

Anaya, Rudolfo

NPR Review: ALBURQUERQUE by Alan Cheuse
Aired: 7/20/92

Critic Alan Cheuse says a new novel by New Mexican novelist Rudolfo Anaya called ALBURQUERQUE fulfills two important functions: it restores the missing R to the name of the city, and it shows off Anaya's powers as a novelist. ALBURQUERQUE has everything going for it--sympathetic characters, an easy flowing style with a dash of magical realist flavoring, an appealing setting, and a reasonably suspenseful plot with a lot of love interest. It's the story of young ALBURQUERQUE ex-boxer Abrán González and his search for his unknown father. Nineteen-year-old Abrán doesn't even know he has a problem with his paternity when the novel opens, and he and Santo Domingo Indian pal Joe Calabaza wade into a barroom brawl between local poet Ben Chávez and some pool hall drug thugs. But Abrán soon learns that he is adopted, and he gets to meet his birthmother just as she is dying though her lips remain sealed as to the identity of Abrán's dad. A lot of folks get caught up in Abrán's subsequent search for the man--the city's current mayor, Abrán's putative grandfather who is also a powerful developer, and Frank Dominic, the man who would be mayor and abuse his power to turn the city into a cross between Las Vegas and Venice using Indian water and taxpayers' dollars. The New Mexico landscape of wind and rock and light plays a role in this novel too, and there's also an appearance by the coyote trickster of Indian myth who rides along Joe Calabaza in a stolen pickup on the way to the book's carnival-like climax. But then as Ben Chávez remarks towards the end of the novel, life is more than a painting one creates from it. In a story there's no frame--it spills over the edges. In ALBURQUERQUE, life doesn't just spill, it thrills. The book is ALBURQUERQUE by Rudolfo Anaya, reviewed by Alan Cheuse.