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Hybridity and Identity in Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* 1972

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Dedication

A special feeling of gratitude to my caring mother who supported me and believed in me through my journey and for that I am eternally grateful

To the soul of my beloved father Ahmed

To all my dearest friends who were by my side unconditionally loving and caring about me

To whom I cherish and love

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Abstract

Postcolonial studies have shed light upon hybridity and its considerable impact on the individuals' psyche. Cultural identity, in particular, has aroused intense in social studies. On the other hand, the third space has become the basis for Mexican-Americans to construct their cultural identity and realize how unique and important they are in a contradictory society. This dissertation aims to explore and study how hybridity and other social circumstances formulate identity, essentially, Chicanos' identity. Additionally, it attempts to investigate hybridity and cultural clash and their contributions to the construction of identity in *Bless me, Ultima* as a Chicano narrative. In three chapters, this study examines Antonio's quest for identity, how he deals with his parents' lifestyles as well as how he is able or unable to assimilate to the new environment centred on Anglo-American culture either by adopting a hybrid identity or retaining his Hispanic cultural identity.

Keywords: Chicano, cultural assimilation, hybridity, identity, post-colonial

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General Introduction

Postcolonial literary studies regard identity alongside hybridity as the constitutive elements of American literature in general and Chicano fiction in particular. Since the two concepts are strongly related to each other, it is vitally important to study how one reflects the other. In other words, one should study how hybridity helps to shape the identity and the personality of the individuals. From a postcolonial perspective, establishing a cultural nationalism is, according to Hegelian theory, human self-consciousness through the interaction with and the recognition of the other. Therefore, the hybrid person faces an identity crisis and shows a cultural dislocation, both of which reflect this person's identity construction.

Recently, postcolonial studies have kept a primary focus on hybridity as an important factor involved in shaping the various identities of the individual. In the case of hybridity, the individual assumes two or more ethnic identities combined together, experiencing an identity crisis and showing a cultural dislocation. Thus, one cannot forge and confirm one specific identity. In other words, one faces central issues of belonging and space between two distinct cultures.

This dissertation will aim to study how hybridity shapes and modulates the individual's identity as well as his or her personality. The current study will concentrate solely on the work of the Chicano writer Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless me, Ultima* (1972) and how the cultural background of the protagonist's parents clearly reflects the young Antonio. The research will also attempt to highlight the impact of hybridity as a key concept on the identity construction of the protagonist.

Searching through books, doctoral dissertations and search engines, many considerable works have discussed the subject of hybridity and social circumstances, and how they affect the process of identity construction. Rudolfo Anaya is one of the rare Chicano authors who has written many significant narratives in order to introduce Chicano culture worldwide.

In *Walking Down the Borderline: Hybridity and the Modulation of the Self in Three Canonical Chicano Novels* (2008), Juan Meneses Naranjo confirms that *Bless me, Ultima* embodies a ‘complementary hybridity’ which is based on the individual’s integration of the old and modern Mexico and United States. *Ultima* is a significant depiction of the Mexican and the Anglo-American cultural clash, where the protagonist finds himself in the middle of a continuing conflict caused by opposed forces. Antonio withstands the social, religious and family unrelenting pressures that he is placed under and must decide about and shape his own future. Thus, he embarks on a relentless quest for his Chicano identity through the interaction with others. In the context of hybridity, Tony presents the Anglo-American version of Antonio as a result of studying in an English-speaking school. Therefore, it is necessary for Antonio to gather his torn self-reflected image in the dialectical powers.

In his thesis *The Identity Formation of Chicanos in Rudolfo Anaya’s Novel Bless me, Ultima* (2012), Shofi Mahmudah Budi Utami argues that Anaya has introduced cultural values combined with cultural conflicts of the 1940s through the use of myths and symbolism. As for the protagonist, Antonio, he faces several cultural conflicts and contradictions within his own family as well as in the clash between the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking worlds. These cultural conflicts have helped Antonio to securely and firmly establish his Chicano Identity. Anaya’s use of myths and symbols is very important both for his novel and for the Chicano movement. Several activists have made use of those components in order to form communities which express and satisfy their political needs in their movements.

In *Cultural Hybridity in Chicano Fiction* (2018), P.S. Athawale considers Rudolfo Anaya as the main pioneer of modern Chicano fiction. He also claims that cultural hybridity is a relatively neglected topic in modern studies. Moreover, he argues that the novel *Bless me, Ultima* is an incarnation of hybridity through the protagonist's story, which narrates the psychological and spiritual development of Antonio Marez Y Luna in his childhood. Furthermore, Athawale discusses how Antonio's development is demonstrated by the sociological concepts of enculturation ('ethnic socialisation') and acculturation ('cultural assimilation').

Central to this investigation are the following questions: To what extent does the cultural background of Antonio's parents influence him? Does he succeed to choose one life background or does he remain lost? How do hybridity and social circumstances affect Antonio's personality and psyche? Does Rudolfo Anaya succeed, through his narrative *Bless me, Ultima*, to demonstrate and assert the influence of culture on identity?

What will be hypothesised is that the different cultural backgrounds of Antonio's parents have achieved significant impact on Antonio's personality. Eventually, Antonio does not manage to pick one lifestyle for himself. Moreover, hybridity and the social circumstances surrounding Antonio would set him in 'the third space' and thus, marginalise him. Anaya has successfully expressed, based on his personal experience as a Chicano individual and a hybrid person, through the character of Antonio, to clearly demonstrate the obstacles facing identity construction.

This study intends to introduce the core concepts of hybridity, identity, double consciousness, Hispanic-American and Mexican-American literature, and Chicano identity. This research will aim to study how hybridity and social circumstances contribute to shape the individual's identity as well as his or her personality. The research will also attempt to

investigate the impact of hybridity as a key concept on the construction of the protagonist's identity.

The current study will be undertaken within the theme of Hispanic self-identification, particularly hybrid identities, and will discuss qualitative data to demonstrate the process of identity construction in *Bless me, Ultima*. Therefore, a descriptive analytical and thematic methods will be primarily adopted while conducting this research. The selected data and quotations will be discussed and analysed in order to build an idea of how hybridity contributes to identity construction.

The structure of the current work will consist of three chapters. The first chapter will present a general overview of the concepts of identity, hybridity, double consciousness and third space from a postcolonial perspective. It will also lay strong emphasis on Hispanic-American literature and especially Mexican-American literature as a prime example. The second chapter will discuss the life background of the protagonist's parents and how he quests for his personal identity during a cultural and spiritual journey. The third chapter will treat of Antonio's identity modulation and his surrounding conflicting cultures, highlighting hybridity and the clash between two coexisting distinct cultures which he personally and directly experiences.

Chapter I

An Overview of Identity and Hybridity

Identity and hybridity are among the most debated issues in post colonialism in general and postcolonial literature in particular. These two phenomena are usually connected together. In this chapter we shall attempt to give a broad outline of core concepts, such as identity, hybridity, double consciousness, and the third space within the context of Hispanic-American and especially Mexican-American literature. We consider that the exploration of these concepts is an essential preliminary to the study of the novel we have selected.

1. What Is Identity?

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (8th edition, 2015) provides us with two definitions of the word 'identity': (1) who or what somebody or something is; (2) the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others. Psychologically speaking, identity is to have essentially unchanging characteristics. It is the basic unity of a personality.¹ In sociology, identity is the sense of self, i.e. what kind of person one is. Moreover, sociologists think that identity is both sameness and difference at the same time. It is to be the same as the members of one's group and different from the members of another group. According to sociologists, identities can be relatively durable when they are acquired in childhood such as ethnicity, family, locality, nationality, or religion. But in the age of globalisation, identities tend to be more fluid and changing due mainly to geographical and social mobility, and the breakdown of traditions. Abercrombie et al. write: 'People can change

¹ Personality is the thinking, feeling and behaving, and the particular characteristic pattern of these elements that makes every human being unique. Personality also includes the important role of unconscious processes that may be hidden from the individual but are partly perceptible to other people.

identities over their lifetime. They can choose who they want to be in a society in which traditional loyalties are breaking down . . . Individuals reflect on their own identity and continuously rework it' (190). But how can one explain identity with respect to postcolonial literature?²

2. Identity in Postcolonial Literature

From a postcolonial perspective, the definition of the term 'identity' might be more complicated. In a postcolonial context, the existence of an individual, a group or a nation is noticed in connection with the existence of an 'other'. In other words, otherness³ is one of the striking characteristics of identity.

Identity remains one of the most extensively debated topics in the postcolonial era. Because of the effects of colonialism, the colonised still struggles to determine his or her identity. In his article "*identity and Cultural Diaspora*", Hall states:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, the representation (222).

Hall's argument is that old identities which stabilised the social world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified

² Postcolonialism (covering postcolonial studies, postcolonial theory and postcolonial literature) is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to the study of European colonialism and its impact on the society, culture, history and politics of the formerly colonised regions of Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific. The term 'postcolonialism' was first used by historians after the Second World War to refer to the post-independence era. Since the 1990s it has been used by literary critics to study the effects of colonial representation in literary texts.

³ Theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Simone de Beauvoir make great use of otherness: the binary divide us-them, self-other, and masculine-feminine. 'Othering' is the action of making some group into a clear contrast to 'us'.

subject. This so-called crisis of identity is seen as part of a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world.

Furthermore, otherness resulted in the perturbation of identity. National identity which was constructed in postcolonial states is 'believed to be never fixed and is very changing according to environment and culture, because of transfer and sovereignty which lead to a confusion in identity' (qtd. in Dizayi 1000).

Stewart Hall adds:

There are at least two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity'. The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (223).

From this quotation Hall regards cultural identity as one common culture explicitly embodied in many individuals who descend from same ancestors and thus share one history. That is to say that cultural identity is the shared historical backgrounds and cultural terms which provide a steady constant setting of reference to one people, regardless of the fluctuations of their own history.

After this brief introduction to identity, let us move on to the second major element that we introduced previously, namely, hybridity.

3. What Is Hybridity?

A hybrid is something that is the product of mixing two or more different things and hybridity is the mixture. Hybridity was first used in biology then was adopted in the linguistics. In a socio-cultural context, hybridity can be defined as a combination of two different races, cultures or religions. The word 'hybrid' derives from the Latin word 'hybrida' or 'hibrida', which had first referred to the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar before it referred to one born of a Roman father and a foreign mother or of a freeman and a slave. In other words, who is born of heterogeneous parents. The word came into English in the seventeenth century.

In the field of literature, 'hybridity' is used in postcolonial theory. It is the feature of a culture produced by the interaction of two or more separate cultures. The hybrid may feature aspects of either or both cultures, but is a new and distinct cultural product. The Russian Mikhail Bakhtin was the first theorist who gave serious thought to overtones of hybridity in *Rabelais and his World* (1965). In the latter book, Bakhtin examines how the pleasures of the medieval carnival defy the authority of the church and feudal law. Conforming to Bakhtin's line of thought, the hybridity of medieval carnivals lies in their heteroglossia or polyphony.⁴ Put in simple words, polyphonic narratives are likely to question authoritative discourse.

In full measure, postcolonial theorists have concentrated on hybridity when it is the effect of the interaction between peoples in colonial and postcolonial contact zones. Hybridity and its process, named hybridisation, assume several shapes. Hybridity and hybridisation can

⁴ Heteroglossia is coined by Bakhtin and it is the existence of conflicting discourses within a novel. This term approaches linguistic variety as a feature of social conflict, as in tensions between central and marginal uses of the same language. These tensions may resonate through the differences between the narrative voice and the voices of the characters in a novel. Bakhtin sees language as consisting of an indefinite variety of languages, each one of which presents its perspective on reality. Every character speaks a variety of these languages, so every character may be heteroglot. In the contemporary novel, first person narrations, parodies, pastiches illustrate heteroglossia. Therefore, a polyphonic novel is one in which several different voices or points of view interact on more or less equal terms.

occur in the linguistic domain, resulting in the emergence of pidgins and creoles. Second, hybridity and hybridisation can take the form of miscegenation begetting new and hybrid racial groups. Third, the coloniser and the colonised may embrace or be forced to embrace the cultural practices of the other (Cuddon 344). The relationship forged by Bakhtin between hybridity and the power to challenge authority exerted marked influence on postcolonial theorists.

Homi Bhabha asserts that the disarray of colonial authority is due to the ambivalent hybridity of the colonised. The latter mimics⁵ the customs, values and education of the coloniser. In doing so, the colonised shows simultaneously respect for and mockery of the coloniser (345).

Moreover, Bhabha finds that hybridity is the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its grip on meaning and finds itself open to the language of the other, enabling critics to track the complex movements of the other in the colonial text (Young 21). Bhabha offers a definition of hybridity as being ‘a problematic of colonial representation . . . that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other “denied” knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority’ (qtd. in Young 21). That is to say, hybridity depicts a process during which the sole voice of colonial authority enfeebles colonial power, by inditing and revealing the other so as to reveal itself as double-voiced. What happens then to the voice of the colonial authority is that it hears itself speaking differently. Bakhtin’s heteroglossia or polyphony has been altered by Bhabha into an instant of opposition to a dominant cultural power.

⁵ In biological psychology, mimicry is understood as a strategy in natural selection. Animals (mimics) take on the appearance of other animals (models). Animals mimic the appearance of a model that is avoided by predators. Other animals adopt a common pattern of mimicry in order to warn off predators. In social psychology, mimicry is viewed as the unconscious and unintentional imitation of other people’s accents, speech patterns, postures, gestures, mannerisms, moods, and emotions.

Similar to the colonised, the stranger (the immigrant) lives in the same situation. The stranger arrives to a new country and may leave one day. Strangers are hybrids and have a hybrid identity because they are concurrently members of the community and not members of the community. The stranger is one new identity resulting from two previous identities: the original one and the acquired one which used to overlap before they emerge as a new one. These strangers are not considered as individuals but as a specific group or category that is the combination of the stranger's identity and the local identity. The ideal solution to this identity crisis of having two identities (two voices = heteroglossia) is to construct a new identity, a hybrid identity.

What one concludes from the sections mentioned above is that hybridity began as deep contemptuousness (half-breed, mongrel, abnormality, freak, queer, half-caste, mulatto, etc.) and is now metamorphosing positively in our globalized contemporary world. This metamorphosis is best summarised below:

With globalisation and increasing modernisation, being a hybrid is now a benefit. The ability to negotiate across barriers — language [linguistic], cultural, spiritual, racial . . . is an asset. Although the hybrid contains elements of the local and the global, the intermixture makes it unique. Those who occupy hybrid spaces benefit from having an understanding of both local knowledge and global cosmopolitanism. Those who can easily cross barriers in a world of amorphous borders have an advantage' (Iyall Smith 4).

Inherently combined with hybridity are the two concepts of double consciousness and the third space; without which one can neither speak of hybridity and identity nor conduct a study on a postcolonial novel as this current piece of research proposes to do.

3.1. Double Consciousness

First used by the American theorist W. E. B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), ‘double consciousness’ refers to the situation of the blacks in America. DuBois’ reasoning is that the black man can only see himself by the eyes of the white man after a long period of slavery and domination. Being considered as an object of disdain, the black man is aware of being American and black. The effect of this awareness, according to DuBois, is the internalisation by the black man of white attitudes and prejudices. What is occasioned by this internalisation, afterwards, is the deep-seated belief of the black man that he is primitive, oversexed and uncivilised. Indeed, these are the beliefs the white man rigidly adhered to. These beliefs implant a feeling of inferiority in the black individual as well as the black community; and convince them of the superiority of the white man. The resistance of the black man after centuries of slavery and subjugation by the white man is to blend both identities, i.e. American and black together to form a consistent entity. DuBois was not the only early thinker who theorised about double consciousness.

A crucial aspect and after-effect of double consciousness is the experience of alienation by the other, be that other a black man or a colonised man. The experience of alienation that is undergone by the colonised is what Franz Fanon discusses in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1956). Fanon notices that the black man wears a white mask because he desperately tries to speak and behave like him, relinquishing his own culture and identity. As he asserts “The movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self” (109)

3.2. The Third Space

Another major aftermath and aspect of hybridity is the third space. This is a concept invented by Homi Bhabha to depict a space where claims to the purity and homogeneity of culture are being rejected. Bhabha thinks that rather than make such claims, we adopt the hybridised essence of cultures. For Bhabha, this space is not barren but productive. The third space is the locus of the negotiations and exchanges athwart cultural boundaries. The third space never existed ahead of the fusion of identities. The third space comes into view wherever cultures encounter each other and blur.

Following this exposition of the concepts of hybridity and identity that are extremely critical to the understanding of post-colonialism in general and postcolonial literature in particular, let us now introduce Hispanic-American literature as a general illustration of postcolonial literature.

4. What Is Hispanic-American Literature?

Hispanic-American literature came into being subsequent to the first Spanish colonial writings about America, especially Christopher Columbus's writings whose importance is cardinal to the emergence of a Hispanic-American literature. Columbus's first letters of the discovery of the New World, which he wrote to the Spanish monarchs in 1493, described the American landscape and the natives, their customs and behaviour. He guaranteed the Spanish that the natives would easily convert to Christianity and serve the Spanish nation. The evangelists, who accompanied Columbus on his exploratory journeys and who tried to evangelise the natives, lived within native communities in order to observe their culture. One of these evangelists, Ramón Pané, described the beliefs and behaviour of the Taínos of Hispaniola in *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* (Account of the Ancient

Beliefs of the Indians) completed in 1498 and first published in 1571. In his account, Pané recognises that he does not understand the culture of these natives.

Then began the colonisation of the continent by Europeans who imposed their language and culture on the natives (the other), who survived slavery and forced labour by the white man. During centuries after the conquest of the New World by Europeans and especially the Spanish, these natives have embraced or have been forced to embrace Spanish culture. The purpose of this study being to provide an introduction to Mexican-American literature, more details about general Hispanic-American literature should be shunned at this level. Instead, primary focus should be given to a sub-category of Hispanic-American literature which the novel to be studied fits into.

