

Anaya, Rudolfo - author - Albuquerque



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Albuquerque by Rudolfo Anaya. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992; 280 pp. \$19.95.

It's often been said that the writings of Tomás Rivera, Rolando Hinojosa, and Rudolfo Anaya have received all too much attention in Chicano criticism, and that the criticism ought to move on to other worthy works. But I wish to counter this notion by stating that these authors still warrant our critical attention, especially as Hinojosa and Anaya continue publishing works further widening the parameters of Chicano literary discourse. Further, it should be noted that Chicano criticism is alive and well and treating literary works by a whole new generation of authors. That the first three recipients of the Quinto Sol Prize were canonized early on is indisputable, yet Rudolfo Anaya's most recent novel, *Albuquerque*, confirms his early canonization. His first novel in over ten years, *Albuquerque* stands as Anaya's best work, and with it, we receive an elegant, tightly woven narrative, with cultural and political lessons important to the Southwestern U. S.

Like the spelling of the novel's title, the narrative theme is about the recuperation of cultural heritage[s] previously lost through a process of cultural and political domination by waves of various non-native forces in New Mexico. The patrimony of generations, having been lost, is now brought back to the main characters with richer meaning, however not without a struggle against domination, which has continued on for generations, as resistance to the dominant group is shown as always having existed. This richly colored narrative of "recuperation" reshapes the formerly accepted, traditional interpretations of New Mexico, and aptly demonstrates the *mestizaje* that continues to inform Southwestern cultural existence. Anaya takes us on a tour [*de force*] of New Mexico, from the inner-city barrios and suburbs of Abu(r)querque, to the small northern mountain Native-American and Chicano villages, thus bringing to life this region's cultural diversity. He also intertwines personal and cultural relationships tying together peoples' environmental responsibility to the earth.

Revolving around the young Abrán González and his discovery of having been born to parents he never knew, Anaya's plot slowly lays out details like a detective novel, building a high dramatic tension incorporating local politics and business interests, water rights, and relationships of love and hate between people seeking to shape the artistic and political landscape surrounding Abu(r)querque. Each chapter is a montage of richly textured local color, with "la Matanza in Los Padillas" being perhaps the finest description of a Chicano cultural event in all of Chicano and Southwestern "American" literature. Anaya invokes "local knowledge," organically placing the human and environmental priorities besetting all

Southwestern peoples in a new perspective. At the center of this novel is corrupt politics, or "the art of chingando" which plagues people of color from different directions. With this novel, Anaya capably shows that Southwestern Chicanos and Native Americans have historically not taken nor will take the politics affecting their historical place without resistance. A singular result of this cultural convergence is Anaya's vision of America in microcosm through the healing of *Albuquerque's mestizaje*.

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