "the agricultural area the ditch had once served was extinct" (508). Nichols makes no allowance that Chicanas and Chicanos could, out of necessity, adapt the old ways to changing circumstances, as Chicanos and Chicanas have ever done. Nichols, either uninterested in contemporary Chicano culture, or reeling in post-seventies political defeats, renders Chicano culture in the area dead so that he might excoriate its killers in the eulogy. He will allow no hope of renewal, no glimpse of a future that alters the piteous scene of Eloy's death.

In Bakhtin's terms of grotesque comedy, Joe Miniver's sexual failures are kin to Nichols constant return to defecation and sewage, and to his refusal to designate any heirs for Eloy Irribarren. For Bakhtin, grotesque comedy calls attention to the lack of boundaries between the body and its surroundings; sex, defecation, and death are all activities that violate the isolation of the individual body, and blur the distinctions between individual persons. In comedy, "the grotesque... discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable" (48). While Nichols is attempting to destabilize the smug, and to dispute the continuing conquest of Taos, he makes the fundamental error of trying to put boundaries around the grotesque. He makes death so absolute and lonely, as all the while he makes rote condemnations of man's alienation from sex in marriage and his alienation from defecation in sewers. Ultimately, this book is a valiant effort to make modern grotesque comedy, but I believe that Nichols' work devolves into "narrow 'genrism.'" This degradation was linked with the specific

limitations of the bourgeois world outlook” (52). In Joe Miniver’s failure to make connections there is the possibility for grotesque comedy, but in Nichols’ rendering of Eloy’s death “only bare cynicism and insult” can be said to be the real product of his efforts (28). Finally, Nichols refuses a depth of knowledge that would help him to better cope with the insults of the twentieth century, by refusing to recognize that death is a component of life, along with sex, food, elimination, and birth. In this, the span of his own lifetime is the only measure that he possesses with which to evaluate the efficacy and length of any given struggle.

### **A HOME STOLEN OUTRIGHT**

One of the things that marks a New Mexican from, say, a Texan, is that a New Mexican generally knows who John Nichols is, and has an opinion about his work, which is usually not informed by a familiarity with any of the novels that he wrote after *The Milagro Beanfield War*. I may be traveling in the wrong circles, but I have yet to encounter that same casual familiarity with the work of Nash Candelaria among my relatives and friends. I can only speculate on reasons for this, and bemoan the fact that Candelaria’s novels are not more widely known. Candelaria’s work, in many ways, is an excellent complement and antidote to Nichols’, in that his perspective is of a group that Nichols ignores and mystifies: the children of those peoples who have been removed from their ancestral lands. Candelaria is interested in the ways in which this group recuperated their sense of belonging through Chicano movement politics, and he writes historical fiction that lays the groundwork for understanding how the twentieth century in New Mexico actually came about. In doing so, Candelaria offers a more critical perspective on the gender norms of the region than Nichols’ romanticized elegy for the macho. Candelaria’s New Mexico sequence, written in the decade after Nichols finished

his New Mexico trilogy, is an important corrective to the equation between land and culture, displacement and cultural death.

The lack of popular appreciation for Candelaria is mirrored in the genuine dearth of scholarly writing on his work. Though he published novels and short stories consistently throughout the eighties and nineties, academic examinations of his contributions remain sparse. The reasons for this may be complex, fashion being dictated by the machineries of publication and marketing as well as the demands of a defined readership. However, I must argue that there is a subtlety to Candelaria's work on New Mexico, a refusal to reduce the dynamics of race and land loss to their easiest, most flattering terms. Luis Leal wrote that Candelaria's novels work within the Chicano tradition of revising and correcting the historical record:

La trilogía narrativa de Candelaria puede ser considerada como una acusación de los anglos por las numerosas injusticias cometidas contra los hispanos de Nuevo México y, al mismo tiempo, una denuncia de aquellos hispanos que colaboraron con el invasor. Es también, aunque indirecta, una revisión de la narrativa nuevomexicana... en la cual encontramos una sociedad idealizada.

[Candelaria's narrative trilogy could be considered an accusation of the Anglos for the numerous injustices committed against New Mexico Hispanos, and, at the same time, a denunciation of those Hispanos who collaborated with the invader. It is also, though indirectly, a revision of the New Mexican narrative... in which we find an idealized society] (30, my translation).

Leal notes here that Candelaria, while working with the Chicano canon of historical fiction, is also critiquing it, in that he refuses the available narrative that makes heroes of Chicanos at the expense of knowing their history accurately. Antonio Márquez calls these efforts at historical accuracy "workmanlike," adding that "Candelaria excavates events, episodes, and moments of human dignity that were either erased from or never entered in the historical record" (264). Like Leal, Márquez also finds his refusal to participate in the standard romanticized narrative of New Mexico in *Memories of the*

*Alhambra* refreshing, but also finds the tone of the first novel to devolve into polemical, preachy Chicano politics (262); the second novel, *Not by the Sword*, possesses the “larger merit... in the vitality and rich detail that Candelaria brings to the imaginary characters, representatives of the common folk who endured those turbulent years” (263). It is probably this refusal of the romantic pastoral narrative, a refusal of a heroic past, that makes Candelaria’s work a less compelling loci for nationalizing, communalizing thought. But this refusal is also a much firmer groundwork for building a vision for a Nuevomejicano future, one that doesn’t devolve into Nichols-esque panic.

Vernon Lattin describes the first book of the sequence, *Memories of the Alhambra*, as an attempt to grapple with the problem of time: a husband’s attempts to fit his life into a historical lineage, a wife’s attempt to live according to cyclical time, and their son’s efforts to make a pragmatic balance between the two (110). Quoting T.S. Eliot’s “Little Gidding” as an epigraph for the project, and alluding to the neo-Romantic nationalism of the Spanish composer Francisco Tárrega in naming the novel after his most famous composition, Candelaria’s work will not be an idyll, but neither will it utterly repudiate the gravitation pull of memory and origins. In the course of the novel the protagonist, José “Junior” Rafa<sup>20</sup> will recognize the central importance of his childhood home in New Mexico to his image and value of his own self. That this recognition comes as he is in desperate flight from his family and in search of an alternative homeland provides Candelaria with the opportunity to ponder what it means to be from a place, and the consequences of denying that kind of rootedness to one’s

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<sup>20</sup> Being that these novels are a family saga that crosses several generations, one of the elements of continuity in *Memories of the Alhambra*, *Not by the Sword*, and *Inheritance of Strangers* is that one of the protagonists is named José Rafa in every book. While the effect of this constant rebirth is interesting, it does make it difficult for a critic to help her readers understand and distinguish between different characters. For this reason, I am using the childhood nicknames of these characters as a means of keeping them distinct for my own purposes of argument, even though Candelaria usually refers to each one by the name “José” at least some of the time.

children. At the outset of the novel, Junior attends his father's funeral, an event steeped in the resentments of his siblings towards him, the one who abandoned his obligations towards them in order to hold down a job in California. Junior is disgusted by his sister's argument over who will take custody of their mother as a means of securing their parents' household goods, and horrified with the rapidity with which his cousin, Herminio, has aged. Looking at his sisters, Junior's expression says, "Thieves... Goddamned Indian thieves" (10). He tells his wife and son, "These are not my sisters, my brother. Look at their brown, greedy faces. Listen to their accented speech. We're not members of the same family. We're not even members of the same race" (12). For Junior, this moment is the catalyst for what will become a deranged emotional state that will lead him to search out roots that flatter his self-perception of his own racial superiority to his brother and sisters, to create a lineage of eldest sons that links him to the conquistadores of Spain.

