Anaya, Rudolfo - Alburquerque

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Reprint Address: GISH, RF; CALIF POLYTECH STATE UNIV SAN LUIS OBISPO,SAN LUIS OBISPO,CA 93407

Title: **'ALBURQUERQUE' - ANAYA,R**

PS 314 W4 W4

Source: *WESTERN AMERICAN LITERATURE* 28, no. 2 (AUG 1993): 190-191

Additional Info: UTAH STATE UNIV: WESTERN LIT ASSOC UMC 32, LOGAN, UT 84322

Standard No: **ISSN:** 0043-3462

Language: English

References: **Number:** 1

SUBJECT(S)

Journal Subject: LITERATURE, AMERICAN -- H PF

Cited Reference: ANAYA, R, 1992, ALBURQUERQUE

Sandra Cisneros as "a history history forgot to mention," this novel's historical tale is that of upper class female resistance to paternal authority, family duty and female "respectability."

The brokering of women as wives for Spanish gentry provides the book's central gender dilemma. Lopez-Medina goes beyond simply depicting patriarchal power to explore mothers' and daughters' complicity in the brokering process. The book's matriarch, Rosario, refuses her own arranged marriage, yet makes arrangements for two of her daughters. Rosario's daughter, Teresita, finally breaks with female complicity. Against the will of husband and mother-in-law, Teresita will not permit Amparo's—the daughter/narrator—arranged marriage to take place. Lopez-Medina comprehends that mothers participate in oppressive marital practices because they offer, tragically, the best future a mother can provide for the daughter she loves.

In spite of Cisneros' sisterly endorsement, *Cantora* seems an unlikely work to situate within a contemporary Chicana literature. The problem is not an absence of the barrio cadence, a linguistic signature of most Chicana narratives. The problem is that this book seems unaware there is a barrio. Although this narrator proclaims her "indio" identity, the markers of upper class European identity dominate the narrative. The novel's characters are more accustomed to having, not being, servants. That, to my mind, fundamentally distances *Cantora* from previous Chicana writers' sensibilities. Perhaps Lopez-Medina has more in common with the tradition of the Southwestern "Hispanic" women writers of the 1940s and 1950s like Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, proud Spanish aristocratic ladies displaced by Anglo cultural hegemony.

Cantora suggests the range of contemporary Mexican-American narratives and histories. But the narrator's homes on the beachfront in Marin or the Salvadoran plantation, or in the old money part of Santa Barbara or Palm Springs, are homes in a different world than that of the dilapidated house on Mango Street.

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Alburquerque. By Rudolfo Anaya. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. 280 pages, $19.95.)

Rudolfo Anaya's latest novel, *Alburquerque* (sic), revives some old questions about whether or not an author really has more than one story to tell. Anaya's first novel, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), now twenty years into the past, is generally recognized as his best work. *The Heart of Aztlán* (1976) and *Tortuga* (1979) work as extensions of *Ultima* and advance what is usually read as Anaya's New Mexico trilogy.

In these highly autobiographical works, Anaya develops his own versions of

the more universal themes of individuation through periods of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. In all these fictive installments, Anaya offers a Chicano's portrait of the artist as a young man.

Now, in *Alburquerque*, Anaya stages some dramatizations about his life as a matured Chicano writer in Albuquerque, living on the West Mesa and teaching creative writing at the University of New Mexico. A beer now and then at Jack's Lounge on Central, conversations with university students, involvement with the people of Barelas and other Chicano communities, following issues and litigation surrounding claims of the Atrisco land grant against the encroaching urban sprawl of one of the West's oldest and newest cities—such is the stuff of Anaya's commitment to the city, the *Pueblo*, as it struggles to know its heritage and its horizon as a multicultural mixture of American Indian, Mexican American, and Anglo socio-economic and ethnic ingredients.

Anaya's analog in *Alburquerque* is the writer Ben Chavez. His quest now, much beyond discovering the right ending to the novel he is writing, is to reclaim his lost son, the product of an interracial love. The two quests, artistic and autobiographical, are reciprocal. Young Golden-Glove champ, Abrán Gonzales, holds the answer to Ben's quest and moves, by novel's end, from former student to blood kinship. Anaya's own autobiographical yearnings for such a son seem to surface much beyond metaphors of a writer's responsibility to future *raza* generations.

The motif of a political campaign to restore the older spelling of the city's name by adding an extra strategic "r" serve to similarly represent the native-son writer's obligation to older purities of the city's own genealogy and the political obligations of novelistic art. Ben and Abrán must, above all else, claim their pasts to free their futures—as must the metropolis of Albuquerque/Alburquerque.

Alburquerque offers at times disappointing evidence that if there is ever to be another *Ultima*, this latest version of Anaya's "story" is not quite it. *Alburquerque*, however, strongly confirms that the story itself is often less relevant than the telling of it, the passion to keep on questing, keep on writing/fighting. And this Anaya and his father/son counterparts do in fine form.

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