4.1. Mexican-American Literature

Western culture was introduced to the lands that would be part of the United States (southern and south-western parts) by Hispanic peoples, that is, Spaniards, Hispanicised Africans, Amerindians, mestizos, and mulattoes.⁶ The areas in which lived these Hispanic groups became part of the United States by the mid-nineteenth century through conquest and purchase. After the incorporation of these areas by the United States, many English-speaking colonists settled in the lands. They soon made up the majority and their culture became the dominant one. However, the Hispanics who used to be Mexican citizens before the annexation of their territories by English-speaking Americans found themselves in ethnic enclaves dominated by a foreign culture. They simply became minorities in lands that used to be their own. Nevertheless, they continued to struggle to preserve their cultural Hispanic heritage.

⁶ A 'mestizo' is a person of mixed European and American Indian ancestry, while a 'mulatto' is a person of mixed white and black blood.

From the nineteenth century onwards, the Hispanics have considered themselves as exiles, immigrants, and natives. Their socio-historical experience in the United States has revealed three main identities (native, immigrant, exile) which help us truly understand their literary expression. The immigrants and exiles left the newly-found Mexican Republic for the United States where they sought refuge. But Hispanic refugees and immigrants have poured into the United States until today, not only from Mexico but from other Hispanic countries. The successive waves of Hispanic immigrants enriched the culture of the already established Hispanic groups.

Within this category of Hispanic literature, one can include Mexican-American or Chicano literature. It is the body of literature written by Mexican Americans beginning from the twentieth century until today. Even if 'Mexican-American' and 'Chicano' are used synonymously, 'Chicano' describes the ethnic pride and unique identity of this ethnic group that has existed since the civil rights movement of the 1940s in the United States. However, the early origin of this literature goes back to conquest of Mexico by the Spanish in the sixteenth century and continued through the annexation of Mexican territory by the United States in 1848. Indeed, it is that year which is acknowledged as the formal date of the birth of Mexican- American literature.

The term 'Chicano' derives from the word 'mexicano' and was used for the first time in literature in 1947 by Mario Suárez in his collection of short stories *El Hoyo* (The hole). Like 'hybridity', the word 'Chicano' was used pejoratively to refer to Mexican Americans but soon acquired a positive meaning because it started to assert the identity of this ethnic group.

The first major Mexican American writers of the twentieth century during the civil rights movement were José Antonio Villareal, Josephina Niggli, Sabine Ulibarrí, and Américo Paredes. Niggli published *Mexican Village* in 1945 and Villareal published *Pocho* in 1959.

The word 'pocho' meant a person who is forgetful of his or her Mexican origin and assimilated the values of the white and English-speaking establishment.⁷ Identity conflicts and problems of assimilation in the United States is a recurrent theme in Mexican American literature of the 1940s and 1950s, whereas the assertion of Chicano identity was predominant as a literary theme in the 1960s and 1970s due to the new wave of civil rights movement that swept the USA. During these two decades, Mexican American literature became the instrument for social protest and cultural assertion. Rodolfo Gonzalez published the poem *Yo soy Joaquín* (I Am Joaquín) in 1967.

In the 1970s Quinto Sol established an annual prize for Mexican American writers. Tomas Rivera and Rudolfo Anaya were among the first writers to be awarded the prize. In 1972 Anaya was awarded the Quinto Sol for *Bless me, Ultima*, an internationally known novel. It is this novel which will be studied in the ensuing chapter.

In conclusion, we have introduced in this section the key concepts of identity, hybridity, double consciousness, and third space within Hispanic-American and especially Mexican-American literature. Identity is a central issue in the modern world and postcolonial studies and hybridity is one of the most important factors that substantially contribute to the construction of any individual, especially the individual who finds himself or herself torn between two conflicting cultures. Furthermore, a hybrid society often results in what DuBois calls 'double consciousness' within the individual's state of mind. Thus, such individuals attempt to create their own space which is referred to as 'the third space' by Homi Bhabha.

We will now move on to the next chapter which will introduce the novel selected *Bless me, Ultima*, and tackle two major themes which are, the quest for identity and the significance of land.

⁷ The establishment is a small group with considerable power and influence: economic, military, political, social, legal and cultural. It is a group that does not have to struggle to maintain its position.

Chapter II

The Significance of Land and the Quest for Identity

The Chicanos are deeply attached to their land and pledge strong allegiance to it. They regard their land as the fertile source which provides everything in life. *Bless me, Ultima* is a description of this sense of sacredness that the land has acquired in Chicano culture and as a means to shape Chicano identity. The two main protagonists of the novel, namely Ultima and Antonio are strongly attached to the land: The first is ‘physically’ and ‘traditionally’ attached to it while the second character is attached to it in a ‘symbolic’ way. Ultima is a wise old woman who uses the herbs of the land to cure the illnesses of her community. For Antonio, it is through the teachings of Ultima that he is able to feel a strong attachment to the land: not a physical one, however. For Antonio, the land is just a landmark to discover his own identity on the journey of the quest for identity. Our concern in the present chapter is the general presentation of *Bless me, Ultima* which is the novel under study. Next, we shall discuss two major themes which prevail in the novel, viz. the significance of the land and the quest for identity.

1. Presentation of the Novel *Bless me, Ultima*

The novel that we are working on is entitled *Bless me, Ultima*. It was written by Rudolfo Anaya in 1972 and it is a coming-of-age novel.¹ *Bless me, Ultima* has been one of the most read and criticised novels in Chicano literature.

¹Coming of age is the process of growing up or entering into adulthood. A coming-of-age novel is a novel on a person’s (character) journey from childhood or adolescence to adulthood.

The setting of *Bless me, Ultima* is a mixed area of a small Spanish-speaking community and a large English-speaking community. The novel is written by a bilingual author, using English, Spanish, and Spanglish.² Therefore, bilingualism³ is one of the most distinct facets of Chicano identity.

The novel treats of Chicano identity which develops through an intercultural process in the multicultural⁴ society of the American southwest. In *Bless me, Ultima* Anaya designs a cognitive map for his readers to show them how multicultural American society in the southwest works. By the same token, he shows his readers how the mind of Antonio Marez (protagonist and narrator) works. The novel demonstrates how Antonio experiences the multicultural borderland,⁵ a land of cultural clashes.

The protagonist takes the readers on a journey during which they meet the protagonist's family members, peers, classmates, society, and people. What is more important in this journey is the considerable impact that Ultima has exerted on Antonio's personality and spirituality. The novel depicts the stress and struggles which Antonio faces in his spiritual quest.

The metaphysical dimension of the novel is the struggle between good and evil, personified respectively by Ultima and Lord. The former represents legend and the latter embodies reality. Antonio's dilemma is to choose between the two.

According to Hispanic traditions in the American southwest, the eldest son of the family assumes weighty responsibilities. Taking up his father's role in case the father leaves home,

²Spanglish is a hybrid language combining words and idioms from both Spanish and English, especially Spanish speech that uses many English words and expressions.

³Bilingualism is the fact of being able to use two languages equally well, or the political or institutional recognition of two languages.

⁴Multiculturalism is the presence of, or support for the presence of several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society.

⁵A borderland is an area of land close to a border between two countries. It has features of both but is not clearly one or the other.

the eldest son is expected to support, guide and look for the family's pressing needs. The eldest son is forced to grow up quickly. However, Antonio's maturity is displayed very early even though he is the youngest son.

Antonio lives in a family which consists of a mother, a father, two sisters and three elder brothers who are soldiers fighting in the Second World War. The family used to live in Guadalupe, a small town between the 'llano'⁶ of his father in Las Pasturas and his mother's farming village of El Puerto of Las Lunas. Antonio is the descendant of two civilizations which prospered in New Mexico when it was under Spanish rule. The two families symbolize the classical Spanish families, originating from the conquistadors and the priests. The Marez are rough individuals who derive their symbolic name from seafaring conquistadors ('Marez' derives from 'mares' meaning 'seas') and turned into shepherds and vaqueros.⁷ The Lunas derive their name from a priest who founded a farming community in the Valley of the Moon (Kevane 37).

The ancestors of both families were strongly connected to the land, the thing that Antonio's parents remember vividly. Antonio's parents are obliged to leave their land. So, they are unable to transfer to Antonio and his siblings their attachment to the land and the lifestyles connected to the land. His mother wants him to be a priest while his father wants him to be a cowboy. Thus, Antonio carries the enormous burden of his parents' expectations and throughout the novel he fights to choose one lifestyle. So, how is the land represented in the novel and what symbolic significance does it assume?

⁶A 'llano' is a treeless grassy plain in Spanish America or southwestern United States.

⁷A 'vaquero' is a cowboy. He term is especially used in southwestern United States.

2. The Significance of the Land

Chicanos have always appreciated the land since the land connects them to their roots, heritage, and birth. They regard it as ‘a site of birth, death, home, family, ancestors, yet also reminder of dispossession and the struggle to survive’ (qtd. in Budi Utami 65). This vision has influenced the attitudes of the Chicanos towards the land as it represents one of the most fundamental elements of Chicano culture.