Junior's wife, Theresa, had earlier made the decision to leave New Mexico forever, a move that Lattin describes as attempt to break with history and live only in the cyclical now (108). This rejection of history makes it difficult for Theresa to help her son cope with the prejudices of the father against Mexican nationals, and to understand her son's attachments to a homeland where he has never lived. Joe is filled with dread by his father's distress, because unlike Theresa he senses a drastic change in his father's relationship with his family. That dread soon comes to fruition, as Junior disappears from his home with a large chunk of his life savings, the only clue of his whereabouts being a business card from a geneologist named "Senor Alfonso de Sintierra" [sic] (18). Sintierra provides Junior with contacts in Mexico City and Spain, "the Hispanic world," as he calls them, for a price; Joe sees Sintierra as a "flattering son-of-a-bitch," whose enthusiastic exaggerations of the historical significance of the Rafa name draw him in even as he attempts to find his father and put an end to his folly (22). In his hunger for a



lineage, Junior loses his critical capacities and eagerly pays Sintierra for a few business cards and a handwritten chart, using these scraps to plot a journey to the documentary evidence of his own exceptionalness. He leaves his family and heads for Mexico City, at which point all evidence should lead him to give up and return home: the “genealogist” that Sintierra refers him to is actually just a very kindly chauffeur, a distant cousin of Sintierra who knows him only well enough to want that distance to be even greater (33). This setback, along with a bout of “la turista” and a violent altercation in a bar, nearly transports Junior into a fugue state, in which the motivations for his quest begin to clash with his memories of growing up in the racially charged atmosphere of early twentieth century Albuquerque. Junior’s determination to complete his journey grows in proportion to the sapping of his physical strength, as he decides that Spain is the only place where he can find a satisfactory originator for his own patrilineal line. Predictably, the source in Spain that Sintierra has provided is not a genealogist, but an antiquarian book dealer with little interest in helping Junior out. However, his search for his own origins pans out in ways that he did not expect.

For in Spain, Junior is forced to recognize that the things that he recognizes as “Spanish” are actually exotic and foreign to Spaniards, and that Spain is a place that does not resonate as a home to him. It is a chance conversation in a park in Seville that actually leads him to a crisis, and a new appreciation for the land of his birth. While waiting to talk to the book dealer, he meets a man named Benetar, a Spanish Muslim man playing Tárrega’s “Memories of the Alhambra” on the guitar. They strike up a conversation on the topic of homelands, and Benetar reveals that he is descended from conversos, and that as a young man he had been determined to recapture the dignity and beauty of Islamic Spain. Their conversation, which touches on Spain’s own mestizo populations of Europeans, Africans, Jews, and Muslims, undermines Joe’s insistence that

he will find his original European ancestors at the end of his journey. Benetar ends his story with the sighing acknowledgment that he must return to Spain, Christianized though it may be, and that in yielding to the faith that “there is no victor but Allah,” he must relinquish his desire to see the romanticized past of Muslim rule restored (158). Outraged, Junior nevertheless continues this conversation in his own mind, Benetar telling him:

We did not succeed in the Old World... The Christian and the Moor got together; the Jew and the Christian got together—at least the Christians converted some Moors and Jews. But all three did not get together as equals. You have a chance in the New World to bring them together—Spanish, Indian, and Anglo (162).

Finding mestizaje in what he had imagined to be a simpler, more pure world is shocking to Junior, but his final trip to Extremadura, “the country of the conquistadores” completely overwhelms him (165). He finally starts to recognize the open-endedness of his journey, that “every step [yields] nothing but confusion” (166), and his dreams become clouded with visions of himself, dressed as a soldier, massacring his siblings , and then encountering his own face on a severed head (168-9). He meets a young Extremaduran man who declares “We are the descendents of the conquerors” (171). Since his town is “Old and tired,” the young man is a migrant worker in England, directly mirroring all the qualities of Mexicanness of which Junior had been so previously ashamed:

[Junior] watched the young man rush off the bus and move swiftly toward the austere group. There were tears in the older woman’s eyes, and the father extended a hard, rough hand... There was something too familiar in that welcome to the world traveler come home. Like a regression in time to some forty years ago, his return to Los Rafas from California (171).

His journey over, Junior has found a statue commemorating Hernan Cortes, and a debilitating longing for his childhood home; Junior has a heart attack on the bus back to Seville, and dies thinking longing thoughts of El Rio Bravo del Norte. Joe, Junior’s son,

is left to gather his belongings and fly his body back to New Mexico for the funeral. Joe ponders his father's motivations, and pities him for the insecurities that drove him from his own home. The first novel ends with Joe's realization that, "...from generation to generation... Through the slowly changing landscape, life runs its deep, familiar course, in spite of all diversity" (191).

Joe's insight, as well as Junior's fatal homesickness, sets the stage for the next novel in the sequence, which provides the story of the Rafa family's roots. Taking place in 1846, during the U.S. invasion of Mexico, *Not by the Sword* is Candelaria's vision of the headwaters of New Mexicans as a people, with the major conflicts of the twentieth century established in the troubles of the nineteenth. This novel finds the Rafa family prosperous and well-regarded by the community, with the patriarch of the family, Don José Antonio II, wealthy both in land and in potential heirs to his dynasty<sup>21</sup>. His grandson, José Antonio III, nicknamed Tercero, has just returned from the seminary in Durango in order to serve as priest to the neglected souls of the New Mexico outback. This book in particular distinguishes Candelaria's perspective from any other author in this study, in that even when he is writing about the time before the U.S. invasion, he still refuses to frame the pastoral economy within the idyllic chronotope. This insistence on rooting his narrative in the historical record makes it possible for Candelaria to make more grounded and accurate statements about race and colonialism than Anaya, Fray Angélico Chávez, or Nichols. Rather than offer mystifications and feel-good overgeneralizations about racial politics in New Mexico, Candelaria offers reasoned meditations on the systems that produced the complex interrelation of different ethnic groups in the twentieth century.

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<sup>21</sup> Don José Antonio Rafa II is the great-great-great-grandfather of the José Rafa who journeys through Mexico and Spain in *Memories of the Alhambra*. For Candelaria's diagram of the Rafa family tree, please see appendix B.

At the outset of *Not by the Sword*, we see an Albuquerque not yet invaded, but where the groundwork for introducing American mercantilism has already been laid. Locals, witnessing Missouri traders making quick money over the Santa Fé Trail, are eager to get into business, complaining that “This is a country of borrowers with no one who has anything to lend” (26). As a new priest, Tercero witnesses the cynicism with which the backcountry priest Padre Gallegos handles the sacraments—salvation is only for those who can afford it (32). His twin brother, Carlos, uses protecting the family sheep from the Comanches as an excuse to stay away from his wife. In spite of the fact that they are constantly hearing rumors of impending war and training a hopelessly underarmed militia, the first sign of actual trouble arrives in the form of an Irish soldier named Mike disguised as a priest, a refugee from the defeat of the San Patricio battalion in Monterey.<sup>22</sup> With the arrival of U.S. Federal troops, the family life soon centers on preserving the lands that they have inherited from previous generations of Rafas from the legal machinations of American land speculators who winnow down the boundaries of Mexican properties in the name of codifying the law. While Carlos, running from legal and marital troubles, travels with the armed militias in a last ditch effort to expel U.S. troops from the region, Don José, Tercero, and their younger sister, Andrea are all left to cope with the realities of conquest: legal, social, and spiritual humiliation and denigration.

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<sup>22</sup> The San Patricio Battallion fought for the Mexican Army during the Mexican-American War. It was a group of soldiers comprised of American Catholics, mostly Irish immigrants, who deserted the American Army after witnessing U.S. atrocities against Catholics. They fought at Monterrey, Saltillo, and Buena Vista. Many of them were executed by the U.S. Army for desertion after the battle of Chapultepec. For more on the San Patricio Battalion see *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/qis1.html>>

As the presence of U.S. troops destabilizes what had only ever been the uneasiest of truces, Tercero finds himself traveling as a priest into the sites of massacres, observing:

The land was still wild and dangerous. Dangerous most of all for what man did to man. For with New Mexicans fighting Americanos, and Apaches, Navajos, and Utes fighting both, the day one would love his neighbor as himself seemed as distant as the beginning of the world. Back to the heritage of Cain and Abel (153).

The family struggles with the problems of how to keep themselves together, with another family offering to marry Andrea into a household that is planning to pull up stakes for Chihuahua (163). Carlos is killed in the bombardment of the mission church during the Taos rebellion, leaving several thousands of dollars of gambling debts in the family's name (201). His wife, anguished that she had wished him dead, disposes of the debt by ceding much of the family property to his creditors (206). Linking the struggle for a free Ireland with the annexation of the American southwest, Candelaria pairs Andrea with Mike, who only later hears the horror of the mass execution of the San Patricio battalion at Chapultepec, and decides to take Andrea into hiding (209-10). So Tercero, left as the only heir to the dwindling Rafa fortune, is left with a choice: to serve in the impending bishopric of the foreigner Jean Baptiste Lamy, or to abandon his vows and take charge of his family's concerns. He endures the indignity of seeing San Felipe church turned over to a foreigner, and the public humiliation of knowing that he could have preserved the local church from being turned over to a French priest. And although Tercero believes the removal of Padre Gallegos from the Church will be an improvement, he also notes that there is also a disappearance of joy from the celebration of religion, as the religious practice is forced into "appropriate" forms, "almost as if God had, in the end, turned out to be a Yankee. And God's brown-faced stepchildren would have to learn new ways of

loving their Father” (226). Turning from the church, Tercero marries and begins the long process of protecting the area families from real estate speculation.

The third book of the sequence, *Inheritance of Strangers*, takes place in Tercero’s old age, at the end of decades of struggle to maintain authority over diminishing scraps of land. By the year of 1890, the largest parcel of land is owned by a man named James Smith, who relies on Tercero’s lingering prestige to negotiate with his neighbors. At the outset of the novel, Tercero and his grandson Leonardo attempt to corral and sequester a man who has broken into Smith’s goat pen in order to woo a nanny whom he has named “Esmeralda.” The paranoid ravings of this man, Pedro “Don Pedro” Baca, provide a pretext for the grandfather to relate the process of the family’s downfall, even though “he felt too old to explain... The years had eroded his passions so that he accepted things he once would have fought. Or even worse, he had become indifferent to them” (9). Tercero manages to talk Pedro out of the goat pen with flattering allusions to his responsibilities to the hacienda that he no longer owns and the long-dispersed peons: in late nineteenth century Albuquerque, aristocratic grandeur is a form of madness, a sign of a culture losing touch with its reality. Tercero is faced with the dilemma of how to portray the past to his grandchildren:

I do not want to deceive myself about ancient glories, he thought. I never believed in them. Glory was always in the future. In heaven. In God. But as I get nearer to that, I think more about the past and how it might have been. About our loss of vigor. About giving in instead of fighting. As I grow older, I sometimes have regrets. Sometimes I wish that I had fought more and accepted less. But what will I tell Leonardo? (15).

His account of his country’s history is careful to deny the notion that they are Spanish, and emphasizes that Spanish colonizers and Native Americans had interbred. This account, however, does not underplay the centrality of violence in the sequences of conquest in the Southwest: “The Anglo took from the Mexican what the Mexican-

Spaniard took from the Indian who in turn had taken it from other Indians. The strong take from the weak... The weak may be blessed, but the earth still belongs to he who takes it" (17). In this occasion, Tercero's growing depression over the state of his family's landholdings and the history for which he is a vessel is to have dire consequences for his grandson. The problem the child has integrating the old man's despair into the beginnings of his adult self, which causes him to act out his confusion in destruction.

*Inheritance of Strangers* shifts between two separate time frames. In the moment of 1890, the action focuses on Tercero's role in the selection of a new sheriff for Los Rafas, particularly in his interference with his son Francisco's practice of realpolitik in vote purchasing and candidate intimidation (26). When the narrative focuses on the story of Pedro, the time frame shifts back to the 1850's in California, and the ethnic cleansing that occurred there in the wake of the gold rush. Tercero relates the Pedro's story to his bored grandson, wondering how he can "appreciate New Mexico if does not know what terrible things happened in other places? How can he learn what to watch out for so that those terrible things never happen again?" (47). This knowledge is meant to arm his oldest grandson with the determination to keep his land, and to preserve the social and familial bonds and vocations that are his birthright. Little does Tercero know that the entire foundation of this enterprise is eroding from underneath him. His son Francisco attempts to develop political power through violent suppression of the candidacy of a Hispano willing to toady to the Anglo political machine, but instead he is beaten almost to death by the candidate's brother. Enraged and frightened, Leonardo sets out to get revenge on the man who assaulted his father, and is in turn shot dead in the street. The political machine moves onwards, as the Rafa family retreats into grief; Pedro,

meanwhile, meanders in and out of paranoid insistence that the people who took his rancho are still coming to get him. Tercero muses on Pedro's troubles:

A home stolen outright. Legally. With no recourse. Once a verdant rancho in Eden itself. Now God only knows what kind of Anglo haven. A squalid farm town of loud and arrogant grabbers. A gabble of Anglo migrants who knew nothing of its history or of the people from whom they had stolen this paradise. Who cared even less. Like the livestock grazing in the pastures with not a thought to the why and wherefore of it as long as their bellies were full (265).

Tercero is terrified that, having recounted this story to Leonardo, caused the boy to respond with violence to threats to his family. Wracked with guilt that the history that he must impart to his grandchildren is such a burden, Tercero nevertheless begins the task of educating Carlos, Leonardo's younger brother, about the past. This little boy will one day grow to be Junior Rafa's father, and the telling of this complex story will transform him from a second son to an heir.

Of course, many of the problems that the protagonists in these three novels face or make for themselves are rooted in the limitations of systems of patrilineal inheritance. And as the old landholdings diminish, the story of the family becomes a more and more significant part of each child's inheritance. This problem is at the center of the final book in the sequence, *Leonor Park*. The story commences in 1985, a year commemorated for the "founding" of Albuquerque, but which actually commemorates the year that Anglo developers split New Town, with its railway depot, from Old Town. Antonio Rafa, a distant cousin of Junior's, is reading a play that his son Tony has written for the event, an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. While impressed by his son's ingenuity, Antonio also comes to realize that he is charged with educating his son about the terms under which his mother, Leonor, had decided to donate the last of her family land to the city, for a park. Leonor Armijo, a cousin of Theresa Rafa from *Memories of the Alhambra*, is heir to her grandfather's land and fortune, but as a teenager at the time of



his death in 1928, too young to take charge of it. It is left in trust to her through her father, Nicolas and his sister, Magdalena. Nicolas and Magdalena, in adulthood, have taken sibling warring to the extreme; their lifelong battle for their father's affection shifts immediately to an effort to control the affections of Leonor. Nicolas is feckless, having given over the upbringing of his infant daughter to his sister after the death of his wife in order to ride the railway across the southwest. In his father's lifetime, he spends much of what he would have inherited on hopeless business schemes:

The fool had actually believed that they could raise sheep with colored fleece: red, blue, green—and with varying degrees of curl. Nicolas had believed until his money ran out and the experimental herd looked just like any other herd on the mesa in spite of the more expensive, special diet (37).

In contrast, Magdalena is very capable with money, managing both her father's household and her own cantina, where she sells bootleg liquor. Her father says of her financial abilities, "...she's almost as good as me. I don't trust her because she's a wolf, and there's no such thing as a friendly wolf" (37). In the wake of her grandfather's death, Leonor's affections become the key to controlling the family fortune, and the means by which both siblings mean to finally defeat one another. For Leonor, being an heiress means having to choose between loving her weak father or obeying her overbearing aunt; ultimately, she elopes with Antonio Rafa and abdicates the responsibility to choose between these two models of being. The book begins and ends with Antonio, as Leonor suffers from dementia, preparing to donate her land to the city of Albuquerque. At the same time, he is providing Tony, now a professor at a college in California, with an honest account of how it is that the land has remained fallow and empty all these years as Leonor has refused the burden of her inheritance.

The choice between her father and her aunt, for Leonor, comes down to designating which model of New Mexican heritage should survive. Nicolas represents a

vision of the past as pastoral idyll, where limpid shepherds idly strum their guitars as wolves quietly eat their flocks; Magdalena represents the New Mexican heritage as conquest. Magdalena's misandronistic tendencies, the product of her contempt for her father in his willingness to spoil her and the shame of three disastrous marriages, do not allow her to interact meaningfully with her niece. She tells Leonor:

Your aunt is rich. If you're a good girl and do the right things, Auntie will leave it all to you. You'll be an heiress. But being an heiress is not easy. You have to be careful. Especially of men. I want you to listen and learn from someone who knows best (92).