Bless me, Ultima, which is a bildungsroman,⁸ is saturated with the power of the earth or what the Spanish call ‘la tierra’. Anaya depends on both landscape and on his New Mexican sense to deliver his characters’ emotions. He always pledges strong allegiance to landscape. Anaya asserts: ‘My sense of place helps to define my centre, and the centre becomes the point of view from which I observe life’ (qtd. in Kevane 35). This is virtually the same for Antonio because he discovers, with Ultima’s help, that acquiring clear understanding of landscape, integrated with suitable spiritualism, may help him to solve the clash of cultures that chases him in the novel.

From the starting-point of the novel, Anaya describes the land and its strong link with humans and life. As Antonio’s father recalls the old times, it is demonstrated that the past is strongly connected to the land. Antonio’s father was a vaquero who appreciated the land. Speaking of his father, Antonio says:

He spoke in Spanish, and the village he mentioned was his home. My father had been a vaquero all his life, a calling as ancient as the coming of the Spaniard to Nuevo

⁸A bildungsroman is a novel on the moral and psychological growth of the main character. It is a story of the growth of a sensitive person, who looks for answers to his or her questions through different experiences. Such a novel starts with a loss or tragedy that disturbs the main character emotionally. In a bildungsroman, the main character goes on a journey to fill a vacuum. During that journey, the protagonist gains maturity gradually and with difficulty. The plot of the bildungsroman depicts a conflict between the protagonist and the values of society. Finally, the protagonist accepts those values, ending the dissatisfaction. Such a novel is also referred to as a coming-of-age novel.

Mejico. Even after the big rancheros⁹ and the tejanos¹⁰ came and fenced the beautiful llano, he and those like him continued to work there, I guess because only in that wide expanse of land and sky could they feel the freedom their spirits needed. (*Anaya Bless me, Ultima 2*)

Antonio's father was one of the Spaniards who came to New Mexico and were mainly attached to their lands, because the land used to provide those free men with the keen sense of freedom that any free human being needs.

Like his father, Antonio's dream is to travel over the 'llano' hills to discover the places and the houses because his own birth has established his remarkable correlation with the land. Antonio narrates:

In my dream I flew over the rolling hills of the llano. My soul wandered over the dark plain until it came to a cluster of adobe huts. I recognized the village of Las Pasturas and my heart grew happy. One mud hut had a lighted window, and the vision of my dream swept me towards it to be witness at the birth of a baby. (5)

This quote shows the significance of the land and that it is related to birth and the very beginning of life. The land is 'the past', 'the present'; and 'the future': in other words, the starting-point of life, its continuation, and eventually, its inevitable end. Everything originates from the earth and will go back to the land in the end. This vision is explicitly embodied in the novel, and is also predominant in the culture of the native inhabitants of the land: the Indians. In this context Antonio says:

⁹A 'ranchero' is a person who farms or works on a ranch, especially in southwestern United States and Mexico.

¹⁰A 'tejano' is a Mexican-American inhabitant of southern Texas. It also refers to a Hispanic resident of the state of Texas who culturally descended from the original Spanish-speaking or Mestizo settlers of Tejas (Texas).

I realized that from these two people I had learned to love the magical beauty of the wide, free earth. From my mother I had learned that man is of the earth, that his clay feet are part of the ground that nourishes him, and that it is this inextricable mixture that gives man his measure of safety and security. Because man plants in the earth he believes in the miracle of birth, and he provides a home for his family, and he builds a church to preserve his faith and the soul that is bound to his flesh, his clay. (228)

In this excerpt, the importance of the land is starkly highlighted. The land acquires several meanings. First, the human being belongs to the earth, as it can be his or her source of food and wealth. Second, the land is regarded as a 'miracle of birth' by which people start to inherit, honour, and perpetuate traditions in order to foster a culture. Third, the land can also be a place where people can build churches in order to practice their religion and revive their spirituality.

As a representative of the natives' ancient culture, Ultima is a 'curandera', an expert of herbs who cures mental and physical illnesses. Antonio describes her as '... a curandera, a woman who knew the herbs and remedies of the ancients, a miracle-worker who could heal the sick' (4). Throughout the novel, Ultima guides and teaches Antonio about land and nature, and provides him with in-depth understanding of his heritage and his origins. Antonio relates:

She took my hand, and I felt the power of a whirlwind sweep around me. Her eyes swept the surrounding hills and through them I saw for the first time the wild beauty of our hills and the magic of the green river. My nostrils quivered as I felt the song of the mockingbirds and the drone of the grasshoppers mingle with the pulse of the earth. The four directions of the llano met in me, and the white sun shone on my soul. The granules of sand at my feet and the sun and sky above me seemed to dissolve into one strange, complete being. (12)

When Antonio first meets Ultima, he starts to discover the significance of the land to the inherited values. He feels the power of nature and the beauty of the land in the person of Ultima since their first encounter. Ultima teaches Antonio the true greatness of the land and its limitless potential, i.e. the land reminds him of his early origins. The expression ‘pulse of the earth’ and the use of the word ‘magic’ mean that nature remains alive. Furthermore, Antonio supposes that he can, with Ultima’s help, grasp the beauty and the secrets of the land, the thing which will lead him eventually to understand himself.

From a psychological perspective, Ultima exerts great impact on Antonio’s personality. She guides him through the hills to gather herbs while teaching him the secrets of life and the importance of the land. This contributes to his spiritual and personal growth. Antonio recounts:

We walked together in the llano and along the river banks to gather herbs and roots for her medicines. She taught me the names of plants and flowers, of trees and bushes, of birds and animals; but most important, I learned from her that there was a beauty in the time of day and in the time of night, and that there was peace in the river and in the hills. She taught me to listen to the mystery of the groaning earth and to feel complete in the fulfilment of its time. My soul grew under her careful guidance. (15)

Antonio spends most of his time with Ultima because he cannot bear the tense family atmosphere that pervades at home because Antonio’s parents come from different families: the Marez and the Lunas regard Antonio’s future differently. Yet, they agree on one point: the significance of land in Antonio’s life. The Lunas were the first Hispanics who were granted the lands in the southwest. Antonio’s mother explains: ‘They were the first colonisers of the Llano Estacado. It was the Lunas who carried the charter from the Mexican government to settle the valley’ (54). This quotation reveals that the Chicanos are strongly connected to their

lands which serve as their roots and origins. In other words, both their lands and their cultural legacy shape, assert, and maintain the Chicanos' sense of identity.

3. The Search for Identity

The theme of identity is very significant in *Bless me, Ultima*. It is depicted in Antonio's internal conflict to choose the future which his parents desire. Antonio struggles with mixed-raced identity and throughout the novel, he searches for his personal and cultural identity. In other words, he quests for his identity among the conflicting expectations of his mother's and father's families.

Antonio's internal conflicts are embodied in his dream. This illustrates the fact of being born from a cowboy father and a farming mother. Antonio tells his mother half of the dream. Once he can figure out the significance of his dream, the internal conflict starts. The dream articulates a vision for Antonio to decide about his own future life. Antonio tells the story of his dream: 'This one will be a Luna, the old man said, he will be a farmer and keep our customs and traditions. Perhaps God will bless our family and make the baby a priest' (5) and he adds: 'He is a Marez, the vaqueros shouted. His forefathers were conquistadores, men as restless as the seas they sailed and as free as the land they conquered. He is his father's blood!' (6)

The quotation above shows the contradictory cultures of the Marez and the Luna as each one of them tries to claim Antonio, the new-born male, for its own family. Antonio grows up, finding himself obliged to decide which family's cultural background to stick to. Antonio describes this situation:

Always the talk turned to life on the *llano*. The first pioneers there were sheepherders.

Then they imported herds of cattle from Mexico and became vaqueros. They became

horsemen, caballeros, men whose daily life was wrapped up in the ritual of horsemanship. They were the first cowboys in a wild and desolate land which they took from the Indians. (125)

The ancestors of Antonio's father were horsemen, shepherds and cowboys who came from Mexico to settle in the 'llano' in order to practice their crafts.

Antonio is the descendant of two civilisations which flourished in New Mexico when it was ruled by the Spanish. The two families symbolise the classical Spanish families which originated from

The conquistador and the priest. The Marez are rough men that derive their symbolic name from seafaring conquistadors [Marez meaning mares/seas] turned shepherds and vaqueros. . . . The Lunas derive their patronymic from a priest who founded a farming community in the valley of the moon (qtd. in Kevane 37)

The Marez family extracted their name from the sea conquistadors who became later shepherds and cowboys who valued the 'llano', freedom and mobility. Antonio tells us about them: 'These were the people of my father, the vaqueros of the llano. They were an exuberant, restless people, wandering across the ocean of the plain' (6). On the other hand, the Lunas got their name from a priest who created a farming clan in the valley of the moon. Antonio tells us about the priest: 'Then there was the strange, whispered riddle of the first priest who went to El Puerto. The colony had first settled there under a land grant from the Mexican government, and the man who led the colonization was a priest, and he was a Luna' (29).

The Luna and the Marez were two cultural opposites, the thing which makes Antonio ask ‘Why two people as opposite as my father and my mother had married I do not know. Their blood and their ways had kept them at odds, and yet for all this, we were happy (29).