For Magdalena, knowing what is best for Leonor means restricting her access to her father, her cousin Theresa, and especially from Antonio. Magdalena develops paranoid fantasies that Antonio has used his job in the bank to snoop into her accounts, unable to cope with the notion that her money is not the only attraction that Leonor possesses. Controlling Leonor is a significant asset to her, and any threat to that control is a serious threat to her entire sense of being. When Leonor asks her why she never married again:

For an instant, caught off guard, Magdalena's eyes mirrored the terrible fear that was a constant part of her. The pain was raw, undisguised, a pleading for help. Then it disappeared as if a steel door had slammed shut (93).

Control of her niece, control of her business, and control of her father's estate are all the foundations of her self. Even the smallest threats can undermine her, something her passive-aggressive brother knows well. Her whiskey sales are mysteriously reported to the police; Leonor and Antonio run away together; and late at night she receives phone calls from someone claiming to be her father calling from hell. She later receives lectures from a cockroach, who warns her, in the style of *Archy and Mehitabel*, "You'll go to that squeak squeak down in the fiery squeak of squeak. Eternal. Forever" (163). While Candelaria does not tell us how Nicolas has managed to trick his sister, Antonio later tells Tony that the life-long sibling rivalry had taken a deadly turn as a consequence of

Magdalena's attempt to manipulate the estate and Leonor. The combination of her brother's trickery, strong drink, and Leonor's sudden disappearance force her out of the house, and the next day she is discovered in her car, suspended underwater in the river, having driven off the bridge the night before.

Her aunt's death troubles Leonor deeply in later years, especially as her father's role in the foundering of Magdalena's sanity gradually becomes more apparent. Antonio makes enough money for them to both ignore her inheritance, which she associates with her aunt's and her father's greed for money and love:

When Leonor finally understood what had happened, that guilt had hastened her father's death, she tried to forget what Nicolas had left her. It was tainted money, tainted land. She knew too much of its history. When she became ill, she realized that her illness was a warning. She was the inheritor of takers and had to earn whatever forgiveness she could by giving something back. So there it was. The park. A penance you might say. An offer of atonement if only God would accept it. It was right that it should be for everyone to enjoy, which was what it was in the beginning anyway (190).

Her aunt's bluster and her father's concealed malice are the models with which Leonor can become the next generation of landowner; her refusal of this role mirrors the quest of her contemporary, Junior Rafa, to find the provide substance to his delusions of grandeur. Junior's longing for a patriarch gradually develops into a desire to return to the earth where he was born, a dream of a snitching melons and a swim in the river (175-6). Conversely, Leonor fears that she is culpable for the wrongdoings of this same patriarch, and therefore atones for having benefited from the machinations of her forbears.

In the novels that frame this sequence, Candelaria examines the tribulations of maintaining a sense of belonging through shared family histories and experience. The loss of land means the undoing of the family in that large groups no longer share responsibility for producing livelihoods for each other, and that loss of shared destiny is much to be mourned in these books. However, in framing this sequence as he does,

Candelaria re-emphasizes that sharing history is also of great importance, and that the distortion of history can be as damaging as the loss of a living when it comes to making young people feel capable of the decision to stay in the land of their home.

#### **LAND OF MI CHANTE**

There is a sense of unease that sneaks up on you as you read your way through John Nichols' New Mexico Trilogy, a feeling that what you are reading is somehow off in a small, but fundamentally significant way. This discontent haunts you through the first and second novel, but its source stands out in *The Nirvana Blues*: Nichols uses the word "Chicano" exclusively as a racial term, which does not acknowledge the associations of educational and political engagement that round out the significance of claiming Chicano identity. In designating Eloy Irribarren "The Last Chicano," Nichols creates a fiction in which the possibilities for Chicanos to compete against Anglos for land ownership and for Chicanos to develop political power are both essentially nullified. Nichols, rooted in the expensive place of Taos, can not see or imagine that the struggle has moved elsewhere out of necessity. And since he can not see the reproduction of the struggle, in his despair he declares it dead.

Candelaria understands that these relationships are the product of historical actions, and that actions have consequences beyond the duration of an individual lifespan. I am thinking particularly of Candelaria's reconfiguration of the Mexican origin myth in *Not by the Sword*. Tercero, in an effort to warn Mike from taking his grandfather's idealized account of their Spanish origins literally, recounts the true origins of the family. The very first José Antonio Rafa, son of a man killed in the 1680 Pueblo Rebellion, settles with his wife in a new settlement named after him. His wife bears several daughters, but no sons. For several years his flocks of sheep prosper, until a Navajo man nicknamed Ojo Torcido for his wall eye starts making a regular practice of helping

himself to the sheep. Rafa's response to this rivalry is to enslave, and later rape Ojo Torcido's daughter, who shares with her father the feature of crossed eyes. The girl stays with them, and when Rafa's wife Maria notices that the girl is pregnant, she cruelly renames her Concepción. In her anger at her husband, Maria seduces a red-haired farm hand for revenge. In this latter day version of the story of Sarah and Hagar, the two women go into labor on the same day. Maria dies giving birth to a small, red-headed boy. Concepción gives birth to another boy and makes her getaway, stealing the household's best horses in the confusion surrounding Maria's death. Don José, overjoyed at having an heir, seems to hardly miss either of these women, and:

Even the raid on his sheep just a few weeks later no longer upset [him]. It was a retribution that he now accepted. And in succeeding years, the sheep raids became more frequent and more vicious. Shepherds were killed and dismembered, where before none had been so much as struck. Finally, he abandoned the grant...

But for Don José it was enough that he had his sons. Two sons. The dark-skinned one with the twisted eye and the other. The redhead whom he only accepted because of his wife's death (126).

Don José abuses the position provided to him as head of the household by the hierarchy of Spanish colonialism, that of despot. His actions have far reaching consequences, as Concepción strikes out at him through the years. One of the consequences of his actions is that his descendents are impoverished and endangered as the result of his criminal arrogance, which mirrors actual conditions between New Mexico Hispanos and Native Americans, where mutual kidnapping and raiding of food shares was a common occurrence from the time of the Reconquest on (Rebolledo 130). This history of mutual hostility still haunts some New Mexico communities, which is ironically a means through which one can claim status as a local. The actions which were supposed to have elevated Don José among his peers, instead move forward through the generations, as Mike sees

the mark of Don José's vanity and Concepción's anger, the twisted eye, on the face of his friend Tercero. It is a mark of a violent history, but the twisted eye is also a mark of a willingness to look within, to forgive past wrongs in turn for the gift of living in a place where one's family history is available for examination, even in all its ugliness.

The brutality of Candelaria's genesis for the New Mexican people brings up another striking contrast between his work and Nichols'. The rape of Concepción is as ugly as anything that Nichols writes of, and yet I find that Nichols' rendering of the sexual act lingers as feelings of disgust that are far more distressing than the feelings of anger, sadness, and regret that are produced by reading Candelaria. I find that the sexual act in Nichols is atomized, contained within the experience of the individual actor. Nichols does not portray the consequences of the sexual act extending beyond the orgasm; even the prospect of pregnancy barely flits through the minds of his pathetic, reedy little heroes before they throw themselves headlong into pursuit. This is apparent in Nichols sustained interest in representing the incestuous gaze of a father towards his daughter, and Nichols repeated use of the scene of the cry of a young girl interrupting coitus between husband and wife.

In *The Milagro Beanfield War*, Charley Bloom's attempt to sexually overwhelm his reluctant wife, a move tantamount to rape, is interrupted by the call of their young daughter, who is waiting on the toilet for someone to wipe her bottom and flush it (234-5). This scene, of the lack of trust between Charley and his wife, concealed for the benefit of their daughters, is gentle and warmly humorous compared to the direction that father-daughter relations take in his later novels. Charley has a bad temper that he tries to disguise with a façade of altruism and which is kept in check by an overactive superego. His first wife attempts in their divorce to accuse him abusing their daughter in order to bully him into giving her full custody; the records of this incident will later be used by

the water board to bully him into deserting the cause of Joe's beanfield. We understand from everything that we have learned about Charley that this accusation was absolutely false, and though Charley finds a great deal of satisfaction in anger, ordinarily he's much too cowardly to express it. And although the incestuous gaze of the father towards the daughter here is only a malicious innuendo, the father-daughter relationship is already marked as one of danger.

The novels that follow this one are really dismaying. As what could be seen as the heartless landgrabber Rodey McQueen's only weakness, his daughter April is:

... his most precious possession, [but which] also caused him the most frightening pain. Beautiful beyond almost any man's ability to describe her, April seemed possessed by devil-inspired energies. Volatile, criminally attractive, all-American and healthy—almost any superlative might describe that wild and moody child. By April's sixth birthday, McQueen had realized that they were in for trouble. April was wilder than a peach-orchard shoat, cocky as the king of spades... April's mischievous blue eyes and mouthwatering golden hair were intoxicating in ways McQueen did not understand. Often, staring at her, the financier felt his groin prickle, an erection on the way. And at a terribly early age April understood exactly the power she had over men... [she] played the coquette, tormenting them for fun; it amused the child to break their hearts in two (73).

Should irony be this ham-handed? What a terrible punishment for the man who is displacing the Hispanos of the valley, that he should have in his possession a treasure that he can never truly possess. And so much the worse for him when April goes forth in the world, living a quasi-pornographic ode to free love to every man in the valley but him; that she returns to them only to work against his business interests is simply the final embellishment on Rodey McQueen's life of frustration. And while the above passage easily manages to make this point amply clear, for some reason the novel goes on for another 440 pages, just to make sure that we know that Rodey is bad, but that he is also frustrated and scared, and that is good. April lives out the "magic journey" of being a

male fantasy of female sexual liberation, always understood as Rodey's property, the loss of which will be the punishment for his venality.

When we come to the final book, we are presented with what I find to be one of the most disturbing characters in Nichols' body of work: Joe Miniver's eight-year-old daughter, Heather. Heather speaks as if she is channeling a burlesque comedienne, always ready with a snappy comeback laden with sexual innuendo. That she's making such retorts towards her father is an early tipoff that the New Mexico trilogy is coming unhinged. Like Charley Bloom's daughters, she is the interruptus in her parents' coitus, much to her mother's apparent approval. "Such a sly, wise, and absurdly cute child" whose need for braces infuriates Joe—"eight million dollars to give her the perfect mouth for future blowjobs!" Joe looks at her and envisions, "Three years hence, aged eleven, she would probably marry a Monacan prince, and commence flying around the world" (140). The daughter, for her part, delights in enraging her father, a portrait of the harpy as a young girl. She taunts her father for his failures as a husband, saying:

...after you get divorced, maybe Mommy will get married again, and we'll have two fathers, too. I hope she marries someone who isn't a garbage man, with a real car that starts up every time and has a heater (420).

This banter between Joe and Heather comes to a violent end, with Heather coming to her mother's defense by ferociously biting her father's arm, showing once and for all that he is no longer welcome in his home. The implausibly precocious Heather thus becomes an emblem of all of Nichols' emasculating, materialistic, promiscuous-yet-frigid women. Miniver takes refuge with the threatened macho, the Last Chicano, Eloy, and by this we can finally diagnose a problem that has dogged us through the entire New Mexico Trilogy. For what we observe in these pages, for all of what we are supposed to see as an enlightened portrayal of a small New Mexico community, what we have in actuality is an updated version of Lummis' call for men to throw off the shackles of modern



feminization and adopt vigorous lives of primitive masculinity in the West. The Last Chicano must die in order to provide closure to the masculinist psychodrama that dictates that no virtue but adamantine resentment can stand before the specter of the vagina dentata. That there is no mercy or affection even in the father-daughter relationship rounds out this tantrum on the part of Nichols, who in brooking no exception to his vision, relegates all Chicanos, Native Americans, and little girls alike to the role of offering reassuring measurements of the male ego.

It is the dangers of this fantasy that concern Candelaria. Characters like Junior from *Memories of the Alhambra*, or Carlos from *Not by the Sword*, prove susceptible to the idea that some fundamental, inchoate masculine virtue within themselves is being neglected, and this makes them vulnerable to scams and hopeless causes. Wiser men, like Tercero, see themselves as parts of wider networks of mutual need and kinship, and are therefore less likely to try to dictate the sexual behaviors of their sisters. In the autonomy of female characters to make sexual choices for themselves, we encounter the true difference between Candelaria and Nichols' visions. Even in *Not by the Sword*, Andrea is allowed to refuse marriage proposals, and Tercero educates Mike on the legal process of what to do should her father refuse her permission to marry (169-70). Candelaria is not sentimental about these choices, as in *Inheritance of Strangers* the mismatch between the abusive and moody Florinda, her husband Francisco, and indeed, the entire Rafa family, impedes the family's ability to protect each other. Framed by two different 20<sup>th</sup> century courtships, Candelaria's sequence of novels returns in the end to its earliest themes. Lattin emphasized how in *Memories of the Alhambra*, men's and women's models of time are different, linear vs. cyclical. I would caution against naturalizing this model of reading, as indeed does Lattin, in that Theresa's life never fits perfectly into her ideal, forcing her son to reconcile the perspectives of his mother and his

father. It is worthwhile to use Theresa and Leonor's courtships, though, as models with which to discuss the most troubled of all Candelaria's female characters, the disliked and doomed Magdalena.

One of the funniest and most bitter scenes in Candelaria's work occurs when Theresa, as a very young woman, has a job cleaning an Anglo woman's house. The owner of the house refuses to speak directly to her, instead relaying demands and criticisms in baby talk directed at her two Siamese cats. While Theresa is fed leftover beans for lunch, the two cats receive a can of tuna every day. One day, she decides to exchange her lunch with cats', sneering, "Some frijolitos so you can learn to fart in Spanish" (52). Of course, she is immediately caught, and "It was necessary for anyone to say, 'You're fired!' Perhaps it had been [the cat] who had meowed it" (53). To console herself in her anger and embarrassment, she sneaks out of the house and goes to a dance, where she meets Junior Rafa. Junior's family disapproves of her, and so she seduces Junior with the aim of getting pregnant and forcing a marriage. Her plan appears to work, until she suffers a miscarriage that she is convinced is a divine punishment for having been a bad girl. Only in her grandmother's house can she heal herself, because there she can witness the life that she truly desires, because she can witness in her grandparents' home and relationship a unity of purpose and desire in belief (76). Afterwards, she can move forward as a friend to Junior because her faith in the eternal enables her to endure the small insults of her life and to make self-sacrificing choices as she waits for circumstances to change.

Leonor's story echoes that of Andrea in many ways: the youngest daughter of a local dynasty falls in love, and is determined to marry with or without permission of her guardian. As with Andrea, her father proves unable to resist her pleas, and gladly gives her permission to marry who she chooses; the complication is with her auntie, who

projects her own desires onto her niece, most especially the desire to be regarded with reverence by her neighbors:

She was too self-involved to realize that people rarely talked about her or laughed about her. Those few times that someone really was talking about her, it was about her ex-husbands, her money, and her too apparent hypocrisy. Spanish-speaking New Mexicans have always had a wicked sense of humor and sharp, peasant perceptions that are like needles puncturing the balloon of pomposity. Let's face it. She never fooled anyone for all her pious pretensions. But nobody cared, unless for some unfortunate reason they were subject to her power—which meant they owed her money (48).

Magdalena's three marriages all end in disaster—one suicide, two divorces—as each of her husbands fail to live up to her pretensions of being gentry. Through most of this novel *Candelaria* presents her actions through the words of Antonio, a young man. It is only much later, in his middle age, that he can develop sympathy for Magdalena in her desperation to maintain appearances. An assertive, determined young woman in an era that demands prettiness and agreeability from young women, Magdalena over-corrects for her lack of charm by insisting that she control her family absolutely, which only serves to further degrade her standing in the community. Magdalena's isolation is reminiscent of Joe Miniver's frantic, self-indulgent narration of his own personal pornographic movie. And, as with Miniver, it is the rejection of her niece-daughter that pulls the foundations from beneath her home, and set her on a path to her own destruction.