The ancestors of both families were strongly connected to the earth, the thing which his parents reminisce about. At the beginning of the novel, Antonio’s parents are displeased, as they are obliged, due to the marriage, to leave their lifestyles and their connection to the earth. Since they are away from their original lifestyles of farming and sheep farming, they couldnot transfer neither to Antonio nor to his siblings any significant connection to the land.

Thus, Antonio becomes his parents’ dream, and since his parents come from different backgrounds, each one of them considers Antonio’s future differently. On the one hand, his mother is a devoted catholic and wants her son to be a priest. Antonio notes: ‘That is why my mother dreamed of me becoming a priest, because there had not been a Luna priest in the family for many years’ (29). On the other hand, Antonio’s father is an anti-religious man, thus he wants his son to become a cowboy. His father always had the dream of moving to California accompanied by his sons. Antonio says: ‘My father’s dream was to gather his sons around him and move westward to the land of the setting sun, to the vineyards of California’ (14).

Antonio’s growth is dependent on his realization that he can combine elements. His question to Ultima shows that he is obliged to choose. He says: ‘Now we have come to live near the river, and yet near the llano. I love them both, and yet I am of neither. I wonder which life I will choose?’ (41). This quotation shows the perplexity and the confusion which Antonio feels as he has to decide about his own future life and destiny.

Over and above, the young Antonio bears the terrible burden of his contradicted parents’ expectations, and the whole novel is but Antonio’s fight to choose a single lifestyle, thus the

difficulty of the decision to make since his family's legacy drags him in two different directions. He claims: 'I wanted to be a good son, but the dreams of my mother were opposite the wishes of my father. She wanted a priest to watch over the farmers of the valley; he wanted a son to travel with him to the vineyards of California.' (74).

Antonio grows up and keeps learning about his surroundings and combats to define himself seeking to find one single identity. He seems lost between being a Marez or a Luna, the thing which is clear in his expression:

Oh please tell me which is the water that runs through my veins, I moaned; oh please tell me which is the water that washes my burning eyes! It is the sweet water of the moon, my mother crooned softly, it is the water the Church chooses to make holy and place in its font. (120)

Therefore, deciding about one single lifestyle, whether his mother's or his father's, created a sense of perplexity in Antonio and resulted in conflicts within himself. This situation, which left Antonio in the in-between, is depicted in the novel as the babes of Limbo.¹¹ In this context, Antonio states: 'In my dream I saw Ultima's owl lift la Virgen on her wide wings and fly her to heaven. Then the owl returned and gathered up all the babes of Limbo and flew them up to the clouds of heaven. The Virgen smiled at the goodness of the owl' (13).

The quote above proves that babes of Limbo were those people of learning who cannot decide or make an action, instead, they just wait for someone to come and catch them out of their lost situation or make a decision for them. The influence of this condition makes

¹¹According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 'Limbo' is 'a situation in which you are not certain what to do next, cannot take action, etc., especially because you are waiting for somebody else to make a decision'. It also means 'an uncertain period of awaiting a decision or resolution; an intermediate state or condition' or 'a state of neglect or oblivion'.

Antonio engage in a learning process. In many situations, and through contact with two different things or cultures, Antonio attempts to resolve internal conflicts.

Thus, the protagonist struggles with binary forces embodied in his mother and his father, the church and his peers, the conflict between good and evil. Eventually, Antonio discovers the possibility of combining elements as his father explains:

We lived two different lives, your mother and I. I came from a people who held the wind as brother, because he is free, and the horse as companion, because he is the living, fleeting wind – and your mother, well, she came from men who hold the earth as brother. They are a steady, settled people. We have been at odds all of our lives, the wind and the earth. Perhaps it is time we gave up the old differences . . . Every generation, every man is a part of his past. He cannot escape it, but he may reform the old materials, make something new. (247)

The sharp differences of the Luna and the Màrez should be kept apart, and thus Antonio's father advises his son to combine the old elements in order to shape a new identity which he can adopt.

In the end, Antonio finds out a way to combine the customs inherited from his parents' families to construct a new identity for himself; he says: 'Then maybe I do not have to be just Màrez, or Luna, perhaps I can be both' (247). Antonio is able to grasp his parents' differences and manage to combine both of the Màrez and the Luna traditions in order to create a new hybrid identity. This is clear in his conversation with his uncle Pedro:

A man of learning can go far in this world, he can be anything- It makes your mother very proud, and, "he looked down at the earth beneath his feet and as was their custom caressed it with his boot," it makes us proud. It has been a long time since there was

an educated Luna, a man of the people, “he nodded and pondered.” “I am M̀arez,” I answered. I did not know why I said it, but it surprised him a little. Then he smiled. “That is right, you are M̀arez first, then Luna.” “Well, you will be leaving us in a few days, going back to your studies, as it should be.” (250-251)

The excerpt above proves that Antonio has finally absorbed his family’s binarism and could understand that he is both his mother’s and his father’s son. Thus, he does not have to be only a M̀arez or a Luna, instead, he can be both M̀arez and Luna.

In brief, the protagonist, Antonio is related to ‘la tierra’ (the earth) as the seasons are related to it. Because the seasons alter the surface of the earth and its bosom so is Antonio’s inner self. The land is part and parcel of Antonio. The land shapes the culture of the people; and the land and the culture, in turn, shape people’s identity. This is exactly what has happened to Antonio’s parents first and to him later. Once one forgets one’s land, one will forget one’s past which makes one’s future vanish. The result is rationally being lost and not knowing who one is.

Throughout the novel, Anaya had undeniably succeeded to portray, via many characters like Ultima, Antonio and his parents, the significance of the land to the Chicanos. All of those characters carry a sense of pride and belonging to their land. The land connects Antonio to his birth, links Ultima with the herbs, and relates Antonio’s parents with their traditions of vaqueros and farmers’ culture.

As a natural continuation in this study, the following chapter will explore the themes of cultural clash and hybridity in *Bless me, Ultima*.

Chapter III

Hybridity and Cultural Clash

In the previous chapter, we have considered how Antonio's identity has been affected by several factors. It has been demonstrated how the land and the different cultural backgrounds of Antonio's parents have contributed to shape his identity. The chief concern of this chapter is to consider how two cultures affect the identity of the individual in *Bless me, Ultima*. Therefore, a prime focus will be placed on the themes of hybridity and cultural clash, and how these latter have profoundly influenced Antonio's personality.

1. Chicano Culture vs Anglo-American Culture

Anaya is inspired by the New Mexican heritage focusing on the Spanish language, even though the novel is written in English since the characters 'speak' Spanish. Anaya sheds the light upon traditions, folklore and the indigenous people's connection to the landscape. The Spanish language is Anaya's mother tongue. When he started studying, the shift from Spanish to the English language created a period of modification.

Bless me, Ultima is written mostly in English with some Spanish lines. Anaya uses English more than Spanish. The use of the Spanish language by the protagonist shows that American identity is not solely monolingual or Anglo-centric. Berry notes that 'The presence of Spanish challenges the monolingual American identity and acknowledges the Hispanic culture as part of

American identity, even before/if the word is translated' (33). In other words, the use of Spanish proves that Hispanic culture is an important part of American identity.

Bless Me, Ultima was written during the emergence of Chicano fiction and it is regarded as 'the most recognized Chicano novel of all time' (qtd. in Berry 7). Furthermore, Anaya uses Antonio as a symbol to refer to some of the major obstacles which he faced as a Chicano who lives in the borderlands seeking to define his identity as a Mexican American.

The Chicano movement has certainly inspired Anaya's narrative and it is a significant evidence of how Chicano culture is vividly depicted in literature, particularly if it is expressed through abrupt code switching¹ from English to Spanish. As a Chicano writer, Anaya has chosen to integrate non-translated Spanish lines in his work and this proves that Chicano culture holds a prominent place within general American culture. However, the common experience that the Chicanos have undergone in the United States is different from that of the dominant White Anglo-Saxon people. Chicano identity and culture and their difference compared with the identity and the culture of the white majority in America are central motifs in *Bless me, Ultima*. The Chicanos do not forget their cultural roots. This can be seen through the way keep speaking Spanish. Spanish is a fundamental aspect of Chicano culture. Spanish is the people's and the ancestors' language. It is highly regarded as their natural and spiritual home before the Americans acquired the land and before the gradual dominance of the English language. But because the main character in the novel is the outcome of two co-existing worlds and yet different, he personifies a sort of blurred identity, which neither wholly Anglo-American nor totally Hispanic. It is the strange sort of identity we can call hybrid.

¹ Code switching is a term in sociolinguistics. It is a movement from one language to another. The following is code switching by a bilingual speaker when he or she says: 'Sometimes I start a sentence in English y termino en español.'

2. Hybridity in *Bless me, Ultima*

Anaya originally expects his audience to be English-speaking, however he favours code switching in which Spanish lines are neither italicised nor translated. This method permits the story to flow smoothly, thus portraying the intercultural functionality of Spanish and English. This code switching is illustrated through Antonio's mother vivid description of Ultima's goodness: 'There isn't a family she did not help, . . . , no road was too long for her to walk to its end to snatch somebody from the jaws of death, and not even the blizzards of the llano could keep her from the appointed place where a baby was to be delivered—Es verdad . . .' (*Bless me, Ultima* 3)

In this quote, the Spanish short phrase is easy to translate, 'Es verdad' means 'it is true'. The use of this phrase indicates that Antonio's parents have the ability to carry on a conversation which starts in English and then shifts to Spanish with no dramatic transition. That is to say, Anaya uses code switching in order to prove that English and Spanish can coexist in this textual area, and that the reader will not face any impassable language barrier to understand what is referred to.