*Candelaria*, however, sees fit to provide us with Antonio's perspective on the matter, a perspective of forgiveness and empathy for her pretensions and needs. This mercy, so cut off in Nichols' work, is at the heart of *Candelaria*'s model of what it means to be New Mexican. *Candelaria*'s model for familial responsibility, Tercero, represents the foundational tenet for the New Mexican Hispano identity: that stories must be shared, that they must be taught to the next generation, and that in these stories we find unity.

All other concerns—land, money, and ethnicity—prove to be compelling but are all ultimately of secondary importance to the relation of shared histories. Without this historical perspective, we observe what happens in Nichols: fetishization of real estate, isolation, and despair. Only from the perspective of witnessing many generations of colonialist activity in New Mexico could one forgive the excesses and prejudices of one's ancestors, and therefore truly be "from there." Genaro Padilla writes that Mexican American autobiography

...goes beyond reconstructing an individual life. Rather, an individual life is measured within a communitarian configuration and against the disruption of identity as identity is situated within an imagined cultural community of the past. Autobiography functions not only to reconstruct "a life" but to save some idea of "lives" as they might be lived in another time and place. The overarching ideal of a homeland, whether framed as the homeland of the pre-American Southwest, the mythic Aztlán, or the barrio of the "homey," remains a deeply embedded—if metaphorically fluid—unifying symbol for a community that in its various manifestations and regional developments remains recalcitrant in the face of social domination since 1848 (232).

We can see this same expansion of imagination in the fiction of Nash Candelaria, and the same need to build community out of a shared, imagined past. Nichols, for all of his good intentions, writes New Mexico from outside of this imagined social network. From the outset of his fictional project, he can sense the existence of this broader symbolic order. Unfortunately, his perspective remains enmeshed in the assumptions and perceptions of his own background, the limitations of European and Eastern U.S. structures of feeling that surround the American West. Since he can't enmesh himself in the past, he can not conversely see a future, and so his work on New Mexico ends in extinction and disaster. Nichols' New Mexico comes down to a zero-sum game of land ownership. Candelaria's New Mexico, on the other hand, is produced by interlacing generations of peoples co-producing and constantly reshaping their community. The

ownership of land is not incidental to this group, but the land itself is not fetishized as the only thing that can keep the group together.

I do find it interesting that for all its flaws and limitations of perspective, Nichols' work has become a part of the story that New Mexicans tell about themselves. For after all, we are not meant to look back on our families' previous lives as something distant and abstract, an *Our Town* set in Albuquerque. My parents' generation saw itself portrayed sympathetically for the world in Nichols' novel, and this exposure satisfied for them a need to see themselves as having been regarded in the larger world as something unique, something remarkable and special. When my father, or my aunts and uncles defend John Nichols, they are not necessarily defending his politics, his retrograde sexual attitudes, or his fuzzy embrace of the tenets of Western Expansionism. I know this, because when I try to talk about this, I get told off for not getting it. Readers of my parents' age are defending the story that they tell to each other about themselves, about what they needed in their lives at the time that they first read the book, and the people that they became in the wake of that period. *The Milagro Beanfield War* has become part of their life story and mutual history, and I think that in perpetuating its reputation and proclaiming its importance, they remake the shape of and perpetuate that continuity of building a reading, social community. And in that they continue to recreate the story of themselves, I think that Nash Candelaria, would recognize the work that they do and be proud.

## **Conclusion: Land of Mi Chante**

When I close my eyes and try to picture a perfect New Mexican scene, I am taken back to a bright October morning, and a sky that was filled with hot air balloons. In my memory, the sky is the incandescent, solid blue that is cheated when compared to turquoise or to lapis. I can remember standing on the flat roof of our house on a morning like this, watching the Air Force's Blue Angel stunt team make vast, swooping arcs over the valley, as one of my sisters murmurs, "One of them crashed once." Was the pilot okay, one of the other sisters asked. No, the pilot had died, was the response. The jets were so tiny in the sky, their contrails the only thing that indicated their position at all. It seemed to me at that moment, as I threw tiny stones and bits of tar down on the top branches of the trees, a foolish thing to leave the ground.

I suppose this sort of memory is a common one; the military base has a long history of putting on entertainments for the denizens of Rio Abajo, many of whom it directly or indirectly employs. These kinds of employment, that brought people off their farms and into a life of paychecks, mortgages, and interstate freeways, has been the source of both civic celebration and vocal, hand wringing distress about the loss of cultural heritage. I grasp for a memory of such a rural life, and I recall my grandfather's apple orchard on the acres of land behind his house on Second Street. The orchard started behind his shed, a mysterious building where we were not allowed to play. Its walls were decorated with the skulls of deer, and on the event of a *matanza*, the slaughtering of a pig, this was where the bacon was cured. The orchard spread out from this, the edge of the domestic arena. I remember the orchard with great fondness,

envisioning my sisters climbing its trees and almost catching the sweet smell of rotten apples fermenting on the ground which we'd throw to the pig, to see if we could get him drunk. The orchard was the center of our play, the place where all the cousins converged to escape the tedium of meals and parental conversation. It was here that we all attempted to sled down the ditch banks on cardboard boxes when we had been expelled from our grandmother's funeral rosary for our disruptive behavior.

In my nostalgia for the orchard, I was recently surprised to find out that my father had disliked it. For the orchard was an extra source of income for my grandparents' growing family in the wake of the second World War. My grandfather sold those apples to passing motorists for a dollar a bushel; the entire family was expected to contribute to the upkeep of this resource. The place that I remember as an excellent ground for hide-and-seek was for my father and his siblings a source of seasonal aggravation. My father recalls with distaste the chores of caring for an orchard—the weeds, the pesticides, the birds, and worst of all, polishing every apple to a high shine. Neither do any of his brothers and sisters seem to share my nostalgic vision of the orchard. The apples were a responsibility that was curtailed by the brevity of the natural life of an apple tree, and as the orchard died out the trees were replaced not with fresh saplings but with the homes in which my aunts raised their families. And in spite of how much I miss this orchard, I would be hard pressed to say that the land could have been put to a better use.

These memories are what come to me when I try to think of how I might have engaged in or been influenced by rhetorics of enchantment in New Mexico. The word “enchantment” is invoked to give New Mexico an aura of the supernatural, a place where

quotidian rules no longer function. Territorial governor Lew Wallace is popularly quoted as having said, “Everything proven by experience elsewhere fails in New Mexico.”<sup>23</sup> At the same time, there is an element of containment and concealment in the word “enchantment,” a façade like a crocheted cover for a toilet paper roll, something aggressively Victorian and unpardonably twee. The slogan, “Land of Enchantment,” functions within Stewart’s rules of Victorian pornography: the delight and bewitchment that it is meant to inspire both conceals and calls attention to the real reasons that things proven by experience fail in New Mexico. Experience failed in New Mexico because U.S. colonizers were latecomers in the scheme of global colonialism, and encountered an entrenched colonial legal code that a large population made difficult to displace. The frustrations of managing recalcitrant peoples are concealed by the rhetorics of enchantment, which allow the vision to fly from uncooperative subjects and the damages of wars of conquest and choice to landscape and edenic fantasy.

In the struggle to give this project a title, I returned again and again to the idea of Enchantment. Had I ever experienced it? What site or event could I associate with enchantment? My own nostalgia for the orchard seemed to fit the bill, but was soon deflated by my father’s more realistic accounts of the needs of orchards. I could also draw on my own experiences of childhood, but I kept running up against quotidian obstacles: that jets crash devolved into wondering whose job it was to procure jet fuel for the base, and how many base employees it took to keep things running smoothly, and

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<sup>23</sup> Here I am actually culling this quote from a “New Mexico Passport,” a little pamphlet sold in the airport gift shop for \$5. Also quoted in this booklet is Manuel Armijo’s famous statement.



how many of those peoples' kids I had gone to school with, and on and on. Enchantment, for me, would take enough effort to scuttle the whole endeavor anyway. Enchantment is vaporized by its backstage, and management of the backstage can only do so much to maintain the glamour. So, when I encountered the word play, "Land of Mi Chante" on Barelas Coffee House's souvenir t-shirt, I was both amused and excited. Here was a pithy, well-grounded response to the discourse of Enchantment. The word "chante" is a *caló* term that means "house," a close cognate of the English "shanty." But in the language of the penitentiary, it can also mean "cell" (Cardozo-Freeman 13). With the word "chante" come all of the associations of home: material comfort, emotional acceptance, and the release that comes from not having to translate for others. The "Land of Mi Chante" holds its own utopian feel, the site where all our hungers are fulfilled and soothed. Of course, the cost of *this* utopia is that it leaves us cut off from the abstract, from the ability to engage in and influence the symbolic orders of life, and to respond effectively when the boundaries of this idyll are breached in the name of development and civic renewal.

What binds the authors of this project together is a universal grappling with this dichotomy-- Enchantment/ Chante, idyll/modernity, abstract/ physical, archetype/ ethnography—I could probably think of a dozen more ways to describe this tension. The history of New Mexico's racial formations has forced peoples with marked bodies both to recognize the threat inherent in touristic "Enchantment," and to learn how to use that boosterist language to their own advantages. We observe in works by tourists the ease and violence with which they rearrange the aesthetic order of New Mexico to suit their

own artistic purposes and prejudices. We observe in the work of the priests an attempt to stake out authority in the realm of the symbolic, to mark quotidian concerns as sacred and therefore beyond the purview of uninitiated newcomers. With the actresses, we observe the emotional and physical costs of maintaining the appearance of embodying this ideal. And in the final chapter, we can see that a too stringent fetishization of the concept of *chante*, of the physical land or object, an introversion that in itself become an impediment to protecting local social formations.<sup>24</sup> Raymond Williams wrote of the split between rural peoples and their educated, cosmopolitan contemporaries thusly:

The times were getting better, my family always said: the old days were the bad days; the villages now were less oppressive and less deprived... The crisis of rural Britain, which indeed they had lived through in its actual consequences, was not the crisis that had been projected from the cities and the universities. It was a crisis of wages, conditions, prices; of use of land and work on the land. This of course was overheard, as complaint or grumbling, often finding sympathy. But it was in a different dimension from the loss of the Dryads, or from finding them either. The fact is—and it is a real loss both ways—they spoke mainly among themselves, and the Georgian observers, travelling and overhearing, spoke mainly among *themselves*; that was the kind of society that it was (257, author's italics).

In Williams' estimation, these are the kinds of societies that produce stereotype, and impede social change. For country people never find the rules of capital as foreign as city people imagine they will; country people know capital because its workings shaped their lives and their relationships with land in ways that could not have been projected. With increased access to education, health care, and transportation, however, Williams accounts for a new crisis of representation in England, the writer on the border between rural and industrial life. Although Williams never uses the terms *enchantment* or *chante*,

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<sup>24</sup> For an example, see the ways in which real estate developers overwhelm acéquia culture by filling in ditches along adjacent properties.

one can observe a similar process in his rural England to the one I have described in New Mexico. As we saw at the end of Chapter 2, Williams believed that the gaps between those who lived in the country and those who talked about it produced in D.H. Lawrence a volatility that he refused to make solid, to the impoverishment of the discourse on the shift that England underwent.

We have observed in the works of all of these authors attempts to reckon with the burdens of existing in between one's own physical reality and someone else's ideal. I have highlighted tensions in these works between the grotesque body and the literary chronotope, and the ways in which each category of organization seeks to alter and contain the other. Although none of the authors surveyed here make extensive use of the term "enchantment" in relation to New Mexico, all of them attempt to cope with its influence. The tourists, Cather and Castillo, embrace the possibility that the body can be reified, and so the bodies of New Mexicans in their works become costumes for their fancies, which become souvenirs of their stays in the pastoral idyll. The priests, Fr. Chávez and Anaya, visibly embrace the abstraction that is the idyll, and claim to speak from it in order to make their mark in a modernizing order. But in the realm of the doubly marked bodies of Hispanas, we see the limitations of this approach to coping with colonialism. For instance, when I see Jaramillo try to negotiate cultural and financial degradation almost exclusively through her costumes, the memory of her daughter becomes all the more painful and poignant, as it becomes more and more obvious that embodying the idyll will only ever provide poor consolations for what we've lost in the flesh. Jaramillo left it to later generations to cope with these losses, but in Denise Chávez I can find not only confrontation with Jaramillo, but the means with which to forgive her for her shortcomings. Chávez takes Jaramillo's consolations apart, bit by bit, all the while calling our attention to the physical distress that Jaramillo tries to elide. In so

doing, reminds us of the reasons that living in a body is so humiliatingly difficult, and how living according to someone else's ideals is ultimately impossible. The locals, Nichols and Candelaria, distinguish themselves from the tourists by investing their works in the politics of the people about whom they are writing, extensions of Nichols' decades long residence in New Mexico and Candelaria's life of partaking in the stories of his parents' homeland. What distinguishes them from each other is the historical scope of their works: Nichols works exclusively within a very constrained timespan of one decade, while Candelaria's time frame allows for a sweeping account of the past 150 years. So, where Nichols fetishizes contemporary towns and persons, Candelaria acts as a corrective to him by reminding us that the present is part of a greater story.

Each of these authors struggles with the demands of the idyllic chronotope. Cather and Castillo must work to edit what they have observed, defurnishing in their minds the landscapes that they have seen so that what they write strongly resembles the thing that they had wanted to see in the first place. Anaya and Fr. Chávez must try to appear to be perfect subjects of a non-existent place; therefore, both of their writings exhibit the strain that comes with maintaining a mask. When the strain of maintaining appearance becomes too great, as in the case of Jaramillo and Denise Chávez, we can see the conventions of the idyll and the idyllic subject disintegrate, and we can see the grotesque body emerging from behind the false, idyllic front. At last, in the locals, we can observe a true engagement with a vision of New Mexico that rejects the conventions of the idyll. But the comparison between Nichols and Candelaria shows us that this is only a first step: one must also work to contextualize the contemporary world within a past that is neither idealized or transformed into myth. All of these authors function within an economy of significance that prizes the appearance of harmony and freedom from capitalism over the substance that is confinement of living in one of the poorest