Antonio's parents' use of both English and Spanish in their communication reveals that both languages can be integrated in one conversation without the dominance of any language over the other. Throughout the novel, all of the dialogues between Antonio's parents is in Spanish since Antonio makes us aware that older people mostly speak Spanish.

By the end of the Second World War (1945), still many Chicanos spoke Spanish as their mother tongue, essentially the elders who did not use English and did not attend school. Generally speaking, those were the second generation of Mexicans after New Mexico had

reached statehood within the United States. In other words, most of the Chicanos in New Mexico spoke Spanish in the 1990s. The dialogue between Antonio and the mother of Jason indicates that the Chicanos use Spanish as their first language inside their families and society. Antonio narrates:

"¡Jasón!" I called at the kitchen door. I had run hard and was panting. His mother appeared at the door.

"Jasón no está aquí," she said. All of the older people spoke only in Spanish, and I myself understood only Spanish. It was only after one went to school that one learned English.

"¿Dónde está?" I asked.

She pointed towards the river, northwest, past the railroad

tracks to the dark hills. (10)

In this quote, Antonio uses Spanish to communicate with Jasón's mother. "*Jasón no está aquí*" means that 'He is not here.' Antonio goes to Jasón's house to look for him, yet Jasón's mother says in Spanish that he is not at home. Antonio asks her "¿Dónde está?", which in this context means 'where is he?' Antonio speaks only Spanish at his early age since he has no touch with native English-speaking people and the school. Only by way of school, Chicanos can be introduced to English in addition to their use of Spanish at an early age within their families. Thus, becoming bilingual very early in life.

According to Antonio's mother, learning English is an obligatory task for her son in order to become a successful priest as she has always dreamt of. Antonio says: 'Many of the old people did not accept the new language and refused to let their children speak it, but my mother believed

that if I was to be successful as a priest I should know both languages, and so she encouraged me in both' (180).

As the quotation cites, Antonio's mother has always encouraged him to learn the new language, i. e. English, in addition to his first language which is Spanish.

Unlike Antonio, his sister Deborah speaks English because she has interacted with English-speaking people at school. The complete mastery of English is not obligatory, since Chicanos are expected to speak less in an Anglo-dominated society. For instance, Antonio needs to learn English as he is about to go to school, while Debora has already acquired English because she has spent two years in school. Moreover, she has taught her sister some English too: Antonio recounts: 'She had been to school two years and she spoke only English. She was teaching Theresa and half the time I didn't understand what they were saying' (11). Antonio then tells us how his sisters have spoken English while he has not, which has made him unable to puzzle out their English conversations.

In that hybrid society and with the dominance of English, the Chicano individual should abandon his or her mother tongue in order to get involved in the dominant society whose sharp difference from Chicano society starts to be understood by this individual. As a result, the Chicano individual constructs his or her own identity according to this difference. This is Antonio's case when he has figured out that he cannot speak only Spanish when he goes to school, therefore he has to learn the English language. This demonstrates that school enhances bilingualism over monolingualism. School is a tool for the Chicanos to grasp American values and force their children to reduce the use of Spanish. However, Antonio's family still use

Spanish at home and around the neighbourhood despite the imposition of the English language over their culture.

Another important aspect which affects Antonio's cultural development is language and relationships. With the arrival of Antonio's family to New Mexico, Antonio has become Tony once he has attended the English-speaking school. Additionally, Antonio's new friends are different. It is very strange to Antonio to notice that his friends are not dark-skinned with dark eyes and hair anymore. He says: 'He was tall and thin, with curly blonde hair that fell to his shoulders. I had never seen anyone like him, so white and speaking Spanish' (36). He mentions that some of the new children are tall with blonde hair. In addition, he is more shocked when he hears those light children speak Spanish.

Furthermore, Antonio's brothers have been assimilated to the White Anglo-Saxon world, the thing which has resulted in their will to leave the family and adhere to the dominant culture. They have denied their Chicano heritage and as a result they have lost their culture. Unlike his brothers, Antonio would not forsake his past in order to assimilate into the White Anglo-Saxon world. It is evident that he will resist assimilation in order to hold over his ethnic identity. When he recalls the time which he has spent with Ultima before going to school, it is clear that it is inevitable for him to adapt with the new required styles. Antonio describes this situation: 'But the innocence which our isolation sheltered could not last forever, and the affairs of the town began to reach across our bridge and enter my life. Ultima's owl gave the warning that the time of peace on our hill was drawing to an end' (15).

Nonetheless, some serious culture clash and obstacles may erupt in the course of the life of hybrid people during their gruelling journey to find their identity. What follows below is an examination of that culture clash in the existence of Antonio.

3. Culture Clash in *Bless me, Ultima*

Assimilation usually requires the contact of at least two independent cultural groups. This contact is likely to cause a change within one of these groups. This change can exist in either group, however the strongest group would bearably dominate the other and impose its culture over the weaker group. The process of domination proposes that what occurs between the contact and the change might be problematic.

The first stage of Antonio's assimilation occurs when he steps into school. He goes to school speaking only Spanish, his mother tongue. By then, he realises that he is different from others when he does not understand the voices around him. Antonio's sense of lost and marginalisation in the midst of White Anglo-Saxons is explicitly demonstrated when he arrives at school, looking for his Spanish-speaking teacher, Miss Maestas. At this moment, Antonio understands the formidable obstacle that is erected between his world and the one of the English-speaking dominant cultural group. He desperately tries to understand what these English-speaking people say, but it is strange and hard for him to do so. In this context, Antonio remarks:

Somehow I got to the schoolgrounds, but I was lost. The school was larger than I had expected. Its huge, yawning doors were menacing. I looked for Deborah and Theresa, but every face I saw was strange. I looked again at the doors of the sacred halls but I was too afraid to enter. My mother had said to go to Miss Maestas, but I did not know where to begin to find her. I had come to the town,

and I had come to school, and I was very lost and afraid in the nervous, excited swarm of kids. (57)

Antonio has found the school and the people strange and has felt lost in it. He adds ‘. . . I turned and looked into the eyes of a strange red-haired boy. He spoke English, a foreign tongue. “First grade,” was all I could answer.’ (57). This shows the genuine perplexity Antonio has felt since he has been unable to speak English. He also mentions: ‘She pointed at me but I did not understand her. Then the other boys and girls laughed and pointed at me. I did not feel so good. Thereafter I kept away from the groups as much as I could and worked alone. I worked hard’ (58).

From the quotation mentioned above, we can safely assume that it is hard for the Chicanos to integrate themselves into a dominant White Anglo-Saxon society, essentially for adolescents like Antonio who is still constructing his identity within and powerfully influenced by the surrounding environment. The more Antonio notices how different he is from the others, the more he recognises himself as a part of his original community.

Moreover, Antonio tells us how his peers mock him when they see his lunch:

At noon we opened our lunches to eat. Miss Maestas left the room and a high school girl came and sat at the desk while we ate. My mother had packed a small jar of hot beans and some good, green chile wrapped in tortillas. When the other children saw my lunch they laughed and pointed again. Even the high school girl laughed. They showed me their sandwiches which were made of bread. Again I did not feel well (58)

From the previous quote, it is obvious that Chicano culture is different from that of the dominant group in the United States. This has inevitably provoked a cultural clash that constitutes an enormous obstacle that Antonio must surmount. Even though he could not understand what the others say, he fathoms out their mocking laughs and rude gestures. Therefore, Antonio will not only learn English in school, but school will also teach him a sense of prejudice. When the children have made fun of Antonio, they have provided him with a feeling that he is different. He portrays this state:

The strangeness of the school and the other children made me very sad. I did not understand them. I sneaked around the back of the school building, and standing against the wall I tried to eat. But I couldn't. A huge lump seemed to form in my throat and tears came to my eyes. I yearned for my mother, and at the same time I understood that she had sent me to this place where I was an outcast. I had tried hard to learn and they had laughed at me; I had opened my lunch to eat and again they had laughed and pointed at me. (58)

This marginalisation is a heavy burden on Antonio's shoulders. He has felt that he is 'an outcast' in a school which consists of children who are culturally different from him, adding: 'The pain and sadness seemed to spread to my soul, and I felt for the first time what the grown-ups call, *la tristesa de la vida*' (59). In plain words, because of his peers' attitude towards him, Antonio has felt for the first time of his life the tremendous sorrow of life.