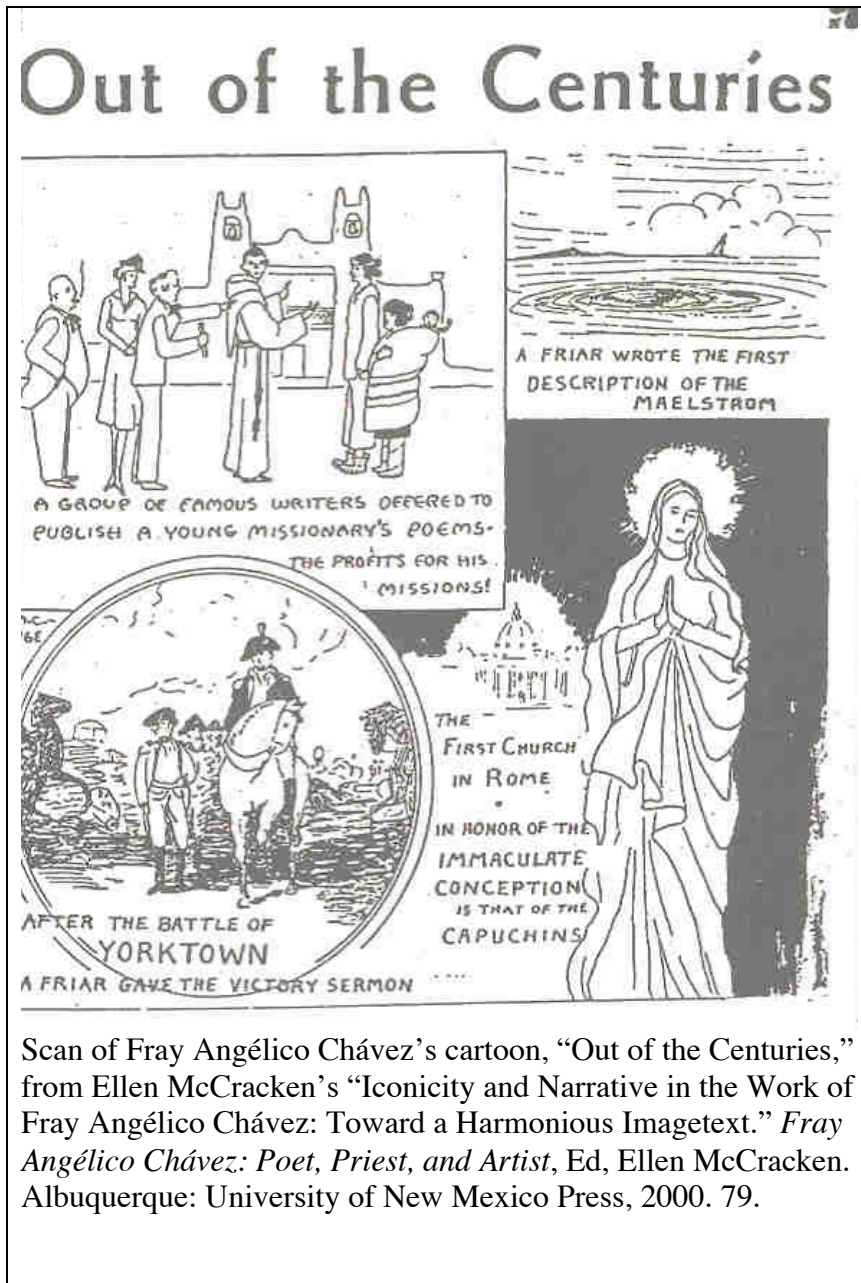
states in the richest country in the world. Here, the wealthiest of people meet the most impoverished face to face, and as in Williams' Georgian England, everyone often leaves this encounter without having conversed in any significant way. The idyllic chronotope can be used by both poor and wealthy alike, a pleasantry that allows people to go about their business without letting the substance of the political machinery that shapes their lives bother them too much. At the same time, for urban peoples the idyll represents a lack in their existences, and it is therefore a useful position from which to open criticisms of the greater systems of significance and value in the United States. As the case of Nichols demonstrates, however, one must not let the critical possibilities of the idyll blind you to its limitations.

In writing this project, I have occasionally stopped to consider which, if any, of these categories that I, as an author, would fit into. I think that I could be accused of committing any number of the errors that I ascribe to the narrativists whom I have focused my criticisms on. Like Cather, I've managed to unfurnish and refurnish several complex and important careers so that they would fit my own structures of meaning. And like Castillo, I can be accused of using that refurnishing careers in accordance with my own sense of humor. I stand accused, if only by my own self, of claiming the authority of priesthood over the texts of New Mexican literature: I have designated to myself the power to explicate text and set rules of ethical behavior. I have indulged in the most saccharine, sentimental flights of nostalgia for a homeland that I have never been to, and then anguished when in my person I did not fit the bill of the native informant. Finally, I have disrespected my historical predecessors, and can only say that I have aspired to keep the sweep of New Mexican history between me and self-indulgent despair. I write this conclusion as both sinner and judge. As with many of my authors, my own position is untenable. It is within the greater economy of meaning that is New Mexican letters,

however, that these arguments will begin their true work: to challenge and renew the processes by which New Mexicans know each other, and the centuries-long fights that help us to recognize each other as invested in and loving these groups of towns and peoples.

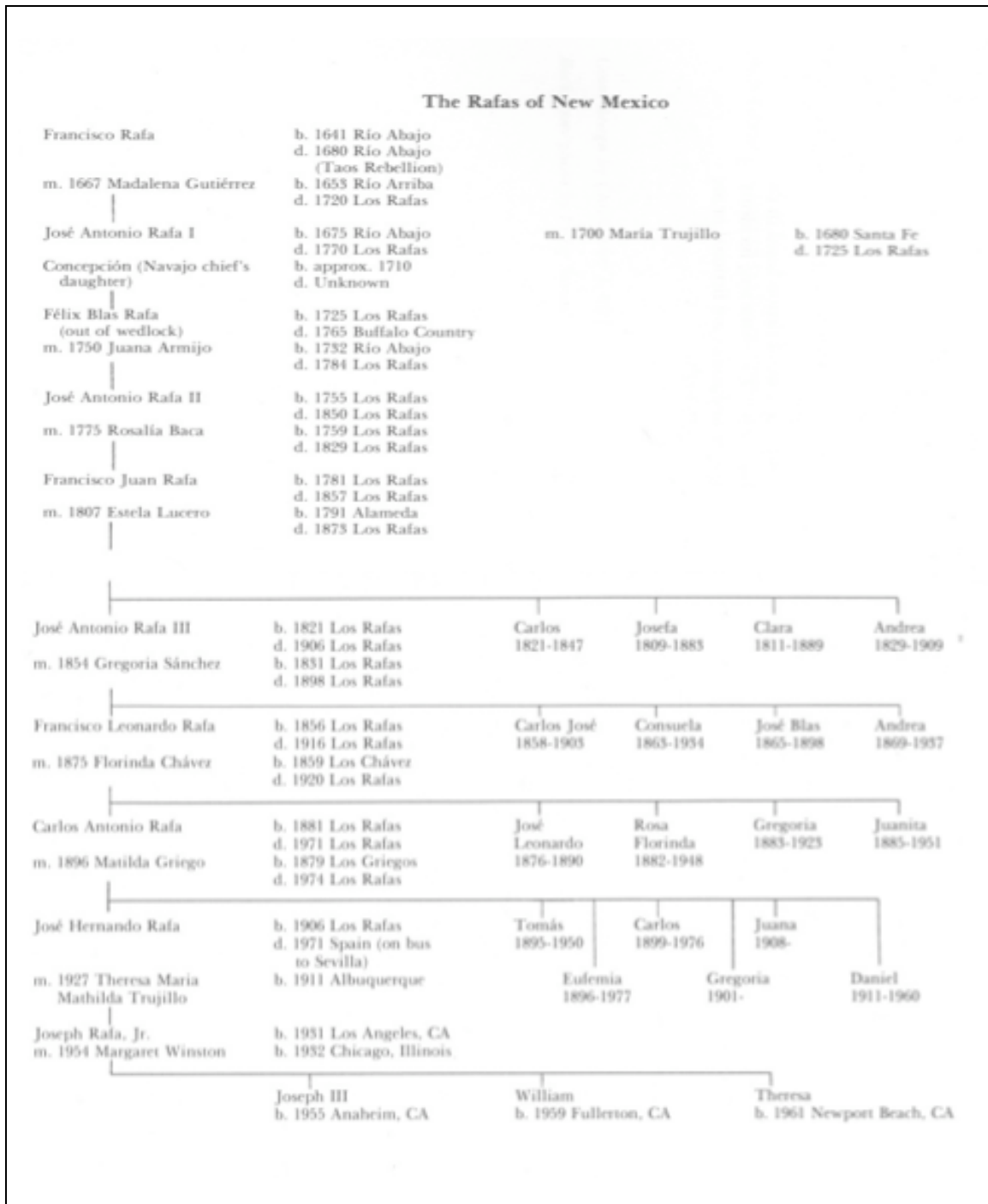
## Appendices

### Appendix A: Scan of Cartoon by Fray Angélico Chávez



Scan of Fray Angélico Chávez's cartoon, "Out of the Centuries," from Ellen McCracken's "Iconicity and Narrative in the Work of Fray Angélico Chávez: Toward a Harmonious Imagetext." *Fray Angélico Chávez: Poet, Priest, and Artist*, Ed, Ellen McCracken. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000. 79.

Appendix B: Scan of the family tree of the Rafas, Nash Candelaria's fictional New Mexico dynastic clan (*Inheritance of Strangers* 6-7).





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## **Vita**

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