However, Antonio has soon found out that he is not alone. Two other Chicano boys, whom he has previously known, have suffered like him:

But no, I was not alone. Down the wall near the corner I saw two other boys who had sneaked out of the room. They were George and Willy. They were big boys; I knew they were from the farms of Delia. We banded together and in our union found strength. We found a few others who were like us, different in language and custom, and a part of our loneliness was gone. (59)

Antonio could find a sense of relative peace as soon as he has found two boys who are culturally similar to him. Moreover, his union with other Chicano boys has provided him with the strength needed to face the strange world of the dominant Anglos. ‘When the winter set in we moved into the auditorium and there, although many a meal was eaten in complete silence, we felt we belonged. We struggled against the feeling of loneliness that gnawed at our souls and we overcame it; that feeling I never shared again with anyone . . .’ (59). Antonio’s company with the two Chicano boys is very helpful for them all to fight the horrible feeling of cultural alienation he has experienced among the rest of the children.

Ultimately, Antonio realises that only through education he will be able to break through the cultural barrier and fully assimilate into Anglo-American society. This seems fairly clear when he says: ‘And I was busy at school, driven by the desire to make mine the magic of letters and numbers. I struggled and stumbled, but with the help of Miss Maestas I began to unravel the mystery of the letters’ (64).

It becomes glaringly apparent that Antonio is trying so hard in order to succeed at school so that he can eventually read, write and speak English. Only by then, he can enter the Anglo-American world. Indeed, Antonio has done well at school and passed two grades in one year: ‘Miss Maestas sent a note to my mother telling her that I was progressing very well, and my

mother was happy that a man of learning was once again to be delivered to the Lunas' (64). Antonio tells us about his success at the end of the year:

On the last day of school she handed out report cards to the other kids, but when it came to me she took me to the principal's office. He explained to me that I was a little older than the other kids in first grade and that my progress had been very good. Miss Maestas beamed. So instead of passing me from first to second he was passing me from first to third. (76)

By the end of the novel, with Ultima's help, Antonio could finally understand that a man's future depends heavily on his past. Right after Ultima's death, he realises that one's past defines one's future and that the old life will always be attached to the new one. As claims:

Around me the moonlight glittered on the pebbles of the llano, and in the night sky a million stars sparkled. Across the river I could see the twinkling lights of the town. In a week I would be returning to school, and as always I would be running up the goat path and crossing the bridge to go to church. Sometime in the future I would have to build my own dream out of those things that were so much a part of my childhood. (261)

One can understand that Antonio's childhood has exerted a great impact on his personality. Moreover, he draws an image of his own future using his childhood memories. This means that his past will undoubtedly be one of the components of his future. He forcefully asserts: 'It seems I am so much a part of the past . . . Ay, every generation, every man is a part of his past. He cannot escape it, but he may reform the old materials, make something new' (247).

Ultima could teach Antonio the true significance of life. He states: 'He had saved my life, and perhaps if we had come earlier we would have saved Ultima. But it was better not to think that way. Ultima said to take life's experiences and build strength from them, not weakness' (261). One should take advantage of one's old experiences and build out of them a strong future for oneself.

Anaya has brilliantly succeeded through his narrative, *Bless me, Ultima*, to conclusively demonstrate the powerful influence of culture on identity. There are three major phases which determine Antonio's identity: First, Antonio's parents contradicted intentions for his own future; second, the sharp difference between the Anglo-American culture and Antonio's Spanish cultural background; and third, the distinction between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking people. Antonio has undergone different, painful, and yet valuable cultural and spiritual experiences according to the people he has encountered. These experiences have ultimately helped him to decide about the kind of person he wants to be and about his own future.

In conclusion, Antonio has lived within a continuous struggle, always questioning his surroundings: his culture, language as well as his family and his own background. The development and the creation of a new culture will eventually answer his questions. This hybrid new culture would be an unconscious imposed mixture of two cultures colliding with each other, and inevitably resulting in the cultural marginalisation of Mexican-Americans in the United States.

General Conclusion

This study has aimed to provide an overview of hybridity and identity construction in multicultural societies. It has shed light upon the contributing factors to the identity construction of the individual, keeping central focus on hybridity since the latter has considerable impact on individuals' personality as well as their psyche. The choice of the Chicano author Rudolfo Anaya has been guided by his careful examination of Chicano identity construction through the novel of *Bless me, Ultima*.

The third space and double consciousness are two core concepts mainly associated with multiculturalism, as they both result from the recognition of two distinct cultures and the hybridity that results, in its turn, from these conflicting cultures. From a psychological perspective, double consciousness lodge itself within the psychology of the individual in the form of mental dislocation. Culturally speaking, the third space occupies any space where two cultures meet and blur.

This study has conclusively proved that the cultural backgrounds of Antonio' parents have had massive impact on his personality. The study has described the inner struggle that Antonio has waged, while being raised by parents who are sharply different from each other, especially as far as their socio-cultural backgrounds are concerned. Consequently, this sharp difference has potentially resulted in internal conflicts within the family. Moreover, the second part of the hypothesis has been refuted on the grounds that although Antonio has been torn by his parents' social backgrounds and their different wishes for his future, he has succeeded in combining elements in order to form a unique hybrid identity, and thus has been able to decisively shape the promising future which he has deeply pondered over and

carefully chosen. In other words, he has succeeded in taking on a new distinctive identity. His new identity is not only Luna or solely Marez, instead, he is both Marez Y Luna.

As for his social status, Antonio has perfectly well managed to fully assimilate into the English-speaking society and the Anglo-American world. It has also been demonstrated how Rudolfo Anaya has adequately explained, based on his personal experience as a Chicano and hybrid person and through Antonio's journey, the marked influence of cultural hybridity on the construction of the identity of the individual.

What is new in this study is that it has dealt with Antonio's quest for his personal identity from a social, a cultural, and above all from a linguistic aspect, unlike the previous studies which focused either on the cultural or on the social aspects of Antonio's life, neglecting his linguistic accomplishment by the same token. What this research has reasonably presumed is that Antonio has had to face double hybridity, one within his own family, clearly manifested in his father's and mother's cultural differences, and the other one is represented by the cultural barrier he has frequently encountered while being a Hispanic, a Mexican-American, a Spanish-speaking person in an Anglo-Americanised world. Subsequent to these circumstances, Antonio has found a way to get out of his familial dilemma. Ultimately, he has succeeded in getting rid of the feeling of cultural alienation, not only in his own family, but also in the land of his ancestors which is now dominated by the Anglo-American. Indeed, he has acquired absolute mastery of the Anglo-American world by perfectly capturing the true essence of this world, viz. its language. Antonio is not only a Spanish-speaking Mexican or an English-speaking American, but an ideal and perfect combination of both. Furthermore, he is Hispanic and then Chicano.

Although the research has discussed the issues of Chicano cultural life, especially the creation of Chicano identity in *Bless me, Ultima*, the possibility of researching this wide topic

is still open up. The coexistence of Hispanic, especially Mexican-American and American culture can be analysed from an opposite viewpoint. It is interesting to study how Americans construct their identity with the existence of Chicano and other cultures. The study can cover how Americans regard Chicanos and deal with them, and whether Chicano culture greatly affects American culture one or not. Another interesting aspect is to study the growing influence of the Spanish language on the English language, and whether it is possible for the language of a distinct minority to dramatically affect the language of the dominant majority in the United States.

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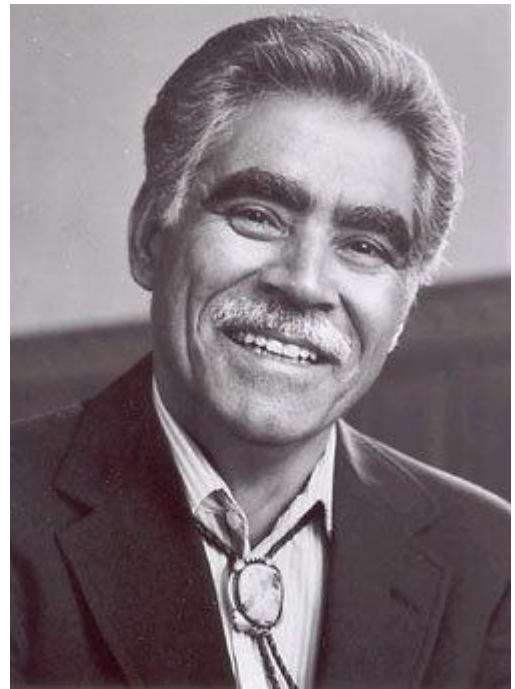
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Appendix 1: Biography of Rudolfo Anaya

Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya was born in Pastura, New Mexico, on October 30, 1937. His mother, Rafaelita (Mares), was from a deeply settled, Catholic farming community called Puerto de Luna, while his father, Martin Anaya, was raised by nomadic herders on the New Mexican *llano* or eastern plains country. This dichotomy informed Anaya's sense of self and the rhythm of his writing. One of seven siblings, Anaya was the only male in his family to attend primary school, as his three older brothers served in the military during



World War II. Not long after Anaya was born, his family moved from Pastura to Santa Rosa, where he grew up playing Chicano games like *las escondidas* (hide and seek), *la rona* (tag), *adivinanzas* (riddles), and listening to the *cuentistas*, who were Spanish-speaking oral storytellers. It was as part of a rapt audience listening to the stories of his ancestors that Anaya first experienced the power and vibrance of a well-told tale.

In 1952 jobs started disappearing in and around their small, rural town, and Anaya's family moved to Albuquerque to find work. Anaya found the city both stimulating and intimidating. They lived in the Barelitas barrio, and he came into contact with street gangs as well as with the music and culture of his tight-knit community.

Anaya graduated from Albuquerque High School in 1956 and quickly enrolled himself in Albuquerque's Browning Business School from 1956 through 1958, with the intention of becoming a CPA. Unsurprisingly, he found the mechanisms of finance creatively stifling, and left the business school to enter a liberal arts program at the University of New Mexico. Anaya earned a bachelor's degree in literature from that university in 1963, and was working

on a master's degree in literature when he met and married Patricia Lawless, a guidance counselor, on July 21, 1966. He finished his literary degree in 1968, but returned for a master's degree in guidance and counseling, which was awarded in 1972.

In an interview with *Contemporary Authors*, Anaya explained how frustrating it was for him to write "without models or mentors ... I was still imitating a style and mode not indigenous to the people and setting I knew best. I was desperately seeking my natural voice, but the process by which I formed it was long and arduous ... [because] the thought was still prevalent in academia that [Chicanos] were better suited as janitors than scholars."

From Student to Teacher

Anaya's desire to sow and cultivate a sense of value in Chicano youth led him to teach in Albuquerque public schools for seven years and serve the local youth as a guidance counselor for three more. He followed his efforts in the public schools by working as an associate professor at his alma mater, the University of New Mexico, for 14 years. He took a position as an English professor there in 1988, then became Professor emeritus in 1993. He remains an integral member of the university staff to this day. In his spare time Anaya lectures, teaches creative writing workshops, and edits.

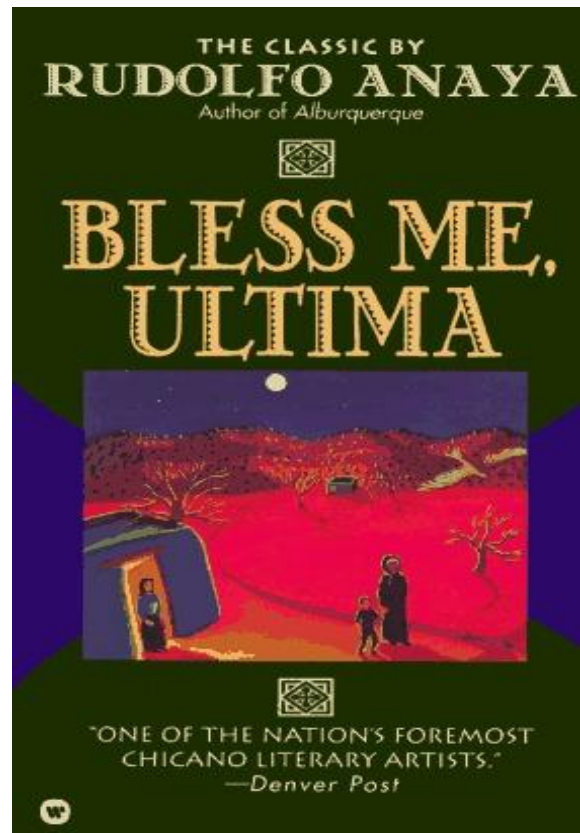
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Appendix 2: Book Review of *Bless me, Ultima*

Raymond J. Rodrigues notes that *Bless Me, Ultima* portrays the conflicts which result from the changes wrought by forces outside one's culture. Ultima, a curandera or healer, living with the boy Antonio Marez and his family, introduces Antonio to mysteries of faith and nature. Antonio's parents each want different futures for their son. His mother, from a family of farmers, wants him to be a priest. His father, who reflects his background of free horsemen or vaqueros, dreams of the time when he and his sons, the oldest three having left to fight in World War II, can move to California



and be-come wealthy. But the father does not count on the influence of war and travel upon those who have left their homes.

The novel reveals numerous conflicts: those caused by the differing backgrounds of the parents, the forces of evil vs. those of good, the encroachment of the outside world upon the life of a rural community, organized religion vs. individual beliefs, the dreams of the old vs. those of the young, and Antonio's seeing the world as a beautiful place, yet filled with horrors. Appropriate for more mature students, this novel easily fits into such units as those on faith, multicultural literature, future shock, man against man, the search for identity, and the generation gap. Among those issues which can be considered by a class are: how much loyalty does one owe his or her parents? Does nature control our lives more than God does? Do we have any choice in deciding our future? If the world is a benevolent place, why is there

so much corruption? Does education free or imprison an individual? Can different cultures exist together, or must one overcome the other?

Allied activities leading from or in conjunction with *Bless Me, Ultima* include collecting examples of "folk medicine," interviewing those whose lives have been influenced by war to determine what changes have ensued, studying why one picks some peers as friends and rejects others, considering ways in which another culture has influenced one's own, investigating different religious beliefs, studying additional Chicano literature, interviewing people of generations older and younger than one's own to determine how their values may differ and why, studying the nature of dreams and whether they influence our lives, learning as much as possible about a culture different from ours, and collecting nicknames to determine why they were chosen and how accurate they are. Because so many issues are developed in this novel, allied readings may vary widely, but a few which involve similar conflicts and which form a compact unit are Richard Adams's *Water-ship Down*, Fred Bodsworth's *The Sparrows Fall*, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Frank Waters's *People of the Valley*, Thomas Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*, and Richard Wright's *Native Son*. All treat individuals who, as a result of outside forces, must choose among vastly different ways of life. Whether considered in conjunction with other works or by itself, *Bless Me, Ultima* is an important contribution to literature in a pluralistic United States.

David Jan Slavicek on the other hand wrote, in his paper entitled *Hybridity in Rudolfo Anaya's Bless Me Ultima*, Conventionally, literary criticism considers hybridity alongside ethnicity as one of the constitutive ingredients of ethnic American literatures and thus Chicano fiction, one of its canonized genres. Rudolfo Anaya's Bildungsroman *Bless Me, Ultima* figures prominently within the latter as a text on hybridity, embodied in the story's protagonist. The novel's first-person narrator, Antonio Juan Márez y Luna, recounts in a first-person retrospect his mental and spiritual development, from approximately his sixth to his

eighth year, in the US Southwest around the end of the Second World War. The different forms of his development are best illustrated with two sociological concepts, enculturation and acculturation. Enculturation (or ethnic socialization) is an individual's internalization of cultural knowledge obtained within one's ethnic group from other co-ethnics such as family, relatives and peers. Acculturation (or cultural assimilation), on the other hand, describes the ethnic individual's encounter and engagement with the culture of the dominating majority group.

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ملخص

لقد سلطت دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار الضوء على الهوية الهجينة وأثرها على نفسية الأفراد فقد اكتسبت الهوية الثقافية، على وجه الخصوص، اهتمامًا خاصًا في الدراسات الاجتماعية. من ناحية أخرى، أصبحت المساحة الثالثة للمكسيكيين-الأمريكيين أساسًا لبناء هويتهم الثقافية وإدراك مدى تميزهم وأهميتهم في مجتمع متناقض. تهدف هذه الرسالة إلى استكشاف ودراسة تأثير الهوية الهجينة والظروف الاجتماعية الأخرى في صياغة الهوية الفردية و بالتحديد تأثيرها على هوية الشيكانو. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تحاول الرسالة التحقيق في الهوية الهجينة ومساهمات الصراع الثقافي في بناء الهوية بشكل عام في رواية "باركيني يا أولتيما" و هي قصة من تراث الشيكانو. في ثلاث فصول، تفحص هذه الدراسة سعي "أنطونيو" لإيجاد هويته، وكيفية تعامله مع أنماط حياة والديه وكذلك استيعاب أو عدم استيعاب بيئة جديدة بنزعة أنجلو-أمريكية إما من خلال اختيار هوية مختلطة أو الاحتفاظ بهويته الثقافية الأصلية ذات الجذور المكسيكية الناطقة بالإسبانية. الكلمات المفتاحية : الشيكانو، الاستيعاب الثقافي، الهوية الهجينة، الهوية ، فترة ما بعد الاستعمار.

Résumé

Les études postcoloniales ont mis en lumière l'hybridité et son impact significatif sur le psychisme des individus. L'identité culturelle, en particulier, a acquis un intérêt considérable pour les études sociales. D'un autre côté, le troisième espace est devenu la base sur laquelle les Mexicains-Américains construisent leur identité culturelle et réalisent à quel point ils sont uniques et importants dans une société contradictoire. Ce mémoire vise à explorer et à étudier comment l'hybridité et d'autres circonstances sociales forment l'identité, essentiellement l'identité des Chicanos. De plus, il tente d'étudier l'hybridité et les contributions des conflits culturels à la construction identitaire dans *Bénissez-moi, Ultima* en tant que récit chicano. En trois chapitres, cette étude examine la quête d'identité d'Antonio, comment il a géré le mode de vie de ses parents ainsi que son assimilation ou non au nouvel environnement centré sur la culture anglo-américaine, soit en adoptant une identité hybride ou en conservant son identité culturelle hispanique.

Mots Clés: Chicano, assimilation culturelle, hybridité, identité, postcoloniale.